

Home Visit Guidelines and Considerations

NorCal GSP Rescue

Applicant name:

Date:

Volunteer name:

Home visits should be scheduled during daylight hours so that you can properly inspect the fencing, see the neighborhood, and of course for your own safety.

Neighborhood

Get an overview of the applicant's neighborhood.

Question: Does the neighborhood seem safe and welcoming for a dog?

Red flags: Are they on a busy street? Are there dogs running loose?

Applicant And Family

Talk with the family about whether they are prepared for life with a GSP.

Question: Does the applicant seem to have a realistic idea of what life with a GSP will be like?

Question: How does the family plan to address any special needs of the dog?

Red flags: Do you sense any tension between family members? Does it seem as if everyone will pitch in to make it work?

Resident Pets

Ask to meet any pets in the home.

Question: Do current pets appear healthy and well cared for? (Note grooming, weight, if nails are trimmed, training, whether they are wearing ID tags etc.)

Question: How do current pets interact with each other and with family members? Do they seem well-socialized?

Question: If you've brought your own dog(s) along for the visit, how do the resident pets react?

Question: If there are other pets in the home (cats, birds, hamsters, reptiles, etc), does the family have a plan to keep them safe from a GSP who might view them as “prey”?

Interior Of Home

Check out the inside of the home. Look for signs that it's GSP-proof and has that "lived in" look that comes from having a dog in the home.

Watch for and point out:

- items that a GSP could easily destroy or break
- objects, plants or chemicals, including outdoor chemicals and fertilizers, that could cause harm to a dog if they are accessible
- accessible, open wastebaskets

Question: Does the family seem willing to make changes as needed to ensure the safety of both the dog and valuable household items?

Question: Where will the GSP stay when the family is away during the day and does that area appear comfortable and safe? If outside, is it protected from the elements with plenty of shade? Is there fresh water accessible?

Check all exterior doors for security. Make sure all latches work properly and that the family members are prepared to handle a dog that may try to bolt out an open door.

Question: Where will the GSP sleep? Is the area free of drafts? Does the bedding appear clean and warm?

Find out what other areas of the house the dog will have access to, ie basement, garage, or other storage areas. Make sure these areas are not unsafe for a dog.

Red flags: The family tells you the dog will be *required* to sleep in the garage, basement, or outside.

Yard And Fence

Examine the fence and yard carefully, keeping in mind security and safety. Walk the perimeter of the yard, pushing on the fencing and gates to test. Point out any issues to the family. We can't stress enough how important this is. GSPs are fast and clever!

Question: Is every part of the fence in good condition? Are there any gaps, loose boards, holes, or places where a dog could dig out of the yard?

Question: What height is the fence? What material is it made of? Barbed wire, electrified fencing, and/or invisible fencing is not appropriate for our dogs. Please let us know if the yard has any of these. Unsure? Take photos and send them to us.

Question: Are the gates secure? Can the gates be locked (against children and thieves)? If the dog jumps against the gate, would it be possible for the dog to hit the latch and cause the gate to open? Note any special circumstances such as electric gates.

Question: Does someone have to enter the yard on a regular basis, such as a gardener or a meter-reader? Does the family have a plan for containing their dog?

Question: What is the condition of the yard? Does it appear reasonably clean and well-kept? Is there adequate shade, shelter, and water?

Keep an eye out for these red flags in the yard:

- anything that has been stacked near the fence that a GSP could climb on to get out. Point it out to the family
- any signs that dogs have been tied out on a chain or otherwise neglected for long periods of time in the yard
- poisonous plants
- flower beds or other landscaping that the dog might destroy
- animals in adjacent yards that are not adequately contained
- livestock that the dog would have access to
- children in neighboring yards that will harass a dog
- balconies or decks that a dog could leap off of and get hurt
- drowning hazards, such as a pool, hot tub, fish pond, etc.

Question: Did you notice any red flags or issues in the yard that would make the area unsafe?

Question: Is there a pool or water feature? Is it separately fenced or covered?

Question: Is there a doggie door? Will the GSP have unsupervised access to the yard while there are no people home?

Question: Do all family members understand that a GSP should not be off-leash in an unfenced area unless fully trained (ie solid 100% recall)?

Conclusions

Question: Do you feel that this applicant can providing a loving home and responsible care for a rescue GSP?

Question: Are there any special needs, unusual circumstances or concerns that we should consider when placing a GSP in this home?

Question: Did you notice anything “odd,” inconsistent, or not adequately explained? Was the applicant evasive?

Question: Would you entrust the care of your own dog to this family?

Question: Please indicate any recommendations you made to the family: fence repairs, items that need to be moved, etc - so we can follow up.

FOR FOSTER APPLICANTS

Question: Does anyone seems skeptical or concerned about fostering?

Question: Is the fencing and yard secure for a variety of sizes and “personalities” of dogs? Because we do not know which foster dog(s) will be placed there, are there any issues for dogs that are: energetic, jumpers, diggers, chewers, small/young/thin, barkers?

Question: Do all family members understand that a foster GSP should not be off-leash in an unfenced area?

FOR ADOPTION APPLICANTS

Question: Does anyone seem skeptical or concerned about adopting? Do they understand this is a lifetime commitment?

Question: Is the fencing and yard secure and appropriate for the particular dog the family wishes to adopt?

Question: Do all family members understand that a GSP should not be off-leash in an unfenced area unless fully trained (ie solid 100% recall)?

Question: Does this adoption “feel” right?

PUPPY ADDENDUM (FOSTER OR ADOPTION) Puppy = 6 mos old or less

The home visit for a puppy follows the same guidelines as the regular home visit, keeping in mind that the dog being placed may be as small as 10 pounds. Once that has been completed, move on to the puppy proofing that is the main part of the puppy home visit. Here are things to look for:

- any gaps anywhere in the fence that a small dog could get through
- wrought iron or any type of slat fencing with gaps between them (a huge no-no for puppies)
- pool (is being asked during screening process so no one should have one) - not an option for puppies
- lots of small decorative rocks outside (need to be blocked off from puppy)
- bark chips will be chewed - make sure it's not cocoa mulch which is toxic
- poisonous plants outside or inside
- any sharp objects, particularly outside
- any cleaning supplies or chemicals anywhere within reach
- rugs with tassels on them - very attractive to puppies
- electrical cords will be chewed on; need to be hidden or door shut to room
- all wooden objects are chewable - just point them out
- breakables or valuables within the puppy's reach
- litter boxes within reach
- cords from curtains or blinds
- things puppies like to chew on should be moved: books, magazines, newspapers, any wooden or leather objects, shoes, children's toys of all kinds, tissues, tv remotes, throw pillows

Question: Please indicate any specific puppy-related recommendations you made to the family for items that could not be taken care of during the visit itself.

Thank you for helping make sure each GSP has a safe and secure home!