



FOSTERING OR ADOPTING A BEREAVED DOG

Like humans, dogs grieve in different and individual ways. Unlike humans they may be unable to express the grief they feel as we can. For this reason it is important for a dog to feel secure to have routine and consistency in life. In a case where a dog is going into a new home, the routine is likely to differ to the one the dog has been used to, but keeping it consistent will soon help it become normal and will help the dog to settle.

When introducing a dog into a new home where there may be other resident animals, it is important to observe the same rules as you would for any animal being introduced into a home.

Introduce the dogs in a neutral environment. The ideal scenario is to enlist help in order that all the dogs can be taken for a long walk together. Walk the dogs on leads side by side, but some distance apart. This will give you a chance to observe the signals the dogs give you. During the walk gradually bring the dogs closer together so that they are walking as a group. The longer the walk the better but aim for a minimum of thirty minutes.

On arriving home, take the new dog into the house first bring other dogs in one at a time. Keep leads on the dogs to start with so you can quickly gain control at any point should you need to. Don't leave the dogs alone and unsupervised until you are confident that they will get along.

Introduce cats gradually, one at a time, giving both animals space to retreat if necessary. The dog needs to be on a lead so that you are in control to start with.

The new dog should be given a bed or crate some distance away from the others, so that he has somewhere to retreat to and feel safe. Keep meetings with the other dogs short initially until you can see that the dogs are comfortable together.

Try to give the dog an object belonging to the previous owner, blanket, slippers or an item of clothing that has the smell of the deceased person. Give this to the dog in their sleeping area and leave it with them as long as possible without washing it. Having the smell from the deceased person will allow the dog to grieve. If it is possible for the dog to have the bed and toys he is used to, that will also help.

When feeding the dogs, again keep a distance between them so that the new dog can feel safe when eating. Don't feed them in separate areas unless you know the existing dogs will cause problems, just give them enough space to feel comfortable. If the bereaved dog feels stressed he may not want to eat. This is normal. Just ensure that there is water always available. Offer food and remove the food after twenty minutes if not eaten. As the dogs becomes settled he will want to eat again.

Always remember that the dog needs to learn the rules of your house, particularly when and how he gets to go out to relieve himself. To start with take the dog out as often as possible with the aim of avoiding accidents. If an accident does occur, don't scold the dog. If possible interrupt the accident and take the dog out. If too late, just clean up and ignore that it has happened. When the dog toilets in the correct place give lots of praise. He will soon learn what you expect.

If the dogs appears unduly stressed, try some Bach's flower essences or a Pet Remedy Diffuser. These can be bought from some pet shops, vets or online.

Give love and affection to the dog when he is behaving in the way you would like him to, ie when he is sitting nicely or lying calmly. If he is showing stressed behaviour, i.e. pacing, whining etc, distract the dog with a different activity and give affection only once he is calm.

Allow the dog to have as much exercise as possible. An exercised dog is generally a happy one. With exercise and routine it is likely that your new companion will soon settle into life with you.