

Friends of the Shelter Newsletter

Volume V



Zeke – an exceptional dog!

By Jan Robinson

Zeke, who was called Ajax when we picked him up from the Los Alamos Shelter, has turned out to be an amazing dog. Initially he had severe separation anxiety; he peed and pooped when we left him for even 5 minutes, even in a crate.

He now can be left in a crate without being stressed. He comes to my office everyday and sleeps all day and then is ready for his playtime. He runs and is very athletic. He has just started on search/retrieve, which he does really well. This week he did his first demonstration of a sit stay in one of my obedience classes at Petco.

Advertised as a German Shepherd cross breed, Zeke turned out to be a pure bred Australian Kelpie, see the website:

<http://www.avenpart-avenel.com>

and there is Zeke. He is the coolest dog I have ever owned. Everybody loves him, he loves other dogs and they just love to play with him. Zeke was very suspicious around any changes that happened in his daily routine, now he accepts any changes without feeling afraid.

He also loves the water and splashes and is such fun to watch. The day I got him from the Shelter I began to work with the Tellington Touch Method of training (see the web site: <http://tteam-ttouch.com/>), lots of touch work on his mouth, ears and tail. I put body wraps on him and took him through the ground exercises to build his confidence.

Zeke is going to make an excellent tracking, obedience and agility dog. He is just wonderful and I'm so lucky to have found him. Thank you Los Alamos Shelter, for all you did for him over the 4 months you had him, helping him to overcome his shyness and become an awesome dog.

First Days Home with a Shy Dog

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All newly adopted dogs need to be taught what they can chew, how they may greet you, where to go to the bathroom and other house rules. If your adopted dog is afraid of novel people or new situations, he will also need some extra help from you to adjust to his new home. In the hands of a patient and caring owner, a shy dog can be a great companion and can make gains in confidence over time.

Avoiding Coercion

First impressions are lasting, so, when you first arrive home, make sure the dog isn't forced into any scary situations. As tempting as it might be to give him hugs, scrub him in the bath, take him to people's houses or invite over all your friends, it is much wiser to let him explore his immediate surroundings while you sit quietly, waiting for him to come to you when he is ready. When he does approach you, he may still be wary of your hands or of being touched. Be patient – physical contact is the hardest part for some – the best way to win his trust is to not rush him.

Hand-Feeding

A great idea is to hand feed him treats and/or meals. At first, talk to him while you feed him piece by piece. After a session or two, try touching him with your other hand before each treat. If he moves away, go back to feeding him without touches a few more times and then try a smaller touch before feeding. If he is extremely fearful and hides for a long time once you get home, you can toss treats near to where he is hiding and then leave him alone. Once he feels better, he'll venture out and associate it with getting a tasty treat. In time, his forays out will happen sooner and sooner after you toss treats and your presence will become associated with the treats as well. Once he is out, you can switch to hand feeding.

Finding Safe Distances

Take walks around the neighborhood and let him sniff and thoroughly check things out. Sudden noises or changes in the environment will likely make him flatten or try to run for cover. Your best policy is to let him hide or to take him further away from the scary situation. Then, once he settles down, encourage him to approach as close as he is comfortable to what frightened him. Feed him a few treats and then leave. Also be careful of people who think they are "good with dogs" and then try to approach him too quickly or too close. Being forced into more than he can handle is never therapeutic and can even

make him worse. Take the initiative to coach people on how to remain passive and let the dog set the pace of contact. A good idea is to carry treats for people to toss to him – if he won't eat, it's a sign that he needs even more distance. Get him far enough away so that he's relaxed enough to eat as this helps him develop a positive association to new people.

Other Considerations

Shy dogs are no less prone to developing separation anxiety than other dogs. Be sure to do many brief absences in the first few days so he learns that you are not always there and that whenever you leave, you come back. Exit and entry in a very matter of fact way and leave him in a dog-proofed room with plenty of chew toys.

Shy dogs warm up and bond strongly to people they live with within days or weeks but remain nervous around novel people. The time it takes to warm up to a new person may accelerate over time – whereas early on, it took dozens of visits from a certain person before that person was accepted into the dog's circle, later the dog is comfortable with a new person after half a dozen exposures. This process usually takes years, with attention paid to never rushing the dog as well as effort at creating positive associations. So, in the early days with your shy dog, don't become frustrated if it seems he is taking a long time to warm up to your friends.

Some Confidence Building Activities

Positive experiences with what frightens him at an intensity he can handle is the best way to build up a shy dog. Here are a few other suggestions that often help:

- Free-shaping tricks and new behaviors using a clicker
- Dog-dog play
- Tug of war – provided you have learned and know how to enforce the rules
- Agility training

The SPCA offers clicker, tricks, agility and many other classes to help provide structure and support in working with your shy dog.

B.C – from Homeless to Happy

By Jean Rand

I was headed outside to wash windows, and as usual had twenty million thoughts running through my mind, when suddenly, I became conscious of this sweet little solitary “m.....e.....o.....w” sound. I looked down and standing in my path was a petite little coal-black kitty. I said “well..... hi, and who are you?” I crouched down to let the frail little kitty approach me.....and it did ever so cautiously. I recognized the look of hunger evidenced by way too many ribs and not enough flesh for such a young tike, so I slipped inside for a bit of food to offer. The “little black cat” as she became known, readily wolfed it down, and then instantly disappeared. In the next several weeks I was to share company with “little black cat” every several days as she decided to visit me. I asked around the neighborhood about the young feline’s origin and found that her pregnant mother was abandoned when her owners moved away. Feral “Mom” had 2 kittens under the hot tub of a vacant house and throughout the year proceeded to try her best to supply enough wild-captured food and protection from packs of dogs hunting around the neighborhood.



Recognizing hardship, I decided to strike up a deal with the hungry black cat – she was free to come and go as she pleased and I would help out with food whenever she wanted to visit. But no binding ties for either of us. I had never been “animal free” in my life (this was the first time), and I wasn’t sure for the time being if I wanted to return to being “animal responsible.” As the days went by we both seemed to be happy with our pact and the little black cat visited me quite regularly every couple of days. However, when several days passed and I had not seen her, I started inquiring of neighbors if they had possibly seen a black cat flash by, as she always moved at top speed when not in hiding. I was informed that the “vacant” house had been sold and the new people had trapped the feral “hot tub” cats and drove them to the Santa Fe animal shelter. I was sad to hear that black cat had exited my life. However, in the middle of that thought, my new neighbor knocked on my door to tell me about the cat trapping and that they would be happy to bring the black cat back since I had been caring for her. I shuffled my feet a bit and replied, “Well.....okay.” And thus began our relationship.

The little black cat, now known as - what else, but “B.C.” is in my life forever. She has been with me now for about 18 months and still continues to grow more affectionate and calm in her behavior. I will always show respect for her desire to spend her days freely romping outdoors. The little black cat grew up wild with feral mom and that is how she enjoys living. But B.C. will never again be hungry. She is also quite regular about coming into the security of home in the evening. B.C. sleeps in her cozy bed on top of the refrigerator until sometime after midnight when she decides that it’s time to jump on my bed in full “purr” throttle as she rubs and kneads against me before curling up in the crook of my legs. What a wonderful and loving way to be awakened in the middle of the night. This sweet ritual always brings warmth to my heart, as together B.C. and I fade peacefully into a deep sleep.

ASPCA Policy on Declawing Cats

POLICY: The ASPCA does not approve of the declawing of cats as a matter of supposed convenience to cat owners. It is form of mutilation and it does cause pain. The only time the surgery should be considered is when the health and safety of other animals, human beings or the individual cat is involved, and euthanasia or abandonment the only realistic alternatives.

ASPCA RECOMMENDATIONS: Your cat needs her claws for just about everything she does. When she plays, her claws grip the toy while she punches it with her hind feet. Her claws provide proper balance and secure footing when she climbs, and are her main means of defense should she be attacked.

Your cat also uses her claws for scratching. This allows her to mark her territory. It also exercises her muscles.

You've also probably seen her kneading her paws in contentment-this harkens back to her kitten days, when such action stimulated the flow of milk when she was nursing.

If these ten tiny tools are so important to a cat, why do some owners have their animal companion's claws removed? Declawing is expensive, painful surgery. Think of it as having the first joint of all your fingers removed. And because their first line of defense has been taken away, declawed cats may resort to biting more often than their intact counterparts. Some veterinarians around the

country refuse to perform declawing surgery.

If your cat is scratching where she shouldn't, the problem is behavioral, not medical. You may want to consult an animal behavior professional, but ASPCA experts suggest several humane solutions you can try to redirect your pet's energies.

Remember, it's perfectly normal for cats to scratch, and it's up to you to provide yours with appropriate places to do so. Sisal or rug-covered posts at least 3 feet tall have satisfied many a feline's scratching needs. Corrugated cardboard scratching boxes are an inexpensive and effective alternative. Pile on the praise-and offer an occasional food reward-whenver she uses her new scratching post. She'll soon lose interest in her old haunts.

During retraining, you'll need to stop her from using her favorite inappropriate place, such as the chair leg or draperies. Cover these spots with heavy plastic sheeting, tin foil, balloons or double-stick tape. You can minimize much of the destruction while your pet's being retrained by clipping her nails every 10-14 days. Surprisingly, cats can do little or no damage when their claws are kept blunt.

Animal behaviorists believe that cats inherently need to scratch-both to keep their nails in tip-top shape and to mark their territory. No problem there-until your cat decides to do what comes naturally by using your couch as his own personal scratching post. With patience and persistence, you can rechannel this inappropriate behavior and save your furniture.

To keep your cat from scratching in a particular place, you'll need to make your home furnishings unattractive to him. Cover his favorite targets with double-stick tape, tin foil, balloons or contact paper.

For additional protection, The ASPCA recommends that you cover your furniture with a sheet, blanket or plastic slipcover. You should keep it covered at least until your pet learns proper etiquette. And remember, fabrics such as raw silk, leather or anything with a thick and bumpy texture are very tempting to feline claws. You may want to avoid these materials for your furniture and drapes, opting for smooth cottons such as chintz or parachute cloth instead.

Next, you'll need to retrain your cat by providing him with an appropriate place to act on his instincts. Try a sturdy scratching post that's covered in sisal or burlap; ideally it should be at least 3 feet tall. A tree trunk may work well, too, but first make sure it is insect-free. Start off by putting this post next to your cat's favorite inappropriate target—a chair leg, your living room rug, etc. Remember, it may take a bit of effort to get him to use his new scratching post. Try running your nails over it or dragging his favorite interactive toy across it. If he still needs coaxing, twice a month sprinkle catnip or the oil from canned tuna on the post. Praise him whenever you see him using the new post, and gradually bring it closer to a preferred location, away from his old favorite. You may want to set it up near his regular resting place. Many cats are compelled to scratch when they wake up from a nap.

If things are not going as smoothly as you would like, ask your veterinarian about rubber or plastic caps that glue on a cat's claws. They will need to be replaced by your pet's doctor every 8 weeks, but will help minimize the damage to your furniture as you continue with the retraining process. And remember, by keeping his nails trimmed, you will also cut down on damage.

To find out more information about animals available for adoption, call the Los Alamos Animal Shelter, 662-8179

Volunteers who can help with cat adoption questions:



**Nyree Cox 662-2054, Peter Roberts 662-2652
Ruby Turner 662-7615**

Volunteers who can help with dog adoption questions or for information on volunteering:

Wendee Brunish 662-3252



Sally Wilkins 662-2773

If you have questions or would like to make a donation:

**Friends of the Shelter
162 Chamisa St.
Los Alamos, NM 87544**

Or email:

sitstaygooddog@earthlink.net

Visit our Web Store !

www.cafeshops.com/fos_lanm

We have t-shirts, baseball caps, dog shirts, hoodies, frisbees, aprons, greeting cards, lunch boxes and many other items. You can get one of our special designs or our unique Friends of the Shelter logo.
(See samples below)



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