

Evaluation of XXXXXXXX

Evaluation at XXXXXXXX – XXXXXXXXXX, NJ on April 17, 2013

Conducted by Jeff Coltenback

Video by Diana Coltenback

Handler: Shelter staff, XXXXXXXX

The following evaluation was conducted at XXXXXXXX in XXXXXXXX, NJ. 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 manner. Although a dog may "pass" a test, I still may still offer suggestions for improved behavior.

The adoptability of a dog is a subjective decision based on many factors. It is not my intention to determine the adoptability of a dog tested. This decision should be made by the organization who maintains care, custody and control of the animal. However, I do offer my opinion as it relates to when, where, how and why a dog could or should be placed, rehabilitated, sent to sanctuary or euthanized.

- **Initial Observation in kennel/cage:** Upon approaching the cage, XXXXXXXX was very excited and jumping on gate and barking. I walked past the cage and ignored him. I then came back and made direct eye contact and crouched down to his level and offered him a treat. He sat and took the treat gently and showed no signs of stress or aggression with my approach to his cage. I made eye contact again and XXXXXXXX responded with a very alert posture. He did not charge the gate or me. PASS.

Comments: XXXXXXXX's cage excitement, although normal, should be worked on. This can be done by just about anyone. You can simply take approach XXXXXXXX's cage and do not make eye contact. Sit or kneel quietly by his cage door. After a period of time (however long it takes), XXXXXXXX will settle down just a bit. Then, eye contact can be made and a treat offered. The treat is only offered once XXXXXXXX is calm. Once this is accomplished, the person may leave. However, once the person begins to walk away, if

XXXXXXX begins to be excited again, the person must not leave the cage. The theme here is to reward XXXXXXXX for being calm upon approach and departure.

- **Observation exiting cage (Rafael is the handler):** XXXXXXXX was overly excited at the presence of Rafael and the sight of the leash. Rafael took the perfect approach in waiting for XXXXXXXX to settle before leashing him. Upon exiting, XXXXXXXX was excited and pulling toward the door. Rafael continued to settle XXXXXXXX down prior to entering the yard. This approach should be done by all of XXXXXXXX's handlers. PASS

- **Capacity to decompress upon exiting (time, reactivity, etc):** XXXXXXXX entered the yard tail high and wagging fast (aroused and over stimulated). It took XXXXXXXX about a minute to decompress a little bit which is noticed by the change in his posture and his tail lowers and wags slower (slow and low [lower than spine]; is where we want the tail to be). XXXXXXXX settled down very quickly. He showed no reactivity to other dogs or any of us.

PASS

- **Interacting with a non-threatening stranger:** Once we were in the yard, I directed Rafael to allow XXXXXXXX to approach me. I had a small treat in hand. I was standing perpendicular to XXXXXXXX with my eyes averted (not square and facing him). He came up to me took treat gently and went about his business. Most importantly was that his body posture was calm and relaxed. PASS

- **Walking (observation & change of handler):** We took XXXXXXXX for a little walk off site. XXXXXXXX showed no signs of stress or apprehension with me walking next to him with Rafael Handling. We passed firefighters that were doing some work with equipment and hoses and XXXXXXXX showed casual, normal interest and continued on the walk. Once we were out in a nearby field, I took the leash from Rafael. I gave XXXXXXXX a sit command and offered a treat. We then continued walking. XXXXXXXX kept looking up at me and he was a bit apprehensive with me handling him. He was clearly uneasy with a new handler. Fortunately, XXXXXXXX is very food motivated and this allowed me to interact with him to effect positive change in his demeanor. We stopped again briefly before returning to the yard and XXXXXXXX was much improved, but still a little unsure

about me. XXXXXXXX recovered well and progressed nicely on this walk. I'd like to see XXXXXXXX have more opportunities to be handled by more people. FAIL

Comments: XXXXXXXX's apprehension with a new handler is not a major issue. In all likelihood, his quarantine time and minimal exposure to people and handlers contributed to his uncertainty and apprehension towards me as his handler. It also could be that he was nervous with me and me alone. Walks and interactions by multiple handlers along with positive associations with new people will likely help XXXXXXXX to trust more people.

- **Environmental Sensitivity:** XXXXXXXX showed no abnormal sensitivity to the environment including dogs, people, firefighters, traffic, etc. PASS
- **Obedience Commands (any handler):** XXXXXXXX knows sit and come only. More training is needed. Sit, down, come and stay should be taught. FAIL.
- **Friendly Verbal Interaction:** Back in the yard I was just interacting and walking back and forth with XXXXXXXX and offered some treats. He was very friendly and relaxed at this time. PASS
- **Friendly Physical Interaction:** I sat in chair in the yard and XXXXXXXX approached. I gave him a treat and started touching his mouth and jowls. He was accepting but did stiffen up briefly. I considered muzzling him. But, I stopped test to watch on camera. And, he was uneasy for a split second and no muzzle was needed. FAIL

Comments – XXXXXXXX just needs more socialization and opportunities to interact with people so he overcomes his apprehension.

- **Stare Test:** This test was conducted twice. First, was when we came back from the walk and I confronted XXXXXXXX and stared him dead in the eye sternly. He did not react negatively and was more focused on getting a treat. The true stare test came when I

grabbed him by his jowls. This was pretty far into the eval. But, he accepted my control of his head. PASS.

- **Play Initiation:** Unsure and apprehensive at first, XXXXXXXX was happy to reciprocate and engage in play with me. Each time XXXXXXXX responded favorably, I rewarded him verbally. This was an opportunity to not only evaluate him, but also to reward him for good behavior so he is more likely to respond to friendly play appropriately. The play test was the first time I took my gloves off since his behavior was relaxed and friendly. The light taps in his face with my hand were accepted by him without consequence. Even as I increased my intensity with XXXXXXXX, he remained in control of himself and at no time did he over-react or become over stimulated. He did mouth a bit too hard a few times. But each time, I corrected him and responded appropriately. Firm and loud verbal corrections were accepted readily as well. PASS.
- **Off leash interaction:** I continued to engage XXXXXXXX in play off leash. I wanted to see if there any predatory or herding behaviors present when I ran away from him. He did not engage in any threatening or negative behaviors while off leash. PASS
- **Tag/Fast touch test:** Similar to play imitation, the tag/fast touch test is intended to see what, if any, over reaction we get from XXXXXXXX. His response was immediate arousal and excitement. I did this on a couple of separate occasions in the eval. PASS
- **Excited greeting:** I walk very fast towards dog and handler, yelling and hands/arms waving to see if dog overreacts at excited approach. XXXXXXXX was unfazed by this. PASS.
- **Massage Test (lumbar, skin sensitivity):** This is more of a rough pet test to ensure the dog has the capacity to accept rough, but friendly interaction. XXXXXXXX absolutely enjoyed it. PASS.

- **Pull Test (ears, tail):** XXXXXXXX wanted no part of his tail being touched. He didn't mouth but chose to spin his tail away from me. The timing of this test and his "spin" away from me could have been interpreted by him a play since we were engaged in playful interactions for an extended period of time. Nevertheless, I would have liked to have seen a less excited response. He allowed me to pull on his ears and made no attempt to mouth me or act adversely. PASS

- **Bite Inhibition (during play, treats, etc):** During one of our play interactions, I excited the play and offered my fist to XXXXXXXX try and get him to mouth me. He did and as his excitement increases, so did the pressure of his mouthing. This is very normal, especially for young, confined dogs. XXXXXXXX was especially inhibitive when taking treats from my hand. He was very gentle throughout. *Side note was during the last test; the agitation test. XXXXXXXX opted to using his mouth as a last resort to a threat.* PASS

- **Physical Manipulation:** This is where I lift the dog's hind quarters off the ground by wrapping my hands around the belly and lift body up. XXXXXXXX did not accept this at all. He did attempt to mouth. But he did not act aggressively. His response could have been residual from our play session. However, we should err on the side of caution and work towards his acceptance of physical manipulation in this manner. FAIL.

Comments – when he is in a relaxed state (after play or exercise), take some treats and calmly wrap your hands around his belly – but do not lift. Simply do this exercise as often as possible. There is no need to lift here. The goal is to have positive association with this invasive attempt on him (he could perceive this as being mounted).

- **Ear probe:** This is done merely to emulate having his ears cleaned. I stuck my fingers in his ears and made a cleaning motion with them. He did not react negatively at all. PASS

- **Skin Pinch:** XXXXXXXX is very sensitive to having his skin pinched. This has very little bearing on his temperament. But, something worthy note.

- **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. He even

tried to jump away. But, I maintained the pressure and he ultimately submitted and went down and even rolled onto his side. PASS

- **Paw pinch:** XXXXXXXX had very little reaction to his hind paws being pinched. He is sensitive to his front paws. This could be something as simple as a bad nail clip at some point in his life. FAIL

Comments – although not a huge deal; I'd like to see him be less sensitive to his front paws being touched. Petting his paws with one hand while having treats in the other hand could help desensitize him to this.

- **Aggressive handling:** I emulate trying to grab him aggressively. XXXXXXXX did not back down and did jump at me in an aggressive manner. But, when I stopped, he stopped. Although some may feel this is a negative behavior, I do not. This is a very normal response. However, this is a behavior that should be expected if someone mishandles him.

- **Threat/Agitation Response (bite sleeve):** This test is done to determine the dog's willingness to aggress or retaliate to a threat. XXXXXXXX initially chose to flee and warn through body language. Even though he was tethered, he still chose not to retaliate. He even expresses his anal glands as you can see in the video. XXXXXXXX gave clear signs that he wanted no part in this interaction. It was only until I gave him no choice but to protect himself that he did just that. Even when he did ultimately bite and hold, he released immediately when the agitation stick was struck next to his face. This test also validates that XXXXXXXX will not redirect on his handler when presented with a threat or stressor. Redirected aggression is common for high anxiety or anxious dogs. XXXXXXXX did not redirect on Rafael during this, the most stressful encounter XXXXXXXX likely has ever had in his life. Another compelling aspect about this was after the test was over. I came back into the yard and XXXXXXXX accepted me friendly. His recovery from this was remarkable. PASS

- **Remove from Kennel post-agitation:** After we were done, I went inside to see how XXXXXXXX would respond to me letting him out of the cage. He calmed down very quickly and I took him out of the kennel without any problems. PASS

- **Dog-Dog Test & Food Guarding test:** Neither test was performed on this day. However, XXXXXXXX did not exhibit any overt behaviors towards other dogs that he was in the

vicinity of. This suggests, at a minimum, that he can be easily walked in public on leash in the presence of other animals. As far as food guarding, XXXXXXXX did not show any such behaviors with any of the treats we were offering him. Quite a few fell on the ground near my feet and XXXXXXXX never stiffened up or looked to guard in such situations. And, he always took food from our hands gently. Grade N/A

Conclusion

Overall Grade: PASS. Overall, XXXXXXXX is a pretty normal dog. It is my opinion that XXXXXXXX can be placed into an appropriate home environment immediately. A household with small or young children is not recommended at this point in time. Whether it is a foster or permanent situation, XXXXXXXX would benefit from daily training, stimulation and socialization away from the stress of shelter life. I don't believe, based on what I observed during my time with XXXXXXXX, that XXXXXXXX needs an owner with exceptional skills. I do believe, however, like with many athletic dogs, XXXXXXXX does require an owner with previous experience with any of the following breed types: bully breeds, herding dog types, working type terriers or other working type dogs. XXXXXXXX would benefit from a firm, but loving hand and an active owner. His eagerness to please and focus on his handler is very apparent. He has some triggers that cause over stimulation and excitement during play or when challenged. But, he accepts direction readily and he is easily re-directed with treats. This makes for an easy-to-train dog. XXXXXXXX does have some anxiety. I do have to take into account that we were working him in a stressful environment with very little exercise or stimulation done prior to the evaluation. He was also in quarantine for a while with limited exposure to people and stimuli.

XXXXXXX is apprehensive of new people interacting with him intimately. Initial interactions with XXXXXXXX should always be calm. Socializing him with trusted people in a controlled setting with lots of positive reinforcement will help him overcome his deficiencies in this area. On the other hand, those that know him and have gained his trust need to offer him firm guidance and discipline for when he gets too stimulated. XXXXXXXX is a dog that is extremely eager to please. He also is a dog that will match your energy level. He was able to get excited and be brought back down as well. He also showed that, if has no other choice, he will retaliate against a threat. This is not a behavioral issue. This is a very normal behavior for a dog that chooses flight over fight. XXXXXXXX is not a dog that will seek confrontation, but rather avoid it.

XXXXXXX can be easily trained and socialized to be a very good household pet. XXXXXXXX needs people. He needs people to understand him. This is not a dog that should be sent off to a sanctuary. And this certainly is NOT a dog that qualifies for euthanasia. XXXXXXXX is a good dog that needs guidance and he can get so much better with proper training, stimulation and socialization. Finally, I would like to offer a FREE training session to whoever adopts or fosters XXXXXXXX. The only catch would be they would have to come up to me. If this is not practical, I'd be happy to offer a free phone consult instead. I believe in XXXXXXXX's ability to become a good domestic pet.
