

## Congratulations on Adopting Your New Dog!



Here are some helpful tips to make the transition to your home smooth and joyful!

### Coming Home

The first few days in your home are special and critical for a pet. Your new dog will be confused about where he is and what to expect from you. Setting up some clear structure with your family for your dog will be paramount in making as smooth a transition as possible.

Give him time to adjust to your home and family before introducing him to strangers. Make sure children know how to approach the dog without overwhelming him.

Determine an area inside your house that will keep your dog AND your house safe. Because he will be under a lot of stress with the change of environment (from shelter or foster home to your house), he may forget any housebreaking (if any) he's learned. Often a kitchen will work best for easy clean-up. Another safe way to do this is with a crate. Your dog probably spent their time at the shelter in a cage or a run, so the it should not be a big deal to have them stay in a crate at home. The confined area or crate will greatly assist with potty training and give your dog a safe and comfortable place. When your dog is at home and outside the crate, please supervise them for a first several weeks and do not let them just

run free. The amount of supervision required will depend on your dog. Remember, no matter how old the new dog is when you adopt him, he should ALWAYS be treated like a puppy and not trusted with ANYTHING until you are certain how he will behave.

Dog-proof the area where your dog will spend most of his time during the first few months. This may mean taping loose electrical cords to baseboards; storing household chemicals on high shelves; removing plants, rugs, and breakables; setting up the crate, and installing baby gates.

If you plan on crate training your dog, leave the crate open so that he can go in whenever he feels like it in case he gets overwhelmed.

Your dog will probably form an instant bond with you and leaving him alone can be stressful. To build his confidence, when you first bring him home, leave your dog alone for short bouts of time. Leave for a couple minutes then come right back. Then leave for 3 minutes, then come back. Do this over and over again. so he knows you return right away. Once your dog is comfortable with short departures, randomly include some longer departures. Ignore your dog during departures and arrivals (be very casual about leaving - don't look back!). Practice mini departures inside by closing doors when you take a shower, use the toilet, etc. Turn the television or radio on 30 minutes before leaving (and at least 15 minutes before you start preparing to leave) to help calm your dog when he's alone. Note: If you turn on the television or radio shortly before departing, it can become a signal to your dog that you're leaving and increase his anxiety. Studies have shown that dogs are calmed by classical music so consider changing your radio station. Try to stay relaxed (if you're anxious your dog's anxiety will increase). Give your dog a safe chew toy stuffed with treats before you leave the house.

## Potty Training

No matter how old the dog is, potty training should ALWAYS follow the same pattern: outside ON LEASH, with voice command to eliminate, praise during elimination and freedom in the house ONLY after elimination outside. The length of time you will need to do this will depend on the dog – it will vary from days to months. When you bring him home, take him to his toileting area immediately and spend a good amount of time with him so he will get used to the area and relieves himself. Even if your dog does relieve himself during this time, be prepared for accidents. Coming into a new home with new people, new smells and new sounds will throw even the most housebroken dog off-track, so be ready just in case.

## Helpful Tips

Enrolling in an obedience class can set you up for success. Classes are great for several reasons - they help with socialization, teach you how to talk to you dog, and teaches the family to all use the same commands to not confuse your dog. If you chose not to go to obedience class remember training your dog will start the first moment you have him. Take time to create a vocabulary list everyone will use when giving your dog directions. This will help prevent confusion and help your dog learn his commands more quickly.

For the first 2 weeks, your time with your dog should be mainly exercise and not coddling. Don't give in and comfort him if he whines when left alone. Instead, give him attention for good behavior, such as chewing on a toy or resting quietly. For the first few days, remain calm and quiet around your dog, limiting too much excitement (such as the dog park or neighborhood children). Not only will this allow your dog to settle in easier, it will give you more one-on-one time to get to know him and his likes/dislikes.

If your dog came from another home, objects like leashes, hands, rolled up newspapers and magazines, feet, chairs and sticks are just some of the pieces of inappropriate "training equipment" that may have been used on your dog. Words like "come here" and "lie down" may bring forth a reaction other than the one you expect. Or maybe he led a sheltered life and was never socialized to children or sidewalk activity. This dog may be the product of a never-ending series of scrambled communications so please do not place unreal expectations on your new dog, he will instead require patience on your part.

While every dog needs exercise, some breeds require more than others. Most behavioral problems are developed when a dog has too much energy that has not been released properly through mental and physical stimulation. Some common outlets to release energy when left to the dog are: chewing, barking, jumping, pulling and window- or gate-guarding. So make sure to give your dog enough mental and physical stimulation to avoid those unwanted behaviours. A tired dog is a happy dog!

## No Excuses for Behaviour

DO NOT make excuses for your new dog! You may observe he is shy around men or strangers; many people think the dog was abused before they got him. He may have had a scary experience, but generally, if you don't know for a fact he was, he was probably just under socialized. To sit on the excuse, "Oh, be careful with him, he was abused as a puppy," is an immobilizing thought. Instead of carefully avoiding things that frighten your dog, give that man/stranger an irresistible treat to give to your dog every time they meet; you may be able to work through the problem! What may have happened in your rescue dog's past doesn't need to cripple him for life!

It's never too early to start correcting bad behaviors, which can manifest themselves very quickly if dogs don't get structure and leadership—from you—from the start. Practice obedience training, set rules, and enforce them

calmly. Praise your dog's good behavior, and you'll soon have a friend for life.

It is usual to not see your dog's true personality until several weeks after adoption. Your dog will be a bit uneasy at first as he gets to know you. Be patient and understanding while also keeping to the schedule you intend to maintain for feeding, walks, etc. This schedule will show your dog what is expected of him as well as what he can expect from you. Remember to reward good behaviour!

When at the dog park pay close attention to your dog's body language to be sure he's having a good time – and is not fearful or a dog park bully. A rescue dog might have old habits, but a new environment can help teach new habits through positive training. Do not wait until those bad habits surface to seek training — the sooner the better. If you encounter behavior issues you are unfamiliar with, ask your

veterinarian for a trainer recommendation. Select a trainer who uses positive-reinforcement techniques to help you and your dog overcome these behavior obstacles.

If you use punishment techniques that cause pain or frighten the dog, to deter behaviours, such as yelling, choking, popping the leash, smacking, shaking the scruff, alpha rolling (forcing the dog onto his back) or choke chains - you risk damaging the relationship between you and your dog - sometimes beyond repair. Moreover, it does nothing to address the cause of the behaviour so it is likely to be repeated.

## Introducing Your Shelter Dog to Other Pets

You will have to invest time in introduction and supervision of the new dog and existing pets at home. Introductions should happen in controlled settings. The new dog should be ON LEASH, and your existing pets should also be controlled in some way: cat in carrier (you could be bitten or scratched if you hold the cat for the new dog to meet!), other dog(s) on leash – one at a time. Some raised hackles are normal even in friendly introductions. Keep leashes fairly loose or leave dragging on the ground, but always be ready to pull each dog away from the other should an argument ensue. If a fight starts, NEVER put your hands anywhere near to grab dogs! Instead, throw a blanket over them or use a chair to separate them by wedging in between. These introductions work best when a person handles each animal.

The new dog should NOT be alone in the house with your existing pets until you have carefully monitored and controlled their interactions for a period of time. That time period could be anywhere from a couple days to a month or more. The new dog should be crated when you are not able to supervise. The crate can still be in an area where your existing pets can approach to sniff; however, this also needs to be supervised. Your pets could tease the new one, or the new one could be somewhat cage aggressive/protective and lunge and growl.

With careful planning, preparation and training, adopting a shelter or rescue dog can be one that will work for life.

## Feeding Your Dog

Dogs do not react to changing of food easily. You will probably not know what type of food your dog ate at the shelter, so you may see some gastrointestinal distress. If you wish to switch to a different brand of food at any time, do so over a period of about a week by adding one-part new food to three-parts of the old for several days; then switch to half new food, half old, and then one part old to three parts new. Never switch your dog's food to a new brand all at once. His stomach cannot handle it.