



AAR AND WHAT WE DO

AAR is a small registered charity (10567 Spain) based in the Axarquía area of Spain. We are a group of unpaid volunteers dedicated to the rescuing and rehoming of abused and abandoned animals in this area. We have a small shelter for emergencies but rely mainly on our fantastic network of foster families to care for the animals and give us the time we need to rehome them. We depend on donations and fundraising to enable us to continue our work. With a current case load of 100 animals on our books, our monthly vet bills are usually in the region of €4,000+.

We have a Committee of 7 who run the Charity, a Chairperson, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary and Committee Members. Under the Committee are 2 main groups - the AAR Charity shop team and the Rehoming team. The Committee also organises events, fundraising and special projects.

Our caseworkers are one of the most valuable assets we have. We currently have around 100 active cases, split between several caseworkers with more new cases coming onto our books daily. We also have a small team of 'first responders' who pick up general enquiries and initial contacts to free up the caseworkers time.

The Role of the Caseworker

From the time we take an animal onto our books until the time it arrives in its new forever home, the caseworker is the manager of that case. For example, say a litter of puppies are found in the bins (sadly a very typical scenario) a caseworker would be allocated and they would be the one to liaise with the finder, arrange for the litter to be checked by the vet and then find a foster home. Once the pups are safe the caseworker then needs to get the fosterers to send good photos and information on each puppy and then their 'story' needs to be written so that they can be advertised for rehoming. In the meantime, arrangements need to be made for vaccination dates or any other tests that may be required. When there is interest in a puppy it is important to get to know the potential adopter a bit more (all done online), find out about them and if they seem suitable and a good match, then a home check needs to be arranged. Once the home check is completed and OK, the caseworker will work with the travel manager to get transport arrangements in place. Regular contact with the new 'parents' is essential and they need to be sent information and photos of their new babies. Sometimes lifts to the airport need to be arranged for those flying to Holland or Germany. Once a puppy has arrived in its new home, the caseworker needs to check that all is going well. Most caseworkers keep in touch with their new parents and often become friends and a whole load of other things in between too!

Liaising with fosterers is a very important part of the role. Our fosterers are invaluable and we would not be able to operate without them. Therefore we need to make sure that we keep them happy and fully informed at all times. The caseworker needs to introduce themselves to their fosterer and if they are on Facebook, add them to the foster group. They need to

be kept in touch with regularly. They should be invited to the monthly coffee meeting at Trapiche Market on the first Tuesday of the month. The caseworker should make sure that the fosterer has an ID tag and a coat for the dog they are responsible for, if the dog isn't already reserved. There could also be other equipment required as well. The fosterer must also be kept informed of any interest in their dog and especially as soon as the dog is reserved. The fosterer should be actively encouraged to post their own dog on FB and to take an active part in the homing process. When adding a new foster carer, their names and preferences should be added to the database (DB). It is very important to take notice of preferences when allocating a dog to a fosterer. Persuading them to take more dogs or a different type or sex than they have asked for often ends in failure. We need to make sure that our foster carers have only positive experiences so that they will continue to foster for us.

It probably sounds very daunting but there is an experienced team on board too. To start with all new caseworkers are given one or two cases. Depending on how much time is available, the cases will be worked through with an experienced caseworker. There is loads of information, contacts and resources in place that make the job a lot easier - for example there are lists of FB sites where we advertise (and a note of where we don't advertise!), we have lists of foster carers and groups of volunteers who are happy to do airport or vet runs etc. We also have our adoption and advertising processes documented. Any time help is needed there is always someone available.

The majority of casework is done online - mostly FB but also email. There are a few caseworkers working from the UK who are doing a great job. If International calls are required, one of the team will do it.

A caseworker requires the following skills:-

- passion and dedication to helping animals
- ability to be online at least daily (obviously there are times when this is not possible but as long as the team know there's no problem)
- organised and able to plan
- good communicator
- ability to keep calm
- patience and a good sense of humour!

We have a new database (DB) which contains our active cases, information on volunteers. Photos are also stored on here.

It is impossible to say how many hours are required. The existing team all put in different amounts of time depending on their work commitments and take on cases reflecting that - after all this is voluntary!

There is a secret, dedicated FB site for the Rehoming team, it is totally private and is used as our main communication tool. Most people are on there at some point during the day, if not often for a few hours!

Caseworkers are privileged to confidential information about the group, therefore all new caseworkers will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement.

There is nothing more wonderful than that time when you get a photo of your first case happy in their new home - it is a brilliant feeling! Some of us still get valentines and Christmas cards from some of the animals they have rehomed years before - very clever dogs!