



Molly's Mutts and Meows, a California nonprofit corporation  
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## What to Expect

Bringing a new animal into your home is a sweet and exciting time for you and your family. But just as if you were bringing a new baby home from the hospital, there are adjustments that need to be made by everyone. We know from trainers and animal behaviorists that **we never want to set the dogs or cats of Molly's Mutts & Meows up for failure in their new home.** That is why we have all the steps to our adoption process, including the complimentary DVD – to insure happy and successful adoptions. These animals deserve it after all they have experienced.

**We can tell you one thing NOT to expect: PERFECTION.**

**We can tell you one thing to expect: THE UNEXPECTED.**

Don't be surprised if it takes a few weeks for your animal to acclimate. Avoid situations that place undue stress on your new pet. What is undue stress? Avoid cornering your new animal in a closed space, allowing your children to play with his/her food while he/she is eating, taking a new dog to a dog park where he/she may be confronted by strange dogs, etc. If you are bringing a new dog into your home for the first time, introduce him/her to a room at a time on leash. Give your new animal time to adjust to one new situation each day. Give him/her plenty of affection, but also give them plenty of room and time to settle into a new routine.

### Speaking of routines...

One of the best things you can do for your new pet (especially a new dog) is to establish a routine. Remember, your new dog or cat will act differently than how he/she did when you first met him (with the foster mom/dad). He/she will be excited, nervous, etc. Since animals (again, more so dogs than cats) are routine-oriented, he/she may have just gotten comfortable at his/her foster home and now recognizes the routine is changing yet again. He/she doesn't know the smells, the sounds, and importantly, THE ROUTINES of your house. Start establishing your routine immediately.

### Think INSIDE the box...

When you bring home a new animal, it's important to restrict your new pet's access to your home for the first few days or even weeks. This will allow your pet to get used to its new environments and ROUTINES and slowly gain confidence in its new surroundings. We LOVE the idea of crate training and/or using a baby gate in a non-carpeted area (like a kitchen) for all dogs, especially in the beginning. Crating and/or restricting access in the beginning will eliminate accidents, chewing destruction and other mischievous activity that is rooted in nervousness and anxiety. Please refer to the DVD we offer for more on crating.

On the flip side, crating and limited access should NOT be abused. Dogs are pack animals. Many cats are very social too. They need to bond with their people by spending time just "hangin'" with you and your family. Also, crates are NOT meant to be used as any type of punishment. Again, please refer to the DVD we offer to all new adopters for more on crate training your dog.

### "Don't leave me."

This is mostly for dogs. Cats are too cool to be needy. Your new pooch may be a little needy or a little possessive of you in the first few weeks. Try to understand how your new dog feels. He or she suddenly finds themselves in a new environment, with strangers, so if they cling to the first person who shows them kindness; it is understandable. This will lessen in time as your new pooch feels secure. Try not to make a big deal when leaving or coming into the home. The more calm and confident you are, the more your attitude will rub off onto your new dog. One more thing: when you go in and out of your house, watch out as your new dog may try and run right out – and then they may keep running. This "flight" behavior is sometimes seen in shelter dogs. It is something you want to be cognizant of and tell guests coming in and out of your home that you have a new rescue dog and to please shut the door as soon as you enter.

### Just like a new spouse, there is a "honeymoon period"...

All rescue animals go through a "honeymoon period." The animal may be very docile and very "good." But all of a sudden, three weeks later you have the "real" animal! He/she has figured out the house rules, the schedule, the characters of his new peeps and maybe even the other critters. He or she may start testing out his/her position in the pack, or may boss the other cats around, etc. Be patient, firm in your expectations (but remember, don't expect perfection!) and reward and praise for appropriate behavior.

### **“I have to go potty.”**

Cats use their litter box. Most of our cats that we place know how to do this. If they are not using their litter box, there may be a health problem (i.e. urinary tract infection) or a behavior issue. As for the canines – take your new dog in and out through the same door to go to the bathroom and walk him to the place in the yard where you want him/her to go and praise-praise-praise when he/she does. This will help your dog understand which door he/she should go to if he/she needs to go outside and where to go. Oh yea, your mutt’s first day/night in his new home may excite his bladder a bit. Don’t be surprised if he has to go pee-pee a few more times than normal. It’s also a good idea to walk your dog on a leash inside your ENCLOSED yard for the first few weeks. Walk him/her until he/she feels comfortable and knows where he/she belongs and you are certain he/she can’t jump your fence. We don’t think you should ever leave your dog unattended in the yard for at least a few weeks.

### **“This is my sofa. I will give it a yellow flag to prove my ownership.”**

Male dogs sometimes mark. Your new dog may lift his leg a time or two letting you and the fellow home dwellers know that he has moved in. Simple and effective corrections WHILE HE IS IN THE ACT will help nip this in the bud. So will following the paragraph directly above this one....**and watching the DVD.**

### **“But my Jake/Emily/Alex would never do that. They are great with animals.”**

You may have the most perfect children on the planet. But do not EVER leave a new dog or cat unattended with children. Give your kids a refresher course on how to act around animals. Teach them simple things like approaching the animal gently, don’t run and yell around the animal to scare it or get it excited, don’t stare down a new dog, etc. There is nothing more endearing than kids and their pets. Give your new pet a chance to bond with your kids and please, don’t set it up to fail with them.

### **Be a Social Chairman.**

This one is important for dogs. Rescue dogs come from a variety of backgrounds, but all dogs can use more socialization. After your pooch has time to settle in and make himself at home and is looking to you as the “alpha,” start providing socialization opportunities. Have friends and relatives over...but do introductions GRADUALLY. 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 the new people approaching your dog. Tell your friends that this is a rescue dog so they need to be more sensitive. And here’s a little information nugget for you: ***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.*** Suggest after introducing someone to your new dog that they pat the side of the dog’s neck or side of the shoulder instead.

### **“My dogs/cats love other dogs/cats.”**

Like your children, you may have the most perfect dogs and cats on the planet. But we still advise keeping your new dog or cat separated from your pets for a couple of weeks (unless you are there to supervise). Allow the pets to meet each other under supervision. You can increase the length of time for each “meet, greet, play” session until you feel secure with their relationship. If bringing a new cat into the home, it is imperative to allow the cat access to a safe haven where he/she can get away from the other animals. If bringing a new dog into the home to be a bud for your current dog, pick up the toys and the “high value treats” like raw hides or bully sticks. Your current dog may be a bit miffed that you have added to his/her pack. We’d hate for a fight out of possessiveness to occur when it could have been so easily avoided.

### **Since we can’t move in with you...**

We could go on and on about bringing your new animal into your home. But this powerful and eloquent adage aptly sums up the relationship we want you to have with your new critter:

**Authority without domination.  
Love without subservience.  
Respect without fear.**

We love that you have made adoption the first option when choosing a new mutt or meow for your family. We want it to be a win-win situation for both the animal and for you. Here are a few more things we can tell you about\_\_\_\_\_:

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