



The importance of 'getting it right' for your new Romanian Rescue Dog cannot be stressed enough.

It is far easier to prevent problems arising than it is to try to undo them once something has happened.

By sticking to a few simple guidelines when your Rescue dog first arrives at their new home with you, you can help make sure they settle quickly, happily and with as few problems as possible.

Please read through the whole information guide several times before your dog arrives ideally, and get all members of your family to read it too.

These guidelines are information you need to know, you may need to know all of them, you may not need any of them, but you will definitely need to be prepared to read and assess how your particular dog is coping with everything, and meet his/her needs as an individual.

Collection/Arrival Day

Even if your dog has already been with a foster family in the UK, these recommendations still apply. Yes, being with a foster may have helped them over a key adjustment period, but you are about to take them away from everything that has become familiar to them in that time, so the stressed/confused/scared possibilities still exist.

When collecting your dog you will need the following

- A collar & lead
- A Slip Lead – this is to be worn as an emergency back-up should your dog panic and try to bolt – a dog can slip out of a collar in 2 seconds and you would be shocked how easily this can happen.
- A harness would be advisable but many dogs arrive confused and scared and so may not cope with the manhandling of having a harness fitted.
- A Crate for the car or harness with seatbelt attachment or a secure boot area.
- Someone with you to help in case your dog panics in the car or is exceptionally upset.

IF YOUR DOG IS DELIVERED STRAIGHT TO YOUR HOME ADDRESS

- You **must** keep them at home for the first 48 hours as part of DEFRA Regulations
- You may receive a spot check visit from DEFRA, usually within the first week but it can be anything up to 4 weeks following arrival. This is just to make sure everything is in order with your passport, paperwork and they will want to scan your dogs microchip to make sure it matches your documentation.

Collection / Arrival Day Rules AND I MEAN RULES!

I have watched too many of these beautiful dogs go through a three day van journey to arrive at their new life only to escape in panic and be lost. Some are lost for weeks and some sadly get killed on the roads. Please do not underestimate the need for belt and braces here.

- As soon as you have your dog, put them straight into the car or in their crate in the car or take them straight into a secure garden or indoors.
- DO NOT walk them around to see if they want to go to the toilet, most of these dogs won't toilet until they feel totally safe anyway.
- Please Remember your dog will most likely be scared, confused and stressed. They may look for a way to escape your garden, they may try to wriggle out of collars and may well bolt if given half a chance.
- Please DO NOT Risk your Dog's Life.
- Leave their lead on in the car if it's safe to do so, to make it easier and safer for you to get them out when you get home without manhandling them too much trying to get the lead back on. If you are going straight into your home, also leave the lead attached and trailing for the first few hours at least in case you need to manoeuvre your dog into or out of anywhere.
- If you have collected your dog in the car, when you arrive home, again take your dog straight indoors or into the garden, but keep them on a lead in the garden, even if you think it's secure.

RECOMMENDED DO'S

- **LEAVE A LEAD ON WHEN YOU ARRIVE HOME:**

Leave a short lightweight lead trailing when you first arrive home in case you need to move your new rescue dog off of, out of or into anywhere This will eliminate the need for you to grab for their collar, which could be scary to an already stressed dog that doesn't know you.

- **FOOD & WATER:**

Make sure they have access to fresh water in a place where ideally they don't have to turn their back on a room to drink, so not in a corner. If they feel anxious about their surroundings

they may be reluctant to drink if they can't see where everyone is while doing so. Offer them food shortly after they arrive but for the first few days at least, maybe longer, feed little and often rather than big meals. Ideally scatter their food over a small area to prevent them wolfing it down and to encourage them to engage in naturally calming behaviours like snuffling and sniffing. It is always advised initially to feed them separately to any resident dogs.

- **TIME, SPACE & PATIENCE:**

When your dog arrives they will be in stress overload. Their Cortisol and Adrenaline levels will be through the roof. They will need at least a few days for these to even begin to come down so please keep this in mind and allow them the space and time that is needed. Most dogs sleep a lot during the first 24 hours and it's important to give them the opportunity and a safe place to allow them to do that. This alone can prevent all sorts of problem behaviours in the first few days. Make sure they have a place they can be that is quiet and calm, to take themselves away and decompress, if necessary give them separate time from resident dogs to have a break and process all that has happened to them. If they are fearful when they arrive and don't wish to interact then leave them to choose their space and don't keep encouraging them to make friends. They will come around in their own time but if you keep trying to make them do things you could increase their anxiety and make the process of them settling take much longer.

- **PREVENT OVERWHELM:**

Avoid having lots of visitors to the house during the first week or so. Let your new arrival settle, get used to their new environment and get used to you before you start introducing more new people. Visitors tend to want to excessively fuss because they will know you rescued this dog from an awful situation. All this attention from so many strangers can cause many of these dogs to feel anxious. Let your dog choose to interact with any visitors when they do come, but if they don't want to then leave them be and ask your visitors to ignore them. You should be able to tell how comfortable they're feeling from their body language. If they're happily leaping around your new visitors, then it's more likely they will enjoy a fuss, but if they're hesitant and unsure, it is REALLY IMPORTANT that you let your dog set the pace for new introductions. If you try to encourage them to make friends, you can actually make them scared of new people – and this can take months to change once established.

- **SAFETY:**

Keep them on a lead, preferably a long line in the garden for the first few days, some dogs can be very panicked by all they've been through & their new surroundings and you want to be sure they have no intention of trying to escape. This is especially important and a very real possibility if your new rescue dog was a street dog. Some of these dogs have been known to jump 6ft fences and if you have any gaps in your fencing, you can be sure your Romanian dog will find them! No matter how small the gap or how big the dog, they will find a way out of that is their intention.

- **SAFETY FIRST ON YOUR FIRST WALKS:**

Double lead your rescue dog when you first start walking them outside, in case they panic and slip a collar or harness. Best combination is harness + lead with a flat collar + lead. Or you could have a slip lead on as well as your ordinary collar/harness & lead, but don't use it, it's only there as a back-up if anything goes wrong. Many Romanian dogs will panic if you use a lead that tightens around their neck so make sure the slip lead is only used as a backup emergency.

- **TOILET TRAINING:**

Take your rescue dog out to the garden when they arrive (on a lead) to see if they want to toilet. Most won't go until they have settled down. Following on from this take them out to go to the toilet as soon as they wake up, after each meal and every couple of hours for the first week (every hour if a puppy) this will lessen the risk of accidents in the house and give you the opportunity to praise and reinforce all toileting outside. This will increase the likelihood they will quickly learn where they are suppose to go to the toilet and reduce the degree of accidents in the house. Most of these dogs are toilet trained within 48 hours.

RECOMMENDED DON'TS

- Don't keep fussing over your new arrival, they will most likely not be used to it. Although you may feel you are showering them with all the love they have missed out on and comforting them during their stress at being in a new home, they can actually find this quite stressful, in addition to all the stress of their journey and finding themselves in a whole new strange environment. Please give them time and space.
- Don't Bathe them for at least a week. Your new arrival will most likely pong a bit. Please refrain from putting them through the additional stress of being bathed for at least a week unless it's absolutely necessary for medical reasons. This is a very intrusive and often scary experience for a dog that has already been through so much stress. They have no idea who you are or where they are and may not cope at all well with being manhandled into a bath or shower. This kind of overwhelm in the first few days of arriving could easily cause trauma for your new arrival and the development of more deep seated issues (fearfulness, mistrust, reactivity) Once a few days have passed you will have a much better idea of how your dog might cope with this experience (or not as the case may be) The smell very quickly diminishes anyway so just give them some space on this one. The Responsible Dog Rescue recommend doggy grooming wipes for the first few days to help with the smell.
- Don't allow them to follow you everywhere and have access to all areas of the house for the first few days/weeks. Often these dogs will not be used to all the home comforts we offer them and if you allow them free reign over everything, you could find them developing resource guarding behaviours over all the new & wonderful 'stuff' they find at their pawtips. Plus it can help prevent the development of separation anxiety by providing them with their own room that you leave now and

again just to go to other areas of the house. In addition to this, an anxious dog can feel more anxious if they have too much space.

- Don't Let them on beds or sofa's for the first few weeks or at all if you are fostering. Again this can instigate resource guarding, which once it starts to happen, is more difficult to stop than if you can prevent it from starting and being practised in the first place. Resource guarding of sofa's and beds is a very common problem during the first few weeks and has led to quite a few bites and the return to kennels of newly adopted dogs, so please help make your adoption be as successful as possible and follow this advice.
- Don't reinforce ALL attention demanding behaviours. This can often be an insecurity based behaviour and you could enhance the possibility of separation anxiety and owner possessiveness (resource aggression) being created by always giving in to their demands for attention. By all means give them plenty of attention once they're settled in, but try to avoid always responding to their demands for it.
- Don't mess about with your rescue dogs feet – this is a very sensitive area (instinctively) for dogs, leave grooming, bathing and rubbing with a towel until they are a bit more familiar with you and a relationship of trust has been established. Your new rescue will most likely smell quite unpleasant, and whilst some will tolerate being bathed, it could be another stressor for them on top of an already stressful week! if you can leave it a couple of days, they might feel more comfortable about you doing it.
- **Don't take your rescue dog for walks for a few days AT LEAST for most it will be a week.** They need time to decompress from everything that has happened to them before overwhelming them further with all the sights, sounds and smells of the outside world. We feel they need walks every day to be happy, but many of these dogs will not be used to our busy environments and find them scary & stressful, on top of the already stressful experiences they have been through leading up to their arrival with you . They will be tired enough with processing all that has and is happening to them, they need time to settle to get ready to take on the environment outside. (Google -Stress or trigger Stacking in Dogs for a more detailed explanation about this)
- Don't Expect your rescue dog to be used to wearing a collar and walking on a lead. If they have had any experience of being on the end of a dog catchers pole, they will most likely be terrified if you start trying to pull them along on a lead. Do plenty of lead practise in the garden in the first few days, without all the distractions they will face when they actually go out for walks, to get them used to it and help them realise it's nothing to worry about.
- **Don't Let your rescue dog off the lead for AT LEAST several weeks** but probably much longer & with some never, especially if your dog is a foster Hire a secure field if you want to give them a good 'ole run around. Please do not risk your dog's life

because you want to enjoy the sight of them 'running free' many of these dogs are very easily spooked and it wouldn't take much for them to bolt. In addition to that many of them have a very high prey drive and although they may seem like they're going to hang around with you, one whiff of something interesting and they could well be disappearing into the distance.

What To Expect For the First Few Weeks (at least!)

When your rescue dog first arrives with you, it is important to be 100% aware and realise they **will need time to adjust and settle**. If I took one of my dogs and left them in a strange house where they didn't know anyone, I would expect them to be very unsettled, upset, confused and very stressed, and to display any range of behaviours which they would not normally display.

I would expect all this from a dog that has **never** had any upset in their life and has lived knowing nothing but love, safety and security. So imagine how much worse it is for a rescue dog from Romania. These dogs could have spent some time trying to survive on the streets, would have had to endure the horrors of a Romanian Public Shelter and how they're treated and handled there. They would have spent 3 days on a transport vehicle with yet more strange dogs and people before they finally arrive with you, yet another new environment with more strange people and possibly more strange dogs, along with a completely new routine and level of expectations.

Some dogs cope with all of this remarkably well, but some don't, and it would serve adopters and fosterers better to assume that they won't cope and behave and handle them accordingly. That way, you are far more likely to prevent problems than if you assume they will be fine, or that they will be grateful for this wonderful life you have offered them and don't provide them with the necessary consistency, boundaries and structure that they **need** at this most unstable of times.

Important points to remember in order to provide structure in the early weeks

1. Have **all the equipment** you might need ready for when your dog arrives. That way you will be prepared.
2. Keep **YOUR** behaviour consistent. Your rescue dog will learn much quicker from knowing what is expected of him. Avoid confusing him by making sure everyone in the house is doing the same things.
3. **Provide a secure, safe place** for him to be left alone. Start doing this as soon as he arrives, even if only for 5 or 10 minutes at a time while you go elsewhere in the house. The more times you can repeat this from day one, the better your dog will cope with being left when you have to go out for longer periods.
4. Establish a **routine** as much as possible and as quickly as possible. Your new arrival can gain a lot of confidence and reassurance from having a routine in place and knowing what to expect and when. This can help them settle more quickly and there will be plenty of time to develop their resilience to changes in routine once they are more settled.

5. **Expect some problems** in the early settling in period, and **be prepared** for it to be a bit stressful and unsettling for **everyone in the house** to start with. The Responsible Dog Rescue will provide full support and advice, but it can never hurt to have already sourced a reputable local trainer or behaviourist you can call upon if needed. I would however recommend speaking to your trainer and asking them if they have any experience of working with Romanian Dogs, because they are a little bit different.