



****SECOND HAND DOG****

The second-hand dog has become commonplace. More often than not, the second-hand dog is slated for pet-hood and his somewhat checkered past is rarely revealed in full. In fact, the dog in your life who needs a bit of patching and refurbishing may even be a found dog, a treasure that someone left to fend for himself in a cold, cold world.

Whether the older, used, second-hand, passed-around-dog you know was recycled for a "legitimate" reason or not, you will have taken on a problem. Solving the problem (or more accurately the set of problems) that will come with your new pet can be a most satisfying and necessary pastime.

If your second-hand dog has been abused, neglected or battered in anyway, even by being low man on his pack's totem pole, you'll want to change your rules and standards for him, at least for the first few months. I would not take a dog that had been wandering the streets or neglected in a kennel run and teach it not to jump. In fact I'd be delighted to see a dog, with that history, jumping up to say hello. And while a new dog needs a dose of R & R (rules and regulations), the hand-me-down dog needs more than that. He needs, actually, more of everything: more good food, more grooming, more contact, more company, more bonding activities, more long solitary walks with you, more exposure to your particular environment, more time in your car, and more patient training.

Since every dog has a history, if your new friend comes without one, or with a sketchy one, careful observation will help fill in the missing details. You'll never get all the details, but you'll get a surprising amount of information by watching quietly while your dog adjusts to his new home and new playmates. You'll learn more by watching without interfering than you can learn by jumping in and trying to control what he does. Eventually, alone with him, collar and leash securely on your pet, this process will be another stage in your learning about him, while he learns to understand what you want and what you'll praise or correct.

While each of us has certain standards of behavior for our pets, the second-hand dog, in some severe cases, may not be able to live up to your most fair standards. Something in his past, something you may or may not know about, may eliminate the possibility of your using a crate, for example. There are some dogs that will not tolerate confinement, especially if they are grown when first exposed to it. The chore of convincing a dog that the past is past, and this is now, will take time and cannot be done with words.

But if you are one of those who feels that 'If it isn't me, then who will help, who will it be?', here are some guidelines for helping a slightly or even a used dog to adjust well to your new and loving home. Remember that you may not be able to do all of these things with every pass-around dog - particularly as stated, item No. 1.

1. BUY AND USE A CRATE: Give your wanderer a permanent den, a room with a view, a place to call home, somewhere where he can rest in peace. In most cases, the crate will offer security to the dog who badly needs just that. Some dogs will do better with their crate in the hub of the house, the den or the kitchen. Others need a quiet place. Some like a good view and even some conversation while they rest. Others need a towel draped over the crate or the comfort of a semi-closed airline type crate rather than the all wire model. This can be discovered only by trial and error. Luckily, most of these dogs,

even the homeliest ones, are so sweet and needy that you won't want to stop trying until you get the job done.

2. BONDING IS URGENT: Make time for it in your life. Tie your new dog's leash to your belt and keep him attached for five minutes at a time, working up to an hour a day, indoors and out. Tie-on-time is silent time. Don't keep hammering away at the animal in an effort to get acquainted. Don't be a distracter. Let him fully understand the implication of the physical attachment to you (leash on belt) and let him make the decision to watch you. Dogs are not verbal animals. Give him time to absorb the way things are in silence. He's smart. He'll become attached to you as figuratively as he is literally in this exercise.

3. TRAIN WITH PATIENCE, AFFECTION AND QUIET FIRMNESS: Your rules and regulations will make the dog secure in his new home. But he has lost something profound. He'll need reasons to feel proud of himself again. You can give him those. Whenever he does something worthy, let him know it. Don't gush and stop the training. Coo to him like his mother used to and keep the work flowing. Work is the best medicine for anxious, insecure creatures. It even works for people in trouble.

4. GIVE YOUR PASS-AROUND PET THE BEST YOU CAN AFFORD: He needs it to combat the stress of change. Even if the change is for the better, it will still cause stress at first.

5. EXPLORE WITH YOUR NEW DOG: First, explore your house and grounds with him. If your grounds are your block, fine, explore it. Continue off your property and into your neighborhood. Make big circles, the way he would. Walk around the block and reverse the pattern the next day. You can watch him getting familiar with the turf and enjoying knowing where home is. Ah, home. Who doesn't feel that way? Now, play a game with him. When you get near your home to a house away, or an acre away, tell him GO HOME, GO HOME, and run with him to your door. Now, get down with him and praise and hug. Kissing is in order, too. Here's a dog that will soak up affection. That, in fact, is one of the rewards of working with a slightly used dog. Now take your dog out in the car and go places. Show him the world. Make him bold, make him yours.

6. GROOMING TIME: Grooming your dog relaxes both of you. It's another way of getting the message across, 'I love you. You're here to stay.' Grooming is a nice ending for a walk, training session, or a hectic day.

7. BED YOUR NEW DOG IN YOUR BEDROOM: That's seven or eight hours of bonding time at no cost to you. Again, it's an important message. You belong to me. But don't, in your zealousness allow the dog to spend the night on the bed with you. This message says "we're equals", and of course you're not. While you may have to put up with a time of crying, destruction or jumping, which you would not tolerate from a dog that had started out with you, still you do not want to initiate anything that is false: that is a lie. Keep the dog in his place - either in his crate or on a mat. That will help the initiation process along, too.

It is not true that a puppy will only make a strong bond in the first few months of his life. And while it is indeed wonderful to bring home a cuddly pup who still smells like mother's milk and raise him from scratch, a second hand dog can also become a fast friend. He can indeed bond well to a second owner and he can provide a kind of loyalty and companionship that bonds all of us to the family dog. The rehabilitation of a second hand dog is in fact a rich project, one you're extremely unlikely to regret or forget.

(Author Unknown)