

Opt to Adopt...Regardless of Species

The majority of people today *are aware of* puppy mills, cat and dog adoption, cat and dog overpopulation, and cat and dog spay/neuter. The majority of people today do **not** know about bird mills, mass merchandising of small animals, wildlife/exotic pet trade, etc. Cat and dog exploitation are more obvious because their roles as pets are more common. But, behind the scenes there are millions of so-called starter pets, disposable pets, and pocket pets. For every species of animal that can be considered a "pet," there are breeding mills, backyard breeders, "hobby" breeders, and in the case of exotics, abduction from the wild.

Since bird and small animal rescue and adoption are comparatively new concepts, many groups are still very small and may not have a website or an official standing as an organization. Often these groups start out as lovers of the particular species, who gradually become aware of the problem of pet stores and breeders. Over time they take in unwanted animals and by word of mouth alone they grow. Eventually, many decide to apply for non-profit status out of necessity, but some choose to remain small and independent, thus harder to find.

Some information & trends we have found:

- Rescue work is very difficult, and keeping a group going year after year takes its toll. **Even longstanding groups come and go**, so don't be surprised if you discover that a group you saw on Petfinder or Facebook is no longer in operation.
- **Don't give up** after doing a couple of searches. *They're out there* – you just have to find the right connection to locate them. It's worth the extra steps.
- Even if you come up empty in your search for a rescue **organization**, at the very least you should be able to find a single animal needing a home.

Some suggestions for finding rescues:

- Use **Petfinder** (www.petfinder.com) and **Adopt-A-Pet** (www.adoptapet.com), but *be aware* that, at least in the case of Petfinder, not all groups listed are genuine rescues, so do some homework if you find a rescue you don't know. *(See reverse side of this page for some tips.)*
- If you have already done a basic search for **rescues**, try searching for **clubs**. Enter your search term and area in quotation marks. For example, "*parrot club St. Louis*" or "*sugar glider club MO.*" These enthusiasts would surely know of rescue groups, or individuals wanting to surrender an animal. There is also a good chance that at least one of the club's members is connected with rescue and adoption.
- Ask your **veterinarian**. He/She would probably know of adoption groups, or might even know of clients who are looking for a new home for their animal.
- Check out **local animal shelters** or humane societies. Very often shelters will take in animals other than dogs and cats. Even if the shelter itself does not deal with these species, they will more than likely know of rescues in the area. Rescue facilities are becoming better at communicating with one another. This is especially true if the shelter does its own investigations and rescue (like HSMO and Stray Rescue).
- For small mammals start out with the **Humane Society of MO**. They seem to be the only *reliable* (e.g., consistent) resource for these species.

Tips for Researching an Unfamiliar Rescue

(from the Jefferson County Humane Society website - www.jeffersoncomohumanesociety.org)

Before dealing with a rescue group or individual, check the following:

Animal Care Facilities License

Contact Missouri Department of Agriculture
Animal Care Facilities Program
573-751-3076

Non-profit status in the state of Missouri

Contact Secretary of State at 573-751-4153

AND Website: <http://sos.mo.gov/business/corporations> "Corporations"

Be sure to include all possible names under which the rescue group or individual may be operating.

501(c)(3) status

Contact the IRS at a local office – St. Louis: 314-612-4002; Kansas City: 816-966-2840. They may direct you to a national database of applications.

AND Website: <http://www.irs.gov/Charities-&-Non-Profits/Search-for-Charities> "Search"

A group's approval and/or application is public information. If not seen in the Search, call the IRS regarding date of an application.