

Michelle 302243: What to Expect

Michelle is a graduate of our Behavior Modification Program and is looking for a special home. Michelle is a very sweet, albeit shy & nervous puppy. She likes going for leisurely sniffy walks in calm environments and romps in the yard with her dog friends. Michelle was born on and grew up with her siblings and parents on a secluded porch, missing out on her key puppy socialization. She's incredibly shy and nervous and is still learning how to be a dog and navigate this human world. Michelle is most nervous around people preferring to hang out in a corner and observe. She does not yet approach people for affection, play, or even to take treats from our hands. If approached directly, she will flee. During her time at OHS, she's learned to walk on a leash, explore new spaces, and meet new dogs. While Michelle does like to hang out and occasionally play with other dogs, she tends to do best with confident and well socialized dog (or dogs), who understand not to overwhelm, crash into, or rough house with her. Michelle does get a great deal of her confidence from the presence of another dog and as such will do best in a home where there is a resident dog to play with and to help show her the ropes of living alongside humans. Having a confident resident dog will also help relieve some of the social pressure she may be feeling at first as petting and play can be directed to the social resident dog. A pet meet is required to ensure the dogs are a good match. She will do best in an adult only home, in a calm & quiet neighborhood. Due to her fear, she is not a match for a home with children, a busy downtown apartment building, or a home with a lot of foot traffic. We expect that Michelle will be overwhelmed by everything she encounters at first. During the critical first months in a new home, her safety will depend on your good judgment and forethought. **A frightened dog will look for any occasion to bolt when startled: out of vehicles, out the front door, or slipping out of the leash. Keep a very tight grip of that leash!**

Michelle is a nervous and reserved dog, she does not enjoy being approached or forced into interacting with people; she will try to avoid people or interactions that make her uncomfortable, moving away from and making herself small. She is not a dog who likes to be touched, petted, or picked up, and may never be comfortable with these types of interactions. She much prefers a leash to be guided into areas rather than the pressure of people. If handlers continue to push her, she may urinate/defecate, show her teeth, or growl to show her discomfort. She will need patient owners who can continue to build up her confidence and skills using the same positive reinforcement-based methods we use here at OHS. Michelle needs a home with another resident dog who she can do activities alongside and alleviate any social pressure from the humans in the home.

Here's how to help Michelle settle in during your first months together:

Use an exercise pen to confine Michelle to a small area when you are not home or able to supervise them (see picture). Give them a bed, water, favorite toy, and a potty pad. This "safe spot" will also be a great place to put them when you have visitors to your home, so they don't have to worry about interacting with everyone if they're not comfortable.

Patience will come in handy for you. Michelle responds best to positive reinforcement and reward-based training. They will need an understanding, calm owner who has the time and desire to work on helping them learn to live in a home. Michelle will pay you back by supplying love and enthusiasm!



Michelle's "safe spot" when no one is home.

Use routine to get Michelle comfortable in their new home. It will take a few weeks for Michelle to feel comfortable in their new home and with you. Having a predictable schedule will help them adjust to their new home.

Be your dog's advocate. It's okay to ask someone to stop or prevent a person from letting their dog come up to say hi to your dog. Watch their body language and help your dog out of situations if they appear stressed. Explain that Michelle is not comfortable with people and doesn't enjoy meeting strangers while on their walk. Tossing a treat on the ground is more effective for your dog to make positive associations with new people. Distance is calming.

Don't take Michelle to busy places where they will have lots of uncontrolled interactions with people/dogs (such as Saturday Market, off-leash dog parks, coffee shops, walks down Hawthorne St., Home Depot, etc.).

Let them drag a leash attached to their collar for the first week or two inside and outside the home. Fast movements are startling, and it will take time for them to be okay with you approaching and removing the leash. If you go slow at the beginning, you'll build a trusting relationship. Treats always help!

Allow for time to build trust. Always let Michelle decide if they want to come closer to you. Don't force interactions. As they grow more comfortable, you will see Michelle decide that they enjoy spending time with you by coming closer for pets, jumping next to you on the couch, and following your resident dog around.

Supervise your dog outside. Even if you have a fenced yard, please do not let Michelle out alone. They are small and could easily hide under your deck or a bush - or slip through a gap in your fence! They do like to go for short walks and go outside to potty, but need some time to build confidence to go on longer excursions in even the quietest of neighborhoods.

Wait to take walks. Michelle will need time to bond with you before you start taking them for walks. Give them a couple of weeks to get to know you and their new home, then practice walking around your yard before trying a walk around the block. Michelle will do best walking alongside a confident canine companion. They're already doing a great job of checking in with their human at the other end of the leash – continue encouraging this behavior to help strengthen the bond by offering treats.

Visiting the Vet: Unless it's an emergency, give your dog plenty of time to bond to you before taking them to your vet. Start with positive visits just for treats. Vet visits will more than likely be scary, but if your dog already trusts you, your presence may help them feel more comfortable.

Behavioral Medication for your new dog

This dog has been prescribed one or more medications to help reduce anxiety and impulsivity during their time in the shelter. You may be provided with a supply of this dog's medication(s) along with specific dosing instructions at the time of adoption. We would recommend that you continue giving this medication for at least the first 6 months after adoption to help reduce stress that may be associated with this dog making a smooth transition into your home. In order to avoid any adverse side effects (including behavioral and systemic) please do not abruptly stop administering these medications or discontinue use without consulting your veterinarian. When it appears time to stop giving your dog these medications, please contact your veterinarian for an appropriate protocol to make sure you have enough medication to allow for a gradual weaning off process. Please do not substitute other supplements or medications (including your own prescriptions) without consulting a veterinary professional.

During this process, please watch for any signs of worsening fear or anxiety. If the dog appears to be getting worse during the weaning off process, contact your veterinarian as longer treatment or a different combination of medications may be needed. Remember that successful behavioral rehabilitation often relies on a combination of pharmaceutical therapy as well as various training modalities.

We're here to help!

We want Michelle to be successful in your home. We're available to answer questions via phone and email. During your first two months with Michelle, we can also set up a free one-on-one consultation. For questions or to schedule an appointment, contact Annika at **(503) 802-6713** or annikah@oregonhumane.org.

Please keep in touch so we can continue to help you now and in the future. Reach out if you have questions or concerns, or just to give an update. We love to see photos and hear how our friends are doing! Thank you for adopting from the Oregon Humane Society. Congratulations on your new dog!