Rehoming a Pet

The Animal Welfare League of Alexandria operates the Vola Lawson Animal Shelter under contract to the City of Alexandria. We provide a temporary haven for stray and lost animals, as well as animals whose owners are seeking to rehome them. The AWLA is defined as an “open admission” shelter, meaning we will take in any animal that comes to us from within the City of Alexandria*. This also means that we take in ill and injured animals and those who may need additional care before they can be available for adoption, as well as pets that are no longer wanted, pets from people who can no longer care for them and stray animals.

We are currently open BY APPOINTMENT ONLY to prevent the spread of COVID-19. If you have read the below information and still need to rehome your pet, please email us at info@alexandriaanimals.org for more information. If you are experiencing an animal emergency, you can reach Alexandria’s Animal Services any time through the Alexandria non-emergency line at 703-746-4444.

If you are looking to rehome your pet directly from your own home, please consider using the REHOME online tool to do so. This tool allows you to post your pet on a site where he or she can be seen by thousands of potential adopters, review applications, schedule appointments and more. Click the button below to learn more:

(Please note that the REHOME tool is hosted by Adopt-A-Pet, not the Animal Welfare League of Alexandria. For questions, please contact their support team directly.)
Before You Rehome a Pet

There are a variety of options to consider when you are looking into rehoming, and no matter what your reasons are, we are here to support you. Here are some options to consider when rehoming:

- If you need assistance with pet costs, including food, supplies, grooming or veterinary care, we may be able to help. READ MORE.
- A friend or family member may be willing to help. Please contact others who may be able to care for your pet either on a temporary or long-term basis.
- If friends or family are unable to help provide pet assistance, contact us about our short-term Crisis Care boarding program.
- Many behavioral problems can be resolved, and the AWLA offers behavior and training assistance to help pet owners resolve challenging behaviors so a beloved pet might stay with their family. Contact AWLA at 703-746-5654 for this support.

If these options do not meet your needs, please contact the AWLA about bringing your pet to the shelter. Please note that when you give custody of your animal to the AWLA, you relinquish all rights to that animal.

Necessary Documentation

If you plan to rehome your pet through the AWLA, we will send you a brief online survey to learn more about your pet and their behavior, to help prepare us to take them in. At our facility, you will need to provide

- A valid form of photo ID
- Any pertinent records pertaining to the pet (medical records, a bill of sale, etc.)
- Proof of Alexandria residency (the AWLA may be able to accept surrenders from other jurisdictions when there is space, but there is a fee associated)

The AWLA requires that the pet’s actual owner gives us custody of the animal. If you are bringing in an owned pet that is not yours, we require proof from the animal’s actual owner to sign the animal over to the AWLA; we can discuss these
What Happens Next?

At the AWLA, all animals receive necessary veterinary care, nutritious food, exercise and plenty of love and attention from our experienced staff. Animals determined to be suitable for adoption are placed in our adoption program. There is no set time limit for how long an animal can be available for adoption. As long as an animal maintains general good health and a sound temperament, we will keep a pet until we can find them the right placement, sometimes even for weeks or months. Animals who are sick, underage or who would benefit from behavioral intervention may also be placed in foster care, with the goal of making them available for adoption when they are ready. We work hard to give second chances to every healthy or rehabilitatable animal and find placement for more than 96% of the animals who come to us.

Animals who are not candidates for adoption due to medical or behavioral problems are humanely euthanized, as are aggressive animals determined to be a potential threat to the community and those sick or injured animals whose life quality is deemed un-rehabilitatable.

There is no charge to City of Alexandria residents for giving up an animal, though we will ask if you are able to make a donation to help care for all the animals here at the shelter. We are available to assist you with rehoming any time during our business hours, though if you are able to call us at 703.746.4774 first to make an appointment, it helps to ensure that you have all the information you might need and that we are have everything we need to take in your pet.

No matter what decision you reach, please keep in mind that pets should never be “set free” or left in a park or woods. Pets lack the skills to survive on their own and often suffer starvation or traumatic injury. Please do not leave your pet behind in your former home, assuming someone will find him/her. Many animals have suffered from serious trauma or even death if the home is not visited. If you have any questions about rehoming your pet or how we care for animals in our custody, please contact us.