



## **LABRADOR RETRIEVER RESCUE-CT, Inc**

*a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization*

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Thank you for your interest in Lab Rescue. Our purpose is to find loving permanent homes for the Labs that come into our adoption program. The following material must be read carefully, as it will help you decide whether a Rescue Lab is the right dog for you. Also, the following information will familiarize you with our requirements for an adoptive home. We reserve the right to deny an application, if the home or environment is incompatible with the needs of a rescue Lab. Our organization is comprised of a small but devoted group of volunteers whose reward is knowing a rescue Lab was given a second chance. Thank you for considering our Labs. If you conclude that you want to adopt, we look forward to receiving your completed application.

### **SECTION 1. WHERE DO RESCUE LABS COME FROM?**

All LRRCT labs are for the most part purebred. We do accept some compatible “retriever” mixes but essentially the predominant look is one of a Labrador Retriever. Our labs come into our program from shelters, veterinarians and owner surrenders. They are given up because of family relocation, divorce, allergies, serious illness/death of the owner or simply because their owners do not have enough time for them. All labs are evaluated for temperament. We do not accept any dog who has a history of aggressive behavior. It is essential that our labs go to owners who are prepared to make a commitment to them.

### **SECTION 2. IS A RESCUE LAB THE RIGHT DOG FOR YOU?**

**Time:** Many of the labs that come into our adoption program were given up because the former owners decided they did not have the time to spend on a dog. Therefore, one of the most important requirements is that the new adopter(s) has time to spend with a lab. Labs are “people” dogs. They **NEED** to be around people because they thrive on companionship, attention and love. Labs do not do well alone in an invisible fence or placed outside for hours in a fenced yard or in a crate for the day. Consider your lifestyle and household schedule. Do you work long hours? Are you busy with community and children obligations? Do you need or like to travel frequently? In other words, do you really have the time to give a Rescue Lab? Today many people are out of the house the entire day and find the benefits of a dogwalker well worth the expense (~\$15-20 per visit). We would prefer a responsible family member to be home part of the day. Many of the dogs offered to us have already been proven unable to tolerate being left alone for the average long workday plus busy after school schedules as well!

**Exercise:** Labs need to have consistent daily exercise (minimum 30-45 min. a.m. and p.m.) or they have trouble adjusting to the “family” dog role. Younger or higher energy labs require even more exercise. Dogs **DO NOT** exercise themselves; therefore, you must interact with them and go for a walk or throw a ball. Labs that are left alone (for long hours) in a fenced yard or tied out will usually exhibit behavior problems, such as, chewing, excessive barking, digging and possibly territory aggression. A well exercised lab is a “happy” lab. This means seven days a week, rain or shine.

**Training:** We have all enjoyed our friend’s well trained Lab and this is what may have attracted us to the breed. **THAT** Lab did not train himself! The owners provided consistent structured training and rules for a well-behaved dog. The large majority of our dogs are 1-3year old minimally trained males and females. They are kind, loving and eager to please, however, no one has provided much training or guidance along the way. With time, training and attention they will grow into a fine family companion. We highly recommend obedience classes to teach you and your lab the skills needed to co-exist happily. Training is an investment for a good future together.

**Size:** Labs are a medium/large breed, belong to the sporting group. They come in three colors: black, yellow and chocolate. The average Lab weighs between 65 lbs.(females) to 90 lbs.(males) and possess a large, strong (otter) tail, webbed feet and an active nose. They are intelligent, strong active companion dogs who require much attention and exercise in return for their unconditional love.

**Grooming:** Labs are a double coated breed and therefore shed seasonally. During this time, their undercoat needs to be brushed out. They also need to have their ears cleaned regularly and checked for infection, especially during “swim” season. Both jobs are easy for the lab owner to do. Because Labs love to swim and enjoy the outdoors, they can carry fleas and ticks. If you require a perfectly neat home DO NOT get a Lab. Labs are always willing to donate hair, paw prints and puddles of water to your décor.

**Health and Care:** Labs like all breeds are prone to certain hereditary conditions. Some of these are joint problems (elbows and hips), eye disorders, and more and more food and skin allergies. We try hard to find out if a Lab has any major health concerns or problems before coming into our adoption program---any known disabilities would be disclosed to you prior to the adoption. Routine veterinary expenses can cost \$400 or more per year. Feeding one medium size Lab a good quality dog food can cost another \$500-700 a yr.

**Age:** The average life span of a lab is anywhere from 11-14 yrs. Although, genetics plays a role in longevity, we believe exercise and proper nutrition also plays a significant role. Many adopters come to us due to the death of their family lab, however getting a young lab does not always guarantee a long life. The young Lab’s activity level and attention needs are much more intense than the older mature lab you may have owned. Therefore, please consider a lab at age 5 or 6 or older. A five year old lab is much more focused and over the “very active” stage and approaching their very best companionship years. They still have more than enough energy for the average family and they usually adjust to their new family quite readily. We rarely get puppies under six months of age.

**Temperament:** All labs are evaluated for temperament, as this is the major consideration in our matching process. We do not accept any dog with a history of biting or aggression, as this is “atypical” of the lab temperament. Individual personalities can range from headstrong and stubborn to more submissive. We encourage our applicants to make temperament their top priority, especially in a family with young children; and NOT color or sex. If you limit your search to a certain Lab i.e. a 1 year old, yellow female, English type, obedience trained, good with cats etc. your wait will be very long. Male labs are just as caring and affectionate as females, some even say more so. Traditionally, more males than females come into our program.

**Children:** Families with children under the age of 8 must have a fenced yard. (See Fencing Guidelines) The new lab and small children must NOT be allowed to interact unsupervised. Families with children 5 years and younger need to consider if they are ready for another responsibility. If your family has many commitments to a job, sports, school; there is probably very little time left over to include exercise and care for a Lab. Let’s be realistic about getting a dog for the family. Usually Mom is the main caretaker and if she is not ready for this time and energy commitment, it’s doomed from the start. Therefore, adopting a lab needs to be a decision and commitment for the whole family. Our goal is to place rescue labs in permanent homes, this is not a “let’s try and see” situation.

### **SECTION 3. Fencing Guidelines**

Unfortunately, experience has been the best teacher and it has taught us that the safest environment for a rescue lab includes a fenced yard or area. Generally speaking, “second chance” labs need limitations because they do not have the benefit of having bonded with their new owners since puppyhood. We feel very strongly that dogs allowed to wander unsupervised are dogs that are unloved because they are at risk of getting lost, stolen, injured, poisoned, attacked by another animal or hit by a car. We do place a few dogs in homes without fencing. However, these are primarily

adult homes who have an excellent record with training previous dogs. We will no longer place rescue labs in a home with children under the age of 8 unless there is a fenced area adequate to hold a lab in place on the property. Appropriate senior labs(8 or older) who require less vigorous exercise *may* be placed in unfenced homes.

The fenced enclosure is intended to guarantee a safe environment for not only the lab but for children to play and interact with their dog, free from outside interferences from other dogs or animals, as well as keeping both away from car traffic. The fenced area is not intended for the dog to live outside. Labs are highly social, people-oriented dogs and need to be with you to be happy.

A satisfactory fenced area may be built of stockade, chain link, or split rail fencing with heavy gauge wire. The enclosure should be 5 ft minimum (6ft preferred) and include a lockable gate. Equal attention should be given to the security of the fence along its' bottom edge in order to prevent dogs from digging out.

The location of the fenced area should also be taken into consideration. It should be installed so it is directly accessible from the house. This will ensure an increased measure of safety for your dog and prove a convenience for you, especially in the winter. The fenced area must be large enough to provide the dog with a comfortable space in which to be played with, get some exercise and fresh air and eliminate. Shade, shelter and water should also be provided.

Invisible fence systems and portable pens are accepted on a case-by-case basis. The yard should not border a highly trafficked roadway and the applicant should have previous experience with the system or be able to demonstrate a knowledge of the system, the training process and the system's limitations.

The use of tie-outs or overhead runners is not safe or allowed for a rescue lab. Dogs on tie-outs may become tangled or choke and are not able to adequately defend themselves from other dogs or animals that may enter the yard.

We regret that our fencing policy may eliminate some homes, but our first priority must be for the safety of the labs that are in our care. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

#### Section 4. ADOPTION FACTS

Our adoption program has been successfully placing Rescue Labs in new homes for 15 years. Here is some information:

1. We rarely have puppies.
2. Rescue Labs range in age from 1-12yrs. old; the predominant ages being 2-5yrs. Rescue labs come in all three colors; black, yellow and chocolate. Black being the most dominant color and chocolate being the least.
3. All rescue labs are spayed/neutered prior to adoption.
4. All rescue labs have been updated on all vaccines, including 4DX test(HW,lymes,erlychiosis). (You will receive copies of your labs medical history at the time of adoption.)
5. A \$350.00 adoption fee is required for rescue labs 9 yrs or younger. Puppy(<9 mths.)adoptions are \$375.00. For the adoption of Senior labs or those labs w/ disabilities or medical issues, our adoption fee may be reduced or waived. We are nonprofit, therefore, all donations go towards our veterinary expenses, boarding/feeding costs and in some cases behavioral/obedience training.
6. A fenced area is required for most rescue labs.
7. We cannot predict how long it will take to adopt a lab. Matching the rescue lab's background and needs with that of a family's is our most important job.

Occasionally, no matter how carefully we match a dog and family, we are asked to take the lab back. If the placement is not working out, we *must* take the lab back, according to our written contract.

*Additionally, LRRCT reserves the right to take back any rescue lab that is neglected, improperly cared for, or is allowed to run free, unsupervised.*

8. When called to come visit a rescue lab we have selected for your family, we want you to understand that you will usually only be interacting with the chosen lab and we need a “yes” or “no” within 24 hrs. of your appointment.
9. After adopting your rescue lab, LRRCT is available to assist you with training or any problems/concerns and of course “happy endings”.

#### Section 5. THE RESCUE LABS PERSPECTIVE.

##### WHERE AM I?.....AND WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

Imagine being airdropped, alone, into a strange country where nothing is familiar; you do not know anyone, the rules of acceptable behavior have changed and you cannot speak the language. It would be confusing, if not downright scary and you would be bound to offend a few people before you got the hang of things. This is probably how your new rescue lab is going to feel, although he may not show his confusion. As far as he knows, you are just another part of the parade of people who have passed through his life lately and your home is just another stopover.

The lab you are adopting has been through a difficult journey that started when his family gave him up or he became lost. He may have been under stress or neglected in his past life or frightened by being homeless. His first stop was at a shelter, town pound, or concerned stranger’s home.....then, we were contacted and saw him. Next, he was temperament tested, medically updated, and neutered/spayed. Then entry into our foster program, either in a home foster or a kennel. Although, it is designed to be a low stress stay, it is still a confusing situation for most dogs and produces some anxiety.

In the process of transforming your dog’s confusion into security, it is important to look at things from *his perspective*. Labs are eager to please their owners once they understand the rules. It is your job to communicate clear rules in a way your dog can understand. Be sensitive to the fact that in your dog’s previous home he may have been encouraged to sit on the sofa, beg for food, jump up for attention or play roughly. If it is not permissible, *teach him, do not blame him*. Be kind and patient, dogs need repetition and consistency to learn. Instruct him using *positive reinforcement* so that he does not feel defensive or confused. Reward him for good behavior with treats, hugs and a happy voice. Corrections for inappropriate behavior should be used *sparingly*. *Labs can be sensitive and often a calm but firm verbal reprimand is enough*.

We strongly suggest taking an obedience class, even if your Lab comes trained. You will find it a fun and rewarding way to bond with your new family member and no dog is ever too old to learn. Obedience classes are a great environment for dogs that need to improve social skills with people and dogs. Classes are also a resource of information and support for you and your dog during this adjustment phase

As your lab settles and starts to learn the rules in his new home, he will get more comfortable. The transition time for each dog is different, taking from a few weeks to a few months for him to completely settle in and adjust to his new life. Like people, dogs deal with change and stress in many different ways. Some dogs will be overly active, other dogs will be a bit depressed by the loss of family and surroundings, some are needy and clingy, still others might be a bit defensive and worried and then there are those dogs that take it in their stride. No matter what your dog’s reaction,

remember to go slowly, start teaching the new rules from day one and be respectful of the difficulty of being airdropped into a different world.

It will take time for your new lab to bond with you. Offer love and guidance but never force yourself on your new dog. *Children must be closely supervised when with your new dog and excessive contact should be limited during this time.* Keeping the environment quiet for the first few days will be important. Allow your dog to get comfortable with your home and new rules before he meets your friends, family and the neighborhood. Your rescue lab may drink excessive amounts of water his first week, this is due to stress. He may make a mistake, therefore, try to be aware of the water intake and take him out more often. Be consistent on what door he goes out in order to relieve himself so he can begin to let you know when he needs to go out.

Be realistic about your expectations during the transition period. Never assume that your dog can cope with all the new situations in his life without a problem or two. Set up precautionary measures when he is alone in the house, when he first meets new children, when around unfamiliar dogs and get him outside more often to help him to adjust to a new toileting schedule.

Be extremely careful when taking your dog “out and about” for the first few months. Do not assume that he will come to you when called or he will automatically stay with you on a walk. Use a martingale collar or well fitted non slip collar when out walking so he can’t slip out of his collar if panicked. Most importantly, *do not allow him off leash* in an unfenced area and NOT until you are sure he will come when called even when distracted. Ideally, this would only occur after much recall work with your lab and after many months of practice. Food rewards combined with praise work well for positive training practices. Letting your dog off lead before he is ready could teach him bad habits or worse case scenario end in a horrible tragedy.

Now that you had had the opportunity to consider this new relationship from the rescue lab’s perspective, we know you will do your best to make this strange new land into a safe and happy home. Be positive, be consistent, work out a daily routine and use lots of praise and positive reinforcement. Most of all enjoy your newfound best buddy. *Your time will be well rewarded with a devoted lifelong companion and a life filled with unconditional love.*