

Boroughbred Behavior Resources



Issue: Decompression Period

What does this mean?

When you bring a new pet into your home, regardless of their behavior or personality, they will need some period of decompression before they are fully comfortable. During this time they may be particularly fearful, anxious, or may have accidents in your home. The most important thing to remember is that this is normal! Think about arriving into somebody's home to stay with them; you don't know where anything is, you might be uncomfortable, anxious, and depending on the type of person you are, perhaps want to be left alone. This is exactly how your new pet will be feeling, but they are not able to say it to you. Their behavior during the first hours, days, or even weeks in your home may not represent how they will be once they are settled in, meaning do not worry if you feel like your new pet is hiding or avoiding contact, or if they are whining, pacing, or having accidents in the home.

What do I do?

The most important thing to remember is to give your new pet time and space. If they are hiding, or avoiding you and your family, just ignore them and allow them to be by themselves. When they approach, offer praise, attention, treats or anything else that makes them feel good. Ideally create a quiet space, whether this is a crate, a quiet room, or even a space under a desk or table, where they can feel safe and still observe your daily routine. If you are passing by the quiet area, or walking by your pet, it can also be beneficial to toss treats towards them so they learn to associate your approach with positive things.

Remember, your pet does not know this brand new space or even you! If they have accidents or jump on furniture that you do not want them on, do not punish them! As with everything else, offer praise for desirable behavior and either ignore undesirable behavior or remove them from the area calmly and offer praise and treats when they get to their own bed or area (for example if they are jumping on furniture).

Your new pet may or may not be house trained, so the best thing to do is offer frequent walks to give them the opportunity to eliminate outside. You can find out more about house training in our other fliers.

If your new pet's behavior is completely different from the behavior described at the Care Center, or if it is highly concerning (barking, growling, lunging), you can always call the Care Center for advice.

As your new pet comes out of their shell you will get more of a feel for who they really are and your patience with them will be rewarded! Giving your pet space when they need it is always important but especially while you are still getting to know each other.

And while we know you will want to celebrate your new pet, perhaps with a homecoming party or by inviting all your friends over to meet them, we love the idea but suggest you wait a few weeks until your pet has fully acclimated to their new home and to their new family. Too much too fast can be overwhelming, and may push your new dog to behave in ways they normally would not. They want to meet your friends too – just not immediately.

If you need more help:

Seek out a consultation with a professional, certified behaviorist or a certified dog trainer.

Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers: <http://www.ccpdt.org>

Certified Applied Animal Behaviorists: <http://corecaab.org>