

DECOMPRESSION FOR SHELTER DOGS ENTERING A HOME

Congratulations on your adoption! We recognize that it is an exciting time for you bringing a new dog into your home. The key to success will depend on you providing an enriching, safe, and low-stress environment. Dogs are social creatures – they want to be part of your family! It is important that you allow them the time they need to feel comfortable in their new home and to develop and cement the relationship YOU have with the dog first and foremost. Here are some tips to help integrate your new dog to your home in the first two weeks:

- **Provide the dog with an area in your home where they can feel safe.** A room with tile or linoleum floors would be ideal in case of accidents. Select an area in your home where your dog can choose to be with you or alone. It is about respecting each other's space. Allow supervised visits to other areas of your home. This is a good time to introduce a crate in your dog's safe area. You can feed your dog in the crate at meal times so it becomes a safe, fun and private place to be. Do not close the door on the dog until you are sure they are comfortable in the crate. You could even play some classical music, or use calming pheromones like Adaptil.
- **Show your dog the area you would like him/ her to potty.** Let your dog sniff around. Reward them with a treat when they do potty to make it a positive experience. Remember, accidents will happen. If you catch your dog in the act, gently interrupt them. If you find the mess later, do not punish your dog as they cannot make this association. Clean up the mess and try again.
- **Respect their space.** It is natural to want to hug your dog and show affection, but some dogs are not comfortable with this. Allow time for trust to build before physically interacting with your dog. If the dog moves away from you (and/ or ears pinned back, licking their lips, showing the whites of their eyes, body stiff) they are telling you they need more space. Avoid prolonged direct eye contact and reaching or bending over your dog as this can create fear.
- **Take short walks and stay close to home.** Take short walks around your home early in the morning and or late at night to let your dog adjust to his/ her new leash and harness. This will also help you learn how your dog behaves on walks. Do not take your dog to visit additional homes, parks pet store, etc. just yet as this can be overwhelming.
- **Use food rewards to praise your dog and lures (food, toys) to encourage/ teach your dog good behavior.** Any time you see your new dog relaxed, praise and offer a reward. If your dog is frightened of your kitchen, use a yummy hot dog to coax them into the room.
- **When you introduce your new dog to family and friends, keep it positive.** Use food rewards, and praise. If your dog seems overwhelmed - respect their space. Place your dog back in their safe area. Ideally allow the new dog two weeks before doing introductions.
- **Supervise your dog.** Never leave your new dog alone with children or other pets. Never leave your dog tied up or unsupervised outdoors. Use crates, baby gates, doors, etc. to confine your dog when you cannot monitor them. Utilize their safe space as needed.
- **Provide enrichment.** Make sure your dog gets plenty of mental and physical stimulation. Use food puzzles and stuffed Kongs and play games. A simple game to play indoors is to toss their kibble down a hallway instead of feeding from a bowl. There are a lot of enrichment resources for dogs on Facebook.
- **Ask for help.** Contact CPHS, local dog trainers, or veterinarians about any behavior concerns as soon as they develop. Early intervention can help correct any troubles that develop as your new dog adjusts!