

From the Editor

The many faces of Rescue

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Welcome to our annual Rescue Issue. Rescue is a multifaceted subject because it involves not only the dogs but the people who give them up and the people who come to their aid. It's difficult to be dispassionate about such an emotional matter. Everyone sets out with the best of intentions to do what's right for the dogs in need, but opinions vary as to what constitutes an acceptable new home.

Placing dogs, whether they are puppies we have produced, retired show and breeding stock or animals we have fostered and are ready to be rehomed, is stressful. We screen new owners to the best of our ability, but once a suitable individual is found, we must believe that others are capable of giving a dog as loving a home as we are. Those who cannot bring themselves to trust new owners risk becoming hoarders; collectors who keep too many dogs, often in squalid conditions. Many live a reclusive existence, unwilling to share information about the animals in their care, ultimately becoming overwhelmed by the state of their lives and the state of their charges.

Liz Palike sheds much-needed light on this problem in her feature story "Driven Beyond Excess" (page 38). Mental-health professionals say that hoarding can be a symptom of many different mental-health illnesses, including obsessive-compulsive disorder, attention-deficit disorder, dementia and major depression. Although little research has been done on hoarding, and even less on animal hoarding, an estimated 8 million people in the U.S. suffer from obsessive-compulsive disorder, and one-third of those have a tendency to hoard.

"Separation anxiety" seems to have become a catch-all phrase that's tossed around pretty loosely today. How do you know if a rescue dog is truly demonstrating separation anxiety, and what can you do to overcome the condition? Read Maryanne Dell's article "Panic Stricken" (page 26) for some answers. Dell spoke to trainers and behaviorists, as well as owners, and offers sound advice to make good-byes less traumatic for both dogs and new owners. Baby talk and clingy departures are sure to make matters worse. Stay calm and upbeat, and your dog most likely will, too.

Many a nervous dog has learned confidence on the agility course. Getting exercise and learning to play with other dogs are two other important by-products. It's no wonder many shelters have set up agility equipment on their grounds. Our agility columnist, Terry Long, has written a touching feature about her own rescue dogs and the strides they've made on as well as off the agility course. "My Dogs" (page 32) is a poignant tribute to the resilience of rescue dogs whose love and potential are recognized by an equally loving, astute owner-trainer.

If the concept of rescue strikes a chord in you, remember that there are many ways to contribute. It may not be feasible for you to foster outside dogs. However, there are vans to be driven, phone calls to be placed, crates and towels to be collected, websites to be maintained and bulletins to be written. Whatever your talents, rescue groups will be most grateful to make use of them.

Thanks for your loyal readership and support in 2007. Happy holidays from all of us at Dog World.