

Spotlight on Rescue
By Carol Allen

Why do People Surrender Golden Retrievers to Rescue Programs?

The National Rescue Committee collected data from Golden Retriever Rescue programs across the country and asked the above question.

We realize that, generally speaking, people who either have good knowledge of the breed or seek to gain it and then obtain a puppy from a reputable and ethical breeder are not likely to surrender that dog to a rescue program or a shelter. Further, the breeder is usually ready to receive the dog back if necessary and, by contract, that may be mandated. We are, then, “preaching to the choir” in some ways by sharing this information with GR News readers.

There may be, however, some observations, which could be made from the data that would be found helpful in making decisions as owners for Golden Retriever puppies are selected.

A) By far, the Number One reason why Golden Retrievers are surrendered is NO TIME for the dog. In many families today, all adults work and children are involved in many after-school activities. Time and time again a picture is drawn at surrender of the Golden being left as family members go out the door. There is no time for exercise, training or even the human companionship which most Golden live for.

B) The second most common reason for surrender is MOVING and can't take the dog. While often this is job- and economy -related, some also is related to lack of commitment. We aren't so out of touch with reality as to suggest that people don't need to feed their families: its just for some the family includes the dog and for some it does not.

C) LACK OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE BREED is the third most common reason. Many people seem not to understand that their dog will grow to a certain size, need training, have dog hair and need grooming, need exercise and need human companionship. Further, there is inadequate understanding of the need for early and often socialization with other dogs and people, consistent but gently discipline and rules, which are consistently applied.

D) The fourth most common reason is CHANGES IN LIFESTYLE to include divorce, a new or another baby or now wanting to travel. The “commitment barometer” registers low. It is a curious twist that in divorces the partner getting to keep the dog is the one getting to give it up.

Reasons for surrender:

A) Personal Reasons (45%) including No time/too busy (31%) and Changes in lifestyle, divorce, baby, travel plans (14%).

B) Lacking prior knowledge of the Breed (20%) including Dog too active, too large, too much hair, no interest in training, can't handle).

C) Social/Economy (26%) including moving and can't take the dog (22%) and financial, can't afford (4%).

D) “No fault”, the death or illness of owner, (8%).

E) Health of dog, temperament of dog including aggression (1%)

Generalizations are made from the numbers submitted for 2001, as the data is not adjusted to reflect programs size. While there are some regional differences, for the most part generalizations are supported across regions and differing program sizes. We are eager to collect and consider data for 2002 and after that see what changes, if any, have occurred.