

Adopting a rescue dog: the pros and cons

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Adopting a rescue dog: the pros and cons

Many people choose dogs from rescue organizations or animal shelters; others avoid rescue dogs, due to worries about the dog's health or behaviour. Here are some of the advantages and disadvantages of adopting a dog from a reputable animal shelter or rescue group.

Breeds

- + By adopting a mixed-breed dog from a shelter, you might be reducing the risk of medical problems which are associated with purebreds.
- Purebred dogs are also often available at shelters, but popular breeds may be difficult to acquire.
- You may have less background information available than if you purchased a purebred from a reputable breeder, where you can obtain information about the dog's parents and ancestors, as well as research common behavioural characteristics and medical problems for the breed.

Puppies

- + If you prefer a puppy, they are occasionally available at rescue centres.
- While it is possible to adopt a puppy from a shelter, they may be much more difficult to find, and with unknown parentage their final form may be difficult to judge.

Medical health

- + Most rescue dogs have had a veterinary exam, vaccinations, testing for and prevention of parasites, and are spayed or neutered. This thorough evaluation and treatment increases the likelihood that your new dog will be healthy.
- Some dogs adopted from animal shelters or rescue groups may have diseases that they acquired while in the rehoming facility. Reduce this risk by asking your veterinary surgeon about reputable rescue centres with low risk of disease.

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Behavioural health

- + Most rescue dogs have had a behaviour evaluation performed, in an attempt to determine their safety in a home and to match them to an appropriate home.
- Many dogs at rescue organizations will have been surrendered because of behaviour problems. Find out as much as you can from the shelter about the dog's behavioural history, and the shelter's treatment of any problems, or post-adoption support policy. Ensuring a healthy relationship from the start is key.

Training

- + Adopting an adult dog from a rescue centre may mean that you are acquiring an already obedient and housetrained dog.
- Some dogs will have been surrendered because their owner did not have time to train them. If the shelter has not performed remedial training, you may be acquiring a dog that requires a significant investment in training. But if you are consistent, many training problems with previous owners will quickly disappear.

Support

- + By adopting a rescue dog, you are supporting an organization whose primary goal is to save animals' lives and improve their welfare.
- Ensure the shelter is reputable, with the animal's welfare considered foremost, or else you may not be supporting good welfare as much as you think you are.