



## GENERAL REHOMING INFORMATION FOR LABRADOR WELFARE ADOPTERS/CARERS

### BIG DAY ... BIG CHANGE

It's a big day when you open your heart to a dog from Labrador Welfare and the door opens for them on the new life they're about to begin with you. Bringing the new addition to your family home for the first time will be an exciting time for you (and us) but let's not forget that, for your new dog, this may be a big life change that they might find a little daunting at first.



One of the most stressful things we humans can go through is moving house and it's no different for the new dog you've welcomed into your home. To you it's all old hat but to them it's a whole new world – one full of different smells, sights, sounds and unfamiliar people too.

If you're anything like us, there's a place for everything and everything in its place but to help your new dog settle in what's now their happy place, we've put together some information which we hope you'll find useful in helping you and your dog start your new lives together in the place you both now call home.

### THE EARLY DAYS

Your first few days at home together are possibly the most important as this is when you'll start to build your bond with your new dog who'll need time to place their trust in you. It's important to take things slowly in the first few days and weeks and taking 'baby steps' to make sure your dog feels safe, secure and welcome can go a long way to helping them settle and start to feel right at home.

Here are a few tips to help with settling and caring for your new dog when you first bring them home:



#### **No Pressure**

Don't put yourself or your new dog under pressure. Each of you will need time to get to know each other so focus your time in the first few days on keeping the pressure off and helping your dog feel comfortable in their new surroundings.

It's perfectly understandable that every (wo)man and their dog will want to meet your new canine housemate but your dog needs to get to know you and any other resident household members first so try to put visitors off for the first few days at least as this will help to avoid your dog becoming overexcited or perhaps a little overwhelmed.



#### **Give Yourself Space**

Each of you will need time to adjust to sharing your living space and while it's all familiar to you, your dog may welcome a little space where they can take themselves if they need some time to work out what's where.

In most cases, we'll have been able to tell you what your dog's been used to sleeping on (or in) and whereabouts in a previous life and this might be helpful in working out where to create a space for your dog to take themselves for some quiet time alone and undisturbed if they need it when they first come home.



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### **Start As You Mean To Go On**

You'll probably have your own house rules but, until you help them understand, your dog won't necessarily know what they are. There's a lot for a new dog to take on board in the early days but don't forget these days are as much a learning curve for you as you'll have a lot to learn about your new dog too.

Every home has different 'rules' and it's worth remembering your dog may have left a life of comfortable living behind before spending time in our care at kennels and then landing in what to them might feel like paradise having landed a home and a new life with you.



You'll need to start to gently teach your dog your routines and introduce them to your house rules **from Day 1**. Even if they've never sat on a sofa before coming to live with you, they'll likely try just to see if it's allowed. The same goes for begging for food or sleeping on the bed and any number of other things some dogs do but .... it's not the done thing to chastise or punish a new dog for choosing to do something you'd rather they didn't. It's perhaps far better that you limit your dog's choices so they're not unwittingly put in a position of being able to make the 'wrong' choice simply because they may not know any better.

It's really important that you **and** every other resident member of the household helps your dog start to understand what your expectations are from the very beginning while understanding it might be unreasonable to expect too much too soon from a dog that's brand new to your home.

### **Go At Your Dog's Pace**

They say good things come in 3's and the widely accepted **3-3-3 Rule** is a general guideline that marks out the 3 milestone phases your new dog will likely go through as they settle into their new life. Loosely speaking the 3-3-3 Rule relates to the first **3 days, 3 weeks and 3 months** after bringing your dog home from kennels.

Also known as the 'rescue dog honeymoon period', some dogs will naturally follow the 3-3-3 Rule to a tee while others may need several more months or longer to feel completely at home. Dogs live in the moment and don't live by the book so there's no hard and fast rule as to how fast or how slowly they'll settle but as a general rule of thumb you can expect your dog to take:

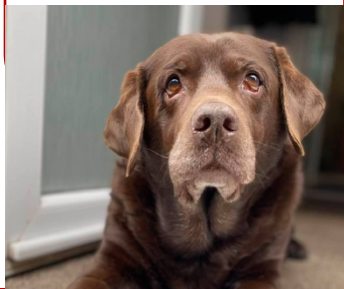




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### 3 DAYS

to decompress and stop feeling overwhelmed and/or unsure after experiencing a significant life-change



### 3 WEEKS

before they start to figure out their new environment and routine and perhaps test a few of the house rules



### 3 MONTHS

until they really feel comfortable, safe and secure enough in their new home to build on the bond they'll have formed with you



You've given your dog their new home but keep in mind that the best things in life are worth the wait so try not to expect too much too soon of your new dog during this 'honeymoon period' – remember, as well as your love and care, the greatest gift you can give any dog is ..... **TIME**.

## DOG DAYS

Dogs like routine and most daily routines for a Labrador will consist of eat, walk, play, sleep and repeat! The pointers below may help you get the balance just right as you start to establish a daily routine that suits you and your new dog.

### Feeding Your Labrador

You'll have been advised of the type of food that your dog has previously been used to and the times that it's been fed on the **About Your New Dog Information** sheet provided when you adopted your new canine companion.

It pays to try and keep to this – at least in the early days – as a rapid change of diet can result in upset tummies and accidents in the house. If you do want to change to a different food, do this by combining a small amount of the new food with the dog's normal feed, slowly increasing the amount of new food until you've completely moved over. This should be done over a period of around 2 weeks. Should your dog have an upset tummy, try adding a teaspoon of honey and the beaten white of an egg to their drinking water. If their tummy doesn't settle within 24 hours and/or the symptoms are severe, then do contact your vet.





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### *Small World Isn't It?*

It's worth remembering that many dogs come to us for rehoming when their owners find that they don't have enough time to dedicate to the dog so walks may only have been short ones while, in some cases (and for many reasons), the dog may not even have experienced the simple pleasure of being taken out for a walk at all.

Whatever their previous experience, keeping their world small to start with can help your dog begin to feel comfortable in their new surroundings and familiarise them with the local sights and sounds. There is no harm in not walking your dog for the first few days while they begin to adjust to their new home and, in some cases, this can really help them to settle until they and you are ready to step out into what, for them, will be a whole new world. It can really pay to begin at the beginning with short walks and gently broaden your dog's horizons and social circle with longer walks that you can build up together over time.



In terms of how much exercise your dog will need, much will depend on the age of the dog, and how much exercise they might already get in your garden and home. Some dogs will run around the house and garden using up energy whilst others might prefer the lazy life of a sun-lounger on the couch!

Lead walking will help to keep muscles in trim and walking on roads and pavements will keep nails short. However, many dogs can benefit from some free running exercise to stretch muscles and burn off excess energy. It's worth remembering that Labradors are a working breed and will enjoy the mental stimulation that varied walks can provide. Born to retrieve, most dogs will

enjoy retrieving a ball or a dummy but just as many will also savour a sensory sniff walk which, believe it or not, can be mentally just as exhausting as a full-on chase after a ball in the park.

### *Taking the Lead*

You'll have been advised what your dog has been used to walking on in a previous life eg type of lead, collar, head collar or harness.

Extending leads or long lines can be useful in open spaces until you've established your dog's ability to recall whereas flexi leads aren't perhaps the greatest or safest for street walking where you're more likely to need to keep your dog close.

Labrador Welfare don't advocate the use of choke or semi-choke check collars or indeed any collar that will cause a dog discomfort or pain - not least because some can cause damage to a dog's larynx and also because there are far kinder alternatives to help to make a walk more comfortable for your dog and perhaps for you too.

### *The Legalities*

In accordance with the **Control of Dogs Order 1992**, you'll need to make sure your dog is wearing a collar when out and about in a public place and it'll need to have your family name, address (including your postcode) and telephone number on it - whether written (eg embroidered) or by way of an attached, engraved tag - in order to comply with the law.

Whatever collar you use for your dog, it doesn't have to cost the earth but walking your dog without one **and** the ID the law requires can cost you dearly ... in fines of up to £2000!

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### **Microchips**

As well as the legal requirement for your dog to wear a collar and ID in a public place, it's also been compulsory for all dogs to be microchipped since the introduction of the **Microchipping of Dogs (England) Regulations** in 2015.

Your new dog will be microchipped with a unique 15-digit number that identifies him or her and the chip will be transferred into your name on adoption so the relevant microchip company is aware. Shortly after adopting your dog, you'll receive a notification by post or email from the company their chip is registered with that'll confirm as and when the chip's been transferred to you.

You'll be asked to check the information the company holds on their database and it's really important you **do** check your dog's record and keep the information on it up to date. This is so that you can quickly be contacted and reunited should your dog go walkabout and become lost or, worse still, stolen – an up to date microchip record ensures while they're missing in action, current contact details for their owner (that's you!), aren't missing without a trace!

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### **Medical Matters**

Unless we've been advised against it by a vet, dogs leaving our care at kennels are usually neutered or spayed.



You'll have been informed of any health issues you need to be aware of prior to adopting your dog and, in most cases, provided with a copy of their vaccination card on the day you take them home.

### **TEAMWORK MAKES THE DREAM WORK**



Labrador Welfare work really hard to ensure the match for each dog and their new owner(s) is as perfect as it can be and the team will be there to support you and your dog from the start of your new life together – right to the very end.

Although we'll have given you as much information on the dog's background and behaviour as we're able to provide, it's worth remembering that the information we take from relinquishing owners is done so and passed on in the spirit of good faith. There are those previous owners that might just have been a little economical with the truth but, in many cases the truth will often out whilst a dog is in kennels and we'll have told you about any behavioural issues that have become apparent while your dog has been in the care of kennel staff.

No kennels, however good, is a natural environment for any domestic dog and it would be reasonable to expect some behavioural changes as a dog begins to settle in their new home.

So, although everyone thinks they have the perfect dog, and nobody is wrong, the reality is your dog may have some imperfections and they'll need **you** to put the work in and help them .... just to iron any wrinkly bits out.



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### THE FUTURE

We hope you find the information we've provided here useful as you start life with your new dog but don't forget, we're only at the end of a telephone or email if there's anything you need or we can do anything else to help.

We commit ourselves to each and every dog that finds their way into our care but we don't stop caring once they've been rehomed – if you need us, we'll be there.

Nothing gives us greater pleasure than hearing how the dogs are getting on and perhaps seeing a picture or two as well, so never hesitate to get in touch to let us know how they're doing and don't be surprised if you get a call or email from our Rehoming Team who'll try and touch base with you and your dog every now and then too!

We don't work hard so our dogs can have a **BETTER** life ...



We work **REALLY** hard so our dogs can live their **BEST** life

[www.labradorwelfare.org](http://www.labradorwelfare.org)

### SUPPORT

We're here to support you in whatever way we can but if you'd like to support the work we do to help dogs like yours, please visit our website and take a look at the information on our [Support Our Work](#) page for lots of ways to help us – and, like the best things in life, you might be surprised to find that some of them are absolutely free too!