



Mortimer 336096: What to Expect

Mortimer is a graduate of our Behavior Modification Program and is looking for a special home. Mortimer is a reserved Great Pyrenees who enjoys casual sniffy walks and lounging in the sun. Mortimer came to OHS through our Humane Law Department; his former owner struggling to care for the number of dogs they had on their rural property. While it was in Mortimer's best interest to be removed from this property, that wide open space had been all he had known for his whole life. Prior to coming to OHS, Mortimer had never worn a collar, walked on leash, or lived indoors. Coming to Portland and suddenly being inside a shelter environment, was very overwhelming for him. This caused Mortimer to shut down, refusing to walk inside and plant himself on the ground when he felt overwhelmed.

Working with him in the Behavior Modification program, we've been able to provide Mortimer with structure and predictability, allowing him to try new and intimidating things in a way that feels manageable. Using both positive reinforcement based training methods and setting up situations in which Mortimer can try new and intimidating things in a manageable way, like walking on new flooring, he's had fantastic success! Future adopters will need to be ready to acknowledge his default anxious behavior but feel comfortable continuing his progression of skills. He is learning the comforts of living in an indoor world and things we have adjusted to will be brand new experiences for him, such as noise from the television, riding in a car, sight and sound of the vacuum, walking through doorways, and the various texture of flooring throughout a home. We expect that Mortimer will be overwhelmed by everything they encounter at first. During the critical first months in a new home, their 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!**

Stress can often affect a dog's appetite, and Mortimer's level of stress in the shelter environment has lead him to have some hesitancy about eating. This lack of appetite has left Mortimer underweight. With time, Mortimer has started to feel more comfortable in the shelter environment, we've found foods that he enjoys eating, and he's slowly gaining healthy weight. During his time at OHS, our veterinary team has looked at Mortimer and prescribed him with a special diet to increase his calories in a safe & controlled manner. Adopters will need to be prepared to continue this feeding and check in with their community veterinarian to help maintain Mortimer's weight gains.

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

Designate a "safe spot" in your home. You can use a crate or taller baby gates to confine them to a smaller area where they have access to water, bed, and toys. When you are unable to supervise the dog, leave them in their safe spot. Slowly work toward leaving them alone, unsecured, once they've had the chance to settle into your home and you know with certainty, they will be comfortable.

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 Mortimer is not comfortable with people and doesn't enjoy meeting strangers while on their walk.

Don't take Mortimer 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 Mortimer decide if they want to come closer to you. Don't force interactions. As they grow more comfortable, you will see Mortimer 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.

Patience will come in handy for you. Mortimer 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. Mortimer will pay you back by supplying love and enthusiasm!

Supervise your dog outside and take them out on a leash. Even if you have a fenced yard, please do not let Mortimer out alone. They are easily frightened and could dig a hole under your fence or slip through a gap! 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.

Limit introductions to new people. Take your time to get to know Mortimer before introducing them to someone new. They may need to meet a new person multiple times before feeling comfortable with strangers. Treats and allowing Mortimer to approach as they feel comfortable will be best. New people should just completely ignore Mortimer at first – playing hard to get is the way to their heart.

When you have people over, **it's okay to put Mortimer in another room.** If you'd like Mortimer to meet a guest, put them on a leash and give them time to adjust before allowing your guest to pet. Let it be Mortimer's choice to go to them for pets or hang back and watch. Crowding Mortimer or forcing them to interact can make fearful behavior worse.

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

Use treats and toys to build trust. Maintaining and continuing Mortimer's training will create a bond and a form of communication between two species who don't understand each other. The more positive experiences Mortimer has with their owners, the more valuable you will become in high distracting situations.

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.

Try using **Adaptil (Dog Appeasing Pheromone)** or **Rescue Remedy by Bach Flower Essences**. These products may help dogs settle in new environments by easing the stress associated with change.

We're here to help!

We want Mortimer to be successful in your home. We're available to answer questions via phone and email. During your first two months with Mortimer, we can also set up a free one-on-one consultation. For questions or to schedule an appointment, contact us at **(503) 285-1145** or BMODTrainers@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!