



STARTING OFF ON THE RIGHT PAW – DVGRR TIPS FOR ADOPTERS

Leashed is Loved – Please Read and Heed!

Congratulations on your new family member! We know you are looking forward to many years of happiness and joy with your adopted DVGRR Golden. We also know you are committed to being a responsible pet owner and want to do all you can to keep your Golden safe and healthy. To that end, we ask that you read the thoughts below on off-leash activity with your dog.

The Adoption Contract you have just signed requires that your adopted dog be kept on leash at all times when not in a securely fenced area. We sincerely hope that you will abide by that requirement and honor your contract with DVGRR. **We know, however, that for many adopters there will come a time in the dog's life where you may be tempted to allow him or her off leash to run and play with no fence.** Maybe it will be on a hike through the woods, at a vacation home near a lake, at the beach, or just one night when you are too tired to go out and instead open the door for a quick, off leash potty break.

Please... think VERY carefully before you do this and consider the potential risks and consequences:

- **First and foremost, you are putting your dog at risk of getting injured, lost, or even killed.** That may sound overly dramatic, but trust us, we've seen it happen. You may think your dog will never leave your side, but how can you be 100% sure? Even the most well-trained dog can be distracted, tempted, or frightened by something unexpected in the environment and take off without warning. The risk of this happening with rescue dogs is even greater, since we can never know everything that they were or were not exposed to in their past. Human nature leads us to believe the old mantra, "It won't happen to me." *Don't be so sure.*
- **Your dog depends on YOU to keep him or her safe.** On their own, they do not have the street smarts or level of human cognition to understand what may hurt them. That responsibility should never be taken lightly. How will you feel if your dog is hit by a car because you thought they were okay to be off leash? The article on the reverse side, "Trust – A Deadly Disease," was written by a heartbroken adopter who lost her treasured dog in just that way. Read it and heed it.
- **Ask yourself if your dog has a rock solid recall, one that you can depend on, even under the most adverse circumstances.** Just because your dog comes readily to you in your fenced yard does not mean he or she will do the same when there is a rabbit, squirrel, deer, or other dog that has caught his eye.
- **With regard to other dogs, what will happen if your off-leash dog runs up to another dog on leash who doesn't appreciate such a close, exuberant greeting?** Many dogs are extremely uncomfortable with dogs running up and getting in their face, and you run the risk that the leashed dog will lash out and bite, snap, or attack your off-leash dog in seconds flat. For owners of dogs who don't react well to other canines, your off-leash dog may be their worst nightmare. Be prepared to get a tongue-lashing from someone who has been working hard to desensitize their dog, only to have YOUR dog undo all their hard work.
- **Finally, should your dog end up in a shelter or vet office where he or she is scanned for a microchip, DVGRR will be notified of the dog's recovery.** Should we feel that you, as the adopter, have not been responsibly caring for your Golden, we have the contractual right to reclaim the dog and take him or her back into our program. Obviously, we are loathe to do this and use it only as a last resort, but we can and will pursue this action if warranted. Do you really want to risk losing ownership of your adopted Golden?

Keep your Golden safe – leashed is loved!

Trust – A Deadly Disease

By Sharon Mathers

There is a deadly disease stalking your dog, a hideous, stealthy thing just waiting its chance to steal your beloved friend. It is not a new disease or one for which there are inoculations. The disease is called "Trust."

You knew before you ever took your rescue dog home that it should not be trusted, especially if it is a dog that was a stray and, therefore, has no "history." The foster who provided you with this precious animal warned you, drummed it into your head. Dogs steal off counters, destroy anything expensive, chase cats, may need to be house trained and must never be allowed off lead unless in a securely fenced enclosure! When the big day finally arrived, heeding the sage advice of the foster, you escorted your dog into his new home, properly collared and tagged, the lead held tightly in your hand.

The house was "dog-proofed." Everything of value was stored in the spare bedroom; garbage was stowed in the cabinet under the kitchen sink or in a can with a tight lid; cats were isolated; and a gate was placed across the living room to keep at least one part of the house accident free. All windows and doors were properly secured, and signs were placed at strategic points, reminding all to "Close the door!"

Soon it becomes second nature to make sure the door closes nine-tenths of a second after it is opened and that it is really latched. "Don't let the dog out!" is your second most verbalized expression. (The first is "No!")

You worry and fuss constantly, terrified that your darling will get out, and disaster will surely follow. Your friends comment about who you love most, your family or the dog. You know that to relax your vigil for a moment might lose him to you forever.

And so the weeks and months pass with your dog becoming more civilized every day. The seeds of trust are planted. It seems that each new day brings less destruction, less breakage. Almost before you know it, your untrained but wonderful new companion has turned into an elegant, dignified friend.

Now that he is more reliable and sedate, you take him more places. No longer does he chew the steering wheel when left in the car. And darned if that cake wasn't still on the counter this morning! And, oh yes, wasn't that the cat he was sleeping with so cozily on your pillow last night? At this point you are beginning to become infected; the disease is spreading its roots deep into your mind.

Then one of your friends suggests obedience classes, and, after a time you even let him run loose from the car into the house when you get home. Why not? He always runs straight to the door, dancing in a frenzy of joy and waiting to be let in. And remember, he comes every time he is called. You know he is the exception that disproves the rule. (Sometimes late at night, you even let him slip out the front door to go potty and then come right back in.)

Time passes. It is hard to remember why you ever worried so much when he was a new family member. He would never think of running out a door left open while you bring in the packages from the car. It would be beneath his dignity to jump out the window of the car while you run into the convenience store. And when you take him for those wonderful long walks at dawn, it only takes one whistle to send him racing back to you in a burst of speed when the walk comes too close to the highway.

This is the time the disease has waited for so patiently. Sometimes it only has to wait a year or two, but often the incubation period is much longer. He spies the neighbor dog across the street, or perhaps it was only a paper fluttering in the breeze, or even just the sheer joy of running. Suddenly he forgets everything he ever knew about not slipping out doors, jumping out of windows or coming when called due to traffic.

Stopped in an instant. Stilled forever. Your heart is broken at the sight of his still, beautiful body.

The disease is trust. The final outcome, hit by a car.

Every morning my dog, Shah, bounced around off lead exploring. Every morning for seven years he came back when he was called. He was perfectly obedient, perfectly trustworthy. He died fourteen hours after being hit by a car. Please do not risk your friend and your heart. Save the trust for things that do not matter.

Please read this every year on your rescue dog's "Gotcha Day," lest you forget.