



Owner turn-ins Abdicating responsibility

Dealing with owners who want to voluntarily relinquish their dog is one of the most difficult conundrums CSR faces. It angers us, it saddens us and it burdens us. Each case is evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

An owner makes an implied commitment when the dog was acquired, purchased or adopted to be its caretaker. Consequently relinquishment angers us when it appears the owner doesn't want to be bothered any longer. Reasons such as "My daughter left for college and our lifestyle changed," ring hollow and uncaring. Or how about, "We are moving to a NEW house and the dog will soil the carpet."

The owner who cheerfully contacts us about "giving" us her 10-year-old dog has no concept of the grief an elderly dog endures when separated from its life-long envi-

ronment. Who do they think wants this "wonderful" dog? There are few adopters who want the expense of an elderly dog or to invest their heart in a dog who they will have only a few years.

Equally distressing are owners who announce they are moving and can't take the dog with them. We want to scream "Look harder for a place that will accept a dog!" Is this a case of just being lazy and not looking for a dog friendly landlord? A reluctance to pay a pet deposit? Inability to pay a pet deposit? Or just an opportunity to get rid of the dog?



Preston

We are regularly called by people who have a baby/toddler and now either don't have time for the dog or the dog is biting at the child. We do understand not all cockers do well with kids and sympathize.

Every year we accept a handful of injured dogs whose owners are unable to pay a large vet bill. Generally the dog must be young and otherwise in good health. The dog must be signed over to CSR since we are not in the business of subsidizing pet ownership. Pet owners should be prepared to either pay for treatment or euthanize their dog.

We worry that far too often owners turning in their dogs feel they are doing something noble. Nothing could be further from the truth—they are abdicating their responsibility.

Should a rescue group accept owner turn-ins?

While government supported shelters must accept every dog dropped off or picked up as a stray, private rescue groups like Cocker Spaniel Rescue can be more discriminating.

Rescue groups have differing philosophies on whether or not to accept owner turn-ins (OTIs). Some groups refuse hoping to discourage the owner from getting rid of the dog or re-homing it themselves. Other groups prefer to focus on dogs on death row in shelters.

CSR has a different philosophy. We recognize that many of the dogs at shelters were turned in by the owners. To us it is smarter to take the dog before it is trau-

matized at the shelter. Also, contact with the owner gives us more information about the dog—its name, age, health/behavior issues, etc.

We walk a fine line with OTIs. We don't make it easy for an owner to get rid of their dog nor do we want to place a dog in danger.

We counsel the owner to work out the problem and keep the dog in its home. We actively encourage OTIs to re-home the dog themselves.

We are more willing to accept the dog into our program if the owner agrees to foster the dog. We post pictures on the website and encourage the owner to bring the dog to adoptions.

If all else fails, we may accept the dog. Our decision is based on sex, age, behavior and health issues not on the excuse the owner offers. We also want the dog up-to-date on immunizations, spayed or neutered and a nice donation. The owner is asking us to take on the physical responsibility of the dog and should expect to subsidize our efforts.

The whole issue of owner turn-ins could be avoided if people treated their dogs as family members, not as an item to be disposed of when the going gets tough.

Kismet is fate, fortune, luck or destiny.