



## **THE BEAGLE RESCUE PROJECT**

### **Animal Care Instructions**

#### **What To Expect**

The Humane Society of the United States is taking on the biggest animal rescue situation to date, with approximately 4,000 beagles being placed in shelters, rescues, and foster homes with the shutdown of the Envigo facility. The facility where these beagles were held bred them for generations to sell for the use of research and testing purposes. These dogs have not had the opportunities to be dogs, faced neglect, and therefore may present with medical and behavioral challenges.

The Anti-Cruelty Society is fortunate enough to have the resources to help 36 beagles as they transition to become part of families in the Chicago region. This packet will provide you with guidance on what can be expected when taking home one of these beagles, and tips on how to make this transition into the companion animal world a positive experience.

#### **Beagles in the research facility:**

- Lived in crowded quarters
- Were treated as objects
- Had limited chance for emotional connection
- Lacked agency
- Experienced inadequate veterinary care
- Were denied positive social interactions
- Lacked the 5 Freedoms: freedom from hunger/thirst, discomfort, pain/injury/disease, and fear/distress, and freedom to express normal behavior

#### **Understanding your Beagle**

It is important to note that unless the dog is still a puppy, they have missed their critical opportunity for socialization when they were younger. This means that the world can be a scary place as they did not have a positive experience in their youth, leading to fear, anxiety, and stress about the world around them. In addition, research has shown that even before they are born, if mothers experience stress, that can have a negative impact on her puppies' future behavior. Based on the situation the beagles are coming from, a combination of nature and nurture have played a role in the beagle you see before you.

These dogs will have to learn how to trust, love, play, meet new people, and go for walks, what petting is, and so much more! It is important to maintain realistic expectations for you and your dog through all of your time together. Your dog's personality reflects their experience. It is important to accept each dog for their unique traits and temperament. In addition, it will take time for these dogs to be ready for adoption. They have experienced significant trauma and may need an extended amount of care. It may

be a bumpy road, but the time, patience, and love you give will be demonstrated in the successes you and your dog make along the way!

### **How to Set up a Safe Zone**

Before you bring your dog home, prepare by setting up a Safe Zone in your house that your dog can go to freely. This is a space-- a room, closet, or entire section of the house-- that your dog can go to relax and feel secure, even if they are alone. While it sounds simple enough, there are some rules you should follow to make sure this space is having the effect it should:

- **Location is important.** It should be in a quiet area that is not going to get a lot of foot traffic.
- **Make it comfortable.** If you want your dog to choose this space willingly it should be comfortable, not only in cushioning but also size. We recommend incorporating calming activities into this space, such as calming music, dim lights, and aromatherapy.
- **Ensure privacy.** Do not bother your dog while they are in this space. This is a place for them to relax and regroup by themselves. Kids and other animals should not be allowed in this space.
- **Keep it positive.** Do not force your dog into this space or use it as a punishment. We want your dog to willingly choose to use this space- not see it as a bad place where scary things happen!
- **Provide enrichment.** We also recommend providing things for your dog to chew on and lick, such as bully sticks and frozen stuffed Kongs, while in this space. You may want to provide other ways for your dog to entertain themselves while in this space if they will be there for a while.

### **The Car Ride Home**

- It is important to set you and your dog up for success even before they are home. When coming to The Anti-Cruelty Society to pick up your dog, there are a few things you can do to set up for a low-stress car ride home.
- **Limit the amount of people in the car.** Although this can be an exciting day for you and your family, having a packed car can be very stressful for your dog. Having 1 or 2 adults come would be the ideal set up, kids can stay home and greet them when they are settled in and ready for company.
- **Having calming music can be beneficial.** Classical (piano-based), soft rock, reggae, or an audio book are all good choices for the car ride home. This is not the time to put on your favorite song at full blast. Remember that dogs have a much better sense of hearing than we do! Barely audible will be the right volume to create a safe, calming space.
- **Aromatherapy.** Spray your car with essential oils that are dog safe and will create a calming scent in your car that can help alleviate stress. Common scents include lavender, vanilla, and jasmine.
- **Go straight home.** It is highly likely that these beagles have never been in a car before (prior to their trip to Chicago) and are going to be stressed after their long journey to us. It is important that they get to go home promptly and get a chance to decompress.

### **Allow Time for Decompression**

At The Anti-Cruelty Society, we request that fosters and adopters keep the rule of 3s in mind when it comes to decompression: [3 days, 3 weeks, 3 months](#). This is the traditional formula for phases in a pet's acclimation period to a new home. For your dog, it will most likely take longer for them to feel

comfortable in the new space, with you, your family, and life in general. It will take time for them to understand they are in a safe space, and to build a positive relationship with you and your family. It is extremely important to develop a routine for your dog which does not change (as much as you can manage!). A routine will establish a pattern of predictability, and this may help them become more comfortable and confident in your home. Other things to do during the decompression period include:

- **Avoid flooding!** Flooding means that a dog is overstimulated/stressed by an excess of new stimuli such as new people, animals, items, places, etc.
- **Use treats.** Offer yummy, small (pea-sized) treats to help build a positive relationship. Be sure to avoid luring a dog to you with treats, this can cause more stress. If your dog is unsure, toss the treats to them gently or utilize the treat and retreat exercise included in this packet.
- **Keep things calm.** Spend time with your dog by reading a book to them or playing calming music when you are with them. Keep a low stress environment (watch the TV volume, carefully close doors, etc). Avoid long walks, car rides, and prolonged periods of separation.
- **Autonomy.** Give your dogs as much agency (choice) in situations as possible.

### **Flight Risk**

This is especially pertinent when you are first bringing home your beagle. Your dog may become so frightened that all they can manage is to run away from the scary thing and hide. Due to this, **a leash must always be on when your dog is outside, regardless of if you have a fenced in backyard.** While it may be tempting, you cannot trust your dog to be off leash. If they run away, it will be nearly impossible for anyone to catch them due to their distrust of people. Here are some tips to keep your dog safe outside and in:

- Set up a “double door” system in your home to prevent your dog from dashing out an open door. This can be done by setting up a baby gate or play pen around the door, blocking the dog’s direct access to the door.
- Make sure your dog collar is fitted properly to prevent your dog's head from slipping through. We will help fit your dog for a collar before they go home with you.
- If they choose to flee in the house, do not chase. Calmly follow them to make sure they are in a safe area of the house.
- If they flee outside, give them some slack in the leash so they do not slip out of their collar. Do not drag them, but allow them to go in a direction they feel most comfortable to get away from the stressor (what caused them to dart) as soon as possible .

### **Potty Training**

These dogs likely did not get the opportunity to go outside to eliminate. This could mean they will be used to doing so in a kennel environment. Don’t be surprised if they are hesitant to go on different surfaces outside such as grass, rocks, etc., as they have never experienced them before. They will not be house trained or have been taught to go potty when they are on leash outside. Potty training will take time and patience as we teach them where we would like them to go! Here are some tips on what to do when potty training your dog:

- If your dog does have an accident, never scold your dog for doing so. This does nothing to help your dog understand where to properly go and can negatively impact the relationship you are trying to build.
- If your dog does have an accident, it is VERY important to clean up the mess using an enzymatic cleaner designed to eliminate pet odors. This is the only kind that will also get rid of the scent your dog can detect. For example, if you use a simple soap and water solution, you may not smell it anymore, but our canine friends can, and will want to go there again!
- Lay down newspapers, towels, or potty pads where your dog is kept, in a play pen, or around the house so you can prevent your floors from being soiled.
- When your dog is not in a confined area, they should have a dragline attached to their collar. This way you can quickly grab the leash if you notice your dog sniffing a spot to eliminate.
- Make sure you feed close to the same time each day so you can establish a potty routine! What is eaten on schedule, comes out on schedule. You can expect your dog to have a bowel movement within 20 minutes of consuming a meal.
- Set your dog up for success by taking them outside frequently. This may mean every hour in the beginning. Reward your dog with treats immediately after they are done eliminating to tell them they did a good job! You can also give calm verbal praise after they eliminate if they are not food motivated.
- It may be helpful to keep a log of each time your dog went to the bathroom so you can start to pick up on patterns of when they usually go.

It is important to note that this aspect of training may take time for your dog to grasp. Depending on the individual dog, there can also be the possibility of them never being fully potty trained due to their prior life circumstances. Having access to areas in the house where they can go to eliminate, like having potty pads in a mudroom, can be a way to mitigate in-house elimination.

### **Leash Walking**

These dogs will not be used to having collars on and being walked on a leash. Slowly introducing the leash will allow your dog to get used to this equipment. Most likely, your dog will not be able to go on walks in your neighborhood for a bit of time. The house, yard, and empty garage are all spaces you can practice to help your dog get used to the feeling of a collar and leash! Other tips and what to expect when on leash:

- Pressure/feeling of this equipment may be foreign and frightening, it's important to let them get used to this feeling gradually.
- For the first couple of weeks, practice maneuvering around objects in your house and backyard with the leash on. Drop/lure them with yummy treats to make this a positive experience.
- When outside, let your dog walk at their own pace. Your walks will take longer, but this is very important in the beginning! We want to let these dogs have as much agency as possible.
- A sniffy walk, aka allowing your dog to sniff anything they want and go a short distance, will be just as beneficial as a long, physically tiring walk.
- Walking multiple dogs at the same time may be to your dog's benefit. Dogs learn from watching other dogs! If you already have one or more dogs in your home who are confident and well-mannered on leash, these dogs effectively will help teach the new arrival about confidence and

good behavior. Your well-behaved, confident dog may help your dog gain confidence while walking on a leash, as it may be more inclined to follow the lead of the other dog.

## **Handling**

It is safe to assume that these dogs have not had many positive experiences when it comes to being touched and handled. Dogs that find this type of interaction scary can react in a variety of ways, from being squirmy and unmanageable to retreating/hiding, and, if retreat is not respected, nipping/biting. Just like people, dogs also have a wide variety of personalities and innate tolerance levels. It is important to read your dog's body language cues that can let you know they are uncomfortable and honor that and cease touching. Body Language to look out for:

- Stiff body posture, closed mouth, ears back, yawns, lip licks, weight leaned away from you, moving away from you, whale eyeing (showing whites of the eyes), and paw lifting can be indicators that your dog is uncomfortable with the area you are touching.
- When petting, do not lean over your dog as this could create spatial pressure and make your dog uncomfortable.
- Avoid handling/petting for a prolonged period. A good rule is to pet, pet, and then pause and consent check. If your dog is showing no stress signals (as indicated above) you can begin to pet again.
- You can start slow! Practice just reaching your hand out to the side (not touching them) and slowly get closer and closer until you have a light touch. This can help your dog feel more comfortable and breaking it down into smaller steps can help to not overwhelm them.
- Practice handling with yummy treats/lickimat/food-filled Kong available so your dog can have a positive experience! It is important to keep an eye on body language while they are eating and stop touching if they show stress signals and/or stop eating. If you notice that your dog is struggling with handling and petting, please reach out to the Training Team (information below) so we can give you more information.

## **Manners Training**

Your dog has never had any formal type of training before. It is important to have no expectations when it comes to manners. They won't be able to perform sits/downs/stays etc. right away. We have to teach our dogs how to learn before we have expectations of them! It will be very important to break down behaviors that you want your dog to do - even slower than you would expect! In addition, it will be helpful to wait until you and your dog have established a relationship and they have had time to decompress before trying to train behaviors. For example, for a sit we will use a lure:

- Start by giving your dog a treat out of your hand in a neutral position
- Next, put the treat up to their nose and reward when they sniff the treat
- Slightly elevate your hand and give them a treat for following your hand
- Raise your hand to go over the top of their head and reward for following
- From here, watch for them to lower their bottom to the ground, into a sit position, then give the treat
- If at any point you notice stress signals, or your dog is not following the treat, take a step back and see how you can make the behavior easier.

You will have to take baby steps! It is important to not force our dogs into these positions as it is aversion and will not teach your dog how to do the behavior over time.

### **Training Support**

If you are having any behavioral concerns that this packet does not address, feel free to reach out to the Foster Team at [foster@anticruelty.org](mailto:foster@anticruelty.org) or the Behavior Helpline at [behavior@anticruelty.org](mailto:behavior@anticruelty.org). Remember that we are here to support you as you set your dog up for success!

*The majority of the content above has been developed and generously shared with The Anti-Cruelty Society by Anderson Humane in Elgin, Illinois.*