

Evaluation of XXXXXXXX – mixed breed male dog

Evaluation at Paradise Pet – 48 West Passaic Ave - Bloomfield, NJ on April 29, 2013

Conducted by Jeff Coltenback; assisted by Mike Trombetta

Video by Diana Coltenback

Handlers of XXXXXXXX: XXXXXXXX; Jeff Coltenback

The following evaluation was conducted at Paradise Pet in Bloomfield, NJ. This is the first and only time I have met this dog. The tests performed during this evaluation determine this particular dog's behavior, temperament and ability to cope with stressors and stimuli on this particular day and in the environment in which the test was conducted. As far as the results I will offer; please keep in mind that a pass or fail mark for an individual test is not an indication of a pass or fail for the overall test. For instance, a "fail" merely indicates that improvement is needed and I will offer suggestions on how the dog can improve in a particular situation. Conversely, a "pass" generally suggests the dog reacted or behaved in a normal or expected manner for the average domestic pet. Although a dog may "pass" a test, I still may still offer suggestions for improved behavior.

- **Initial Observation:** Unbeknownst to OWNER, I took video of her walking XXXXXXXX toward the entrance of my place of business, Paradise Pet. OWNER demonstrated complete control over XXXXXXXX while crossing a busy country road. XXXXXXXX was relaxed and calm as they approached the entrance. PASS
- **Capacity to assess and respond to a new environment (time, reactivity, etc):** Once inside Paradise Pet, XXXXXXXX was preoccupied with the new environment and was inspecting, sniffing and surveying the area. XXXXXXXX did appear a bit apprehensive yet continued to be curious. XXXXXXXX did not exhibit any signs of stress or duress. PASS
- **Interacting with a non-threatening stranger:** I presented myself to XXXXXXXX in a non-threatening way and instructed XXXXXXXX to allow XXXXXXXX to approach me. He approached in a friendly manner and took a treat from my hand gently. PASS

- **Bite inhibition:** During our initial interaction where I offered XXXXXXXX a treat, I verbally “yelped” to obtain an inhibitive response from XXXXXXXX and he immediately backed away from my fingers. This is a clear indication that he receives communication precisely and demonstrates appropriate bite inhibition. He proceeded to show normal interest in the treats I had in my hand and offered a “sit” to me. PASS

- **Obedience:** XXXXXXXX knew his basic commands of sit, down and come even towards me a stranger. He is food motivated and showed normal interest in me and the treats at this point in time. Prior to us continuing to the next test, I was giving XXXXXXXX instructions for her handling of XXXXXXXX and XXXXXXXX showed no signs that caused me concern as to a stranger approaching his handler, nor did he offer any behavior or posture that suggested he was concerned with my approach towards XXXXXXXX. PASS

- **Stare Test:** This is a typical test performed to determine a dog’s ability to be physically manipulated and stared at to emulate a direct challenge. Initially, XXXXXXXX did not move as I grabbed his jowls and held his head firm. After a couple of seconds, he did begin to pull away. But, at no time, did he exhibit any aggressive or abnormal behavior other than a bit of anxiety. I released and approached him again and his anxiety was clear and his desire to flee was obvious. I persisted in my approach to him. His anxious and fearful body posture was accompanied by a vocalization. I gave him the come command and he approached me and took a treat. PASS.

- **Invasive approach:** As I continued to approach and stare at XXXXXXXX, his anxiety towards me was apparent. His body language clearly suggested he was uncomfortable with me and he vocalized as well to communicate his discomfort. Although I was offering a more threatening approach towards XXXXXXXX, his reaction to me suggests his preference to flee threatening stimuli rather than confront. Although this is better than a fight response, I would suggest that a socialization schedule be implemented to help XXXXXXXX overcome his apprehension in such situations. FAIL

- **Assertive and physical handling:** I took the leash from XXXXXXXX and XXXXXXXX exhibited anxious posture and barked. I pulled him towards me nonetheless. I walked him a few feet and he sat. I gave him a few leash corrections. HE accepted physical handling appropriately. He offered me his paw – at this time I performed a brief pinch test and I pinched the inside of his toes. Although he tried to pull away, he did not attempt to mouth or bite me nor did he act aggressively. I then held a leash correction on him (i.e. pulled and choked him with the leash) and grabbed his muzzle with no negative reaction. XXXXXXXX is, however, a little hand shy. This could just be a byproduct of the stress of being tested. I was also able to perform a brief “pull” test on his ears. He did not overreact and accepted my pulling of both of his ears. Although very anxious, XXXXXXXX shows good tolerance. PASS.
- **Neck scruff/roll:** This is where I grab the dog by the neck scruff and force dog to the ground. This test is a bit archaic, but still very effective in determining a dog’s ability to cope with being handled in an invasive manner. XXXXXXXX resisted initially and popped into a sit. But, I reapplied the pressure and he ultimately submitted and went down and even rolled onto his side. I held him down for about 10 seconds before proceeding to the next test. PASS
- **Paw pinch and tail tug:** XXXXXXXX had very little reaction to his paws being pinched, even after I forced him down by his scruff. I also pulled him about two feet by his tail without any adverse reaction on his part. Most compelling about this was his immediate recovery as indicated by his body shake – a clear calming signal for dogs. PASS
- **Friendly stranger:** I had my assistant act as the friendly stranger to see XXXXXXXX’s response. Although XXXXXXXX is food motivated, he did once again show some shyness towards hands. However, his capacity to accept a friendly stranger is apparent. PASS
- **Ear Cleaning:** The purpose here is to assess how the dog can handle invasive interaction such as an ear cleaning. XXXXXXXX was obviously stressed during this. Yet, he had no aggressive or adverse reaction to me cleaning his ears other than trying to pull away. PASS

- **Play Initiation/Tag-Fast touch:** This is to engage dog in play and to see if dog will overreact to stimulation by handler. Unsure and apprehensive, XXXXXXXX wanted no part in engaging in play with me. I tagged him hard a couple of times and he wanted no part in this interaction. Normal dogs will comply and reciprocate play. XXXXXXXX's lack to do so could imply a need for more socialization. It could also simply indicate his stress level and incapacity to function normally at this time. Improvement is needed. FAIL
- **Food guarding:** XXXXXXXX was not food aggressive and did not guard his food from me. Instead, he backed away several times as my hand went into his food dish. I confirmed with XXXXXXXX that he had no prior issues with food guarding. PASS
- **Dog on Dog Test:** First dog tested was a 5 year old female Shih Tzu. At first XXXXXXXX showed elevated interest towards the dog. His body posture did not exhibit aggression or predation (behavior consistent with chase or hunting). His ears were forward and his tail was low and relaxed. This was mere curiosity. I tried to agitate him by correcting him on the leash to see if he would react aggressively but he did not. He simply just raised his muzzle to sniff the air in an attempt to gather information about the dog. I then approached dog and XXXXXXXX sat calmly only 3 feet from dog. I then instructed my assistance to walk back and forth with the 10lb dog and even ran back and forth to try to get a chase response out of XXXXXXXX. He was easily controlled the entire time, even in a down position and XXXXXXXX showed no signs of aggression rather focus on me the handler. I then took XXXXXXXX into my boarding room and he was face to face calmly and friendly with a large, male pit bull. PASS
- **Threat/Agitation Response (bite sleeve):** This test is done to determine the dog's willingness to aggress or retaliate to a threat. Using an agitation stick, I agitated and approached XXXXXXXX in an aggressive and threatening manner. His only reaction was to flee. XXXXXXXX had no intention of retaliating or protecting his owner or himself from this threat. He even expressed his anal glands and urinated during this test – a clear sign that a dog does not wish to engage in the confrontation. After this test, I attempted to interact with him in a friendly manner and he was very apprehensive. Yet, he still chose curiosity. PASS

Conclusion

Overall Grade: PASS. Overall, XXXXXXXX is a pretty average dog in his response to normal, everyday stimuli and circumstances. His reaction to most of the tests performed, even the ones with a “fail” result, were not uncommon results. The major issue with XXXXXXXX is that he is a very nervous and anxious dog. Now, this could merely be that he was nervous on this day, in the environment he was tested and the person testing him (me). However, I must still recommend that serious effort be put into continued and sustained socialization with XXXXXXXX. XXXXXXXX is easy to handle. He is very food motivated which will make training and socialization very easy. XXXXXXXX’s capacity to be a normal household pet is quite apparent. I saw no signs of aggression or unpredictable behavior from XXXXXXXX towards people or animals presented to him. Aside from his anxiety and apprehension when under duress, there was nothing discovered during this evaluation that suggests XXXXXXXX is any different than many household pets.

Furthermore, as it pertains to New Jersey State Title 4 dog laws, XXXXXXXX’s response to unprovoked interactions with both dogs and people was typical of a non-aggressive animal. However, to ensure XXXXXXXX’s capacity in all situations, specifically as it relates to aggression towards people, I went the extra step and agitated and provoked XXXXXXXX for the purpose of eliciting an aggressive or defensive response out of him. Under extreme stress, agitation and provocation, XXXXXXXX chose to avoid and flee the provoked attempt by me. The facts demonstrated by XXXXXXXX’s behavior are apparent and illustrated on video. It is not my opinion, but factual video data, that XXXXXXXX was not aggressive towards unprovoked approaches by people and dogs alike. It is unclear if the victim (the deceased dog) actually initiated a provoked response from XXXXXXXX, or vice versa. It is irrelevant that XXXXXXXX was running at large, as it pertains to XXXXXXXX’s alleged “attack” on the small dog. Dogs are not aware of human leash laws, only their communication with one another via body language, eye contact and vocalization. Since there were no trained professionals present during the alleged attack, it is impossible to deduce which dog initiated the physical escalation during the incident. The only clear fact surrounding this case is that XXXXXXXX was running at large. Such an offense, according to New Jersey State law, XXXXXXXX cannot be found to be dangerous or potentially dangerous unless clear and convincing data proves that injury or death was the result of an unprovoked attack.

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Signature: _____ Date: _____
