



Guide to Fearful Dogs

Fearful dogs are special cases that require extra time and patience. Given the time, it is amazing to watch them come out of their shell and begin to build confidence. These dogs need a guardian that is willing to keep them feeling safe and out of harm. These dogs also require a quiet home where they can begin to build a relationship with their owner that is built around trust and security.

Follow these steps to help your fearful dog adjust to their new home:

1. Don't overwhelm your dog when you take them home.
 - a. Give your dog lots of time and space to explore their new surroundings. Do not pressure them to interact with you. Simply allow them to explore and become acclimated.
 - b. Introduce your dog to one family member at a time. Meeting multiple people at once can be very overwhelming.
2. Find treats that your dog LOVES.
 - a. Use these treats to begin building a positive relationship with your dog.
 - b. Also use these treats to help your dog to feel more confident about anything they might find scary.
3. Utilize positive reinforcement training **ONLY** with your fearful dog.
 - a. Avoid any training that involves punishment. This type of training will be confusing for your dog and they will be very unlikely to learn. Punishment will also damage the relationship and trust between you and your dog.
 - b. Instead, utilize positive reinforcement training. Reward the behaviors that you like and ignore the behaviors that you don't like.
 - c. Clicker training will help your dog to learn quickly and will build confidence.
4. Watch for dog's body language closely for signs that they are overwhelmed. If they become overwhelmed, try to remove them from the situation. **IT IS OK TO COMFORT YOUR FEARFUL DOG.** Comforting them will not teach them to be fearful.
 - a. Subtle signs of stress and anxiety in dogs include having a furrowed brow, lip licking, yawning, pacing, moving very slowly, and not eating treats.
5. Give your fearful dog as much choice as possible. Avoid backing them into a corner or forcing them to move through the house. Instead, encourage them using treats and praise.

If you have tried what is provided here and still have questions, contact larimerbehaviorhelp@humane.org or call 970-226-3647 ext. 5130