

Adopting a RSDR Animal

What You Should Know

Cruelty to animals takes many forms and can be found in virtually every community. The dogs and cats who live on the streets in Bulgaria are often times victims of abuse that occurs daily, not randomly like in other Western countries. Bulgaria has very slack laws regarding animal abuse. Since it is a poorer EU country the authorities are mainly looking out for the people of their country and not the animals. Dogs and cats are seen very differently in Bulgaria than they are in other countries, mostly seen as nuisances. The street dogs and cats of Bulgaria are lucky in that they do have people looking out for them and that is RSDR. The stories that you may hear about the street animals of RSDR are terribly heartbreaking. Your initial reaction may be to rush out and want to adopt that animal immediately and give it a warm and loving home. It is this kindness that we all appreciate but before you do anything rash you must ask yourself “why” do I want to adopt a pet. There are a few things to consider:

THE WRONG REASON

Potential adopters must ask themselves, “Do I really want a pet? Or am I reacting with a sympathetic humanitarian response to the atrocity of animal abuse?” These are basic questions that have to be answered by anyone thinking about adopting an animal from abuse situations. While feeling compassion for these animals is a normal human emotion, it should not be the sole reason for wanting to adopt one of our animals. Adopting *any* animal is an enormous responsibility and entails a change in lifestyle. To enter into such an undertaking with an animal that “may” have health, behavior, and emotional problems is something that must be given serious consideration.

HEALTH PROBLEMS / FINANCIAL

Some rescued animals may have medical problems later in life, and will require long-term, special medical attention. Do you have the money to financially take care of an animal that has lived a hard life on the streets of Bulgaria? Are you prepared to buy toys, food, dog training/ behaviour consultations, annual vaccinations/medical, boarding kennels etc. An RSDR animal needs to have a commitment financially, so you need to be prepared.

BEHAVIOUR / EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS

Many RSDR animals are not housetrained and have only lived on the streets and then in a shelter environment in their pens. An un-housetrained dog requires investment of time and patience to “unlearn” bad habits and learn new ones.

Many street animals even though rehabilitated at the shelter, take a long time to recover after a long road journey. They also then have to settle into a new environment they have never seen, smelt or heard before and deal with many frightening stimuli and new people. Adapting can take many months before they settle (with some taking years). Your pet may be afraid of certain stimuli and you may have to help changing your animals fear & mindset with positive association. Take in to account that they may also be very wary of you and that may be hurtful when all you want to do is love them. Can you deal with that? Some issues that may occur - barking at visitors, fear of walking through doorways, fear of going up and down stairs, outside frightening city sounds, travel sickness, scared of other people or animals. Not all the animals have the above fears, but these are some issues you may have to work on over a period of time building up positive associations. How you prepare and settle your dog or cat can make a difference in how they adapt. Adopters need to show commitment, time and patience, and may also need to look into getting the help of an experienced behaviourist /dog trainer to help with any issues.

EATING

Some RSDR animals have only ever eaten scraps or bread on the streets. Many animals have been deprived of food and water for long periods of time. At the shelter, the animals are taught that food will always be available when first at the shelter, so they do not have to compete. They then have regular feeding times. With some animals, due to past history they may develop eating disorders or may not want to eat if they are anxious when they first settle. This behavior does not happen in ALL of our rescues but it can and we want you to be aware of the potential issues, and the patience & time it will take to settle your animal.

SUMMARY

This information is not meant to discourage potential adopters from offering their hearts and homes to a street animal. It is provided so that potential adopters are aware of the potential problems that may occur and is to help you with preparing. Although many of our animals become good companions, others can take time before fully being that pet you wish for. The commitment that must be made in terms of time, patience, training, and health care needs often goes beyond what the average pet owner can manage.

After reviewing the facts some people recognise that they really do not want a pet; they simply want to do something to help the animals. We have many other ways to help in our “how else you can help” section on the donate page of our website.

Tell people what RSDR are doing and ask them to support us at www.streetdogrescue.com