



Pointers In Need Information Sheet #6

“Home Checking Procedures”

October 2022

A huge THANK YOU for volunteering to home check for us. Without you we would not be able to place Pointers into new forever homes.

So, what is the purpose of this guide? The information in this document has been accrued from years of home checking and includes good practice from our own experiences and input from others who may have home checked from other reputable rescue groups. By providing this guidance, we hope to standardise our home check (HC) procedures, and in doing so, maintain our high reputation as a reliable, well organised, and trustworthy Pointer rescue and rehoming Charity.

Just to stress that this document is a guide, not a bible.

GENERAL INFORMATION

When offering to conduct a HC, the Rescue co-ordinator will provide you with (by email or Facebook Messenger).

1. A copy of the Pre-Adoption form, in almost all instances.
2. A blank HC report form for completion and this can be done on your device and returned to the Rescue co-ordinator.

If relevant, take the Pre-Adoption form with you so that you can refer to it. If any of the information provided during the meeting contradicts this form, **do not challenge it**, just record the difference so that it can be reviewed with the applicant later.

Always be objective and impartial. Remember that a rescue Pointer will possibly have had a traumatic start to his or her life and it is in the Pointer's best interest to go to the right home, first time.

Note that no two HCs will be the same, visits can range from trying to get blood out of a stone from prospective adopters to those you will want to tell you their life story. You just have to judge best how to handle each one – as a rough guide a 60-90min HC is probably a good benchmark and a good measure that you have done a thorough review. Ultimately the best judge of whether the home and family would be suitable is to take a "dog's eye view" of the home and garden. Then imagine you're placing your own Pointer(s) there, and would you be comfortable entrusting your dog(s) to these people and in that environment?

PREPARATION FOR CARRYING OUT A HOME CHECK VISIT:

Before attending a home check, you may wish to use Google Street map which will give you an impression of the area. Try to arrive 5-10 minutes before the scheduled time and take a look around the vicinity, consider main roads, trainlines, open fields – anything that would raise a concern if your dog lived there.

Whilst we do try and arrange Home Checkers with experience of the breed for the HC, sometimes it isn't always possible. So should you not be familiar with the Pointer breed, it is wise to do a little research about it so that you aren't going there blind. The Kennel Club provides a useful resource - <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk/services/public/breed/> or please seek advice from one of the Rescue team. Being able to answer questions such as "how long does a Pointer live", "how much exercise does a Pointer need" or "do Pointers suffer from any hereditary problems" will show to the applicant that you are prepared and well informed.

You may be asked to provide proof of who you are by the applicant before being permitted entry into their home, so it would be wise to carry some official ID such as a driver's licence. Obviously introduce yourself as a HC for Pointers In Need.

It would be sensible to go prepared and take with you :

- ✓ A phone which can capture images of the house /garden /documentation. Obviously ask permission before taking photos.
- ✓ A notepad for jotting down things you may wish to include in your comments section of the report – usually most HC forms include an area near the end for your opinion.
- ✓ Pen – take a couple in case one runs out of ink.
- ✓ A torch / head torch is useful for winter / evening visit.
- ✓ A waterproof coat / jacket in case it is raining when you check out the garden.

COMMUNICATION BEFORE THE HC TAKES PLACE

WITH THE POINTERS IN NEED RESCUE TEAM:

Read through the Pre-Adoption form before you arrange the visit, and if you have any questions contact the Rescue co-ordinator to have any issues clarified. If a link to the Pointer applied for is not available, you may want more information from the Rescue team such as breed, age, sex, if neutered, any issues or pre-existing conditions or illnesses, may be a photograph etc. so you can discuss the Pointer with the applicant.

Some home checks are not for a specific Pointer so no link will be provided in these cases. For applicants offering to provide foster homes, specific Pointer details are not generally applicable unless they have offered to foster a specific Pointer.

WITH THE APPLICANT:

When you phone to book the HC, inform the applicant who you are, and that you have been asked to carry out a HC on behalf of Pointers In Need. Arrange a mutual date/time with the applicant, it is probably best to avoid evening HCs when the light is only going to fade – a garden check in dark is not ideal. Advise the applicant that you have/seen their completed Pre-Adoption application.

Advise them that you will require to see proof of identity, something with their current name and address on it; ideally sight of one of: a driving licence, a passport, professional registration, employer's ID card or bus pass is acceptable as name proof, and one of: utility bill, council tax bill, bank letter etc as address proof. Just use your discretion.

You must record in the report that the applicant's name and address has been verified.

The Pre-Adoption form may already have asked the applicant if they own or rent their own home and may ask you to see evidence if the latter. Gently explaining that you are trying to establish whether they need permission from their Landlord to have animals in the property. If they do not have evidence, inform them that Pointers In Need may ask for this to be sent before a final decision can be made. There have been occasions (with other groups) when an applicant has told rescuers and home checkers that they own their property to pass the home check, then later ask to return the dog because the Landlord has objected. Many council properties allow up to two dogs. Private Landlords vary.

Ask how many people live in the property and can they all be present for the HC and can they be present to meet you. The reason for this is to confirm that this is a multilateral decision to adopt a rescue Pointer. It also ensures that any advice and tips are heard / understood by all residents. Understandably, this cannot always happen due to working arrangements.

TAKING YOUR OWN DOG (if you have a Pointer)

You should ask the applicant if it is acceptable to take one of your dogs with you. Your dogs can provide you with some security and it is also a good way to judge how the applicant(s) interact with a dog and often their reaction to dog hair/slobber etc. - Ask if they have a dog / cat / chickens / other pet / (in case your own dog does not like any of these) and to also ensure that you are not putting your own dog under undue stress. If they have any other animals ask if they are healthy before taking your own dog, as you do not want to expose your own dog to an infectious disease unnecessarily.

APPLICANTS WHO HAVE HAD POINTERS BEFORE

Obviously if an applicant is familiar with the breed and has had Pointers before, then that is a really positive thing. HOWEVER, there is a big difference between owning a UK Breed show Pointer to taking on an ex working Pointer being rescued from abroad, so don't be fobbed off by an applicant who thinks they know it all. There are information sheets available, just ask the Rescue co-ordinator.

POINTERS IN NEED

THE HOME CHECK PROCEDURE

Remind the Applicant at the start of the HC that you are ONLY performing the HC as requested by Pointers In Need and that you do NOT have any part in the decision making process. This removes any pressure on you. Reiterate this again before leaving the premises.

Try to confirm details the applicant has provided to Pointers In Need. If the applicant has had dogs before ask if they have photos. This is generally a good icebreaker as everyone loves talking about their dogs.

Occasionally applicants will say anything to get a dog, however if you encourage them to talk about previous pets, they may contradict themselves. If this happens **do not challenge** anything said, as this may cause unnecessary tension. If the applicant has lost their previous dog, you will have to judge for yourself if they wish to discuss / disclose the reason for death.

If a specific Pointer has been applied for, discuss this with the applicant - however remind them that you are acting on behalf of Pointers In Need and have only the information provided to you. They may wish to confirm more details of the Pointer in question with Pointers In Need after the HC and before

proceeding further with the application. Stress that Pointers In Need will provide all information known to them as it is in no-one's interest to withhold anything. Emphasise that to do so could result in a disappointed applicant and a Pointer that may fail its adoption (or fostering). Likewise, ask them if there is any additional information, they wish to be fed back to Pointers In Need that is not included on the application form. Stress this is to make the best match possible.

Reiterate that Pointers In Need may not know the full background of the Pointer as it may have been a stray, however while in rescue, observation and interaction with the dog is the way that most of the information available has been obtained. Some Pointers are rescued as very young puppies and generally these have no or very few issues. Only limited information may be available to the home checker beforehand, as they will have spoken extensively to or communicated with the applicant beforehand.

Ask the applicant if they have any experience of the Pointer breed / type / size of dog applied for. If the applicants have no experience of Pointers, encourage them to review the information on the Website or discuss with their vet / intended vet practice or a Pointer breed club (try the Kennel Club Breed Information Centre <http://www.thekennelclub.org.uk> who can provide additional information). Nowadays many people will research their choice of breed on the internet and that is good. Encourage them to join a local training group; usually local vets and dog wardens have this information.

Asking to see around the house can be daunting and you must assess when is best to do this. If the Pointer is going to be restricted to downstairs, then there is no need to go upstairs or into bedrooms. In many instances the applicant will want to show you the other areas. People may hide other pets; also, you need to make sure the home is safe, should the Pointer be allowed upstairs. Look for open-structure stairs, and open railings often found on upper levels of homes. These may need to be screened or blocked so a dog can't fall through. If there is any area of concern within the house record it on the HC form. You may wish to make suggestions such as the use of 'baby gates' or crates to help with segregation and training. Do not get drawn into any disagreement with these suggestions. Baby gates are useful to restrict a dog to one area, especially at night or when food is being prepared / eaten and crates are useful in preventing dogs that may chew from accessing live electrical cables and provide a 'safe place' for dogs to rest up.

If possible, take pictures of anything that causes concern, e.g. an area within the garden that gives cause for concern, (remember to ask the applicant's permission first) and send back with the completed HC form to the Rescue co-ordinator.

CHECKING GARDENS

Before the visit, be clear on fencing/security requirements.

The suitability of a garden will vary depending on the Pointer to be homed. Ask if any outhouses or sheds contain pets such as rabbits etc., especially during wintertime. Walk the entire garden. Look for loose boards and gaps, which must be fixed and re-inspected before adoption or photographs of repairs may be sent to Pointers In Need by the applicant. Tell adopters that they must supervise the Pointer when in the garden for safety and liability reasons. Wooden slats fences; are they horizontal or vertical? (horizontal fences can be climbed easily by some Pointers as they can be very agile). Climbable objects situated next to fences, such as bins or BBQ's, may allow a Pointer to climb up on and over a fence. Chain-link fences; warn that some Pointers can learn to climb over them.

Gaps: Pointers can push through gaps. If there's a gap under a fence, a Pointer can quickly dig his way out. Suggest blocking escape routes with boards, rubble, bricks or even compacted piled up earth or construct a sunken barrier at the fence line. Advise applicant to line any fence gaps on the interior with chicken wire.

Hedges; is there a fence behind / within the hedge to prevent the Pointer pushing through?

Ponds: how deep? Could a Pointer fall in / climb out? Can it be covered?

Garages, workshops, sheds: Is access restricted? Pointers can get hurt or die from exposure to tools, loosensails, poisons and antifreeze.

HOMES WITH CHILDREN

Adoptions to homes with children have a higher failure rate. Your advice can make all the difference. You may wish to suggest to parents they obtain a crate before bringing a new Pointer home.

Advise parents never to leave Pointer alone with their children or their children's friends. Explain to the whole family: "A Pointer can't cry or whine when he is unhappy. Instead, he may growl or try to bite." When a Pointer is getting tired, leave him alone. Advise parents not to let young children walk Pointers themselves. Strongly advise obedience training for the whole family.

Share the "doorknob / dog" rule: "Don't turn the doorknob until you know where the Pointer is, so that she can't run out the door as she could get hit by a car!"

NEXT STEPS & PROCESS

As mentioned above, the decision to pass/fail the HC is down to Pointers In Need. Explain that you will be reporting back to them, and a member of the Rescue team will be in contact.

Advise the homeowner that the "next steps" will be explained by the Rescue, and to direct any questions about the process to them.

If you can get the report back to us as quickly as possible that would be appreciated.

CONCLUSION & SUMMING UP

As mentioned at the start, the reason for collating this guidance document is to ensure that you are provided with common sense information on many aspects of home checking, gathered from the experiences of numerous people, over many years.

Performing home checks is a rewarding experience and friendships can be forged which last many years.

YOUR ASSISTANCE AND SUPPORT

This is a 'live' working document and if you wish to suggest amendments because of your own experiences, please let us know.

www.pointersinneed.org.uk
info@pointersinneed.org.uk

Registered Charity No: 1196922