



## Evaluation Checklist for Animal Shelters/Rescue Groups

Make a file for each shelter or group. Remember, no shelter is perfect.

The difference is attitude.

Those in charge of a well-run organization are open to improvements to better care for the animals. Resistance to reasonable suggestions is a hoarding red flag.

Name of Shelter/Group \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Manager/Person in Charge \_\_\_\_\_

Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Website/Social Media \_\_\_\_\_



## Legal/Basic Setup

Is it a registered 501(c)(3) non-profit charity organization? Check the organization's status at one of these sites...

[U.S. IRS 501\(c\)\(3\) Non-profit List](#)

[Charity Navigator - Advanced Search](#)

[BBB Wise Giving Alliance](#)

You'll find reviews at [GreatNonprofits.org](#)

Is there a board of directors? How often do they meet?

How involved are they in the operation of the organization, fundraising, etc.?

Are they in compliance with all state and local laws (number of animals per home or shelter, having a kennel license, employees, etc.)?

What is the legal capacity and current number of animals?

There should be an intake limit and up-to-date records that show current shelter population numbers. The ratio of foster homes to animals should be reasonable.



## Finances & Fundraising

What is the annual budget? Is there a financial statement available?

Do they have a fundraising program in place? If so, what fundraising do they do?

## Animal Records

Do they have organized, clear records on all animals they take in?

Records should be as complete as possible and include the date and reason for surrender (by owner, animal control confiscation, rescue from abuse, death of owner, etc.).

There should also be complete veterinary records for each animal including vaccines, spay/neuter date, and other medical needs seen by a vet.

Many animals have no records from before their time at the shelter, so vet records should start from the date of admission.



## Animal Housing & Daily Care

What you want to see are happy, healthy animals in clean, pleasant surroundings with no odor of urine or feces.

There should be little to no unpleasant odors and no overcrowding.

The animals should be given fresh food and water every day, with cages and kennels cleaned daily.

If the dogs have kennel cough or the cats are sneezing a lot, that's a red flag.

Cats should be in a quiet area away from loud, barking dogs and all animals should be comfortable in their environment.

Just being in a shelter environment is stressful but there should be an attempt to house the animals in as stress-free an area as possible.

Are there behavior enrichment programs for every type of animal? Some examples are play, training, and "cat TV" for cats, walking, play, training for dogs.

What behavioral evaluation process do they use?

Do they have access to a behaviorist for advice and training help?

Is there a foster care program in place for dogs and cats unable to tolerate a shelter environment? If so, what's the ratio of homes to number of animals?



## Security

What security measures are in place? Fences? Cameras?

Is someone on the property at all times? If not, how is security handled?

## Condition of Facilities

Are buildings, rooms, kennels, cages and general areas appealing, well-lit and clean?

Does the facility have good curb appeal? Lawns mowed and shrubs clipped?

Is there peeling paint, broken windows, or other neglected maintenance?

Are there any potentially dangerous structural or code building issues (electric, foundation, etc.)?

Are all buildings climate-controlled?



## Medical Care

There should be an isolation area for quarantining new arrivals and sick animals. How long are they kept separate?

How do they handle medical needs? What veterinary relationships do they have? Is there a vet on staff or a local vet practice with which they work regularly?

Shelters and rescue groups should have a regular, good working relationship with at least one vet, whether on staff or at an independent vet practice.

Is there a good spay/neuter or TNR program in place?

There should be a responsible spay/neuter policy with documentation to give adopters. All dogs and cats should be spayed or neutered before being released to adopters.

Unchecked breeding among the animals is a hoarding red flag.

If the rescue works with TNR (trap/neuter/release) for feral cat colonies, they should be diligent to get this done on a timely basis in conjunction with veterinarians.

Some shelters or rescues go a step further and have microchipping done for all dogs and cats.



## Staff & Volunteers

Do they have a strong roster of volunteers? Is there enough staff?

How are staff and volunteers treated?

Are they organized, trained and clear about their duties?

Are they appreciated and listened to when suggestions are given?

Are they held to a high standard of professionalism and trained on how to deal with the public?

Are they pleasant and helpful or burned out, judgmental and rude? They should return calls in a reasonable time and not be evasive.



# Adoption

Do they have written, clear adoption policies and procedures in place? Are they easily accessible by the public either on their website or at the shelter?

What is the average turn-around time between admission and adoption?

Usually, 1-2 months for adult cats and dogs is reasonable. Some go faster, some slower, depending on the individual situation.

For example, kittens typically go very quickly once old enough to be adopted, while senior cats can take a long time to be placed.

Small dogs are often adopted faster than large ones, but it can also depend on the temperament of the individual animal.

Are their policies and fees reasonable or prohibitive? Anything that's unnecessarily restrictive and discourages adoption can be a hoarding red flag.

Do they actively work to prepare animals for adoption?

Do they promote adoptions on their own and/or through partnerships?





Do they have adoption events or attend events held by other organizations, such as PetSmart?

Do they include an adoption section on their website featuring available animals or post on adoption sites like Petfinder or Adopt-a-pet?

Do they use discounted fees to help encourage adoptions for harder-to-place animals?

Do they actively work to prepare animals for adoption?

Do they have adoption events or attend events held by other organizations, such as PetSmart?

Do they include an adoption section on their website featuring available animals or post on adoption sites like Petfinder or Adopt-a-Pet?

Here's an example of a reasonable cat adoption application...

[Cat Adoption Survey - Richmond SPCA](#)



## How Do They Handle Euthanasia?

What is the attitude of those in charge about euthanasia?

Are they open-minded, judging each animal's situation individually with veterinarian advice, willing to end an animal's suffering if there are no other options?

Are they willing to euthanize as a last resort if an animal is dangerous and unable to be safely kept or adopted?

## What is Their Reputation in the Community?

Check their reputation with other animal shelters, veterinarians, animal control officers, dog walkers, pet sitters, groomers, etc.



## Other Notes

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