

Fostering Fearful or Timid Dogs

Chasity Garrett

Key Points of Observation

- Overall Body Posture
- Hair/Coat
- Eyes
- Ears
- Mouth
- Tail
- Vocalizing
- Animal in Context



Overall Body Posture

- Is the dog tense/stiff or relaxed/loose/wiggly?
- Is he leaning towards you or away from you?
- Is his body posture upright or crouched?



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Hair/Coat

Is the dog's hair standing on end (piloerect) or lying normally against the body?



- Commonly referred to as “hackles”
- Doesn't necessarily indicate aggression
- Usually indicates excitement or arousal

Eyes



- Is the dog looking directly at you or away?
- Are the pupils dilated or normal size?
- Are the dog's eyes wide or squinty?
- Is the dog giving you a hard stare or soft gaze?
- Does the dog have “whale eye?”

Ears

- Are the ears flattened down or held naturally?
- Are the ears pointing sideways, forward, back, or in a neutral position?



Mouth

- Is the mouth open or closed?
- Are there teeth showing?
- Is the dog yawning?
- Is the dog lip licking?



Tail

- Is the tail tightly tucked or held away?
- Is the tail wagging?
- If wagging, is it stiff or loose? Fast or slow?



Vocalizations

- Is the dog vocalizing?
- If so, is it high pitched or low?
- What kind of vocalization?



Animal In Context

- What is the situation?
- Is the dog seeking or avoiding contact?
- Are there specific stressors around?



Think of how the animal perceives the world

Their sensory systems are different than ours



Sight

- Fast motion can be interpreted as a threat
- Some postures can be interpreted as threats
- Fast movement could engage prey drive
- Personal space



Hearing

- Much better hearing than ours
- More sensitive to loud noises

Think of how the animal perceives the world

Their sensory systems are different than ours



Smell

- Much better sense of smell than ours
- Certain scents can cause stress
- Tasty treats can create a positive association



Taste

- A variety of treats
- Associating people with tasty treats reduces stress



Touch

- Sensitive areas include paws and face
- Fast petting or scratching will increase excitement
- Slow, steady touch may cause relaxation



Fear or Stress Signals

- Whining
- Excessive shedding
- Sweating through paws
- Shaking
- Hiding
- Excessive vocalizations

Calming Signals

- Looking or turning away



- Yawning



- Paw Lift



- Sniffing Ground



- Lip licking



- Walking slowly or in an arc



- Scratching



- “Shake Off”



Positive, Respectful Approach

- Non-threatening
- Give the dog a choice
- Loose leash, if possible
- Offer tasty treats







Leash Techniques



- Under the chin approach
- Using treats to leash dog
- Clip lead trick
- Leash harness
- Leash lock
- Be an Oak, not a Willow

Martingale Collar

- Provides more control than a regular flat collar
- Will prevent a dog from backing or slipping out
- Adjustable
- Properly fitted martingales will not choke the dog
- Good for dogs whose heads are more narrow than their necks
- Rings can get caught on objects, so use only when dog can be supervised. Remove the collar before crating the dog.



Freedom No-Pull Harness

- Minimizes/eliminates pulling without putting pressure on the neck
- Has 2 points of contact to decrease the opposition reflex
- Harder for dog to get out of than most other harnesses



Front or Easy Walk Harness



- Controls the shoulder/chest area
- Reduces strain on neck

Sporn Harness



- More easily sized to fit
- Padded straps are more comfortable

Connector Clip

- Connects collar ring and harness ring together
- Provides back up in case dog manages to get out of the harness
- Highly recommended for timid or fearful dogs
- Best used with front harnesses and martingale collars



Gentle Leaders and Haltis

- Also works well when used with a connector clip and front harness
- Utilizes pressure points on neck and nose
- Doesn't put pressure on throat



Make Your Dog Feel Safe and Secure



- Respectful approach
- Calming signals
- Treats
- Acclimate to new environments
- Keep away from stressful situations and triggers, if possible
- Give the dog choices
- Use appropriate human interactions
- Thunder Shirts

Introductions with Other Dogs

- Try to let the dogs meet in a neutral location with a separate person handling each dog. It is best to take the dogs for a walk around the block together before being introduced face to face.
- Allow the dogs to sniff each other briefly then lead the dogs away from each other. Try to keep the leash loose to avoid tension. Repeat this several times.
- If the dogs are reluctant to greet, just let them have some space. They will greet each other when they are ready.
- Pay attention to the dogs' body language. Quickly lead the dogs apart if one or both dogs give signals of reactivity. These include hackles up, growling, raised or erect tail, prolonged stare, and/or snarling.



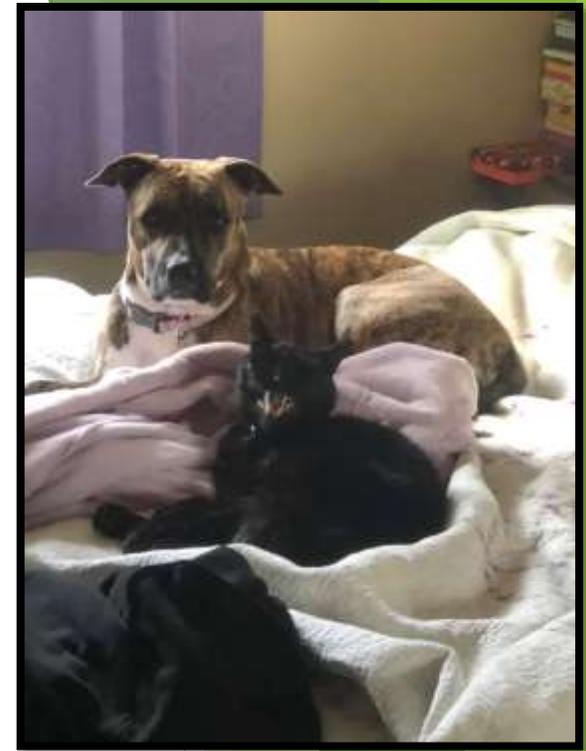
Introductions with Other Dogs

- If the dogs need to be separated, give each dog time to calm down and relax.
- Make sure to remove all toys, treats, food bowls, bedding, and the dogs' favorite items while the dogs are forming a relationship.
- It is best to keep leashes on the dogs in the house so that you can quickly lead them away from each other if they start to become tense.
- Always monitor the dogs when they are around one another.
- Confine them to separate areas if you have to leave them alone.
- Remember to feed the dogs in separate areas at first to make sure there is no resource guarding.
- Remember to stay calm and quiet if you need to correct the either dog. Being angry or loud will make the dog more fearful.



Introductions with Cats

- It is preferable to keep the animals separated and allow them to sniff each other through a door at first.
- You can also place the cat in a crate on a high surface then walk the dog on leash into the room.
- After the dog and cat get accustomed to each other, you can let the cat out of the carrier while you have a good hold on the dog's leash.
- Do not let the dog bark or intimidate the cat, even when the cat is in the carrier.
- Keep the meetings short.
- Don't rush the introductions.
- Remember to stay calm and quiet if you need to correct the dog for intimidating or barking at the cat. Being angry or loud will make the dog more fearful.



Introductions to Family Members



- Allow the dog to come up to greet them
- Offer lots of tasty treats
- Give the dog a choice to stay near or walk away
- Calm, respectful greetings

Bringing Home a Fearful Dog

Getting Familiar with Surroundings

- Take the dog out often in the beginning
- Don't leave the dog unattended in the yard
- Keep the dog leashed even in a fenced yard until you are sure he can be contained safely in the yard
- Don't be overprotective
- Begin by allowing the dog to be in just one room or area until they are accustomed to the new sights, smells, and sounds
- Once the dog is comfortable, increase the areas the dog can explore
- If the dog likes to hide, put up blockades to areas where the dog may hide, but provide a "safe" area for the dog to go to if afraid
- Lie down on the floor and allow the dog to come up to you and just hang out
- Use calming agents to relax the dog



Bringing Home a Fearful Dog

Leash Walking

- Use appropriate leashes, collars, harnesses, or other equipment
- Acclimate dog to leash and equipment
- Walk calmly and confidently
- Loose leash
- Use treats to lure dog if needed
- Keep dog away from situations that may trigger fear



Bringing Home a Fearful Dog

When You Have Visitors

- Separate room
- Crate
- Tether or back tie
- Leash
- Barrier



Bringing Home a Fearful Dog

Crate Training

- Use positive techniques only
- If your dog is wearing a martingale collar, remember to remove it before crating your dog
- Coax dog inside with a treat that will take a while to eat
- Close the door while the dog is eating the treat
- Open the door before the dog is finished eating the treat
- Stay nearby while the dog is in the crate so he associates it with you being nearby
- Slowly increase the time the dog is in with the door closed

Bringing Home a Fearful Dog

Crate Training

- Have the dog in the crate beside you while you read or watch television
- Once the dog is consistently comfortable in the crate beside you, begin to walk away for short periods of time
- Slowly increase the time you are away
- Always make sure the dog has something enjoyable to keep him occupied in the crate. It's best to have a favorite toy or treat that the dog only gets when in the crate.
- Clean any accidents that occur in the crate immediately

Housebreaking: Best Times to Take Your Foster Out for Potty Breaks

- After exercise or play
- After eating
- After waking up
- If the dog hasn't been out for a while
- If the dog starts sniffing the floor
- Any time you think he needs to go!

Bringing Home a Fearful Dog

Housebreaking

- Wait until the dog is completely done eliminating before praising him.
- When giving a treat for eliminating in the right place, use a high-value treat, maybe even one that is just used for housebreaking.
- Once the dog begins to cue you to go outside, allow the dog to go outside without you. Just make sure he gets all his business done before coming back inside. When the dog asks to come back inside, reward him with a different, lower-value treat, at the door.
- Quit feeding treats at the door after the dog has had several successes, but keep up the praise intermittently for a while longer.
- Don't become angry or emotional or reprimand in a stern tone when the dog isn't successful or has accidents.
- Clean up messes with an enzymatic cleaner such as Nature's Miracle.

-Taken from *Rescue Your Dog from Fear* by Peggy O. Swager

Helping Your Dog Become Confident

➤ Socialization

- Take small steps
- Socialize with different people, in different places, and in different situations
- Hand-feeding

➤ Be a gentle, but respected, leader

- Stay calm and quiet
- Teach some basic obedience commands to build a bond
- Use gentle and calming touches to build trust

➤ Desensitization

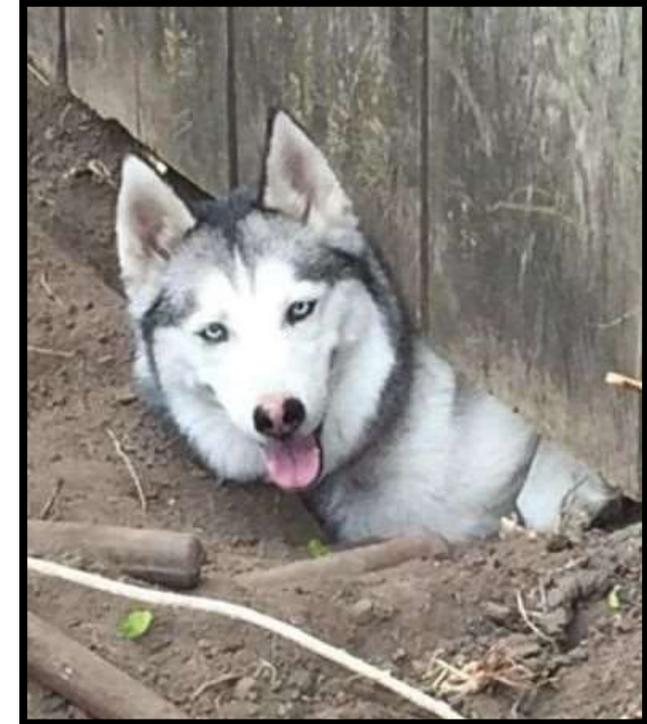
- Find out what is upsetting the dog
- Teach the dog to relax on cue
- Teach the dog to associate something good with their fear



Bringing Home a Fearful Dog

If the Dog Gets Loose

- Don't chase the dog! You will just make him run farther faster.
- Call Emilee at (423) 290-2908 immediately!
- Walk the area with tasty treats and a slip lead in case you see your foster dog around.
- If possible, you should walk the area with another dog that your fearful dog knows. It may be one of your own dogs. It may be a dog he was friends with at the shelter.



Bringing Home a Fearful Dog

If the Dog Gets Loose

- If the dog is near but won't come to you, try sitting or lying down, tossing some treats, and calling him in a friendly voice.
- If you don't see the foster dog, post the location and dog information on our volunteer Facebook page so our super dog-catching volunteers will know. They will often show up to help with the search.
- If you aren't in HES's jurisdiction, you'll need to contact the area shelter to let them know to be on the lookout.



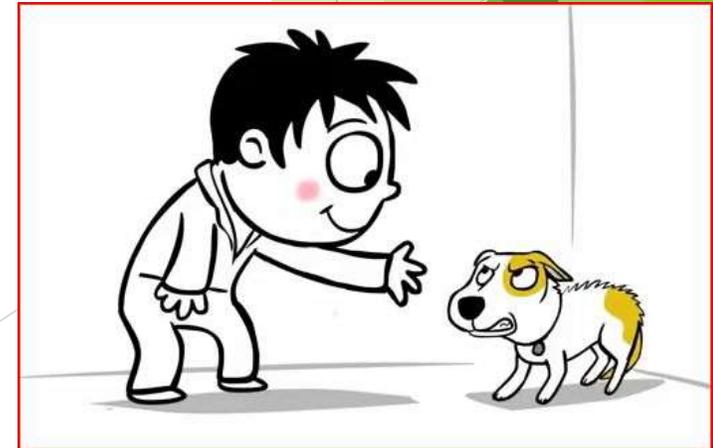


Remember tasty, high-value treats are helpful in building positive associations!



Management & Supervision

- PROVIDE A SAFE ZONE
- BE CALM - Teach kids to be calm around your dog. (no yelling, running, fast movements)
- SAFE DISTANCE - Start having calm kids walk past at a safe distance and throw your dog's favorite treats to her
- DO NOT FORCE A GREETING - Never have kids try to greet your dog or come into HER space.
- AVOID AREAS WHERE CHILDREN PLAY - Parks and Playgrounds
- NEVER
 - Leave children and your fearful dog alone together, even for a moment.
 - Put a child in harm's way in order to 'train' your dog.



How to Pet a Dog You've Never Met

IMPORTANT FOR ADULTS & KIDS!

- Ask Permission
- Move slowly and let dog approach you
- Hand in a fist
- Allow dog to sniff
- Pet under the chin or chest



What Kids Should Never Do to or Around A Dog

- Do not invade the dog's body space
- Approach a dog from behind or pet directly on top of the head
- Do not follow a dog that moves away from you when being pet
- Do not stare (look briefly, then look away, look and look away)
- Do not hug
- Do not kiss or put your face close to a dog's face
- Never tease
- Do not approach when sleeping
- Do not approach when eating
- Do not take away bones or toys
- Do not run away if scared - stand straight like a tree! If on the ground, be a rock!
- Do not move a dog from a couch or chair. Ask an adult to do this if you wish to sit there.



References

Rescue Your Dog
from FEAR

Tried-and-True
Techniques
to Help Your Dog
Feel Secure



➤ *Rescue Your Dog from Fear* by Peggy O. Swager

➤ *SANE Solutions for Challenging Dog Behavior* online class with Kathy Cascade

➤ *Lessons in Fear and Aggression* online class with Peggy O. Swager

➤ *Fear Free Shelter* online course

➤ *Canine Behavior: A Photo Illustrated Handbook* by Barbara H. Handelman

➤ *On Talking Terms with Dogs: Calming Signals* by Turid Rugaas

Peggy O. Swager
Author of *Rescue Your Dog from FEAR*

Canine Behavior
A Photo Illustrated Handbook
Barbara Handelman, M.S., CDBC



Turid Rugaas

**On Talking Terms
with Dogs:
Calming Signals**



A Dogwise Training Manual