
Alternatives to Surrendering Your Dog

By now you have no doubt made the difficult decision to surrender your pet to the Eau Claire County Humane Association. However we ask that you take some time to read over these materials to consider other options. Surrendering your dog is a serious decision and should only be made after exploring all alternatives, and with a complete understanding of the process and potential outcomes.

Ask yourself (honestly): Why are you surrendering this pet?

I just don't have time to care for my dog anymore.

This is a very common reason for giving up a pet and is probably the most inexcusable. You may live a busy life, or may have recently had a life-change that altered your schedule. However you made the choice to accept your dog into your family in the first place. Therefore it is necessary to make time to give your dog attention and a walk on a daily basis.

There are also other alternatives in this busy world, one of them being doggie day care. You can drop your pet off on the way to work and pick them up on the way home. The result at the end of the day will still be your dog going home with you. This is a better alternative than surrendering your pet, and potentially causing him/her to endure a traumatic and stressful situation.

My dog has behavioral problems.

- Have your dog examined by a veterinarian. Behavioral problems are sometimes linked to a treatable medical condition.
- Contact a canine behavior specialist to discuss your dog's behavior problems and solutions. Many behavioral problems are easily correctable using the right methods.
- Review our helpful canine behavior articles online at www.eccha.org or explore the Internet for other canine behavior resources.

If you have tried everything to address severe behavioral problems with your dog, please be aware that if your dog is surrendered to ECCHA, it is likely our only option will be to humanely euthanize the dog. Because we do not want your pet to be in the hands of strangers when this happens, we always recommend that you take your animal to your regular veterinarian so that you can be with you canine companion during this traumatic event.

Me or someone in my family is allergic to my dog.

Usually allergies are caused by pet dander, not the actual fur. You can reduce pet dander by trying the following:

- Create an "allergy-free" zone in the home (like the bedroom) where the dog is not allowed.

- Use high-efficiency HEPA air cleaners throughout your home to clean the air of allergens.
- Try to remove or reduce the number of dust and allergen-catching items in your home, such as carpeting, rugs, cloth curtains and blinds, etc.
- Clean your home often to remove dust and dander. Wash cloth items that collect dander.
- Bathe your dog on a weekly basis. (Yes with patience and positive reinforcement they can get accustomed to this!) Discuss bathing with your veterinarian to best determine which shampoos, if any, to use.
- Ask your doctor to test you for allergies to determine exactly what you are allergic to, because many people are allergic to more than just animals. Reducing the amount of the other allergens in your home will help to reduce your overall allergic reaction.
- Speak with your doctor about which one of many “anti-allergy” drugs might be right for you. Often it only takes one pill a day to significantly reduce your allergic reaction, making it possible for you to keep your dog.

My landlord/homeowner will not allow the dog.

- It is possible, with planning and perhaps a few compromises, to find pet-friendly housing almost anywhere.
- Find local, pet-friendly housing in the Eau Claire area on our website www.eccha.org
- Visit www.RentWithPets.org, which is a great resource that thoroughly outlines how to find a pet-friendly home.

I simply can't afford my dog anymore.

In today's economy this has become a common reason that people need to give up their pets. But animals do not need to be an “added expense” if you can learn to balance their expenses. Not all of your dog's necessities need to be purchased at the same time and sometimes not even in the same month. Here is a list of what your dog really needs:

- Collar and Leash - \$1 each at the local dollar store
- Rabies vaccination (with a rabies ID tag) - \$20 - 30 depending on your veterinarian
- Food - \$5 - 30 per month depending on the brand

If you are still having trouble affording the things that your dog needs, and if this is the only reason why you have chosen to surrender your dog, consider asking for help from friends or family members.

Steps to Take if You Must Surrender Your Dog

There are a number of steps that you should actively explore before making the final decision to bring your dog to the Eau Claire County Humane Association.

The first step is to try to find a new home for the dog on your own:

- Talk to friends, family members, neighbors, local veterinarians, and others you trust to try and find someone willing to adopt your dog. As a last resort, advertise in the newspaper.
- Screen potential adopters carefully. Do not be afraid to deny a potential adopter if you just do not “feel right” about them. Trust your instincts - your dog’s happiness depends on it.
- Always ask for an adoption fee from the adopter. Never give your dog away as “free to a good home” because this can attract the wrong kind of adopter.

When you’ve found a potential new home for your dog:

- Personally visit the prospective new home yourself to ensure that it is a safe and healthy environment suitable for your dog.
- Have your dog spayed/neutered before placing them with their new family to help reduce pet overpopulation.
- Require adopters to provide a valid form of ID, like a driver’s license, and make a written record of their license number. Also require them to sign an adoption contract that requires them to contact you to return your dog if for some reason they can no longer keep it.

If you are not able to re-home your dog on your own, the next step is to contact other dog adoption or rescue organizations:

- Contact other animal shelters and rescues in the area to see if they will accept your dog.
- Search the phone book or Internet for dog rescue organizations, but screen every organization carefully to ensure that it is a legitimate rescue with sincere intentions.
- There are many different breed rescue organizations that focus on re-homing specific breeds of dogs. If your dog is a purebred research online or contact our organization to find out what breed rescue organizations exist that may be able to help you find a home for your dog.

As a final step, if you have no other options, bring your dog to the Eau Claire County Humane Association on the date of your scheduled surrender appointment.

It is important that you understand the implications of surrendering your dog to the ECCHA. We exist as a resource to people who have explored all other alternatives. However we take in two to six dogs per day. Our space and resources are limited. As a result we cannot guarantee that we will be able to place your dog up for adoption. There is a possibility that your dog may have to be euthanized if we determine that he or she is unadoptable. Issues that could encourage us to make that difficult decision include, but are not limited to, major medical problems or severe behavioral issues (for example, aggression). This is why we ask you to sincerely and thoroughly try to find an alternative to surrendering your dog. Please understand that we want to help your pet find a good home, and we are very appreciative that you have taken the time and responsibility to contact us.