

# Do you really have to give up your German Shepherd?

So you think you are unable to keep your German Shepherd anymore!

There are several options available to you if you are unable to keep your German Shepherd, however before you go any further we encourage you firstly to read the article below which presents an honest assessment of the re-homing process.

Cast your mind back a little. Not that long ago, you were thrilled to have a German Shepherd puppy of your very own. You never dreamed you'd have to give him up someday. Even if you can't keep him anymore, your dog still depends on you to do what's best for him, just like he depended on you when he was a puppy. Now, more than ever, he needs you to make the right choices for his future.

Throughout this article, we're going to be direct and honest with you. Your dog is **your** responsibility. He has no one else but you to look out for his interests. It'll take effort, patience and persistence to find him the right home. He deserves your best efforts.

Before you start, there are some important things you should consider...

Soul Searching - Do you really have to give up your German Shepherd?

***There's a big difference between being forced to give up your dog and wanting to "get rid of him".***

Search your heart for the real reason why your dog can't live with you anymore. Be honest with yourself. Your answer will probably fall into one of two categories:

People Problems, or Dog Problems.

## **1. The Most Common People Problems:**

***"We're moving and we can't find a landlord who'll let us keep our dog."***

Many landlords don't allow children either - but you'd never give up one of your kids if you couldn't find the right apartment. Affordable rental homes that allow pets are out there if you work to find them. Most people give up too easily.

It doesn't have to be this way - Here are some useful tips:

Most people give up too quickly in their search for rental property that accepts pets. Don't be too quick to jump on the first house you see. There'll probably be a better one available soon. Widen your search. Most people only look as far as the classified ads. Many landlords list their property through real estate agents or rental associations rather than the classifieds. Take advantage of rental services that help tenants find houses. Ask friends, relatives and co-workers to keep an eye open for you. Many houses are rented via word of mouth before they're ever advertised in the papers.

A home that allows pets might be in a different neighbourhood than you'd prefer. It might be a few more kilometres from work. It might not be as luxurious as you'd like. It might cost a few dollars more. Are you willing to compromise if it means being able to keep your dog?

"No Pets" doesn't always mean "no pets, period." Many landlords automatically rule out pets because they don't want the hassle. Many of these landlords are pet owners themselves. Just because the ad says "no pets" doesn't mean you shouldn't go see the houses anyway. During the interview, ask the landlord "Are pets absolutely out of the question?" If he answers, "well....", you have a chance! Hint: You'll have better luck asking this question in person than over the telephone - it's harder for people to say "no" to your face. To encourage a landlord to let you keep your dog:

Bring your well-groomed, well-behaved dog to the rental interview. Show the landlord that your dog is well-cared-for and that you're a responsible owner. Bring along an obedience training certificate if your dog has one.

Offer an additional security deposit or rental amount to be able to have a dog.

Bring references from your previous landlords and neighbours. Invite the landlord to see your present home to show him that the dog has not damaged the property nor been a nuisance to the neighbours.

In difficult times, people often have to move in with relatives or friends who don't like dogs. This doesn't have to be an impossible situation. Use a dog crate when you're not home or when your family doesn't want your dog underfoot. A portable kennel run can be set up in the yard for exercise and can be sold later when you have your own place and don't need it anymore. Don't think you're being unfair to your dog by moving into a smaller place than what he's used to. Dogs are very adaptable, they can often adjust even faster than people. Where he lives isn't as important to him as who he lives with. He wants to be with you and he doesn't care where that is.

### ***"We don't have enough time for the dog"***

As a puppy, your dog took far more of your time than he does now.

An adult German Shepherd doesn't really take that much time – all he wants is companionship from you, and taken out for a daily walk (something that is good for you also), and regular grooming which need only take an hour a week. HONESTLY, are you really that busy?

Can other members of your family help care for the dog? Will getting rid of your German Shepherd really make that much difference to the time in your life? When they look closely at their lives, people often discover that the dog isn't cramping their style as much as they think.

## **2. The Most Common Dog Problem**

### **Behaviour problems**

If you got your dog as a puppy and he now has a behaviour problem you can't live with and you haven't really addressed it in earnest, you must accept the fact that you are at least partly responsible for the way your dog is now. You have four options:

1. You can continue to live with your dog the way he is.
2. You can get help to correct the problem.
3. You can try to give your problem to someone else.
4. You can have the dog destroyed.

Obviously the first option is out or you wouldn't be reading this article.

**You're probably most interested in Option 3, so let's talk frankly about that for a moment...**

If you were looking for a dog and could select one from all kinds of dogs and puppies, would you deliberately choose one with a behaviour problem?

No, certainly not, and neither would anyone else. To make your dog desirable to other people, you're going to have to take some action to fix his problems.

Most behaviour problems aren't that hard to solve. We can help you with them if you'll give it a try. What's more, if you solve his behavioural problems, you may find there is no longer a need to get rid of him.

**Think hard about Option 2 before deciding it won't work for you**, because the only option you have left is number 4, having the dog destroyed. That's the bottom line. If you, who know and love the dog best, won't give him another chance, why should anyone else? Think about that.

**If you would like assistance in solving your dog's behavioural problem(s), please check out our [Contacts page](#) for details of your closest GSDCV Training Branch.**

### **If your dog has ever bitten anyone**

If your dog is aggressive with people or has ever bitten anyone, you can't, in good conscience, give him to anyone else.

#### ***Could you live with yourself if that dog hurt another person, especially a child?***

It is also possible that a lawsuit could result from the withholding of any such information? You could stand to lose your home and everything else you own.

Our society today has zero tolerance for a dog with a bite history, no matter how minor. A dog that has bitten -- whether or not it was his fault -- can be considered by law to be a dangerous dog, and to be perfectly honest, no responsible person in his right mind would want to adopt a biting dog.

No matter how much you love your dog, if he has ever bitten anyone, you only have one responsible choice -- take him to your veterinarian and have him humanely put to sleep. Don't leave him at a shelter where he might be frightened and confused and put other people at risk. Don't pass your problem off to another family who will be forced to make the same decision you should have reached.

As hard as it is to face, putting a potentially dangerous, biting dog to sleep is the only safe and responsible thing to do. It's the right thing to do.

**If you find yourself in this position, we are willing to provide telephone support for distraught owners who must make such a difficult decision.**

If you have decided after reading this that you can no longer keep your dog, and he IS suitable for re-homing, there are a couple of things you need to know:

.... about Animal Shelters

Shelters and humane societies were created to care for stray and abused animals. They were NOT meant to be a drop-off for people who don't want their pets anymore. Shelters take in many new animals each day. Let's face it - there won't be enough good homes for all of them. Even the best shelters can't boast much more than a 50% adoption rate.

*Only the youngest, friendliest, cutest and best behaved dogs are going to be adopted.*

By law, stray pets must be kept several days for their owners to reclaim them. They may not be destroyed until that period is up. Dogs given up by their owners aren't protected by these laws. They may be destroyed at any time. Shelters don't want to kill all these animals but they don't have a choice. There just isn't enough room for all of them. *Shelters today are so overcrowded that your dog could be killed the same day it arrives.*

Being purebred won't help your dog's chances of adoption either -- almost half of the dogs in many shelters are purebreds. In some shelters, many German Shepherds would not pass a standard adoption entry test. Your dog may be as good as dead when it walks in the door. If your German Shepherd is old, has health problems or a poor attitude toward strangers, it has no chance of adoption through most animal shelters.

Sending your dog to a shelter in hopes that he'll find a good home is wishful thinking. It's more likely that you'll be signing your German Shepherd's death warrant. **A shelter is your last resort only after all your best efforts have failed.**

So how do you re-home your dog.....

There are a few options available to you at this point, but first you need to be honest in assessing his potential for adoption:

#### 1. Evaluate your dog's adoption potential

To successfully find a new home, you need to be realistic about your dog's adoption potential.

Let's be honest - most people don't want "used" dogs, especially if they have health or behaviour problems. Your dog will have the best chance if he's less than four years old, is healthy, friendly to strangers, obeys commands and adapts quickly to new situations [if only they were all like that!]. Look at your dog as if you were meeting him for the first time. What kind of impression would he make?

#### 2. Would you want to adopt him?

You already know that German Shepherds are special dogs for special people. Those special people can be hard to find. A lot of people interested in German Shepherds today have never

had one before. They want a dog that will greet them with a wagging tail or will at least allow them to pet him. If your dog is aggressive to strangers or is "temperamental" – we have already talked about the correct option.

3. What kind of home do you want for your German Shepherd? A large fenced yard? Another dog to play with? Children? No children? Make a list of what you feel is most important for your dog. Then get real. No home will be perfect, of course, so you'll have to make compromises. What kind of people are you looking for? What will you be willing to compromise on? Once you have a firm idea of what you're looking for, it will be easier to plan your search and get the results you want.

Next.....

### **Step 1. Call your dog's breeder**

Before you do anything else, call the breeder of your dog and ask for help. Even if several years have passed, *responsible breeders care about the puppies they sold and will want to help you find a new home, if they can.* On occasions some may even be able to take the dog back. At the very least, they deserve to know what you intend to do with your dog and what will happen to it.

If you can't remember the breeder's name, look on your dog's registration papers.

If you got your dog from an animal shelter or rescue service, read the adoption contract you signed when you adopted him. You may be required by the contract to return the dog to that shelter.

### **Step 2. The GSDCV has a listing service for adult dogs, that comply with very strict regulations**

Firstly, you must be a current member of the GSDCV Inc. – No, we don't want people joining just so as they can use this service.

The adult dog must be tattooed with permanent identification (as per the GSDCA Tattoo Scheme), bred from Breed Surveyed parents, and you must sign a declaration that the dog is physically and mentally sound.

You need to be brutally honest with yourself here – as we have said before, you have a duty to your dog and the new prospective owners.

We do NOT take the dog from you, and house it for you. You retain the dog with you, and as any calls are received we put them in touch with yourself. It is then between you and the prospective owner to determine whether the adoption is good for all concerned.

**THERE IS NO WAY OF TELLING HOW LONG THIS MAY TAKE, YOU NEED TO DO THIS IN CONJUNCTION WITH ALL OTHER OPTIONS.**

### **Step 3. Advertise!**

Word of mouth doesn't go very far. Don't be afraid to use classified ads to advertise your dog. Done right, it's the most effective way to reach the largest number of people. It's easy to write a good ad that will weed out poor adoption prospects right away.

Your ad should give a short description of your dog: his needs, your requirements for a home and of course, your phone number. The description should include the breed, colour, sex, if he's neutered and an indication of his age. Hints: if your dog is less than two years old, state his age in months so he'll be perceived as the young dog he is. If he's over three, just say that he's an "adult".

Emphasize your dog's good points: Is he friendly? Housebroken? Well-mannered? Loves kids? Does he do tricks? Has he had any training? Don't keep it a secret but don't exaggerate either. Knowing his name doesn't make him "well-trained"!

State any definite requirements you might have for his new home: fenced yard, no cats, kids over 10, whatever. Try to say these in a positive way. For example, saying, "Kids over 10." sounds better than "No kids under 10". If your German Shepherd doesn't like other pets, say "should be an 'only pet'" rather than "doesn't like other animals".

Always state that references are required. This tells people that you're being selective and that you're not going to give your dog to just anybody. This statement will do a lot to keep people with bad intentions from calling you.

Never include the phrase "free to good home" in your ad even if you're not planning to charge a fee. If possible, don't put in any reference to a price at all. Any people calling you about a "free" dog won't be the kind of people you're looking for and may be people you'd rather not talk to at all. Genuinely interested buyers know they have to pay for a quality German Shepherd.

*Your ad should look something like this:*

*"German Shepherd: beautiful, young adult black and tan male, neutered. Friendly, housebroken, well-behaved. Best with children over 10. Fenced yard, references required. Karen, 9123-4567"*

Along with your local newspaper, advertise in all major papers within an hour and a half's drive. Schedule your ad so that it appears in Saturday's paper - the issue that's the most well-read and widely circulated [or the Melbourne Trading Post]. Nearly every community also has small, weekly "budget-shopper" newspapers that offer inexpensive classified ads.

Don't be discouraged if your phone isn't ringing right away. Most people give up too soon. It can take a month or more to find a new home, so plan on advertising for several weeks. Put a phone number in the ad where you can be easily reached or use an answering machine. People often will not call back if there was no one home to answer the phone.

Newspapers are just one way to advertise. Take a good photo of your dog and have copies made. Make an attractive flyer on coloured paper that you can have copied for a few cents each. Attach the photo of your dog. Your flyer doesn't have to be expensive, professional or computerized, just neat and eye-catching. Since you're not paying for words, you can be more descriptive about your dog than you could in a newspaper ad.

Ask for permission to post your flyers at grocery stores, vets' offices, pet supply stores, grooming shops, malls, etc. - anywhere you can find a public bulletin board.

#### **Step 4. Get your dog ready**

Your dog will be much more appealing if he's clean, well-groomed and healthy. First, take him to the vet for a check up. He'll need a heartworm test if not currently on a preventative program, and vaccination if he hasn't one within the last 12 months. Be sure to tell the vet about any behaviour problems so he can rule out physical causes.

If your dog isn't spayed or neutered, do it now! Don't waste your time trying to sell your dog as "breeding stock" even if he's VCA-registered. Frankly, no reputable German Shepherd breeder will want him unless he came from a well-known show dog fancier or kennel in the first place. The only kind of "breeder" who'll be interested in your dog will be a puppy-farmer or a dog broker. Brokers seek out unwanted purebreds for resale to puppy-farms or research laboratories. That's not the kind of future you want for your dog. Spaying or neutering guarantees that your dog won't end up in a puppy-farm. It's the best way to insure that your dog will be adopted by a family who wants him only as a best friend and member of the family. If you can't afford the cost of surgery, you honestly don't have your dog's best interest at heart. Having your dog neutered or spayed is the best going-away present you can give him. It may save his life! Give your dog a brighter future - make the appointment today!!

If your dog has never been tattooed or microchipped, this is a great time to do it. It's not unusual for newly-adopted dogs to get loose and become lost. A permanent ID will help your dog get back to you or his new owners.

Hopefully your dog is already well groomed, however you want your dog to look beautiful and make a good impression. He needs to be clean and well-presented! Get rid of any mats and tangles and give him a bath. Get rid of his old rusty choke chain and buy a nice, new, strong collar and lead.

Set a reasonable adoption fee, if indeed you are asking for any money. The key word is "reasonable". You can't expect the new owner to pay you anywhere near the same price for a "used" dog as they would for a shiny new puppy. A reasonable range might be between \$100-200, enough to help offset your advertising and veterinary costs. *The placing of the dog with the right home should outweigh any other consideration.*

## Step 5. Interviewing callers

"First come, first served" does not apply here. You are under no obligation to give your dog to the first person who says he wants it. You have every right to ask questions and choose the person you think will make the best new owner. Don't let anyone rush you or intimidate you. To help you along, we've included a list of questions you should ask your callers. Make copies of this list and fill in their answers as you speak to your callers. Get out the list you made with your requirements for a new home and compare it to the answers the callers give.

First of all, get your caller's name, address and phone number. Deceitful people may call you from a phone booth or give you a fake address. *Ask for information that you can verify.*

Does the caller's family know about and approve of their plans to get a dog? If not, suggest they talk it over with their spouse and call you back. The same applies to people living with a companion or roommate. *When one person adopts a dog without the full approval of the rest of the family, the adoption often fails.*

Do they own or rent their home? If renting, does their landlord approve? You'd be surprised how many people haven't checked with their landlord before calling you. If you have doubts, ask for the landlord's name and number, then call him yourself. Be cautious about renters, they're quicker to move than people who own their homes and movers often leave their pets behind. *Remember, you're looking for a permanent home for your dog.*

Does the caller have children? How many and how old are they? If your dog isn't good with kids, say so up front. How many children can make a difference depending on your dog's personality. A shy dog may not be able to cope with several children and their friends. Very young children may not be old enough to treat the dog properly. If the callers don't have children, ask them if they're thinking of having any in the near future. Many people get rid of their dogs when they start a family.

Have they had dogs, especially German Shepherds, before? If yes, how long did they keep them?

These are very important questions! How they treated the pets they've had in the past will tell you how they might treat your dog. The following answers should raise a red flag and make you suspicious:

**"We gave him away when we moved."** - Unless they had to because of unavoidable problems, moving is a poor excuse for giving up a pet. Almost everyone can find a place that will allow dogs if they try hard enough. If they gave up their last dog that easily, there's a good chance they'll give yours up someday, too.

**"We gave him away because he had behaviour problems."** - Most behaviour problems - poor housebreaking, chewing, barking, digging, running away - result from a lack of training and/or attention. If the caller wasn't willing to solve the problems he had with his last dog, he probably won't try very hard with your dog either.

**"Oh, we've had lots of dogs!"** - Watch out for people who've had several different dogs in just a few years' time. They may never have kept any of them for very long.

"Do they have pets now? What kinds?" - Obviously, if your dog isn't good with cats or other animals and your caller has them, the adoption's not going to work out. Be up front. Better to turn people away now than have to take the dog back later. The sex of their other dogs is an important consideration. Usually adult, spayed females will do better with a neutered male than another female. Often, an adult neutered male can be with a neutered male or a spayed female without incident. Dog fights can be serious problems and one dog can hurt or even kill the other. We recommend that you make absolutely sure they'll like each other before the adoption is finalised.

Are their current pets spayed/neutered? - This is not only important in determining whether or not your dog may get along with theirs, but it also gives some insight into what kind of owners they may be. It is healthier and safer to have spayed/neutered pets. Are your prospective owners the kind of people who recognize this? Are they breeding their other animals for profit? These are important considerations concerning the atmosphere of your dog's potential home.

Do they have a yard? Is it fenced? - Your dog will need daily exercise. Without a yard, how will he get it? Can the caller provide it with regular walks? If the yard isn't fenced, ask how he plans to keep the dog from leaving his property? Did the caller's last dog wander off or get hit

by a car? If so, how will he keep this from happening to his next dog? Does he know that keeping a German Shepherd tied up can have a bad effect on the dog's temperament? Where will the dog spend most of its time? - Most German Shepherds love to be with their owners and crave human companionship, a whole life outdoors probably isn't what you have in mind for your dog. Dogs always kept outside are sometimes neglected, lonely and may develop behaviour problems.

Why is the caller interested in a German Shepherd? What do they like about them? -

Find out what kind of dog "personality" they're looking for. Many people are attracted by the German Shepherd's beauty but don't know anything else about them. They might not have the slightest idea what a German Shepherd is all about and might not like its temperament and characteristics. If their expectations don't match your dog's disposition, the adoption's not going to work. Be honest about our breed's good and bad points. Is a German Shepherd really what they're looking for or would they do better with another breed? Many rescues spend a lot of time helping potential owners decide that a German Shepherd is not the right dog for their needs after all. It's better to know this before your dog is in its new home. And if you're giving up your dog for some of these reasons, what's to prevent the next owner from doing the same? Be honest with yourself and prospective owners.

References - Get the phone number of their vet (if they've had pets before) and two other personal references. Call those references! Explain that John Doe is interested in adopting your dog and you want to make sure he'll give it a good home. Ask the vet whether former pets were given regular medical care, annual vaccinations and heartworm preventative. Were they in good condition and well-groomed? How long have they known this person? If they were placing a pet, would they feel comfortable giving it to this person?

### **Step 6. The in-person interview**

Once you've chosen a family (or families) that you feel are good candidates, make an appointment for them to see the dog. You should actually set two appointments: one at your house and one at theirs. Going to their house lets you see whether their home and yard are truly what they said they are and whether your dog will do well there. It also gives you an opportunity to call off the adoption and take the dog back home with you if things aren't as represented, if you think there'll be problems, or if you just get a bad feeling about the whole thing.

If they already have a dog, make plans to introduce the dogs on "neutral" territory, like a park. Most dogs resent meeting a strange dog at home. They may be hostile toward the new dog or even start a fight.

If the family has children, ask them to bring them to the interview. You need to see how the dog will react to them and how the children treat the dog. Some allowance should be made for kids' natural enthusiasm but if these children are undisciplined, disrespectful to your dog and not kept in hand by their parents, your dog could be mistreated in its new home and someone could get bitten.

Do you like these people? Are you comfortable having them as guests in your home? Would they make good friends? If not, don't give them your dog. Trust your instincts. If something about them doesn't seem quite right, even if you can't explain what it is, don't take a chance on your dog's future. Wait for another family!

### **Step 7. Saying goodbye**

After the interviews are over, give the new family a day or two to decide if they really want to adopt your dog. Make sure they have a chance to think over the commitment they're making. While they're deciding, get a package ready to send along with your dog. This package should include:

your dog's medical records and the name, address and phone number of your vet.

your name, address and phone (and new address if you're moving)

your dog's toys and belongings (dog bed, blanket, etc.), a supply of dog food and special treats he loves

an instruction sheet on feeding, special needs, etc.; some reading material about the German Shepherd breed.

collar and leash; ID and vaccination certificates

Set aside a special time for you and your dog to take a last walk together and say goodbye. We know you'll cry. Do it now, in private, so you're clear-headed when he has to leave. He may be confused about being left with strangers and you won't want your emotions to upset him even more.

There are some things you need to explain to the new family before they take your dog home: The dog will go through an adjustment period as he gets to know his new people, learns new rules and mourns the loss of his old family. Most dogs adjust within a few days, but others may take longer. During this time, they should avoid forcing the dog to do anything stressful -- taking a bath, obedience training classes, meeting too many strangers at once, etc. -- until he's had a chance to settle in. Tell them take things easy at first and give the dog time to bond to them. The dog might not eat for the first day or two. Not to worry -- he'll eat when he's ready. Some dogs temporarily forget their training. A well-housebroken dog may have an accident during the first day in his new home. This isn't unusual and rarely happens more than once.

### **Still need our help?**

We can help you whatever your decision may be:

So you've changed your mind after reading the above article? Fantastic...

Our Obedience Training Administrator can help with any behavioural problems that might need sorting out.

For more information, go to our [Contacts page](#) and contact your closest [GSDCV Training Branch](#) for help.

So your dog is a biter, thus unsuitable for rehoming, and you need support. We can provide **telephone support** for distraught owners who must make such a difficult decision:

Fran - 5968 8235 or Val - 5426 3898

*We wish to acknowledge that this article has been adapted from an article written by Vicki DeGruy of the Chow Chow Club Inc., USA Welfare Committee.*