



BEAGLE FREEDOM PROJECT

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CARE GUIDE FOR ENVIGO BEAGLES

INTRODUCTION

Having an animal cruelty survivor in your life is a very special thing for you and for the animal. At Beagle Freedom Project (BFP) we know it is a unique experience to teach an animal about the life that they were deprived of before their freedom.

It is hard work, but it is worth it. Patience, dedication, and love will help your dog get through any of these issues so that they can become the dog they were always meant to be!

The personalities and behavior of former research animals often differ drastically from that of other companion animals. Research animals are bred in commercial breeding facilities that are notoriously stressful and traumatic for animals. Your companion was deprived of proper socialization during her/his formative months, which are the experiences that would empower them to interact and cope with their environment normally.

Survivors of animal testing can be extremely fearful, especially in the first few weeks outside of a laboratory. Their past experience may have taught them that novelty, change, and unfamiliar things are unsafe or dangerous. It will take time to heal their past trauma and teach them that they are truly safe now. Please be patient with your survivor as s/he adjusts to an overwhelming number of stimuli. They are like newborns in adult bodies who do not understand the usual signs and vocal tones our dogs at home are accustomed.

Everything is brand new to them: smells, sights, food, and even the way they drink water.

We find it is extremely beneficial to have another well-adjusted dog in the home to model behavior for your new survivor on how to be a "dog."



THE BASICS

DOG FOOD

These dogs have been fed low-quality food and they do not understand treats or “good” food. You will probably have to try different methods of feeding, types of food, and environments to get them to eat. Make sure to use a dish with a plastic or rubber bottom so that the movement does not make loud sounds and scare them. Have dry kibble, wet food, and some high-value treats at the ready to see which they prefer. We suggest bland food at the beginning to ease them into a new routine and avoid upsetting their tummies too much. All of the new stimuli are sure to give them diarrhea no matter what. Canned pumpkin and white rice help to solidify stool.

CRATES

Crates should only be provided as part of your dog’s “home base” if you **REMOVE** the door. A closed crate can feel a lot like being back in a research lab and is not acceptable as it will trigger the dog and they will regress.

INTRODUCING YOUR DOG TO STRANGERS

Animals experience much of their world in these terms: **what is safe + what is not safe**. Due to your dog’s past trauma, it is likely that they are on the fence about seemingly normal experiences, such as meeting a new person. Help your dog land on the “safe” side of the fence by creating positive associations with the new person. This can be easily accomplished by adding treats, toys, or extra praise to the introduction and initial greetings thereafter.

INTRODUCING YOUR DOG TO OTHER ANIMALS

For dog-to-dog introductions, choose neutral territory for initial greetings. Enlist the help of family or friends to take the dogs on parallel walks in a low-stress environment. Be sure that both dogs are wearing the correct equipment, such as a flat or properly fitted martingale or y-shaped harness with a flat 6-foot leash. Keep a normal pace with each other and gradually close space throughout the course of the walk. If the parallel walks are successful, then you may proceed indoors with both dogs. Allow the resident dog to enter the home first, followed by the new dog.

FEARFUL DOG: IT’S NOT WHAT YOU THINK

It is a common misconception that all your fearful dog needs is a lot of love and to be totally spoiled because of their traumatic past. Dogs learn how to perceive, engage, and stay safe in the world around them at a very young age. It is common for survivors to show sensitivity to any of the following and more:

- Raised voices or abrupt changes in volume, tone, and cadence
- Exaggerated or swift body movements, such as reaching your arm up or turning on your heel
- Direct eye contact, even if you are smiling or happy
- Being approached head-on, with your body facing the dog
- Reaching overhead, such as leaning over to pet or rounding your shoulders in the dog’s direction

SEPARATION AND ISOLATION ANXIETY

It is common for survivors to bond closely with one member of the household and oftentimes this person is the primary caretaker. Your dog may prefer to sleep close to that person or follow them around. If your dog shows distress in the absence of a particular person or simply when left alone, contact BFP staff. Your dog may be struggling with separation or isolation anxiety, which requires professional intervention.

Dogs with separation anxiety (SA) typically show distress in the absence of a particular person, whereas dogs with isolation anxiety (IA) show distress when left alone. The dog's emotional distress may lead to destructive or dangerous behaviors; however, it is important to understand that destructiveness when left alone is also a common behavior in bored dogs who do not have SA or IA.

ESCAPING AND CONFINEMENT

Unfortunately, it is common for survivors to get easily startled by new sounds and sights and when they do, they tend to try to flee, usually through open doors or windows. This is why it is critical to keep a collar and identification tag on your dog at all times and microchipped with your current contact information. At BFP, we make sure all of our survivors wear a GPS collar made by Fi. This connects with your smartphone so if anything should happen, you can track where your dog is and easily locate them.

If your dog escapes from the house or on a walk, **STAY CALM** and do not chase after the dog, as that can scare them away. Instead, walk slowly behind them and try to get their attention. If you are able to lure them to you, pick up the dog instead of trying to get the leash around them. Once in your arms, reattach the leash. It is highly recommended to always carry high-reward treats in case you need something to lure them.

If your dog does become lost, **CALL BFP IMMEDIATELY.** We can walk you through the process and connect you with a Search and Rescue Expert. Call the emergency rescue phone at (818) 208-7351 and the Rescue Department will advise you know how to proceed.

HOUSE TRAINING

Dogs learn their *surface preference* for elimination (potty time) at a young age. Because dogs from research laboratories have lived their entire lives in cages, they are accustomed to eliminating on hard surfaces, usually where they eat, sleep and live. This means that you must do the extra work to undo learned behaviors. Help your dog learn how to go potty outside of the house by following these steps:

Step 1: Create a Bathroom Break Schedule Prior to bringing your dog home, you should plan already the times they will be given an outdoor bathroom break. Start by giving your dog bathroom breaks every hour and continue to build additional bathroom breaks.

Step 2: Set up Your Dog's Home Base for Success According to the “long-term confinement area” concept, your dog's home base should be a safe space that they can retreat to be alone. The area should include a bed, water source, toys, and a toilet. You can create a toilet with turf or sod in a boot tray or with pee pads.

Rumors about potty training to ignore: **Never** rub your dog's nose in their feces or urine as this only teaches a dog to avoid going potty in your presence, which makes going to the bathroom on leash walks impossible. This also causes many dogs to continue to potty when your back is turned and consume their excrements to avoid you finding the accident.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

Fostering and adopting a survivor is an empowering and beautiful process that will change your life. At Beagle Freedom Project, we know the complexities of caring for a survivor. If you become overwhelmed or nervous about how to best care for your dog, do not hesitate to contact us. We will gladly guide you on this exciting journey as we have with numerous other families. **If you feel you cannot provide your dog with the level of care that most survivors need, we are able to help rehome them, judgement-free.**

*You can also contact us for our full-length **Foster & Adopter Guide.**

Beagle Freedom Project is a nonprofit dedicated to ending the use of animals in research and testing through education, advocacy, and rescue efforts. For more information, visit bfp.org.

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