

Mattie



Mattie is a bit over 10 years old but acts more like she is three. Friends are always saying "are you sure about her age, she is so frisky and trim?" She was in a "kill facility" in Missouri and she had very little time left. I learned about Mattie's plight from one of my former students, on Facebook. Mattie's original family had fallen on hard times and was forced to take her to the local "facility". She had been at the facility for a while and her time had "run out". The constant thought I had, that night, was "I wonder who would adopt an older dog?" So the next morning I talked it over with my wife.

We were still sad about losing our own Dalmatian, our family pet, six years ago. And we currently have a big, bouncy eight year old male Black Lab. Questions arose... Would they get along? Do we really want to take on the responsibility of another dog? But if we don't, who will adopt Mattie? Yes, we do have the space and I do have the time to devote to another dog. We decided that I should at least look into Mattie's situation. Maybe someone else had "stepped forward". I responded to the phone listing for Dalmatian Rescue of Colorado and the more I learned about Mattie, the more "adopting Mattie" felt like "the right thing to do". And yes, Dalmatian

Rescue could get Mattie from Missouri to northern New Mexico, but I would have to drive, from southern New Mexico, to pick her up.

The questions then changed. How do you greet a new, but older dog? My experience had always been with puppies. How do you bring a new, older dog, into another dog's territory? What do I need to purchase for her... a bed... a crate... a leash... food... dish? And what type of food has she been eating? I did some "online surfing" and found answers to greeting a dog and successfully acquainting them with an existing pet. Dalmatian Rescue provided added answers on feeding and crating. In fact the crate was invaluable since Mattie had forgotten her "potty training" instructions due to being in kennels, foster homes and being transported. One mophead, 3 rolls of paper towels, and one half gallon of "stain and odor" remover and we are slowly getting our potty training skills back. I learned to observe her "potty schedule" and provide many trips outside at the appropriate times, like right after getting up from sleeping or right after a meal. She receives gentle verbal correction when she makes a mistake.

Was it worth it? YOU BET!!! Mattie is the sweetest, most loving dog ever. She loves to give kisses and to snuggle. And she really enjoys climbing into my lap to nap. She is ever more than a couple of inches from me. She is inquisitive and loves checking out all the cabinet, cupboards and drawers as I open them. She "sniffs" her fill and then pulls back. Just getting acquainted with her new environment, I think. She also likes watching TV. Mattie really likes riding in the car and doing shopping errands. She waits patiently, at each stop, for me to return. It is obvious that she came from a "very caring environment". I am sure her original family was heartbroken when they had to give her up.

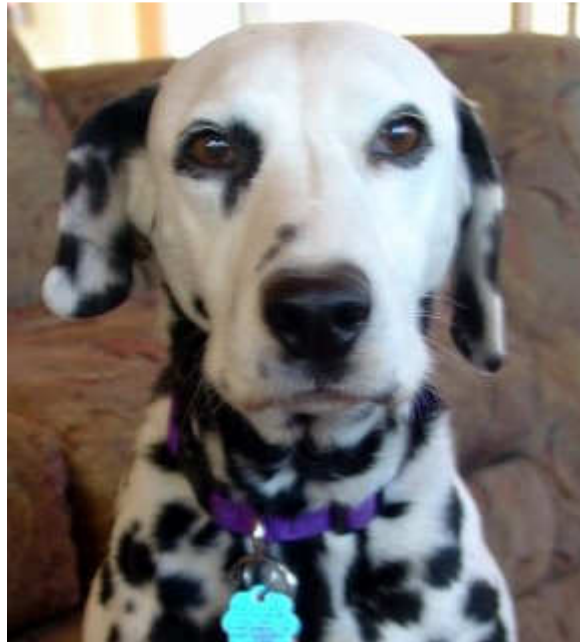
She and our Lab Retriever tolerate each other quite well. They are still working on who is "in charge" but Mattie follows her everywhere, except she does insist on going through doorways first. She is learning to retrieve tennis balls, however, her version of retrieving is to steal the ball when the Lab drops it at my feet... then run to her bed and try to skin the cover off the thing. From Mattie, the Lab is learning that he does not have to run through doorways first, and he is learning how to take treats from your hand gently. My fingers appreciate Mattie's ever so careful nibbles at whatever the hand is offering. I make sure they get equal treats, pats, verbal approvals, and it seems to be working. They both "wait their turn" now (even at mealtime) and are not competing for attention. As Mattie learns to use the dog door, it's really fun to watch this little black and white nose, first poke its way gently out the side of the door. With our Lab you get a solid crashing out through the door, 120 pounds all at once and look out whomever or whatever is in the way.

With Mattie, I couldn't be more pleased. She has taken over the couch in my study and watches patiently as I work on my computer. She is already extremely loyal and can be off-leash when out on the desert. I enjoy her "Dalmatian trot" both through the house and out on the desert trails. She travels like she really has a 'sense of purpose'. Her stamina actually exceeds the Lab, who has been running on trails all

his life. I also enjoy the characteristic three-legged pointer stance with one front leg lifted while gazing into the distance or sniffing the wind.

I hope to enjoy Mattie's company for many more years. Adopting Mattie was the right thing to do. It's nice to have a Dalmatian in our home again.

*Lee H.
Las Cruces, NM*



Mattie posing for a portrait photo
