

Love is setting up your newly adopted dog for long term success in his new loving home. Please understand that your newly adopted dog's behaviour WILL change a certain amount after the Honeymoon Period is over. So that means assuming that this new dog will be fine in certain situations just because he has not exhibited any troubling behaviours is unwise and dangerous. Active supervision is a must until the dog has had a chance to be fully trained or retrained. Complacency could end in tragedy for the dog or a family member. Please don't let that happen.

Complacency With Newly Adopted Dogs Can Create A Tragic Ending To A Story
By Margit Maxwell March 10, 2017

On one of the other dog forums, I recently read a heartbreaking post.

Well-meaning people adopted a Malamute as a companion for their existing dog. They went through a local shelter to adopt this dog. The owner recounted how on the first day home after the dogs had "been playing outside together nicely" the owners called the dogs in to feed them. It appears that the new dog jumped up to grab food from the stove. Fearing the dog would hurt himself with hot food or stove, the husband pulled the dog back away from stove. Then all hell broke loose and the dog started savagely biting the new owners. The owner said that they finally managed to coax the dog outside and left the dog outdoors until police could come to remove the animal from their yard. It sounds like they want the dog to be destroyed.

Everyone who was commenting on this post was shocked at the dog's savage behaviour and was condemning the shelter for allowing a dog like this to be adopted out. But I don't think that I read one single comment that brought to light the devastating mistakes made by the new owners that helped to create this tragic set of circumstances. When people adopt dogs, there must be safety precautions taken that may have easily prevented the tragic outcome that befell this family and this poor dog.

9 Ways to Help Keep Everyone Safe When You Have Adopted A New Dog

1. Don't Trust the Temperament Evaluation Made by the Shelter

All dogs that are surrendered to shelters go through an evaluation for temperament and adoptability. But the evaluation(s) are only as accurate and reliable as the experience of the person doing the temperament testing. I have seen Huskies get labeled as aggressive when in fact they were only demonstrating understandable excitability. I read an account where a pit bull mix was assessed by three different shelter staff, deemed fit to adopt, only to go on a week long aggressive rampage in his new home where there was a small child present.

Before you assume that a dog that you are considering adopting is safe to adopt, have the dog checked out by someone who is very experienced with the specific dog breed that you are dealing with to make sure that the dog behaviours are accurately recognized. Also, truly aggressive dogs or unstable dogs who suffer an organic brain disorder are not good candidates to be adopted out to family homes. Sometimes, depending on the circumstances, these dogs could be placed into a special home with people experienced in working with these kinds of behaviours but the average family household with young children is NOT where these dogs should be placed.

2. You Must Take Safety Precautions In Your Home

When you bring home a newly adopted dog, new owners must take certain precautions to keep unfortunate tragedies from happening. People have this unreal expectation that they will bring home this new dog, the dog will be eternally grateful to the human for giving him a new home, and they all live together happily ever after. Adoptions can work out to have happy endings but certain safety precautions must be taken during the settling in time and direct supervision at all times is a must.

3. The dogs should never be allowed to play together unsupervised. To the untrained eye it could look like the dogs are just playing "nicely" but upon careful observation the trained eye would likely

see tense bodies, wild eyed stares, and dominating stances being given all leading to a behaviour explosion between waiting to happen between the dogs.

Existing dogs will to some extent be worried about protecting their space, their toys, their humans, their food, and the new dogs will be concerned with being in the tenuous position of being the new dog on the block and about trying to establish themselves within the social hierarchy. Supervised play activities for the first while should involve quiet Getting To Know You interactions, not rambunctious wrestling or excited games of tug. Be ready to call a time out to let energies cool off before they escalate to dangerously over excited states. When dogs cannot be directly supervised they should be separated for both of their safety.

4. Dogs who have no socialization experience with people or other dogs have no social skill set for knowing how to behave politely or appropriately and can act inappropriately and unexpectedly. Don't assume that your new dog will display normal tolerances for household activities or will act reasonably towards all the new things and people in his environment. Biting from fear is a natural reaction for a dog to have so always progress slowly and be aware that a new dog might snap or bite even in situations that don't call for that level of reaction.

5. Children should not be allowed to interact with the new dog unless directly supervised. Children, especially young children, are not going to be able to spot the dog communications signaling their discomfort or fear. Dogs that feel cornered or threatened will snap or bite to drive people away. Children can receive serious bites to the face, hands, arms and legs from dogs, as can adult humans. Supervise all interactions during the time that a dog is settling in. This settling in period could take from weeks to months depending on the history of the dog.

6. Understand that the two strongest natural forces exerted on animals is the drive to reproduce and the drive to eat to stay alive. So that also means that dogs will be their most volatile and aggressive in situations where they are sex hormone driven or when food is present.

New dogs that are unneutered or recently neutered can easily display aggression when same sex dogs are present or when a viable sex partner is available. This **MUST** be taken into consideration when you are bring a new dog into your home. If your dog is not fixed or the new dog is not fixed or has just recently been fixed, keep dogs well separated to prevent tense outbursts of sexually fueled aggression from breaking out. Closely supervise all same sex interactions.

Whenever there is food present, especially when another "predator" is present, dogs will revert back to a very primal state of food aggression and guarding. For the safety of all dogs and humans, assume that the new dog will have food aggression issues and feedings should happen in the safety of a crate. This keeps the dogs from having to worry about food being stolen by the other dog and it keeps everyone safe from food guarding aggression. Dogs should not be anywhere near the food prep area while meals are being prepared. When meals have been prepared, only then should dogs be called to the eating area, crated, and then served their food.

Make sure to immediately pick up all dishes once dogs are finished eating to keep dogs from resource guarding their bowls. Treats and chew bones should not be used when dogs are together to keep food driven aggression from breaking out. Dogs should not be allowed in areas where humans are eating to keep food driven aggression from breaking out and humans should not be hovering in close vicinity where dogs are eating, especially near the newly acquired dog.

7. Sleeping places can become the point of contention as choice sleeping places can be regarded as a limited resource that needs to either be guarded to keep it or taken in order to procure it. Keep sleeping places well separated and give each dog their own beds and sleeping spots. Sleeping places inside of crates are highly recommended. Make sure that you put the new dog's sleeping place out of heavy traffic areas to keep dogs from become anxious about guarding their sleeping spot.

8. Pinch points, like narrow hallways, kitchen galleys, or going through doorways can easily create tense or aggressive reactions from dogs. Dogs in too close proximity to each other can feel trapped or overwhelmed. Make a plan for moving dogs in a calm orderly manner, ideally one at a time through these pinch points areas. Don't allow dogs to collect and mill around in pinch point areas.

9. If you try and use physical force with a new dog that not only does not know you, but has no respect for your authority, you are going to likely find yourself receiving a painful retaliatory bite. Even just moving near a new dog should be done carefully using no sudden movements and certainly no collar grabs, pushes, pokes, and certainly nothing so utterly foolish as doing an alpha role "to show him who's boss". Don't reach in towards the dog, especially over his head where he cannot see what your hands are doing and don't make big sudden or quick movement with your hands. Don't speak in loud or harsh tones or threaten the dog verbally. And remember, dogs don't comply to our cues because we command them to be compliant to us, they comply once a Relationship/ Trust Bond has been forged so noncompliance at this early stage is quite normal.

Remember to keep your new dog on a leash in the house for the first few days, or even the first week. Limit their freedom. No access to whole house, no jumping on furniture, no free roaming. Crate your new dog whether or not it has been crated in the past. Let your new dog know IMMEDIATELY that there will be rules in the home and that love and affection will come second to rules, boundaries, and limitations. The honeymoon stage is a real thing, so even if the dog is not displaying bad behavior, it will if not given rules.

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The Divine Dog Project