



SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS

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The reporter asked me one question that was not reflected in her article, Rise in number of animal welfare groups, Today, March 25, 2014; *“If someone wants to form an informal group and go around saving dogs and putting them up for adoption – is this allowed or encouraged? What do you think should or should not be done?”*

My response was: go for it! But starting an informal group and saving dogs and putting them up for adoption” is not as easy as the reporter makes it out to be. Any group wishing to start a rescue group needs to consider several factors.

First and foremost, is this a long-term objective, and does the group have a viable financial plan for the long haul? Can a continuous income stream be readily secured to ensure that rescue, feeding, housing, and veterinary and other operating costs are taken care of. Is there a regular income? Make a realistic assessment of income needs, and the amount you need to fund raise to sustain the operations. Be transparent when dealing with public funds and open the books to audit.

Secondly, does the group have enough volunteers to feed, retrieve and foster the animals? Rescuing animals is an exhaustive affair and not for the faint-hearted. Thus, a big support network of rescuers, feeders, fosterers and vets is needed. And for how long can these volunteers go on? Can they identify the successors to carry on should the founders eventually leave the group?

A third major consideration, has the rescue group identified a place to house these animals? Whether they purchase or rent land, building and construction costs have to be considered, as does connecting and paying the utilities. Running costs also include food, veterinary bills, cleaning materials, operating costs. Do they instead depend on existing shelters and commercial boarding places? The oft-heard ‘land is scarce’ and ‘shelters are full’ often requires rescue groups to look for alternative sites or temporary foster care to house their charges.

Running a rescue requires a huge financial commitment and is a major responsibility that requires passion and belief.

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