

## **Home Visit Basics:**

1. Take a "dog's eye view" of the home and yard. Imagine you're placing your own dog there. Look for any potential risks. Consider whether you would entrust your dog to these people.
2. Review their application before the visit.
3. Have the whole family present for the home visit so you can share tips with all.
4. If you have possible plans of doing the adoption at the end of the housecheck, provide the dog's neck measurement in advance so the people can get a collar. Remind all applicants of the two-finger rule so they buy the right size collar and fit it properly.
5. Particularly for less-experienced dog owners, explain the utility of a crate for housebreaking and confining when unsupervised. Suggest crate sizes appropriate for the dog (you can bring a dog supply catalog).
6. Listen for comments about risky practices such as letting the dog off-leash in unfenced areas. Some applicants need education. Others may not be ready to safely care for a dog.
7. You do not have to approve a home visit. If you have doubts, tell the applicants you report back to the Adoption Coordinator.

## **Homes with Children:**

1. Advise parents to obtain a crate before bringing a new dog home.
2. Advise parents never to leave dog alone with their children or their children's friends.
3. Explain to the whole family: "A dog can't cry or whine when he is unhappy. Instead, he may growl or try to bite." When a dog might be getting tired, leave him alone.
4. Advise parents not to let young children walk dogs themselves.
5. Strongly advise obedience training for the whole family.

## **Ask Questions:**

1. Have you considered how to schedule time to walk and play with the dog each day? At what times will you take the dog out for potty breaks and exercise? (Review a schedule; dogs typically should be taken outside upon waking, after breakfast, mid-day or right after work, after dinner, and before you go to sleep at night.)
2. Can you always get home after work, before going out again? Do you have a reliable pet-walker or neighbor to take your dog out when you can't get home on time?
3. For puppies, who will feed and walk mid-day so the pup can get housebroken?
4. Are you prepared to clean up after a shedding dog? Can you move things out of the dog's reach? If the dog chews carpets, shoes, table legs, chairs...how will you deal with this? Are you ready to accept an animal who might go through adjustment problems in your home?

5. Dogs are like children - you must educate and guide them. Are you willing to take the time to teach them acceptable behavior with consistent, positive reinforcement?

## **What to Tell Applicants:**

1. Have an ID tag ready before you get a dog. Secure it to a flat buckle collar, and always keep that collar on the dog. Do not leave a training (choke) collar on a dog; use such collars only for walks and training sessions. Alternatives to metal choke collars include traditional or neck/body harnesses and head collars such as the Gentle Leader or Halti.
2. Explain how to transport a dog safely and securely in a car (alternatives include a crate, a divider panel, dog seatbelt harnesses, securing the leash to something in the car). Have your hand on the leash before opening the car door. Don't let dogs stick heads out windows while you're driving.
3. As soon as you bring your dog home, show him where to potty. Praise him when he goes there.
4. Even housebroken dogs have accidents, ranging from marking to diarrhea. Be prepared with plenty of paper towels and urine-scent-killing cleaning products like Simple Solution.
5. Advise they get a crate before bringing a new dog home.
6. Feed the dog a good grade of dog food. It saves money on health care in the long run. Ask what the dog was fed; if you change the diet, do it gradually to avoid intestinal upset.
7. Feed the dog on a set schedule, typically twice a day, leaving the bowl down for 15 minutes. (Free feeding can lead to housebreaking accidents.) To prevent fights, feed pets separately.
8. Use a crate for housebreaking and to confine until the dog can have free rein. Folding crates travel.
9. When there's a housebreaking accident, never hit or yell at the dog, or shove his nose in the mess. This worsens the problem. Keep the dog on a good feeding/potty schedule. If housebreaking accidents persist, see your vet - the dog may have an easy-to-treat infection or parasites.
10. On the first day, don't stay with your dog the whole time - that leads to separation anxiety. Put her in a crate and leave for short periods. Gradually increase the time.
11. When leaving the dog, make sure he has safe toys. Chewing is normal dog behavior. **WARNING:** avoid rawhides and other overly coveted chews; dogs may fight over them.
12. Take hold of a dog's collar before opening an exit door. Don't let dogs off-leash.
13. Let the animal sleep on the same floor as your family. Dogs are pack animals. **Warning:** letting dogs sleep on your bed or furniture often leads to dominance/aggression problems.
14. Don't stick your face in the dog's face until knowing the dog is settled in and you can trust him.
15. Don't play tug-o-war or wrestle with the dog; this induces aggression.
16. Explain the need for year-round heartworm preventative and annual vaccinations.

17. Take obedience training from the start and read books to learn proper, humane training methods.

## **Dog Home Visit Checklist:**

### ***Specific house and yard items to check***

- Proximity of home to busy roadways.
- Screen, storm and sliding glass doors: Check all latches and require repair if needed. Advise that even small dogs can pop open doors. Warn that dogs can easily tear through screens.
- Doors: Relate the dog/doorknob advice: "Before someone opens a door, locate the dog and make sure she can't dash out."
- Front door: Suggest optional places to install a baby gate or other barrier to prevent escapes.
- Windows: A dog may jump through a screen - or even window - to chase an animal. Close windows; block access to low-lying windows.
- Windows: Move/remove cords in which a pet can get tangled or strangled.
- Look for open-structure stairs, and open railings often found on upper levels of homes. These may need to be screened or blocked so a small dog can't fall through.
- Ask where the dog will be when the people aren't home. How long will the dog be left alone on workdays? Ask where they will place a crate or baby gates; make suggestions (such as kitchen). Advise not to confine in dark, lonely areas such as basements or laundry rooms. (Dogs kept in basements usually have housebreaking problems.)
- Ask where will dog eat, drink, sleep, go potty, exercise.
- Kitchen: Floor-level cabinets should be secured; keep toxic cleaners out of the dog's reach. Keep dishwashers closed -- pets can climb in or ingest detergent.
- Suggest use of Bitter Apple on furniture, moldings and other items dogs might chew.
- Bathrooms: Don't confine there. Dogs have been injured slipping off tubs or turning on faucets.
- Look for cords/wires on which dogs might chew and get electrocuted. Conceal or unplug.
- Space heaters and electric appliances: Remove from floor.
- Power strips: Cover open outlet holes so pets can't stick claws or tongues in them.
- Valuables: A dog may knock over items, or may seek to chew your knick-knacks. Move them to higher ground. Remove glass, ornaments and window candles that a dog may knock over.

- Bathmats and scatter rugs: Dogs may chew on them.
- If they have other pets: Do they look healthy? Observe water bowls, toys, bedding. How clean is the kitty litter box, dog crate or bird cage? Is the litter box and cat food out of the dog's reach?
- Doggie doors: Advise to block them when the dog is left alone in house. Never leave dogs outside when you're not home for safety and liability reasons.
- Balconies and decks: For small dogs, require the applicant to install chicken-fencing or other barriers to prevent the dog from slipping through. Reinspect before adoption. Most areas have laws against leaving pets unattended on balconies/decks.
- Basements: Check for hazards -- tools, cords, items a dog can get hurt on. Block access to sump-pumps, furnaces, appliances.
- Garages, workshops, sheds: Tell people not to allow dogs in these areas, where they can get hurt or die from exposure to tools, loose nails, poisons -- and antifreeze. Pets love the taste of antifreeze, but one lick can kill a dog.
- Fence gates: Repair latches that a dog or a passerby can knock open.
- Fences: Walk every foot. Look for loose boards and gaps, which must be fixed and reinspected before adoption. Before the visit, find out any fence requirements for the particular dog.
- Fence advice: Adopters should watch a dog when in the yard for safety and liability reasons.
- If there's a gap under a fence, a dog can quickly dig his way out. Block escape routes, pile up sod, or construct a sunken barrier at the fenceline (bricks work well).
- Chain-link fences: Warn that many dogs can learn to climb over them.
- Picket fences: If the boards face out, many dogs can push them out. Have the applicant reinforce as needed for the particular dog with extra nails and cross-beams.
- Gaps: Dogs can push through gaps. Advise applicant to line the fence interior with chicken wire. Require fixing and reinspect before adoption.
- Electric/invisible fences: While PAW often does not place in homes with this type of fence, if you're sure the application reviewer knew the applicant had one, remind them to be out with the dog in case the power fails. Also, electric fences do not keep out critters or human intruders.
- A/C and electrical units: Shield wires to prevent dogs from getting electrocuted.
- Window wells: Cover them so dogs don't fall in.
- Pools: To prevent drowning, the adopter will need to keep the pool securely fenced off and/or covered with a sturdy pool cover when not in use. Also, there must be graded steps out of the pool, not just a ladder. Adopters should carefully train the dog how to get out of the pool.
- When a dog is brought on the visit, observe the people's responses to the dog being in the home.

- Before approving a home visit, ask yourself if you would entrust your dog to these people.