

ISOLATING WESTIES 8/07

(The following remarks were in response to a specific question. They do not mean that each foster home has to follow the same criteria. Some may want to isolate every dog for 10 days. We each have to consider our circumstances and do what we think best. However, it is important that we each think this subject through before we come face-to-face with the situation. So please read the following and then come up with a plan for your own home and circumstances.)

When a dog comes in here, I handle it on a case-by-case basis. If the dog came from a home and comes in clean and with medical records, I don't normally isolate. If he comes in dirty or no records or just looks mangy...I will isolate until I get to the vet and get a go-ahead. I'm isolating mainly for two things: Mange and Kennel Cough. Parvo isn't a concern to me since this hits mainly puppies and none of mine are puppies and all of mine are currently healthy; and the dogs coming in are seldom puppies.

If the dog comes in from a shelter, it depends on what shelter. For instance, I'd be much more careful with a dog from an animal control than from the Rochester HS. Something to consider when pulling a dog is whether the shelter has a full-time vet and when the dog was seen. Some shelters have no vets at all and others don't release a dog who hasn't been seen by their vet. To some extent you need to know your shelters and if you don't, ask questions. If the shelter didn't give any shots, I'd be very careful.

If the dog came from a shelter environment, I'd be wary of any mangy looking skin. I'd keep the dog isolated for that. There is always a risk of Kennel Cough and not much you can do about it because the vet can't tell until there are symptoms. I don't want to isolate for as long the 10-day exposure period so for that I isolate until they see the vet and then count on my dogs being protected with the Bordetella shot and general good health. If they do get Kennel Cough and it is the difficult strain, many are having a lot of luck treating with Tamiflu. I can provide information from Dr. McGuire who is a Westie person on the National Club Board and associated with Westie Foundation. I wrote to her to get her opinion on the use of Tamiflu. Also I have a copy of a suggested protocol for usage. Note: I've never used this myself but it has been used successfully by many other rescue groups. (There is also an article on the subject on the PET WEB LIBRARY.)

Regarding isolation, if I can do it, I think most anyone can. I have a very small house and no good way to do something like this so what I do is use my laundry room. It is just a tiny area off my family room. I put one baby gate between the washer and the wall to keep the dog in that area. Then another baby gate in the door that leads into the laundry room. The two gates are at 90 degree angles from each other so the dogs can't get near the new dog and really can't even see around the corner to get a glimpse of the other dog. Then when I want to take the new dog out to potty, I put my dogs in their room behind their baby gate. Then I take the new dog out to the front yard on leash. My dogs can see the new dog from the window so they know the dog is there but they can't ever get close to him. If you use only one baby gate, they will sniff through the gate and exposure will occur. It is a pain in the neck but it can be done to keep your dogs safe. (Remove from the floor anything that might be dangerous if chewed. And if you have plastic pipes or plastic behind the toilet, block them off so the dog can't chew them.)

When Jake was a puppy, he may have had the especially bad kind of kennel cough which is why it went into pneumonia (although by the time he got to us, he wasn't seeming to be all that sick). Many dogs are dying of this version of KC but prompt use of the Tamiflu seems to make a the difference. So if you start seeing a snotty nose, you might want to go this route. I'd suggest taking the attachments to your vet. Maybe even fax or email them now so he can read it before you really need it.

Regarding the way we use Bordetella, I will tell you how my vet does it for my dogs who are exposed to foster dogs. We give the nasal first. Then six months later, we give the shot; then one year later, we give the nasal; then six months after that the shot. We alternate them with the nasal lasting only six months and the shot lasting a year. The nasal doesn't last as long but it takes effect immediately without needing the booster that the shot needs. Then when we give the shot, it carries forward. This process has worked well for us.