

Guidance
for
Adopters
of
Rescue Dogs



Congratulations on adopting a rescue!

The first few days in a new home are critical for the adjustment of your dog and your family. As expected, your dog will be confused about the change in her environment and is depending on you to lay the foundation for a successful future together. Plan to spend a lot of time with your new dog in the first few days after her arrival, and limit the number of new people she meets.

Being prepared will make the transition smoother and will allow you to focus your time and energy on your new family member.



For the Love of Dogs Vermont Dog Rescue is a non-profit 501(c)3

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Preparing for Your New Rescue Dog

Use the weeks preceding your dog's arrival to think through the essentials

Plan to spend a lot of time with your new dog in the first few days, and limit his human interactions to family members only.

Although many of our dogs are house trained, the stress of shelter life and transport can affect their training. Be prepared for accidents and plan to keep him close to you the first few days so you can reinforce designated outdoor potty areas before an accident occurs.

Start by determining where your dog will be spending most of his time when you're home and when you're away. Depending on the layout of your home and yard, will you want pens, gates, or fencing? If you are planning to crate-train, be sure to have purchased and set up the crate before you

bring your rescue dog home. If you will not be using a crate to confine him while you're away, plan to confine him to areas with tiled floors for easy clean-up: mudrooms, bathrooms, and kitchens work well.

For the safety of your dog and your home, be sure to dog-proof your house by limiting access to cleaning supplies and other potentially toxic chemicals, exposed electrical cords, poisonous plants, and other dangerous items, and by putting away favorite items like shoes, kids' toys, etc., to avoid having your dog use them as chew toys. Clear low tables of all items. You might consider limiting his access to only a few rooms to start, at least until you have a feel for what objects might be enticing.

Purchase appropriate bedding and decide which areas of your home will be encouraged napping spots. Favorite areas are next to your bed, in the family room, and anyplace that has your scent and is cozy and quiet.



Purchase food and water bowls, and determine the kind of food he will be eating. Decide where you will store the dog food so that he cannot get to it, and decide where you will feed him. Again, tiled floors make for easy clean-up.

Purchase only a few toys at first to see what he likes best. Chew toys that can be stuffed with peanut butter or treats are good to start. Also purchase treats for training.

Purchase a 5-6-foot leash, a collar, and an ID tag bearing your name and phone number. These items will be required when you meet your dog at transport. You may want to purchase a harness to allow for more control while walking your dog. We do not encourage the use of retractable leashes at first.

Your dog will be up to date on all vaccines and, unless he's a puppy, will have been spayed/neutered. You will be given your dog's vet records when you pick



him up. Be thinking about the veterinarian you might like to have on board.



Taking Your Rescue Dog Home

If you already have a dog at home, do not bring her with you when you pick up your new rescue dog. Limit the number of people to two, one to drive and one to attend to your new dog.

If you are traveling a long distance to pick up your dog, use the facilities, run your errands, and have a meal before you meet the transport. Do not leave your dog alone in the car on your way home for any reason. If your dog needs a potty break, be certain that you have a firm

grip on your dog's leash before you open the car door. Dogs just off transport are usually scared and confused and have been known to bolt.

Your dog should ride in a crate in the back, if she tolerates it, or in the back seat of your car with the windows up. Talk to her calmly and confidently, and use her name whenever possible. Allow your dog to rest and relax on the ride home. Introduce her to her new home by walking her on a leash around the yard, allowing her to sniff.

Your dog should be securely leashed while outside over the first few weeks as she acclimates herself to her new environment and becomes confident that yours is her new home.



Your First Day With Your New Dog . . .

If You Already Have a Dog at Home

After picking up your rescued dog, arrange to meet another adult with your present dog (if you have more than one dog, have them meet one at a time). Meet outside in a quiet area with plenty of room, with both dogs leashed.

The dogs should be walked separately, one in front and one in back, with enough distance between them that they cannot come into physical contact with each other. This allows the dog in the rear to pick up on the scent of the dog in front and become more familiar before coming in contact. After walking this way for a bit, switch and let the dog in front be in the rear. After this initial introduction you can begin to walk the dogs in

the same direction with the walkers in the middle, the dogs on the outside. Provided this introduction is going well, you may slowly bring them closer together until they can be walked side by side. When you feel comfortable enough to go into your own yard or home with both dogs, do so naturally, with the new dog entering the yard or house first.

Keep your dogs' leashes on in the house and refrain from leaving your dogs alone together until you are completely comfortable with their mutual acceptance. Give the dogs enough space and time away from each other so they can rest and voluntarily return.

Things to Avoid In the First Few Days

- ✓ Do not allow either dog to mount the other. Mounting is dominance, and the only dominant one in the house should be you. If your dogs begin to posture (standing tall and straight), growl or begin to fight, do not interfere unless you think it is getting out of control. A stern "NO" will calm the situation down.
- ✓ Avoid feeding your dogs together. Each dog should have her own dish and each dish should be placed on opposite ends of the room in which they eat. Do not allow the dogs to investigate the other dog's food dish. Once the meal is over, pick up the dishes. Never feed your dogs without supervision. Remember: you do not know what your rescue dog may have experienced in the past. Provide a safe environment for both dogs by feeding them separately; do not provide an opportunity for food-aggressive behavior to arise.



How to Introduce Your New Dog to Your Resident Cats

Thank you to the Hawaiian Humane Society for this information.

Dogs and cats, especially those who were not socialized with the opposite species when they were young, will require time to adjust to each other. Dogs may want to chase and play with cats, and cats can be afraid and defensive. Slow introductions help prevent fear and aggression problems from developing. Keep your dog and cat in separate rooms when you are not there to supervise introductions.

When you introduce pets to each other, one of them may send “play” signals that can be misinterpreted by the other pet. If those signals are interpreted as aggression by one animal, then you should handle the situation as “aggressive.”

Make sure your new dog understands a few basic commands before introducing her to your cat. Work with her on Sit, Down, Come and Stay. Use tidbits of food to increase your dog’s motivation. Be sure she obeys the commands consistently, with a food motivator, so that she will perform even in the presence of a cat.

Arrange a positive first encounter by placing food tidbits on either side of the door that is separating the dog and cat. Each animal

will approach the door to get her treat and will smell the other animal. They will begin to associate the other animals’ smell as a pleasant experience. Work up to feeding them their regular meal on either side of the door.

Switch sleeping blankets between your new dog and your resident cat so they become accustomed to each other's scent. Rub a towel on one animal and put it under the food dish of the other. Do this with each animal in the house. Let your dog have free run of the house while

your cat is confined to one room. This will give your dog time to smell the cat’s scent. Then confine your dog while the cat roams free and sniffs the house.

After the dog and cat have become comfortable eating on opposite sides of the door and with each other's scent, try a controlled face-to-face introduction. Put your dog's leash on and, using treats, have her sit or lie down and stay. Have someone else bring in the cat (be careful about who you select as you want the cat to

remain calm). Quietly sit down and offer him a special food treat. The cat should not be tightly restrained and should be allowed to retreat if the situation is stressful. Be sure he can escape to his own room or hiding place.

At first, the cat and the dog should be on opposite sides of the room. Lots of short visits are better than a few long visits. Repeat brief meetings until both animals are tolerating each other without fear, aggression, or other undesirable behavior. Bring them closer together with each visit.



Precautions

- ✓ Don't leave your dog alone with your cat until both are fully comfortable.
- ✓ Dogs like to eat cat food so keep your cat's food out of your dog's reach.
- ✓ Eating cat feces is common for dogs. Although there are no health hazards to your dog, it's probably something you won't want to tolerate.
- ✓ It's upsetting to your cats to have their litter box "invaded." Place the litter box where your dog can't access it (behind a baby gate, in a closet with the door open just wide enough for your cat, or inside a tall, topless cardboard box with easy access for your cat). Booby trapping the box to keep your dog away should be avoided as it will also keep your cat away, and punishment after the fact will not change your dog's behavior.
- ✓ Because they're so much smaller, kittens are in more danger of being injured or killed by a young, energetic or predatory dog. Kittens should be kept separate from an energetic dog until she is fully grown, and even then, supervision may be necessary.

Next, allow your cat to explore the dog at his own pace, with the dog on leash and in a down-stay. At the same time, give your dog treats and praise for her calm behavior. If your dog gets up from her stay position, she should be repositioned with a treat lure, praised and rewarded for obeying. If your cat runs away or becomes aggressive, you're progressing too fast.

Although your dog must be taught that chasing or being rough with your cat is unacceptable, she must also be taught how to behave appropriately, such as sitting, coming when called, or lying down in return for a treat. If your dog is punished whenever your cat is around, and never has good things happen in the cat's presence, she may become aggressive toward the cat.

Consistently reward your dog when she is calm and obedient in the cat's presence. You may want to keep your dog on leash and with you whenever your cat is free in the house during the introductory period. Be sure that your cat has an escape route and a place to hide. Keep your dog and cat separated when you aren't home until you're certain your cat will be safe.

Usually, a well-socialized cat will be able to keep a puppy in its place. However, if you have a shy cat, you may need to separate him from your puppy until she matures enough to have more self-control. Conversely, an over-confident or aggressive cat can injure a puppy or small dog. Cat scratches can damage a dog's eyes or lead to infections and abscesses on the body.

When To Get Help

If introductions between your new dog and your other pets don't go smoothly, seek professional help. Talk to your veterinarian or ask for a referral to a behavior consultant who understands both dog and cat behavior. Animals can be severely injured in fights, and the longer the problem continues, the harder it can be to resolve. Conflicts between pets in the same family can often be resolved with professional help. Punishment won't work, though, and could make things worse.

Things to Avoid In the First Few Days

- ✓ Don't leave your dog alone with a young child
- ✓ Try not to invite guests over to meet your dog; if you have children, do not allow them to bring their friends to the house.
- ✓ Refrain from grabbing, pushing or pulling your dog. Do not grab at your dog's collar, even when taking him for a walk. Don't shake your finger, hand or any object at your dog. Avoid cornering your dog—always give him an escape route. Do not yell at anyone in the house, including and especially the dog. Do not allow your dog to lie on top of you or to stand over you. Do not rough-house with your dog.
- ✓ Avoid putting anything into your dog's bowl when he's eating. Do not attempt to pick up his dish while he is still next to it.
- ✓ Young children should never be allowed to walk a rescue dog (another dog, squirrel, cat, etc. can spook your dog). Do not take your rescue dog into crowded areas (malls, parks or stores). Do not take your rescue dog to a dog park.
- ✓ Never leave your dog outside unattended. Never tether your dog and leave him unattended.

Your First Day With Your New Dog Whether or Not You Already Have a Dog at Home

Be prepared to spend a lot of time with your new dog in the first few days at home. Clear your schedule as much as possible. Allow him time to adjust to his new family in a calm and quiet environment, limiting his contact to family members only. You may want to allow him access to just a few rooms in your home, at least to start. Your rescue dog will be looking to you for guidance. A calm and easy introduction into your family will make your rescue dog feel welcome and unafraid.

Bring your dog into your home and leave him alone. There's no need to show your dog around—he will investigate when he feels comfortable.

Set a routine for feeding and for potty time, and stick to it.

Introduce your dog to new food slowly to avoid stomach issues: start with 4 parts old food/1 part new and gradually adjust the ratio over the next 7 to 10 days. Feed your dog in a low-traffic area to avoid having people walking around when your dog is eating. Leave your dog alone when he is eating—do not stand over him.

Start close to home with walks, limiting the time spent away

from your home, and do not allow contact with neighborhood dogs until he has acclimated. When preparing for a walk, talk to your dog and calmly place his lead on.

If you plan to crate your dog at night and when you are away, use one crate for one dog. Be sure to remove his collar when he's in his crate—it can easily get caught on something in the crate and choke your dog.

If your dog is going to sleep with you, talk to him when you are getting into bed. If you get up during the night, announce yourself to your dog. He can easily startle during these first few days. It is a good idea to leave a light on in the house so if you get up during the night, your dog can more quickly identify you.

Keep a running dialog going with your dog whenever possible. The more your dog hears your voice, the more your dog will look forward to hearing it.

Some dogs make lots of noise during play, growling and barking. Listen to your dog. You will know his "play" noises and his "alert" noises. Learn to know the difference. If your dog gets overly excited during play, stop playing. Allow him to calm down and re-group.

Make sure your dog always has his ID tag on.

Email For the Love of Dogs Vermont
if your dog should ever get lost. We have many contacts in the
dog community and can help relocate your dog.
fortheloveofdogsvermont@gmail.com



Resources

Love Has No Age Limit: Welcoming an Adopted Dog Into Your Home by Patricia B. McConnell and Karen B. London

Do Over Dogs: Give Your Dog a Second Chance for a First Class Life by Pat Miller

On Talking Terms with Dogs: Calming Signals by Turid Rugaas

101 Dog Tricks: Step by Step Activities to Engage, Challenge and Bond with Your Dog by Kyra Sundance

The Puppy Primer by Patricia B. McConnell

The Culture Clash by Jean Donaldson

The Whole Dog Journal, a monthly guide to natural dog care and training. www.whole-dog-journal.com/cs

Balanced Life K9 Training. <http://www.balancedlifek9.com/>

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