

compatible pet.

AGGRESSION TOWARDS OTHER ANIMALS



Aggression towards other animals, (mainly other dogs) is particularly common and its not just rescue dogs who have this problem. Dogs with animal "issues" include dog park bullies, cat chasers and sibling rivalry to name a few of the more common ones.

As with aggression towards people, make sure you can identify what sort of threat your dog presents here either by history or observation.

Is your dog "making a display" with lots of noise and spittle or does he really mean business. In his altercations with other dogs has there been a need to visit the vet for one or both parties, and if so, what was the cost? This is your yardstick for rehabilitation success. As before, do not let your dog practice unwanted behavior while you are trying to fix it. A good approach is to hold off visiting the dog park until your dog has learnt to obey you, has a solid recall and is ideally de-sexed. We live in a litigious society and under no circumstances should an aggressive dog be allowed to interact off leash with other dogs in an uncontrolled manner. New council laws allow for the confiscation of dogs deemed aggressive to people or other dogs and serious fines can arise as well. Socialize your dog with other dogs at a good Obedience dog school at a distance he can handle before tackling the "wild west show" that is the dog park.

"Socialize your dog with other dogs at a good Obedience dog school at a distance he can handle..."

FEARFULNESS

Dogs can be afraid of many things and the behavior this produces can be upsetting for the owner to witness. It can range from major phobias such as a fear of people, other animals, thunderstorms or travelling in the car to something as minor as a scent or someone wearing an item of clothing such as a hat. There are often good products on the market available for managing



some of them, like special clothing or scent pheromones but for most my "go to" approach is desensitization.

As I mentioned in aggressiveness towards people, introduce the triggers gently using food rewards if the dog is calm enough to take them. Try not to buy into the fear the dog shows. Be supportive but resist the temptation to coddle or scold the dog which only tends to make things worse. Some dogs never totally get over their fears, but with kindness and training, they can learn to live with them.

NOT COMING WHEN CALLED

Every time you call your dog, he must realize that coming to you is always a good thing. Never call him if you don't intend to follow it up, he will just learn to ignore you. Perhaps even more important, is to never call the dog then punish it. If you need to do so, go fetch the dog. Coming when called should always be safe. When you go to the park, practice calling him in, and then let him go play again multiple times. Dogs that are only called when leaving the park will learn to avoid you as the only time you call them immediately precedes the end of play.



When first training your dog to come in an unfamiliar or unfenced area, use a long line for safety. Taking the dog off leash in the street will not only invite a hefty council fine, but runs the risk of having him distracted by a dog or cat across the road which may have very bad consequences should he decide to run. Always train the recall in partnership with a good solid STAY and praise lavishly when he gets it right.

This is by no means a definitive fix all for problem behaviors, not does it intend to imply all rescue dogs will have any or all of them. This is simply a list of tips and should not replace seeking the help of a qualified trainer should such a need be present.

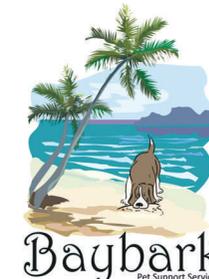
Adopting a rescue dog can be the best thing you ever do. The unconditional love they bring pays you back tenfold for any training you need to do to help them.

I know this from personal as well as professional experience. Good luck and enjoy the journey with your new friend.

Want more?
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Rescue Dog Training Tips



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Start off on the right paw...then do more!

RESCUE DOGS

Rescue dogs come in all shapes, breeds, sizes and ages. Some are well adjusted, some have issues. Most are needing homes through no fault of their own. In most cases taking on a rescue dog can come with a few challenges, but rest assured with a few simple procedures, you can have a wonderful companion that will bring joy and happiness into your home for many years.



Whether purebred or "ancestry unknown", rescue dogs have one thing in common, they have all been influenced by humans for better or worse prior to meeting you. By keeping this in mind, you will better understand the need to teach the dog to understand your rules, some of which may never have existed for him beforehand.

Dogs needing adoption may fall into the following¹ categories:-

- Owner circumstances changed due to financial or physical reasons.
- The dog grew into a larger or smaller breed than was originally expected.
- Difficulty getting along with other pets in the household.
- The dog became too old for its original purpose or simply was not wanted anymore.
- The dog had behavioral problems.
(Probably the most common reason)

We may or may not know our rescue dog's exact history, so rather than wasting time guessing we need to look at the behavior the dog is exhibiting now. If it is going to be a problem to you, then it needs to be addressed from the day the dog comes home.



Remember, he does not know the rules of your household, nor will he, without constant repetition from you in a kind educational manner. The observations, house rules and

training you put into these early weeks when he arrives, will form the obedient, happy dog you will

enjoy owning for a very long time in the future.

BEHAVIOUR—WHAT YOU SEE IS WHAT YOU'VE GOT

The initial behavior our rescue dog shows us is the product of the life he had in the past. A classical example is the dog that cowers in fear when the owner picks up a broom or newspaper. We may assume the dog has been beaten by these things in the past. This may or may not be true. Then we have the dog that shows aggression around other dogs. Perhaps he wasn't socialized as a pup or young dog or maybe he was attacked at some point and is still fearful. In order to help these dogs we must focus on the behavior we would like to have and work towards training it.

My first rule for rehabilitating rescue dogs with "issues" is a simple one. If all you can do is feel sorry for them, you can't help them. On face value this sounds cold, but by this I mean love alone will not fix the problems. Much as we want to cuddle them and make up for their bad start in life this will not be enough. Love them by all means, but it must be in partnership with house rules, leadership, education and a training plan. In some cases, tough love is what's needed but often a sensible approach, patience and realistic goals are much more productive.

So, how do you identify and deal with your dog's particular "challenge"?

Obviously, there are differences in the training approach according to what behavior the dog is showing you and they cannot all be fully addressed in this handout so I will concentrate on some of the more common ones I have been called in to fix.

- Aggression towards people
- Aggression towards other animals
- Fearfulness
- Not coming when called.



"If all you can do is feel sorry for them, you can't help them."

AGGRESSION TOWARDS PEOPLE

This one is tough and sometimes progress is very slow. The first thing we need to do is to assess how dangerous the aggression really is. Is it mainly bluff, or is there a real danger someone will get hurt? If the dog has come through a good rescue organization it will likely have been screened for serious aggression issues before it was put up for adoption anyway. If the dog has been rescued by some other means, you will need to carefully watch and monitor the dog until you are sure of the severity of the problem.



Any history you can get is of benefit here. As I have already mentioned, don't worry about the "why" too much, focus on the "what", as in what the dog is doing now or has done in the recent known past. For example, if the dog bites, then what is the severity of the bite? This tells you volumes. A dog that bites when cornered but does not leave a mark on the skin is an excellent candidate for rehabilitation. A dog however, that has no bite inhibition and causes real damage is another case entirely. A dog in the latter category is a case for professionals, if the owner is determined to still try, and it can be costly and not always possible to live with this type of dog. You need to be realistic here for the safety of your family and others.

So, in the case of the good candidate, management is your next step. I strongly suggest you do not allow the dog to practice the unwanted behavior. To this end, having identified the triggers that cause your particular dog to react, e.g., a dislike of men coming too close, avoid putting the dog in a position where he is forced to react aggressively. Rehabilitation is a gradual process. Introduce the triggers with plenty of distance. Think of it as your dog's "comfort zone". Keeping him within his tolerance threshold, while using food rewards for calm or tolerant behavior will stand you in good stead towards the end goal of a happy



¹Not a complete list