

Advice on dogs, life and love



ask dog lady

Dear Dog Lady,

I adopted a puppy beagle two-and-one-half years ago from the Humane Society. He has a very strange habit: Every time I feed him, he rubs his nose on the ground in front of his bowl making a high pitched noise. He continues to do that while grabbing a bite occasionally. He often tips his bowl spilling the food inside and I made a bowl guard to prevent it. Why does he do this?
—Jesus

Jesus, he does this because he's peculiar about food. And who isn't? A bowl of yum can cause dogs to do strange things—sing, howl, dance and emit high-pitched noises. Each dog has eating patterns and issues. (Dog Lady's darling takes small bites silently and chews very carefully). As long as your dog is not aggressive about grub and allows you to put your hands near the bowl, you shouldn't be concerned. You were very sweet to make him a special feeding contraption.

Dear Dog Lady,

I am depressed since getting my eight-week-old dog, Zoey. I was not ready for one. I just didn't want to have to take care of anything else right now except myself. I don't want to think about having to take my dog out every hour. I worry that every time she sits or squats, she's going to go on my floor. She's very hyper and chews and bites everything. Basically, it drives me crazy. Is this normal? Or am I just not ready for a dog?
—Kelly

Kelly, post-poochum depression can often occur after bringing home a puppy or a shelter dog for the first time. Symptoms typically manifest with these common complaints: "What have I done?" "Can I give it back?" "How do I take care of this thing?"

Your tone is angry, as if someone forced this puppy upon you. You might not be in the mood for a reading assignment but Dog Lady wags her finger and heartily recommends "Pack of Two: The Intricate

Bond Between People and Dogs" by Caroline Knapp (Dell Publishing). This non-wonky treasure is the beautifully written memoir of a first-time dog keeper. "Pack" sustained Dog Lady during the struggle to bond with a new puppy, a creature that seemed like an alien from Planet Fuzzbucket.

Do not take your anger out on innocent Zoey. Remember, she didn't ask for you. Keep the puppy in a crate for training. This will save you from worry about where she is and what she's depositing on the floor.

Hey, sometimes the best laid plans of mutts and men don't work out. Give Zoey a happy life. Yet, if you're continually miserable after a couple of months, contact the source where you adopted your puppy and ask for more advice. Dog Lady won't venture beyond this point because it's your personal journey.

Dear Dog Lady,

I have a one-year-old Shipoo I got at a shelter. Normally, she is a loving, goofy, puppy. But when you give her a certain kind of bone and you try to go near her, she growls and will show her teeth. Last night, I tried moving her while she had her bone and she bit me and broke the skin. As soon as the bone is removed, she is back to her old self.
—Mary

Mary, it doesn't matter whether a dog is a cute Shih-poo (Shih Tzu/poodle mix) or a large Akita, the dog's primordial instincts can flare over a lupine lunchable such as a bone. An adorable moptop can suddenly morph into a fixated wild thing when you interfere with a feeding frenzy.

Whenever our dogs draw blood, the situation is serious and the need for training becomes urgent. You have to live with your puppy for many years to come. You should never feel intimidated or fearful of this hairy heap—as cute as she may be. Tell your veterinarian what happened and ask him or her for a reference to a trainer. Your dog is "food aggressive" and professional training could benefit both of you.

Basically, your Shih-poo must understand you are the leader of the pack. You reinforce this concept by carefully monitoring and doling out her food. Do not give any more bones. And when you give her regular meals, hand out the kibble and meat in controlled dollops. Make her sit, stay, and focus on you before she gets anything. Pick up her bowl regularly. This controlling action signals to your puppy that you are Mama Wolf.

Visit www.askdoglady.com to ask a question, make a comment, and listen to segments from "Ask Dog Lady," the radio show.