

# Your New Dog

## **Congratulations!**

Firstly congratulations on obtaining your new rescue dog!

It's a wonderful thing when we can help provide a dog less fortunate with a 'furrever' home and we all know how good that can make us feel right?!!

Here are some tips to help your new dog settle into their new home with you and some information on how you can start to implement your structure, rules and boundaries with your new rescue dog.

*Did you know that it can take up to 2 weeks for a dog to settle into his/her new home??*

This means that during the first fortnight, your new dog is trying to learn his way around his new surroundings, get to know new people, familiarise to sounds and noises, situations etc, all which are very unfamiliar to him.

## **Your new dog must adapt to you, not the other way around**

It is imperative that your new dog adapts to your way of living, not the other way around. So we recommend that you pre-plan, and agree on, all of the important elements before his arrival, such as:

- Where he is to toilet
- Sleeping area
- Eating area
- If inside, where his day bed or resting area (or crate) will be placed?
- Which rooms he can go into and which rooms he cannot?
- Is he allowed on the couch?

By agreeing on the above with other family members, there will be no confusion to the dog and your rules will become very clear from the very first day.

Implement the rules from the minute you introduce your new dog into your home.

## **Avoid having your new dog sleep/sit on beds/couches/chairs etc**

Where possible, we highly recommend you avoid allowing your new dog to sleep or sit on couches, beds or any other piece of furniture which is usually reserved for humans. Some dogs tend to guard certain resources and as such, the couch or prized spot on the bed can certainly become something your new dog will find very special to him/her and may commence guarding it.

So to avoid unnecessary incidents of guarding new resources, we suggest you provide your dog with her/his own bed or sitting area.

### **Feeding time**

If you have other dogs, we suggest you feed them separately for the first few weeks so that there are no squabbles over food or food bowls.

If/When you eventually feed in the same area, do not allow one dog to wander over to the other dog that is still eating. Practice good control over both dogs at dinner time and you can help avoid any incidents of fighting over food

Avoid feeding dogs from the dinner table and ignore begging for food. It may look cute but it very quickly turns into a bad habit which can be difficult to break. Where you have more than one dog, begging at the table (or any time for that matter) is to be ignored at all costs, especially if one dog is prone to resource guarding as this could lead to disastrous problems.

If you already have some issues with your dog which includes guarding resources, please contact us for a consultation and proper professional assistance.

### **Children and dogs**

Keep children away from dogs that are eating and be watchful of dogs with bones or other chew foods. Never allow any child to approach a dog that is chewing on something, no matter how much you may trust the dog. Children should be taught not to snatch food or other items from dogs or disturb a dog whilst eating or sleeping.

Refer to our “Children and Dogs” handout for more tips and pointers

### **Avoid over-compensation**

Humans like to care for and “mother” or “nurture” those less fortunate than ourselves.

We tend to support the underdog (*pardon the pun*) in most situations...this is human nature and is what makes us humans so very special.

Due to this, we tend to feel sorry for our rescue dogs, especially if they have had a bit of a rough past. When we feel compassion over the dog, unfortunately we will tend to over-compensate by giving this dog all of our attention and affection to ‘make it all better’.

Now whilst this works well for human to human relationships, it can be disastrous between human to dog relationships as we “empower” the dog due to all the attention affection we give.

Dogs need guidance and a good leader, not sympathy and constant cuddles (although some cuddles are fine of course!!)

The beauty of dogs is that they pretty much live for the ‘now’ so whatever has happened, or not happened to them, tends to be long forgotten or is now no longer part of their existence. Just like them, we need to move on too which will ensure we are providing a safe, happy and enriched environment.

So instead of feeling sorry for your new dog because he/she may have had a bad previous life, try helping your dog by providing the following:

- New positive experiences like exercise/training, outings and adventures
- Confidence building skills, if dog is shy, by providing slow and regular exposure
- Teaching your dog some tricks or new skills for yummy food rewards – make him use his brain...dogs love it!
- Having your new dog accompany you on car rides and errands
- Long walks/runs are great for bond building and tiring out dogs

The old saying “a tired dog is a good dog”...so do plenty with them and exercise their body and brains. They will absolutely love you for it.

### **Departures and homecomings should always be 'non-events'**

Get into the habit making your comings and goings 'non-events' and you'll avoid issues like separation anxiety with your new dog.

What this means is that you do not make a fuss, both when leaving, or when you return home.

Some new owners feel so guilty about leaving their dogs during the day. So much so that they almost put on a stage production before they walk out the door full of cuddles, tears and pigs ears! This is always followed by a 'party time' arrival home.

Please understand that both of these scenarios can be very stressful for a dog...and they really don't have to be! The anticipation of your leaving, then followed by your joyous return can create serious separation related issues in dogs, so it's best to avoid acting like that at all costs.

Here are some tips:

- Departures are non-events! Your leaving the house is **no big deal**, so simply give the dog breakfast, say a quick goodbye and put him or her outside without too much fuss. Do this at least 20 mins before you leave.
- Homecomings are non-events too! If the dog is jumping up erratic, then best to completely ignore until he has lost interest in you. You should only say hello when he is in a calm state so that you can reinforce this much more than the over- excitability. The type of "hello" you receive is really created by you!

### **Common dog behaviours and when to be worried or call in the professionals**

Here is a list of what you may experience with your new dog:

#### Over-excitability

Caused by over-excitability greetings from the humans and paying attention to the dog when he is being erratic. This is normal and can be trained out of a dog very easily.

#### Bonding strongly to one family member only

This could be due to any number of reasons but if this does happen, then it's advisable that all members of the family contribute to the care, feeding, walking and training of the dog so that he can bond to all members.

#### Digging/barking/destruction

All signs of general boredom, under stimulation and lack of training and exercise. Increasing the exercise, training and stimulation you are giving the dog can definitely help. High energy dogs need more than you give them, generally, so come up with a good exercise and training schedule the whole family can be involved in. Try stimulating the environment as well when you're not home. Refer to "Environment Enrichment" handout for some suggestions.

In some cases the above symptoms can be signs of separation related anxiety. These are usually accompanied by other symptoms for separation anxiety. Therefore if you are unsure whether your dog is just bored or is suffering separation anxiety, we recommend you consult with a trainer or vet.

### Resource Guarding

If your dog growls at you, or suddenly your household dogs are fighting, then there is a good chance there is a resource guarding problem in your household. This can be a very serious issue and will need a consultation with a professional. Resource guarding can be managed very well but don't wait until it's too late...you must seek assistance as soon as you as the tell-tale signs start.

### Aggression to other dogs on a walk/park etc

Do you like every person you meet?? Chances are no! Your dog is not any different!

Some dogs just simply do not like other dogs and if so, they tend to bark and lunge at the other dogs when they walk past them on the street during a walk or the park.

Some dogs will approach other dogs and may look perfectly fine to you one minute, then explode into a fight the next. What you missed was the tail held high up and wagging stiffly at the tip as he approached the other dog, followed by the tension in body language amongst the cold hard stare...this is NOT a sign of friendliness!

Some dogs don't have social skills, unfortunately, due to lack of early socialisation and training or just because they've had a bad experience. The bad news is social skills are not something you can teach an adult dog. The good news is that by enrolling into a good training school where dogs can receive regular and controlled exposure to other dogs, you can help your dog overcome his dog aggression issues over time. He can learn to cope being around or within a certain proximity of other dogs which is a great outcome.

For aggression that is mild, sometimes the best option is to just avoid the situation all together. If your dog has no interest in meeting or greeting other dogs, then you must respect his wishes....simple!

Assistance with dog to dog aggression issues is out there for you if you require it. Don't try to take matters into your own hands as it does require specific techniques and approaches. We recommend you seek the help of a professional trainer!

### Seeking help

Most issues can be helped, managed very well and even fixed! If you are experiencing behaviours from your new dog that you are not comfortable with, then don't wait until it escalates, contact the rescue group and/or contact a reputable trainer immediately!

In many cases if the issue is addressed as soon as it happens, it can be sorted quite quickly!

Best of luck!