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www.oregonhumane.org

Burns Rescue Dogs-What to Expect

On March 13, 2009, 125 dogs were transported from a rural property in Burns, Oregon to begin their new lives at the Oregon Humane Society. After much needed medical care, vaccination, spaying and neutering, these timid dogs will be adopted into special homes and begin their journey toward trusting and enjoying the company of a human caretaker.

The following are a few of the special care considerations and challenges these dogs and their new families will face.

Feeding- The dogs were living in crowded conditions with limited resources, the most valuable being food. Their extremely thin body conditions indicate that few if any of the dogs were receiving adequate nutrition prior to the rescue. As a result, the dogs “wolf” their food and water very quickly. Though it is in our nature to want to feed such a hungry dog, it will be important to avoid overfeeding. Provide the recommended amount of food for the dog’s current weight, split into two or three feedings per day, and increase the amount as the dog gains weight. Overfeeding simply because the dog seems hungry can cause GI upset and will make potty training more of a chore.

Resource Guarding- Again, because of the above, these dogs may be very possessive over their food and even water with other animals and people. Initially you will have to separate the dogs when feeding and watering until you become more familiar with your dog and they settle into your home and gain weight. Because of their situation, some of the dogs may ALWAYS have to be fed separately. Do not give long lasting, high value food treats such as rawhides, raw bones etc. as these dogs may try to hide them and protect the special hiding place.

Potty Training- These dogs have not lived indoors and so are not housetrained. They will be starting from scratch in this department and will need your patience and commitment to help them succeed. Since the dogs were living in such crowded and unsanitary conditions, they may lack the inherent desire to keep their “den” area clean; therefore crate training may not be a viable option at first. Initially, designating a safe doggy room would be best. That way you can provide a “target area” (e.g. paper) and begin to teach your dog to keep their bed area clean and “go” in a designated area. Some of these dogs cannot walk on a leash and certainly won’t feel comfortable going potty with you there and initially some of the dogs may escape even a well fenced yard or be difficult to catch if left outside. Having another dog in the home who is potty trained, social and calm would be a benefit. Time and patience is the key and taking baby steps to allow the dog plenty of time to settle in. Additional house training tips can be found in the “Your New Dog” Booklet provided in your adoption packet.

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Socialization and Leash Training- With little or no human interaction, the Burns dogs have not had prior experiences with adults, children, dog parks, the sights and sounds of traffic, or riding in an automobile. We expect them to be overwhelmed by everything they encounter at first. During the critical first weeks or months their safety will depend on your good judgment and forethought, because a frightened dog will look for any occasion to bolt when startled: out of vehicles, out the front door, or slipping his leash. Again, slow introductions and positive reinforcement will be the key to success in this area. We highly recommend the booklet “The Cautious Canine” by Patricia McConnell for excellent tips on socialization – available in our store. Also helpful is the book “Help for your Shy Dog” by Deborah Wood. They contain excellent tips on socialization, confidence building and how to take care of a fearful dog. They are available in our store or online. It will take time for these dogs to feel safe in public places and they will need to fully adjust to your home and family before being expected to deal with new people or places. Keeping low expectations and not rushing the process will help ensure success.

Children- Absolutely all interactions with children and dogs must be closely supervised. These dogs may bite as a response to fear or by being overwhelmed by new experiences that are completely foreign to them, especially if they feel cornered. By closely adhering to the settling in protocol regarding children provided in your adoption packet, you can help to avoid accidents during the adjustment period. Many of these dogs will not be able to cope in homes with small children.

Training and Behavior Resources- please go to www.oregonhumane.org and look under ‘Pet Training,’ then select ‘Problem Pet Advice’. You will find free articles, contact information for our free behavior helpline, and other helpful links. In the future after your dog has had some time to settle and bond to you, you may want to consider taking a basic obedience class with your dog or coming in for a one-on-one training consultation.

Free Behavior Helpline 503.416.2983. Training Class information: 503.285.7722 x.225

Thank you for adopting from the Oregon Humane Society!