

Bird Adoption Handbook



General & Medical Support: (503) 988-7387

Adopted Pet Behavior Resources: multcopets.org/training-resources

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Successful Homecomings

Adopting a new pet can come with a lot of change for both pet and pet parent, and having the right supplies on hand can help to make the transition as smooth as possible. Here is a list of supplies to help you start on the right foot with your new dog:

Basic Supplies

- ☐ Appropriate cage for your new pet
- ☐ Food: The shorter the list of ingredients is- the better the food is for your new pet!
- ☐ Water and Food bowls
- ☐ Bedding
- ☐ Toys

Other Supplies

- ☐ X-Pen
- ☐ Nail trimmers
- ☐ Brush
- ☐ Flea Control
- ☐ Treats

The First Week Home

Congratulations on adopting a new small animal! Below are some tips to help you both make the adjustment and settle into your new lives together:

- This may be a big lifestyle change for you. You are now responsible for every need of your new pet, including: daily feedings, fresh water, house-training, giving attention, and grooming. Regardless of rain, shine, sleet, snow, or daylight savings time, animals still need to burn off energy. Young or high-energy animals will bounce off the walls if they can't expend that energy appropriately.
- Setting up a routine this first week is highly important. Most animals are creatures of habit, and the way they interact with the world around them can be shaped by how they feel about their environment. In order for them to be able to deal with any changes that come their way, animals must be established with a stable and consistent routine, so that they know what to expect from their new world and what the appropriate response should be. Set your new pet up on a routine so that they are waking up, going to sleep, eating and getting attention & exercise around the same time each day. This will help him to feel loved and secure and will strengthen the bond between the two of you.
- And of course, don't forget to license your new dog with your county animal control!

Housetraining

As tempting as it is to give your new pet the run of the house immediately, it may be too overwhelming for them. It is best to set up a small area as you learn your new pet's habits and as they learn the rules of the house. This area is a space they can hang out when they are not being supervised- where nothing important can get chewed up and accidents are easy to clean up.

Regardless of your new animal's housetraining history, they may need a refresher course on how to do it. To do this, you can either use your dog-proofed area or a crate to teach them. If you decide to use a crate, get one that they can stand up, turn around, and lie down in. Any larger and they may get the idea to use one end as a bathroom and the other as a bedroom.

Crate Training

Introduction to the crate:

1. Never force your new dog into a crate; this will be traumatizing and make the crate training process very difficult.
2. Begin by propping the door open and tossing a few treats inside. Once they go into it, praise them and give them more treats.
3. Repeat this a few times until they are entering the crate easily on their own.
4. Once they are happily entering the crate, try closing the door. Give them a few treats and open the door back up. Repeat many times, slowly increasing the amount of time they sit in the crate with the door closed.

Adjusting to the crate:

5. The next step is to get them comfortable hanging out in the crate by themselves. Prepare a treat that is special and that will take them a little bit of time to work through, such as a stuffed and frozen KONG. Put it in the crate and close the door behind them after they go in. Go about your day and open the door up after 10 minutes without making a fanfare.
6. Repeat this exercise daily, varying the amount of time each time. Ignore them if they whine or bark and wait to let them out once they have been quiet for 15 seconds.
7. Now it's time to leave the house with them in the crate! Place a delicious treat in the crate, such as a KONG and leave the house for a brief errand.
8. Over the next few days, slowly increase the length of your absences. Don't just increase the times though- throw in some short absences as well.
9. Try not to leave them in the crate longer than 3-4 hours at a time, except for bedtime.

Physical and Mental Stimulation

Every animal is going to have different physical and mental needs. Some need to run off energy while other prefer a snooze on the couch. Some animals are highly inquisitive and curious and other happy to just chew on the same toy for hours.

Exercise!

- No matter the age or breed of your new dog, every dog needs exercise. Like humans though, every dog's physical abilities and limitations are different. Thus, tailoring your workout to your dog's needs is crucial. If your dog is new to exercise, start slowly and know your dog's limits (and yours!) and try not to overextend yourselves.
- A good rule of thumb for beginning an exercise program with your dog is: 30 minutes of physical activity, three times a week.
- If your new dog enjoys being around other dogs, set up playdates for them to go burn off some steam with furry friends. For dogs that get along with other dogs, social interactions are very important to helping them have a rounded healthy life. Even if they don't love all dogs, finding at least a friend or two will help fulfill their need for social interaction.

Mind Games

- Equally important is keeping your dog mentally stimulated to ensure both their happiness as well as to prevent any unwanted boredom behaviors such as barking or chewing.
- Use food toys to give your dog a mental challenge to solve. A frozen stuffed Kong can last hours and is a great tool to keep them occupied and thinking. Use your creativity to make food puzzle toys out of boxes or paper towel tubes!
- Training classes are a great way to get them thinking and will help to develop the bond between you. Sign up for a group class or practise basic command at home using positive reinforcement. The sky's the limit on what you two can learn together!

Introducing Small Animals to Children

Small animals and children can make great companions, however not all small animals have had a lot of exposure to children so it is best to introduce them slowly and always supervise their interactions. Children tend to move quickly and a bit erratically, and are generally unaware of where they are in relationship to where the animal is. This means that small animals have a difficult time understanding children and predicting what they will do. The following tips are great reminders to keep on hand when introducing small animals to children

- Respect the animal's personal space and let the animal initiate the interaction – the animal might not be comfortable right off the bat interacting with children.
- Never let a child take the dog's stuff (food, toys, sticks, etc.), especially when they are using or playing with it.
- Always ask the animal's owner before approaching and/or petting an unfamiliar animal. If an animal stiffens their body, turns away or looks uncomfortable, back off. It does not matter much a child wants to pet them, if the animal looks like they want out, let them go.
- Don't pet the dog on top of the head or hug them – although this is what humans like to do, dogs really don't like it. If they want to be pet, always pet dogs under the chin or on the side of the head.
- Make sure children don't hold or eat food at the dog's level. They may just sample it or feel like they are being teased.
- Be ready to intervene in child/dog interactions if the situation is even remotely uncomfortable.
- Never assume your child and small animal can be left alone together without supervision. Children and animals always need to be supervised.
- Do not let a child 'ride' a dog, tease them or get in their face and pull any body part.
- If a dog growls during an interaction, try not to punish the growl. Growling is valuable because it is one of the few tools the dog has to communicate they are uncomfortable. By suppressing a growl, the dog is still feeling the same, but has no way of telling us. This can create a dog that does not give important verbal warnings before they bite.
- Do not tolerate teasing or mishandling of an animal from any child. If the animal is uncomfortable, remove them from the interaction and give them a quiet, safe place to relax.

Introducing Small Animals to Small Animals

If you are combining small animals in your household, here are some tips to position your pets for success together:

- Have a safe room as well as offer high places the cat can access but the dog cannot. It is important that the cat can retreat to relax away from the dog and then venture forward at their own pace. The cat should have access to food, water and litter in this area.
- Never force the cat (or dog) into proximity by holding, caging, or otherwise limiting their ability to escape.
- For the first introduction, always have the dog on leash. If it seems to be going well, drop the leash and supervise closely.
- If the dog is behaving in a friendly and/or cautious way, try to not intervene in their interactions, except to praise and reward the dog for their good manners.
- Interrupt any chasing and redirect the dog's attention to another activity. You may need to manage the dog on-leash around the cat until you have worked out a routine.
- In the first few weeks, observe the trend: is their relationship improving or declining? Monitor interactions until there is a positive pattern in their interactions.
- Make sure the resident cat gets a lot of attention and individual time with you so they do not associate the newcomer with reduced attention and affection.
- If the newcomer is a cat, it's also a good idea to make sure the dog associates positive interactions with the new intruder.
- Dogs should never have access to the cat litter box – it may cause the cat stress and the dog may eat cat feces and litter. Most dogs will also eat cat food the cat leaves behind – it is best to feed the cat in an area the dog cannot access.



Introducing Rabbits to Rabbits



- Introduce new dogs to each other on neutral territory. This helps to prevent any territorial dispute. Each dog should be on leash with separate handlers. Walk them at a distance at first and then slowly shorten the distance between them. Verbally reward and praise positive and friendly behavior. If neither dog is showing negative reactions, let them meet nose to nose
- Pay attention to each dog's body language. Watch carefully for any body language that indicates one of the dogs is uncomfortable, including hair standing up on their back, teeth baring, growling, and avoidance. If you see this behavior, either when the dogs are at a distance or close to each other, immediately redirect the dog's attention. Once the dogs become relaxed again, you can have them approach each other.
- Never try to force interactions between dogs. Each dog is going to have their own unique play and interaction style. Some dogs may become best friends right away, while others take some time to adjust. It can take time for them to figure each other out and to determine the role they each are going to play in the family.
- Before you take the dogs into the home, pick up any resources they could potentially squabble over- such as toys or rawhides. Once you get home, monitor the dog's closely; is their relationship improving or declining? Monitor interactions until there is a positive pattern and keep them separate when you cannot .

Troubleshooting Any Problems

Barking

Dogs bark for a variety of reasons and your reaction to the barking can either encourage or discourage this behavior. Below are different types of barking and steps to modify it.

- **The Watchdog:** Alert barking serves multiple purposes: both to alert the family that an intruder is present and to try to scare away the intruder. This type of barking can be welcome in some types of homes, however can be annoying when an actual intruder is not present (such as the mailman). The best way to manage this type of barking is to teach your dog a different kind of response to the stimuli- such as exhibiting calm behavior for a treat. Everytime the doorbell rings or someone knocks, ask your dog to sit or lay down and offer them a treat. With time this will become their go to response.
- **The Demand Barker:** Demand barking occurs when your dog wants something NOW, such as attention, a walk, etc. Dogs learn to try different behaviors to get the things they want and barking works well due to it being annoying. If you don't like it when your dog barks- don't reward it with either the thing that they want or a correction. Corrections can actually serve to reinforce the behavior because even though it is negative attention, it is still attention. Patience and time are necessary to work with this type of barking. To manage this type of barking it is best to do two things: Set a regular schedule that your dog can anticipate and ignore the barking while rewarding calm behaviors.
- **The Lonely Barker:** This type of barking usually involves anxiety at being left alone. For a dog that is uncomfortable being left alone, it is best to build up your absences and create positive associations with being left alone from the start. Practise brief absences to desensitize your dog to being left alone. Don't make a big deal of it when you leave or come back and provide an interesting thing for them to work on while you are gone such as a frozen stuffed Kong. As dogs are very social creatures, some dogs may not tolerate prolonged absences and would do better with another dog companion, a dog walker, or doggie daycare. Make sure your dog is receiving enough mental and physical stimulation when you are home. A tired dog is a happy dog!
- **The Scaredy Dog:** This barking occurs when a dog is scared, or uncomfortable in a situation. To prevent this, it is important that you practise safe socialization while your puppy is young. If your dog is older, use positive reinforcement to acclimate your dog to the scary stimuli. If strangers are scary- use treats to help them make positive associations around them.

Pulling

When you just want to enjoy a nice walk with your dog and they just keep on pulling- it can be a very frustrating experience for both of you! The following tips can help to make these ventures more enjoyable for everyone!

- Invest in training equipment such as a front clip chest harness or head harness. Both of these tools use slight pressure to discourage your dog from pulling and give you more control over them. Never use a flexi leash; the flexi leash actually gives to a pulling dog and teaches him to pull. Never use choke chains, prong collars or shock collars. These types of collars are often used to correct behavior by inflicting pain any time the dog pulls, lunges, barks or performs an undesired behavior. These types of training tools are known for worsening behavioral issues such as fear and aggression. What should be a pleasurable and rewarding experience for the dog turns into a scary and painful one.
- Play “Red Light/ Green Light”
 - Start your walk and as soon as the leash gets tight, stop walking- just as if you had just come to a red light.
 - Wait patiently until your dog turns to you to see why you have stopped. As your dog turns, the leash will loosen. As soon as this happens, praise your dog and continue to move forward (Green Light).
 - Repeat this throughout the walk. Keep practicing loose-leash walking two or three times a day for 10 minutes at a time until your dog is an expert at the exercise.

Chewing

Chewing can be a very natural behavior- it is how dogs can learn about their world, as well as keep themselves entertained! Remember- dogs don't have an understanding of the value of your things and may just find your fancy shoes more fun to chew than their toys. This energy can be redirected so that your dog is only chewing appropriate items.

- Remove anything you really don't want to be chewed: shoes, children's toys, books, etc.
- Find them toys they like to chew, or make them yourselves. A chicken broth soaked and frozen bone or toy can keep a dog entertained for hours.
- Kong's are designed for the chewer in your life and can satisfy the chewing need.
- Make sure to provide your dog with daily, vigorous exercise, playtime, and training sessions to keep them stimulated.
- Chew proof the area they are in when you cannot supervise them.

Fear

Much of what a dog experiences as they grow up influence who they become as adults and what situations and things they may be afraid of. It is important to introduce a new puppy positively to new stimuli (such as new people, other animals and bikes) so that they do not develop a fear response to them. However, if you are bringing an older dog into your home, they may never have had the opportunity to positively experience the things that scare them.

Some signs of fear include: ears are back and/or pinned to the head, raised hackles, tail tucked, body lowered, fast panting, sometimes showing of teeth and vocalizations. It is important to recognize these signs of fear in your dog and to not force them to interact with the thing causing the fear. Remember- you have more control of the environment than your dog does, and you don't want to push them into demonstrating a behavior that can be damaging, such as biting.

The best way to deal with fear is to either completely avoid the stimuli if possible, or to slowly acclimate your dog to it using positive reinforcement.

- Understand your dog's threshold. Your dog has a threshold under which they are still able to make good decisions and learn new behaviors. Once they reach their threshold it is best to remove them from the situation and allow them to calm down before working with them again. Once they are back under threshold, the situation may still be challenging for them but it can help to build confidence, reduce stress and help to form positive associations for them.
- Pay attention to what your dog is saying. Every dog has a progression of behaviors that can build up to an unmanageable level of fear. Knowing when your dog is approaching an uncomfortable point is necessary to help them to either avoid the stimulus or practise calming behavior.
- Desensitizing and counterconditioning are great tools to teach dogs that “scary” people or situations are not as frightening as they feel they are. Use treats or wet food to slowly acclimate your dog to the stimulus. Start with the stimulus in a non-threatening form (such as a picture of another dog, or a strange person at a distance). Gradually increase exposure to the stimulus until the dog is comfortable and not expressing any fearful behaviors. By rewarding the dog each time it makes a good decision about the “scary” stimulus, it will gradually become less and less scary and the dog will begin to have positive associations with it.
- Make sure to communicate to visitors to your home or strangers on the street how to properly interact with your dog. If it is going to cause your dog too much stress, or they have not progressed to a point in their training where it would be beneficial to the dog, remove them from the situation and do not force an interaction.

Resources

Microchip registration

Register your microchip number online with Found Animals.

www.foundanimals.org/

Behavior Helpline

If you are experiencing any behavior issues with your newly adopted pet, call the Multnomah County Animal Services Behavior Helpline directly:

(503) 988-7387 or visit multcopets.org/training-resources

- Please be prepared to provide your name, phone number, the pet's animal ID (located on your adoption paperwork), and your specific behavior concern.
- If there is no answer, please leave a message and your call will be returned the same business day.
- For emergencies, please Any medical issues should still be forwarded to Animal Health, by e-mailing animal.care@multco.us.
- The Behavior Helpline is for animals that have been adopted from Multnomah County Animal Services. For behavioral help with pets not adopted from Multnomah County Animal Services, call our main shelter line at (503) 988-7387.