



## **DIGESTIVE ISSUES IN DOGS TRANSITIONING FROM THE SHELTER**

You've just brought your dog home, your new pet runs into your yard and promptly has... diarrhea. What should you do?

Sometimes dogs straight out of the shelter will develop a mild and short episode of diarrhea when they move in with their new families. As you can imagine, it can be a little stressful for dogs to adjust to a new environment, new family, and new routine. Stress induced diarrhea can be self limiting and resolve once the dogs adjust to their new lifestyle. You can help your new companions alleviate some of their stress by providing a predictable routine for them by taking them for walks and feeding at set times of the day. Additionally, starting training will provide a structured time for you to bond with your temporary family member and for them to learn how to interact with you.

Some dogs benefit from a bland diet when they move in with their new families. This gives their digestive tract a chance to not have to work as hard to digest their food. Bland diets are composed of an easily digestible protein and carbohydrate source. The most common bland diet is low fat cottage cheese and cooked white rice mixed in a one to one ratio. This diet should be fed about 4 times a day in smaller amounts than their regular food diet. They should get very little to no treats at this time. Utilizing a slow feeding bowl can also benefit dogs experiencing digestive issues.

Most dogs will have stool quality improvement within 2-3 days of eating this diet. Once their stool quality shows improvement, gradually mix in their regular food with the bland diet and decrease the number of meals back to twice daily. The recommended mix is 75% bland diet mixed with 25% regular food. See how the dog does on this mix for a couple of days. If the stool continues to improve, then increase the amount of regular food to 50% of the diet and see how the dog does for another couple of days. If stool quality does not worsen, then increase the regular food by another 25% for a couple of days until you are just feeding regular food. If stool quality deteriorates or worsens during this transition time, you may have to go backwards until stool quality improves and move through the stages of increasing regular food a bit more slowly.

If your dog had normal stools for at least a week to 10 days after bringing them home and then develops diarrhea, or their activity and appetite decreases while they are having diarrhea, or the diarrhea is protracted lasting longer than 5-7 days, then this could indicate that your dog's

diarrhea is not due to stress but some other, possibly more serious, medical condition and it may be of benefit to have the dog examined by a veterinarian.

### **Stress diarrhea**

Occurs when dogs encounter a new and potentially stressful situation

Activity and Appetite remains normal

Responsive to bland diet

### **Bland diet feeding regimen**

- 100% bland diet for 2-3 days or until stool quality starts to improve.
- Add regular food to bland diet at 25% regular to 75% bland and feed for 2-3 days and monitor stool quality.
- If stools continue to improve, add 50% regular food to 50% bland diet and feed for 2-3 days.
- Increase regular food by 25% as long as stool quality remains improved.
- If stool quality deteriorates, go back to the previous balance of regular to bland food and add regular food in lesser amounts to maintain and improve stool quality.

### **A veterinarian should be consulted if:**

- Your dog has diarrhea that lasts longer than 5-7 days with no improvement despite a bland diet.
- Your dog has diarrhea with a concurrent decrease in activity and appetite no matter how many days.