

Rescue

MATURE DOGS

By: Kayla M Savory

Some people may think that adopting an older dog is easier than taking in a puppy or a young dog. This can be true, but can be fraught with difficulties. The potential problems should not discourage people from adopting an older dog; there are many that need good, loving homes, and the rewards of adopting a needy older dog are great.

I have lived with dogs, mainly Belgian Sheepdogs, my whole life. In that time we have taken in two older dogs. Some rescues require a great deal of medical intervention, and others just need a stable home. The variation in need is different for every dog. A dog could be coming from a home that taught it manners and gave it good care, or it could have come from a neglected environment. There is a chance that the dog may have been abused and turned into a fear biter or just shies away from people in general.

Taking in a rescue dog of any age means that you are ready to deal with the possible health and personality issues that are part of the package. For instance, our last rescue, Twyla, had health issues. She had bad teeth that were poisoning her, and had been hurt at some time resulting in a wobbly gait. After we had cared for the health problems we could, we just had to accommodate her other needs. She wasn't able to keep up with the rest of the dogs, or jump into the car. She was probably ten or more years old and was with us for eighteen months, during which time she was comfortable and loved.

Our rehome, a Belgian Malinois from a deceased breeder's father, was more of a rescue than a rehome. We took her as a foster, planning to rehome her, when her temperament issues surfaced we realized we had to keep her or euthanize her. She was eight years old and had been a kennel dog and knew little of basic manners or how to play. Her health was good and remains so; she will be fourteen in July, but at age eight, already had set personality quirks. These made it a bit of a challenge to care for

her. She wouldn't go near men, and was very jumpy; her reaction to a stressful situation was to use her teeth.

But she could be groomed and crated because she had been shown in conformation a few times. It is now six years later and she sleeps in my room, on the bed sometimes, and will play ball and knows basic obedience; such as sit, down and come. It took many, many months but now she is a happy, responsive, thankful girl that we are glad to have in our family. We learned a great deal about how to accommodate and rehabilitate a reactive biter. The experience of earning her trust was truly moving.

Older puppies and young dogs often, but not necessarily, have less "baggage" and tend to be easier to train, but older dogs can bring greater rewards. They can be just as playful and sweet as those cute faced little ones. There are many older Belgians, and other breeds, looking for warm, caring homes, as there are puppies. It just may be that the older dogs require a bit more than the younger. Younger dogs can have just as many health issues. An instance is a young mix in the Los Angeles area whose pelvis didn't form right. She will need reconstructive surgery for her displaced organs and malformed bone structure; and will always need the assistance of a doggy wheelchair. You can never know until you adopt. A rescue dog will be grateful to you the rest of its life. The best thing you can give it is a warm home, be a friend, and give unconditional love. 🐾

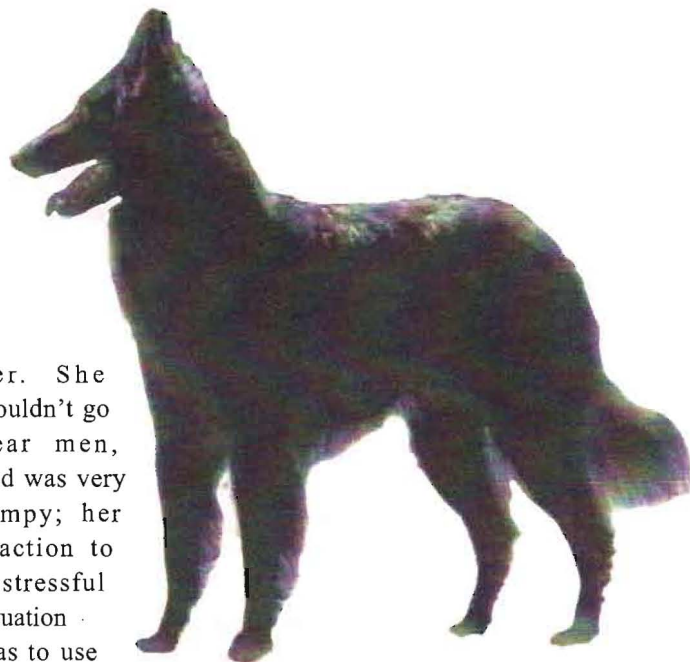


Photo by Shelly Brosnan