Your Rescue Dog is here…Please read fully.

Over the years we have seen many dogs come from foreign rescues to their forever homes in the UK. The following is a guide aimed at making their and your experience safer. This guide will also for the most part help nervous UK rescue dogs too.

Assuming you are rescuing from abroad, the chances are the dog will be coming via land thanks to some sort of pet courier.

So the dog will have been travelling for a few days. It will of course be very confused as to what is happening by the time you go to collect it.

The collection of your dog is a massive moment in your life as well as theirs' but even though you will doubtless be very excited PLEASE try and resist the urge to get your dog out of the van and take lots of pictures. Whilst some dogs may well take this in their stride for nervous dogs the last thing in the world they need is to be posing for pictures. If you must take a picture do so whilst the dog is still caged or when it is placed securely in your motor vehicle.

The hand over of the dog is one of many critical stages in keeping your dog safe so please ensure that you take the utmost care. Where possible speak to the transporter first. Ask how your pet travelled? Whether it was nervous on the trip? Did it get off to be walked have wee stops etc? Even if your new dog travelled well sometimes the arrival occasion can be simply too overwhelming. You have to remember to try and think as a dog not as a human. They will have gone from probably having limited human contact in a shelter to all of a sudden peering out of a cage to see a crowd of excited people gathered round and looking at them. The most confident dogs can find this situation daunting so PLEASE don`t hang about outside the van, trying to glimpse your dog, there will be plenty of time for pictures later on. If you are the person taking the dog firstly ensure that the van is closed while the dog is removed from its cage and that it is handled by the transporter, who will have become familiar with the dog over the days of the transport. Far too many dogs have escaped at this critical point and have never had a second chance. Ensure the dog is safely secured as soon as it comes out of the cage. We recommend that the dog is secured in three ways:

Collar

Slip lead

Harness

All need to be correctly adjusted to ensure they are a snug fit.

The collar should be tight enough to ensure that should the dog struggle in the event of something panicking it that it is not too loose that it will be able to slip its head through it nor so tight that it is blocking their airway. You should be able to insert 2 fingers under the collar once it is fitted. A normal clip lead should be attached to the loop on the collar and it should have an ID disc with your address and telephone number clearly displayed.

The slip lead is a vital piece of safety equipment. They are very cheap but could well prove to save your dogs life.

Here is a standard slip lead.



On all slip leads are a stopper which ensures the lead stays as tight as is needed.



 The arrow on the right in  the picture above points to the stopper; the one on the left shows the direction the stopper should slide until it reaches the dogs neck and thereby freezing the lead in that position.



The picture above clearly shows the stopper has been moved up to the neck, securing the lead tightly enough to not allow it to go over the dogs head should it panic but not so tight that it restricts their breathing.

 The harness should also be adjusted to ensure it is a snug fit, again not so tight as to restrict blood or pinch but secure enough to hopefully hold a dog should it panic and back away trying to escape. Please be aware that a panicking dog will get out of pretty much any harness ever devised, so the harness should never be relied upon as the only security measure.

I would like to add at this point you can never be too careful. Any one of these measures on their own would not be enough but combined together will hopefully ensure your companion's safety.

Below is a picture of one of our dogs showing the 3 safety measures in place.



Make sure to double check all are properly secured before moving the dog out of the van and into the open. In the above picture I would just move the stopper on the slip lead a little closer to the neck to be happy I had correctly safety fastened it.

DO NOT in this early phase use a flexi lead as it is an accident waiting to happen. Should anything spook your dog and they are not within arms length then they could easily escape before you can bring them to you and contain them. They are bulky and easily pulled from your hand with a sudden jerk or lunge, and the resulting clatter as the handle hits the floor is likely to send any dog bolting away, with the handle crashing in hot pursuit - sending the dog into a blind panic. The bulkiness of the plastic handle makes it difficult to hold any other leads safely - you need a few safety nets so if one lead fails you have another to use as back up. If you attach a flexi lead then you would either have to attach it to the harness or collar thus not giving you any secondary back up. For this initial period please resist the urge to use one of these leads.

Please have a crate in your car ready to place your dog in, make sure all doors are secured. We advise that all dogs are transported in a crate, if you have an accident and the dog is not secured he/she may escape from the car and will run, we have had this happen on a few occasions unfortunately and the result is a dog running on a motorway, scared, with no chance of capture.

 Now we know how to safely secure a dog, let’s go back to getting it off the van. Wherever possible again I would ask the transporter if they minded moving the dog for you as the dog will have come to know and trust them where as you will probably be a stranger to them. With nervous dogs the safest means would be to either move a crate into the van shutting the doors to stop an escape. Then the dog can be transferred to your crate ready to be lifted off and put in your vehicle or to simply secure the dog as described above and lift it again to your vehicle. This of course is not always possible depending on the size of the dog, but even where the dog is carried it is still essential to secure them as described above.

OK, phew, you have got your dog into your vehicle. Now be sure to secure them so that when they come to get out at the other end they can’t simply just bolt when the boot or back doors are opened etc. Be certain that the dog is properly secured in the car so that if anyone opens a door it has absolutely no way of getting out.

Again we must think like the dog which I know can be difficult as we are not dogs but a little empathy and thought can go a long way.

The chances are your new pooch may have never been in a car before, where it can see out of the window. The sights/smells will be completely different to anything they may have ever seen before and the dog might find them very scary. We can never be sure what our rescue dogs have been through so always keep that in mind. If you have a very nervous dog then cover the windows or its crate so that it is not intimidated by the outside surroundings.

Over the coming weeks we will be exposing our companion to a whole new world where there are bound to be things that will excite, scare and puzzle our new additions - we have to try and be aware of all of them that we can, we are only human after all and can't predict everything but we can do everything in our power to keep them safe.

You should now also be in possession of your pets paperwork ie Pet Passport, traces documents etc. which will hold their microchip number.

We will register your dog’s microchip whilst they are at the kennels, so they are registered by the time you collect them, if you are adopting then your registration document will normally arrive within 7 days. If you are fostering the dog will be registered to us until that dog is adopted, as we can then change the details free of charge.

**KEEPING OUR PETS SAFE OVER THE INITIAL BONDING PERIOD**

The life of a dog before it came to you can be mostly unknown. What can be a fair assumption is that it will have not seen many of the things we take for granted. I very much doubt it will have seen a widescreen TV and the sound which comes out of it. I doubt It will have ever heard a hoover, washing machine etc. etc. It is our job to gently introduce our companions into our modern world whilst ensuring we keep them safe.

A good stress reliever for dogs is chewing, we must ensure they have no access to electrical wires, household products or anything else they could chew which could do them harm. They don't automatically know what they can and can't chew, we need to teach them.

A dog's natural reaction to events which scare it is to FIGHT or FLIGHT although a third possibility is also to freeze.

Knowing how a scared dog is likely to react means that you can pre-empt behaviours and ensure its safety by thinking like a dog not as a human. A rescue dog does not enter your home and think thank goodness you have saved me, the chances are it will be quite unsettled for the first few weeks until it learns how everything works where and when.

Giving a dog basic obedience training and getting it into a daily routine will also give it confidence as it will know what happens when.

It is likely that your dog will have either lived on the streets or in a rescue shelter. Either way it will likely have been able to have 24 hour access to doing its toilet outside. It will not have learnt to hold its movements for any amount of time so we cannot expect it to be able to go long between toilets when it comes into a new home. We must ensure it has many opportunities to go outside as possible, until it knows when and where it can go. This can be a problem. this again is where we need to exercise caution as for a scared dog their natural reaction will be to flee from what is scaring it, to get away. So for the scared dog we cannot simply let it out in the garden and expect it to go to toilet as It may well see this as its chance to get away. A scared animal will gain super powers in order to escape. It will climb objects you never thought possible. It will get through gaps that don't exist. So we need to ensure they are safe until they are completely bonded with us and comfortable in their new environment. One way of doing this is to take them out to toilet on a lead. Try not to stand over them as you can imagine this could be quite off putting. Do NOT make eye contact with them but turn sideways so you can still see but that they dont feel threatened. Wait until they have been before you tell them good dog; this way they learn where to go whilst being praised and you are keeping them safe.

Also please be aware of them being able to escape when your front and back doors are opened. It is best to shut the dog into a room before opening the front door to anybody to ensure there is no risk of the dog being able to dash through the door and escape. Are there many members to your family? Do you have kids?  In a busy, noisy home you will need a safe place the dog can escape where no one will disturb it.    
For most of these dogs being transported their cage (crate) becomes like a den, a place of safety. Used in the correct way dogs can feel really safe and secure in a crate. If you have multiple dogs it’s a good way of keeping the newbie safe, as well as your old ones when you are not there or are too busy to supervise. Using a crate for feeding, when you go to bed, when you are busy etc keeps them safe. It is NOT a place to lock them away all day. By feeding and giving them treats in their crate you are giving positive reinforcements that it is a good place to be, and covering the crate makes it a comfortable and sheltered place the dog can retreat to when it needs a break and some peace and quiet.

The family will need to sit down as a group and ensure that when coming and going you are all extra vigilant so as to never leave any doors open as there really is no room for error. Do friends/neighbours come to your house and let themselves in? Keep the door locked so that people have to knock so that you have the opportunity to secure the dog before opening the door. Everyone needs to know the rules so you can avoid any slip ups. A scared dog develops magical powers -  it can run faster, push its way through solid objects to escape and climb unscalable fences to escape if it gets into a panic. These are all things we need to be aware of.

It is not unusual after the arrival for your dog for it to have loose motions or diarrhoea which might even be bloody for a few days. He has been wormed, has had the stress of a long journey and for some there have been a couple of changes of diet. Any diarrhoea should clear up quickly, but please don't overfeed your dog for the first few days, less than a full sized meal, and keep the food bland with no rich additives until his stomach has settled. If your dog is not interested in food for the first couple of days please do not panic, it is only because he is a little stressed and unsettled and he will start eating as he settles in.

When taking your dog out on walks for the first few weeks try and make sure they have the earlier mentioned safety methods in place; collar, slip lead and harness

Be very mindful that your new addition is going to be flooded with so many new experiences you need to ensure they stay safe. Again thinking as a dog and not as a human there can be so many things which trigger different responses. Noises, smells, other dogs, traffic, strange people, children etc everything is going to be new. Try to start with somewhere quiet and walk there a few times to build their confidence then as they improve you can slowly add more stimuli while keeping them calm.

Once you have cracked this early stage the extra security measures can be taken away. The collar can be loosened a little. You can do away with the slip lead. Even try using a flexi lead in an fenced area so you can work on recall.

I can't emphasise enough how important it is to keep these dogs safe in the first few weeks until they have formed a bond with you. A scared dog that bolts will very quickly revert to feral behaviour, often within moments. Survival mode if you like. They will most likely have no road sense whatsoever. They will not see or hear you, they will just be terrified.

PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE DON`T find yourself in that position as a new owner of a LOST scared dog. Make sure you do everything in your power to keep them safe.

There is nothing quite like the love of a rescue dog. Even more so when you see their character develop and watch them blossom. All these dogs need is a little guidance and lots of TLC, time and patience. There is no magic wand and it can take time but boy, is it worth it......

We are here to help with any issues you have when you get home. If you have any problems please contact Kaz Gilbert or Joanne Shrimpton, we will be more than happy to help resolve them…. You are not alone once you get home xxx

 Before you know it you will have a dog that’s jumping for joy :)