

WHAT TO EXPECT FROM RESCUE DOGS

"For an adult dog, the first few weeks in a new home are a critical transition period. How well you manage the dog's behavior during this time will determine whether he develops into a well-behaved, loving pet. This article will help people know what to expect from a new dog.

Adoptive owners view a dog's new life in their home as a wonderful change from a shelter pen, but the transition presents some problems for the dog. The transition brings a change in the dog's daily routine and caretakers. In the new home, the dog suddenly faces a new set of social companions in a new environment filled with unfamiliar sights, smells and sounds. He will be confused, stimulated and a little frightened. He faces a big adjustment as he learns his way around and develops relationships with his new family. Some undesirable behavior may result. Don't panic! By modifying or redirecting his actions, you can help the dog become a solid citizen in a few weeks.

What to Expect:

- * Jumping up (which you can discourage by ignoring the behavior and making sure you don't reward it).
- * Exploratory behavior, including sniffing, mouthing and chewing new things.
- * Stealing food.
- * Accidents in the house. The shelter rules differ from the new home's rules, which will take time for the dog to learn.
- * Wild running and play in the house. Frequently this behavior is encouraged by children, even adults. The new dog cannot yet distinguish between indoor and outdoor behavior.

Managing Your Dog During the Transition:

The first few days following an adoption is a critical time for learning rules and breaking bad habits. Dogs are particularly impressionable in a new environment, especially the first time they try a behavior. Therefore, plan to invest time during this period to socialize, teach and get acquainted with your new dog.

Plan and prepare for your new dog in advance. Read about basic training. Get food, bowls, collar, leash, brush and comb, toys, and dog gate or crate. Decide where the dog will be confined when you're not home and arrange a bed or crate in that area. Decide what particular area outdoors will be the dog's bathroom. Prepare yourself mentally -- all things will not go smoothly at first.

As soon as you get your new pet home, begin managing his behavior and supervising

him closely.

Do not give him run of your house. The most important thing he needs for the first few weeks is STRUCTURE -- enforced rules for living in your house. Freedom comes later as he develops the responsibility to handle it. Failure by the owners to teach a dog the house rules is a chief reason for unsuccessful adoptions.

Rules to teach:

1. Housebreaking. Take your dog out on a long leash at two-to-three hour intervals to the area designated as the bathroom. Allow him to explore and get used to the area. When he poops or pees, praise effusively and then reward him with a few minutes of play, sniffing or a walk. The dog should be kept near you in the house so that if he begins to potty inside, you can reprimand (say "nah-ah-ah") and take him out immediately. Punishing a dog after the fact is ineffective and confusing to the animal.
2. Jumping up should never be permitted.
3. Chewing and mouthing is permitted only on dog toys. As you introduce your dog to each area of your house, take him there on a long leash. Bring along some toys and chewing items, and make them available on the floor.
4. Stealing food. An important reason not to feed dogs table scraps is that it leads to food-stealing.
5. Running, wrestling and other rough play should not be allowed in the house. Make toys and chews available.

Some Management Rules That Owners Must Learn:

1. Correct, praise and re-direct. If the dog ignores corrections, work to improve your communication skills.
2. Pay attention and be consistent. Don't send mixed messages. If you correct behavior sometimes and ignore (or even inadvertently reward) it other times, your dog will be confused and not behave reliably. Keep the rules simple and enforce them, but always remember to praise.
3. Dogs look for authority in their lives. If none is forthcoming from people, they begin to act as their own bosses and may even try to push around their human companions using growling, snapping and lunging. Leadership with a dog is a positive relationship, not based on punishment or abuse. Shortly after you've adopted your dog, enroll in a positive reinforcement-based obedience class to get expert help in developing leadership and control. This greatly reduces the possibility of problems later.
4. Dogs should not roam when no one is home. A newly adopted dog that is free to

wander in the home in the owner's absence is almost certain to get into trouble or practice bad habits. In most cases, the damage is not done out of spite, but because the animal is nervous, stressed, frightened, stimulated to escape, bored or just exploring. Restrict the dog's access when you are out, at least until he has comfortably adjusted to your home. To do otherwise jeopardizes your possessions, the dog's safety and your new relationship.

5. Never tie or tether your dog with a metal training collar (AKA "choke collar," though if it's choking the dog, the handler is using it incorrectly). This can kill your dog, and should be used only when leash-walking and only after learning to use it correctly. Incorrect use of a training collar will cause problems rather than cure them. Keep a regular leather or nylon collar bearing license and i.d. tags on the dog.

Dogs have an amazing way of making people happy. You can enjoy all the benefits with some well-directed efforts to help your dog adjust to life in your new home."
PLEASE BE PATIENT WITH YOUR RESCUE DOGS, THEY ARE WORTH IT.

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