Alfonso 357515: What to Expect

Alfonso is a graduate of our Behavior Modification Program and is looking for a special home. Alfonso is a cute, cuddly little guy whose biggest wish is to be your very own scruffy blonde shadow! He loves being picked up, snuggling in your lap, and adores leisurely walks with plenty of time to stop and sniff along the way. Alfonso came to us through our Second Chance Program, and much of his history is a mystery. We do know he previously lived with many other dogs, which became overwhelming for his owner to manage. These days, Alfonso is ready to soak up all the love and attention! While he would absolutely love to be your one and only, he is affable with other dogs and could live with a canine companion. A pet meet is required before adoption to ensure everyone is a good match.

Alfonso was briefly adopted, but he was returned to the shelter due to an incident involving one of the resident cats in the home. While his adopters were present, Alfonso displayed neutral behavior toward the cats. However, when left unattended, he was able to escape confinement and had a scuffle with one of the cats breaking skin on its ear. Based on this incident, Alfonso is not considered a suitable candidate for a home with cats.

Alfonso is still working on potty training; in his previous home he was marking indoors, and they used Belly Bands to help manage these occasional accidents. He has shown improvement while in our care, and with time and consistent training, he could continue to have success. His future family should be prepared to keep a structured potty schedule, offer frequent trips outside, and provide plenty of positive reinforcement as he learns the potty training ropes. Alfonso has also had some big feelings about being left alone and would benefit from ongoing support and training in learning to feel comfortable and settle independently when no one is present. With patience, consistency, and a little extra guidance, Alfonso will truly blossom in your home!

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

Use an exercise pen to confine Alfonso to a small area when you are not home or able to supervise them (see picture). Give them a bed, water, 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.

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

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

We expect that Alfonso 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!**

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

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 Alfonso decide if they want to come closer to you. Don't force interactions. As they grow more comfortable, you will see Alfonso 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 Alfonso 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 Alfonso before introducing them to someone new. They may need to meet a new person multiple times before feeling comfortable with strangers. Treats and allowing Alfonso to approach as they feel comfortable will be best. New people should just completely ignore Alfonso at first – playing hard to get is the way to their heart.

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

Alfonso needs daily exercise to reduce stress. Alfonso loves to go for runs, walks, play fetch, and chase a flirt pole. Giving your dog a healthy outlet for some of their energy will help them settle during calm hours at home.

Practice crate training. Start by feeding meals in a wire crate and work your way up from there. It will be in your best interest to **slowly** increase time in the crate, so they view it as a safe, comfortable spot. When you cannot monitor your dog in the home, allow them some time to settle and relax in the crate.

"Puppy proof" your home and practice tether training to prevent them from getting into puppy/adolescent trouble. When home have Alfonso on leash, attached to you or tethered to a large piece of furniture as you go about your daily routine. This will help with potty training, bonding, and creating boundaries within the home. Let Alfonso drag the leash around the house or yard from time to time to simulate "freedom", but do not let them off leash until they can 100% be trusted not to get into things they shouldn't. This could take up to a few weeks. Crate them when you cannot watch them. This will ensure their puppy curiosity doesn't get them into any trouble. You will have long lasting success if you follow this method.

Don't take Alfonso 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.).

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.

We're here to help!

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