



CockerKid Kismet

Mailbag Is CSR's adoption fee high?

I am interested in possibly adopting a homeless cocker spaniel, but am not interested in the high fee associated with the adoptions, (I know this is to cover the expenses you have incurred so far.) Just wondering if you ever allow adoptions to be made without the mandatory \$200 "donation?" With so many homeless dogs to house, would you also profit by no longer having to care for the dog that is being adopted? Would it be possible to adopt directly from foster home? Just wondering if there is any other affordable way to offer a home to one of these precious dogs?

Does Cocker Spaniel Rescue of East Texas (CSR) have a high adoption fee? Well, yes and no. Comparing our \$200 adoption fee to those of a shelter, ours looks pretty steep. Shelters are often supported by tax dollars, not totally dependent on adoption fees, donations and fund raisers as are rescue groups. The adoption fee and services provided vary at area shelters. Some give immunizations, spay/neuter, deworm and give a heartworm test for \$80. Other shelters charge \$25-\$35 but the adopter is responsible for spay/neuter, shots, etc.

Minimally CSR dogs have had immunizations (DHPP, bordatella and rabies); been spayed or neutered; had a fecal done and been treated for any parasites identified; tested for heartworms; and been bathed and groomed.

Additionally, CSR rehabilitates dogs, something shelters can seldom afford to do. At CSR heartworm positive dogs are treated, dogs with dry eye get drops, dogs with cherry eyes have surgical repairs, dogs with cataracts are evaluated for surgery. Ear infections (bacterial, fungal or yeast) are treated. Skin issues and mange are addressed.

Broken bones, bad knees or hip dysplasia have surgery. Dogs with kennel cough or upper respiratory infections receive treatment. At shelters dogs with these types of problems are often euthanized unless a rescue group agrees to accept them.

CSR never euthanizes a dog because it is unadoptable except in rare cases where the dog is aggressive. Currently we have 20 dogs whose chance of adoption is minimal. Shelters regularly euthanize dogs deemed unadoptable or those not adopted in a short period of time.

Dogs coming directly out of shelters may have been exposed to communicable diseases but not develop symptoms for days. Hopefully rescue dogs have been in our program long enough to rule out such problems. We never guarantee a dog will be perfectly healthy. We may miss a problem or it may develop later.

Generally a CSR dog has been evaluated in a home setting lending insight to its personality and behavior. This is a valuable tool to use in placing the dog but unlikely to happen in a shelter.

On average CSR spends \$400 per dog so the \$200 adoption fee only partially offsets the expense. We need the money to continue caring for other cocker spaniels. To supplement adoption fees we are always seeking donations and fund raising opportunities.

It seems reasonable to think that with so many homeless dogs to care for, we would profit by letting dogs go for lower adoption fees. The main problem with this argument is that we want our dogs to go to homes that can financially provide for them. We estimate it costs about \$1,200 a year to

provide the basics – monthly grooming, high quality food, annual immunizations, monthly heartworm and flea preventative, etc. There will probably be one or more vet visit for an eye, ear or skin problems. Each visit can easily run \$100 or more depending on the problem. If a \$200 adoption fee seems high, how will the adopter feel about spending \$1,200+ annually to maintain a cocker spaniel?

It is possible to adopt directly out of a foster home or at an adoption event. An adoption event provides the best opportunity to meet multiple dogs at the same time. But, foster parents are happy to show their dogs outside adoption events as long as the prospective adopter comes to them.

Buying a puppy from a reputable breeder can run \$500 - \$800 and you may be required to spay/neuter at your own expense. A cheaper option is to buy from a roadside vendor or a backyard breeder. However you not only run the risk of buying a poorly bred dog with undisclosed health issues, you also are likely purchasing an extremely young puppy needing all three sets of puppy shots and to be spayed or neutered (~\$500 total).

Even at a reasonably priced veterinarian immunizations, fecal, heartworm test, office visit and spay/neuter will run about \$325. Medications to clear up any problems found are additional. Heartworm treatment can easily run \$500.

Is there a cheap way to adopt a cocker spaniel? Shop the shelters for the best deal but keep in mind those annual maintenance expenses. All things considered the \$200 adoption fee charged by CSR is affordable and a good value because of the additional services offered. If you are looking for a bargain, a cocker spaniel is not the dog for you.