

## Things to Think About Before Bringing Home a New Dog

So you're thinking of making a rescued Lab part of your family – congratulations! The fact that you are working with dog rescue shows that you have given adding a dog to your family some careful thought. The purpose of this article is to share with you some other things to think about.



There are many advantages to adopting a rescued Lab over purchasing a puppy. One of the biggest advantages for many people is that by adopting you are literally saving a dog's life. Other great advantages can include having a good idea of the dog's temperament, not having to deal with much of the undesirable puppy behaviors (house training, teething, excess energy, etc.), knowing how big the dog will be as an adult, and knowing some, if not all, of the dog's health history.

Unfortunately, nothing in this world is perfect, not even bringing a rescued Lab into your family. There are some downfalls that anyone who is adopting any animal needs to know. By being prepared to deal with some unforeseen circumstances, you can save yourself, your family, and your new dog a lot of possible worry and heartache.

- ❖ Foster families are not able to test foster dogs in every situation that that he will encounter in your new home. **Don't assume anything about your new dog until you've had a chance to carefully observe him in many different and unusual situations!**
- ❖ All dogs test boundaries in new situations. This is totally normal. For some dogs testing will begin immediately and for others there may be a "honeymoon" period of several weeks before they gain the confidence to begin testing.
- ❖ Basic obedience and house manners will slip when the dog is in her new home. This is common and should be expected during the dog's adjustment period, which can last from a few weeks to several months. For this reason, it is EXTREMELY important to enroll your new family member in a positive reinforcement based obedience class as soon as possible. This will not only help your dog remember previously learned lessons, but will help to build a bond of trust between you and your pooch.
- ❖ Each Lab is an individual. Do not expect your new Lab to act the same way that your other Lab did or to behave as the wonderful Lab down the street does. We don't always remember the rough times that we've had with our former dogs and we definitely don't see all of the training going on between other people and their dogs.
- ❖ No Lab is born knowing basic obedience and house manners. These must be taught to the dog. There are some exceptions to this rule, but if you fell



in love with Labs because of the awesome dog at the park, down the street, that a family member has, etc., keep in mind that the dog is awesome because someone put a lot of hard work and training into making the dog that way. Your new dog can be just as great – if you put the training into her.

- ❖ There is a big difference between growing up with a dog in your family and getting a Lab as an adult. Most people don't give the adults in their families enough credit for all the work that they did with the family dog. Even if you were primarily responsible for the dog's care when you were living at home with family, you had a back up for days when you had activities that ran late, social commitments, weren't feeling well or you were just having a rough day. Obviously it's not impossible to own a dog as an adult, but please be prepared that it will be very different.

Most of this article can be summed up in this way – Labs, especially new Labs, are very much like toddlers. They are active and into everything, they need almost constant attention, their toilet training isn't always reliable, they put everything into their mouths, they need play as much as they need structured learning time, they make messes and destroy things, they're adorable, they do embarrassing things at the worst possible times, some days they're angels and other days evil little devils, they are completely dependent on you, yet want to show their independence, and they love you unconditionally. Unlike toddlers, Labs never completely grow out of this stage. If you feel prepared to deal with a toddler on four legs for up to the next 15 years, then you are prepared to share your life with a Lab.