

Adopting a Puppy Mill Dog

The SPCA of Texas helps to rescue hundreds of dogs and puppies raised in puppy mills and put an end to these cruel conditions each year. Dogs and puppies born and raised in puppy mills do not receive adequate attention and care and because of this these dogs can have long lasting health and behavioral conditions. If you are considering adopting a former puppy mill dog or if you have already adopted one, here are some things to know.

Things to Know Up Front

Puppy mill dogs can be physically or behaviorally normal like any other dog or they can have long lasting complications. Behavior change for former puppy mill dogs can be fast, slow, very slow, or none at all.

Most puppy mill dogs are more fearful than the average dog. Puppy mill dogs are more than 8 times more likely to have fears and phobias than other dogs.

Many former puppy mill dogs are difficult to house train due to their former living conditions.

Expect to have no expectations. Each dog is different in their ability to adapt but the limitations to the degree of acclimation usually fall short of a normal dog. Puppy mill dogs are often less trainable due to their lack of confidence and ability to trust new people or things.

Puppy mill dogs normally bond to one or two people. It is common for fearful dogs including dogs from puppy mills to be more fearful of men and children.

Never punish, scold, or raise your voice with a puppy mill dog since this will break down the trust in your relationship. Your puppy mill survivor dog needs you to stand up for him and protect him from things that he perceives as scary.

Puppy mill dogs are usually uncomfortable with being touched, picked up, and held. This can display in various ways including not moving and shutting down, to trying to escape or behaving aggressively.

Use lots of patience. Be really, really patient. Celebrate tiny improvements! The smallest steps are big changes for dogs that have had such an abnormal upbringing.

Being with, and learning from other confident dogs can be the single most beneficial factor.

Puppy mill survivors have special needs and "all they need is love" is not actually true. They will need help healing emotionally and building confidence.

Puppy mill dogs are likely to exhibit compulsive and repetitive behaviors such as spinning in circles, pacing or staring blankly into space.

Puppy mill dogs typically show less aggression than most other dogs. They are typically less excitable and energetic than other dogs.

Adopting a dog who is a puppy mill survivor is a dedication that can be as rewarding as it is difficult. When you gain the trust of a puppy mill dog it makes all the hard work worth the effort.