HOW TO PLACE YOUR DOG IN A NEW HOME

Step #1: MAKING DECISIONS AND PREPARATIONS

Is your dog really adoptable? If the dog has bitten people or has attacked other dogs you may be held liable if you place him in a new home and he bites again. Be sure to be totally honest about the dog’s temperament. A dog who is truly aggressive should be euthanized. If the dog is deaf or has a serious medical problem like chronic stone-forming, severe allergies, seizures, you will have to be very careful in evaluating a new home. Some people may feel sorry for the dog and think they can provide adequate care but the involvement of time and money may become too much and they will pass the dog off to another home or to the pound.

Family needs: Before you look for a new home, please make sure the whole family is aware of what is going to happen. If there are children involved, explain to them why you think the dog should be placed, and make sure they understand the issues. Children who can't let go of a pet make effective placement impossible.

Dog needs: Sit down for a few quiet moments and consider the needs of your dog. You know what kind of home your dog your dog lives in now, so what would you want the ideal new home to be like? If you are placing your dog because of problems, then you should consider how those problems will affect the new home.

- Does your dog: like other dogs? cats? children?
- Does your dog need a fenced yard?
- Does your dog have a very high energy level?
- Does your dog need to go out in the middle of the day?
- Does your dog have trouble staying alone?
- Does your dog need special treatment or medication?

Make a list of these requirements now. It will be invaluable to you later as you seek the right home.

Medical Preparation:
It is important to have your dog spayed or neutered before placement. Without this, you run the risk of the new owner harming your dog by using the animal to breed indiscriminately or selling the dog to a breeding farm/puppy mill. Contact your local humane society or animal shelter for information on low-cost spay neuter programs. Your veterinarian may also have information on such programs. Two national programs are Spay USA and Spay Inc. Update shots and other medical care. Give your dog the best possible start in his/her new home.

Step #2: PLACING THE CORRECT NEWSPAPER AD

The BEST way to find a loving home is to place a well-written advertisement in your local newspaper. Don't be afraid to use this method. It gets much better results than
flyers, notices, word-of-mouth or any other methods. You can get good results if you follow our recommendations. Use the above mentioned list to be very specific in the wording of the ad. Plan the kind of home you want first, then word the ad to target that kind of home. For instance:

Dalmatian, B/W male, 2 1/2 years, neutered, very active, needs home with lots of time for a dog. Fenced yard a must. No small children or cats.

Dalmatian, B/W female, 4 years, settled and sweet. Likes attention, petting, walks. Cats OK, children over 8 OK.

You can see from these two ads that the kinds of homes that should respond are quite different. If you were looking for a dog and you saw these ads, you would easily know which might best fit your home circumstances. Remember, being specific is important because you need to get phone calls from people who have the right kind of home and eliminate all the callers whose homes would not qualify. If you are honest and specific about your dog’s needs, then the family who adopts the dog will be better prepared to deal with the dog’s limitations. If they are not informed, they may return the dog to you within a few days or, even worse take the dog to a pound or just dump it somewhere.

Don't use the word "free". There are people who take "free" dogs and harm them by reselling them to research labs or breeding farms. Also, the word "free" implies that the free item is something with little worth and you don't want to encourage calls from people who think of dogs in that way.

**Step #3: SCREENING CALLS FROM THE AD**

Have a list of questions ready to ask each caller and use a notebook to keep the responses organized. Use your list of requirements and the questions listed below to begin your screening. Make arrangements with your family as to who will screen the calls and arrange a quiet place to talk.

**Sample questions:**

- Have you ever had a Dal before? If the answer is "No", share the information found in the article "Is A Dalmatian Right for You?". Let potential homes know what the breed is like.
- Have you ever had a dog before? If "Yes", what happened to that dog? If the dog was hit by a car then you have the right to know how such an accident will be prevented in the future.
- Do you rent or share? If "Yes", will they provide a letter of permission from their Landlord stating they can have large dogs? If they still live with parents, do the parents want a large dog?
- Do you have children? If "Yes", how old? Take care in this area. Don't ask a dog who has never lived with children to live with children under eight years of age.
- Do you have Any other pets? What kind? Are other dogs spayed or neutered?
• Do you have a fenced yard? If "No", how will they exercise the dog? Is fencing a possibility?
• Will the dog live in the house? Be allowed on furniture? Where will the dog sleep at night? Where will the dog stay while the owners are at work?
• Is there someone home during the day? If "No", how long will the dog be left alone?
• Does anyone in the family have allergies?
• Are you aware of the Dal's shedding problem?

There are no "right" or "wrong" answers to these questions. They are just a way to determine how the home will fit your dog. As you listen to the callers, some comments should raise doubts in your mind!

For example:

• "I don't really know anything about Dalmatians but I want one." People who know nothing about the breed are setting themselves up for failure as dog owners.
• "I want a dog for the kids to teach them responsibility." Children cannot be expected to assume full responsibility for care of a pet. Many dogs are abandoned because "the kids refuse to take care of them".
• "My son/daughter wants to pick a dog for himself/herself." Children cannot listen to the pros and cons about a breed of dog and then make a logical decision as to whether the dog will fit into the household.
• "This will be a surprise for my parents/friend/nephew/grandchild." Pets should never be given as a surprise. People have to make their own decision about acquiring a pet.
• "We need this dog right away. We don't have time for all these silly questions." Why? What's the hurry?
• "The kids watch the movie all the time and the house is all decorated in Dalmatian stuff." A living breathing dog is not a decoration, in fact, he may destroy the decorations.
• "I just talked my mother/roommate/landlord into letting me get a dog." Everyone involved has to really want a dog.
• "We don't have a fence." If the caller doesn't have a fence, how will he handle the exercise needs of a large, very active dog?
• "Let's hope this dog works out." How many other dogs have they had and why didn't they work out?
• "Why can't this dog be bred?" or "Why does it have to be spayed or neutered?" or "I'm looking for a mate for my dog." Irresponsible breeding is the reason there are so many homeless dogs. You do not want your dog to contribute to the problem.

The caller may still turn out to be a good home. Just keep digging until you have more information. Remember that some callers may be good hearted and have the best intentions, but they may not be the right home for YOUR dog. Feel free to talk to us or your local rescue organization about any answers which make you feel uneasy. We'll be glad to help you to evaluate your prospective homes. As you complete the call, take a moment to record your thoughts and feelings about the caller. You may think you will remember, but after the third or fourth call, they all run together.

STEP #4: SELECTING YOUR DOG'S NEW HOME
Invite the most likely candidates to visit you and meet your dog. It may be a good idea to meet at a neutral location such as a park particularly if they will be bringing a dog of their own. This way you can get a better feel for the situation before you invite them to see the dog at your house. Make sure the whole family comes to visit. If there are children, you need to see what they are like. Rowdy or undisciplined children make a transition to a new home hard on a dog. In addition, the children may be obviously overwhelmed by your dog. In either case, this may NOT be the right home for your dog. If all seems well and you have found a family you like, the next step is to take the dog to their home for a visit. This is a very important part of the placement process and it should not be missed. It will give you a chance to check out the home atmosphere, physical layouts, and your dog's response to where he would live. Make it clear in a nice way that this may only be a visit. You may make the decision on site to either leave the dog, arrange for another visit, or pursue other homes.

**Step #5 FOLLOW UP**

During the first week, check on your dog's progress in his new home at least twice. Find out if any problems have developed. Continue to check about once a week during the first month. If you can, assure the new family that you will be available to answer any questions they may have about your beloved pet and his transition to their home. Placement of a dog is not an easy procedure. Your goal is to find the RIGHT home for your dog...one where he will stay and be loved.

Your dog's new family can find some good, helpful reading in “Choosing A Shelter Dog” by Bob Christiansen. This book is available at "Borders" or "Barnes & Noble" bookstores and contains excellent advice for those who are learning to live with newly adopted dogs.

**OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

**WORKING TOGETHER WITH RESCUE:** If a rescue program is sending prospective homes to you, they have probably already asked these basic questions, but don't be afraid to repeat them and ask your own questions. The final approval of the home is yours! If you're not comfortable with a home a rescue group has referred, say "No": If this happens, they would like you to tell them why so they can consider changing some of their placement criteria to meet the needs of people in your situation. They won't be offended, and won't quit helping you until you ask them to stop. They try to screen homes very well on the first call but their not perfect. This is why they use the visiting times to ask more questions, actually see the new home and observe the people-dog interaction. If there is no Dalmatian rescue group in your area, ask your vet or local Kennel Club for a referral to another rescue group. They may be willing to answer your questions about the process of placing your pet, even if they don't do Dals specifically.

Saying "NO": You have the right to say "NO" to the adoption at any point for any reason. You don't have to offer an explanation; just tell the prospective home that circumstances have changed. Chances are likely that if you're not comfortable with the choice of a new home, your dog won't be either. Remember, he/she's depending on you to find just the right home for him.

**FINAL THOUGHTS**

We know that placing your dog is not an easy process. If you take the time to look for that "just right" home, your dog will have a happy future. The members of our club who have worked in rescue have found good homes for many needy Dals. Some of these dogs were difficult placements, but by being honest about the dog's needs, and with some patience, the right home was eventually found. You can find the right home, too!

(Prepared by Dalmatian Club of America Rescue Committee)