

Mid-Atlantic German Shepherd Rescue

www.magsr.org

Congratulations on your Adoption!! Thank you for opening your home to one of our dogs. We have written out some information to help with the adjustment of bringing your new fur kid home. Please contact us if you have any questions. And we LOVE updates on how you and your dog are doing!

MAGSR Name:

MAGSR Tag #:

PLEASE take the time to read the following. It WILL help with the transition of your dog.

DO'S AND DON'TS

1. Do not take your new friend to be groomed for at least two weeks. This will allow them some time to adjust to their new environment and to bond to you.
2. Do not go home then take your new friend out to the pet store. Once you have them home it's less confusing to the dog to stay in one place. If you take them out, they may think they are yet again being moved somewhere else.
3. Do not invite everyone over to meet your new friend, or have a party. While you want him/her to be kept socialized, you do not want to overwhelm them while everything is so new.
4. Do not hold their past against them by babying them and letting them 'rule' the house, you, or other humans. Their past is just that and they are moving on to their new lives. Set the rules and limits NOW (take the 'alpha' position from the start) so they know what is expected of them, and they will understand you are in control and that's not their 'job'.
5. Do not allow your new friend off lead thinking they will stick with you; **they won't**. Give them lots of time to bond to you and work on recall before trying this or you'll have a lost dog. They may still be searching for their other family, or used to roaming.
6. Don't leave a dog outside for long periods of time unsupervised or while not at home. A fence does not guarantee that he/she will stay in the yard. To some dogs, a 6 ft. wood privacy fence is just a large hurdle to jump over.
7. Do supervise your dog's interactions with children. The quick movements children make can sometimes scare a dog. Teach your children the correct way to stand still and let the dog approach them.
8. Do take our information and advice seriously.

WHAT TO EXPECT

You should expect your new dog to act differently than he did when you met him at the kennel. He will be excited, nervous and maybe tired after the trip to your house. Being routine-oriented, your new arrival may have just gotten comfortable at the kennel and now recognizes that the routine is changing yet again. He doesn't know the smells, the sounds, and most importantly, the routines and rules of your house. This is very confusing for your dog.

Dogs display anxiety and nervousness by: panting, pacing, lack of eye contact, "not listening," housebreaking accidents, excessive chewing, gastric upset (vomiting, diarrhea, loose stools), crying, whining, jumpiness and barking. This is a litany of behaviors any and every dog owner dreads! As long as you understand where these behaviors originate, you can perhaps address them before they appear and deal most effectively when they do! Your goal in the next weeks is to reduce the "noise & confusion in his head" and get him to relax, to be calm and show him how to be good. Despite your joy at adopting (and after a few enthusiastic hugs and kisses), you should be calm and gentle and firm with your dog.

All rescue dogs go through a "honeymoon period." After the first day or so, the dog may be very quiet and extraordinarily controlled and "good." The "real" dog appears two to four weeks later - after he's mostly figured out the house rules, the schedule of the days, and the characters of his new family. At this time, he'll start testing out his position in the pack, and may "regress" to puppy hood and "bad" behavior. Be patient with him, firm in your expectations, praise him for appropriate behavior - especially when he is lying quietly and behaving himself. Don't praise for nothing constantly - the dog will learn to tune out your praise over time!

NEW HOME INTRODUCTIONS

When you first bring your new dog home, make sure you have him on a leash! Spend the first 15-30 minutes walking him outside around the perimeter of your yard or the area that you will be with him most on your property. Walk slowly - let him "lead" mostly - and let him sniff and pause if he wants to. He is getting used to the "lay of the land" and all the smells associated with his new home. He will undoubtedly relieve himself - this is his way of making himself at home by adding his mark to the smells of your home. Obviously you want this to happen outside! If you have a place you wish this to happen, encourage him to "get busy" in that area and praise him warmly when he does. The excitement of the move and new family will cause him to have to relieve himself more often than normal. You must be prepared to give him plenty of opportunities to do this in the beginning! Whenever the rescue dog is not confined, supervise him! Set this dog up to win!

You might want to consider isolating the new dog from your resident dogs during the first entry to your home - he will appreciate safe and quiet at first as he explores your home. Let the new dog explore the house - leave him on leash and make sure he's supervised! Reintroduce the dogs on NEUTRAL territory. (The backyard is NOT neutral territory. Neither is the dog park.) The resident dog should go in first. Why?

The alpha is always first and until the order has changed, the resident dog is alpha dog. People are the actual alpha of your pack.

Once inside your house, a male (and rarely but still possibly a female) may still mark a door, plant or chair when he first walks inside your home. This is out of nervousness (or he may smell another dog), so it is best to leave him on the leash indoors the first day. If he starts to lift his leg give him a short jerk on the leash and tell him "No." That should stop him immediately and remind him of his housebreaking manners. Follow up this correction by taking him outside in case he's not just marking! Bear in mind that if your new dog has a few accidents, it does not necessarily mean that he is not housebroken. We can't emphasize enough how much nerves and excitement can cause uncharacteristic accidents. Watch for typical pre-piddling behavior - circling, sniffing, etc. Do not scold or hit a dog for having an accident - rather, verbally get his attention, grab the leash, and take him right outside to his spot to do his business. If he does it, praise him! Once he relaxes and learns the rhythms and routines of your home, all his manners will return!

FEEDING

We are feeding him/her _____. If you are interested in changing food, please do so over time so that there is less stomach upset. Your new fur kid is being given _____ cups twice a day. Our kennel dogs are fed twice a day, once in the morning and once in the evening. GSD's are prone to bloat. Check out magr.org for more info on bloat and ways to help prevent it.

To help establish yourself as alpha, make your new addition sit before they get their food bowl. They should not jump up to try to get the bowl. They may be excited to be fed but should follow your commands before being rewarded with food. The alpha eats first then the rest of the pack. A good habit to get into is having the new arrival see you eat first – even if it is pretend – any resident dog should be fed next and then the new arrival. You can feed both dogs in the same room but our *strong* suggestion would be not next to each other. It may be helpful to have another adult around the first couple of nights to help make sure feeding time goes smoothly.

The food bowls are put down and the dog is given approximately 15 minutes to eat. If they are not eating in that period of time the food is taken up until next mealtime. Don't worry if they don't eat for the first day. By having each dog with their own bowl, you can monitor how much is being eaten. This can help alert you to something being wrong. We have learned that is common for a dog to miss one feeding or not eat all of their food when first introduced to a new situation. Once you get a routine established, a lack of eating for a day can be an early warning sign that there is a problem. You should always talk to your vet if you have any questions or think that there might be a problem.

HOUSE RULES

I'M ALPHA

The alpha is always first; first to eat, first out the door, first up the stairs. The subordinate dog needs the alpha's permission to do what they want to do. Don't pet your dog because they ask you to – do it because that is what you want to do. Give them a few commands to follow before you pet them. Tell them to sit or down or even to give you their paw (some of our fur kids will know this and others will not).

Keep in mind that you can only determine that the **people** in the house are alpha. You cannot determine the order of the dogs in the house. They need to figure that out themselves. If you get too involved it just prolongs the figuring out process. There are many non-confrontational ways to establish yourself as alpha when you first bring your dog home.

OFF THE FURNITURE

For the first month or so don't allow the dog on your furniture; especially when they get up on their own. This is telling them that they are equal to you. If you choose to allow them up, it should only be after your invitation, NOT because they want to.

CRATING

GSDs are pack animals and when someone new joins the pack they are going to want to find their place. All people (parents and kids) are in charge. The newcomers start at the bottom of the pack. At your house they may work their way up the chain of command eventually but while the order is being figured out, crating them is a great way to keep them and your other animals safe. Crating is also beneficial to those of you that don't have any other fur kids. The crate becomes your dog's safe place. It should be placed where the dog can see and hear you, for example the family room or bedroom. The basement is not a good place. You don't want your dogs to feel isolated from the family when in the crate.

He may have some separation anxiety when first coming into your home. He may forget his housebreaking as well as his manner, for example chewing inappropriate things. While the crate should never be used for punishment, it is an excellent training tool to help you with housebreaking and manners.

Children need to learn to leave the dog alone if he goes into his crate. That is his spot to escape to when things get too overwhelming. Crating a dog can also help when you are traveling. It gives them a safe and familiar place to go to in a strange place. You do want to praise your dog if they go into the crate on their own. Your dog should not be crated all of the time. While it may be necessary to crate your dog when you first get them and you are not at home, the idea behind crating is that you are eventually working away from having to put the dog in a crate. The agreement you signed states that you will not crate the dog for more than 9 hours in a 24 hour period. Eventually you will be able to leave the crate up with the door open (or off in some models) for the dog to retreat to when they want to.

One thing you do not want to do is make a big deal when you leave or return home. Dogs do not understand what you are saying when you will only be gone a short time and it only makes them think that they are missing something.

PROVIDE QUIET TIME

Quiet time will be important for your new dog, especially during the first week. Because of his nervousness and anxiety, he will get tired fast. His recent past may have included a shelter stay which has worn him out with worry. Despite your excitement, try and resist inviting friends and relatives over to visit him. Give him time to get used to your immediate family and resident pets. If the dog does not solicit play or attention from you, let him alone. Believe it or not, we don't want you to force him to play at first!

BE PATIENT DURING THE HONEYMOON PERIOD

There is a good chance that your rescue dog will show his insecurity by following you everywhere! This will include trying to hang with you in the bathroom, watching TV with you, getting the mail, and undoubtedly wanting to sleep with you. It is not unusual for him to whine or cry or bark if confined away from you at night - lights out at a new strange place is a stressful thing for him. If you put the crate in your bedroom where he can see you, the problems are usually minimized. Safe chew toys in the crate at night will give him something to do if he's awake. Remember, during the first couple of weeks, the dog will probably get quite tired and worn out by the day's activities, so establishing a sleep schedule is usually not a big deal. As you wean him from the crating at night, make sure he has been well exercised - **a tired dog is a well behaved dog!!**

ESTABLISH A ROUTINE

Try to develop and use a consistent daily routine for feeding, exercising, and bathroom duties. Dogs are creatures of habit and routine translates into security for them. If you do the same things in the same way and in the same order, he will settle in more quickly and learn what is expected of him and when.

Let your new German Shepherd out to air and take care of business as soon as you rise in the mornings. Feed him after a short walk or romp in the yard. Give him another chance to relieve himself before you go to work. Upon return from work, immediately let the dog out for exercise and bathroom break (this is NOT the time to read the mail, make a phone call or flop yourself on the sofa!!!). If he's exercised heavily, wait 30 minutes or so before the evening feeding. He'll need another bathroom break anywhere from 30 minutes to several hours after the evening meal, depending on his age - it'll be your job to figure this out. He should get another airing right before you go to bed. **If in doubt – take them out!**

OBEDIENCE CLASSES

Obedience classes are required as part of our contract. Many assume we require training just so the new dog can learn the 'come, sit, and stay' commands. It is much more than this. Formal obedience training is an excellent way for you and your new dog to bond and clearly establish a relationship. It also encourages socializing the new dog with other

dogs. Don't ignore this very important step in setting yourself and your new dog up for success! Be persistent about finding an obedience class or trainer. There are many dog obedience classes that teach dog manners, canine good citizenship and discipline. Register for a class as soon as possible if you are not going to use a drop-in class. If you have any questions please ask us. Remember, German Shepherds need work - this is a really easy way to provide them with active, mental work that you'll approve of! The rewards are obvious - what a joy it is to have a well-mannered, trained German Shepherd companion!

Many of the dogs we place were strays, abandoned, abused, or were simply no longer wanted by their owners and were dumped in a shelter. Their worlds have been turned upside down. Many of these dogs have lost their self-confidence and their confidence in humans. Training helps restore that faith by strengthening the bond between you and your new dog.

Many rescue dogs were abandoned or turned into shelters as a result of the owners not knowing how to handle the dog due to lack of training. When one of our adopters calls us with a problem, the first question we ask is "did you take the dog to training?" Nine times out of ten the response is 'no'. Although we state that each adopter has 6 months in which to complete this training – the sooner the better.

CHANGING THE NAME

New families often ask about changing the adopted dog's name. If you desire to, it is fine. Many times, the dogs are given names at random by a shelter. The dog will learn his new name if it's overused in the beginning. It is in no way traumatic to the dog to change his name. We just ask that if you change their name to let us know. The rescue does follow up phone calls and we like to know the correct name for the dog for when we are talking to you.

SOCIALIZE YOUR RESCUED GERMAN SHEPHERD

Rescue dogs come from a variety of backgrounds, but all dogs can do with more socialization. After everyone has settled in, start inviting your friends and relatives to meet the new dog. Introductions can take the form of petting, playing fetch, even going for a walk. Do not force the dog to accept new people - do it positively, with lots of praise, allowing the dog to approach people rather than people approaching your dog!!! Be sure to tell your visitors that your dog is new from rescue so they need to be more sensitive. If he does not go to the new person, that visitor should completely ignore the dog. Suggest after the dog has met/sniffed the new person that they pat the side of the dog's neck or side of the shoulder. Patting a dog on the top of the head is interpreted by dogs as a powerful dominance attempt and can be a challenge to some dogs, a frightening thing to others. Teach your child's friends the correct way to approach a new dog whose owner is present and make sure not to leave the child and dog unattended.

Start taking your dog new places - nearby parks, dog-allowed beaches - and, especially to obedience classes! The opportunity will allow you to determine how your dog responds to strange people, dogs and places.

LOVE AND ENJOY YOUR NEW DOG

You do not need to frighten your dog into complying with household obedience commands, or prove to him that you are the toughest creature around by using constant brute force. You DO need to show your dog that you are the leader in the household, a leader he should put his trust in following. You can do this by "telling" your dog this in a language he understands - body language and daily habits. Respect is not something that you can force a creature into giving you.

Above all, be patient, firm and consistent with your new German Shepherd. Use positive reinforcement and lots of praise when he's good. When mistakes are made, correct him when it's happening, and praise him when he modifies his behavior. Undoubtedly you will get lots of advice - good and bad - from other dog owners! Read and research as much as you can to prepare yourself. Understand that sometimes you may need to try more than one approach to a problem. Don't be afraid to ask questions, bring up new situations, and feelings of frustration! Our goal is to make sure our dogs never have to be uprooted again.

Most of all, be prepared to give and receive more love, affection and loyalty than you ever thought possible! Enjoy your new family member for many years to come and thanks again for adopting a rescue dog!