



Somerset Regional Animal Shelter

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Dog Adoption Packet



Visit us on Facebook at

www.facebook.com/somersetregionalanimalshelter

Thank You for Adopting!

Thank you for adopting your dog from the Somerset Regional Animal Shelter (SRAS).

We hope you will be very happy with your new companion. In this adoption packet you will find a variety of helpful hints and materials, including important documents about your new companion and the adoption process. We encourage you to keep these documents in a safe place along with your other important papers.

When one of our dogs leaves the shelter to start his or her “new beginning” we feel great happiness for the dog and his or her new family. So we again thank you for giving your dog a loving home, and we hope you will encourage others to consider adopting a dog from SRAS or another shelter, so they, too, can experience the joy of finding a new best friend.

We encourage you to send along pictures and to tell us how your dog has settled in at home. We have a growing community on Facebook and we welcome your posts: [facebook.com/somersetregionalanimalshelter](https://www.facebook.com/somersetregionalanimalshelter).

SRAS is a resource for success

If you have immediate questions about your new dog, we encourage you to look through your adoption paperwork. Most common questions— such as what vaccines your dog has received—can be found in your dog’s paperwork. If you have questions that aren’t answered in this packet, please call the shelter at **908-725-0308**. SRAS appreciates the opportunity to keep in touch so we can continue to help you with the bond you’ve established with your new companion.

As an organization that has matched thousands of families with companion animals, we have extensive experience and information to help new guardians with their dogs.

We want your new relationship to be successful, so if problems arise, we hope you try the resources we offer as well as other professional resources in the community to make your relationship work. Included in this packet is information on the most common issues such as leash pulling and jumping up, along with a variety of other behavior and training topics.

Please don’t hesitate to contact us at **908-725-0308** or SomersetRegionalAnimalShelter@aol.com to share your concerns.

Sincerely,
Niki Dawson
Executive Director, Somerset Regional Animal Shelter

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New Dog Supply Check List

Basics

- Food
- Water bowl
- Bed, blanket, towels
- Crate and/or baby gate
- Long leash, short leash
- Flat collar w/ID tags (to be worn at all times)
- Head halter or anti-pull harness (for walking)
- Poop bags

Dog Care

- Dog toothbrush, dog toothpaste
- Nail clippers
- Dog shampoo
- Grooming brush
- Flea control treatment*

Training and Mental Stimulation

- Food dispensing toys (KONG® toys, treat balls)
- Puzzle toys (hide-and-seeK, treat wheels)
- Training treats (soft treats, freeze-dried meats)
- Plush toys (with or without squeakers), rope toys
- Edible chews (rawhide, bully sticks, pig ears)*

*Consult your vet for age appropriate recommendations

Settling In – The Transition Period

Setting Up Your Home

As tempting as it is to give your new dog the run of the house right away, that's too much freedom too soon. Instead, create a safe, confined area—a dog-proofed area—to allow your dog to make a gradual transition to his new home. The dog-proofed area is where your dog will stay when you can't supervise, i.e. whenever you can't keep your eyes on him the entire time. This prevents chewing accidents, house-training accidents, and teaches your dog to relax while alone. Don't worry that this is too strict or in any way mean. Dogs are den animals who enjoy close quarters. See the section on "**Crate Training**" that details how to teach your new dog to love their new crate!

Where? The ideal dog-proofed area is easy to clean and easy to close off with a door or baby gate. (If you have a large dog, the baby gate should be tall – 41") It should be mostly free of furniture. The best places for a dog-proofed area are the kitchen, laundry room, bathroom, or an empty spare room that does not contain anything that the dog could potentially destroy.

What? Furnish the dog-proofed area with a bed or a crate with something soft to sleep on, a water bowl, and several toys, including a safe chew toy or a KONG stuffed with part of your dog's meal.

Introducing your new dog to your resident dog

First impressions matter! Always introduce the two dogs on leash in a neutral territory, i.e. at a park or friend's house, tennis court, etc. Allow them to see each other from a distance and sniff and look at each other through a barrier such as a chain link fence. The idea is to let the novelty wear off while allowing them to acclimate to each other without tension. Another way to do this is to walk the two dogs together keeping at least 10 feet in between them. The idea again is to allow them to see each other without meeting so it is less stressful.

If this goes well, you can introduce them off – leash on neutral territory for a few minutes and allow them to play if they'd like. Be sure to end the session on a good note and this will set the tone for their relationship.

If things are progressing nicely, you'd would then move on to introducing them in the resident dog's yard and then inside.

Introducing your new dog to your resident cat

It's important to know that a dog can easily harm a cat just by playing, so until you're absolutely certain the animals will not hurt each other, they should be kept separate when you cannot directly supervise them.

Keep your new dog leashed during any introduction periods to ensure he cannot chase or harm your cat. Introductions should always be done while supervised and cats should never be left alone with dogs until a consistently safe relationship has been established. This can take several months, be patient. It helps if your dog knows basic obedience commands such as sit or leave it, so that you can distract your dog if she tries to chase the cat. Create a safe area for your cat where a dog cannot follow. Tall cat trees or baby gates will help give your cat a safe place to hide if she feels overwhelmed by the dog. There are pet gates with a cat door in the middle that are quite helpful for giving your cat a safe escape route, should she feel the need to flee. Be sure the cat's food, water and litter box are in an area that is safe from dog interruptions.

See handout on Introducing Your Dog to Cats for additional details

Teaching Children Pet Safety Rules

First and foremost, make sure your children understand that a pet is a living creature to be cared for and respected. Animals have needs and feelings, and they rely on us, their caretakers, for companionship and loving care. To help form this relationship, get children involved with caring for your new companion with age appropriate activities, such as feeding, playing with toys and gentle petting. Supervise pets and children at all times and never leave them alone together. Accidents happen even with the most trustworthy children and pets.

Here are some handy tips to help your pets and children have a safe and happy relationship:

- Advise children that they should never bother the dog when they are eating, chewing a bone or sleeping/resting
- Never allow your children to lay on your dog
- Do not allow children to pull toys or anything else out of your dog's mouth
- Always pet an animal gently, with no pulling or tugging, and never from behind
- Remind children to use their "inside" voice when interacting with pets, no shouting or screaming
- Tell children to avoid contact with a dog's waste, which can transfer disease
- Keep dog toys out of children's reach as they can present a choking hazard

Your Dog's Health

SRAS is committed to the health and welfare of the animals in our shelter, and provides high quality care in an effort to place animals who are healthy. In a large-scale kennel environment, whether it is a boarding facility, breeder, retail outlet or a shelter, a number of transmittable illnesses can be passed among animals within a common living area. Some animals may not exhibit symptoms during their stay at the shelter and may only show signs of illness once they have been placed in a loving home. By adopting you have committed to providing your new dog with any medical care he or she may require.

Please see your dog's paperwork for details on the diseases he has been tested for and the medical treatment he received while at SRAS.

Veterinary Visits and General Health Care

When visiting the veterinarian for the first time with your new dog, take the medical records provided by SRAS with you. Check your adoption packet for additional health waivers or inserts that may have been provided as well. This will alert the doctor to any vaccines, parasite treatment, surgery or other procedures that were performed. SRAS gives dogs the basic **DA2PP** vaccine combination and a dewormer. Some dogs will have a rabies vaccine if it is age appropriate.

Other important ways to keep your new dog healthy are providing routine medical care, including yearly wellness visits, flea and parasite prevention, good nutrition, proper grooming, exercise and socialization. Please be sure to check your email (including your spam folder) for information on your 30 days of free pet insurance.

If Your Dog is Not Feeling Well

When your companion animal is not feeling well, she may show signs such as loss of appetite, lethargy, loose stool, hiding, or vocalizing. These symptoms could indicate an illness, such as upper respiratory infection (URI), or may mean that your dog is simply adjusting to his new surroundings. It is always best to consult with your veterinarian if your dog appears to be unwell.

A common ailment seen in newly adopted dogs is kennel cough (Bordetella). While in our care, we try to ensure that all dogs are healthy prior to adoption (unless otherwise noted). But illness can still occur despite our best efforts.

Training and Exercising Your Dog (Courtesy of SFSPCA)

Every dog needs mental and physical exercise in order to be healthy and happy. By taking your dog on walks, or playing a good game of fetch with him, you'll help him stay in good shape. This often helps reduce behavior problems such as destructive chewing and howling, etc. It's always important to ensure that a dog is well stimulated and always kept busy doing something while you are not playing with him/her.

Some top rules for house-training that you need to know are: never leave him/her alone unless the dog is in a dog-proofed area or crate, supervise your dog at all times in the house so they do not get into anything, when walking your dog always have a leash on him/her and start the walks by walking in half-hour intervals. An indication that your dog needs to go to the bathroom is if the dog is sniffing and circling in the house and when this occurs you need to take him/her out immediately. When the dog goes outdoors, reward him/her with a treat and praise the dog for good behavior. Always keep in mind that the size of your dog affects how long he/she can hold it. The smaller the dog, the less time you can expect him to go for a period without a bathroom break. A good rule of thumb is a dog can hold it for one hour longer than their age, i.e. a 4 month old dog should be able to hold it for 5 hours.

The First Day

You would most likely want to spend every moment with your dog, but that can create problems for you and your dog in the long run. Dogs are highly social and active animals and have to be taught to be calm and relaxed when alone, so you need to get your dog used to short-term absences within the first few hours of his/her arrival home. First, leave your dog in his dog-proofed area while you go out or spend time in different part of the house. It is good to vary the length of your absences, from 30 seconds to 20 minutes, and repeat them throughout the day so your dog can get used to you not being around. Then when the dog is comfortable, increase the times to even longer. It may take up to several days or weeks for your dog to adjust to his/her new home.

Crate Training Your Dog

Before you start to use a crate for your dog, you have to give him/her a chance to get used to it. You do not want to just throw your dog in there and hope he/she adjusts; that would be traumatic for your dog. The crate needs to be a comfortable and safe place he loves to spend time in. This feeling can be gained by using treats, praise, and toys in an easy-to-follow crate training program. Here's how:

The First Day

1. Throw tiny, yummy treats into the crate. When your dog goes in to get them, praise him for it.
2. When your dog is happily volunteering to go into the crate by himself or herself, begin practicing closing the door for a few seconds while treating him/her through the opening. Then let him/her right back out and repeat the exercise many times, building up to 10 seconds.

The Next Few Days

1. Repeat exercise 2 from above for the next few days to get him acclimated to the change. Then stuff a KONG with extra-special goodies such as dog treats and seal with some peanut butter and freeze it. Then put the KONG in the crate and close the door behind your dog as he/she goes to eat it. Go about your business in the house, then let your dog back out after five minutes. Do this without any fanfare whatsoever.
2. Then repeat the exercise several times in the next couple of days using a yummy chew bone or other safe, age appropriate chew. Vary the absences from one to 20 minutes. Make sure to ignore your dog if he whines or barks; always wait to let him out until he has been quiet for 10 seconds.

Leaving The House

1. When leaving your house, leave your dog in the crate with something gourmet in his KONG, then leave the house for any brief errands such as collecting your mail or watering the garden.
2. Over the next few sessions, gradually spread the duration of your absences to longer periods. Go from one minute to five minutes to 10, 15, or 30 minutes. Do not just build your absences upward, though, also throw in some shorter ones.

Tips:

- Never leave your dog in the crate for longer than three to four hours at a time, with the exception of bedtime.
- Ensure that the dog is given a bathroom break prior to putting him/her into the crate.

Training Your Dog Using Reward-Based Methods

Training your dog through positive reinforcement requires using your dog's natural inspirations to teach him which behaviors you approve of and which you don't approve of. You can use anything your dog desires such as praise, toys, treats, a belly rub, a leash walk, or a ball thrown to help them learn obedience commands. SRAS recommends that all dogs and owners attend obedience training classes. Please see our list of recommended services in the area.

A Word on Punishment

Never use physical punishment. A dog's response to yelling or physical punishment is stress. Stress can cause many behavioral problems including defensive aggression. It also erodes the trust between you and your dog and prevents learning.

If you are having behavior problems with your dog, please seek the help of a qualified dog trainer. We have provided contact information for several dog trainers in your area. If these trainers are outside of your service area, please visit www.apdt.org for an experienced trainer.

Solutions to Dog Behavioral Issues

Destructive Chewing

A stimulation of physical and mental activities will stop your dog from chewing you out of house and home. Supplying your dog with chew toys such as Nylabones, Kongs, bully sticks or busy bones will prevent your dog from chewing your shoes and other forbidden items. Chew items should be available to your dog at all times.

Dog Anxiety and Stress

Dogs, just like humans, are prone to stress and anxiety especially seen in dogs that are adopted. Keeping your dog company by playing or just sitting with him/her will keep the dog mentally and physically stimulated which leaves the dog less stressed and less motivated to destroy items in your house. Exercising your dog by taking them for walks, or playing ball is a good way to reduce stress and anxiety. A tired dog is a happy dog!

Mouthing

Mouthing is a way of communication from dogs to tell you to do a particular thing. It involves less pressure, and is less annoying, but not particularly cared for either. When playing with the dog you need to set boundaries with him/her in how much they can pull and/or grab. This can be done by using verbal commands that the dog can pick up on to alert them to stop. Consult a qualified trainer if your dog is excessively "mouthy".

Jumping

Dogs jump for many reasons, but the most common is to say hello. When a dog jumps you essentially need to turn around and show your side and/or back to the dog and refrain from giving them any attention at all. This will make the dog aware that jumping is not a good thing to do and that the only way to get your attention (i.e. praise, petting, etc.) is to have all four feet on the floor. Continuously working with the dog on this method will ultimately stop the dog from jumping when you or anyone else approaches him/her.

Leash Pulling

Many dogs tend to pull on lead because it is continually being reward, i.e. the dog pulls on lead, the owner allows the dog to get where they are going. One of the easiest ways to teach a dog not to pull is to simply “be a tree” when the dog pulls. For example, if the dog is pulling you towards a fire hydrant, you would hold still and remain there until the dog stops pulling. Once there is slack in the leash, you can resume walking. Doing this consistently teaches the dog that the only way to continue walking and moving forward is to have slack in the leash. If leash pulling continues consult a qualified trainer on the use of no-pull equipment, such as Easy Walk Harnesses and Head Halters.

As always, please call the shelter at 908-725-0308 if we can be of further assistance.