

Welcoming your new pet home



We hope these tips will help you successfully introduce your new dog to your home. You may also want to check out the online resources listed at the end of this note.

INTRODUCTIONS

Remember that the dog has usually come from a stressful, even dangerous environment prior to rescue. And while we are lucky to have fosters, it's a new situation coming to your home. Give your dog time to adapt, and your patience will be amply rewarded when you see a happy, confident dog emerge.

Try to provide a calm, fairly quiet environment for the first few days, while the dog learns the ropes. If you are entertaining or having a large family gathering, you might do well to put the dog in a bedroom, in a crate, where it can find peace and quiet.

Don't let your children overwhelm the dog with excessive roughhousing or noise – and definitely no pulling of ears or tails, or attempting to “ride” the dog! Kids need to be protective of the dog, especially at first. Approach the dog slowly, using a high-pitched, friendly voice, and reach for it gently. A low, gruff pitch sounds scary to a dog. Don't wave your hands around the dog's face. A direct stare at the dog may be threatening.

HEALTH

Dogs require regular vet care, as well as any emergencies or illnesses that may occur. Vaccinations include DHPPT and rabies. Vets should also check for internal and external parasites.

Dogs need to be on heartworm preventative every month – Sentinel, Trifexis and Heartgard are good brands. Consider Frontline for flea prevention.

Your dog has been microchipped, so that you have a better chance of getting it back if it should be lost. But, you need to be sure to always keep your address registered and up to date.

CRATE TRAINING

House-training is a normal part of dog upbringing and your attentiveness at the start will accelerate the process.

Many obedience specialists recommend crate-training your dog. This involves “luring” the dog into the crate with a treat, so that it is always associated with something positive and not as a punishment. The dog will see the crate as a safe place; its own “den”.

Crate the dog overnight at first, and leave the crate door open at other times so the dog can go into the crate if it wants to. Make sure the crate is of sufficient size for your dog so that it can turn around. The dog will naturally resist urinating or defecating in its own space – but ensure that you provide plenty of opportunity for the dog to potty outside every couple of hours during the day. Six to eight hours should be manageable for adult dogs overnight under most circumstances.

If your dog has an accident in the house, clean the site thoroughly with products like Nature’s Miracle to eliminate the scent. If you see the dog urinate or defecate, say “No” in a stern voice and then take the dog outside to potty immediately. If you have not seen the dog go, then don’t scold it later – it won’t understand.

FEEDING

You will get a small bag of dog food when you pick up your new pet. Transition to your own choice of high quality dog food by mixing the old and the new over a few days. A sudden transition will result in digestive upset.

It is better not to feed your dog more than the very occasional bit of people food. Some foods are actually toxic to dogs, and others are simply too rich to be handled safely – they may cause tummy problems or even pancreatitis.

Always have clean, fresh water available for your dog. Keep the food and water bowls clean with hot, sudsy water, just as you would with people dishes.

TRAINING

It is well worthwhile to sign up for a doggie obedience class or to purchase a training video, and spend some time every day working on basic commands. The dog will want to please you, it will be a good bonding exercise, and your well-behaved dog will be a pleasure to have around. You want to establish yourself as the “alpha” in the relationship, and the dog will look to you for guidance.

Try to keep training positive – the idea is to reinforce what you want the dog to do, by using a happy tone of voice and (occasional) treats when you see the desired behavior.

Try to keep tempting food items inaccessible on the counter, so that your dog doesn't get in the habit of looking for food. You may want to use a baby-safe latch on the cabinet if the dog tries to get into the trash. You may also want to work on the "leave it" command (rewarding them after they obey you; using gentle corrections if they strain towards the item). Mastering that command may save your dog's life, by keeping them from lunging for something that is poisonous to them.

PLAY AND EXERCISE

Just like people, dogs need playtime and exercise. Try to make it a habit to go for long walks daily – it will be quality time together that you can both enjoy. If you have access to a dog park where your dog can safely run off-leash, you may want to try that – once your dog is settled in and confident, and has bonded well with you.

Your dog will behave better when it is not bored. Provide plenty of quality toys and suitable chews to keep it busy.

GROOMING

Some breeds, like Poodles, require more care in grooming than some other breeds. You will want to brush your dog out a couple of times per week with a slicker brush to avoid having mats develop. To use a slicker brush, part the hair, touch the brush to the skin, and pull out and up. Don't drag the wires across the skin – it hurts! Mats can be very painful to dogs, and hard to get out: best to avoid them in the first place. Make sure that the dog is brushed out before and after bathing to avoid developing mats.

If you are adventurous, you may want to check out books or online videos and try grooming on your own. Otherwise, many reputable kennels have grooming services. Prices vary depending on how elaborate you want the grooming to be, and how big (and hairy) your dog is. If you groom on your own, be sure to include nail clipping. Plucking the hair from the inside of the ears (with fingertips and ear powder, not hemostats) and cleaning them with a good cleaner like R7 will help avoid yeast infections in the ears, which can be painful and even damage hearing. When you have the dog groomed, or see the vet, ask them to check the anal glands and express them if necessary. It's probably better that you not try to do that yourself, to avoid injuring the dog.

When using an animal dryer or "blaster" on your dog, carefully shield the ears from the noise and force of the air. Blowing air into the ears could puncture an eardrum. You may want to use clean cotton balls to protect the ears while bathing the dog, but if so, be sure to remember to remove them when done.

OTHER RESOURCES

Website for dog food recommendations and recall alerts: <http://www.dogfoodadvisor.com/>

Foods and plants that are toxic to dogs:

<http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/virtual-pet-behaviorist/dog-behavior/foods-are-hazardous-dogs>

<http://www.aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/toxic-and-non-toxic-plants>

ASPCA Poison Control Hotline: (888) 426-4435 (\$65 consultation fee charged to your credit card).