

Moving to a New House: Helping Your Dog Stay Safe and (Almost) Stress-free

Beth Bradley

The stress of moving to a new home can be overwhelming. And although you understand that the stress is temporary, your dog, unfortunately, is clueless as to the reasons for the upheaval. Poor Fido is faced with confusing changes before, during, and after the move. These changes can frighten your dog and may even cause undesirable behavior. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to help your dog make a smooth transition to your new home.

Don't skimp on the exercise. Preparing for your move requires almost all of your time and energy. Your time is limited, but it is important to make sure your dog continues to get enough exercise and mental stimulation. Dogs need about 45 minutes to one hour of exercise each day; some need more! In the busiest weeks leading up to the move, strongly consider using a doggie daycare, a dog walker, or visits to a friend or family member. Utilizing this kind of outside help on a regular schedule has several benefits.

- It provides a dependable routine for your dog during an otherwise chaotic time.
- It gives your dog an outlet for pent-up energy and nerves resulting from the move.
- It gives your dog a break from the stressful environment of a house being packed or unpacked.
- It ensures your dog is in a safe place—away from open doors and moving vehicles—during the move.

Unpack the crate. Even if your dog no longer uses his crate, this may be a time to unpack it and reintroduce it. I am a firm believer in crates. They can be useful for dogs of any age—especially during a move.

- During the packing period, the crate will provide a safe haven where your dog can feel safe and secure away from the traffic and movement.
- If your dog must be in the house on moving day, the crate will safely contain him. Moving day is the perfect storm of strangers in the house, open doors, scary noises, moving vehicles, and inattention. You will not be able to keep an eye on your dog at all times. The crate will keep him safe.
- Your dog's crate is also a great bridge for introducing him to your new home. The crate is familiar and comforting when everything else is strange and different. When you arrive in your new home, set up his crate in a quiet space. Use the crate as you would when you introduce a dog into your home. Crate him when unattended. While you are at home, gradually allow him time to explore and acclimate to your new house.

Talk to your veterinarian. If your move is far enough that you will need to change vets, make sure your vet has transferred your dog's health records to his new vet. Get copies of vaccination records. If your dog has a nervous or anxious temperament even under the best of circumstances, your veterinarian may recommend a short course of anti-anxiety medication to help him over the most difficult days of the move. Keep in mind that medication alone is never sufficient. It can aid, but cannot replace, your role in ensuring that your dog makes a successful transition. After the move, schedule a checkup, especially if your dog does not seem to be adjusting in a reasonable amount of time.

Reboot the routine. When you arrive in your new home, take time to establish routines that will give your dog a sense of predictability and order—especially training routines. You may be tempted to “loosen the rules” because you feel sorry for your dog. Don't! Loosening the rules will only make your dog feel more insecure and unstable during this confusing time. As you settle into your new house, find an hour a week to take Fido to a training class. Find at least 15 minutes each day to work on his training at home.

- Focusing on training reassures your dog that you are still a leader he can trust.
- Incorporating regular training as you settle into your new home provides a reassuring routine.
- Training reminds your dog that although his environment has changed, the expectations for his behavior have not. Consistent, predictable expectations are reassuring to him.
- Training class will provide a mental and physical workout that tire your dog in a positive way so that he can relax and be calm.
- Making time for training ensures that your dog gets some positive attention each day.
- Your trainer can advise you on any behavior issues that arise as your dog adjusts to his new environment.

Conclusion Moving can be enormously stressful on all family members—including the canine ones. Fortunately, it doesn't have to be. With a little effort, you can make a big difference in helping your dog make a safe, smooth, and calm transition so that the whole family can enjoy a low-stress move into your new home!

About Beth Bradley

As one of the top professional trainers and competitors in the United States, Beth is committed to improving the lives of dogs and people through training. She teaches group classes and private lessons in basic and advanced obedience, competition dog training, puppy training, Schutzhund training, personal protection, Canine Good Citizenship, and therapy dog training.

Beth also trains and places service dogs for children with autism and custom trains “cross-trained” companion/protection dogs for families and individuals. She consults for shelters in the tri-state area and for New Jersey law enforcement on cases involving canine behavior and temperament.

Beth began studying animal behavior and dog training at age twelve. She has worked and studied under many renowned animal behaviorists and trainers. After graduating from Rutgers University with a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology and Criminal Justice, Beth worked as a New Jersey State Animal Control Officer. In 1989, she founded her own company and has made dog training and consulting her full-time career since 1995. Competing with her dogs, Beth has earned national and international titles, championships, and honors in both Schutzhund and AKC Obedience. In 2003 and 2009, she represented the United States in the FCI World Trials. In 2015, Beth and her dog Fyte qualified for the elite team representing the United States at the WUSV in Finland. Although Fyte is the youngest qualifying dog in the history of this worldwide competition, Beth and Fyte ranked third among the US competitors and posted scores that placed the US team in the top ten.

Beth is the author of *Real World Dog Training*, and has produced a number of training DVDs and videos. In addition, Beth trains and handles dogs for movies, television, and theater, with recent credits including appearances at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, *Board Walk Empire*, the *Batman* franchise, *Damages*, *Blue Bloods*, *The Good Wife*, and *The Blacklist*.

CONTACT BETH

Phone (201) 247-8472

www.dog-trainer.biz

www.servicedogsandautism.com

www.crosstrainedk9.com

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