

What to expect from a rescue dog

Your new dog may have been abandoned, abused or surrendered by a previous family. The dog had to adjust to life at a TLC foster home and is now going home to a new, unfamiliar place with strangers. Kind of scary if you think about it!

Being gentle, considerate, kind and patient will help ease your new dog into it's new family. Some may be very friendly while others may be reserved. No dog is going to be "perfect" and due to their past history rescued dogs require special consideration. Rescue dogs have a higher chance of being very submissive due to their past history. Don't feed the pets in the same room together until they are showing no aggression or jealousy at mealtime. A dog that has been starved, or forced to give up food to other dogs in the past, may be very protective of the food you give it.

WHERE AM I?

- Your dog might be afraid and unsure of his new surroundings. If he appears to be scared, keep him in a small, quiet area to start, and take it slow... VERY SLOW. Busy holiday times are not the times to adopt a dog. Ask friends and family to limit their visits until your new rescue dog starts getting used to you and your routine.
- Don't leave your other pets or small children unsupervised with the new dog until they are used to each other. Don't allow children to bother the dog if he is afraid; fear can result in nipping.
- Give your dog plenty of time to adjust to his new surroundings, taking it one step at a time.
- Dogs have a 400+ times greater sense of smell than humans do and while human think in terms of what they see and hear, dogs think in terms of what they smell. Your home might smell vastly different to what the foster home did. Try and stick with the same brand and fragrance of perfume for the first several weeks - the dog will recognize your smell much faster than he other signs it is you.

OOPS! I'M SORRY

- Even a potty trained dog can make mistakes in a new home. The main thing is to reward good behavior and use firm verbal cues for bad behavior. He doesn't know which door to go to or how to ask his new family what he wants. Demonstrate where he can go and where he cannot. Keep a very watchful eye on your new friend and confine him when you can't watch him. A crate is an excellent way to limit the amount of accidents.
- The worst thing you can do is to physically reprimand the dog. This teaches him that he must go someplace you can't see him to eliminate. A firm "no" when you catch him in the act and placing him outside or on papers will teach him where it is appropriate to go. Some experts say not to place the dog exactly where you want him to go when you take him outside, but nearby and calling him over to that place.
- It is not advised that you let the new member of your household free reign of the house when you are away for long periods of time. Chihuahuas in particular have small bladders. Unlike large dogs, they are not physically able to hold their bladders for long periods of time. For this reason Chihuahuas need to be taken outside more often, even if they don't seem to have to go, and need to have papers or pee pads available when you are away and cannot take them out.
- If you find your dog consistently urinates despite just having gone out, make an appointment with your vet. Bladder infections are common in smaller breed dogs.
- Umbilical training works well with rescue dogs - attach his leash to your wrist and wherever you go for the first few days, so will the dog. He's not likely to find a secretive place to urinate or defecate with you attached to him... and the umbilical attachment to you is a great reminder that he needs to go out frequently until he firmly knows where.

NEW RULES

- Your new dog had a whole different set of rules in his previous home. More than likely, if he came directly from a shelter, you will not know any of them. If the dog came from a rescue, your foster parents will be able to give you some insight on this issue. If it is not volunteered, ASK! Your dog may have been allowed to sleep in bed or beg at the table. When he repeats these behaviors in your home that is not a time to reprimand him with anger. Redirect the behavior in a positive fashion with something else. For example, if you don't allow begging at

the table, feed your new dog in his dish at the same time you are eating at the table - put up a barrier to prohibit him from approaching the table. It's up to you to teach him your rules, but teaching proper behavior takes time and patience and consistency.

ADJUSTMENT PERIOD

- Allow several weeks to adapt to his new surroundings and up to six months to fully adjust (older dogs may take longer than young ones).
- Adopting a pet is a lifetime commitment. We assume that you will make a patient and concerted effort to achieve a successful placement. Sometimes rescued dogs may exhibit behavioral problems that could include house soiling, destructive behavior, mild aggression toward other pets or humans, submissive urination, clinging behavior, licking behavior, and hiding or cowering in bed. All rescued dogs will exhibit some behavior when entering a new home. Most of the time, bad behavior is of very short initial duration as the animal becomes used to its new surroundings. The foster parent will advise you regarding any behaviors that have been observed while the animal was in foster care.
- If you find your new dog is fearful of someone in your family, they are the ones who should be doing all the feeding. Once the dog realizes the person is the source of food, it becomes motivation to overcome their fear when hungry.
- The best thing you can give your new rescue dog in this time period is to observe and reward the good behaviors, ignore the bad behaviors and redirect them when they occur.

These are just some of the situations you may possibly run in to with your rescued dog. For the majority of adopters however, after an initial few days of adjustment they find that they have adopted a truly wonderful little dog that wants nothing more than the touch of your hand, the sound of your voice, and the love of your heart. You may find it hard to believe that someone in the past treated your new friend with cruelty and malice.

HEALTH OF DOGS COMING FROM RESCUES/SHELTERS

It certainly is possible that a pet adopted from a rescue shelter may have medical problems. However the majorities of the animals who are adopted from shelters are perfectly healthy and just need a good home. If anything, you're more likely to get an honest answer about an animal's medical problems from a rescue or shelter volunteer - who are clearly there because they *care* about the animals - as opposed to a pet store owner or breeder that is only in for the money. Animals in rescues are typically treated better than animals in pet stores, which typically have spent their short lives in cramped environments with little socializing and often, unsanitary conditions. Rescue dogs have had the benefit of living in a foster home for a time, so they may have even become more obedient and trained as a result of having someone to care for them in the interim. You have chosen to give a new home to one of our TLC dogs that have been abandoned or abused. You should be proud of yourself. Without people like you, hundreds of abandoned and abused dogs of all breeds would be euthanized every year only because no one wanted them.

RESCUE/SHELTER DOGS MAKE SOME OF THE GREATEST COMPANIONS

There are many misconceptions about the quality of animals found in rescue shelters. The persistent stigma which shelter pets have been labeled is they are "damaged goods". Despite countless educational campaigns to educate the public, there still remain some individuals who believe shelter pets do not make wonderful companions, or else their original owners wouldn't have gotten rid of them. Animals are brought to shelters for a large variety of reasons, some of which are...

- Their owners have passed away and no other family member could care for the pet.
- An irresponsible owner didn't get their pets spayed or neutered and ended up with unwanted litters.
- The animal's owners were abusive to the animal, so the authorities have removed the pet from the harmful environment.
- An animal was purchased or adopted by someone who did not take into consideration all of the responsibilities associated with caring for a pet.
- Someone lost their job, their home or had a similar dramatic change in lifestyles that prohibiting taking good care of their pet.