



Guidelines for Rehoming and Adoption of Dogs

Rehoming and Adoption Working Group

Focus Group for Rehoming and Adoption of Dogs

Supported by:

National Parks Board, Animal and Veterinary Service

Table of Contents

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR ADOPTION AND REHOMING OF DOGS	2
PURPOSE OF AN ADOPTION AND REHOMING POLICY ..	4
GUIDELINES ON PRE-ADOPTION SCREENING PROCESS.	6
GUIDELINES ON DEVELOPING ADOPTION AGREEMENTS	8
INFORMATION WHICH SHOULD BE PROVIDED BY AWGs TO SUPPLEMENT THE ADOPTION AGREEMENT	10
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF STAKEHOLDERS	15
APPENDIX.....	24

Preface

This document provides information on the adoption and rehoming of dogs through Animal Welfare Groups (AWGs). The guidelines cover the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders involved in the rehoming process, and post-adoption support for adopters. Rehomers and adopters are encouraged to refer to these guidelines to better safeguard animal welfare and improve communication between parties.

Guiding principles for adoption and rehoming of dogs

- Public health and safety as well as animal health and welfare are priority; where necessary, public health and safety take precedence over animal health and welfare.
- AWGs should screen and assess individual dogs for their suitability to be rehomed, especially if they have any history of aggression.
- Biting history (if any) should be assessed using objective assessment tools e.g. Dunbar Dog Bite Scale.
- Existing medical and behavioural conditions and history should be clearly assessed and made known to all relevant stakeholders before adoption.
- Pre-adoption screening, adoption processes and post-adoption support should be robust, and clearly communicated to the adopter.
- The pre-adoption process should not be rushed, and may include completion of application forms, screening of prospective adopters, matching of prospective adopters to suitable animals, assessment, etc. prior to the decision.
- It is important to educate adopters on animal health, behaviour, appropriate socialisation and training.
- Key clauses of adoption agreements should be made transparent to potential adopters at the onset, and adopters should acquaint themselves with the stated obligations early, to minimise misalignment of expectations by both parties.

- AWGs should maintain good relations and open communications with adopters to encourage adopters to approach them as soon as possible if they have issues post-adoption.

Each AWG should develop their own policies relating to the adoption and rehoming of dogs under their care based on the guiding principles above.

Purpose of an adoption and rehoming policy

- To facilitate effective and successful transition of animals from the AWG to an adopter with minimal stress on the dog.
- To give consideration to the long-term quality of life of a dog and protect public safety.
- To find a home that is the best fit for each dog.

An adoption/rehoming policy should include:

- The considerations for when a dog should or should not be rehomed:
 - i. When a dog has caused severe injury or death of a person, it should not be rehomed.
 - ii. When the behavior of a dog indicates that it may pose a risk to public safety (e.g. through behaviour assessment, or has a history of aggression resulting in injury), the dog should undergo training from a competent trainer for a reasonable duration and be re-assessed prior to being rehomed.
 - iii. When the quality of life of the dog would be compromised and negative welfare outcomes are foreseen (e.g. caged for life), rehoming is not in the dog's best interest and should not be considered.
- The conditions under which ownership of the dog will be transferred to a new owner.
- A clearly written adoption agreement that is easily accessible by the potential adopter so that the adopter can be clear about

his/her responsibilities (refer to the Guidelines on developing adoption agreements and Information which should be provided by AWGs to supplement the adoption agreement sections below). This should cover:

- i. Contingency measures and post-adoption support for the new owners and resolution of post-adoption issues.
 - ii. Policies regarding return or rehoming of a dog (when it can no longer be cared for by the adopter), treatment, euthanasia, where applicable.
- The criteria for refusing the adoption of a dog. Reasons for refusal may include:
 - i. The AWG has reason to believe that the future housing will have a detrimental impact on the dog.
 - ii. The interaction between prospective owners and the dog raises concerns about the adoption.
 - iii. The AWG assesses that the prospective adopter is unlikely to be able to meet the needs of the dog.

Guidelines on pre-adoption screening process

Pre-adoption screening should cover the following:

- Expectations of the prospective adopter and the reasons for wanting a dog
- Preparing the prospective adopter on the anticipated change in lifestyle e.g. time commitment and family planning
- Attributes of the dog and whether its needs can be realistically met based on the lifestyle of the owner
- Long-term costs and commitment associated with dog ownership, including ongoing vaccination, deworming, regular veterinary health checks and other treatments
- Basic requirements for care of the dog, including diet, space, housing, environmental enrichment, exercise, etc.
- Relevant laws relating to keeping a dog
- Compatibility and health status of other animal(s) in the household – the adoption of a dog should not be detrimental to the existing animals in the household
- Any special needs (health and behavioural conditions) of the dog that have to be considered by the adopter
- To have prospective adopters and their household members interact with the dog during visits

- To consider conducting a home inspection, requesting for visits to allow interaction of existing animals(s) in the household with the dog being considered for rehoming
- To consider providing resources for adopters with useful information to get the dog settled in the new home (e.g. in the form of an adoption booklet)

Guidelines on developing adoption agreements

AWGs should have a written adoption agreement signed by both the adopter and AWG. Adoption agreements should contain the following:

a) Particulars of the adopter:

- Name
- Address
- Contact details

b) Details of the dog:

- Breed
- Colour
- Microchip number
- Sex and sterilization status
- Any other unique identifying features of the dog

c) Declaration made by the adopter (refer to the Information which should be provided by AWGs to supplement the adoption agreement section for guidance on supplementary information to be provided):

- i. Awareness of expected standard of care of the dog
- ii. Awareness of existing health and behavioural conditions/history
- iii. Awareness of contact points for post-adoption support

- iv. Awareness of requirements for AWG notification or participation in decision-making for the dog on return, rehoming, treatment, euthanasia (where applicable)
- v. Awareness of return policy and fees (if any)
- d) Declaration made by the AWG (refer to the Information which should be provided by AWGs to supplement the adoption agreement section for guidance on supplementary information to be provided):
 - i. Post-adoption support to be provided within an agreed timeframe
 - ii. Response to adopter notification related to the above point c. iv. (to be provided within an agreed timeframe)
- e) Declaration made by both parties:
 - i. Information to be true and factual, to the best of their knowledge
- f) Signatories of both the adopter and the AWG
- g) Date of signatories

Sample adoption agreements can be found on the websites of various AWGs.

Information which should be provided by AWGs to supplement the adoption agreement

This information should be included as an Annex to the adoption agreement to support adopters. AWGs should provide, to the best of their ability and knowledge, the following information:

i. Expected standard of care

Expected standard of care should be feasible given the adopter's ability and realistic limitations in terms of time and commitment. These should be clearly communicated prior to adoption and the adopter when being screened for suitability. Information should cover, where applicable:

- Ongoing treatment or management for medical conditions and follow-up veterinary visits
- Ongoing training, behavioural modification or treatment of behavioural conditions

ii. Existing health and behavioural conditions/history

Information should cover, where applicable:

- Medical history
- Existing medical conditions
- Vaccination and deworming history
- Behavioural history, including reasons why (if any) it was relinquished, previous owner's experiences

- Bite history, which should be assessed using objective assessment tools e.g. Dunbar Dog Bite Scale¹
- Behavioural assessment while in the shelter
- History and outcome of any rehabilitation or training provided to the dog

iii. Post-adoption support

Post-adoption support is essential to ensure the long-term success of adoptions. AWGs should develop their own policies regarding post-adoption support provided to adopters. Post-adoption support should provide adopters with resources and information to ease the transition of the animal into the new home, to reduce return rates associated with post-adoption health or behavioural issues, and to help adopters resolve issues with the goal of improving animal welfare in the long run.

Post-adoption support includes:

- Encouraging adopters to contact the AWG at the first instance should they have queries or require assistance, so that early intervention can be made to ensure the dog's welfare
- Providing contact numbers or contact persons in the event adopters require assistance
- Agreeing on the mode of communications with the AWG and the contact point (e.g. Facebook, emails, mobile, etc.)
- Providing educational resources for common post-adoption issues, including health and behavioural issues
- Providing a list of recommended veterinarians and trainers that adopters can seek advice from

¹ <https://apdt.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/ian-dunbar-dog-bite-scale.pdf>

- Providing medical and behavioural support or advice, limited by time (e.g. within 2 weeks post-adoption) or by condition (e.g. shelter-associated conditions)
 - Providing post-adoption training support for behavioural conditions
 - Encouraging stakeholders to report all dog bite incidents to the Animal & Veterinary Service
 - Recommending training and veterinary assessment for dogs that develop behavioural issues after being adopted
 - Gathering post-adoption feedback from adopters through surveys at specific time periods following adoption to follow up on behaviour or health issues
 - Specifying the number/frequency of post-adoption visitations (if required)
- iv. Any requirements for AWG notification or participation in decision-making for the dog (i.e. return, rehoming, treatment, euthanasia)
- AWGs should develop their own policies regarding return and/or rehoming of adopted dogs when they can no longer be cared for by the adopter, as well as treatment and euthanasia. These policies should provide adopters clear guidance on their obligations to avoid miscommunication between the adopters and the AWGs.
 - Details on whether the AWG needs to be notified or participate in decision-making for the dog in relation to return, rehoming, treatment, and euthanasia (where applicable) should be clearly communicated and agreed on by the adopters.

- Where applicable, AWGs should specify the duration of how long the AWGs have to respond to the notification (for example, a 'cooling-off period').
 - Adopters and AWGs should agree where the dog will be housed during the 'cooling-off period'.
- AWGs should inform adopters of any documentation and mode of communication required for return of an animal, such as through a 'Request for Return of Animal' form, if applicable. The 'Request for Return of Animal' form should be a written documentation between the adopter and the AWG, where the adopter may request to return a dog to an AWG if he/she is no longer able to care for it. In turn, the AWG should complete the form to state if they wish to take in the dog, or decline to take in the dog. The form should be signed by the AWG and returned to the adopter within a reasonable timeframe, e.g. one to three days.
- If used, a 'Request for Return of Animal' form should include the following:
 - Name of adopter
 - Details of dog
 - Reason for return
 - Date of return

References

- New South Wales Government, Department of Primary Industries. Animal Research Review Panel Guideline 27. Research Animal Rehoming Guidelines, 2020.
- RSPCA. Animal adoption guidelines 2018.
- The Humane Society of the United States, Adopters Welcome Guide 2016
- SPCA Hong Kong, Adoption Process
<https://www.sPCA.org.hk/en/services/animals-for-adoption/adoption-process>
- RSPCA UK, dog adoption booklet.
- RSPCA, Post-adoption Service resources -
<https://rvspca.org/resources-education/post-adoption-services/>
- Humane Society of West Michigan, Post Adoption Services -
<https://www.hswestmi.org/post-adoption-resources.html>
- Dog's Trust UK, Post-Adoption Support Project
- ASPCA Pro – Post-adoption templates
- SICSA – Post adoption process

Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

1. Shelters/AWG/Rehomers:

- Provide necessary and appropriate care to the animals under their charge and address all medical and behavioural needs in order to protect the mental and physical health of animals, including spay/neuter and following up with adopters to ensure adopted animals are spayed/neutered.
- Implement shelter protocols and health programmes in consultation with veterinarians, with the aim of improving both population and individual animal health and welfare.
- Adopt transparent and open adoption practices.
- Take all necessary steps to ensure safe rehoming of as many animals as possible.
- Exercise science-based decision making and discretion in the adoption, rehoming and management of animals, especially those with medical or behavioural issues, taking into consideration the individual animal's physical and mental welfare as well as practices that support the overall shelter population.
- Animals with a history of aggression should undergo a process of rehabilitation with trainers, behavioural consultants, and veterinarians. This should include regular assessment of the animal's behaviour. Adoption of such animals should be done with care, taking into consideration the adopter's ability, suitability, and public safety.

- Animals that do not improve with rehabilitation efforts or are assessed to be dangerous should not be put up for adoption in order to protect public safety.
- Key processes pertaining to adoption and rehoming should be made as transparent as possible.
- Pre-adoption screening, adoption process and post-adoption support should be robust and clearly communicated to the adopter (e.g. adoption fee, trial period, return policy).
- Existing health and behaviour conditions, as well as medical and behavioural history of animals for adoption (e.g. any previous bite attempts) must be clearly made known to potential adopters and all relevant stakeholders before adoption.
- Specific information pertaining to the care of puppies should be provided if they are being adopted e.g. sterilisation, vaccination, socialisation and dietary needs.
- Where dogs are of a suitable age and health status, they should be sterilised before rehoming.
- Ownership of the animal post-adoption should be defined clearly before the adoption is formalised, including decision making authority on the animal, and legal considerations (e.g. contracts only hold between the signatory parties).
- Clearly drawn up fostering and rehoming contracts/agreements are recommended. All parties to the contract should seek their own legal advice.
- Encourage owners to keep open channels of communication with the AWG.

References:

- <https://www.aspca.org/about-us/aspca-policy-and-position-statements/position-statement-responsibilities-animal-shelters>
- <https://www.sheltervet.org/assets/docs/shelter-standards-oct2011-wforward.pdf>
- <https://www.animalsasia.org/assets/pdf/1%20Basic%20Management%20Guidelines%20for%20Dog%20and%20Cat%20Shelters.pdf>
- <https://www.icam-coalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Shelter-guidelines-English.pdf>
- https://theaawa.org/resource/resmgr/files/2018_files/TA_Provision_Veterinary_Care.pdf
- https://theaawa.org/resource/resmgr/files/2018_files/adoption_bp_november_2018.pdf
- <https://www.humanesociety.org/sites/default/files/docs/what-is-normal.pdf>

2. Adopter:

- Sufficiently equip oneself with background information (e.g. breed specific information, family with young kids/elderly), regulations (e.g. licensing, HDB restrictions) and rehoming requirements (e.g. adoption contracts) for keeping an animal before embarking on the adoption.
- Provide necessary and appropriate care to the animals under their charge and address all medical and behavioural needs in order to protect the mental and physical health of animals.
- Ownership of the animal post-adoption should be defined clearly before the adoption is formalised, including decision making authority on the animal, and legal considerations (e.g. contracts only hold between the signatory parties).

- Ensure one clearly understands and is agreeable to all clauses (and their legal implications) in the adoption agreement/contract before signing it. All parties to the contract should seek their own legal advice.
- Ensure one is aware of all medical and behavioural history of the animal, conduct research to equip oneself and the family with adequate knowledge before adopting the animal.
- Ensure one has access to post-adoption support, including veterinary support, socialisation or behavioural training etc.
- Participate in socialisation for adopted dog within a safe environment where possible (e.g. with fully vaccinated and healthy animals or healthy juveniles of similar vaccination status).
- Keep open channels of communication with the AWG.

References:

- <https://vbspca.com/foster-home-responsibilities/>
- <https://www.petfinder.com/dogs/bringing-a-dog-home/responsibilities-newly-adopted-dog/>
- <https://www.icam-coalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Shelter-guidelines-English.pdf>

3. Fosterer:

- Sufficiently equip oneself with background information (e.g. including breed specific information, family with young kids/elderly), regulations (e.g. licensing, HDB restrictions) and fostering requirements for keeping an animal before embarking on fostering.
- Provide necessary and appropriate care to the animals under their charge and address all medical and behavioural needs in

order to protect the mental and physical health of animals (e.g. suitable home environment with supportive family members etc.)

- Ensure one is aware of all medical and behavioural history of the animal, conduct research to equip oneself and the family with adequate knowledge before fostering the animal.
- Ensure one clearly understands and is agreeable to all fosterer requirements by the AWG before agreeing to be their fosterer.
- Ensure one clearly understands and is agreeable to all clauses (and their legal implications) in the fostering agreement/contract before signing it. All parties to the contract should seek their own legal advice.
- Participate in socialisation for fostered dogs within a safe environment where possible (e.g. with fully vaccinated and healthy animals or healthy juveniles of similar vaccination status).
- Encourage owners to keep open channels of communication with the related AWG.

References:

- <https://www.aspcapro.org/sites/default/files/seattle-animal-shelter-foster-1.pdf>
- <https://www.sheltervet.org/assets/docs/shelter-standards-oct2011-wforward.pdf>
- <https://www.animalsasia.org/assets/pdf/1%20Basic%20Management%20Guidelines%20for%20Dog%20and%20Cat%20Shelters.pdf>

4. Vets (shelter):

- Develop and oversee programmes for shelter animals (e.g. small animal population health management with an emphasis on infectious disease control and prevention, socialisation programmes for animals within the shelter), provide treatment or rehabilitation for sick animals, conduct spaying/neutering of animals.
- Develop policies and protocols on health and management (e.g. population health, sanitation, medical and behavioural health, housing, handling, euthanasia, sterilisation, public health) for vet technicians, shelter staff, adoption counsellors and volunteers.
- Report any deficiencies observed that jeopardise the physical or mental health of animals in the shelter and recommend changes.
- Encourage owners to keep open channels of communication with the related AWG.

References:

- <https://www.maddiesfund.org/what-is-the-role-of-a-veterinarian-in-animal-shelters.htm>
- <http://www.peihumanesociety.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Shelter-Veterinarian-term-2015.pdf>
- <https://www.sheltermedicine.com/library/resources/?r=veterinarians-role-in-private-practice-and-shelter-medicine-solving-the-problem-of-companion-animal-homelessness-together>
- <https://www.sheltervet.org/assets/docs/shelter-standards-oct2011-wforward.pdf>
- <https://www.animalsasia.org/assets/pdf/1%20Basic%20Management%20Guidelines%20for%20Dog%20and%20Cat%20Shelters.pdf>

- https://theaawa.org/resource/resmgr/files/2018_files/TA_Provision_Veterinary_Care.pdf

5. Vets (Post-adoption):

- Provide veterinary care to the animal (including treatment, preventative health, spay/neuter etc.)
- Address underlying health conditions for animals with behavioural issues if any.
- Gather behaviour history as part of every visit if necessary.
- Encourage obedience training and proper socialisation at new visits.
- Encourage new owners to socialise their animals with other well cared for animals in relatively safe environments (e.g. fully vaccinated and healthy animals or healthy juveniles of similar vaccination status).
- To be able to recommend qualified trainers and animal behaviourists where needed.
- Keep updated on differential diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment of common dog behaviour problems, and treat or refer as appropriate.
- Work with dog trainers and animal behaviourists to treat underlying medical conditions leading to behaviour problems, where necessary.
- Encourage owners to keep open channels of communication with the related AWG.

References:

- <https://www.sheltermedicine.com/library/resources/?r=veterinarians-role-in-private-practice-and-shelter-medicine-solving-the-problem-of-companion-animal-homelessness-together>

6. Dog trainers:

- Obtain relevant qualifications to provide the particular service (e.g. obedience training, training for aggressive dogs etc.)
- Adopt and advocate use of science-based training methods based on the Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive (LIMA) principle.
- Gather behaviour history including any previous bite attempts.
- Develop and execute appropriate training and enrichment programmes for animals entrusted to them.
- Recognise that behavioural issues may extend beyond training (e.g. underlying medical issues etc.)
- Refer promptly to a veterinarian for behavioural issues that may have underlying medical issues.
- Refer promptly to a behaviour consultant or other dog trainers for behavioural issues that extend beyond their scope of expertise.
- Encourage owners to keep open channels of communication with the related AWG.

References:

- <https://routhumane.org/cms/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Dog-Trainer-Job-Description-Final-Apr-2018.pdf>
- <https://www.rspca-act.org.au/sites/default/files/20160404%20A011%20Senior%20Behavioural%20Trainer.pdf>
- <https://aacspca.org/dog-trainer/>

Appendix

Contributor List

Mr Tan Kiat How	Chairperson
Mr Louis Ng	Member of Parliament
Ms Kristina Dieta	Dog Trainer
Ms Angie Tan	Dog Trainer
Dr Daphne Ang	Veterinarian
Dr Cathy Chan	Veterinarian
Dr Frederic Chua	Veterinarian
Dr Timothy Chua	Veterinarian
Dr Chow Hao Ting	Veterinarian
Dr Grace Heng	Veterinarian
Dr Lee Yee Lin	Veterinarian
Dr Xutian Liang	Veterinarian
Dr Prithiba Manickavasagar	Veterinarian
Dr Simon Quek	Veterinarian
Dr Kenneth Tong	Veterinarian
Ms Christine Bernadette	Rehoming Partner
Mr Patrick Cher	Rehoming Partner
Ms Lynette Chia	Rehoming Partner
Ms Madeline Chia	Rehoming Partner
Mr Mohan Div	Rehoming Partner
Dr Gan Theng Wei	Rehoming Partner
Ms Kieran Kua	Rehoming Partner
Ms Kelly Lim	Rehoming Partner
Mr Samuel Lim	Rehoming Partner
Ms Wendy Low	Rehoming Partner
Mr Kevin Neo	Rehoming Partner
Dr Jaipal Singh	Rehoming Partner
Ms Mary Soo	Rehoming Partner
Mr Derrick Tan	Rehoming Partner
Ms Karen Tan	Rehoming Partner
Ms Malina Tjhin	Rehoming Partner
Mr Ricky Yeo	Rehoming Partner