

Transition Assistance

Welcome to the wonderful world of Akitas! ARMAC will fully inform you about behaviors exhibited while the dog was in their care. Here are some suggestions and reminders to help both you and your new Akita in the transition from foster home to your home. It takes about 4-6 weeks for them to adjust and settle in. This can be a very intense time for both dog and owner. In fact, it can go beyond intense and be one of the most difficult times of your life. BUT if you and the dog make it through the first month, chances are things will go much more smoothly from then on.

Also remember that if you have recently lost a senior dog, adopting a younger dog, even one as old as 5 yrs, can be a culture shock. Older dogs slow down and sleep quite a bit of the day. Now you will have a more energetic dog who may need more exercise and definitely more attention. Prepare yourself.

Look at this from the dog's point of view. He has been in a shelter, running loose for days, or in home that he has lost. He was feeling pretty confused and scared. Then he was put in a foster home. He learned to trust and love someone again, feeling pretty comfortable and safe, starting to settle or already settled in. Now he is being uprooted again, put in another home with new people he doesn't know, and feeling pretty unsettled. There is a new house, family, and routine to learn and adjust to. For the first few weeks, he is not going to be sure about anything, especially whom he can trust. He needs time with his new family, free from extra activity and lots of visitors. This time will enable him to start to trust and bond with his new people. Give him the time he needs initially and soon he will be a happy and loving member of your family.

FAQ'S

WHAT WILL I NEED TO BUY TO PREPARE FOR MY AKITA?

You will need the following:

A metal water (7 qt) and food bowl (4 qt) (we recommend metal because it is very durable and some Akitas have plastic allergies.)

A 4-6 ft leash.

An appropriately sized training collar (ask what size your dog wears)

A wire or vari-kennel crate, preferable a giant or 700.

The same brand dog food the Akita is currently being fed. If you wish to change food, a 10-lb bag should suffice for the changeover.

A good slicker brush or other grooming tool

MY AKITA ISN'T EATING. WHAT CAN I DO?

It is not unusual for an Akita in new surroundings to lose their appetite. Keep offering them food morning and evening. Leave the food down for 20 minutes. If it is not eaten, or partially eaten, pick it up and no food until the next meal. Many dogs are used to being fed in the crate. If this is the case, continue to do so, especially if there are children in the family. Feeding in the crate gives the dog a sense of security and freedom from household distractions. It may take a few days, but they will come around. It is a good idea to feed a bland diet of rice and chicken or boiled hamburger the first few days, then slowly change over to whatever food you will be using. (see section on food for changeover information)

HOW DO I START AND STRENGTHEN A BOND?

Remember first of all, that you are stranger to this dog. To accelerate the bonding experience, make being in your presence a happy experience. If he comes over to see you, pet and praise him, expressing

pleasure in his company. At the same time, recognize and respect when he wants to be left alone. Another way to accelerate bonding is to tie a leash or rope around your waist, the other end attached to the dog. This is particularly effective if there are several tasks to be done, and he was going to be crated so they could get accomplished. In attaching the Akita to you, the tasks are accomplished and he is supervised and staying out of trouble. Taking him to obedience class will also strengthen the bond as well as making him a better-behaved dog.

WHAT ABOUT CRATING?

The new dog should be crated initially. It is especially important if he is used to being crated at the foster home, or is a young dog less than 2 years (they are well known for chewing whatever is in reach). The crate should be placed in a high traffic area, a place where the family spends most of their time...family room, or kitchen. This allows the dog to get to know the rhythm of the household as well daily sights, sounds, and smells. If you plan to let the Akita sleep in your room at night, try it the first night. If this is successful, continue doing so. This can be very reassuring and start the bonding process. Just make sure the bedroom door is closed so he has no access to the rest of the house, and everything remotely edible is out of reach. The crate is not a jail and should not be used for punishment. It is a great place for time out if he is getting overstimulated or tired. Give him a treat every time he goes into the crate and tell him what a good dog he is. Give him a chew bone or another toy to occupy him while he is being crated. Once your puppy hits the 2 year mark, or it is time for your rescue dog to start being at large in the house, start leaving him out and alone for short periods of time. Take a 15-minute walk. Upon return, check for damage. If there is none, and no signs of soiling, praise the dog. Let each stage last 5-7 days, and at the end of that time period, lengthen the time he is left alone. Do this in small increments, about 5 minutes each time, and build up to the point where he is trustworthy for long periods of time. If you buy the Vari-Kennel type of crate, a 700 is the best size. A wire crate should be no smaller than an extra-large. Ask ARMAC how to make wire crates more secure. The cost of a crate can range from \$150.00 - \$300.00.

WHEN CAN EVERYONE MEET HIM?

As much as you want to show your new member of the household to family and friends, it is better to not have much company the first few weeks, allowing the Akita to get to know you and his new surroundings and become comfortable with them. For example, have one or two dog knowledgeable friends over, but do not have a loud, large party. If there is entertainment pre-planned, put his crate in a room that can be closed off. At the beginning of the party, introduce your Akita to your guests, and crate him before the party gets into full swing. He will be safe from people who may have had a little too much to drink. If you have friends with children or your children's friends want to come over, have them wait until your Akita adjusts to his new home. The same holds true for taking him everywhere to introduce him to friends and family. Let him stay at home for the first few weeks until he gets his bearings. Then you can take him out and about with you. Too much stimulation with an insecure dog can set up a bite situation. It is very important to let your Akita move at his own pace, learning to trust and love you before exposing him to various social situations.

WHAT CAN I DO WHEN HE WON'T COME WHEN I CALL?

As a result of being new to you, and not yet having a bond, the Akita doesn't care if he pleases you or not. He doesn't know you. For example, the Akita is out in the back yard, you call him in, and he ignores you and you spend the next 45 minutes trying to get him inside. A solution to this problem is to walk him on lead inside or outside the yard, or put him on a flexi-lead or long lead and go out with him until he has done his business. One way to make him more responsive is to carry treats with you while in the house. Periodically call him over (Akita, come!) in a happy tone of voice and when he responds,

give him a treat and lots of praise. Over time, eliminate the treats and continue the praise. This will later translate to out-of-doors and your Akita will come to you more often than not (but not always, they are Akitas after all!). NEVER CALL YOUR DOG OVER TO PUNISH HIM. He will associate coming to you with bad things and will not respond well in the future. If he must be disciplined, go get him.

HOW DO I CORRECT OR DISCIPLINE HIM?

The Akita is in new surroundings and with new people. He must learn to trust his new owners before he will take corrections well. Build the trust by initially “bribing” him to things. Use an irresistible lure...chicken, lunch meat, whatever. Attention is attention whether it is good or bad. Accentuate the positive moves, and unless caught in the act, ignore the negative. This should result in less negative behaviors. The Akita should be assertively corrected when he is caught doing something wrong, but do not be extremely aggressive in doing so. A good firm NO or “EH EH” will usually do the trick. There are ways to achieve your goal, which is a dog that listens out of respect, not fear, and to effect a correction without a confrontation. Watch the dog’s posture and listen. Growls indicate escalation. A dog that feels threatened will bite. Avoid this escalation by making use of the leash. If the dog won’t go where the owner wants, attach the leash to the collar, and lead him. Even a dog with a little leash training will respond well to this. If the dog has a rawhide and is guarding it and growling, don’t get into a physical confrontation. Get a broom and sweep the bone away from him to a place where he cannot get to it. Put the leash on, and lead him into the crate. Go pick up the bone, and buy him a different toy, one he won’t feel so possessive about. Note: ARMAC does not place food/toy aggressive dogs, but it is good to know how to handle this situation should it arise. Picking battles carefully results in a win-win situation where neither dog nor owner loses face.

MY DOG HAS BROKEN HIS HOUSE TRAINING!

Sometimes a dog that is perfectly housebroken in the foster home has problems in his new home. Diarrhea in the first few days of residence is not uncommon. If this occurs, just give the Akita boiled rice with chicken or boiled hamburger along with a probiotic. Ask ARMAC for recommendations. If the diarrhea lasts more than 48 hours, if vomiting develops, if he acts lethargic take him to your vet immediately. Once his stools are back to normal slowly switch back to normal dog food. (See section on food for instructions on switching). With males, it may just be a matter of marking territory, especially if there is or was another dog in the house. If you catch him in the act, discipline him immediately. If not, just clean up with a good odor and stain removing solution (Nature’s Miracle, Simple Solution) and keep close watch. DO NOT drag him over to the soiled place and yell or rub his nose in it. This is not effective and will only train the dog to fear your homecoming. If he is soiling in the house while you are away from home, or not in the room with him, use a crate when you are not available to supervise. Revert to basic housebreaking techniques as you would for a puppy. Take your dog out immediately in the morning, standing watch outside and praise him when he goes in the yard. Take him out after meals and upon arriving home, making sure to go out and watch, and once again praise him highly for doing his business outside. It will take a while to learn the dog’s signals indicating a need to go out, and for him to adjust to a new schedule. Once both owner and dog become more familiar with each other and adjust their lifestyle accordingly, the problem should be resolved. Please remember that a dog does not soil the house to be “spiteful”. Generally it is a result of anxiety. They are stressed in a new environment, or because you have left them. As with many people, when some dogs become anxious, it results in bowel and bladder problems. Crating will help solve most of these symptoms. While there are some dogs who cannot be crated because it just increases their anxiety, many regard the crate as a safe haven, and it gives them some continuity, especially if they were crated in their foster home. The very anxious dogs that do not crate well sometimes do better when confined to a room with newspapers to eliminate on. Other dogs will soil when they are crated or put in a room, and are fine

when allowed freedom of the house. If you have a dog that cannot be crated, left confined in a room, or who is destructive when left loose in the house, an outdoor kennel or VERY SECURELY fenced yard may be the answer. The foster home should know enough about your dog to advise which method would work best. An alternative for an extremely anxious dog is to consult your veterinarian or an animal behaviorist about using short-term drug therapy to calm him down enough to implement behavior modification to alter his anxiety reactions.

HOW CAN I ESTABLISH A GOOD RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MY CHILDREN AND THE AKITA?

Talk with your children prior to the dog's arrival about what is expected of them and how they should behave around the Akita. There are some important rules regarding children and dogs:

- The dog should not be disturbed in any way when he is eating, sleeping, drinking or chewing on a bone.
- If they are playing and he walks away, the children must understand playtime is over and they must leave him alone.
- If the dog is crate trained, and at some point retires to his crate, once again, they are not to follow, but to find something else to do. The crate is his private area and should not be invaded by children.
- Remind children to never approach and touch a dog from behind. Just like people, he will be startled, and will swing around. An Akita swinging around is enough to knock any child down.
- At no time should a child take or attempt to take a bone or toy (even one of their own) away from the dog. They should get adult assistance.
- Dogs are not toys. Children should not ride them, use them as a pillow or bed, poke, prod or crawl over them.

Help them understand that initially, the Akita may be a little nervous and for them not to overwhelm him with attention. Let him come to the children and when he does, they may pet him in an agreed upon manner. They should not run or yell, and no rambunctious play around the dog. As eager as they are to show off their new arrival, friends should not be allowed to come over and play for at least 3-4 weeks. However, they may come earlier just to meet the dog. Instruct them in proper introduction etiquette:

- Let the dog sniff their outstretched hand and then gently scratch under the chin or the chest.
- Have them try not to scratch his head immediately, for as their hand goes up, his nose will follow.
- Remind them not to stand with their hands hovering in the air above the dog, for that is a sure invitation for him jump up, possibly startling the child or at worst, knocking the child over.
- Make sure they do not put their faces up to his, or try to kiss and hug him.

Once they have met him, they can go elsewhere to play. It cannot be emphasized enough to **NEVER LEAVE** children, especially very young ones alone, unattended, with the Akita. Children cannot read dog body language well and do things that may aggravate the dog. Watching the dog with the children means just that, not watching TV, reading a book, on the computer, texting, cooking or being otherwise occupied while still in the same room.

Remember that while the Akita may be wonderful with your children, he may not be so wonderful with strange children. Akitas have been known to interpret strange child who plays rough with their child as a threat, and will respond in a manner to protect "their" children. Akitas were once bred for hunting, so children running around may present an irresistible temptation to chase them. An adult or young adult Akita can knock over a child very easily while running after them, even if no harm is intended. If other children are visiting or even if it is just the household children, when the horseplay gets intense or

they are playing games with lots of running, make sure the Akita is crated or confined in another area.

WHAT TYPE OF FOOD SHOULD I FEED AND HOW OFTEN?

Feed a high quality food with no soy protein in it. The first listed ingredient should be whatever meat is listed on the front of the bag. Feed your dog twice daily. Have plenty of fresh water available. Fruits and vegetables as well as some table scraps are okay to add to his food as long as you avoid cruciferous, gas causing veggies, onions, raisins and grapes. If you are changing the Akita to a different food, make the changeover gradually. Buy a 20-lb. bag of the food he is currently being fed. The first week, feed the food he has been eating. The second week use a $\frac{3}{4}$ mix of his current food and $\frac{1}{4}$ mix of his new food. The third week use $\frac{1}{2}$ his current food and $\frac{1}{2}$ his new food. The fourth week use $\frac{1}{4}$ current food and $\frac{3}{4}$ new food. The fifth week completes the changeover with 100% new food. If you follow this formula you will lessen the chances of diarrhea and stomach upset.

WHAT ABOUT BLOAT?

Recent studies have shown that your dog will have more of a tendency to bloat if a parent or sibling has bloated or if your dog has a very nervous disposition. Bloat is more common as the dog ages, especially after 8 years. Bloat is a life threatening condition. There are two steps: 1) the stomach fills with gas, water or food and swells; 2) the stomach flips over (torsion), cutting off the blood supply and starting necrosis (tissue death). **IF YOUR DOG IS NOT TAKEN TO THE VET IMMEDIATELY, HE WILL DIE. IT IS BETTER TO MAKE MANY FALSE RUNS THAN TO MISS IT THE ONE TIME IT MATTERS. BELOW ARE SYMPTOMS THAT COULD MEAN YOUR DOG IS BLOATING. THIS KNOWLEDGE COULD SAVE YOUR DOG'S LIFE.** Check out the video of a dog in the early/middle stages of bloat on our website to familiarize yourself with how bloat looks and how the dog acts. It is not easy to watch this but knowing more about bloat can save your dog's life.

-Extreme agitation

-Inability to sit or lay down comfortably

-Trying to vomit, but nothing coming up, except ropy, slimy saliva

-Swelling between the rib cage and the hips. It could start in the lower rib cage.

-Once the swelling is visible, time is limited. This is an emergency!

-Sometimes in the early stages, no swelling is visible. If you think your dog is in the early stages, **INSIST** the vet x-ray to make sure. You are your dog's advocate. You know him best and know when something is wrong

-If your dog bloats and is deflated by means other than surgery, **INSIST** the stomach be tacked as soon as possible to prevent future torsion. Many times a dog that has bloated once will do so again.

MAINLY WATCH FOR UNUSUAL BEHAVIOR:

- A very active dog who is listless, head and tail hanging down, with a roached up back.

-A very laid back dog who is very restless, pacing, looking uncomfortable, with a pain rictus on his face.

There is nothing proven to prevent bloat, but these suggestions may help:

-Feed twice daily, instead of once.

-Do not feed gas-producing foods (gas causing beans, cabbage, onions, etc.)

-Do not let your dog exercise strenuously one hour prior to eating. A good rule of thumb: if he is panting from exertion or heat, do not feed until he stops panting.

-Do not let your dog exercise strenuously one-two hours after eating.

-If your dog has been out in the heat, or exercising strenuously, doesn't let him gulp quantities of water. Give him ice cubes barely covered with water instead.

- Don't let him roll on his back after eating or drinking.
- If he is being fed a dog food that swells in water, wet the food and let it absorb all the water before feeding.

DOES THE AKITA RESCUE TAG GET RETURNED?

No. The tag remains on the dog's collar for the rest of his life, along with a personal I.D. tag engraved with the owner's information, the microchip tag, a rabies tag, and a dog license. If you lose the Rescue tag, please call us to send you another. It is your backup and may be your pet's only ticket home. All rescue dogs are micro-chipped also. During your Akita's annual visit for shots, have the vet scan the microchip area to assure the chip is in place. The microchip is usually placed on the back between the two shoulder blades.

WHAT TYPE OF COLLAR SHOULD I USE?

Your dog will come with a nylon martingale collar. If you decide not to use it, please send it back for recycling. Your dog's collar should have all the tags on it and should be on your dog at all times. There are too many dogs dying in shelters whose owners failed to put collars on them or tags on their collars. Training collars (choke chains) are used only when training or walking the dog. **THEY SHOULD NOT BE LEFT ON THE DOG ALL THE TIME.**

Hopefully this information sheet has answered many questions. PLEASE CALL US with any further questions. It is better to call twenty times daily, no matter how trivial the question, than to not ask for help and let a small problem become a big one that necessitates the return of the Akita.

Please remember when your dog came into rescue he may have been starved, abused physically, mentally or emotionally, or just had a bad time. The foster parent(s) have invested a lot of time, and emotion into making or helping your dog become what he is today. PLEASE stay in touch with the foster parent. They will love hearing from you and how your Akita is doing. Pictures are very nice, even if only at Christmas.

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