Mia 357518: What to Expect

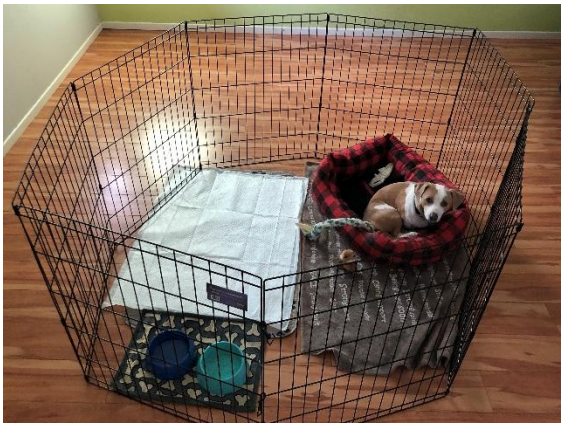
Mia is a graduate of our Behavior Modification Program and is looking for a special home. Mia is a sweet and shy little dog who is learning how to navigate the world as a pet dog living in a home. Mia came to OH from a shelter partner out of state where she was previously living in a hoarding situation with dozens of other dogs. She will need help in her new home learning how to navigate the world and living in an urban environment. Mia will need patient owners who will continue to use the same positive reinforcement techniques we've found successful here at OH. A low traffic home away from the hustle and bustle of a busy environment will further help Mia decompress and adjust to her new home. She would do best in a home without small children who's unpredictable movements and loud noises can be startling.

When uncomfortable Mia will choose a comfortable spot to observe the world around her, either on a dog bed, under furniture, or on the couch. If startled, she may dart and attempt to hide. She is learning how to go for slow leisurely walks on leash and seems to be adjusting to this new routine, but can be easily startled by loud noises and fast movements. The outside world is a new experience for her and things we are desensitized to can be overwhelming for her such as sweeping, noises from electronics, walking, and the everyday movements of life outdoors. Mia is neutral to other dogs, and would likely find a lot of courage and confidence from following another social dog around the house and neighborhood. A pet meet is required before adoption to ensure personality compatibility.

When comfortable Mia will allow gentle chin scratches and follow you around the home. With time she will learn to trust her human companions and could become more affectionate and playful. This journey could take several weeks to months before Mia can fully decompress and trust her new lifestyle and family and settle into a routine of being a "pet dog." We expect that Mia 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!**

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

Use an exercise pen to confine Mia 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.



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

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

Take Mia outside on leash. Even if you have a fenced yard, please do not let Mia out alone. They are so small that they 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.

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

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

Wait to take walks. Mia 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. Mia 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.

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

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

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

Don't take Mia 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.

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