



## Behind the Scenes — the Road to Adoptions

At one of our adoptions have you ever noticed the beautiful dogs with shiny coats in cocker cuts? Some look good enough for the show ring.

Have you ever considered the effort it takes to get the dogs to this point? It is a long road from shelter to adoption.



*Lee, as he looked coming out of a shelter.*

Stage 1: Learning about the dog. There are many ways we learn about a dog needing rescue. People call the hot line or e-mail the website. Volunteers monitor several websites which post dogs in shelters. Some shelters contact CSR directly. Occasionally one of our volunteers finds a stray cocker. Vets, groomers and boarding facilities sometimes contact us.

Stage 2: Deciding whether or not to accept the dog. Usually a series of phone calls or e-mails is exchanged between the CSR intake coordinator and the shelter, owner, or Good Samaritan to verify the dog is a cocker spaniel, discover the location, learn the sex and age and uncover any obvious health or behavior issues. Then the Board of Directors is surveyed. They balance availability of a foster spot or boarding, adoptability of the dog, and if we can afford to care for the dog.

Stage 3: Pulling the dog. There is also a series of e-mails or phone calls to CSR

volunteers to determine who can “pull” the dog and when. This must be coordinated with whomever is holding the dog. Given the geographic area we cover, a volunteer can easily spend an hour in transit to the shelter plus 30 minutes or more waiting to complete paperwork at the shelter. Keep in mind that dogs are often matted, dirty and stinky beyond belief when pulled from a shelter. Time to deodorize the vehicle.

Stage 4: Cleaning up the dog. Chances are the volunteer has a 45+ minute drive home to shave the dog down and bathe before transporting to the vet, boarding or foster home. An hour is a quick job but it often takes 2-3 hours.

Stage 5: Trip to the vet. The dog needs to be evaluated by a veterinarian, given immunizations as needed, tested for heartworms and scheduled for spay/neuter. The dog may leave the vet with medications which need to be administered.

Some vets prefer we drop the dog off. If that is the case, someone has to go back later to pick up. Another 20 to 45 minute trip (one way) plus waiting time at the vet.

Stage 6: Dog goes to foster spot. Hopefully there is an opening in one of our foster homes which are spread from Katy to Deer Park and Lake Jackson to Conroe. Otherwise the dog goes to one of several boarding facilities. More travel time—count on an hour round trip.

Stage 7: Attendance at an adoption event. Every dog needs to look good at adoptions. We don’t pay professional groomers but instead rely on our volunteers. One volunteer, usually the foster

parent, bathes and grooms each dog for the adoption. If the dog needs a complete grooming (nail trim, ear cleaning, hand scissor legs and skirt, shave face and back) it takes about 45 minutes plus a 15 minute bath. The volunteer then spends 30 to 60 minutes driving to adoptions, each way.

The volunteer who brings dogs from one of our boarding facilities spends even more time. The night before adoptions, a trip must be made to bathe dogs. The next morning, the volunteer has to run by boarding to pick up the dogs. After the adoption there is another trip to the boarding facility to drop off dogs who weren’t adopted.

Stage 8: The dog goes to a new home. One or more volunteer spends time reviewing the application, conducting a check with the applicant’s veterinarian, interviewing the applicant, possibly doing a home check, and making arrangements for the applicant to meet the dog either at an adoption event or in a private showing. This step can consume anywhere from one to four or more hours.

Summary. The man-hours spent by volunteers to ready a single dog for adoption varies from a few to twelve hours or more. Multiply this by six dogs per week coming in and it adds up quickly. Thankfully a few volunteers with flexible hours do a lot of the transport work but it takes many volunteers to make the effort successful. Now you know all the behind the scene work to prepare a dog for adoption. It is truly a labor of love for the breed.