



Nettle 354852: What to Expect

Nettle is a graduate of our Behavior Modification Program and is looking for a special home. Nettle is a wide-eyed, soft-hearted sweetheart of a lass who dreams of nothing more than meandering along at your side, then curling up together beneath a great heap of blankets to watch the seasons turn. She's happiest with a gentle stroll, a cozy snuggle, and a little bit of autumn magic in the air. Upon arrival to OH, Nettle found herself overwhelmed with the hustle and bustle of shelter life. To cope with this stress, Nettle would shy away from handlers or freeze to avoid conflict. Bringing Nettle into the Behavior Modification program has allowed us to go slow with her, introducing pet dog skills like walking on leash and navigating in and out of doors. While still a shy gal, Nettle has made fantastic progress and is learning to accept more new experiences with curiosity rather than fear. She'll need a quiet low traffic home with patient, and understanding adopters that are ready to continue using the same positive reinforcement-based training methods we've had success with here at OH.

During her time in the BMOD program, we've introduced Nettle to multiple other dogs to gauge her interest in playing and socialization. Nettle can become excited when she sees other dogs out and about on leash, and this can cause some frustration and barking. As an insecure and nervous young dog, and once bonded to her handlers, Nettle has shown some guarding behaviors of her favorite people. Nettle will hide behind her handlers' legs to avoid a social interaction that has her feeling nervous with another dog or show her teeth and snap if her body language is ignored. Dog parks are not a match for Nettle and her social needs, as there are too many chances for unplanned and potentially negative social interactions. She'll do best in a home that can continue to provide her with positive social interactions and appropriate training to give Nettle more tools to navigate the world with confidence! Due to her upbringing we believe Nettle would like to be the only dog in the home, so she can worry less about others and focus solely on herself.

Here's how to help Nettle 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 towards 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 Nettle 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.

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!

Supervise your dog outside. Even if you have a fenced yard, please do not let Nettle 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. Nettle 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. Nettle 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.

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

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

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

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

We expect that Nettle 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!**

Visiting the Vet: Unless it is an emergency, give your dog plenty of time to bond to you before taking them to your vet. Nettle does very well at the vet, with patience they handle meeting new people well. The vet can still be a scary place. Bringing tasty treats like cheese and/or hot dogs can help make the experience more pleasant.

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 Nettle to be successful in your home. We're available to answer questions via phone and email. During your first two months with Nettle, 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!