

## The newly adopted rescue dog: preventing problems

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Bringing home a new dog is exciting and fun, but remember that your home is a big change from life in the rescue centre and this can be stressful to the new dog. Most dogs appear calmer and quieter than normal for the first few days to weeks. After this 'honeymoon' period is over, a different version of your dog may emerge; this new dog may be more destructive, boisterous, and seeking of attention. Many of these problems can be prevented by following these recommendations.

#### Create a structured routine for your dog

- A consistent schedule may help your dog to settle into his/her new home and feel secure.

#### Teach your dog to say 'please'

- Ignore attention-seeking behaviours; paying *any* attention at this time (including signs of your displeasure) is rewarding a behaviour that you don't want.
- When you want to give your dog something (whether it is petting, a treat, or putting on a lead to go for a walk) ask him/her to 'sit'.
- Teaching your dog to sit quietly in front of you for the things he/she wants is teaching him/her to say 'please' instead of demanding things by barking or by jumping on you.

#### Closely monitor the dog's behaviour and restrict access for the first 4–6 weeks

- Control the dog's behaviour through direct supervision.
- When you are not at home, confine the dog to a location where he/she can't get into trouble.
- Reward good behaviour and prevent bad behaviour.

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### **Prevent boredom or frustration that can lead to destructive behaviour**

- Feed meals in food-dispensing toys. These should be easy to fill with food, and not easy for your dog to destroy. Ideally, you should feed the entire meal in these toys, to make the dog work for his/her food, which is mentally stimulating.
- Keep several different types of toy in your home:
  - Use chew toys and other indestructible toys that you leave out all the time so that your dog can play with them whenever he/she wants
  - Keep *out of reach* some toys that your dog really likes. These might be special balls or stuffed squeaky toys – toys that your dog likes to retrieve (or tug), but also might destroy. Use these toys only when you play with the dog.
  - Your dog will have *favourite* toys. For a terrier, this might be a piece of fabric attached to a rope and a wooden dowel, which he/she chases. For a retriever, this might be a favourite squeaky ball. These toys should be used to reward *really good* behaviour, such as coming when called in a distracting situation or called away from wildlife in the park.
- When you must leave your dog alone, leave him/her with several different types of toy, including food-dispensing toys, chew toys and toys with different textures and consistencies. The more you provide an acceptable option for chewing, the less likely the dog is to chew on valuable items such as furniture and table legs, especially if you make the alternatives particularly appealing initially.

**! If these suggestions aren't working, please contact your veterinary surgeon.**