

Thinking About Adoption/ Taking Your Dog Home

Tips for happy re-homing

Congratulations on finding a new friend for life! Being a responsible dog owner is about more than feeding your dog, or taking it for a walk. Below is a list of things for you to consider when taking your dog home, which we hope you will find useful. Most importantly, behaviour and health problems can arise for a number of reasons, especially for dogs who have been living in a shelter with other street dogs. While the shelter does have vet support, many dogs do not get individual attention, so we advise you to take your dog to a vet for an initial health check and full health advice as soon as you can. If you notice any problems, it is important to speak to a vet immediately who can either treat the medical issue or recommend help with behaviour training.

Daily routine

Dogs need to be exercised regularly, usually twice a day, in all weathers. The bigger the dog, the more walking it will need. Dogs that are not exercised regularly will often develop behaviour problems, but your dog may need extra help and training to get used to walking on a lead, as it may well be his first experience of this. You should carry plastic bags with you to clean up after your dog if you live in an area where people walk or children play. Both tinned and dried pet food can provide a balanced, nutritious diet. Remember to always provide clean and fresh water. When feeding animals, human food is not recommended. For example, chocolate is poisonous to dogs and can be fatal in large quantities.

Living and sleeping area

Before you go to choose your pet, you first need to make preparations at home and think about where your dog will sleep. If a dog has a safe space that he feels is his own, he will likely settle in more quickly and happily. Your pet's bed should be in a quiet, draught-free place out of direct sunlight. Vacuuming or laundering the bedding will help keep smells and fleas at bay, alongside regular flea and worming treatment from your vet. If you have a garden and you've resolved to keep your dog there, you need to provide adequate shelter from cold, heat, wind and rain. A kennel needs to be easy to clean, and should be positioned so that the dog provides good visibility of the entire yard. The kennel should match the size of the dog so that small dogs are not in huge kennels where they feel unsafe, and large dogs are not squashed into kennels that are too small for them. Very large dog kennels are often very difficult to warm up in winter. If you are planning to let your dog run around or stay in a garden/yard, it is essential that you check the quality of the fence all around the enclosure. The fence should be high enough so that the dog cannot jump over it, and you must check that there are no holes in the fence, and that the fence is fixed to the ground – dogs are very good at getting under fences as well as over them! Make sure also that there are no sharp edges or wires or places where the dog could get caught and injure itself, and also check the area for other dangers such as rat poison, chemicals, sharp tools. Dogs are very curious and are likely to try to explore every corner, and sniff lick or chew anything interesting in the garden.

If you plan to keep your dog in a common yard, with the consent of the other tenants, you

should build an enclosure around his kennel. This will enable people to freely circulate through the yard, and at the same time allow your dog freedom of movement. The size of the box depends on the size of the dog, but should not be less than 2 x 4 m. You should never consider keeping a dog on a chain – it is a very dangerous practice and dogs kept on a chain are likely to suffer physically and mentally.

Even if your dog is safely enclosed in the yard or garden, you will still need to spend regular time with it walking and socialising in the neighbourhood. All animals require a lot of attention and time to develop into a healthy, social unit, and dogs that have been traumatised are likely to need extra attention, at least at first.

Good behaviour

Both you and your dog will be happier if he is well socialised with both people and other animals, and is easy to control. Lots of useful information about dog training can be easily found on the internet, but the key thing to remember is that **dogs respond best to reward based training**. By consistently rewarding and praising good behaviour (with food, attention, treats), a dog can soon be trained. However, using punishments for bad behaviour, especially with a dog that has suffered in a dog shelter, is likely to confuse and frighten the dog and may make it more aggressive or passive or confused. You can also talk to your vet or other pet owners to find out what works best, and read as much as you can about how to train your dog.

Providing your dog with plenty of positive experiences around other dogs and people from an early age will help prevent behavioural problems. Regular walks provide your dog with a change of scene and the chance to meet other dogs. Remember, your dog needs a social life, too. Don't encourage your dog to chase cats or other small animals. In urban areas keep your dog on a lead at all times as it could easily be startled by a noise and run off and get injured or cause an accident. Before letting them off in a safe area for the first time, be confident they will come back when you want them to.

Health Issues

Unless your pet arrived with a record of prior vaccinations, they will have received at least one vaccination while at the shelter and should also be up-to-date with worm treatment. However, there are lots of dogs at the shelter and fleas and worms are a recurring problem, so we recommend taking your dog to a vet for a thorough check up in the first week that you have it. This will also help you to find out about what other services the vet can offer and how contact them in case of any health emergencies. Always ensure your dog's vaccinations are up to date before allowing them outside.

Flea, tick and worm treatments should be repeated regularly to ensure parasites are controlled and the animal's health is maintained. Your vet can advise on the appropriate methods. Regular grooming keeps coats clean and healthy and is essential for long-haired pets.

Neutering not only prevents unwanted litters but can also prevent tumours and other health problems. In male dogs, it is also likely to stop them straying away from the house. Most adult dogs at the shelter will already have been neutered or spayed, but puppies may not be

old enough yet. We recommend that females are spayed at about 6 months and male dogs at about 8 weeks old. There are no health benefits to waiting.

Identification and loss prevention

Most owners assume their pet will never go missing. However, we are constantly picking up dogs from the street, many of whom were once pets who have got lost. Make sure your dog wears a collar with an identity disc attached with your phone number clearly visible. These can be purchased from a most pet shops. If your dog is wandering the street without a collar and identification, it could be picked up and returned to the shelter! Some vets can also “tag” your dog with an electronic identification chip which can be read by other vets with a special scanner and includes all your contact details.

Going away

When planning a trip, be sure to make proper arrangements for your pets. You should only entrust your animal to friends or neighbours if you are confident they will take care of them properly. If your dog hasn't already met his carer, take time to introduce them to each other before you go away. For example, your friend could join you and your dog on a couple of walks. Explain the animal's daily routine and leave contact numbers for yourself and your vet in case of emergencies.

Children

Most dogs happily co-exist with children if they have lived with them from an early age, or if they are introduced to them carefully at a later age. It is important children are taught to respect animals and are not allowed to treat them as toys. Pets need their own space, so children should not disturb them when they are sleeping or eating. Never leave a dog alone with children. Always supervise interaction to ensure children do not tease or overexcite a pet.

Commitment

Giving a home to a rescue animal is one of the most rewarding experiences a person can have. However, it is important you feel ready for, and understand, the commitment of taking on another life, one which will be totally dependent on you.

Dogs are very much companion animals and do tend to suffer if left alone for extended periods of time. As a general rule of thumb, an adult, mature dog over five years old should not be left for more than four to six hours on a regular basis. A dog younger than this can generally be left a couple of hours but puppies should not really be left at all when they are very young, and the time they spend alone should be very gradually built up.