



## **BRINGING YOUR NEW GERMAN SHEPHERD HOME?**

Make sure you know your new German Shepherd Dog's (GSD) history, veterinary information, evaluations and current eating, sleeping and activity routines so that his transition into your home can be easier. Dogs need order and are extremely routine oriented. We recommend that you find out all that you can about his routine - and duplicate what you can - before you start to orient him to the rhythms and schedule of your home. Work out your house rules and dog-care regimen in advance among the human members of your household. Who will walk the dog first thing in the morning? Who will feed him at night? Will your GSD be allowed on the couch or bed? Where will he sleep at night? Will he be crated?

"To ensure a smooth transition, you should already have supplies for your GSD (collar, ID tag, leash, food and water bowls, appropriate food, dog bed, crate (if necessary), brushes, nail clipper, training literature, poop pick-up bags, treats, chew bones (un-dyed), and toys). Try to arrange the arrival of your new dog for a weekend - or when you can be home for a few days - for quality, hands-on time.

If you have other resident pets, make sure that they're up-to-date on their shots and generally in good health before bringing home your new dog. Despite the best efforts of the rescue organization, previous owners or foster family, viruses can be spread and occasionally go home with adopted rescue dogs. You may wish to set up an appointment with your own veterinarian to check out your new dog and set up an inoculation schedule, depending on the veterinary care your rescue dog has received in the past.

Register for an obedience class. Don't ignore this very important step in setting yourself and your rescued GSD up for success! Be dogged about finding an obedience class or trainer. There are many positive reinforcement-based dog obedience classes that teach dog manners, canine good citizenship and discipline. Try to register for a class starting 3-4 weeks after your dog has come home with you. It is important that your new dog has some time to adjust to you and your home before putting him into the stimulating environment of an obedience class. Even the shortest "dog manners" course offered at your veterinarian's will reinforce the new bond between you and your new GSD, will give you a valuable face-to-face resource for answers to questions about your dog's behavior, and will provide a powerful tool for moderating your rescue dog's less-attractive behavior traits. Remember, GSDs need work - this is a really easy way to provide him with active, mental work that you'll approve of. The rewards are obvious - what a joy it is to have a well-mannered, trained GSD companion!

New families often ask about changing the adopted dog's name. If you desire to change his name, it is fine. Many times, the dogs are given random names by a shelter. The dog will learn his new name if it's overused in the beginning. It is in no way traumatic to the dog to change his name.

### **WHEN YOU ARRIVE HOME**

#### **THINGS TO EXPECT**

You should expect your new dog to act differently than how he did when you met him at the foster/owner's home. He will be excited, nervous and maybe tired after the trip to your house. Being routine-oriented, your GSD may have just gotten comfortable at his foster home and now recognizes that the routine is changing yet again. He doesn't know the smells, the sounds, and importantly, the routines and rules of your house. This is very confusing for your GSD.

Dogs display anxiety and nervousness by: panting, pacing, lack of eye contact, "not listening", house-training accidents, excessive chewing, gastric upset (vomiting, diarrhea, irregular stools), crying, whining, jumpiness and barking. This is a litany of

behaviors any and every dog owner dreads. As long as you understand where these behaviors originate, you can perhaps address them before they appear and deal with them effectively when they do! Your goal in the next weeks is to reduce the “noise and confusion” in his head and get him to relax, to be calm and show him how to be good. Despite your joy at adopting this GSD (after a few enthusiastic hugs and kisses), you should be calm, gentle and firm with your GSD. "Talk to him in a calm, low voice as you travel home. Avoid playing the car radio and having too many people with you when you pick him up.

All rescue dogs go through a “honeymoon period”. After the first day or so, the dog may be very quiet and extraordinarily controlled and “good”. The “real” dog emerges two to four weeks later - after he's mostly figured out the house rules, the schedule of the days, and the cast of characters in his new family. At this time, he'll start testing out his position in the pack, and may regress to puppy-hood behaviors and “bad” behavior. Be patient with him, firm in your expectations, praise him for appropriate behavior - especially when he's lying quietly and behaving himself. Don't praise for nothing constantly. The dog will learn to “tune out” your praise over time when he cannot associate the praise with a specific behavior.

### **House-training tips that may come in handy:**

Consistency is the key! A consistent walking schedule tailored to your dog's developmental stage and individual preferences is very helpful. Confinement using a crate is also used for house-training your new dog. Cleaning is important to house-training your new dog. A good enzymatic odor neutralizer used to clean up accidents will help remove odors and discourage recurrence in the same area.

Do not be alarmed if your new dog has diarrhea or vomiting when first adjusting to his new family and environment. Your dog is under a lot of stress and this causes his digestive system to become upset. If the symptoms last for more than three days, please contact your veterinarian immediately.

### **Things to do:**

#### **Leash your dog to introduce him to your home!**

When you first bring your new dog home, make sure you have him on a leash! Spend the first 15'30 minutes walking him outside around the perimeter of your yard or the area that you will be with him most on your property. Walk slowly - let him “lead” mostly - and let him sniff and pause if he wants to. He is getting used to the “lay of the land” and all the smells associated with his new home. He will undoubtedly relieve himself^ this is his way of making himself at home by adding his mark to the smell of your home, and now his new home. Obviously you want this to happen outside! If you have a place where you wish this to happen, encourage him to “get busy” or “do it” in that area and praise him warmly when he does the job right. The excitement of the move and the new family will cause him to have to relieve himself more frequently than normal. You must be prepared to offer him plenty of opportunities to do this in the beginning. Whenever the rescue dog is not confined, supervise him. Set the dog up to win!

You might want to consider isolating the new dog from your resident dogs during the first entry into your home. He will appreciate safe and quiet time as he explores his new home. Crate your resident dog(s) or have someone take them for a walk while your new dog explores.

Let the new dog explore the house. Leave him on the leash and make sure that he's supervised AT ALL TIMES! We recommend leaving your new dog on leash in the house for the first day. Don't even leave the dog unsupervised while you answer the phone.

Once inside your house, a male may still accidentally mark a door, plant or chair, when he first walks inside your home. This is out of nervousness (or he may smell another dog), so it is best to leave him on the leash indoors the first day. If he starts to lift his leg, give the leash a short jerk and tell him “NO!” That should stop him immediately and remind him of his house-training manners. Follow up this correction by taking him outside in case he's not just marking. Bear in mind that if your GSD has a few accidents, it does not necessarily mean that he's not housetrained. We can't emphasize enough how much nerves and excitement can cause uncharacteristic accidents. Watch for pre^piddling behavior \* circling, sniffing, etc. Do not scold or hit a dog for having an accident. Rather, verbally get his attention, grab the leash and take him right out to his spot to do his business. Once

he relaxes and learns the rhythms and routines of your home, all his manners will return!

Even in a fenced yard, you'll want to leave your rescued GSD on a leash for the first week or so. This way, you can reinforce a recall command and help monitor pack behavior if you have other dogs. Until your new dog bonds to you and makes good eye contact, we recommend leaving him on a leash.

### **Provide quiet time!**

Quiet time will be important for your new GSD in the first week. Because of his nervousness and anxiety, he will get worn out fast. His recent past may include a shelter stay which has worn him out with worry. Despite your excitement, try and resist inviting friends and relatives over to meet him. Give him time to get used to your immediate family and resident pets only. If the dog does not solicit play or attention from you, let him alone to sleep or establish himself. Believe it or not, we don't want you to force him to play at first!

### **Feed your new dog!**

Feed your dog whatever brand or type of food he was being fed at his foster home. Buy a small bag of the same brand and continue to feed the same food to your new dog for the first couple of days. If you want to switch foods, do it GRADUALLY. Mix just a little bit of the new food in with the old to start off, and slowly increase the proportion of the new food while decreasing the proportion of the old food over a span of several days. When you walk your dog and he relieves himself, carefully watch the consistency of his stool for any signs of looseness or diarrhea that would indicate that the new food is not agreeing with his digestive system. If all goes well, within a week or ten days, you will have switched from the old food to the new food and your dog will not have suffered any ill effects.

Quite often when dogs move from one place to another, for the first few days their appetite will diminish or they may choose to not eat. Sometimes this is due to stress, and other times they are testing you to see if you will serve them something more exciting than dog food to eat. Do not waver. He will eat when he settles down and gets hungry enough.

Please do not adhere to the amount of food recommended on the bag (or can) of dog food. Most of the time the amounts indicated are more than you should feed your dog. Your veterinarian can give you a better idea of the proper amount and feeding schedule to adhere to. Also, watch your dog's weight and body mass as an indicator of his diet. If he gets too much, he will put on excess weight. Conversely, if his weight slowly drops over time, he may not be getting the right amount of food. If he is overweight, though, it would not be a bad thing for him to shed the extra weight through a combination of exercise and proper diet.

If you have other dogs, feed your rescue dog away from them, but at the same time. You can feed in the same room, but use opposite corners, putting the dominant dog's bowl down first. This is usually the resident dog on the first few days, but that situation may change over time. You may want to arrange having another adult in the room for the first week of feedings to monitor "pack behavior". Watch that each dog sticks to his own bowl. Keep vigilant over feeding time for a couple of months until the pack positions are worked out.

### **Consider crating your dog!**

Many of the GSDs that pass through rescue have been crate-trained at one time or another. Every dog needs a place to escape to, a place to call his own, and a crate provides an answer to those needs. Your new GSD will have some degree of separation anxiety when you leave him for work or at home alone. Crating the dog in the beginning will help eliminate accidents, chewing destruction, and other mischievous activity that is rooted in nervousness and insecurity. Your dog is safest in the crate when you are not at home until you can totally trust him loose in your home. This is especially true if you have resident pets because you can't supervise their interactions when you're away or asleep. Children should be taught to leave the dog alone if he retreats to his crate. You should never use the crate for disciplining. The crate must be a dog's sanctuary for crate training to be effective. Crates are great for traveling with your dog later. The dog will have a familiar den to retreat to and feel comfortable and reassured. Each time your dog is confined, make sure that he knows he's a good boy. If your GSD is particularly emotional or anxious, make good byes and hellos as unemotional and nonchalant as possible.

While crating a dog makes everybody feel safe, crating should NOT be abused by locking the dog in the crate all the time. GSDs need to be with you and should be with you unless they cannot be supervised or trusted alone in the house. For instance, if you are going to shower and the dog still sometimes chews, crate him for those 15 minutes for safety, but then let him out to be with

you. If the dog is crated while you are at work all day, you **MUST** make an effort to let the dog "hang" with you in the house until he is reliably loose in the house.

If you prefer to not crate, make sure to set aside a safe, indestructible space in your home for your rescue dog. You may want to try using baby gates in the kitchen or hallway. Remember, you may really want to keep your dog on easy cleanup flooring at first. If the area of confinement is too large, you may begin to have house-training accidents. We do not recommend the basement or garage since your dog will not feel "part of the family" isolated away from it. If your GSD can see and hear you, even better. This is why wire style crates are so effective in the house.

### **Be patient during the honeymoon period!**

There is a good chance that your rescued GSD will show his insecurity by following you everywhere. This will include trying to hang with you in the bathroom, watching TV with you, getting the mail, and undoubtedly wanting to sleep close to you. It is not unusual for him to whine or cry or bark if confined away from you at night. Lights out at a new, strange place is a stressful thing for him. If you place the crate close to your bedroom or somewhere he can see you, problems are usually minimized. Safe chew toys in the crate at night will give him something to do if he's awake. Remember, during the first few weeks, the dog will probably get quite tired and worn out by the day's activities, so establishing a sleep schedule is usually not a big deal. As you wean him from the crating at night, be sure that he has been well exercised. A tired GSD is usually a really good GSD indoors!

### **Establish a routine!**

Try to develop and use a consistent daily routine for feeding, exercising, and bathroom duties. Dogs are creatures of habit and routine translates into security for them. If you do the same things in the same way and in the same order, he will settle in more quickly and learn what is expected of him and when.

Let your new GSD out to air and take care of business as soon as you rise in the morning. Feed him after a short walk or romp in the yard. Give him another chance to relieve himself before you go to work. Upon your return from work, immediately let the dog out for exercise and a bathroom break. This is not the time to read the mail, make a phone call, or flop on the couch! If he's exercised heavily, wait 30 minutes or so before giving your dog his evening meal. He'll need another bathroom break anywhere from 30 minutes to several hours after the evening meal depending on his age. It will be your job to figure out his needs. He should get another chance to go out just before bedtime.

### **Socialize your rescued German Shepherd Dog!**

Rescue dogs come from a variety of backgrounds, but all dogs can do with more socialization. After your dog has had time to settle into your home and is starting to look to you with confidence, usually 2-3 weeks, start providing new socialization opportunities.

Now you can start inviting friends and relatives over. Do introductions to people gradually. Introductions can take the form of petting, playing fetch, even just going for a walk. Do not force the dog to accept new people. Do it positively, with lots of praise, allowing the dog to approach people rather than new people approaching the dog!! Be sure to tell your visitors that your dog is new from rescue so they need to be more sensitive. Instruct the visitors to not reach for the dog; to let the dog come to the visitors on his own. If he does not go to the new person, the new person should ignore the dog. Suggest that after the dog has met and sniffed the visitor that they gently touch the side of the dog's neck or side of the shoulder rather than the top of the head. Patting the top of the dog's head is often interpreted by the dog as a powerful dominance attempt and can be a challenge to some dogs, and frightening to others.

Start taking your dog to new places - nearby parks, dog-allowed beaches and stores - and especially to obedience classes. The opportunity will allow you to determine how your dog responds to strange people, dogs and places.

### **Love and enjoy your dog!**

- Authority without domination.
- Love without subservience.

- Respect without fear.

This is an adage used by workers in GSD rescue. It is appropriate for your rescued GSD, too, and we'd like people to think about it as they live with and train their rescue dogs. You do not need to frighten your dog into complying with household obedience commands, or prove to him that you are the toughest creature around by using constant brute force. You DO need to show your dog that you are the leader in the household, a leader that he should put his trust in. You can do this by "telling" your dog in a language that he understands - body language and daily habits. Respect is not something that you can force a creature into giving to you.

Above all, be patient, firm and consistent with your new GSD. Use positive reinforcement and lots of praise when he's good. When mistakes are made, correct him when it's happening, and praise him when he modifies his behavior. Undoubtedly you will get lots of advice, both good and bad, from other dog owners. Read and research as much as you can to prepare yourself. Understand that sometimes you may need to try more than one approach to a problem because every GSD is different. Most rescue and adoption coordinators will follow up on the dogs they place. Most rescuers are backed up by dog behavior and health experts within their own organization, so if they don't know the answer to a problem, they can ask others. Don't be afraid to ask questions, bring up new situations, and feelings of frustration that you may have. Our goal is to make sure that rescue dogs never have to be uprooted again, so we are quite interested in helping you troubleshoot any problems - the sooner the better - before they become big problems that threaten the placement.

Most of all, be prepared to give and receive more love, affection and loyalty than you ever thought possible! Enjoy your dog for many years to come. Thank you for helping us to rescue German Shepherd Dogs!

"He is your friend, your partner, your defender, your dog. You are his life, his love, his leader. He will be yours, faithful and true, to the last beat of his heart. You owe it to him to be worthy of such devotion." - Anonymous