



Adopting a Dog

Congratulations! You have just saved the life of a dog that will provide you with years of unconditional love and affection. Along with the rewards of pet ownership come certain responsibilities. You must give your pet a good home, lots of love and care, and the training to become a well-behaved companion.

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The New Arrival

What to Expect

If you're adopting a puppy, know he may be frightened when you first bring him home. The puppy was separated from his mom and placed in the shelter. Now he has been taken to a strange new place. Although everyone will want to meet and play with your new puppy, keep the initial interactions to a minimum.

Expect your pup to actively explore and investigate everything he can get into. Puppy proof your house (place shoes in a closed closet, clothes off the floor).

Your adopted adult dog may present you with some challenges. Unlike a puppy, an adult dog already comes with some habits, good and bad. You can never know what his life was like before, so take nothing for granted.

Adjusting to your Family

The ideal life for a dog is with a family. Dogs are pack animals who need relationships and rules to survive. Your family has become this dog's pack and it is important for your dog to know where he stands. He must listen and respect the word of everyone, even the children. All family members must know the rules and commands for the dog and practice them consistently.

Housetraining

Patience and Praise are they in house training your puppy or dog. DO NOT hit or scream at your dog. He will learn better from love than from fear.

Until a new puppy (or dog!) is housetrained, confine him to a small area (preferably one that is easy to clean!), like a kitchen. Make this your puppy's domain until he is reliably house trained.

Even an adult dog that is housebroken can forget his training after an extended shelter stay. A dog kept in a kennel must eliminate there, no matter how well it was trained no to. Confine your new adult dog to a small area just as you would a new puppy, until he is reliable.

If your puppy or dog sniffs the floor excessively or circles a certain area, he probably has to go out! Take him out immediately.

Lead him to a designated area outside and do not distract him while he sniffs around and eliminates. Praise and reward him when he has done his "duty" outside. Praise is the key.

Set up a regular schedule for feeding your dog so you can determine when he will need to eliminate. Younger puppies are usually fed three times a day and older puppies and adult dogs are fed twice a day.

Establish a routine of going outside: first thing in the morning, when you get home from work or school, approximately one hour after your dog eats, just before bedtime and following vigorous play or exercise. Very young puppies may need to be taken outside as often as every two hours.

If you see your puppy or dog in the act of eliminating in the house, say "NO" and quickly take him outside: DO NOT RUB HIS NOSE IN HIS MESS! This is degrading, inhumane and is not effective. Do not reprimand your dog if you did not catch him in the act. He will only associate the punishment with you, not with the act.

Pee Pad and Paper Training for Puppies and/or Small Dogs

Puppies that must be left alone for extended periods of time may need to use paper or Pee Pads while you are away. Pee Pads are available at pet supply stores and are much more absorbent than regular newspaper.

Keep the puppy in a confined area (such as using baby gates to keep him in the kitchen) and place the Pee Pad away from his food, water bowls and sleeping area. Dogs are naturally clean animals who are averse to eliminating where they eat and sleep. Begin with a large Pee Pad. As your puppy (or small dog) begins to eliminate on the pads, you can gradually reduce the size of the pads.

When you come home, take your puppy outside immediately! Do not excite your puppy before you get him outside, or he may not be able to “hold it”. While you are home, take away the Pee Pads and take your puppy outside to eliminate. Eventually, your puppy will be able to “hold it” while you are away and then eliminate outside when you come home.

Accidents

Even after house training, your dog or puppy may have an occasional accident in the house. Don't assume you just have a bad dog. Ask yourself these questions:

1. Did you keep your pet on a schedule with feeding and going outside to eliminate?
2. Did you use a pet odor neutralizer on the spots where the accidents occurred in the past so your pet won't be tempted to use the area again?
3. Could the accident be caused by a medical problem? Check with your veterinarian.

Basic Care

Dogs can't be happy and healthy all by themselves. They need your help:

1. Help your dog stay in shape with regular exercise, such as walks, runs and playing fetch or Frisbee
2. Brush your dog regularly. A daily brushing will help keep your dog's skin healthy and give him a more lustrous coat. It loosens dirt and dead hair and keeps you pet cleaner between baths.
3. Give your dog fresh food and water and keep the bowls clean. Check the water bowl each time you feed your pet.
4. Choose an area for your pet's “bed”. Use a crate or a pet bed, pad, rug or blankets. This will be his own special place.
5. Take your dog to the veterinarian at least yearly for regular check-ups and vaccinations.
6. Get an adjustable collar for your puppy. Check it frequently and adjust it as your puppy grows.
7. Check your adult dog's collar so it is not too tight (or too loose). You should be able to get two fingers between the collar and your dog's neck.

Pet Safety

Here is some important safety tips to remember to keep your pet safe:

1. Never leave your pet unattended in a car-especially in hot weather. A car (even with the windows open), can heat up like an oven in a matter of minutes. Hundreds of animals die in unattended cars every year.
2. Some plants are poisonous to your pet. Identify toxic plants and make them inaccessible to your pet.
3. Chocolate is poison to pets. Do not feed your dog and amount of chocolate.
4. Bones can be dangerous to a dog, especially soft bones that splinter easily. Bones can lodge in a dog's throat or stomach and cause fatal punctures. Give your dog rawhide and nylon bones to chew.
5. Do not transport your dog in the back of a pick-up truck! Hundreds of dogs are killed or injured each year from falling out of a moving pick-up truck. Even if kept in a carrier, the dog is not protected from weather extremes.
6. Keep your pet in a yard with a secure fence, not by chaining or tying it up. A chain or rope can injure the dog and a chained dog cannot protect itself from other animals that stray into your yard. Chaining also creates frustration in your dog that can lead to behavior problems like excessive barking.
7. Provide shelter for your outside dog. Protect him from extreme weather, such as sun, rain, snow and wind.
8. Make sure your dog has free access to water, inside of the house and outside.
9. Walk your dog on a leash. This is for his own safety and consideration of others.

Obedience Training

You wouldn't bring a new baby home from the hospital and just "let it loose" in the house without supervision would you? Just like a baby, your new puppy or dog will need to learn good doggy manners. Teach your new puppy or dog what is acceptable behavior in your house.

There are all kinds of different dog training programs in Medicine Hat. Attending training classes are fun for you and your dog! Plus you get to increase your bond. Check out our website's "Resource" section for local dog training courses.

Bad Habits

Most of what owners define as "bad habits" (chewing, biting, digging, jumping and barking) are natural activities for a dog. The idea is not necessary to stop the behavior completely, but to direct the activity to an appropriate level.

1. Give your dog plenty of stimulation and interaction to prevent boredom and loneliness. Some dogs chew, bark or dig to vent their energy and frustration.

2. Remove forbidden objects and replace with acceptable toys and treats for your dog to chew.
3. Confine your new pet in a safe place, such as a crate, when you cannot supervise him.
4. Do not overly excite your dog so he won't jump up, bite or bark excessively.
5. Divert your dog's attention with another activity, or have him sit and give you his attention.

If your dog continues to have bad habits, it is in practically every case **your own fault**. That is good news, because you can correct your dog's bad behavior by improving your training methods. But remember...breaking your dog of habits formed is far more difficult than training him the correct way in the first place.

Every Dog Needs a Den

Dogs are den animals. If you don't provide your dog with a "den" of his own, he'll may make due with whatever's around- a chair that just fits, the narrow place behind the couch, or the wedge of space between the bed and the wall. One method of houstraining, called crate training, relies on a dog's natural tendency to seek out these cozy and secure places.

A crate is kind of like an indoor dog house. While it's primary function is to serve as a bed or den, used correctly and for brief periods of time, it can also be an ideal tool to houstrain your pet or keep those canines who suffer from separation anxiety from destroying the house while you run a few errands.

However, the dog is not supposed to live in the crate. Endless hours in the crate can lead to severe social and isolation problems for your dog- and he will no longer see the crate as a special retreat. When you are home, your dog needs to be out with you. In fact, the crate should be kept in the room where the family spends most of its time. That way, your dog can seek refuge from the hubbub of household activity, yet still feel like it is part of the family.

Once your dog realizes that the crate is a sanctuary for him, and that no one can bother him while he is in his "den", he will begin to seek out the crate on his own.

There's No Place Like Home

The best place for a dog is in the midst of the family; in contact with the people he loves and needs. You have made an unwanted or homeless animal a chosen dog. Give your dog lots of love and treat him as a member of your family, and you will be rewarded with undying loyalty and devotion.