

The First Few Days with Your New Greyhound Or WHAT THE HECK DID I GET MYSELF IN FOR!

Greyhounds are dogs and most concepts applied to other dogs apply to greyhounds. However, they have had a unique life style up until this point, and it's worthwhile to consider some of the unique features of your new dog.

They have never been alone in their life! They've always had other greyhounds around. They can adjust to being alone, but it takes some time. Leave the radio or TV on for them. At the track music plays constantly. We recommend keeping a dog crated while you're out of the house for at least the first few days. This limits the amount of space your dog "feels responsible for" and prevents him/her from doing any damage to household goods or other pets. Crating is not cruel; it's actually comforting to the dog. These greyhounds are used to being confined when they're not turned out, and a crate gives them a safe haven in a new environment. A couple of blankets in the bottom of the crate give the dog a comfortable bed to sleep in while you're gone. A crate also helps the housebreaking process. It is a rare greyhound that soils his/her own bed.

Speaking of housebreaking...

Greyhounds are very routine oriented. Their track life follows a fairly strict schedule with regular, four turnouts a day for pee and poop. Usually they're used to 6am, 11am, 5pm, and 10pm turnout, or something similar. You can certainly alter their schedule over time, but it's nice to keep somewhat close to this schedule for the first couple of days. Go outside with them at first and praise them in an excited voice when they do their thing in the right place. If you don't have a fenced in yard, you may find your greyhound is too shy to "potty" on leash. If you hook several leashed together or use some other means to put some distance between you and your dog, it will learn to potty on leash in time.

Couch Potatoes...

Yep, given the opportunity, your dog will seek out and find the softest, most comfortable place in the house and take it over as her/his own. Some greyhounds like to nest and will arrange and rearrange blankets on the floor or in their crate until it is perfect. Comforters and quilts from thrift shops and garage sales make excellent dog beds.

Sleeping...

They do it a lot and hopefully do it all night, but the first few nights might be restless. If possible, you may want to put the crate in the bedroom with you and crate them at night. Greyhounds do best close to the ones they love and will probably sleep better if you are within sight.

Weaning out of the crate...

Every dog is different and so is everyone's life style. In general, try leaving the dog alone for shorter periods of time out of the crate and work up to a full workday. Once your dog settles in he or she probably will not even realize you're gone and settle in for a good nap. One tip that I really want to pass on is to remember that your greyhound will be very sensitive to your emotions. If you are nervous, anxious and leave with much trepidation, your dog will wonder what's wrong. If you leave cheerfully, nonchalantly, and toss him/her a favorite treat as you walk out the door, your dog will regard your departure with as much joy as he/she regards your arrival. Make sure there are acceptable chew toys available to the dog while you're gone, and he/she will do fine.

Speaking of toys...

Soft, fuzzy, squeaky toys are frequently favorites. Rummage sales are good places to acquire cast-off stuffed animals. Make sure you remove plastic eyes, ears and any ribbons or loose accessories that your dog could swallow before you give him/her the toy.

Discipline...

Greyhounds are perfect and never do anything wrong, right? Well, hardly ever. A firm "NO" is usually all it takes to persuade your dog to stop doing whatever it is that he/she shouldn't be doing. Backing up the "no" with a squirt from a spray bottle or squirt gun is useful for a particularly stubborn dog. The most important thing to remember is to reward the good behavior! We take it for granted when dogs do what they're supposed to do, but it's nice to tell them once in a while that they're doing the right thing. After all, we can all use an "atta boy" now and then.

Treats, treats, and more treats...

Use them to reward good behavior. Use them to train him/her to go in the crate, to pee/poop outside, to leave the cat alone, climb stairs, or whatever. Commercial dog treats are fine, but read the ingredients. It seems that soy in any form can contribute to the dreaded "greyhound gas."

Speaking of food...

High quality, premium food is recommended, but again, avoid the soy-containing foods. Some digestive disturbance (gas, loose stool) is not unusual the first few days. A couple of tablespoons of yogurt or pumpkin help the symptoms. Remember your greyhounds are lean athletes and their bone structure won't support a lot of extra weight. You should always be able to see the last two ribs on a greyhound. Please don't overfeed your greyhound.

Not to mention the obvious...

But, remember your dog has been bred and trained to chase things. This instinct will take over even the best-trained dog. Do not leave your greyhound off-leash in an unfenced area. Do not tie your greyhound out on a chain or rope. If a small, furry critter comes by, your dog will dash to the end of that rope at full speed and seriously hurt or kill himself.

Kids and greyhounds...

It's a matter of mutual respect. Many greyhounds love kids and do very well with them. Just as you train the dog, the kids should be trained to respect the dog's toys, food, and sleeping space, especially at first when everything is so new to the dog.

Love'em and leave'em...

Not us! We're here for the long haul. You'll have questions, concerns or just happy stories to relate. Call us! Write us! Send photos! Seriously, don't hesitate to get in touch with your adoption person or anyone else in the organization. At a minimum we'd like a Christmas card just to keep us updated, but more frequent communication is fine, too.

More info...

Still want to know more about your dog? Remember to read/review "Adopting the Racing Greyhound" by Cynthia Branigan or "The Greyhound" by Coile.

"Potato Chip Syndrome"...

Within the greyhound adopters' community, this is a common malady. Frequently people come back for a 2nd greyhound. We'll be here for you then also.

Enjoy!

6/00