



## Heather 312165: What to Expect

**Heather is a graduate of our Behavior Modification Program and is looking for a special home.** Heather is a sweet and sensitive gal who has had a rough start to life and is looking for a home who can be patient and take things slow as she adjusts to the big wide world. Previous to coming to OHS, Heather was living in an unfortunate hoarding situation with her siblings and parents, in total 11 other dogs. Raised in a small home and confined to individual crates the first year of her life, she was only let out of her crate for daily trips outside to potty. Being carried each way out and back into the crate, she was never introduced to the leash. During this time in the home, she also had a bark collar that was left on so long, it became embedded into her neck creating sores and scars. Due to this lifestyle in her early development Heather did not receive the crucial socialization needed to be confident living in the world as a pet dog. Despite this rough start to life, Heather is incredibly sweet, loves going for walks, and playing in the yard. She is still a shy dog where loud noises, fast & unpredictable movements can cause her to want to hide and avoid interactions. Due to this sensitive nature, we feel she would do best in a low traffic quiet home without any other pets. While Heather can exist around other dogs, she doesn't yet have the social skills to interact properly. She'll need some time to build confidence in herself, her owners, and her environment before living with another dog.

Prior to coming to OHS Heather's world was a bubble confined to her crate and home. We imagine that things we consider "normal" will be frightening for Heather such as, moving cars, noises from the TV, fireworks, and riding in a car. She will need a patient and understanding family as she adapts to a whole new wide world. We expect that Heather will be overwhelmed by everything they encounter at first. During the critical first months in a new home, their safety will depend on your good judgment and forethought. **A frightened dog will look for any occasion to bolt when startled: out of vehicles, out the front door, or slipping out of the leash. Keep a very tight grip of that leash!**

### **Here's how to help Heather settle in during your first months together:**

**Designate a "safe spot" in your home.** You can use a crate or taller baby gates to confine them to a smaller area where they have access to water, bed, and toys. When you are unable to supervise the dog, leave them in their safe spot. Slowly work toward leaving them alone, unsecured, once they've had the chance to settle into your home and you know with certainty, they will be comfortable.

**Be your dog's advocate.** It's okay to ask someone to stop or prevent a person from letting their dog come up to say hi to your dog. Watch their body language and help your dog out of situations if they appear stressed. Explain that Heather is not comfortable with new people and doesn't enjoy meeting strangers while on their walk. Tossing a treat on the ground is more effective for your dog to make positive associations with new people. Distance is calming.

**Allow for time to build trust.** Always let Heather decide if they want to come closer to you. Don't force interactions. As they grow more comfortable, you will see Heather decide that they enjoy spending time with you by coming closer for pets, jumping next to you on the couch, and following your resident dog around.

**Limit introductions to new people.** Take your time to get to know Heather before introducing them to someone new. They may need to meet a new person multiple times before feeling comfortable with strangers. Treats and allowing Heather to approach as they feel comfortable will be best. New people should just completely ignore Heather at first – playing hard to get is the way to their heart.

**Use routine to get Heather comfortable in their new home.** It will take a couple weeks for Heather to feel comfortable in their new home and with you. Having a predictable schedule will help them adjust to their new home.

**Take Heather outside on leash.** Even if you have a fenced yard, please do not let Heather out alone. They are easily frightened; they could easily hide under your deck or a bush. Heather does like to go for walks and go outside to potty but needs some time to figure out the routine before being trusted off leash.

**Use treats and toys to build trust.** Maintaining and continuing Heather's training will create a bond and a form of communication between two species who don't understand each other. The more positive experiences Heather has with their owners, the more valuable you will become in high distracting situations.

**Patience will come in handy for you.** Heather responds best to positive reinforcement and reward-based training. They will need an understanding, calm owner who has the time and desire to work on helping them learn to live in a home. Heather will pay you back by supplying love and enthusiasm!

**"Puppy proof" your home and practice tether training** to prevent them from getting into puppy/adolescent trouble. When home have Heather on leash, attached to you or tethered to a large piece of furniture as you go about your daily routine. This will help with potty training, bonding, and creating boundaries within the home. Let Heather drag the leash around the house or yard from time to time to simulate "freedom", but do not let them off leash until they can 100% be trusted not to get into things they shouldn't. This could take up to a few weeks. Crate Heather when you cannot watch them. This will ensure their puppy curiosity doesn't get them into any trouble. You will have long lasting success if you follow this method.

**Skip the dog park.** Don't take Heather to busy places where they will have lots of uncontrolled interactions with people or other dogs (such as Saturday Market, dog parks, coffee shops, etc.). Heather has shown us they don't have an interest in being around other dogs. Taking leashed hikes to the river, playing in the backyard, or to places not frequented by many other dogs will allow for exercise, but keep Heather calm and engaged with you.

**Visiting the Vet:** Unless it's an emergency, give your dog plenty of time to bond to you before taking them to your vet. Start with positive visits just for treats. Vet visits will more than likely be scary, but if your dog already trusts you, your presence may help them feel more comfortable.

Try using **Adaptil (Dog Appeasing Pheromone)** or **Rescue Remedy by Bach Flower Essences**. These products may help dogs settle in new environments by easing the stress associated with change.

### **We're here to help!**

We want Heather to be successful in your home. We're available to answer questions via phone and email. During your first two months with Heather, we can also set up a free one-on-one consultation. For questions or to schedule an appointment, contact us at **(503) 285-1145** or [BMODTrainers@oregonhumane.org](mailto:BMODTrainers@oregonhumane.org).

Please keep in touch so we can continue to help you now and in the future. Reach out if you have questions or concerns, or just to give an update. We love to see photos and hear how our friends are doing! Thank you for adopting from the Oregon Humane Society. Congratulations on your new dog!