



**Buddy & Friends
Animal Rescue**

Where furry tales come true

BUDDY & FRIENDS ANIMAL RESCUE ADOPTION HANDBOOK 2026

Thank you for adopting from Buddy & Friends Animal Rescue. By opening your home to a rescue dog, you have given a dog the opportunity for a new beginning.

Adoption is a special moment for both you and your dog. It marks the start of a relationship that will grow through trust, patience, and shared experiences. While this is an exciting and joyful time, it is also a period of adjustment for your new companion. Many rescue dogs have experienced significant change before arriving in their new homes. They may have traveled long distances, spent time in shelters, or lived in environments very different from a family household. Even dogs that appear confident and social are still learning about their new surroundings.

During the first few weeks, your dog is discovering what it means to feel safe, secure, and part of a family. Your patience, consistency, and understanding will help them settle in and build confidence in their new world. The calmer and more predictable your dog's first week is, the easier the rest of your life together will be.

This handbook is designed to guide you through the early stages of adoption and provide helpful information that will support both you and your dog as you begin this journey together.

INDEX

Page 3:

Start Here: Your Dog's First Days at Home
Understanding Rescue Dogs
Decompression: Your Dog Only Gets One First Week
Why Decompression Matters

Page 4:

The 3-3-3 Adjustment Rule
The First 48 Hours
What Is Normal During Adjustment

Page 5:

Appetite Changes
Potty Changes and Accidents
Puppies: What to Expect

Page 6:

House Training
Puppy Biting and Teething
Sleep and Energy
Nighttime Adjustment
Socialization

Page 7:

Vaccination Safety
The Martingale Collar and Escape Prevention
Identification and Microchip Safety

Page 8:

Secure Home and Yard Safety
Understanding Dog Body Language
Introducing Your Dog to Resident Dogs
Introducing Your Dog to Cats

Page 9:

Introducing Your Dog to Children
Resource Guarding
Daily Structure and Routine
Exercise and Enrichment
Crate Training

Page 10:

Feeding Guidelines
Preventing Separation Anxiety

Page 11:

Professional Training Requirement
Adopter Responsibilities
Veterinary Care
Lifetime Return Policy
When to Contact the Rescue
Our Commitment to Adopters

Page 12:

Adoption Success Philosophy
Final Thoughts

Start Here:

Your Dog's First Days at Home: Bringing home a rescue dog is exciting, and the first few days are an important time for your dog to adjust to their new environment.

If you are reading this on your dog's first day home, we recommend starting with these sections:

- **Decompression: The First Week:** Learn how to help your dog settle into their new home and avoid overwhelming them during the adjustment period.
- **The First 48 Hours:** Step-by-step guidance for the first days after bringing your dog home.
- **The Martingale Collar and Escape Prevention:** Newly adopted dogs are at the highest risk of escaping during the first few weeks. This section explains how to keep your dog safe.
- **Introducing Dogs, Cats, and Children:** Guidance for safely introducing your new dog to other members of the household.

You can read the rest of the handbook at your own pace, but these sections will help you and your dog get off to the best possible start.

Understanding Rescue Dogs: Rescue dogs arrive with experiences that we may only partially know.

Some dogs have experienced neglect or instability. Others may have lived outdoors or in environments with little structure. Even dogs that were previously owned may be confused by the sudden change in routine and surroundings.

Your dog is adjusting to:

- A new home
- New people
- Unfamiliar smells and sounds
- New rules and expectations
- A completely different daily routine

Because of this, behavior during the first few weeks may not represent your dog's true personality.

With patience and consistent structure, most rescue dogs adapt beautifully and form strong bonds with their families.

Decompression: Your Dog Only Gets One First Week: The first week after adoption is called the decompression period. Decompression is the time your dog needs to settle emotionally and physically after the many changes they have experienced. Your home may feel calm and welcoming to you, but to your dog it is an unfamiliar environment filled with new sounds, smells, and expectations. The goal of decompression is to allow your dog's nervous system to settle before introducing too many new experiences.

Why Decompression Matters: Dogs experience stress differently than humans. When stressful events occur close together, stress hormones accumulate in the body. This is called stress stacking. Transport, shelter stays, veterinary exams, and entering a new home can all contribute to elevated stress levels.

Because of this, some dogs may initially appear:

- Quiet
- Sleepy
- Cautious

- Withdrawn
- Unusually well behaved

This is often referred to as the honeymoon period.

As your dog begins to feel comfortable, their personality will start to emerge. This may include increased energy, curiosity, and normal dog behaviors. This change is healthy and expected.

The 3-3-3 Adjustment Rule: Many rescue dogs follow a general adjustment pattern known as the 3-3-3 rule. Every dog is different, but understanding this timeline helps adopters remain patient during the transition.

First 3 Days

- Your dog may feel overwhelmed and unsure
- They may sleep frequently
- Appetite may decrease
- They may appear withdrawn

First 3 Weeks

- Your dog begins learning the household routine
- Personality may begin to emerge
- Energy levels may increase

First 3 Months

- Many dogs begin to feel fully comfortable
- Stronger bonds with their family develop
- Confidence continues to grow

The First 48 Hours: The first two days in your home are often the most overwhelming for your dog. Focus on keeping the environment calm and predictable.

When you arrive home:

- Take your dog outside on leash for a potty break before entering the house
- Enter the home calmly and avoid excitement or large greetings
- Allow your dog to explore a limited area rather than the entire house
- Provide a quiet resting space where your dog can relax
- Avoid visitors during the first several days
- Maintain a consistent routine for feeding, potty breaks, and rest
- Allow your dog to approach you at their own pace

Your dog may sleep more than usual during the first few days. This is normal and helps their body recover from stress.

What Is Normal During Adjustment: Many behaviors that worry adopters during the first weeks are actually normal.

Your dog may:

- eat less than usual
- sleep more than normal
- follow you from room to room
- appear cautious or shy

- bark at unfamiliar sounds
- have occasional accidents indoors

Stress affects appetite, digestion, and behavior. Most of these behaviors improve as your dog becomes comfortable with their routine.

Appetite Changes: Some dogs may not eat normally during the first day or two after adoption.

- Stress can temporarily suppress appetite
- Offer meals at consistent times
- Remove uneaten food after a reasonable period
- Avoid pressuring your dog to eat

If your dog refuses food for more than 24 hours, contact the rescue. Water intake remains important. Dogs should always have access to fresh water.

Potty Changes and Accidents: Changes in bathroom habits are also common.

Your dog may:

- Hold urine or stool longer than expected
- Experience loose stool due to stress
- Have accidents indoors even if previously house trained

Take your dog outside frequently and praise calmly when they eliminate outdoors. Routine and supervision will resolve most issues quickly.

Puppies: What to Expect: While many of the principles in this handbook apply to dogs of all ages, puppies are in a unique stage of development and require additional patience, structure, and supervision. Puppies are curious, energetic, and still learning how to live in a home environment. They are not yet fully trained and do not understand household rules. Many behaviors that may feel frustrating at first are actually normal parts of puppy development.

Common puppy behaviors include:

- Frequent bathroom accidents
- Chewing on household items
- Nipping or mouthing during play
- Bursts of high energy followed by deep sleep
- Difficulty settling at night
- Exploring everything with their mouth

These behaviors are not signs of a “bad dog.” They are part of how puppies learn about the world. With patience, training, and consistency, puppies grow quickly and develop into well-behaved adult dogs.

Puppy Adjustment: Unlike some adult rescue dogs who may initially appear quiet or withdrawn, many puppies adjust quickly to new environments and may immediately begin exploring their surroundings. This curiosity is normal and healthy. However, puppies can still experience stress during transitions. Changes in environment, new routines, and separation from littermates can feel overwhelming. It is helpful to keep the first few days calm, predictable, and structured while your puppy settles into their new home.

House Training: Young puppies cannot hold their bladder for long periods of time. Frequent potty breaks are essential for successful house training. A general guideline is that puppies can hold their bladder for approximately the number of hours equal to their age in months.

For example:

- 2-month-old puppy: about 2 hours
- 3-month-old puppy: about 3 hours
- 4-month-old puppy: about 4 hours

Puppies should be taken outside:

- First thing in the morning
- After eating or drinking
- After waking from naps
- After play sessions
- Before bedtime

Accidents will happen and are a normal part of the learning process. Calmly clean accidents and continue reinforcing outdoor potty breaks with praise and consistency.

Puppy Biting and Teething: Puppies explore the world using their mouths. Nipping, mouthing, and chewing are normal behaviors during early development, particularly while puppies are teething.

During this stage puppies may:

- Chew on furniture or household items
- Mouth hands during play
- Chew on shoes or clothing

Providing appropriate chew toys and redirecting biting to toys helps puppies learn what is acceptable to chew. Consistency and supervision are important during this phase.

Sleep and Energy: Puppies have bursts of high energy followed by long periods of sleep. It is common for puppies to play intensely and then suddenly fall asleep. Most puppies require 16–20 hours of sleep per day for healthy development. Providing quiet time and structured naps helps prevent overtired behavior, which can sometimes appear as hyperactivity or excessive biting.

Nighttime Adjustment: Many puppies may cry or whine during the first few nights in a new home. This is often because they are adjusting to sleeping away from their littermates for the first time. A crate placed near your bed can help puppies feel more secure during this transition. Some puppies may also need a nighttime potty break during the early weeks. With consistent routines, most puppies adjust quickly to sleeping through the night.

Socialization: Puppies go through a critical learning period during the first few months of life when positive experiences shape their future behavior. Safe and positive exposure to new people, environments, sounds, and experiences helps puppies grow into confident adult dogs.

Examples of healthy socialization include:

- meeting calm and friendly people
- hearing everyday household sounds
- walking on different surfaces
- experiencing car rides
- Visiting safe environments

These experiences should always be positive, gradual, and supervised.

Vaccination Safety: Young puppies are still building immunity and may not yet be fully vaccinated. Until your veterinarian confirms your puppy is fully protected, it is safest to avoid:

- Dog parks
- Areas with heavy dog traffic
- Unknown dogs
- Places where sick dogs may have been present

Your veterinarian can provide guidance on when it is safe to begin exploring higher-traffic areas.

Training Begins Immediately: Training should begin as soon as your puppy arrives home. Early training focuses on:

- Learning their name
- House training routines
- Create comfort
- Gentle leash introduction
- Basic cues such as sit and come

Short, positive training sessions help puppies learn quickly and build strong bonds with their families.

Raising a puppy requires patience and consistency, but the effort invested during the early months creates the foundation for a lifetime of good behavior and companionship.

The Martingale Collar and Escape Prevention: Your dog will be wearing a martingale collar, which is an important safety tool. Newly adopted dogs are the highest flight risk of any dog population. Dogs that panic in unfamiliar environments can back out of traditional collars. Martingale collars tighten slightly when tension is applied, preventing the dog from slipping free.

During the first several weeks:

- Always attach the leash to the martingale collar before opening doors
- Ensure the collar fits properly
- Maintain a secure grip on the leash when exiting vehicles
- Be especially cautious when opening doors or gates

Escape incidents most often occur during transitions such as leaving the house, loading into vehicles, or encountering sudden noises.

Identification and Microchip Safety: Make sure your dog's identification tags and microchip information are updated immediately after adoption.

- ID tags should always be worn when outside the home
- Microchips greatly increase the chances of recovering a lost dog
- Verify contact information is correct

Secure Home and Yard Safety: Before bringing your dog home, check:

- Fencing
- Gates
- Doors
- potential escape points around your property

Newly adopted dogs should never be off leash outside of a securely enclosed area.

Understanding Dog Body Language: Dogs communicate through body language. Recognizing these signals helps prevent misunderstandings.

Relaxed dog signs may include:

- loose body posture
- soft eyes
- relaxed mouth
- gentle tail wag

Signs of stress may include:

- stiff posture
- intense staring
- lip licking
- repeated yawning
- freezing
- excessive panting

These signals mean the dog needs space or reduced stimulation.

Introducing Your Dog to Resident Dogs: Introducing dogs should always be done slowly and in a controlled way.

- Have two adults present, one handling each dog
- Keep both dogs on leash
- Begin by walking the dogs parallel at a comfortable distance
- Allow brief sniffing if both dogs appear relaxed
- Keep early interactions short
- Remove toys, food, and chews during early introductions

If you have multiple resident dogs, introduce them one at a time.

Introducing Your Dog to Cats: Cats must always have access to a safe place to retreat.

- Keep the dog on leash during early interactions
- Allow the cat freedom to move away
- Watch for signs of stalking or intense staring

- Increase distance if the dog becomes overly focused

Introducing Your Dog to Children: Children and dogs must always be supervised.

Children should never:

- hug the dog
- climb on the dog
- pull ears or tail
- place their face near the dog's face
- disturb the dog while eating or sleeping

Dogs should always be able to move away if they feel uncomfortable.

Resource Guarding: Some dogs guard valuable items such as food, toys, or resting spaces.

Early warning signs may include:

- stiffening
- hovering over an item
- growling when approached

Prevent problems by:

- feeding in a quiet area (or crate)
- avoiding reaching into the dog's food bowl
- trading items rather than taking them

Daily Structure and Routine: Dogs thrive on predictable routines.

Try to keep consistent times for:

- feeding
- potty breaks
- walks
- rest
- training

Exercise and Enrichment: Dogs require both physical exercise and mental stimulation.

Examples include:

- walks
- structured play
- puzzle toys
- scent games
- training exercises

Crate Training: Many dogs benefit from having a crate or quiet resting space in the home. Buddy & Friends Animal Rescue strongly encourages crate training because it can provide structure, safety, and comfort for both the dog and the household. A crate can serve as a dog's personal space where they can relax and feel secure. When introduced properly, many dogs naturally begin to view their crate as a calm place to rest. Crates can be especially helpful during the adjustment period after adoption and can support house training, nighttime routines, and safe management when a dog cannot be supervised.

Crating can help:

- Create a safe resting space for your dog
- Support house training routines
- Prevent destructive chewing when unsupervised
- Help dogs learn to settle and relax
- Provide structure and predictability
- Keep dogs safe during travel or when guests visit

Setting Up the Crate: The crate should be placed in a quiet but social area of the home where the dog can feel included without being overwhelmed. Many families place the crate in a living room during the day and near a bedroom at night during the early adjustment period.

When setting up the crate:

- choose a crate large enough for the dog to stand, turn around, and lie comfortably
- add a comfortable blanket or crate pad
- place a few safe chew toys inside
- ensure the crate is in a draft-free area away from direct heat or cold

Some dogs feel more secure when a crate is partially covered with a blanket to create a den-like environment.

Introducing the Crate: Crates should always be introduced gradually and associated with positive experiences.

Helpful ways to introduce the crate include:

- placing treats or toys inside the crate
- feeding meals inside the crate
- leaving the door open at first so the dog can explore freely
- praising the dog when they choose to rest inside

Over time, most dogs learn that the crate is a comfortable and predictable place to relax. Crates should never be used for punishment. The goal is for the dog to associate the crate with calmness and safety, not stress. Many dogs voluntarily choose to rest in their crate even when the door is open.

When Used Thoughtfully, Crates Can Support Successful Adjustment: During the early weeks after adoption, dogs are learning new routines and boundaries. A crate can help prevent situations where a dog becomes overwhelmed or engages in unwanted behaviors such as chewing household items. Crates also allow dogs to rest without constant stimulation, which can be particularly helpful for puppies and high-energy dogs who may have difficulty settling down. Every dog and household is different, and crate use should always be tailored to what works best for both the dog and the family. For many adopters, however, crate training becomes one of the most helpful tools for creating structure, safety, and calm routines during the adjustment period and beyond.

Feeding Guidelines: Maintain the feeding schedule and food recommended by the rescue during the adjustment period.

If transitioning foods:

- change gradually over 7–10 days
- Sudden changes may cause digestive upset

Preventing Separation Anxiety: Some newly adopted dogs may follow their adopters closely or show mild anxiety when left alone.

Help your dog adjust by:

- starting with short departures
- gradually increasing time away
- keeping departures calm and routine

Professional Training Requirement: All Buddy & Friends Animal Rescue dogs must receive professional training with a BFAR-approved trainer.

Training helps:

- Build communication and a strong foundation for your dog's future.
- Preventing behavioral problems
- Support successful integration into your home

Adopters are responsible for scheduling and paying for training sessions.

Adopter Responsibilities: Adopting a dog is a long-term commitment. Adopters are responsible for providing:

- daily care
- appropriate exercise
- training and supervision
- veterinary care
- a safe and stable home environment

Veterinary Care: Adopters assume full financial responsibility for their dog after adoption.

This includes:

- routine veterinary care
- vaccinations
- parasite prevention
- treatment for illness or injury

Lifetime Return Policy: If at any time you are unable to keep your dog, the dog must be returned to Buddy & Friends Animal Rescue. Dogs may not be sold, transferred or rehomed without written permission from the rescue.

When to Contact the Rescue

Please contact the rescue if you notice:

- refusal to eat for more than 24 hours
- little or no water intake
- repeated vomiting or diarrhea
- aggressive behavior
- intense fear
- escape attempts

Our Commitment to Adopters: Buddy & Friends Animal Rescue remains available to support adopters after adoption. We encourage adopters to reach out with questions so that we can help ensure every adoption is successful.

Adoption Success Philosophy: Successful adoptions are built on patience, structure, training, and realistic expectations. Adjustment takes time, and progress often happens gradually. With consistency and support, most rescue dogs thrive.

Final Thoughts: Adopting a rescue dog is a journey built on patience, structure, and trust. Some dogs adjust quickly while others need more time. What matters most is consistency, communication, and the willingness to meet your dog where they are. At Buddy & Friends Animal Rescue we believe deeply in second chances. To rescue is to heal a heart that we did not break.

Thank you for giving a rescue dog the opportunity to build a new life with you.