



Mendocino Coast Humane Society
19691 Summers Lane, Fort Bragg, CA 95437
707-964-7729

Welcoming Home a New Dog or Puppy

Strive for structure and consistency in your dog's daily routine to give him a healthy feeling of stability as a member of the family. Most dogs want a leader. Dogs are social animals and like being part of a group, but every group must have a leader to prevent chaos. For your dog to feel relaxed, he needs to know that someone is in charge. If you don't take on the role of leader, your dog may feel that is has to fill the position.

- Provide constant access to a bowl of fresh, clean drinking water and a nutritionally balanced diet.
- Socialize your dog and make him a part of your family activities early on.
- Utilize positive training techniques and get your whole family involved.
- Take your dog to obedience training. MCHS offers 2 free training sessions at the shelter. Beyond that each session is \$10. Training is held at the shelter every Saturday from 1-2 pm. This is probably the most important investment you can make to ensure a happy, healthy and well adjusted dog.
- Don't allow children to play rough with your dog...
- Avoid hitting your dog or using other forms of physical punishment because it can make the dog aggressive.
- Provide lots of exercise for your dog through positive play like fetch and/or frequent walks. Walks or hikes provide great exercise for you and your canine companion. Regular activity not only gets rid of excess energy but reduces frustration levels in your pet. Interactive play increases the bond between you and your pet.
- Do Not tether (chaining or tying to a rope) your dog. Tethering removes a dog's ability to flee and makes him/her feel vulnerable. If he can't escape a perceived threat, the only option is behave aggressively.
- Never let your dog roam free. Letting your dog roam free greatly increases his chance of injury or death from cars or attacks by other animals.
- Use care when introducing your dog to new people, new dogs or new situations. Your goal is to provide the dog with a succession of positive experiences so his social skills will continually improve.
- Keep your new dog on lead except in a fenced-in yard or an approved, fenced off-lead area. Always use a leash or lead near traffic, since your dog can be distracted or fearful for just a second and run into the street.
- Select a veterinarian – all vets here on the coast give a free well health checkup to animals adopted at the shelter. Your appointment must be made within 3 business days of the adoption.

How can I prevent my new dog from chewing up my stuff?

If your new dog has her own toys, he may not be as interested in chewing up human things. Buy durable rubber or nylon toys that satisfy the dog's urge to chew. Toys that you can stuff treats into (like Kongs and Buster Cubes) should keep him occupied for a good long while. If he starts chewing one of your personal items, immediately get him interested in a dog toy instead.

What should I know about making my yard safe?

Do a walkabout of your yard. Is your yard completely fenced in? Are there any spaces or gaps that your new dog or puppy can squeeze through? Is there anything that he can climb on that would allow him to escape over the fence (e.g., a wood pile, a fountain, and latticework)? Some dogs know how to flip open gate latches, so latches should be clipped or locked if your dog can reach them.

What sort of plants do you have in your yard? Snail bait and some plants (such as oleander, azaleas and rhododendrons) are poisonous to dogs. Antifreeze is another hazard for dogs – it is toxic and can be fatal. Dogs are attracted to its sweet taste, so don't allow your dog to drink from standing water near where cars have been parked.

Ideally, you should check your yard for safety before your new dog comes home. If you haven't done this prior to the dog's arrival, supervise the time that your pet spends outside. Even a child's toy can be trouble if it is chewed up and swallowed.

House-training:

Walk your new dog outside about every 45 minutes on a lead to allow the dog many opportunities to get it right. I supervise the dog inside the house because it's much easier and faster to help him learn where to go potty before he starts having "accidents" in the house. An alternative to this method is Crate Training which is described below:

Crate Training:

Dogs are hard-wired by their genetic history to be den animals. A den is a small, safe, well defined space. It is where dogs feel instinctively safe. It is also a place that they instinctively avoid soiling. The combination of these two native traits are what make crate training, done in the right way, a kind and effective component in house-training your new puppy or dog.

A crate can also be a place for your dog to rest or have "down time." If you have just acquired a dog, a crate can limit access to the entire house until your new dog knows the house rules. A crate can help with house-training by setting up a routine. For example, you can feed the puppy in the crate and, afterwards, carry him or walk him on a lead straight out to an elimination site where you can use a word or phrase to remind the dog what the trip outside is for.

There are other benefits of crate training. At some point in your dog's life, it may be necessary to use a crate when you are traveling with your pet or when your dog is recuperating from an injury. Such potentially traumatic situations will be much less stressful if your dog is already familiar with and comfortable in a crate.

Purchasing a Crate:

Most pet-supply stores carry dog crates; pet catalogs sell them as well. Considerations when buying your crate are: Make sure the crate is big enough so that the dog can stand up, turn around and lay flat on his side in comfort but small enough that there isn't enough room for the dog to sleep and eat at one end and eliminate at the other. If you are training a growing puppy, you can buy a larger crate with a divider for adjusting the crate as the puppy grows.

Introducing the Crate:

You can prevent problems with crate training by setting your dog up for success. Your dog should only associate good things with the crate, so start by putting treats and/or toys in the crate and encourage it to go in. Some dogs may need to warm up to the crate slowly. If your dog is afraid to go in, place a treat in the crate as far as it is willing to go. After it takes the treat, place another one a little further back in the crate. Keep going until it is eating treats at the very back, then feed it its next meal in the crate with the door open so that it can walk in and out at will. Crate training a fearful dog can take days, so be patient and encouraging. If a crate is properly introduced and used, your dog will happily enter and settle down.

Should I use the crate at night?

Sure, you use the crate at night. Put the dog in with a treat and a cue like “kennel” or “kennel up” delivered in a cheery tone of voice. The crate should be situated close to you so that you can hear the dog whine or whimper if it needs to eliminate during the night. (Dogs will usually make some noise rather than make a mess where they sleep).

If you are training a puppy, be prepared for one or two trips outside at night to eliminate. If the puppy goes outside and doesn't produce, do not allow any extra time for play or long drinks of water when you come back inside. Instead, encourage the pup to return to the crate. It may whine a bit, but if you have given it ample opportunity to eliminate, try to ignore the protests and the puppy should settle down quickly.

How Much Time in the Crate is OK?

No dog, young or old, should be living in a crate full-time. Dogs are social animals, so for a dog to have good quality of life, social isolation should be kept to a minimum. All dogs need daily exercise and some interaction with others. Even four hours in a crate without a break during the day is a long time for many adult dogs, so we don't recommend that you crate your dog if you're gone all day. Except for nighttime, crating a dog for long periods is not acceptable.

Puppies, especially, should not be left in a crate for long periods of time (more than two hours). It is important that puppies not be neglected and forced to break their instinctive aversion to soiling their sleeping area. Unfortunately, this is what happens to many pet-store puppies and it can lead to serious house-training difficulties. Also, since they are still developing, puppies have even more need for social interaction than adult dogs. If they aren't socialized to the world while they are young, they can develop fears and aberrant behaviors of many kinds.

Most adult dogs can stay in a crate for the entire night without a trip outside. However, young puppies and some old dogs cannot physically hold their bladders and bowels through the night.

When should a crate not be used?

A crate should not be used as a form of punishment. As mentioned earlier, your dog should have only warm, fuzzy feelings about its crate. Even though a dog can come to see its crate as a safe place, it is not the solution for a dog with separation anxiety, since it could injure itself trying to get out.

Recall:

Call the dog to you often; again, always using a happy tone. Add treats sometimes to pleasantly surprise him and keep him coming to you fast. Remember to practice recall frequently.

Grooming: Can you trim your dog's nails? Is he comfortable having his feet touched? Grooming has many benefits for dogs, so teach your dog to enjoy grooming.

Getting the Behavior You Want

Be proactive by teaching your dog to perform the behavior you want! We can reward any behavior we like and want to see more of, including being calm and gentle. The most effective way to squelch unwanted behavior is to ignore it. Why? Because giving any attention (even negative forms of attention, such as saying “no!”) for unwanted behavior is still seen by the dog as a good thing because he’s getting attention. You can immediately ask for another wanted behavior while ignoring what the dog has offered.

Introducing Dogs to Each Other

If you have a dog and a new one will be entering or visiting your home, there are things you can do to ensure that the meeting comes off without a hitch. A new dog can mean you are bringing home a foster dog or a new puppy; someone who has a dog is moving into your house; or someone is visiting with a dog.

If you know that both dogs are very social with other dogs, the meeting should be easy. But, you may not know this, since some dogs don’t get out and mix with other dogs that much. If your dog (or the new dog) has not been spayed/neutered, the meeting may be more difficult.

If you are uncertain how one (or both) of the dogs will react, be cautious. First, the dogs will need to meet on neutral ground. Choose a place where neither dog is likely to feel territorial.

When the meeting occurs, have each dog on lead, each with a calm, relaxed adult handler. Keep the leads loose, since tension on the leash might communicate to the dog that you are fearful or anxious about their meeting. Walk the dogs side by side with a safe distance between the dogs. Then, cross paths (still maintaining that distance) and allow the dogs to smell where the other has walked.

Next, let the dogs meet. As the dogs approach each other, watch their body language closely, paying attention to the entire body. The dogs may need to do a little posturing or make a little noise, but if you don’t know how to tell the difference between dogs getting to know each other and dogs who don’t like each other, have someone there who does.

Do not allow nose-to-nose greetings. This type of greeting is very stressful for many dogs, particularly those who are fearful or feel threatened by eye contact.

If the dogs try to play by pawing or play-bowing with their legs stretched out in front of them, they may want to be best buddies. Allow them to sniff each other, and give praise for a nice greeting. If you want, you can take them for a walk together, stopping occasionally to allow them to sniff and investigate each other.

If neither of the dogs is food aggressive, you can practice cues that they know and give treats as rewards. Giving treats can also serve to distract the dogs from focusing too much on each other.

If the dogs seem fine with each other, drive them home and settle in, but make sure you’ve put away your dog’s toys, bones and food bowls first, since these items may be sources of conflict. If you’re going to offer “high-value” items like Kongs or chews, it may be best to separate the dogs. Once the dogs are good friends, they may be more willing to chomp side by side on high-value items.

To introduce a puppy to a dog, use the same procedure as above. But, if the puppy is under four months old, both the dog and the puppy may need frequent breaks from each other. Some adult dogs will quickly lose patience with puppy energy. If the dog does not like the puppy, do not leave them alone together.

Introducing a Cat and a Dog

Some dogs do fine living with cats; others simply cannot live safely with felines. Even if the dog has cat experience and the cat has lived with a dog before, proceed cautiously during the first introduction. It's best to have two people present, one to intervene with each animal if necessary. If you have more than one dog, introduce each dog separately to the cat.

The dog should be held on a loose lead. One person should watch the dog's body language and the other should watch the cat's. If the cat is not acting aggressively (raising his back, hissing) toward the dog, he can be allowed to move around freely. A cat is rarely a threat to a dog, but there are some cats who will meet dogs aggressively. If the dog is not acting aggressively toward the cat, then you can ask the dog to sit, or lie down and stay, while the cat moves around freely, sniffing the dog if he wishes. The dog should be praised and rewarded if she ignores the cat.

If the dog has a strong prey instinct, she will become very focused; she'll stiffen and stare, and may start barking or whining. If you see these signs, do not allow the dog near the cat. Especially, do not allow the dog to chase the cat. If the dog lunges and tries to chase the cat, you should try a different strategy for getting them to share space.

Instead, put the cat in a bedroom with a tall baby gate across the door. Give the kitty all needed supplies: litter box, food and water. Allow the dog to view the cat briefly through the gate, and then get the dog to focus on something else, like playing or practicing cues. Praise and reward the dog for being able to focus elsewhere. Continue to give the dog short viewings of the cat throughout the day.

The hope here is that the dog will eventually lose interest in the kitty. In some cases, the dog will lose interest in the cat within a couple of hours, but some need days, and others simply will not be able to share a space safely with a cat. If you don't feel you can trust your dog around your cat, you should keep them apart. Many dogs can injure or kill a cat very quickly, and dogs can also be injured by cats (eye injuries are not uncommon).

Now, about kittens and puppies: If you are introducing a kitten to more than one dog, again, introduce only one dog at a time. Small kittens may not have any fear of dogs, so you must watch the dog carefully. If your dog is young and high energy, he could hurt or kill the kitten simply by trying to play. Because kittens are small and want to run and play, dogs with a strong prey drive may be very excited by a kitten's movements.

In fact, kittens and dogs should not be left alone at all. Even if your dog is okay with your adult cats, she may become too rough with a kitten and hurt him. So, for safety's sake, keep small kittens and dogs apart any time you are not watching them.

Introducing puppies and adult cats can sometimes be easy, since a well-socialized adult cat will quickly stand up for himself and "tell" a puppy to respect his personal cat space. However, if your rambunctious puppy is chasing your shy cat, the cat may need your help to control the puppy. Until the puppy is old enough to have more self-control and has had some training, baby gates can be used to keep the animals safely and comfortably apart.

Animals with good past experience often adjust well and quickly. But, if introductions do not go well, seek professional help from a behaviorist. Don't ever use punishment: It will not help and it could make matters much worse.

For More Information, the following website is extremely helpful:
www.bestfriends.org/Resources/Pet-Care/Dogs