

Heading Home K9 Rescue Adoption FAQ

Thank you for choosing to adopt, and to save a pet's life. Here is some information for you to get started!

1. INTROS OF NEW PET TO CURRENT DOG AND/OR CAT

Your new dogs has been through a lot of changes in the last 24 hours...they've been from their foster/shelter to a van for transport with 50+ other dogs to a stop in Illinois to potty with all new people, then back in the van, and finally ending in Minnesota where they're passed through a few hands for potty break, vetting, and some love and finally into a car with all new people. It's a lot! It's a good change for them. In fact it's a life-saving change but they don't know that yet.

The best thing you can remember with your new dog is to go slowly. **PLEASE DO NOT BRING YOUR CURRENT DOG TO TRANSPORT.** The chaos and stress there and then getting right in a confined car with a new dog is too much for most dogs. It is best to wait to go through introductions when you get home.

Below are the suggested ways to introduce your new addition to existing pets in the home to set everyone up for success. **We also recommend not bringing your new dog to dog parks in the first few weeks as they are still acclimating to you as new owners, and you are learning to read their signals also.**

Dogs:

No matter how dog-friendly your new dog has been in their foster home and how much your dog loves other dogs, it is still going to be an adjustment for everyone.

Please do not just put them together in the house/yard to introduce them! There's no way to control the interaction if one dog gets overwhelmed. Both dogs are going to be excited, nervous, etc, and a lot of time that level of arousal can lead to a scuffle which starts everyone off on the wrong foot.

The best way to introduce them is to take them on a walk together. If you have one person per dog it makes it even easier but if you're walking them all alone that will work just fine, too. What this does is gets them accustomed to each other while the focus is also off one another and on a fun activity like a walk. Then all their excitement/nerves/etc. isn't directed just at meeting their new friend. They get to start off doing something fun with that friend, they get to burn off some energy, and for your new dog a lot of the extra stress/energy from transport gets out in a productive, low-stress way.

Once you've taken a walk and things are going well, let them meet, sniff, and get to know each other. If they're seeming too interested in each other (mounting, growling, stiff-posture) separate and distract them to take their focus off one another. As long as things are going well, feel free to drop their leashes in a secure area (fenced yard or house) and let them play and interact. We suggest leaving leashes on initially just in case.

Even the most dog-friendly dogs might have a few tiffs as they adjust. It's normal even though it's not fun. Don't panic. They're figuring each other out still.

We always suggest lots of walks together and if your current dog is feeling a little put out, don't feel badly putting your new pup in their crate with a bone or chew for a little bit (or vice versa) to give some alone time to each of them.

Cats:

Even if you know your new dog has lived with cats and is good with cats, please keep them on a leash to introduce them to prevent accidents. Even an accidental over-excited jump from your pup or a swat from the cat can lead to a big vet bill or worse. Start with getting your dog a bit tired out. A good long walk, playtime in the yard, etc. Anything to shed that extra transport stress energy. If you have bedding of the cat's, let the dog sniff it and get used to the smell and over the possible excitement of a new kitty friend. Always let your cat approach the dog first or avoid if they choose. If your dog seems too interested, refocus them onto you with a treat or backing away more. They may need a break in their kennel if they get too over-excited.

If they're ignoring each other, great! If they're respectfully interested, also great, but make sure to keep an eye on the situation and have the dog drag a leash to make sure it doesn't turn into too much interest.

Expect your cat to likely be a little put out by this new addition. They might hide more, avoid common areas, etc. Cats are naturally prey for larger animals so instinctively they are drawn to avoid what could be a predator.

Please also ensure that your dog doesn't have access to your cat's litter box. A lot of dogs find the delectable delights in there too much to resist and then you're potentially dealing with some major diarrhea and vomiting which is surely no fun for anyone!

A proper introduction goes a long way to making life peaceful more quickly. It's a bit more work at first but well worth it!

2. INTRODUCING YOUR NEW DOG TO KIDS

No matter how much your new dog loves kids or how good the kids are with dogs it's vital that the relationship starts with a good introduction. Here are some do's and don'ts to set everyone up for success.

Take your new dog for a walk right away with the kids (if old enough) or prior to meeting the younger kids. This makes sure any extra transport energy and adrenaline is out. At this time, do not let children hold the leash unless they are physically strong enough to manage the dog. If the unexpected happens and the dog is spooked or pulls away they are very unlikely to come back and are at high risk to get hurt.

Have your children hold out their hands to let the dog smell them first. Avoid reaching over the dog's head to pet them, especially if anyone is nervous in this situation.

Be calm. A new dog is exciting, it's fun, it's everything your kids have probably wanted for a long time and their instinct might be to run around, yell, etc. Don't encourage play like this until you know how your dog/kids will react. This might cause your dog to jump up on the kids, play a little too roughly, or react fearfully to the loud noises. Jumping dogs can tackle kids which is scary. The last thing we want is any fear with each other or the dog to think the kids are a fun, noise-making toy. Encourage the kids to engage the dog in play with a toy, throw it around for him, and when he brings it back throw a different toy.

Another fun game for older kids to play with a new dog that builds great engagement is hide and seek. Give the kids some small treats/pieces of dog food and hide in easy places for the dog to find—even in just another room is perfect—have them call the dog to them and the dog has to find them. You can make it as easy or as hard as your dog is capable of handling with hiding spots, how many times you call them, etc. Once the dog gets to the hider, treat party and praise! If you have more than one child, then the next kid can call the dog to their hiding spot while the other finds a new one. A bonus of this game is not only occupying everyone but also formulating a basis for teaching your new dog to come when called.

Most importantly, do not let your child put their hands in the dog's food bowl, take bones/treats from them, lay/stand on them, wake them up, hug them, play with their tail/ears/feet, etc. While this might be their first instinct because a

previous dog allowed it or they're simply not old enough to understand, please for the safety of everyone do not allow these interactions and monitor ALL interactions closely in the beginning for anything concerning.

3. ROUTINES

Feeding:

We always suggest feeding on a schedule. Feeding on a set schedule means a bathroom schedule which is going to help with housetraining. We suggest feeding 1-2 times daily for adult dogs and 3-4 times for puppies under 6 months.

For schedule feeding, fill with the amount they are going to eat at that meal and set it down. Most dogs will eat it right away, especially if they have been strays for a while and had to scavenge for food. If not, pick it up after 20 minutes and feed them again at the next meal time.

Most dogs need to potty within 15 minutes after eating so plan to take them out immediately after or shortly after.

Housetraining:

Even if your new dog is currently housetrained in their foster home they WILL have accidents. If they don't, be pleasantly surprised, but plan for some accidents as they settle in.

The best way to housetrain whether you are starting from scratch or transitioning a new dog is to prevent accidents and to be right there to correct them if they happen. For the first week or so this means your dog is either within eyesight or if you can't watch them then they're kenneled or tethered to you (so you can feel if they try to wander). Take them out every few hours that you are home and awake. If you are adopting a puppy they will have to go out a lot more as their bladders are not fully developed to hold it. Give whatever potty cue you prefer and when they go throw a party with all the good dogs/praise/etc.

Do not be afraid to utilize the crate during this time. When you're sleeping, gone, or can't watch them directly, they can go into the crate. A chew or kong in there is going to go a long way to them being happier in there, too, so feel free to toss one in. When you catch them in the act of an accident (because even with the most well housetrained dog it's going to happen likely), immediately react with something that gets their attention without scaring them—for some dogs this is a slightly raised voice, for

others a loud noise like clapping hands. Take them instantly outside. If they finish out there, throw a praise party again. If not then nothing and you come back inside with no party. It sometimes helps to have them drag a leash at first to quickly move them outside if they catch them having an accident. You may find it easier to have one dragging so you can monitor also where they are since there's a six-foot extra trail.

Know that this phase of solidifying housetraining is not forever. It's extra work at first to take them out more often, to keep an extra watchful eye on them, restrict freedom some but the less chances they have to have accidents in the house, the immediate no when it happens in the house, and the praise party when it happens where it is supposed to makes it so clear to dogs where to potty that it makes training establish so much faster. There is a definite payout to the extra work that goes in initially!

Crate-Training:

We always suggest that dogs be crate trained. It gives them a safe area to be, keeps your belongings safe, and if they ever need to board or spend some time at the vet it's far less stress if they already know how to settle in a crate/kennel.

Most of our foster dogs have been in crates before so are at least used to the basics, but the most important thing you can do is to make the crate a positive place. Making a positive association with a new crate/new house is ideal. Have your dog walk in, give him a training treat, let him out. He doesn't always have to STAY in there, it's a place he goes in when you tell him to and he gets a reward for it. Yay happy place! Put him in for short times too if you're home: one minute, five minutes, ten minutes, doesn't matter. Do not let him out unless he is relaxed and calm otherwise you are rewarding the behavior of causing a ruckus means he gets to come out.

Some good options for special treats they only get when crated:

*Stuffed Kongs are a huge hit. You can make it as easy or difficult as your dog is able to figure out. Putting some of their dry food in and then filling with a little peanut butter, pumpkin, yogurt, cottage cheese, canned dog food, etc is a great way to keep their mind focused on fun and food instead of their human having left. You can even freeze for a longer lasting treat or layer their dry food with the other for more difficulty.

*CET dental chews/rawhide, bully sticks, no-hide chews, pig/cow ears, etc. are also fabulous special kennel treats. Make sure they are an appropriate size for your pup!

4. HEARTWORM DISEASE—ONLY PERTAINS TO SOME DOGS****

Heartworm disease is common in the areas many of our dogs come from. Dogs that wind up as strays or not on prevention are at a high risk of developing heartworm disease. Some of the dogs we take have either been treated for this disease prior to coming to Minnesota or will be treated once they are here. Contrary to the disease name, the worms actually live in the lungs of dogs.

If your dog is coming treated for heartworm disease they may need continued exercise restrictions when they get to your home. Please ask us about this.

If your dog is to be treated once he/she is here you will be sent home with specific medications to start right away and we will arrange for treatment at one of our local vets. In the time period before the veterinary visits, you will want to keep your dog somewhat low key. Leash walks are ok but your dog should not be crazy or get to a place where they are panting heavily. After the two-day veterinary visit, the dog will need to be on pretty strict rest for six weeks along with the medications our vets send home. After those six weeks, gradual return to exercise can begin. The rest allows the dog's body to deal with all the inflammation from the dead worms and helps prevent any complications.

5. FOOD

Many of these dogs are coming from places where they feed whatever food is donated to the shelter/rescue so we do not know specifics of the food your pup was on. We recommend getting whatever food you want to feed your pet long term and start with that. If you need a recommendation Purina Pro Plan (NOT BENEFUL), Science Diet or Royal Canin brands are what brands we usually recommend picking from. If your new dog has an upset stomach with some diarrhea or loose stool, we recommend withholding food for 12 hours and then starting a bland diet for the next few meals. A bland diet consists of chicken/rice, roughly 3:1 ratio of rice to chicken. After a bland meal or two, you can add their dry food in slowly over a few days until they're completely back onto dry food.

6. HEARTWORM PREVENTION

We require monthly prevention for dogs from getting heartworm disease, and also eliminates some intestinal parasites that can be transmitted to humans. Dogs should be given this once every month, year-around. You will get the first dose from us. Subsequent doses you need to pick up from your veterinarian.

7. FLEA AND TICK PREVENTION

In addition to heartworm prevention, dogs also need flea and tick protection year-around. Fleas and ticks can be active even in the cold winter months in Minnesota, so protection is key to prevent your pup from bringing these “friends” into the house. In addition, ticks can carry many diseases that can cause illness. There are both topical and oral options for flea and tick prevention. You will also get your first dose of flea/tick prevention when you pick up your pup. Subsequent doses you should get from your veterinarian.

8. VACCINES/RECORDS

All veterinary records will be emailed to you after you take the dog home and hard copies mailed to you from HHK9 once the adoption is finalized after the 7 day trial period. Some of the records are confusing, but these dogs have been vaccinated for distemper/parvo/adenovirus (DAPP) and Rabies. Other vaccines you may want to get your new friend up to date on include Lyme, Leptospirosis and Bordetella. Talk to your veterinarian about your lifestyle to see if these are appropriate for your dog.

****If you are adopting a puppy under four months of age you will need to follow up with your veterinarian as your puppy will need continued vaccinations. Until they are fully vaccinated (as discussed with your vet) we do not recommend taking your puppy to public places like PetSmart or dog parks due to risk of contracting diseases.**

9. MICROCHIP

Your dog comes with a microchip already implanted. This is a way to track your pet as well as get him/her back if she ever becomes lost. You will get this information with the records and instructions on how to register the chip will be mailed to you with hard copies of the records once the adoption is finalized

10. PET INSURANCE

Dogs can be a big investment, and while most of the time they are happy and healthy, when they do get sick their expenses can add up quickly. Unfortunately for many pets, these bills often force the owner to not provide the best care, euthanize or surrender their pet. Pet insurance is a fantastic way to be prepared should anything happen. There are many companies out there that can provide quotes with minimal info.

11. COLLARS & LEASHES:

Coming from a shelter/foster on a transport van to a new place with new people is very scary! We want your new friend to be safe with you, but all too often we see dogs that get spooked by something unexpectedly on a walk and are able to back out of a collar.

This is why we strongly recommend a snugly fitting Martingale collar. What do we mean by that? When fitted appropriately, if a dog goes to pull back the collar will tighten and not be able to come over their head. Check out this website that makes great collars (and donates to rescues too):

<https://www.maxandneo.com/collections/dog-collars/products/martingale-all-nylon-dog-collar>

For dogs new to leash walking those that are really shy/scared we also recommend the harness lead. We have some stock that is available for purchase through the rescue in limited colors. <https://www.harnesslead.com/why-harness-lead.html>

12. TRAINING:

There are many great training facilities in the Twin Cities, and basic obedience is a great choice for any new dog. It allows you to get to know your dog better and bond with them, and also teach them some basic commands!

A few of our favorites are:

The Canine Coach—they have many Twin Cities locations and also a sport park. The outdoor sport park is fully fenced for off leash recall and some fun energy-burning classes! We also strongly recommend their leash-pulling class. They have a website with all their offerings and locations.

Your Dog's Best Friend—this is a great training resource if you are dealing with adjustment issues or behaviors you're just not quite sure how to address. A trainer will come to your home for a private consultation to specifically work with you/your dog on a plan to help manage and address what is going on.

Pawsabilities—if you are looking for classes to take, this is a fabulous training group with so many options that range from basic to advanced obedience to trick and sport training. Training classes are a great way to exercise your pooch physically and mentally as well as create a stronger bond with them.

A common issue that comes up is leash reactivity. Barking, lunging, jumping, etc at other dogs or people as you walk by. It doesn't make for a fun walk! We strongly suggest Wag 'N Woofs' class called Freak on a Leash. They address not only behavior itself but also the root cause—overexcitement, fear, resource guarding, etc.—to ensure you not only have a dog who is behaving on the leash but also who is relaxed and happy.

Some dogs, especially more nervous dogs, have a really hard time in a new environment and need what is called a decompression period or a “two-week shutdown”. This isn’t common to most dogs but if your dog is completely overwhelmed, acting nervous, growling, hiding, etc., you will need to give them a chance to decompress before you see their true personality. Two fabulous resources that detail this can be found here:

<https://vsas.org/2016/04/decompression-time-for-shelter-animals-is-a-must/>
<https://www.reboundhounds.org/the-first-two-weeks.html>

Please note as well that we will extend the trial period an additional week if your new dog is needing additional time to adjust and show their true personalities. Feel free to reach out to us always so we can offer help, additional resources, and keep updated on how things are going.

13. PREPARING YOUR DOG TO TRANSITION BACK TO WORK SCHEDULES

Right now is a fantastic time to take home a dog. You get to spend extra time with them helping them adjust. Lots of extra fun and walks to make up the monotony of quarantine. An excuse to make a quick exit out of a boring Zoom meeting because you have to let them out...or is that just me? :) But what happens when life goes back to relative normal? When your work schedule becomes not working from home anymore? It’s really important right now to do some preparation work to set your dog up for success so that the transition is easier on your both.

Renew Crate-Training:

For dogs that are crated while you are gone, but are out of the habit while you’ve been at home, re-training them to the crate is important. Feed them their meals in the crate, hide some treats in there even when you’re not leaving so when they go in there there’s little prizes for them for just going in, and crate them for at least a short time daily with an extra special treat even when you are home. This keeps the crate part of their normal life/schedule even though you are home right now. Keeping that crate a positive, fun place is going to make their transition back to you being gone for work hours and them in the crate so much easier on you both.

Exercise:

Will you have as much time to walk, play with, exercise your pup when you’re working out of the house or more hours? Probably not. And that’s ok! Most important is to make that exercise count and if they’re still feeling a bit over-excited or energetic to add

in some mental exercise to help tire them out. Mental exercise is a fantastic way to enrich their minds as well as make them more tired. Just think of doing a big project where you have to focus...aren't you a bit tired after because you've used your mind to create something awesome. Your dog is the same way!

Some of the best mental exercise that are easy to incorporate into a busier schedule:

*Food toys and puzzle toys: Kong wobbler, bob-a-lot, buster cube, and slow feed bowls are great ways for them to think and work for their food. Using those for them to eat their meals out of feeds them in a fun way that occupies them and tires their mind.

*Games: These can be as hard or easy as you want. Hide and seek where you hide and call them to find you, hiding a special treat or toy around and having them find it, playing a two person game where you stand across the yard/house from each other and call the dog back and forth to each of you (bonus: this works on recall!)

*Obedience classes or trick classes. Some are even being offered online right now too. While it's a bit more of a time commitment, it's fantastic mental exercise, relationship building, and super fun for you both to do a class—either in person or online. No matter how well trained, there are always ways to advance and more things to learn.

*Dog walker or Dog Daycare. This isn't feasible for everyone or every situation nor necessary but if you're feeling your dog could benefit from some extra exercise while you're at work dog daycares or utilizing a dog walker is a great choice. More than anything, be patient with your dog while you both adjust back to a new schedule. It's going to be a little rough for a couple of weeks because we've all gotten used to this new way of life and a big change again is going to add more stress to you.

We are ALWAYS here as well for dog behavior questions or troubleshooting if you are struggling with prepping your pup for going back to work or having some issues with them adjusting. Please email if you need some help. Laura is a professional dog trainer and more than happy to give advice and suggestions. Email: laurahhk9@gmail.com.