



QLD STAFFY & AMSTAFF RESCUE INC

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What to Expect When You Adopt A Rescue Dog

Congratulations! You have just done the most amazing wonderful thing of adopting a dog and saving its life. This period can be fun, exciting, exhausting and scary for you and your new dog. Adding a new dog to your family can take time, so please give your pet and yourselves time to get to know each other and adjust to the new family dynamic. Enjoy your pet and don't give up if things aren't perfect right away!

We understand that not all dogs and families are compatible, sometimes things just don't work out but the dog does need to be given a chance to adjust. ***When adopting from QSAR we ask that you make a commitment to have the dog in your home for at least seven (7) days to allow both you and the dog a fair go at starting to settle in together.*** As outlined below, there are many things you can do to help the dog adjust to his new environment. QSAR can provide some advice with any problems you may be having and are more than happy to provide trainer recommendations if you need expert assistance. It is best to address any problems sooner rather than later.

Preparing Your Home

1. Set up an area for your dog so he has a quiet area to retreat to. He should have his own bed, bowls and toys. If you plan to crate train your dog, ensure the crate is set up as well. Your dog's QSAR Foster Carer may send along a special blanket or toy that the dog has become attached to. It's a good idea to not wash any bedding given to you until the dog settles in a little. Having something familiar will be comforting to the dog.
2. Be prepared with a new collar and lead for your new dog. Have an ID tag made up and put it on as soon as you pick up your dog. If the dog happens to escape your yard, it is unlikely they will be able to find their way back home so it's important that you be able to be located. QSAR will arrange for the transfer of microchip details but that will take a little time. If he has no ID tag and gets lost, don't worry, QSAR will be notified and will be in touch to let you know where the dog is. It is advisable to keep your dog on a leash when outside the yard until you and your dog have an established relationship and you are confident letting him off leash in a dog park.

3. The Foster Carer will be able to let you know what food your new dog eats so you can ensure you have some ready. If you plan on changing the diet, wait at least a week to start the new diet. Then, gradually transition to the new food over the following ten or more days by adding one part new food to three parts of the old for several days; then switch to half new food, half old, and then one part old to three parts new before serving all new food. Both stress and diet change can cause stomach upset and diarrhoea, so keep an eye out for any signs of illness.
4. Keep in mind that your new dog may be confused and not understand what is happening when he gets moved around from wherever he came from to one or more carers then to a new home. He needs time to get used to the new routine. This may lead to toileting problems, going inside instead of asking to be let out – especially at night. It may be a good idea for the dog to sleep in an easy to clean area for the first month or so.
5. Stress can also lead to chewing behaviour. This of course, is also a common thing faced by owners of young dogs, they just love to give their teeth a work out! You might want to look at dog-proofing the area where your dog will spend most of his time during the first few months. Keep shoes put away, children's toys separated from the dog, electrical cords hidden or taped to skirting boards, pot plants removed from the dog's area, rugs removed etc. There is more information on chewing later in this document.
6. It is important that everyone in your family knows the training vocabulary to use so the dog isn't confused by different commands. The most effective training involves consistency and patience. Repetition and reward is how your dog will learn best. Also discuss 'house rules' like whether the dog will be allowed to sit on couches, lay on human beds, be in the kitchen and so on. If everyone is consistent in enforcing the rules, the dog will quickly learn where his place is and become a confident and well-mannered pet.

The First Few Weeks

1. Humans know that moving house is stressful — it's no different for your new dog. Give him a little time to get used to your home and family before introducing him to strangers. It can be overwhelming for too many people to be coming and going, especially if they are there to make a fuss of the dog.
2. As mentioned above, replicate the dog's diet for at least the first week to avoid gastric distress.
3. Once you arrive home, take the dog straight to his toileting area and spend a good amount of time with him so he will get used to the area and relieve himself. Let him explore his new surroundings without getting in his way too much.
4. Show your dog his new sleeping area and water bowl. If you plan on crate training your dog, leave the crate open so that he can go in whenever he feels like it as it will be a safe haven for him. Children should be taught not to disturb the dog when he is in his crate.

5. Begin with the regular feed/play/exercise routine you want your dog to get used to. Feed him at the times you would feed him on a normal day in your family life, keeping in mind any advice given by the Foster Carer. The dog will need family time and brief periods of quiet time. Being calm and loving around your dog will reassure him that he is in a non-threatening place and allow him to settle in easier.
6. Your dog may be confused and anxious and may act out by barking, whining or chewing things he shouldn't. He also might just look sad or depressed – remember he has been with a loving Foster Carer who likely has pets of their own and he has probably bonded with that family. He will be missing them for a little while. Having a safe space such as a crate for your dog to rest, dog-proofing your home as well as monitoring your dog, will help solve behavioural problems like this. If you aren't crate training, you may try keeping your dog in one or two rooms so the dog is not overwhelmed by the new space. Have TOYS, lots of them, Kongs and frozen ice blocks are great.
7. Your dog's Foster Carer will brief you on everything they know about the dog – personality, routine, habits etc. However, be aware that your dog may act differently in your home than he did at the foster home. There's really no way to be sure how he will behave. Be prepared for it to take weeks or even months for your new dog to show her true self. Be patient and loving, but also be consistent.

Background – knowns and unknowns

1. Be mindful that QSAR doesn't always know the background of the dogs they rehome. Dogs are often rescued from shelters with very little information on how they came to be there or what their life was like before.
2. When dogs are surrendered by the owners, QSAR often find that the whole truth isn't given about why the dog is being rehomed despite their best efforts to find out.
3. Every effort is made by QSAR and their dedicated team of Foster Carers to discover all they can about the dog's personality and habits and begin training to resolve behavioural problems if any are identified.
4. Be assured that you will be given all the information known about the dog but also be aware that the dog may be the result of a lot of scrambled communications and expectations that will require patience on your part to work through.

Introducing the New Dog to Another Dog

1. Some dogs will act out with other dogs when they are stressed. Also dogs are like humans, they don't like every person or dog they meet. Please keep this in mind.
2. Introductions should be on neutral ground. Your dog is looking to you for cues, ignore the other dog because that shows that you don't see them as a threat. Positive training is helpful here: have food treats on hand that your dog loves. When your dog is sitting by your side, reward him, do this as the other dog passes. Repeat frequently.

3. If you have an existing dog, you should have already introduced her to the new dog during a meet and greet. When you first come home, it is advisable that you take both your existing dog and the new dog out for a walk together on neutral ground before entering your home. Your home is currently the domain of your existing dog whereas going for a walk in a safe, non-threatening environment is a good way for them to get to know each other better after their initial meet and greet.
4. Toys, bones or food bowls can all become objects worthy of 'owning' and guarding in some dogs. This is commonly called "food aggression" or "bone aggression" whatever the case may be. It is recommended not to leave the dogs unsupervised until you are completely comfortable that they are being friendly in their interactions. Be quick to distract or interrupt any aggressive or overly playful behaviour. Be aware that you may never be able to leave the object of the aggressive behaviour (bone/toy/food) out when the dogs are alone – ie. some dogs are unable to have bones unless separated and supervised with the bones being removed after a set period of time.
5. It is good for the dogs to learn that when they are around each other, good things happen. This will help each dog to form a positive association with the other. You can establish this by rewarding good behaviour and distracting and redirecting undesirable behaviour. Allow the dogs to establish their social status with each other – within reason of course, you don't want to let them fight it out viciously. Who came first is not indicative of who should be in charge. The social system of dogs is a hierarchy, not a democracy. Who is in charge may vary based on the context of each situation.

Introducing Your Dog to the Family Cat

1. Place your cat in their favourite room with their bed and toys on the day you bring your dog home. Allow your dog to explore the house and then either secure him in his own room or have someone take him out for a walk. Allow your cat to explore the house and become familiar with your dog's scent. Repeat this over the next few days, allowing each animal their turn to have access to the whole house without ever confronting one another. In the meantime, work on basic obedience with your dog so that you have some control over it when it comes to introducing the dog to your cat.
2. When you are ready to introduce your dog and cat, do so when your dog is at his calmest. You may wish to take him for a walk or play an energetic game beforehand. Put your dog on a leash and give him a tasty treat to distract him while you bring your cat in. Keep your cat in the carry cage for the first few meetings, placing the cage on a table so that the cat feels less vulnerable. In the initial stages there may be some hissing and tail swishing – but this should settle down after a few days. Keep a close eye on both animals and do not punish either of them for aggressive behaviour as this will be associated with the presence of the other animal. Rather, give your dog tasty treats during these introductions, particularly when he is obedient and calm. If he becomes highly excitable at any time during the introduction remove him from the room. Do this several times a day, keeping the meetings short so that stress is kept to a minimum.
3. Ensure your cat receives a lot of individual attention from you.

4. When you are ready to let your cat out of the carry cage, make sure your dog is on a leash and that your cat has an easy escape route – choose a room with high window sills or shelves. Never leave your pets unsupervised and take things very slowly, allowing your pets to become used to one another gradually at their own pace. Keep in mind that your pets may never be best friends. Hopefully, however, they will at least tolerate one another and learn to live happily in the same house. In situations where cats do not like the pet dog in the long-term, they may still be able to co-exist in relative peace by seeking out their own space and spending most of their time apart. Pets often have the ability to find a balance and share their territory. Having access to different rooms so that they may be alone can assist in these situations. Feeding the cat and dog separately is also important and ensuring that your cat has a private area to go to the toilet and a safe sleeping spot may assist.

Dogs and Children

1. Supervise, supervise, supervise. Remember, dogs are animals and animals can bite. Never leave children and dogs unsupervised under any circumstances.
2. With children, having a dog is the same as having a backyard pool. Neither the pool nor the dog is bad, but both could produce devastating effects if the child is left unsupervised.
3. Like people, every dog has its limits. Many dog bites occur because the child was not interacting appropriately with the dog, i.e. disturbed the dog while it was sleeping or eating, pulled its hair, ears or tail, stepped on or even hugged the dog.
4. Teach your children how to treat dogs while you are teaching the dog how to be with children. The most important aspect of helping the dog acclimate to children is to reward it for obedient and relaxed behaviour in the presence of the child.

Chew-Proofing

Dogs are predators who love to search, chase and chew. If it's edible, they think they can eat it. Remember that a dog's idea of what is edible can be vastly different from what humans think is edible! Here are few tips to help redirect your dog's chewing:

1. Exercise your dog regularly to help ensure that he is resting or sleeping during quiet times, not bored and looking for something to do. Do not try to suppress their natural tendency to chew. Instead, redirect their chewing to acceptable toys.
2. Do not give them discarded household items to chew. (Shoes, socks, plastic cartons, etc.) How is the dog to distinguish between the prohibited household items and the acceptable items?
3. Play with the dog with the toys. They need to be exciting to the dog.
4. Pick up those things that you do not want the dog to have. It takes a while for the dog to learn all the human rules. Reintroduce things gradually once your dog is sufficiently chew trained to his own toys.

5. Use toys that can be stuffed with food, like Kong toys, or toys that can be soaked in soup stock and dried to increase their attractiveness, like ropes.
6. Confine your dog when you cannot supervise. Confinement is more humane than screaming at your dog every time he picks up a taboo object and chasing him around the house.

Training the Dog to be Alone

When there's a new dog in your house, the tendency is to constantly be with him because he's novel and fascinating and you want to make him feel at home and secure. However, if you are constantly available, he will be in for an incredible letdown when normal life resumes. Set the precedent right away. Leave the dog alone for brief durations over and over – go pick the kids up from school, go get groceries, out for coffee etc.

Do not let the dog have the run of the house. He must be confined until he has been trained and can be trusted to be alone. With many mini-departures, the dog will learn two things:

1. People are not always going to be available.
2. When people leave, they always come back again.

Do your dog a favour by training it that being alone is a good thing.

Congratulations! If you follow these tips, you'll be on your way to having a well-adjusted canine family member.

Information adapted from these sources:

1. QSAR Foster Carers
2. Dr Andrew Weil <http://www.drweil.com/drw/u/ART00560/shelter-dog-to-family-pet.html>
3. Jenna Stregowski, Registered Veterinary Technician <http://dogs.about.com/od/becomingadogowner/qt/What-To-Expect-After-Adopting-A-New-Dog.htm>
4. Sara, Shelter Outreach Director <http://www.petfinder.com/dogs/bringing-a-dog-home/tips-for-first-30-days-dog/>
5. RSPCA http://kb.rspca.org.au/How-should-I-introduce-my-new-dog-to-the-family-cat_68.html