



Adopting a Puppy Mill Dog

Thank you for your interest in adopting a puppy mill survivor. Before moving forward with the adoption process, it is important to fully understand what to expect so that you can decide if you are up for the challenge. Please read the information below carefully.

It takes a very special person to rehabilitate a puppy mill dog, a person with an abundance of patience. If you are hoping for a sweet loving little dog who will sit in your lap, enjoy being petted, walk on a leash, come to you when called and play in the back yard, this may not be the dog for you. If you are patient and let your dog move at his or her own pace, chances are you will end up with a dog with whom you share a bond like no other. Though it will be difficult – arduous at times – saving a puppy mill survivor and watching him or her blossom from a shutdown, scared dog to one that enjoys life will likely be one of the most rewarding experiences of your life.

What is a puppy mill survivor?

Most puppy mill dogs are confined to a kennel their entire lives. They have not been exposed to the things most pet dogs have been and their interactions with humans have been minimal. They have never been walked on a leash, or inside of a house. Everything from here on out will be new to a puppy mill dog, and therefore very, very scary. Their lives have been turned upside down. Everything they encounter will overwhelm them, and helping them adjust to their new world will be a challenge that will try your patience at times.

These survivors will not know how to 'act like dogs'. The conditions they have been raised in have left them with psychological scars that will take months or years to overcome, if ever. Initially, they will not trust humans. They will be too scared to make eye contact or eat in front of people. They may not enjoy being in your company or being petted. They will not know where to relieve themselves. They will panic on leash, and shut down completely when put in a new situation.

Rehabilitating a puppy mill dog

Fortunately, many of these dogs are able to recover from their traumatic experiences. Many puppy mill survivors form intense bonds with their owners. Yet, they often retain certain psychological differences from other dogs, like a fear of unfamiliar people and novel items or situations. It is impossible to tell which dogs will fully adapt to their new lives as pets and which will continue to struggle with the most basic aspects. As an adopter of a puppy mill survivor, you must unconditionally accept that your dog may never fully recover from his or her experiences up to this point and still commit to providing the best possible life for him or her.

The timeline for rehabilitating a puppy mill dog will be unique to each dog. It may be weeks, months, years, or an entire lifetime. At times it will feel like taking one step forward and two steps back, and what works for one dog may not work for another. But luckily, you're not alone in this. There are many resources available to help these dogs succeed in their new homes.

Are you ready to take on a puppy mill dog?

A puppy mill dog is a 'special project'

- 🐾 You will need to train this dog as if you had a 2-month old unsocialized puppy. You will need to introduce this dog to leash training, toys, people of all types, space, potty training, etc. This training can take months or years to establish.
- 🐾 A puppy mill dog may never be a 'normal' companion dog in terms of cuddling, meeting new people, or exploring on their own.

Potty training

- 🐾 These dogs have lived in their own waste until now. They were forced to urinate and defecated in their cage. Therefore, they do not have the typical rule of going potty away from their sleeping area.
- 🐾 Dogs that have lived so long in their own waste may never understand the concept of going potty outside their home. It will take a lot of work and patience to potty train them.

Home environment

- 🐾 It is important your home is free of any frequent chaos and noise as it will only make the dog feel more isolated and scared.
- 🐾 It is ideal that the dog has its own space he or she can call its own that is quiet and private. A small and hidden spot is usually preferred by these dogs. Make it clear that when they are in this area, they should not be disturbed.
- 🐾 Any kind of noise can make a puppy mill dog jump and even bolt to a place they consider safe. Make sure your house and yard are secure. Always be sure they are wearing tags with proper identification.

Affiliative behavior and affection

- 🐾 Owning a puppy mill dog is very rewarding. Although they may never snuggle with you, they will show you their own way of love. Sometimes physical affection is too uncomfortable and overwhelming for them.

What makes them comfortable?

- 🐾 It is amazing how "normal" a puppy mill dog may be around another dog. This is true simply because they lived their life only around other dogs, so they often prefer to socialize with other dogs.
- 🐾 Going their pace will make them comfortable. Do not push any interactions between them and humans.
- 🐾 Never punish them but instead praise them verbally and with high value treats when they make any progress. Always have treats handy to give them.
- 🐾 Provide them with a kennel they can consider another "safe haven."

Check list for an adopter considering adopting a puppy mill dog

- ✓ Am I ready for a commitment to a dog that will be a special project for potentially the rest of its life?
- ✓ Am I okay with a dog that may be very difficult to potty train, or maybe never potty train fully?
- ✓ Is my house environment calm and quiet enough for this dog?
- ✓ Do I have an available private space in my home to offer this dog?
- ✓ Am I okay with owning a dog that may never want to cuddle or interact with everyone?
- ✓ Do I have friendly dogs that are available to socialize with this dog?