



Siren 355730: What to Expect

Siren is a graduate of our Behavior Modification Program and is looking for a special home. Siren is as sweet as she is shy, with a gentle little soul and a heart full of curiosity. She may be a little nervy at first but give her a moment and her inquisitiveness usually wins out. Siren's history is unknown to us. She came into the Behavior Modification Program at Oregon Humane to help boost her confidence and learn some important training skills. Her future family should be prepared to introduce her to the world gradually, always allowing her to set the pace and continue the positive reinforcement-based training methods we use here at OH. Siren would do best in a low traffic home away from the busy hustle and bustle of a busy neighborhood. Small children's unpredictable fast movements and noises can be frightening and Siren would do best in a home with older children or only adults.

Siren can be a nervous dog, especially when meeting new people or exploring unfamiliar places. When she feels worried or uncomfortable, she will usually try to create some distance from whatever is frightening her. This may look like avoiding eye contact, hiding, moving quickly to the end of her leash, or searching for a way out of a room or yard. If she feels cornered with no escape, she may escalate to growling or snapping. Siren will need time, patience, and understanding as she learns to feel safe around new people and experiences. Giving Siren the choice to approach new people when she feels ready is a wonderful way to help her build confidence without putting too much social pressure on her. And once she decides you're someone she trusts, don't be surprised if she happily sniffs your face when you laugh, leisurely prances alongside you on walks, or sidles up next to you for soft pets.

While in the BMod Program, we've introduced Siren to several dogs, and she can be a very nervous around them, often preferring to keep her distance rather than interact. She does best with calm, confident, well-socialized dogs who understand her need for space and won't rush up to her or engage in rough play. When given the time and space she needs, Siren is comfortable simply sharing her space with a respectful canine companion. Rowdier dogs who don't give her a chance to step away can overwhelm her, and she may snap or show her teeth to let them know she needs some space. While on walks, Siren does not want to meet dogs and will often attempt to dart away if a dog approaches. It will be important to advocate for her space while out on walks, so she continues to build her trust and confidence in you as a handler.

Here's how to help Siren 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 Siren 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!

Allow for time to build trust. Always let Siren decide if they want to come closer to you. Don't force interactions. As they grow more comfortable, you will see Siren 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 Siren 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.

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

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

We expect that Siren 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. Siren 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.

We're here to help!

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

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.