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# **Southern States Mastiff Rescue**

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## **STANDARD OPERATING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

**Adopted 3/15/05**

**[Revised 6/9/05](#)**

**[Revised 7/29/09](#)**

**[Revised 9/30/09](#)**



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## DEFINITIONS:

<b>Term/Acronym</b>	<b>Definition</b>
AKC	American Kennel Club
Altered	Spayed or Neutered
Breed	Old English Mastiff Breed of Canine
Breeder	Person or Persons Who Whelped the Mastiff
Dog	Denotes Mastiff of Either Sex
Field Organization	Refers Specifically to Those Volunteers Having Direct Animal Contact Within the Eight States Managed by SSMR
Intact	Not Spayed or Neutered
Mastiff	Old English Mastiff
Rescue	Southern States Mastiff Fanciers Charitable Trust (SSMFCT) Doing Business as Southern States Mastiff Rescue
SC	State Coordinator for SSMR
Trustee	Trustee of SSMR
USPS	United States Postal Service
Volunteer(s)	Unpaid Volunteer(s) of SSMR



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## **STANDARD OPERATING POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

### **PURPOSE**

The Southern States Mastiff Rescue (SSMR) exists to prevent cruelty to Mastiffs and to place cruelty cases, stray or abandoned Mastiffs in adoptive homes which will provide a high level of care. We may also assist Mastiff owners who can no longer provide a home for their dog.

### **GENERAL - EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION**

Rescue operates as a "closed" adoption system. Adopting and releasing families shall not have access to the other party. All information to and from the releasing or adopting party regarding a Mastiff accepted into the Rescue program must be directed through a State Coordinator (SC).

Information will flow along two lines from the field operation. One will be directed toward the animal tracking system and one directed toward the accounting system. Each system interacts with the other. Please refer to the SC and Volunteer handbooks for detailed instructions on information stream directives. Where this document differs from the handbooks in information stream, the handbook that is current has precedence. Official documents are listed though not reproduced in the Statement of Policies and Procedures.

### **ACCEPTANCE OF DOGS**

1. In all matters of Rescue, the welfare of the breed will be the prime consideration. If a conflict exists between the welfare of an individual animal and the welfare of the breed, the welfare of the breed will take precedence.
2. Rescue will not purchase dogs from private parties or organizations. An individual or group of individuals may make a private purchase of a dog and turn it over to Rescue, but no reimbursement will be made to those individuals.
3. No Volunteer(s) will accept monetary compensation for the placement of a Mastiff officially in Rescue for his/her own personal gain.
4. When notified of a Mastiff in need, the SC will be notified. The SC will have the dog evaluated to determine the breed, temperament, health and potential adoptability of the dog. Only Mastiffs with stable temperaments and those in reasonable health will be accepted into the program. Only Mastiffs with registration papers or those who appear to be purebred Mastiffs by visual inspection will be accepted into Rescue.
5. No animal will be accepted into rescue that has any bite history, demonstrates aggressive behavior toward humans or other animals.
6. If the dog is in a private home, the required Owner Release Form will be completed and signed by a representative of the home when the dog is physically released to the



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Volunteer(s). Whenever possible, the dog will remain with the family until a suitable adoptive home is found. If the Volunteer(s) determines that it is not feasible for the dog to remain in his/her home, the dog will be placed in a foster home.

7. The paperwork issued by shelters for adoption will act as a Release. If there is no paperwork generated by the shelter, then a shelter representative must sign a General Release Form. **No dog will be accepted into Rescue without a signed Release.**
8. Dogs released from third party organizations (e.g. other rescue organizations and kennels) must have an official release form signed by a representative of the third party or organization and in extenuating circumstances it will function in place of the SSMR General Release Form. Such circumstances shall be noted by the SC and included in the dog's permanent file.
9. Vaccinations, as required by local/state statutes, will also be given to the dog if they are due. Further health testing will be done on an individual basis upon consultation with the SC and the Trustees. If the dog is intact, he/she will be surgically altered as soon as possible and placed in foster care until a permanent home is found.
10. All registration papers, tattoo/microchip registration, vaccination records, rabies tag and/or certificate and veterinary records will become the property of SSMR. If any of these items is not physically available at the time of release, the SC will investigate and gather as much of the information as possible from outside sources and include such data in the dog's permanent file.

## NOTIFICATION OF BREEDER

1. In all cases, except when it is deemed inappropriate by SC and/or Volunteer(s), the breeder of record will be notified and given the opportunity of either having the dog returned to them at their expense or releasing the dog into Rescue. If the dog is released to Rescue, the breeder will be asked to reimburse Rescue for all of the dog's medical expenses.
2. Notification to the breeder will be documented by the person notifying the breeder. The date, time of call or e-mail, documentation of who made the contact and the nature of the response to notification will be sent to the SC and be included in the dog's permanent file.

## EVALUATION OF ADOPTIVE HOMES

1. Families who wish to adopt a Mastiff through Rescue will be screened in a two step process using the Family Profile for Family Adopting Mastiff (Family Profile) form and a home visit.
2. All families who adopt a dog must have a Family Profile completed and on file. A Volunteer(s) will visit the home of the family to meet the people and animals that reside in the home. Adopting families will have a personal visit completed prior to signing the Placement Contract. Exception will only be made when the family is located in a remote



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location. In these cases, extensive telephone interviews must be done with the family, the Veterinarian reference and the personal references.

3. The results of the home visit, extensive interview, personal and veterinary references will be documented by the Volunteer(s) and submitted. Should the Volunteer(s) performing the home visit and reference checks have any reservations about the suitability of the family and/or the family home, the application may be denied.
4. Families will be matched as closely as possible with the dog(s) available. All reasonable attempts will be made to place the dogs with families in the same region. Families that wish to adopt a dog located in another region may do so. Trans-regional transportation of the dog to the adoptive family will be at the adoptive family's expense. In the case of trans-regional adoptions, all contents of the dog's permanent file shall be sent to the receiving SC prior to the relocation of the dog. Once the dog arrives in the new region, the respective SC shall be responsible for the supervision of the dog's placement and all paperwork that is subsequently generated.
5. All approved adoptive homes must fulfill the following requirements:
  - a. Must own his or her own home or have written permission from the landlord to have a Mastiff on the property.
  - b. Must have a fenced area for the dog. This requirement may be waived at the discretion of the SC. This waiver must be documented and placed in the dog's permanent file.
  - c. Families must be willing to make the Mastiff part of their family and give him/her access to the house.
  - d. Families must abide by state/local ordinances regarding vaccinations and licensure.

## **FOSTER CARE**

1. All families who desire to be foster homes must submit to evaluation. Foster families are required to provide outstanding temporary care for the Mastiff in their charge. The SC will keep in close contact with the foster family in order to provide and exchange information on the dog. All volunteers are encouraged to donate food, shelter, toys, bedding and food supplements wherever possible.
2. Foster families will allow potential adoptive families to view and interact with the Mastiff at the request of the SC. This will be done at a time convenient to the foster family. Foster families are to report to the SC any impressions and opinions they have regarding the potential adoptive family.
3. Foster families may be given primary consideration to adopt the Mastiff in their care, but must meet the same selection criteria as any other prospective adoptive family.
4. Rescue retains "ownership" of the dog in foster care. If the situation warrants it, a Volunteer(s) upon direction of the SC may reclaim the dog in foster care.



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5. No dog in foster can be released to any family or individual without the express consent of the SC.
6. If a dog has been in Rescue for more than three (3) months and has not been adopted, the dog must be re-evaluated by all those that have had contact or responsibility for that dog. Those individuals must examine the means they have used to place the dog and evaluate if every possible effort has been made to find a suitable home. Rescue recognizes that not every dog can be placed in the three (3) month time period and may remain in extended foster care until a suitable home is found.
7. If it is determined that the dog is not suitable for adoption, the SC in consultation with those involved with the dog, will determine if the dog should be euthanized or returned to its original owner. If the dog is returned to the original owner, written permission of the SC must be obtained and a Placement Contract must be signed. The original owner should reimburse any medical expenses incurred while the dog was in Rescue at the time the dog is returned to him/her. Any donation that the owner made when the dog was released to Rescue will be used to offset medical expenses incurred while the dog was in Rescue. The written permission document and the Placement Contract will be included in the dog's permanent file.

## **PLACEMENT OF MASTIFFS INTO ADOPTIVE HOMES**

1. Mastiffs in Rescue will be spayed/neutered prior to adoption. Exceptions may be made only if undertaking the surgery would compromise the dog's health. Notation of this will be included in the dog's permanent file. If the alteration will be done at a later date, that date will be determined through consultation with the veterinarian who is treating the dog. Said date will be indicated on the Placement Contract. Written certification of the alteration by the veterinarian who performed the surgery must be received by the SC no later than two (2) weeks after the spay/neuter date indicated on the Placement Contract. A Volunteer(s) may reclaim dogs that are not surgically altered by the deadline written in the Placement Contract.
2. All dogs adopted must have an Adoption Contract signed and an adoption fee (unless waived) received prior to placement in the new home. Adoption fees must be made in U.S. funds, cashier's check, money order, or PayPal drawn from a U.S. bank. All cashier's checks or money orders for adoption fees must be made payable to SSMR or to SSMFCT. Cash should not be accepted by a volunteer unless unavoidable and should be immediately issued to SSMR as a money order, cashier's check or personal check drawn on the volunteers account and mailed to the Treasurer. Adoption fees will be made in full unless the SC in consultation with the Trustees has authorized other arrangements. If the placement should fail, the dog will be returned to Rescue and another more suitable dog placed in the home. Reason for failure will be included in the returned dog's permanent file.



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3. Upon execution of an adoption contract and the receipt of the adoption fee (unless waived) all interest in the animal and ownership of the animal resides solely with the adopting family. SSMR has no further interest in nor ownership of any adopted animal.
4. Foster families who subsequently adopt the dog in their care may submit reimbursable expenses they have incurred to the SC for approval and forwarding to the Treasurer. A full fee will be collected at the time of adoption and expenses will be reimbursed separately from that fee.
5. Dogs in Rescue will be adopted to individuals or families only. Dogs may only be placed in institutions, businesses or agencies if an employee thereof adopts the dog and accepts responsibility for the care of the dog.

## **FOLLOW-UP CARE**

A Volunteer(s) will monitor the dog's adjustment into his/her new home as frequently as deemed necessary by the SC and/or volunteer placing the dog. Each follow up will be documented and placed in the dog's permanent file. This may be done by telephone, e-mail and/or visits.

## **ADOPTION FEES/FEES/EXPENSES**

1. The Rescue Fund will bear a net liability of no more than \$300.00 for the care of an individual dog. With prior approval of two or more, the Trustee(s) may extend that limit on an individual case basis. If liability increases occur the SC and/or Trustee(s) will follow the specific protocols for exceptions in accounting practices as detailed in the SC Handbook. This does not prevent the acceptance of outside funding sources for the further care of a particular dog, nor does it prevent the Volunteer(s) and/or Foster families from caring for the dog at his/her/their personal expense.
2. Adoption fees will not exceed \$350.00. Under certain circumstances, the fee may be waived in whole or part upon consultation with and the approval of the SC and Trustee(s). If adoption fees are waived in whole or in part the SC and/or Trustee will follow the specific protocols for exceptions in accounting practices as detailed in the SC Handbook.

## **EXAMPLES OF EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCES**

- a. Advanced age of the dog.
- b. Health condition(s) requiring ongoing veterinary care and/or expenses.
3. The SC will include a written explanation of the reduction of the adoption fee in the dog's permanent file. The Trustees, on an individual basis, will consider other potential waiver circumstances.



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4. Families who release dogs to Rescue will be asked to make a monetary donation toward the care of the dog. This amount will be noted on the Owner Release Form. If asking for the donation will jeopardize the release of the dog into Rescue, then the Volunteer(s) will note their request for donation and reason family did not make a donation.

## **REIMBURSABLE EXPENSES**

Every effort will be made to contain costs. No more than \$300.00 will be spent on a dog accepted into Rescue unless approved by the SC and two Trustees. If liability increases occur the SC and Trustees will follow the specific protocols for exceptions in accounting practices as detailed in the SC Handbook. All receipts for expenses approved by the SC must be received by the Treasurer within ninety (90) days of incurring the expense or on the date the adoption is complete whichever occurs first. **NOTE: SC's and/or volunteers are strongly discouraged from paying any veterinary or boarding charges from their personal funds.**

The following are allowable reimbursable expenses:

### **VETERINARY CARE**

The Volunteer(s) should investigate which veterinarians in their area will provide discounted care to dogs in Rescue. Emergency care must be dealt with on an individual basis, (see Euthanasia Form). Common sense must be exercised when dealing with life threatening emergencies. If there is a question about how to proceed, the Volunteer(s) should contact the SC or one of the Trustees for instructions and that decision should be recorded in writing and included in the dog's permanent file.

### **PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS**

Every effort must be made to obtain prescription items at reasonable costs, including using veterinary supply catalogs and/or internet sites. If supplied by a veterinarian, the Volunteer(s) should attempt to obtain a Rescue discount.

### **ADVERTISING**

If needed, print advertisements for general information regarding Rescue may be placed in local newspapers. The SC or volunteer(s) Investigate if the publication will discount or waive the advertising fee.

### **TRANSPORTATION/TRAVEL**

Expenses incurred in connection with the over-the-road transportation of dog(s) accepted in the program will be in accordance with the \$0.21/mile.



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## **TELEPHONE CALLS**

All phone bills submitted for reimbursement must specifically note the following: Person called, Reason for call, and if it concerns a particular dog, that dog's SSMR ID number. Where possible most communication should be via fax or e-mail correspondence. It will be necessary to make some telephone calls. Volunteers should take advantage of evening and weekend rates unless extreme urgency is required.

## **POUND/SHELTER FEES**

Whenever possible, Rescue should request that the pound/shelter fees be waived. Many shelters do this.

## **BOARDING**

Every effort must be made for dogs to be fostered in private homes. Boarding facilities may be used if prior Trustee approval in advance is given for \$25.00 or less per day, up to two weeks. The maximum boarding fee will not exceed \$350.00. Like veterinary care, the Volunteer(s) should try to get a Rescue discount on boarding fees.

## **CARE FOR MASTIFFS ACCEPTED BY OTHER RECOGNIZED RESCUE ORGANIZATION**

Any Mastiff entering the SSMR rescue will be subject to the same accounting protocols as a dog entering through SSMR volunteers. Original detailed receipts from the other recognized organization of the dog's care/expenses will be submitted to the SC for approval and adhere to the accounting protocols as described in the SC Handbook. The Mastiff in question must be officially released to Rescue in order for reimbursement to occur. Written explanation of the dog's history with the other rescue organization will be placed in the dog's permanent file. In the case of a Volunteer(s) from another recognized rescue group initially accepting the dog, that Volunteer(s) would be reimbursed, as would any SSMR Rescue Volunteer(s).

All volunteers and foster families are encouraged to donate food, shelter, toys, bedding and food supplements.

No reimbursements for expenses will be made until a Release has been approved by the SC and received as described in the SC and Volunteer Handbooks.

## **EUTHANASIA FOR HEALTH/BEHAVIORAL CONDITIONS**

1. Rescue will not accept Mastiffs into the system solely for the purpose of euthanasia.
2. Dogs with serious behavioral conditions that might endanger a potential adopting family will also be considered for euthanasia. Before euthanasia is undertaken, objective detailed documentation of the dog's questionable behavior(s) must be made by the Volunteer(s). Furthermore, the Volunteer(s) recommending euthanasia must document what action has



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been taken to remedy the behavior problem(s). The SC and Trustees should review all written reports before authorizing euthanization.

3. Dogs that require extensive behavior modification shall not be part of Rescue.
4. Health Conditions- Please refer to Euthanasia (color) Form and the SC and Volunteer Handbooks for detailed health condition instructions.

## **HEALTH GUARANTEES**

Rescue does not guarantee the health of the dogs in its program. Rescue shall disclose to adopting families all known and documented health problems. The adopting family takes full responsibility for the health care and expenses thereof once the Mastiff is adopted.

## **ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES**

A SSMFCT doing business as SSMR account will be established using a designated address. Authorized signatures on this account will include all Trustees and the Treasurer. Any single disbursement above \$500.00 requires the signature of the Treasurer and one Trustee (2 signatures).

The Treasurer will set up the accounting protocols for SSMR using standard accounting software as determined and agreed upon by the Treasurer and Trustees. The Treasurer will maintain all accounting records. Those records may be transferred to the Trustee from the SC via electronic, fax or regular mail.

The Treasurer will receive invoices, donations, checks and other information as directed by the SC Handbook. The Treasurer will deposit monies and prepare checks.

The Treasurer is granted explicit authority from the Trustees to prepare disbursement checks for expenses that are granted by the most recent Statement of Policies and Procedures. Expenses exceeding those policies shall follow the detailed accounting protocol within the SC Handbook.

On a weekly basis or as needed, the Treasurer will prepare checks.

The Treasurer will sign checks and mail them directly to the payee if the amount less than \$500.00. If the amount is greater than \$500.00 the Treasurer will forward to a Trustee for the second signature and attach copies of all documentation pertinent to that check.

The Treasurer will prepare bank reconciliations on a quarterly basis and forward to a designated Trustee for review. The Treasurer will prepare the financial reports for the Trustees, and any other party (such as grant organizations) as necessary.



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The Treasurer and a designated Trustee will be responsible for all financial reporting, distribution and filing of informational returns, either personally or through an agent authorized by the Trustees.

Form 990 filing is only required for entities that have greater than \$25,000 in gross receipts annually and will be prepared if applicable. The Treasurer and Trustees on an annual basis will agree on the best and most economical method of filing form 990. Large donations as defined by the IRS will be included on form 990.

Any donation equal to or greater than \$250.00 will be acknowledged in writing by the Treasurer and sent to the donor as per IRS guidelines.

Donations will be tracked by the Treasurer and acknowledgement letters generated as deemed appropriate.

Unrestricted grants/ donations are preferred to restricted grants/ donations.

## **OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS**

As provided above, Rescue will use documents for each stage of a Mastiff's care. Specific instructions regarding the proper filing of these documents and how they will be managed is contained in the most current SC and Volunteer Handbooks. These documents include the following:

### **FAMILY PROFILE OF FAMILY ADOPTING MASTIFF**

This document will be completed by families who wish to adopt a dog through Rescue. A designated Volunteer(s) will complete a home visit on the family to determine if they are suitable to adopt. Family Profiles will be distributed to the appropriate SC.

### **PROFILE OF MASTIFF FOR ADOPTION**

This document may be completed when a dog has been evaluated as suitable for acceptance into the rescue system. **This form is not required.**

### **OWNER RELEASE CONTRACT**

This document is to be completed by the owner releasing the Mastiff to Rescue and the volunteer accepting the animal. It is not to be completed until the dog is physically turned over to Rescue.

### **GENERAL RELEASE CONTRACT**

This document is to be completed by anyone other than the owner who is releasing the Mastiff to Rescue. It is not to be completed until the dog is physically turned over to Rescue.



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## **EUTHANASIA FORM**

This document is to be completed when an animal must be euthanized for any of the reasons listed in this document or on the form.

## **FOSTER CARE AGREEMENT**

This document will be completed by a Volunteer(s) and a foster family representative. This contract is for use by foster families only, not adopting families. A copy of this document will be given to the foster family as a reference.

## **ADOPTION CONTRACT**

This document will be completed by the Volunteer(s) and the adopting family. No animal may be adopted or released to anyone not an SC approved SSMR volunteer without a signed and executed Adoption Contract. A copy of the completed document must be given to the adopting family for reference purposes.