



Taking Home the Fearful/Insecure Dog

What can I do to make a smooth transition?

- It is key to provide a structured environment for any dog, but even more important for the fearful/insecure dog. Dogs thrive on routine and for the fearful dog it will calm him when he knows what his daily routine. Consistency is key for a successful transition. .
- Be aware of your body language with your dog. Keep a sideways stance to your dog and avoid direct eye contact. A direct frontal stance and eye contact can increase his fearful responses. A forward posture can be threatening to your dog and may increase his fear. Instruct visitors how to address your dog also.
- Ignore the fearful behavior. By trying to help your dog through his fear by petting and talking to him, you are actually be rewarding the behavior
- If your dog is hesitant to approach you or new people, reward him with treats when he approaches you or others. Use treats regularly to reward him for overcoming his fears (going into a room he might have been scared to enter, approaching the vacuum cleaner, etc)
- When strangers come to your home, have treats available for them to give to your dog if he approaches them. If your dog does not approach the stranger, they should just ignore him.
- When going on walks, arrange to go for walks with other dogs he gets along with. This sometimes adds to your dog's confidence level when he has another dog to look to for guidance. .
- Take your dog to a basic obedience classes and work regularly on his training at home. Positive training builds confidence.
- Understand your dog's body language and remove him from situations that make him uncomfortable. Shy and fearful dogs might show their feelings by cowering, rolling onto their back, shaking, urinating, hiding, ducking, backing away or going still.

What NOT to Do

- Do not force your dog to confront his fear. A fearful dog that feels trapped or is pushed too far may become aggressive to protect himself.
- Do not scold or physically punish your dog for being afraid. This intensifies his fear and stress.
- Do not constantly reassure your dog. You do want him to look to you for safety and security, but it's not helpful to repeatedly pick him up or chant "It's okay, it's okay.." Your dog won't understand what you're saying, and if you sound anxious, you might make him even more upset. Instead, calmly praise and reward your dog for confident, relaxed behavior if he offers it .