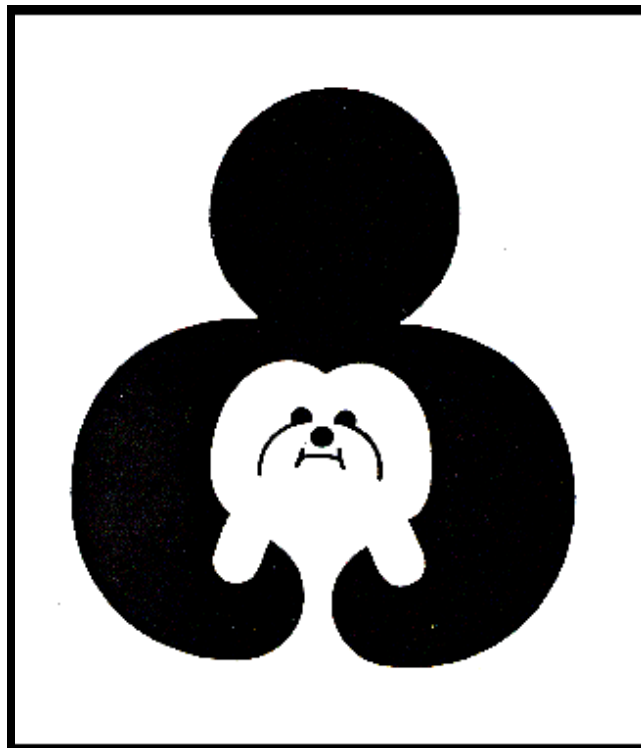


Adopter's Handbook



Shih Tzu Rescue of Minnesota

Website: www.shihtzurescuemn.org

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Disclaimer

The information contained in this handbook is not to be used as a substitute for Veterinary care or advice. STRMN provides this only as a supplement for your work with Shih Tzu and Shih Tzu mixes that come into our rescue. If you have any questions, please call or email one of our members.

Table of Contents

About the Shih Tzu Breed	3
Introduction to the New Home	3
Settling In	3
Introducing New Dogs	3
Feeding – General	5
Dry – Canned – Home Cooked?	5
Treats.....	6
House Training.....	6
Bonding with Your Shih Tzu	6
Grooming	6
Training	7
Exercise and Play.....	7
Massage.....	8
Selecting Your Dog’s Care Team	8
Veterinarians	8
Groomers	8
Caretakers.....	8
Understanding Behaviors	8
Health	9
Allergies	12
Bad Breath	12
Bladder and Kidneys	12
Cold Weather Tips.....	13
Dry Eye, Dry Skin Issues	13
Ear Mites and Infections	13
Licking/Surgery.....	14
Reverse Sneezing	14
Vomiting/Diarrhea/Bloody Stool.....	14
First Aid.....	14
Aspirin for Sprains or Pain	14
Losing a Pet.....	15
Supplemental Articles	16
Rehabilitation of a Puppy Mill Dog	16
Separation Anxiety	24
Submissive Urination.....	28

About Shih Tzus

Shih Tzus are a lively, congenial breed. They are filled with love and joy. Bred as companion dogs, they suffer if left alone or ignored for long periods of time. They are happy and endowed with loads of character, generally getting along well with people and other pets. They are highly intelligent, some learning about 200 spoken words. Their intelligence sometimes shows up as a stubborn streak – they know what they want and are trying to make you listen!

They are very people-oriented, and love attention from family members and acquaintances. They do not have a guard-dog personality and will generally give a couple of barks to let you know someone is at the house. Known for their playfulness and love of affection, they have a 'lap dog' personality. Their favorite activity is curled up beside you dozing to the gentle massage. At night, they would be most happy to share a small area of your bed, curled against your body for comfort.

Shih Tzus love new things and a good walk is always welcome. They are sensitive to extremes in temperature and should never be left outside unattended. The cute short noses make it difficult for them to cool off – heat stroke can come on very quickly. Also, carry water for them while walking and take a rest in the shade when they start heavy panting. **Never** leave them in the car – it can quickly turn into an oven or a freezer. In the Minnesota cold weather, even their full coats are insufficient against the cold. Little paw pads can be burned by salt on icy sidewalks and can suffer frost bite.

Introduction to the New Home

Settling In

Bringing in the new Shih Tzu requires adjustments on the part of both you and the dog. This can take several weeks. It is advisable to limit visitors and keep things "low key" for at least a week, so you can bond with the Shih Tzu and make things less confusing. If you can time the arrival of your new dog with vacation or a long weekend – wonderful! Your lifestyle may need to be altered a bit to accommodate the new arrival. He may not eat right away; may have diarrhea; it can take a couple days to adjust and to develop a schedule.

In order to prevent jealousy between your current dog and the new dog; do not ignore the current dog; feed him first; give treats first etc. Your Shih Tzu may not be affectionate at first because of change, let the dog come to you first. Once the Shih Tzu gets to know you; they may want to be with you constantly - they are very sensitive and may need the extra reassurance.

Introducing New Dogs

Be prepared!

Your new dog must have a collar, harness, and leash. If you plan to use a crate/kennel for sleeping, be sure that is ready and clean. Provide a dog bed, pillow or a fleece blankets for your dog to lie on while resting or sleeping. If the dog comes with food that they are already used to eating, and you want to change their food, you should do it gradually. Switch it

gradually over the course of 3-5 days, mixing in a little of the new food at first, and increasing the proportion of the new food over the next several days.

When you get a new dog; proceed with caution for your safety. The prior reports you may get on a new dog may not be accurate and your dog may be a biter out of fear or aggression or vice versa. They may also be very stressed: hide in the back of their kennel or have diarrhea! If hiding in their kennel, just open the door and let them come out on their time while you go about your business. **DO NOT TRY AND PULL THEM OUT!**

You must be wary of all the new dogs and should not put them in situations where they might harm themselves, you, your family or friends. It is best to proceed slowly with introducing your new dog to new people, dogs and situations. Keep the dog on the leash when introducing him to new people and other pets in the household. People in your home and neighborhood should not be allowed to move quickly into the face, or over the top of a new dog. Actions like that often scare them and out of fear they may growl or bite. Let the dog come to you, sniff you, and you can reward them with a treat. Other pets should not be allowed to run at the dog, jump on him, or bark in his face when they meet each other. Let them see each other first, and gradually let them sniff each other while on leashes. Remember your new dog is “intruding” on your dog’s territory, and it will upset your own pet at first.

BE CERTAIN THAT YOUR NEW DOG IS SECURELY LEASHED WHEN YOU TAKE IT OUTSIDE; THEY MAY TRY TO RUN AWAY BECAUSE IT IS UNFAMILIAR TERRITORY TO THEM. PUT THE LEASH ON BEFORE YOU OPEN THE DOOR. If your yard is fenced, we recommend that you still take them out on a leash at first. Until your new dog knows and trusts you, it can be hard to catch the dog if they run from you even in a fenced yard. Take the dog on a leash so you can give lots of praise for going outside nicely.

We would suggest you quarantine them briefly especially if they came from a shelter. A suitable area to quarantine would be an area not accessible to other dogs; like a spare bedroom or laundry room or a finished basement - preferably gated. Unsuitable areas would be outside or in the garage or unfinished basement.

Make certain your current dog(s) are up to date with their vaccines and they also should get a Bordetella vaccine to inoculate against kennel cough.

The first night or two it may be wise to keep the new dog separate from your own dog—especially if your dog is used to sleeping with you! He/she thinks of that as their territory and may not appreciate an intruder until they get to know the new dog better. You can try having the new dog stay in the “quarantine” area (gated kitchen or near by bathroom), or have them sleep in a dog bed next to your bed, or keep them in a crate or kennel in your room. Soft music or radio may help comfort a new dog. If a blanket and/or toy came with the new dog from a previous owner or shelter, let the dog sleep with that familiar object. Puppies will need to be kenneled for a few months during the night until they become potty trained. If lots of whining occurs while in the kennel, a hard tap on the top of the kennel with a firm “No” will help train the dog to rest quietly...unless there is a real problem with anxiety which will be addressed later in the handbook.

Feeding –General

~ If your dog is overweight, you're not walking enough ~

Choose bowls made of stainless steel, that are wide and low for the flat faces. Bowls should have rubber rings to keep them from slipping. Ceramic and plastic can harbor bacteria. Clean, fresh water should be given daily.

Many dogs are allergic to corn and wheat. Avoid foods with animal by-products – they include hair, hooves, and feathers. Choose foods with a single protein source – that is clearly identified chicken, beef, lamb.

Dry – Canned – Homecooked?

There are almost as many opinions on animal diets as human ones! The Shih Tzu never hunted for food. With the jaw structure and short legs, they are unequipped to live off the land. They've been domesticated for approximately 2000 years, so are equipped to eat cooked foods.

There are several approaches to feeding - each type of food has its advantage:

- Dry: cheaper, purported to cause less tartar buildup. It is important to buy 'premium' brands to avoid allergies. Some dogs have difficulty eating kibble; select a brand for small dogs, however some dogs continue to have difficulty
- Canned: fresher food, with more moisture. Use for dogs who cannot eat kibble or who have bladder problems. Always refrigerate opened cans.
- Homecooked: wider variety of nutrients available and possible to tailor to individual dog's needs ***BUT*** use a reputable, scientific source to make sure there is proper nutrition, with the addition of bone meal for minerals.
- Raw Diet: not recommended.

All dogs will benefit from the addition of fresh fruits and vegetables to their diet. You wouldn't want to live on a diet of breakfast cereal three times a day. Grated apples and carrots, green beans, squash, and fresh parsley are all healthful, nutritious additions. Some dogs delight in chewing fresh carrots as a snack. Leftovers are fine – as long as they are not high in fat, sugar, and salt. Before feeding any quantity of a new food, offer a small taste to see if is desirable. A tablespoon of plain yogurt can aid digestion. (no sugar or fruit)

Remove and discard uneaten food from the dish when your dog has finished. Wash and dry the food and water dishes to prevent a breeding ground for harmful germs.

Poisonous to dogs: onions, grapes, raisins, macadamia nuts, garlic, chocolate

One reputable source for recipes is Dr. Pitcarns

For nutritional evaluation of commercial dog foods, visit www.dogfoodadvisor.com to find a **five star** dog food.

Treats

Please feed a dog wholesome treats. Look for natural ingredients with very few if any fillers, dyes, and additives. Rawhide bones and sticks are hard to digest and often cause a dog to choke or have digestive problems. If you want good dental chews confer with your Vet or try

pizzle or bully sticks which are made of a tendon that is easier to digest. Sweet Potato or vegetable chews are great too! Or try a Kong that is stuffed $\frac{3}{4}$ with the dog's dry kibble, and then fill with a wholesome canned-wet dog food and FREEZE! This is great in the summer time! Avoid food and treats with preservatives and the chemicals BHA/BHT, polyethylene glycol. Rawhide chews are often processed with formaldehyde and should be avoided.

House Training

~ Dogs don't fail housetraining, owners do ~

First, accept that there will be accidents. Think of how many times you use the restroom and what we are asking these dogs with small bladders to do. Understand that, and provide a spot for emergency relief.

Key to house training is consistency – feed and provide access at regular times. Whether you choose to use pee pads or have them go outside, or both, is up to you. The dog will learn.

Moving to a new home is stressful! House trained dogs have a lot of adjustments to be made, so you'll need to brush up on your potty training skills. When your new dog arrives home, keep him with you and watch him closely or gate him in an area that is easily cleaned. To start, keep a leash on the dog, keep him in the same room with you at all times and watch him carefully. If he shows signs of having to go potty (spinning, sniffing, searching for a spot), then say "go outside" in a firm voice and take him outside. When sniffing for a spot outside use a word or phrase like "go potty" or "get busy" over and over so he begins to associate it with "his job"! Praise him in the "squeaky voice" so he gets excited about what he has just done as well. A treat works wonders at reinforcing behavior.

Most dogs will need to urinate right away in the morning, and poop about 10-20 minutes after eating (many choose to do so only on a short walk!). For a young dog, urinating every 3-4 hours is common until they learn to hold it longer. Puppies are often trained to hold it by using a crate for sleeping in and during the day if the parents are gone to work. Dogs tend to NOT dirty in the place they sleep (the crate, or gated area), so again, if they are not housetrained, keeping them crated or better yet, in a large gated area like the kitchen works well. You can also try using piddle pads in a large gated area.

Bonding with Your Shih Tzu

Grooming

~ Good grooming is about more than good looks ~

Grooming is important! In extreme cases, collected eye drainage can cause blindness: a matted coat can be painful and lead to tissue destruction; feces can solidify under the tail preventing elimination; tartar buildup can cause teeth loss and heart disease.

Shih Tzus require frequent grooming. Some should be done at home between professional grooming sessions. Experience is required to trim the face and complete the clipping.

Begin with proper equipment:

- A small sized pin brush
- A comb with rotating teeth
- Scissors or clipper for trimming the hair on the pads
- Non-slip mat – or a soft lap

It's important to be patient and gentle. Shih Tzus require a lot of grooming and you can make it a pleasant experience. Be very careful working around the face – the lovely protruding eyes are easily damaged. Pulling on mats hurts! Work them out with your fingers or cut vertically through them (scissors pointed away from the dog).

Training

~ Run, don't walk away from a trainer that recommends choke collars and harsh training methods ~

Basic commands include: come, sit, stay, and wait. These are important for both behavior and safety.

Because the Shih Tzu is a small dog with fragile bones, they should always be walked on a harness. A sudden jerk on a collar may cause irreparable trachea damage. Use a fixed leash while teaching your dog to walk on a leash. Retractable leashes should NEVER be used!

Avoid harsh correction and shaming. It does no good to punish a dog after the fact. He won't have a clue what you're talking about.

Taking your dog to a puppy class or basic obedience class is highly recommended! Your dog needs the socialization, and every dog needs to have "a job". Performing basic commands gives him a wonderful confidence and puts you in charge as the leader!

Exercise and Play

~ Exercise is the magic elixir for most behavioral problems. ~

Daily exercise is essential to promoting good health. Anyone who has had a dog that suffers from lack of physical activity and mental stimulation will tell you that they will often turn to destructive behaviors -- behaviors that magically disappear once the dog is getting out every day. Walks keep them fit and mentally alert. You both benefit from at least two 20 minute walks a day. Jogging and hiking aren't appropriate for most Shih Tzus. Allow your dog to sniff the ground, bushes, and things along the way to enable him to enjoy the walk. He is identifying many things that make the walk interesting for him. Give him plenty of the to do this - the walk is **his** time and he should enjoy it to the fullest.

Shih Tzus love toys! There's nothing like a good game of fetch or hide-and-seek. They can amuse themselves making 'music' with a small squeaky toy. Purchase toys made for dogs with small mouths. Chew toys fill the natural need to gnaw and promote good dental health. Chose

small toys that are well made with a plastic (not metal squeaker). Plastic toys are easily chewed and ingested – the plastic and paints are not healthy for the dog.

Massage

Shih Tzus have a long back and can suffer from strains. A good massage technique is to place your thumb and forefinger about an inch apart and, starting at the base of the skull, massage in a soft circular motion on either side of the spine. You can also massage the shoulders and hips. The special spot is at the base of the tail. Your dog will tell you if it is too hard, or the wrong spot. Sometimes they will lick you to say, “Thank you, but that’s not quite right”.

The Tellington T-Touch is another great approach.

Selecting Your Dog’s Care Team

Veterinarian

Basic guidelines: Use a veterinarian that seems to listen to you and has the time to let you ask questions and explore ALL options on treatment for your dog. Find one that explains procedures in layman’s terms you can understand, and is willing to research and seek out alternative methods for treatment if needed.

Groomers

Not all groomers actually like dogs and are kind to them. Find one that will let you come and observe their work ahead of time so you can watch to see how kind and gentle they are. Do not choose a groomer that has 15-20 dogs lined up in kennels, barking, with no water etc. This can be very stressful and harmful for your dog.

Caretakers

Shih Tzus do not do well in a kennel environment. It is better for them to have a sitter who stays in your home, particularly if the dog has been recently relocated. If they are sent to a strange, new place while you’re on vacation, it is stressful for them thinking they have been given up again.

Understanding Behaviors

Puppy Mill Dogs—**See article #1 at the end of this booklet!**

Separation Anxiety—**See article #2 at the end of the handbook!**

Submissive Urination—**See article #3 at the end of the handbook!**

Fear Aggression—recommended reading: , *Janet A. Smith, Good Dog! Training, Okemos, Michigan.*

For help with blind dogs, please go to: www.blinddogs.net

Another great source for all kinds of behaviors is: www.thepetcenter.com

Health

Basic care includes annual check-ups and shots, monthly heartworm medication and flea/tick protection. Heartworm medication should be given year round, and flea/tick preventative during the warmer months (in Minnesota from at least April through October).

Shih Tzus tend to have allergies and respiratory problems due to their short snouts. The protruding eyes and long ears are also frequent trouble spots. Dry eye is a common problem and tear production should be checked as part of their annual veterinary exam. Due to their jaw formation, their teeth and gums must be watched carefully. It is highly recommended to brush their teeth daily to avoid gum disease, infection, and loss of teeth. Daily walks are encouraged for them to stay fit and not become overweight. Spinal disc disease caused by a long back and short legs may become a problem. Shih Tzus cannot tolerate warm/hot weather, and prefer cooler temps because of their respiration. High humidity can also make it difficult for them to breathe. Life expectancy is about 15 years or more.

Allergies

Symptoms of Allergies in Dogs

The symptoms of allergies in dogs may vary depending on the cause. A dog that goes into anaphylactic shock, for instance, will have a drop in blood sugar followed by shock, which is very different from a skin condition.

In general, however, the following symptoms could be a sign of an allergic reaction.

- Itchiness
- Hives
- Swelling of the face, ears, lips, eyelids, or earflaps
- Red, inflamed skin
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Sneezing
- Itchy ears
- Chronic ear infections
- Itchy, runny eyes
- Constant licking

Some of these symptoms could also be a sign of another condition. Make an appointment with your veterinarian to get an accurate diagnosis and to help your dog start feeling better.

Types of Allergies in Dogs

Allergies are a misguided reaction to foreign substances by the body's immune system, which, of course, people and pets can suffer from. There are quite a few different types of allergies in dogs. Skin allergies, food allergies, and environmental allergens all pose challenges for dogs and their owners, and to make things more complicated, the symptoms of all these different types of allergies can overlap.

Skin Allergies

Skin allergies, called allergic dermatitis, are the most common type of allergic reactions in dogs. There are three main causes of skin allergies in dogs:

1. Flea allergy dermatitis
2. Food allergies
3. Environmental allergens

Flea allergy dermatitis is an allergic reaction to fleabites. Some dogs are allergic to flea saliva. This makes affected dogs extremely itchy, especially at the base of the tail, and their skin may become red, inflamed, and scabbed. You may also notice signs of fleas, such as flea dirt, or even see the fleas themselves.

Food allergies and sensitivities can cause itchy skin, as well. The most common places dogs with food allergies itch are their ears and their paws, and this may be accompanied by gastrointestinal symptoms.

Environmental allergens, such as dust, pollen, and mold, can cause atopic allergic reactions or atopic dermatitis. In most cases, these allergies are seasonal, so you may only notice your dog itching during certain times of the year. As with food allergies, the most commonly affected areas are the paws and ears (but also include the wrists, ankles, muzzle, underarms, groin, around the eyes, and in between the toes).

All skin allergies pose the risk of secondary infection. As your dog scratches, bites, and licks at his skin, he risks opening up his skin to yeast and bacterial infections that may require treatment.

Food Allergies

True food allergies may not be as common as people think, according to AKC Chief Veterinary Officer Dr. Jerry Klein. True food allergies result in an immune response, which can range in symptoms from skin conditions (hives, facial swelling, itchiness), gastrointestinal signs (vomiting and/or diarrhea) or a combination of both. In some rare cases, a severe reaction resulting in anaphylaxis can occur — similar to severe peanut allergies in humans

But what about all of those dogs that are on special hypoallergenic diets?

What most people mean when they say that their dog has a food allergy is that their dog has a food sensitivity, also known as a food intolerance. Food sensitivities, unlike true allergies, do not involve an immune response and are instead a gradual reaction to an offending ingredient in your dog's food, for example to beef, chicken, eggs, corn, wheat, soy, or milk.

Dogs with food sensitivities can have several symptoms, including gastrointestinal signs such as vomiting and diarrhea, or dermatologic signs like itchiness, poor skin and coat, and chronic ear or foot infections.

The best way to diagnose and treat a food allergy is to work with your veterinarian to manage your dog's symptoms and discover the ingredient causing the reaction.

Treating Allergies in Dogs

The best way to treat an allergy is avoidance of the cause and allergen. This may or may not always be possible. But, in terms of treatment, it depends on your dog's type of allergy. For example, the best way to treat flea allergy dermatitis is to kill the fleas, whereas the best way to treat a food allergy or food intolerance is a change in diet.

In addition to any lifestyle changes that might be necessary, your veterinarian may also prescribe a medication for your dog that will help control the signs associated with the allergic reaction, such as itching and any secondary skin infections that might have developed as a result of the irritant.

To prevent / reduce contact allergies:

- Use natural cleaning products – white vinegar effectively kills viruses and bacteria. Baking soda is effective and safe. Don't put chemicals into the air in your home or on your lawn (they're not good for you either).
- Remove the problem item, or if grass or pollen is the problem, wash the belly and paws when coming in from outside.
- NO SMOKING!
- Provide clean bedding
- Air filters (in the furnace or stand-alone) are helpful
- Occasional allergies can be treated with Benedryl (1/2 tablet every 12 hours) or Chlortrimeton (1/2 tablet for 15 pounds). Do not use time-release.

If your dog has a severe allergic reaction, your best course of action is to get him to an emergency veterinary hospital as quickly as possible.

Prednisone is generally not a good long-term solution because it may cause other health issues, but it is a decision that should be made along with the advice of your veterinarian. There are very effective medications (Apoquel and Atopica) which can be prescribed by your veterinarian.

Bad Breath

Bad breath is an indicator of gum disease. Gum disease can cause loss of teeth and the infection can spread to the heart and cause irreparable damage. The unique structure of the Shih Tzu jaw makes them particularly susceptible to periodontal disease. Daily brushing with specialty formulated dog toothpaste helps. Chewing bones also helps remove tartar. Do not give real bones! Purchase dental bones made specifically to encourage dogs to chew and remove tartar. Only allow your dog to chew them for short periods (with supervision). Domestic dogs have softer teeth than wild dogs and too much bone chewing can damage the teeth and gums.

Bladder and Kidney

Blood in the urine definitely signals a major problem, as does frequent urination, or straining with no urine production. Often if a housebroken dog starts unexplainably urinating in the house, it is because of a bladder infection. See the vet immediately.

Frequent urination with small amounts of production (the dog appears to 'forget' about housetraining) may signal the onset of a bladder infection. It is very painful to the dog and must be treated immediately. It will not clear up on their own and can lead to bladder stones, which can lodge in the urethra causing an immediate life threatening condition.

Two common types of bladder stones are:

- Magnesium Struvite: may be treated with antibiotics and diet to dissolve crystals/stones. A prescription diet will be recommended by your veterinarian. Will require surgery if the stones do not dissolve.
- Calcium Oxalate: usually requires surgery to remove stones. A prescription diet will be recommended by your veterinarian.

A great source for Vet information related to health care and health issues go to:

www.thepetcenter.com

Cold Weather Tips:

Brrrr...it's cold outside! The following guidelines will help you protect your companion animals when the mercury dips.

1. Keep your dog inside. Outdoors, dogs can freeze, become lost or be stolen, injured or killed. Dogs who are allowed to stray are exposed to infectious diseases, including rabies, from other cats, dogs and wildlife.

2. Never let your dog off the leash on snow or ice, especially during a snowstorm—dogs can lose their scent and easily become lost. More dogs are lost during the winter than during any other season, so make sure yours always wears ID tags.
3. Thoroughly wipe off your dog's legs and stomach when he comes in out of the sleet, snow or ice. A container of baby wipes near the entry door works perfectly. He can ingest salt, antifreeze or other potentially dangerous chemicals while licking his paws, and his paw pads may also bleed from snow or encrusted ice.
4. Never shave your dog down to the skin in winter, as a longer coat will provide more warmth. When you bathe your dog in the colder months, be sure to completely dry him before taking him out for a walk. Consider getting him a coat or sweater with a high collar or turtleneck with coverage from the base of the tail to the belly. For many dogs, this is regulation winter wear.
5. Never leave your dog alone in a car during cold weather. A car can act as a refrigerator in the winter, holding in the cold and causing the animal to freeze to death.
6. Puppies do not tolerate the cold as well as adult dogs, and may be difficult to housebreak during the winter. If your puppy appears to be sensitive to the weather, you may opt to paper-train him inside. If your dog is sensitive to the cold due to age, illness or breed type, take him outdoors only to relieve himself.
7. Does your dog spend a lot of time engaged in outdoor activities? Increase his supply of food, particularly protein, to keep him—and his fur—in tip-top shape.
8. Like coolant, antifreeze is a lethal poison for dogs and cats. Be sure to thoroughly clean up any spills from your vehicle, and consider using products that contain propylene glycol rather than ethylene glycol. Visit the [ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center](#) for more information.
9. Make sure your companion animal has a warm place to sleep, off the floor and away from all drafts. A cozy dog bed with a warm blanket or pillow is perfect.

Dry Eye, Dry Skin Issues

The addition of good oils - Flax seed, omega 3 and 6 oil (fish oil) help with dry skin. Purchase refrigerated flax seed oil from the co-op or health food store or select good quality, omega 3 and 6 supplements from a pet supplier.

Severe cases of dry eye require special medication that is necessary to preserve your dog's sight. Dry eye is a condition that is fairly common in Shih Tzus as they age. If your dog is age six or older, have your veterinarian test your dog for dry eye every year at his annual exam.

Frequent brushing stimulates the natural production of skin oil.

Ear Mites and Infections

The long, furry ears that are so beautiful on a Shih Tzu can cause problems if not properly groomed. Hair inside the ears should be removed regularly. Excess moisture causes yeast

problems (*don't let the ears drag in food and water bowls*). Check the ears frequently for odor and dark matter.

Licking / Surgery

Some veterinarians recommend using Vicks or mentholatum to prevent licking the stitches. Just put a little bit alongside the incision and there is no way they will lick. One whiff and they never go back. This may be preferred over the plastic cone over their head that many would like a dog to use. Depending on the site of the surgery, you can also put a baby's "onesie" on the dog to cover the surgical site.

Reverse Sneezing

Sometimes Shih Tzus make loud snorts or wheezing sounds—it sounds like they are having trouble breathing. This is caused by a short snout and airway, with perhaps air getting down the passageway too quickly.....this many times happens when the dog is very excited. Try to calm the dog down with quiet talk and strokes, or gently cover up their snout with your hand so they have to draw breath through their mouth. These instances do no harm to the dog.

Vomiting / Diarrhea / Bloody Stool

Vomiting and diarrhea are the body's attempt to expel noxious materials. Make sure there is fresh water. Blood in the stool may occur with the diarrhea. Feed a gruel of white rice that has been cooked in twice the amount of water or low sodium broth called for in the recipe. You may add a little cooked chicken or hamburger.

See the Veterinarian immediately or go to the Emergency Care if the dog has more than 1 vomiting/diarrhea spell, or has eaten poisonous items. See Poison in the First Aid section.

First Aid

Aspirin for Sprains and Pain

DO NOT GIVE TYLENOL OR ANY OTHER ASPIRIN SUBSTITUTE! THEY ARE POISONOUS TO DOGS!!

Recommended dosage of ASPIRIN: Most veterinarians recommend between 5 mg and 10 mg per pound of the dog's weight every 12 hours. Going on the safe side, a recommended dosage of aspirin of about 5 mg/lb seems to work well for most dogs. If you are going to give more, it is a good idea to check with your vet. Also, note that a small dog should take less per pound. Enteric coated aspirin is not recommended in dogs because about half the time the coating isn't digested and the aspirin is excreted whole in the stool. Do not give aspirin immediately before or after surgery, as aspirin is a blood thinner and may interfere with blood clotting ability.

Start small: It is better to start off small and work your way up to the maximum. If the dog has relief with a smaller dosage, that is great. A standard aspirin is 320 mg. A baby aspirin is typically 80 mg. That means that 5 mg/lb works out to be one baby aspirin per 16 pounds of body weight twice a day.

The following chart for aspirin dosage can be used as a guide. Note that this is **not** medical advice.

Weight of dog in pounds	Number of tablets each 12 hours	mg
8	1/2 baby aspirin or less	40 mg
16	1 baby aspirin	80 mg
32	1/2 adult or 2 baby	160 mg

Liquid baby aspirin may be easier to administer, otherwise give the aspirin hidden in a bit of food.

Losing a Pet

Death Is Nothing At All

*All is well.
Death is nothing at all,
I have only slipped into the next room.
I am I and you are you.
Whatever we were to each other, that we are still.
Call me by my old familiar name,
Speak to me in the easy way which you always used
Put no difference in your tone,
Wear no forced air of solemnity or sorrow
Laugh as we always laughed at the little jokes we enjoyed together.
Play, smile, think of me, pray for me.
Let my name be ever the household word that it always was,
Let it be spoken without effect, without the trace of shadow on it.
Life means all that it ever meant.
It is the same as it ever was, there is unbroken continuity.
Why should I be out of mind because I am out of sight?
I am waiting for you, for an interval, somewhere very near,
Just around the corner.
All is well.*

The loss of a pet is a profound loss. Many people find that it feels more heartbreaking than any other loss they've experienced. Our dogs love us unconditionally and are often our closest companions. The bond that we share with our beloved pets is one of the most powerful that there is. After the loss of a pet, you may feel angry, sorrowful, isolated, guilty, or physically ill. These are all normal reactions and it is important to give yourself permission to grieve in whatever way feels right to you. Grieving is hard work, and you don't have to go through it alone. If you feel stuck and need someone to talk to, please reach out to your veterinarian for local pet loss support groups or call the ASPCA's Pet Loss Helpline at (877) GRIEF-10. There are many resources available online and through your local veterinary clinic to help support you through your loss.

Other websites of interest:

For inexpensive dog toys, clothing, leashes, harnesses, food, and all supplies:

www.petedge.com

For colorful, non-step in harnesses, leashes and collars: www.udoqu.com

For Dog Car Seats and Car Harnesses: www.snoozer-dog-beds.com

For nutritional analysis of dog food: www.dogfoodadvisor.com

For nutritional supplements such as omega 3 and 6 oils, glucosamine chondroitin, vitamins: www.springtimeinc.com

References

Dr. Tamara Geller's book--The Loved Dog
Animal Protection Institute
Get The Facts:What's Really in Pet Food

Article #1

Rehabilitation of a Puppy Mill Dog

Disclaimer: The following is the opinion of the authors ([Michelle Bender](#) and [Kim Townsend](#)) and is based on years of experience with puppy mill dogs; we are not veterinarians or professional trainers. Please note that an adopted puppy mill rescued dog may be at different stages of rehab so we have tried to start this from the beginning. Permission is granted to use this article, unedited, on your website or in print, as long as credit is linked to this page (www.anewstartonlife.com/pupppymill.htm).

Every mill survivor is different. What works on one or many, will completely fail on others; the only thing that is consistent is that they will need lots of patience, understanding, love, and probably most importantly, unconditional acceptance of what they are and what their limitations may be.

At first glance a mill survivor may look like many of your friends' dogs; maybe not a perfect example of the breed, but close. What you won't see is the condition they were in when came into rescue. Many have fur so matted that it all had to be shaved off and even the short haired breeds suffer from thin dull coats. Many times removing the filth and matting have only revealed open sores, usually from flea allergies or sarcoptic mange. Their ears are often full of filth and usually mites and some survivors suffer from permanent hearing loss because of untreated ear infections. Most survivors require the removal of rotten teeth, even young dogs. The gums are

usually very infected and the teeth have excessive buildup on them. Many vets who are not familiar with puppy mill rescued dogs will miscalculate the age of the dog if using only the teeth as their guide. Many survivors also suffer from swollen, splayed and sore feet from so much time walking on wire. While finally getting some good nutrition and extensive medical care after arriving in rescue, all too often there remains the psychological damage that can't be fixed with a bath, medicine, or surgery.

We would love to say that every puppy mill survivor only needs love to turn it into a wonderful family pet, but that would be a lie. Love is definitely needed in large amounts, but so is patience. The damage done during the years in the mill usually can be overcome, but it takes time and dedication. It takes a very special adopter for one of these dogs. Not being "up to it" is no crime, but you need to be honest with yourself, and us, about your expectations. These dogs have already been through more than their share of heartache and if your entire family is not willing to make the commitment, the dog is better off staying in our care until the perfect home for them is found.

Handling:

Many mill survivors have spent their entire life in the mill with only a elevated wire cage to call home. Puppies who grow up in a mill miss out on many crucial socialization periods with humans and they never learn to trust, to love, or to play. They have had very minimum physical contact with people and have virtually no concept of what to expect (or what is expected of them) when they are placed in a family situation.

Their life in the mill may have been what we would consider unpleasant, but it is the only life they have ever known. In the mill, they were probably fed and watered using automatic dispensers, and their feces and urine was only cleaned after it fell through the wire that they lived on. Actual human contact normally came when they were being vaccinated, dewormed, or moved to a new cage to breed or to whelp puppies.

Many of the quirks that mill dogs might have will be discovered while the dog is still in our rescue, but there are things that may develop after the dog feels a little more comfortable in your home. Most of the dogs we encounter have had their spirit broken many years before and aggression is not normally something we encounter; however, there are memory triggers that the dog may experience after it is settled in your home, so we will talk briefly about these.

The physical contact that they have received probably has not been pleasant. For one thing, because they are not handled enough, they are scared. Many mills handle their "stock" by the scruff of the neck. They have work to do, and don't really want to stand around holding some stinky little dog any longer than necessary. It is not uncommon for these survivors to be sensitive to the backs of their necks, after all, it brings the unexpected. Many mill dogs will try to always face you, not trusting you enough to give you easy access to them from behind. NEVER startle a mill survivor from behind, you will lose any trust that you may have gained. Always make sure that they are anticipating you picking them up and consistently verbally tell them what you are going to do with the same word, like "up". It is not uncommon for a mill dog to drop their bellies to the floor when they know you are going to pick them up, some will even roll on their backs, often urinating in the process. This is a submissive move on the dog's part, and while it may be frustrating trying to pick up a dog in this position, these dogs will seldom show aggression in their lives. It is okay to go ahead and pick up a dog while they are in this position, but if time is not of the essence, encourage the dog to come to you by sitting a few feet

away and calling him. The most common posture we see in mill dogs is the "freeze;" the dog will initially try to escape you, but when they realize there is no escape, they simply freeze up--rigid, like a statue--and accept their "fate." This is a good time to really praise the dog--scratch his back or ears and speak gently to him--it goes a long way towards teaching him that human contact can be a good thing.

Always be gentle and try to avoid picking them up until you see that they are receptive to it. It's almost a 'hostage' type situation to these dogs. Imagine how you would feel if taken hostage at gunpoint. The gunman may never harm you in any way, but you are aware of the danger the entire time and you don't have the ability to leave when you want. No matter how nice the gunman is to you, you will never enjoy the experience and will always watch for an escape route; however, you can turn the tables around and see a ray of hope. Imagine the gunman has been captured and you decide to visit him in jail. Now you are in control. You call all the shots, you have the ability to leave at any time. The bottom line is that these dogs have to progress at their own pace. Anything you force them to do will not be pleasant to them; let them visit with you on their terms, whenever possible.

Learning About the House:

Many times when you bring a mill survivor into your home, it is their instinct to hide in a quiet corner. Any new dog that you bring into your home should be kept separated from other family pets for 7 days. During this time it is fine to crate or confine them to a quiet area. After that though, they need to have exposure to the household. If crating, the crate should be in a central location. The ideal spot is one where there is frequent walking and activity. This allows the dog to feel safe in the crate, yet observe everyday activity and become accustomed to it; they need to hear the table being set, the dishwasher running, phones ringing, and people talking.

Very few mill dogs know what a leash is. After the quarantine, when the dog is out of the crate and supervised, it is not a bad idea to let them drag a leash around with them. Let them get used to the feel. It is easy to fall into the mindset that they must be pampered and carried everywhere, but leash training is important. It will make your life easier to have a leash trained dog, but it will also offer your dog confidence in the future.

Gaining Trust:

A mill dog has no reason to trust you. Your trust needs to be earned, little by little. Patience is a very important part of rehabbing a mill survivor. We have seen a lot of mill dogs that don't want to eat whenever people are around. It is important that your mill dog be fed on a schedule, with you near by. You don't have to stand and watch over them but should be in the same room with them. They need to know that their yummy meal is coming from you. For the majority of mill dogs, accepting a treat right out of your hand is a huge show of trust. Offer treats on a regular basis especially as a reward. Don't concern yourself too much if your dog does not eat for a few days. Because most of our mill rescues have been fed with self-feeders and confined to small places, it is not uncommon for them to be a little overweight. If there is no vomiting or diarrhea and your dog is otherwise acting healthy, a few days of nibbling at their food while they learn to live by your schedule, is not going to hurt them. It is important to teach them that food is fed on a schedule and you should not be leaving food down at all times.

While you shouldn't overly force yourself upon your dog, it does need to get used to you. Sit and talk quietly while gently petting or massaging your dog. It is best to do this in an area where

they, not necessarily *you*, are the most comfortable. They probably won't like it at first, but give them time to adjust. Some dogs sadly, never will adjust, and we'll talk more about them later.

Never allow friends to force attention on a mill survivor. Ask them not to look your dog directly in the eyes. It is not uncommon for mill dogs to simply never accept outsiders. Let your dog set the pace. If the dog approaches, ask them to talk quietly and hold out a hand. No quick movements. Ask that any barking be ignored. Remember that these dogs bark to warn and scare off intruders. If you acknowledge the barking you may be reinforcing it with attention. If you bring your guest outside you have just reinforced to your dog that barking will make the intruder go away.

Housebreaking:

A child spends the first one to two years of their life soiling their diaper and having you remove the dirty diaper and replace it with a clean one. A puppy mill dog spends its entire life soiling its living area. Potty training a child and housebreaking a puppy mill dog are the exact same procedures...you are UN-teaching them something that they have already learned to be acceptable. A regular schedule, constant reinforcement, praise, and commitment on your part are a must! Would you ever scream at your child, march them to the bathroom and make them sit on the toilet AFTER you discovered they soiled their diaper? A dog is no different in this sense; scolding them after the deed is done is of no benefit to anyone.

The two most important things you can do are to get your new dog on a regular feeding schedule (which will put them on a regular potty schedule) and to observe them closely after feeding time.

Getting them on a premium, low residue food is very important. This will produce a stool that normally is firm (very easy to clean up) and only one or two bowel movements a day are normal. Low cost, or over the counter foods have a lot of fillers and it is very hard to get a dog on a regular cycle using these foods.

Before you even begin to housebreak them, you must learn their schedule. Most dogs will need to 'go' right after eating. As soon as they are finished eating, command "*outside*". Always use the exact same word in the exact same tone. Watch them closely outside and observe their pattern as they prepare to defecate. Some will turn circles, some will scratch at the ground, some may find a corner, some may sniff every inch of the ground, some will get a strange look on their face...every dog is different and you have to learn to recognize how the dog will behave right before he goes; this way you will recognize it when he gets ready to go in the house.

We could give you a million tips that our adopters have found to work best for them, but as we have said, every dog is different. As long as you always keep in mind that housebreaking and potty training are one in the same, you should eventually see results. Never do to a dog what you would not do to a child. It may take a week, it may take a month, it may take a year...and sadly, some dogs will never learn. Never give up and never accept 'accidents' as a way of life. In most cases, the success of housebreaking depends on your commitment.

While we have focus mainly on bowel movements, urinating in the house is just as hard to correct as defecating in the house (if not worse). Below we will discuss "marking," which many people associate only with male dogs. We will go into that in more detail, below, but if urinating in the house remains a problem for your dog, we highly recommend crate training. This can be

researched online in more detail, but if crate training is not working because your dog is soiling in the crate, you should discontinue the training immediately--as you are only reinforcing that it is okay to soil their area.

In general, if you can understand your dog's bowel patterns, you will usually find that they urinate before or after a bowel movement. Reinforce the positive and work on the negative, as most dogs will understand "*outside*" and associate it with both urinating and defecating. Of course, in the meantime, you will want to protect your carpets by either removing any that can be rolled up, or confining the dog to a tiled floor when you aren't holding it on your lap. This should only be done during the training process, as socialization is just as important as house training and often tiled floors are in areas that we don't spend a lot of time.

Marking:

Puppy mill survivors all have one thing in common...they were all used for breeding. A dog that marks its territory is 'warning' other dogs that this is its area...stay away! However, in a puppy mill situation, the dog's area is normally a 2X4 cage with other dogs in and around their 'territory'. It becomes a constant battle of establishing territory and it is not uncommon to see male and female survivors with marking problems.

Normally, marking is seen in dogs with a dominant nature. This is good in the sense that these dogs can normally withstand verbal correction better than submissive dogs. The word 'NO' will become your favorite word as you try to deal with the problem of dogs that mark. Don't be afraid to raise your voice and let the dog know that you are not happy. Always use the exact same word and don't follow 'NO' with "now what has mommy told you about that, you are a bad dog."

Dogs that are marking do not have to potty...taking them outside will not help. You have to teach them that it is not acceptable to do this in the house. The only way to do this is to constantly show your disappointment and stimulate their need to 'dominate' by allowing them more time outside, and even to areas where you know other dogs have been...like the park, or the nearest fire hydrant.

While you and your survivor learn about each other, and your survivor develops a sense of respect towards you, you will have to protect your home from the damage caused by marking. Here are a few tips that you will find helpful.

1. White vinegar is your best friend. Keep a spray bottle handy at all times. Use the vinegar anytime you see your dog mark. The vinegar will neutralize the smell that your dog just left behind. Using other cleaning products may actually cause your dog to mark over the same area again. Most cleaning products contain ammonia...the very scent found in urine. Your dog will feel the need to mark over normal cleaning products, but normally has no interest in areas neutralized by vinegar.

2. Potty Pads....your next best friend. These can be found in any pet store, but most 'housebreaking pads' are treated with ammonia to encourage a puppy to go on the pad instead of the carpet; since we are trying to discourage your dog from marking, these aren't always the best choice. You might check at a home medical supply store. The blue and white pads used to protect beds usually work best. Staple, tape or pin these pads (white side facing outward) to any area that your dog is prone to mark (walls, furniture, etc.). Do not replace the pads when

your dog soils them...simply spray them down with vinegar. These are not a solution to the problem, but will help protect your home while you deal with the problem.

3. Scotch Guard. Scotch Guard is really nothing more than a paraffin based protector. It puts a waxy substance down which repels water and spills (and in our case, urine). You can make your own product by filling a spray bottle about 1/2 full of hot water. Shave off slivers of paraffin wax into the bottle (about 1/4 a bar should be fine) and then microwave until you don't see the slivers anymore. Shake and spray this onto the fabric areas you want to protect, such as the base of the sofa and the carpet below doorways or areas your dog is apt to mark. It may make the area stiff feeling at first but it will normally 'blend' in with normal household temperatures and humidity. (note: This is also great for high traffic areas of your home or along the carpet in front of the couch). After the first use, you will need to microwave the bottle and immerse the spray mechanism in a bowl of hot water so that any wax residue will melt.

With the use of vinegar and/or homemade scotch guard, you should test a small area of the fabric/fiber that you will be using the product on and make sure it does not discolor, stain, or bleed. I have never had any problems, but it is always best to check beforehand.

4. Belly Bands. Sometimes these can be a (male) mill dog owner's best friend. Belly bands can be easily made at home out of things you probably already have. Depending on the size of your dog you can use the elastic end of your husband's tube socks, the sleeve of sweatshirt, etc. Simply fit the material to your dog and then place a female sanitary napkin under the penis. Another easy way is to measure your dog, cut the fabric and sew on Velcro to hold it in place. There are also many sites on the internet to order these if making them yourself is just not up your alley. Just remember to take the belly band off every time you bring your dog out to potty. Again, this is not a solution, but a protective measure.

Quirks:

Poo-poo, shoo-shoo, ca-ca, doo-doo, #2, feces, poop, stool...whatever 'pet' name you give it, it's still gross! But nothing is more gross than owning a dog who eats poop!

Coprophagia is the technical term, but for the purpose of this article, we're just going to call it the 'affliction'.

Dogs of all breeds, ages and sizes have the affliction but in puppy mill rescues, it is not uncommon at all to find dogs afflicted with this horrible habit. As in any bad habit, the cure lies in understanding the unacceptable behavior.

There are three primary reasons that a puppy mill survivor is afflicted. We'll start with the most common, and easiest to remedy.

1. It tastes good and they are hungry! Rescues that have come from a mill where dogs were not fed properly often resort to eating their own or other dog's feces as a source of food. These types of situations will usually remedy themselves when the dog realizes that he is always going to get fed. It is also easy to discourage this behavior by adding over-the-counter products to their food which are manufactured for this purpose. Ask your vet which products are available and you will normally see results in 2-4 weeks.

2. Learned behavior. This is usually the cause of puppy mill dogs that have the affliction.

There are several reasons why a dog learned to behave like this, but the most common cause is being housed with dominant dogs who fight over food. These dominant dogs will often guard the food dish and prevent the more submissive dogs from eating even if the dominant dog is not hungry. Food aggression in caged dogs is usually fast and furious and often results in severe injury to the submissive dogs. Because the dominant dog is often eating much more than is needed, the stool is virtually undigested and contains many of the nutrients and 'flavors' of the original meal; therefore almost as tasty to the submissive dog as if he'd ate the real thing. Puppies that were raised with a dominant mother or dominant litter mates also pick up this habit very early--in this case, it is a little harder to treat, but it can usually be done.

This eating pattern is usually maintained throughout the dog's life, so the age of your dog will play a big role in how hard it is to correct the behavior. It's become habit...and as the saying goes, "Old habits are hard to break".

Dogs with the affliction will actually go hunting for a fresh stool when you take them outside. The key is to give your dog something better to hunt for. Pop some unbuttered/unsalted microwave popcorn and sprinkle it on the lawn before taking your dog out in the morning. You may find something that he likes better and is as readily available and affordable. The good thing about popcorn is what your dog doesn't eat, the birds will. We can almost guarantee that once your dog has learned to search out the popcorn, he'll pass those fresh turds right up, LOL! It may take weeks or months before your dog 'unlearns' to seek out stools but most dogs are receptive to this training. You may have to sprinkle the lawn with popcorn the rest of your dog's life...but the trouble is well worth just one 'popcorn kiss' as opposed to a lick on the face right after he eats a tasty poop.

3. As mentioned above, Coprophagia means 'eating poop'. Coprophagia is a form of a much more serious problem called Pica. Pica is the unnatural 'need' to eat foreign objects. Dogs suffering from Pica will eat not only stools, but rocks, dirt, sticks, etc. Remember the kid in school who ate paste and chalk and 'other unspeakables'? Pica is a psychological disorder which is much more in depth and serious than anything we can discuss in this guide.

A good rescuer will observe dogs prior to placement and will recognize the seriousness of this problem. A dog suffering from Pica should never be placed in an inexperienced home or any home that is not aware of the problem and the dangers. Dogs suffering from Pica will often end up having surgery--often several times--for objects they have eaten that cannot be digested. If you are the owner of a dog which you believe suffers from Pica, I suggest you consult your vet; these dogs often require medication for their disorder and only your vet can guide you on the best way to proceed.

Before we close this section on Pica, we want to say that true Pica is rare. Most dogs will chew on sticks or rocks--or sofas and table legs. However a dog suffering from Pica will not just chew on these items...they will eat these items any chance they get. Just because your dog is eating his own stool...and also the bar stool at the kitchen counter...does not mean that he is suffering from Pica. If in doubt, consult your vet.

The "special" ones:

Occasionally, we see the survivor who has survived the mill, but at such a great cost that they can never be "brought around". These are the dogs that have endured so much suffering that they remind us of children who are abused, and survive by separating their mind from the body. These damaged dogs will never fully trust anyone. So where does that leave these poor souls?

Most are still capable of living out a wonderful life. They need a scheduled environment but most importantly, a home where they are accepted for who and what they are. They may never jump up on a couch and cuddle with you, or bring you a ball to play catch, but you will see the joy that they take in living each day knowing that they will have clean bedding, fresh food and water, and unconditional love. To them, those small comforts alone are pure bliss.

These "broken ones" are the ones that normally never leave their foster homes. Ironically, these types of dogs normally do very well in a group-dog setting. They seem to have shunned the world, and most certainly mankind, and have created their own little world without humans. Whenever we suspect that a mill rescue may be "too far gone" for a fast paced family, we try to place them in experienced homes; quiet homes; or homes with other dogs. These are by far the hardest ones for our hearts to accept, but they are also a constant reminder of why we do what we do.

The educators:

Finding forever homes for mill rescues is not all we do; we are constantly reminded of the horrors of puppy mills and the commercialization/farming of dogs when we see the neglect and abuse these dogs have suffered. We work not only to adopt dogs, but to educate their new owners about the truth behind that puppy in the pet store window. We hope that you will keep a journal or blog on the reform of your puppy mill dog, and we hope that you will join us in our campaign to educate the public--through the eyes of the survivors--by always taking the opportunity to further educate others. Together we have made a difference in the life of just one dog, but together we can also make a difference in the lives of hundreds of thousands of dogs still caged in puppy mills. It is only when the public realizes the connection between pet stores and puppy mills that we will end the demand; end the supply; and end the abuse!

Article #2

SEPARATION ANXIETY

Everyone needs a little time alone now and then—unless of course you are a dog who suffers from separation anxiety. Dogs with separation anxiety exhibit behavior problems when they're left alone. Typically, they'll have a dramatic anxiety response within a short time (20–45 minutes) after their owners leave them. The most common of these behaviors are:

- Digging, chewing, and scratching at doors or windows in an attempt to escape and reunite with their owners.
- Howling, barking, and crying in an attempt to get their owner to return.
- Urination and defecation (even with housetrained dogs) as a result of distress.

Why Do Dogs Suffer from Separation Anxiety?

We don't fully understand why some dogs suffer from separation anxiety and, under similar circumstances, others don't. It's important to realize, however, that the destruction and house soiling that often occur with separation anxiety are not the dog's attempt to punish or seek revenge on his owner for leaving him alone. In reality, they are actually part of a panic response.

Separation anxiety sometimes occurs:

- When a dog accustomed to constant human companionship is left alone for the first time.
- Following a long interval, such as a vacation, during which the owner and dog are constantly together.
- After a traumatic event (from the dog's point of view), such as a period of time spent at a shelter or boarding kennel.
- After a change in the family's routine or structure (such as a child leaving for college, a change in work schedule, a move to a new home, or a new pet or person in the home).

How Do I Know If My Dog Has Separation Anxiety?

Because there are many reasons for the behaviors associated with separation anxiety, it's essential to correctly diagnose the reason for the behavior before proceeding with treatment. If most, or all, of the following statements are true about your dog, he may have a separation anxiety problem:

- The behavior occurs exclusively or primarily when he's left alone.
- He follows you from room to room whenever you're home.
- He displays effusive, frantic greeting behaviors.
- The behavior *always* occurs when he's left alone, whether for a short or long period of time.
- He reacts with excitement, depression, or anxiety to your preparations to leave the house.

- He dislikes spending time outdoors by himself (although we do not recommend that a dog ever be left outside by himself).

What to Do If Your Dog Has Separation Anxiety

For a minor separation anxiety problem, the following techniques may be helpful by themselves. For more severe problems, these techniques should be used along with the desensitization process described in the next section.

- Keep arrivals and departures low-key. For example, when you arrive home, ignore your dog for the first few minutes, then calmly pet him. This may be hard for you to do, but it's important!
- Leave your dog with an article of clothing that smells like you—such as an old t-shirt that you've slept in recently.
- Establish a "safety cue"—a word or action that you use *every* time you leave that tells your dog you'll be back. Dogs usually learn to associate certain cues with short absences by their owners. For example, when you take out the garbage, your dog knows you come right back and doesn't become anxious. Therefore, it's helpful to associate a safety cue with your short-duration absences.

Some examples of safety cues are a playing radio, a playing television, or a toy (one that doesn't have dangerous fillings and can't be torn into pieces). Use your safety cue during practice sessions with your dog. Be sure to avoid presenting your dog with the safety cue when you leave for a period of time longer than he can tolerate; if you do, the value of the safety cue will be lost. Leaving a radio on to provide company for your dog isn't particularly useful by itself, but a playing radio may work if you've used it consistently as a safety cue in your practice sessions. If your dog engages in destructive chewing as part of his separation distress, offering him a chewing item as a safety cue is a good idea. Very hard rubber toys that can be stuffed with treats and Nylabone®-like products are good choices.

Desensitization Techniques for More Severe Cases of Separation Anxiety

The primary treatment for more severe cases of separation anxiety is a systematic process of getting your dog used to being alone. You must teach your dog to remain calm during "practice" departures and short absences. We recommend the following procedure:

- Begin by engaging in your normal departure activities (getting your keys, putting on your coat), then sit back down. Repeat this step until your dog shows no distress in response to your activities.
- Next, engage in your normal departure activities *and* go to the door and open it, then sit back down.
- Next, step outside the door, leaving the door open, then return.
- Finally, step outside, close the door, then immediately return. Slowly get your dog accustomed to being alone with the door closed between you for several seconds.
- Proceed very gradually from step to step, repeating each step until your dog shows no signs of distress. The number of repetitions will vary depending on the severity of the problem. If at any time in this process your actions produce an anxiety response in your dog, you've proceeded too fast. Return to an earlier step in the process and practice this step until the dog shows no distress response, then proceed to the next step.

- Once your dog is tolerating your being on the other side of the door for several seconds, begin short-duration absences. This step involves giving the dog a verbal cue (for example, "I'll be back"), leaving, and then returning within a minute. Your return must be low-key: Either ignore your dog or greet him quietly and calmly. If he shows no signs of distress, repeat the exercise. If he appears anxious, wait until he relaxes to repeat the exercise. Gradually increase the length of time you're gone.
- Practice as many absences as possible that last less than ten minutes. You can do many departures within one session if your dog relaxes sufficiently between departures. You should also scatter practice departures and short-duration absences throughout the day.
- Once your dog can handle short absences (30 to 90 minutes), he'll usually be able to handle longer intervals alone and you won't have to repeat this process every time you are planning a longer absence. The hard part is at the beginning, but the job gets easier as you go along. Nevertheless, you must go slowly at first. How long it takes to condition your dog to being alone depends on the severity of his problem.

Teaching the Sit-Stay and Down-Stay

Another technique for reducing separation anxiety in your dog is practicing the common "sit-stay" or "down-stay" training exercises using positive reinforcement. Your goal is to be able to move briefly out of your dog's sight while he remains in the "stay" position, and thereby teach your dog that he can remain calmly and happily in one place while you go to another. To do this, you gradually increase the distance you move away from your dog. As you progress, you can do this during the course of your normal daily activities. For example, if you're watching television with your dog by your side and you get up for a snack, tell him to stay, and leave the room. When you come back, give him a treat or praise him quietly. Never punish your dog during these training sessions.

Interim Solutions

Because the treatments described above can take a while, and because a dog with separation anxiety can do serious damage to himself and/or your home in the interim, consider these suggestions to help you and your dog cope in the short term:

- Consult your veterinarian about the possibility of drug therapy. A good anti-anxiety drug should not sedate your dog, but simply reduce his anxiety while you're gone. Such medication is a temporary measure and should be used in conjunction with behavior modification techniques.
- Take your dog to a dog day care facility or boarding kennel.
- Leave your dog with a friend, family member, or neighbor.
- Take your dog to work with you, even for half a day, if possible.

What Won't Help a Separation Anxiety Problem

- Punishing your dog. Punishment is not an effective way to treat separation anxiety. In fact, punishing your dog after you return home may actually increase his separation anxiety.

- Getting another pet as a companion for your dog. This usually doesn't help an anxious dog because his anxiety is the result of his separation from you, his person, not merely the result of being alone.
- Crating your dog. Your dog will still engage in anxiety responses in the crate. He may urinate, defecate, howl, or even injure himself in an attempt to escape from the crate.
- Leaving the radio on (unless the radio is used as a "safety cue," as described above).
- Training your dog. While formal training is always a good idea, it won't directly help a separation anxiety problem. Separation anxiety is not the result of disobedience or lack of training; it's a panic response.

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Article #3

Submissive Urination in Dogs

Many people are familiar with what is defined as the "submissive urinator"; the dog that urinates all over the floor, you the owner, and your guests, as soon as it becomes excited, aroused, or intimidated. It can be a frustrating and embarrassing problem, but fortunately is usually quite easily corrected. Puppies, especially shy, timid and oversensitive ones are the likely candidates for submissive urination, but it is not uncommon to see this problem persist into adulthood. There tends to be more females with this problem as well. Dog owners who are dominant and strict tend also to encourage a submissive relationship with their dog.

Common situations where dogs get excited or fearful, and urinate are:

- over affectionate greetings
- when you arrive home
- guests entering your home
- arguments between people
- scolding
- loud noises

In order to understand this behavior, you must understand the language of dominance and submissiveness. Young puppies learn this from their mother. Gestures like averting eyes, rolling on their back, and urinating, are all used to express submissiveness. In situations where a dog feels intimidated, the proper learned response for them is to elicit some submissive signal to show the person or other dog that they recognize their dominance. Urination in this case is not deliberate or spiteful. To deal with this problem, the first thing that you must do is have your veterinarian examine your dog for possible physical abnormalities pertaining to this problem. Sickness and disease can cause difficulty for your pet to control their facilities. If physical problems prove to be the cause, discuss options specific to your dog's situation with your veterinarian as to your possible options (e.g. surgery, drugs, coping mechanisms).

If your dog is found to be healthy and is diagnosed with a behavioral problem, begin by observing what types of situations make your dog feel excited or threatened. Knowing these, you can design your plan of action to suit the needs of your dog.

There are a few important tips to remember when working with your dog.

- Most importantly, remember that you are dealing with a very sensitive companion that is very receptive to the way you treat them.
- Because you are dealing with a dog that for whatever reason feels submissive, scolding and punishment do NOT work. They only make the dog feel more powerless and less in control.
- Always encourage and PRAISE the dog for what it does right. This helps to build self confidence and cements the bond between you and your pet.

- Do not hover over the dog when greeting it. This is a dominant position and will be interpreted as so. Crouch down and let the dog approach you.
- Limiting your dog's intake of water can help it gain control. If you know guests are coming over, take the water away for an interval before their arrival. (You should not limit your dog's access to water for any extended period of time.)
- If your dog urinates out of excitement when you return home and greet it, or if strangers greet it, try to downplay the greeting by staying calm and saying hello or even ignoring it for the first few minutes until it calms down. Ask your friends to do this as well.
- If your pooch urinates in response to loud, angry scolding, instead of yelling at them when they do something wrong, try to deal with their inappropriate behavior in a firm and constructive manner. A firm NO given consistently at wrongdoings will often suffice.
- If you find that your dog's problem can't be remedied by changing your interactive behaviors, there may be other options which can be discussed with your veterinarian. For example, drugs can sometimes be given to very excitable, hyper dogs to calm them down.

Most puppies will just outgrow submissive urination with a little patience on your part. Try to help your puppy feel confident, which may take a lot of work if your pup is timid and shy. Work in gradual steps and don't expect too much at once. If this behavior persists in your older dog, the few previously mentioned tips on non-threatening techniques to deal with submissive urination are quite effective, with positive changes seen in only weeks, possibly sooner. And remember, be patient, because accidents will happen.

Prevention is the easiest way to deal with submissive urination. If you aren't willing or able to take the extra time to work with a timid puppy or dog, select the outgoing, confident puppy, not the one that crouches in the back. Obedience classes are an excellent confidence booster for your dog. It also can open your eyes to the ways that you can unconsciously reinforce a negative behavior, and teaches you the importance of praise in a healthy relationship with your dog.

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CANINE SUBMISSIVE URINATION (2)

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Dogs, like humans, are social animals. Similarities in human and canine social structure (e.g., living in groups, extended care of the young, communal hunting) have contributed to dogs becoming "man's best friend." However, the many differences between canine and human social behavior and communication can lead to miscommunication, misunderstandings, and what humans consider "behavior problems." From a dog's perspective, for example, submissive urination is perfectly normal; but owners have real concerns about this behavior.

What's Going On?

A complex communication system has evolved among dogs to help establish and maintain stable pack dominance hierarchies, which are essential for a pack to work together in caring for young, hunting, and defending territory. Dominant animals use vocalizations, gestures, and postures to communicate their status. Subordinate animals use submissive displays to turn off these dominant social threats. When dogs live in "packs" made up of their owners and other humans, they use the same gestures to communicate. Problems arise when humans do not understand these gestures or expect dogs to understand things about human society that do not come naturally. For example, humans expect dogs not to eliminate inside the house. A 7lb Yorkshire terrier may not defecate in the room where it sleeps (i.e., its den) but may defecate on the living room rug because it sees the rest of the house as fair game.

Submissive urination is the ultimate gesture of submission. Submissive urinators communicate that they are absolutely no threat to other dogs. In response to the submissive signals, dominant dogs stop their display.

Submissive urination can be seen in dogs of any age or sex. It is most common in puppies, which makes perfect sense because they are automatically subordinate to all the adults in the pack. It is also more commonly seen in females and smaller breeds. Submissive urination occurs when dogs are confronted with facial expressions, body postures, or gestures that they perceive as a threat (see Case Examples, Case 1), including humans reaching for them; petting them on the head; leaning over them; talking to them in excited, deep, or harsh tones; making eye contact with them; or punishing them verbally or physically. In canine communication, dominance gestures include staring, standing over, putting a paw across the back of another dog's neck, and low growls. Dogs simply interpret human actions as they would another dog's actions.

While submissively urinating, dogs usually show other submissive signs, including laying their ears back, tucking their tails, cowering, and avoiding eye contact. They may also give a submissive "grin" in which the corners of the lips are pulled back, exposing molars and premolars. This should not be confused with an aggressive lip lift, which shows the incisors and canines. Some dogs roll onto their sides, exposing their bellies, while giving these signals and urinating. This is not a request for a belly rub; it is a request to be left alone.

Dogs that submissively urinate expect that their behavior will stop "threats" from humans, but well meaning humans continue leaning over, petting, and trying to comfort these dogs as they would another person. Dogs see this as a continued threat rather than a comforting gesture. Punishing these dogs will only exacerbate the situation. A typical scenario is the owner who is

frustrated because his dog urinates on the carpet every time he comes home. Believing that he has "caught the dog in the act," the owner scolds or otherwise punishes the dog for what he believes is a housebreaking lapse. Thus a dog that is already intimidated and trying to say with its only "words" that it respects the owner's authority is met with further threats, resulting in more frequent and intense displays of submission.

Excitement Urination

Excitement urination, a variation of the submissive form, usually occurs during greetings (see Case Examples, Case 1). Dogs with this behavior often do not show other signs of submission. Instead, they seem happy and excited to be greeted by humans. These are the puppies that urinate when greeted and then wag their tails and jump on humans, splashing urine all over.

CASE 1

I recently saw Jake, a 6-year-old neutered male American Eskimo dog, for submissive urination. This had been a big problem when Jake was younger but seemed to resolve with maturation; however, Jake had begun to urinate in the house again. Jake had always been a very sensitive dog, cowering not only if scolded but also if family members raised their voices at each other. Jake's owners did not think they had been scolding him any more and were confused and concerned about the return of the submissive urination. Because Jake's owners had been remodeling the kitchen and bathrooms, they often came home to a mess and an unusable kitchen. Although they did not yell at Jake when they came home, they were stressed and upset and Jake was reading their body language and responding with submissive gestures. But why did Jake submissively urinate when no one was there to see the gesture? Just as Pavlov trained an automatic response (salivation at the sight of food) to occur on an external cue (a ringing bell), Jake learned to pair the automatic response of submissive urination with the learned cue of the owners' yelling. When the owners had a series of bad days, Jake felt as though the alpha dog (the owners) was constantly threatening him. In response, Jake's behavior became more submissive. Jake's owners were asked to change their behavior when they came home. Rather than checking on the progress of the renovations, they walked or played with Jake. After some positive, relaxed time together, the owners checked on the kitchen. They were also reminded of Jake's sensitivity and tried to control their stressful reactions. They used Jake as a barometer of their own stress reactions and made a conscious effort to relax when they noticed signs of submission.

CASE 2

My childhood dog, Misty, a cocker spaniel, was an excitement urinator. As a puppy, urination would occur whenever anyone came home or greeted Misty. My family had never owned a dog before, but someone told us that the behavior was caused by overexcitement, so we never punished Misty. We just assumed we had to live with it. We tried to remain as calm as possible when greeting Misty but never actively worked on the problem. Misty's behavior improved slowly; by 3 or 4 years of age, submissive urination no longer occurred on a daily basis. After that, urination occurred only when Misty greeted special persons whom she rarely saw. My family learned to have Misty greet these people outside. After we understood the problem and found an acceptable way to manage it, Misty's excitement urination ceased to be a problem. Managing the behavior just became a fact of life, like a daily brushing to maintain the coat.

Changing the Behavior

The prognosis for dogs with submissive urination is good: most puppies and young dogs outgrow the problem as they mature and gain confidence in social situations. Treatment relies mainly on owner education and patience. Owners must learn to accept submissive urination as a normal part of canine social behavior. The battle is half won when owners accept that their dogs have not lost their housebreaking skills and are not being spiteful.

The next step is identifying and avoiding the stimuli that lead to submissive urination. Everyone (e.g., owners, their friends, veterinary caregivers) who interacts with dogs that exhibit this behavior should avoid doing anything that causes urination. For example, dogs with submissive urination should not be rushed toward when greeted; instead they should be allowed to approach on their own. Humans should speak softly, avoid prolonged eye contact, and kneel down to avoid towering over these dogs. Ignoring these dogs for the first 5 minutes after arriving home may prevent overexcitement. These dogs should not be reached for, especially over the head; they should be petted under the chin, on the chest and on the side of the neck.

Dogs with submissive or excitement urination may be helped by being taught an alternate greeting behavior or to associate greetings with a different set of emotional responses. These are forms of counter conditioning. Owners should be instructed to meet their dogs at the door with a treat or toy. The dogs will learn to anticipate food or play when owners come home and be less likely to urinate. Especially with treats, owners can shape their dogs' behavior from an excited or submissive greeting to a calm one. When the dogs begin looking for the treat, owners should wait for them to sit calmly before giving it. Later, a treat should be given while their dogs are sitting calmly, being petted, and not displaying any Submissive gestures. Dogs with submissive urination should not be punished. Some dogs are so sensitive that even upset facial expressions or tense body language from owners is enough to elicit urination. The best way to avoid punishing dogs is to guide them toward appropriate behaviors. For example, instead of yelling "no" when their dogs jump on them, owners should teach them to sit. Dogs should be told the right thing to do, something that will result in praise and a reward rather than being allowed to decide what to do, potentially resulting in scolding and punishment. Reducing the amount of punishment will help build the confidence of Submissive dogs and reduce their tendency to show such exaggerated submissive behaviors as urination. Other good confidence builders for dogs include positive reinforcement/reward basic training for obedience or dog sports (e.g., agility, flyball). These activities also help strengthen the owner-dog bond, which may have been damaged by frustration over urination.

Conclusion

Submissive urination is a commonly encountered, normal canine behavior. It is considered a behavior problem because humans do not want their dogs to urinate in socially unacceptable locations and situations. However, submissive urination is easily manageable. By teaching owners a little about canine social systems and communication, veterinary technicians can help them understand their dogs' behavior (see Resources). After owners understand and avoid eliciting the behavior, the submissive urination stops. Confidence building activities between owners and dogs can help end submissive urination and strengthen the owner-dog bond.

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