



Home Tips for Fosters and Adopters

Thank you for fostering or adopting a new dog – did you know that many dogs who arrive in a new environment are lost within the first 24-48 hours of arriving in their new environment? Transitions to a new place are scary and confusing for a dog and their instinct is often to look for a way to run or escape. Please review this information carefully with everyone in your household, including children, regular visitors, and housekeepers! **The following information will help you to learn more about your new rescue dog and how to keep him/her safe.**

NOTE: Some dogs who were recently rescued may act friendly or social once in a home, but the slightest unexpected experience can make them try to flee. If they were rescued after being a stray, they likely ended up in that situation due to one of the reasons below. They will probably be a flight risk for an extended period of time and so we still advise that you follow all of these precautions until the dog has been with you for many months.

New things, people and places are scary

Your dog may have fears that seem irrational and even “silly”, but the simplest of things can cause extreme panic and fear in a rescued dog. Some dogs can exhibit behaviors that may seem “PTSD-like”. When people suffer from PTSD, or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, certain sounds, smells, or sights can trigger memories of a past frightening event and can cause terror. This terror can trigger an immediate “fight or flight” response. With some rescued dogs, they may have had negative experiences with these items, or they may have simply never experienced them before; therefore, treat them as if these experiences are all new and could be scary! Common triggers include:

- Sounds of a car driving by, sirens, backfires, fireworks (keep dogs INSIDE and secure on these holidays)
- Loud yelling by children or adults (including joyful screams of children while playing or adults cheering while watching sports)
- Wind, rain, thunder or lightning
- Appliances such as vacuum cleaners, blenders, garbage disposals, clothes in a dryer
- Food in a frying pan or the sound of a stove exhaust fan
- Snapping sounds – shaking out clothing to put in the dryer, shaking out a trash bag, snapping a newspaper open
- People wearing hats/sunglasses; using canes/walkers; carrying objects like rakes or baseball bats

Some dogs won't just grow out of these triggers quickly – it often takes months or years of slow, methodical and gentle desensitization for the dog to become less sensitive and reactive to these triggers.

Sometimes being alone is more comfortable than being with people. Some shy rescue dogs will often seek out a place of solitude where they can get away from everything. This can be a closet, under a table, or nestled behind a bush in the yard. Allow your rescue dog to have his/her space, at least for the first few weeks, and allow him to come out when he is more comfortable. Sit at a distance, call him softly and try enticing him with a yummy treat. Many of these dogs will need a quiet space where they can retreat at any time, for the rest of their lives.

Do not force yourself on the dog – close contact can be very scary at first. Make sure children know this too and allow your dog to maintain his distance. If and when he does approach you, respond with “calm energy” and pet the dog, but don't immediately ask too much of him (like trying to immediately cuddle him or put him on your lap). It's always best to wait and allow a shy or skittish dog to approach you first.

Cornering a frightened or nervous dog can cause a fear response which might, while not common, make the dog snap at you or a child; it's important to go slow and proceed at a pace that is comfortable for the dog.

Some rescue dogs can take weeks or, often, months to bond with a person; then it is often ONE person, at least for some time. This is normal and to be expected. This has nothing to do with YOU, or your capability as a foster or an adopter! It is extremely rewarding down the road to see how the dog slowly begins to show signs of excitement when you come home, or a willingness to sit near you while you're relaxing and watching television. These are big steps for a shy dog!

We don't always know why certain dogs are fearful or skittish

Many people will automatically assume that dogs with this type of behavior were abused. While this may be the case, these dogs can also simply be under-socialized.

Shy dogs may have had very limited interaction with people – they simply don't know how to be “pets”. Their only exposure to a person may have been at feeding time; they may not have been played with, petted, or spent much quality time in the presence of a person (not “part of the family”).

Many “puppy mill” dogs are like this; they are socially awkward and afraid of many things. So are many dogs who were “backyard dogs” or “yard dogs”. Some of these dogs' unique triggers and phobias may come from their past, such as dogs who were forced to remain outside during terrifying thunderstorms.

Some dogs were once a beloved pet, but they have been out on their own for some time so they have reverted to “survival mode”. Even the most well-adjusted dog can become skittish after being lost for only 48 hours and most of these dogs will not even come to their long-time family members, even if they were with the family since they were puppies. It takes many, many

hours and expert strategy to capture most of these dogs.

Some of these dogs, possibly including the new dog you will be fostering or adopting, were ultimately rescued using a humane trap, which is like a large dog crate that automatically closes once the dog walks inside to eat a meal or a treat. In most cases, caring people tried to call them over, enticing them with treats, to leash them with no success. They may have never had an experience with a leash, and they may perceive a leash as something which is highly threatening.

New rescue dogs, especially shy and skittish dogs, are EXTREME flight risks!!

Because it can take months or years for a dog like this to really feel “relaxed”, they will almost always seek a “way out”. They will run and try to escape any time they encounter a trigger – a snapping noise, a person wearing a hat, or anything that they perceive as scary or dangerous. For this reason, we must take extreme precautions to make sure they cannot escape their home, yard, car, etc.

The following required precautions must be in place for every newly-rescued dog:

1. The dog should be placed in a foster or adoptive home with a MINIMUM 6’ no-climb fence (i.e., not chain link). The fence perimeter should be dig-proof and jump-proof. Check the fence for any way the dog could gain a footing and attempt to scale the fence. Also make sure there are no objects, such as play equipment, trash cans, stacked building materials or other items stored within 2’ of the perimeter of the fence; the dog can use these objects as a means to jump up and over the fence in a moment of fear. Some dogs can jump even these taller fences and should not be left unattended in a back yard at all, at least for a month.
2. Yard gates must be LOCKED (with a padlock) at all times to prevent inadvertent opening.
3. On days when pool or yard service is performed, or when residents are coming and going through a gate, the dog should be locked inside, doggie doors closed, and yard gates re-locked before letting the dog back out.
4. If contractors or repairmen enter the home, be sure to crate the shy dog securely in a quiet area.
5. When inside the home, we strongly recommend using a minimum of TWO BARRIERS between the dog and the outside world at all times. This could be: a. A garage door, then a laundry room door b. A front door, with the dog behind a baby gate in another room (baby gates should be sturdy; always observe a dog closely around a baby gate first to make sure he can’t jump on it and knock it over, or jump over it).
6. Beware of securing a dog inside a room with an open window, with only a screen. Nervous dogs will push the screen out very easily and escape through the window. Remember, their fears are not rational but very real.
7. Whenever a family member is about to leave the home, first check all doors and gates to make sure they are secure, and know where your dog is physically before leaving to make sure

he doesn't accidentally escape.

8. When visitors, friends, children, grandchildren or neighbors come to visit, these guidelines may be a bit much for others to remember on short notice. We therefore recommend that the dog be put in a separate room with the door closed, or in a suitable-sized dog crate in a quiet area, while visitors are coming and going. Once everyone is "settled", the rescue dog can be brought out (if the environment is relatively calm) for brief visits with others to help with socialization. You may want to keep the rescue dog on a leash so that you can keep the dog close to you if he becomes afraid; you can then calmly lead him back to his "safe spot". Please recognize, however, that such encounters with strangers will not be comfortable for this dog for quite some time, and 5-10 minutes at most is appropriate. **Dogs should not be walked, taken to dog parks, to cafes or taken off the property for any reason other than for veterinary care for a minimum of one month after arriving in the new home.** They should become familiar with their home location through sight and smell, before risking an off-site trip.

9. The dog must be microchipped, the registration should be current, and the dog should wear a regular collar, fit snugly, with a current license tag and also a second ID tag with the phone number of someone who will answer 24/7 in case of emergency.

10. When the dog IS taken for a walk or elsewhere away from home, a properly-fitted Martingale collar (see illustration) should be used as a SECOND collar –this special collar should remain attached to the leash at all times after removing from the dog. Check collar fit while walking on leash in back yard first!! 11. Only adults should handle the leash – never children under 16. Whoever handles the leash must remain alert at all times.

12. We strongly recommend threading the "handle" of the leash through a securely clipped "waist leash" (see illustration) so that if the handler becomes distracted or inadvertently drops the leash, the dog will still be attached to the person.

13. We further suggest double-leashing the dog, one to the Martingale collar and the other to the regular collar, as an added protection.

14. A skittish dog should never be "tied out" in your front yard, while camping, at a coffee shop, etc. – leashes can become detached, or nervous dogs can chew through most leashes in a matter of seconds if they are frightened.

15. When transporting the dog in a car, we strongly recommend:

OPTION 1: Transport the dog in a dog crate, with the leash and Martingale collar attached. This allows the person to open the car doors and prepare to remove the dog, with no chance of the dog darting out a car door.

OPTION 2: If a crate is not possible, then ideally two people should be in the car with the dog, one driving and the other holding the leash.

OPTION 3: If a second person in the car is also not possible, then the dog should have his leash

attached with approximately 12" shut in the car door, dangling out the top of a CLOSED window. This allows the person the chance to exit the vehicle, close their own door, walk to the door closest to the dog, grab the end of the leash, and then open the door for the dog.

Make proper arrangements for your dog's care in your absence

If you will be away from your home for a short time, for several days, or for longer, carefully choose who will care for your dog, or where your dog will be cared for, to make sure she is kept safe.

Beware of using friends, adult children or other untrained individuals to care for a rescued or shy dog while you are away. Your absence is a BIG change for this dog, and any slight disruption in routine could cause the dog to become nervous and seek a way out.

We suggest using a professional boarding facility for your rescued or skittish dog when you will be away overnight or longer; but first, please verify:

- ☐ You will be allowed to bring bedding from home; familiar scents are a comfort item for nervous dogs
- ☐ All dog runs must be made of no-climb material (or have tops), if your dog is known to be capable of climbing
- ☐ All perimeter walls must be dig-proof and jump-proof
- ☐ All dogs, if left in an outdoor yard, should be supervised and there should be double gates on yards
- ☐ Staff should be made aware that the dog is an extreme flight risk
- ☐ Gentle, calm interactions with the dog during boarding will help with added socialization

Dogs who are nervous, shy or who have been recently trapped with a humane trap are EXTREMELY difficult to recapture. If a trap was used, they may never be willing to enter a trap again. Please make sure you, and every member of your family as well as frequent household guests, read this information thoroughly. This dog is dependent on you to keep him safe! If for any reason the dog gets out despite these efforts, notify the rescue group IMMEDIATELY - the strategy used in the first few hours is critical to the dog's safe re-capture.

My family has read this information thoroughly, and we agree to abide by all these precautions for as long as this dog is in our household.

Name

Date