



Wisconsin Puppy Mill Project Fact Sheet:

Puppy Mill Survivors: Caring for Unsocialized Mill Dogs

By Michelle Crean and Eilene Ribbens



(with special thanks to rescue and shelter workers who have contributed their experiences and knowledge.)

*"I'd love to say that every puppy mill survivor only needs love to turn it into a wonderful family pet. But that would be a lie. Love is definitely needed in large amounts, but so is patience. The damage done during the years in the mill usually can be overcome, but it takes time and dedication."
– From "Rehabilitation of a Puppy Mill Dog" by Michelle Bender and Kim Townsend*

Except in some sad, rare circumstance where they originally came from companion homes, most puppy mill breeder dogs have never been treated as pets. They are considered livestock – the puppies, a cash crop – and rescued mill dogs are suffering, in a very real sense, from some degree of post-traumatic stress disorder. Dr. Melinda Merck, in a November 2005 article for *Critter Chatter*, states: "Just like in humans, symptoms of PTSD in animals can be triggered by visual cues, smells, sounds, or objects associated with the trauma. Symptoms of PTSD that animals can exhibit include: submissive urination or defecation; unusual or fearful reactions to certain people, garments, hats, or other reminders of the trauma; shaking; flinching when someone tries to pet their head; snapping at your hand; and some animals can even seizure with extreme fear."

Puppy mill survivors have special problems and needs, depending on their individual personalities and past experiences. Some respond fairly quickly to love, steady meals, and a comfortable bed. Others require a great deal of patience and guidance from someone experienced in rehabilitating mill dogs; they can become wonderful family pets but may always have emotional scars and "quirks." A few, unfortunately, are so traumatized that they may learn to co-exist with humans but will never be "pets."

Dr. Frank McMillan, under the auspices of Best Friends Animal Society, is currently initiating a landmark study of dogs who are subjected to the isolation and deprivation of mass commercial breeding conditions.

Fostering or adopting a Puppy Mill Survivor requires a huge commitment of time, resources and self. These dogs are not for everyone.

The information in this article is based on the

experiences of individuals and the observations of experts – but we don't even pretend to know everything. Working with puppy mill survivors is an ongoing education. Each dog, each situation, is different; you need to be flexible and creative in your responses to a particular animal. The key in many cases is overcoming fear and insecurity – learn what particular factors trigger these in your dog, and you're halfway there.

Rescuers of abused/neglected dogs in the general animal welfare community will see similarities to their own situations here, and many of the suggestions are universal. We have included examples of how rescuers and adopters have dealt with various problems with their mill survivors, and have also listed some links for Additional Resources at the end. If you have a suggestion or experience you would like to share, please feel free to contact us.

The Name Game:

As for humans, part of a dog's self-identity is tied to his name. Even if he hasn't heard it very often, it's still Who He Is. The first act of many fosters or adopters is to change that name, thinking to divorce the dog from his horrendous past. In some cases, if the animal seems to be particularly fearful when called by his "real" name, this may be necessary. However, in effect, immediately changing a dog's name is taking away one more thing that is familiar and comforting.

When changing a dog's name, please do it gradually, linking it, at first, with his "real" name and, if possible, keeping some of the key sounds: "Tessie-Bessie," "Chrissy-Susie," for example. After the animal gets used to hearing the new name, the old one can gradually be dropped.

NOTE: Some mill dogs have never even heard their names, so changes don't matter. It may take these guys some time to get used to ANY name at all. Dogs who haven't been spoken to except for commands (or curses) don't quite know how to react to conversation at first. They may just stand there anxiously and wonder what you want them to do – or what you are going to do to them. Just keep talking to them. The more you talk to a dog, the more he will understand!

Pick Up Lines:

When we see an animal hurting or afraid, our first instinct is to swoop him up and hug him. With mill survivors, as with any unfamiliar animal, this isn't a great idea. Remember, what little physical contact mill dogs receive is likely unpleasant, if not downright painful. They are often jerked from their cages by the scruff of their necks or by one leg for vetting, breeding – or to be shown off on the auction block. If the dogs resist, bark, or struggle, they are likely to be smacked across the face or, if they are in a pen, kicked. It's only common sense that these dogs are going to be scared of hands coming toward them. One yellow Labrador retriever, who was purchased at the 10 March 07 Thorp dog auction, challenged rescuers because she was terrified of both hands and feet coming near her.

To a dog, being grabbed and picked up is also a "dominance" thing. It leaves him feeling powerless and afraid. Look at it this way: how do YOU like being grabbed and swept off your feet by a total stranger?

Most mill dogs have long since had their spirits broken and any aggressiveness toward humans knocked out of them. A very few will react to any attempts to touch them by totally "freaking out" and trying to bite the hand that threatens them. More heartbreaking are those who just "freeze" and passively – miserably – seem to say, "Do what you will with me." Some may drop to their bellies and grovel, or do the "submissive roll" over onto their backs. Some may urinate out of fear or submission – this isn't at all the same thing as a "housebreaking" problem. In this case, he is saying, "You're the boss; I'll do anything you say – just don't hurt me!"

What should you do? Easy – unless you absolutely have to pick the dog up, don't! Take the time to earn his trust. And never, ever reprimand or punish him for that submissive "peepee."

Trust Me; I Know What I'm Doing:

You know that your mill survivor's life has changed

forever, for the better. He, however, **doesn't** know it. For him, the scenery has changed, but that just means he's in unfamiliar territory without a clue what is coming next.

He may be so fearful of touch that he won't even allow an ear scratch or a chin chuck, let alone a "99 years to stop" massage that many pet dogs take for granted. He may not take a treat from a human hand, nor even eat when a human is present. He may freeze, cower, tremble, or position himself with his back to the wall, so to speak, so that you can't come up behind him and do something terrible.

In a nutshell, you will have to earn his trust. Again, with some dogs, this is easy. With others, it may take more patience than you ever realized you had.

Accustoming the dog to your touch is the first step. Sooner or later, you're going to have to handle him – to take him to the vet, to care for "owies," whatever. And he certainly needs to learn how to enjoy a good petting! So – let the dog find a spot where he feels safe and comfortable, then sit next to him and talk to him. Let him get used to you gradually. Tell him he's a good dog, a beautiful dog, recite poetry or make up a silly song – just use his name a lot and lull him with your voice. Edge closer; reach carefully but not tentatively, touch confidently. Work with him over several short sessions if necessary. He'll eventually learn to accept your touch, then, gradually, to enjoy it. (Note: in rare cases, a dog may never accept human touch, but – Don't ever give up trying. None of the articles we've come across in our research have been able to define "never.")

Dalton was so terrified of people when he was purchased at the 10 March 07 Thorp dog auction that he was listed as a rare mill rescue "fear biter." Says his foster mom, who is experienced with dogs with "issues":

The first three times I tried to touch him, he proceeded to go crazy and try to eat me.... about eight hours [and several short sessions] later, he finally stayed still, didn't attempt to bite and let me touch him. From there on he made no more attempts to bite. He is progressing well, loves the pack walk each morning with my dogs (anywhere from 4-6 dogs). He gets a massage each day by myself or my husband; touch is coming easier but he still would rather not have it.

I know he behaves the way he does because of no confidence; hence I don't want to coddle the behavior he is exhibiting. The

massage is deep and somewhat firm, not soft like being petted. I want to touch him like another dog would.

...The cringing he did initially was pitiful. His skin still crawls slightly when you start but he relaxes eventually. He needs my confidence to relax; the firm touch seems to let him know I've got everything covered – I'm in control.

When you approach the dog, don't immediately reach for his head or his face. Or the back of his neck, for that matter. You have to play it by ear (so to speak). Some face-shy dogs must be approached from the side and not straight on before they will allow their necks or under their jaws or their cheeks to be touched. Some will allow you to stroke their backs but not their heads. Watch your dog's body language, and respect his wishes as much as you can. As he learns to trust you, he'll allow more "liberties."

When the dog is relatively comfortable with your touch, start working on picking him up. Don't swoop, or make any fast moves toward him; don't grab him from behind. Be matter-of-fact about it; let him know you're going to lift him, then do it. Use a single word or short phrase consistently to signal your intention, because though he may have grown to like the sound of your voice, his actual understanding of vocabulary is still very limited. Keep it simple so that he can associate the word(s) with the act of being lifted securely but kindly, without pain.

Some experts advocate using treats for accustoming the dog to your touch and gaining his trust. However, some mill survivors won't take anything, not even a treat, out of a person's hand. It may be a "chicken - egg" situation: which will he accept first, the treat or the touch?

Home, Sweet Home:

For an animal who has spent his entire life in the confines of a cramped cage or a pen, a House is a strange, wonderful – and frightening – place. It's huge, it smells funny (to noses used to feces, urine, and other filthy dog bodies), and it's filled with scary things, noises, and people. Remember, your mill dog has probably never seen a flashing, talking box (TV); faced a set of stairs, or heard a vacuum cleaner whoosh on. Even your coming toward him with a tissue in your hand may send him into a blind panic.

Everything is new; everything is a potential threat.

Your mill dog may just want to dig himself into a quiet corner and hide. This is not a good time to invite all of your friends and relatives over to meet him. In fact, you might want to confine him to a quiet area for a period of adjustment, and observe him to get a handle on what will trigger his fears.

Hats are a common trigger, and one auction dog reacted fearfully to women with their hair in ponytails or worn up on top of their heads. Some mill survivors are afraid to go through a door. A less usual trigger for panic attacks is the kitchen:

I speculate that maybe her {botched puppy mill} cesarean was done in a kitchen because Susie is terrified to go in the kitchen and there are other rooms with the same flooring that don't scare her. – Josie's Diary

Having at least one friendly, secure dog already in the household is a huge advantage when you bring your mill survivor home. Obviously, you're going to introduce them carefully. However, aside from the basic security of providing another pack member of the same species ("Wow, someone who speaks my language!"), the resident dog or dogs will help show the newcomer the ropes. He/they will teach, by example, where the best blades of grass to water are, when to ask to go out, and that People are the Givers of Good Things. Just seeing the interaction between you and the animals already in your household may give the newcomer a sense of security – hey, you're not hitting, kicking, or yelling at them and they like to have you touch them. Maybe it's going to be OK here after all.

Crates create a safe "den" for your mill dog. Some people think of crates as "cruel," but for most dogs who have lived in a cage all their lives, their crates, with the doors open, are a safe haven where they can escape from the scary world, get some quiet time for themselves – or even enjoy treats and toys securely. As Dalton's foster mom tells us, "*Most of his day is spent kenneled, not because the door is closed (it's not) but because that's where he is most comfortable.*" The crate should be in a central location, where his back can be to a wall but where he can also be part of the daily activity.

In photos of rescued mill dogs on the WPMP website, you will note that several of the dogs are wearing light leashes indoors, even though they are cuddled on a couch or hiding in a run. This serves a number of purposes. Leashes are likely another new experience for your mill dog and may not be an

altogether welcome one. Clipping on a light leash around the house, when he will be supervised so that it doesn't become caught on anything, will accustom him to this new piece of fashion wear. It can also help you with training, as illustrated by this excerpt from Josie's Diary:

At first, when I got her, I had to leave the leash on her when she went outside as I was unable to get her to come to me and I didn't want to chase and scare her. I would usually have to call Toby & Tucker [resident dogs] over to me, then she would follow them and I could get close enough to her to step on the leash, then softly talk my way up to her, pick her up and bring her in the house.

Chow Down:

Even something as basic as feeding your mill survivor can be a traumatic experience. Remember, he's been living in a confined space, probably eating low-quality and possibly even spoiled food, maybe out of a pan shared with other dogs, maybe out of a self-feeder. High-quality food out of a clean bowl set on the floor with you hanging around to watch him eat may be an entirely new experience to him, and one he's not sure what to make of.

First of all, he previously may have had to fight with cagemates for every mouthful, so he may show some food aggression himself. Conversely, he may refuse to eat at all when other dogs or even you are in the room because he has been conditioned by experience to eat only what the dominant dogs have left. If he exhibits either of these tendencies, obviously you're going to want feed him separately from your other dogs until his "issues" are resolved.

Knowing that his food is coming from you at regular intervals will give him confidence and some sense of security, so you do need to try to get him on a regular feeding schedule. These regular meals will also help with housebreaking. Don't leave food down all the time. Do put the bowl down and at least stay in the room with him for a certain period; if he doesn't eat, pick the bowl back up again. If he doesn't eat or only nibbles at his food for the first day or so, don't panic. He may just be acclimating himself to his new environment, and his tummy may be a bit upset.

On top of that, he may also have a sore mouth or the memory of pain when trying to chew. The most common physical problems diagnosed in puppy mill rescues are rotten teeth and serious mouth

infections. Shelter vets routinely must clean teeth and extract those too far gone to save. Your mill survivor may be coming to you with several teeth missing; you may have to soak his kibble in water or broth at first or feed soft food.

If, however, after a few days your dog still isn't eating, you may have to try more creative measures. It was literally months before Christy/Josie, mentioned above, would eat or drink out of a bowl. Her foster mom told us that even three months after purchase at the Thorp Dog Auction:

We are ... struggling to get her to eat or drink. She will only drink when we are not at home and she is in her crate. She sometimes will take a couple of panicked bites of food in her crate but I have had the best luck hand feeding her. She seems afraid of bowls, plates, etc. She ignores food that I leave on the floor of her crate. She loves treats now, too, but the only way I can get her to eat more than a couple bites is to hand feed her when she is in her "safe" recliner. – Josie's Diary

An elevated bowl may help a mill survivor feel more at home at mealtime. These can be purchased from any pet supply store, or a home-made box with a bowl-sized hole cut into it can be constructed from scrap lumber or particle board. And, in some cases, the only way a mill survivor will drink at first is from a "rabbit bottle" clipped to the side of his crate – because this is what he's used to.

The Art of Escape:

Ogden Nash is credited with saying, "A door is what a dog is perpetually on the wrong side of." Anyone who has ever lived with a dog knows just how true this is. Canines are naturally curious creatures at the best of times – a door opens, and they're going to want to get to the other side. It's just common sense to remind family members to be very careful going in and out so that your new mill survivor doesn't slip past and get outside unsupervised.

However, there is also the possibility of your mill survivor suddenly and unexpectedly suffering a panic attack from any of the new, strange, and scary things inside your home, and his instinct will be to flee. He may race directly to his crate or "safe place," but he also may scoot out any door that is ajar, claw through a window screen, or, in rare, extreme cases, hurl himself through plate glass.

Even if he is in his own secure backyard, the sound of thunder, a firecracker, a car with a loud muffler or stereo, a neighbor child on a skateboard, or something as innocuous as a large bird shadow, can send him into blind, frantic flight. He might go over a fence, under a fence, through a fence, or even disappear under a deck or storage unit when your back is turned. And once he gets there, chances are he's going to be too scared to come to you even if he wants to.

Vigilance is the key -- get down on dog level and try to see your home and yard from his perspective. Block off obvious escape routes; imaginatively-placed baby gates can add one more level of security inside the home. Outside, be sure to block off any place where your dog can go under a fence, triple-check that the fence is secure all around and the gate latches properly, and remove anything the dog may be able to jump up on to go over the fence.

Then, when your mill survivor is outside, SUPERVISE him constantly for the first few weeks (if the dog shows any inclination to seek out escape routes, even longer).

Accidents happen, and dogs do get out of their homes and yards. If your mill survivor becomes lost, don't panic. He needs you to be calm and methodical about getting him back. Tell everyone helping you search also to be calm, call the dog's name confidently and in a "happy" voice, and don't try to approach the dog him/herself.

Studies show that timid dogs do not wander far from their homes. They will seek shelter under bushes, shrubs or porches; so when you are searching for them, look close and look low. Be imaginative. One mill dog escaped her foster home and was found days later within two blocks, holed up in a clump of shrubbery. Her foster mom had probably walked past her a dozen times. She was glimpsed snatching up food that a neighbor left out for her, but she would not allow anyone to approach her -- not even her foster mom.

This is typical: no matter how much the escapee likes and trusts you, chances are, he will be too afraid to come to you. Sometimes, he'll allow himself to be drawn out of hiding by a canine friend; sometimes, he'll come to food or treats. Sometimes, a livetrapped borrowed from a shelter or rescue will be the only way to recapture him. Just remember when trying to convince your escapee to come to you to be calm and confident. He needs you, the pack leader, to project strength and security.

Dogs DO pick up on our emotions, but those animals who haven't lived with people don't know how to interpret those emotions. He may think your worry is anger directed at him; by the same token, your "calm" might also be contagious. Remember how you had to sit by him and talk to convince him to allow you to touch him? Try it again, only with a trail of treats leading from his hiding place (or as close as you can get without spooking him) to you. When he does come to you, let him know what a good dog he is! Never, NEVER scold him for running away!

To Pee or Not to Pee:

Before we go any further, please note that there are three instances that most experts agree do not relate to housebreaking at all: submissive/excitive urination, marking, and coprophagia or stool-eating. These will be discussed in the next section.

"Housebreaking problems" aren't unique to mill survivors -- they're one of the top reasons given for owner surrenders at animal shelters -- but mill survivors do have some unique "hang-ups" when it comes to house training.

Most dogs have an inherent, instinctive aversion to soiling their living areas. The major problem in housetraining most dogs is in defining "living area." Conversely, however, a puppy mill dog who seldom or ever is taken from his cage has no choice but to soil his living area. This living area is cleaned only infrequently; sometimes only when feces and urine fall through the wire mesh of the cage. In fact, it's not unusual for mill dogs to suffer from foot injuries caused or worsened by walking in their own waste. Several dogs purchased at a recent dog auction had sores on their feet from urine burns.

So, while many dogs are helped by instinct in housetraining, a mill survivor is hindered by his conditioning -- both because he has spent a lifetime "going" in his cage and because he probably has never walked on grass or spent a lot of time free of constraints and thus also has those fears to conquer.

Remember that the first few days may be difficult: in addition to the period of adjustment to a foreign environment, he will also be adjusting to new food, clean water, treats, possibly medications, noise, humans, etc. These may result in tummy aches, frequent urination, and "the runs."

The key, once again, is PATIENCE. A regular feeding schedule, constant reinforcement and praise,

and vigilance on your part are crucial. If the dog is on a regular feeding schedule, he'll probably be on a regular potty schedule. Put him out frequently – if you have other dogs, they'll help him get the idea of what he's supposed to do, and when he does it, let him know how wonderful he is! When he is outside, watch him. Most dogs have a "ritual" that they perform just before they "go" – some sniff, some dance, some circle. Understanding his "tell" will also help curb accidents in the house. When you see him performing these behaviors inside, get him out quickly before he has a chance to fail!

By the way, there are many products available at your local pet supply store for cleaning up accidents in the house. Just remember to use something that will mask the smell so that the dog doesn't think it's OK to "go" there again. Cleaning products with ammonia aren't a good choice, since ammonia is one of the components of urine (in fact, the component that burns the paws). Many people use vinegar, but a product formulated just for the purpose of cleaning up after pets may be your best bet.

Be cautious about cleaning the floor with the dog watching – dogs can make some weird associations sometimes. We know of at least one dog who thought that the smell of the cleaning product marked a good target for pottying!

Some dogs need more creative methods to teach them where they may "go." A rescuer told us that because her puppymill/petstore survivor had never, ever been outside, he wouldn't "go" unless he had the wire mesh that he was accustomed to under his feet. So, she bought some wire mesh from a hardware store and made a frame, then blocked it up a few inches off the ground in her backyard. As the pup learned to use this as his "good spot," she lowered it by increments, over the space of several days, down to ground level so that he learned not to fear the feel of grass under his feet. Finally, the mesh frame was removed, and the dog had a "good spot" that he used for the rest of his life.

As we've said before, every dog is different. Some will take to housetraining right away, and some may take months. If the dog consistently "goes" in the house, has loose stool or off-color or unusually stinky urine, check with your vet to be sure there isn't some sort of physical difficulty that is interfering with housetraining – a urinary or GI infection, bladder stones, a digestive enzyme deficiency, etc. Be patient, be consistent, be vigilant, be enthusiastic, and never give up trying.

Submissive or Excitive Urination/Marking:

Submissive Urination: One of the ways a dog shows his submission to the pack leader is to cower in front of him and urinate in tiny squirts. As mentioned previously, this has absolutely no relation to general housetraining, and should not be punished as a housetraining accident. Since it is a way of showing you that he knows you're boss, punishing will just result in more submissive urination and a really scared, confused dog. Again, patience is the key. As your dog becomes more confident, this behavior will lessen. Until then, learn what triggers the behavior and try to avoid it.

Excitive urination is just that: the dog "widdles" when excited. There are many good articles available with advice on how to desensitize your dog to situations that bring on submissive behavior or excitive urination. We have listed a few in the Additional Resources section at the end of this article. A web search on "submissive urination" will yield a wealth of further information on the subject.

Marking is another leftover from pack behavior; dominant dogs mark their territory with urine to alert other dogs to stay away. We laugh about our dogs reading their "pee mail" when we have them out walking on a leash, but when it happens in the house, it's no laughing matter. A dog who has never been in a house doesn't realize that marking his territory there is a "no no." Taking him outside won't help, since it isn't about going potty. What you need to do is let him know that it is NOT acceptable to mark in the house. (By the way, some female dogs also mark territory.)

Because marking is generally a dominant behavior, correcting with a sharp "NO!" when you catch the dog in the act should ultimately be effective as the dog recognizes you as the pack leader. If this doesn't work, some sources suggest keeping the dog on a light leash in the house and giving it a pop, with a sharp "NO!" or "OFF!" every time he lifts his leg. Some experts suggest taking the dog for walks to places where he can safely mark – trees, fire hydrants, sign posts, etc. (NOT your neighbor's shrubs or flower garden, please!).

If he has favorite spots indoors to mark, distract him by placing treats around the spot to make it a source of goodies rather than a trigger for marking. Or, make the spot unpleasant by putting double-sided tape or a plastic carpet runner knobby-side up on the area. Be creative – in one instance, spraying the spot with one of the "no chew" preparations did the trick, as the dog associated the smell with the bitter taste

and stayed away! (Check the label to be sure you can safely use the product on furniture or carpeting and test a small area for staining first, though.)

Marking may be the result of a rivalry between your mill survivor and other dogs in the household – so some "conflict resolution" may be necessary there. This behavior can be corrected, but, like everything else, it takes consistency and patience.

Meanwhile, clean his markings in the house thoroughly as you would for housetraining accidents, with vinegar or with a product formulated for neutralizing pet urine odors. You might also consider a "belly band" for him to wear until you can convince him to stop trying to mark in the house. As the sex hormones decrease in the two months after spaying or neutering, the incidence of marking may also decrease and disappear on its own.

For additional information on urine marking, please see our Additional Resources section or do a web search on keywords "urine marking." Some of the articles you find may seem to be contradictory. As you get to know your dog, you'll learn which advice will or won't work for your situation and philosophy. For extreme cases, when behavior modification alone won't work, you might want to speak with your vet about trying a drug such as Amitriptyline along with it (then back the dog off the drug again a month or so after the problem is solved or the habit is broken).

Coprophagia (Stool Eating):

Put simply, coprophagia is stool ("poop") eating. While totally grossing out human caretakers, dogs of all breeds, ages and sizes do it. To them, it isn't abnormal or "icky" at all, and not generally harmful, though intestinal worms and some diseases are passed along through the stool. As in any bad habit, the cure lies in understanding the unacceptable behavior.

There appear to be several reasons that dogs in general, and puppy mill dogs in particular, eat stool. Among them:

- They may have a physical problem, such as a digestive enzyme deficiency, that allows most of the nutrients of the food to pass right through the body without absorption. A vet can help determine if this is the case; there are usually additional symptoms such as diarrhea.
- The food they are getting does not have enough nutritional value and they eat their

stool to make up for this or, they are hungry and should be fed more frequently throughout the day.

- Conversely, overfeeding the dog may result in more undigested food being eliminated.
- Mama dogs naturally eat their pups' stool in the "clean-up" process – to keep the "den" clean and also to remove any scent that might attract predators.
- Though repugnant to humans, the smell and taste of the feces might be attractive to the dog.
- In some cases, dogs have been known to eat feces out of boredom or just to get more attention.

Regardless of why they do it in the first place, after a while it becomes habit. So. First, make sure that there are no physical problems for which feces-eating would be a symptom. Then, break the habit.

There are many different suggestions out there, from training the dog to come immediately after defecating and then giving him a treat reward to going around after the dog and sprinkling hot pepper on the pile so that when he eats it, he'll get an unpleasant shock. Some sources suggest mixing the meat tenderizer "Accent" in the dog's food to make the stool taste bad, and there are products on the market specifically formulated for this purpose. However, ***cleaning up immediately after your dog makes a "deposit" and keeping the yard "poop-free" is the BEST, first step in breaking this habit!***

Many experts agree that if you can keep a dog from engaging in a learned behavior (habit) for two - four weeks, the habit will be broken. Of course, that doesn't mean he won't pick it up again (so to speak) in the future.

Coprophagia is considered a form of "pica," which is an unnatural need to eat foreign objects. Most dogs will "experiment" with chewing rocks, sticks, pine cones, etc., but a dog suffering from Pica will compulsively eat non-food items. This may be a sign of a zinc or iron deficiency or some underlying disease, or it may be psychological. If your dog seems to be compulsive about eating indigestible items, see your vet immediately to find out why. A behaviorist can also help you figure out how to stop this potentially dangerous activity. Your dog's eating socks, pantyhose, and couch pillows is not just undesirable, it can be fatal if it causes an intestinal blockage!

Tao, a shar pei purchased at the March 07 dog

auction, suffered from pica as a result of severe malnutrition. His vet records indicate that, when rescued, his feces were more than 50% hay for the first three days after purchase.

Making New Friends:

We've discussed trying to make your mill survivor feel at home, how to accustom him to your touch, etc. However, in all probability, it won't be just you and your dogs in the home -- you may have a spouse, housemate, children, or others living there. Plus, visitors, your kids' classmates, and relatives will be dropping by; and he'll have to get used to your neighbors, etc.

Those in your home will already have been "briefed" on how to cope with the new dog; they'll realize they are not to sneak up on him, make loud noises, approach him too quickly, wake him suddenly, or grab at him, but before friends or relatives arrive at your door, tell them how to approach your new puppy mill survivor, too. Let visitors meet him one at a time so that he isn't overwhelmed; arm them with treats and make sure they understand they should always let the dog come to them, and not back him into a corner or chase him. If you notice your dog becoming tense or frightened, signal the visitor to retreat. If guests include small children, or if you don't think your mill dog is up to "company," put him in his crate in a quiet place, with soft music or a favorite TV show, his coziest toys and a treat or two. Don't ever force the dog to socialize if he doesn't want to.

It is also a good idea to speak with your neighbors about your mill survivor. Ask neighbor children not to poke their hands through the fence to try to pet the new dog, or yell or chase him. Remind them that if a ball or toy comes over the fence, to ask you to get it for them and not to climb the fence and come into your yard. Let them know that they should ask first before tossing scraps from their backyard picnic or bones from Sunday's roast over to him. If your dog is very sensitive to loud noises, you might also ask your neighbors to let you know when they are going to mow their lawns, blow leaves, or use some other noisy equipment that may frighten your mill survivor, so you can be sure he is safely inside. Emphasize that if they ever see the dog outside his yard alone, they should inform you immediately!

Also, don't forget you'll be introducing your mill survivor to neighbor pets he might be sharing a fence with, particularly if it's chain link.

In Summary:

Fosters and adopters of puppy mill survivors face many other challenges and dilemmas: physical problems, separation anxiety, over-protectiveness, etc. on the part of the dogs, and unforeseen difficulties such as sleep deprivation (because he keeps getting you up several times a night to potty or just to reassure himself that you are there) for you. As you have probably figured out, a mill survivor may also be a huge drain on your time and energy.

And, occasionally, fosters will run into a really hard-luck case who is so "shut down" that he seems impossible to reach. He may have been so traumatized that he will never trust anyone. When do you give up trying? Never. Accept each dog for who and what he is, certainly, but never give up hope that he will someday discover some of the simple joys "normal" dogs take for granted. He may be a permanent foster, or you may find the perfect home with someone who understands his needs and already has a canine pack for him to "lose" himself in.

When you look at your puppy mill survivor, look forward to the wonderful life he will have and not back at the horrors from which he came. And, tough as it may be, don't be over-protective of him. Nurture and encourage him. Watch him and learn his fears, his hang-ups, then set up situations where he can explore, experience success, and build his self-confidence. Remember: as with any dog, it is much better to head off non-approved behavior before it occurs, than to try to correct him after he does something wrong.

Fostering or adopting a puppy mill survivor is not for everyone, but, as one experienced foster tells us, "It is an experience beyond words."

For More Information:

Below are a few links for further research on some of the topics we've discussed here. We've tried to use a broad cross-section of sources, and most of these sites contain other articles that might also be of use to you, so once you're there, explore! This article will soon appear on the Wisconsin Puppy Mill Project website, with click links to all the resources below. A web search on any search engine will find you even more articles to study.

If you have a favorite web resource or know of a helpful email list or online forum, please contact us so that we can share it.

- **Read this article online:** www.NoWisconsinPuppyMills.com/mill-survivors.html
- **Thorp auction dogs:**
 - Dog Statistics: <http://www.nowisconsinpuppymills.com/thorpauction-dogstats.html>
 - Josie's Diary: <http://www.nowisconsinpuppymills.com/josie-diary.html>
 - Dalton's scrapbook page: <http://www.nowisconsinpuppymills.com/thorpauction-djdalton.html>
 - Auction Scrapbook: <http://www.nowisconsinpuppymills.com/thorpauction-scrapbook.htm>
- **Rehabilitation of a Puppy Mill Dog**, by Michelle Bender and Kim Townsend :
<http://www.anewstartonlife.com/puppymill.htm>
- **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in pets:**
 - Critter Chatter: PTSD in Pets: http://www.critterchatter.com/past_issues/nov_dec05/ptsd.html
 - "They just want to love and be loved back," a landmark study of dogs who are subjected to the isolation and deprivation of mass commercial breeding conditions conducted by .Dr. Frank McMillan, under the auspices of Best Friends Animal Society:
<http://news.bestfriends.org/index.cfm?page=news&fps=1&mode=entry&entry=022EB593-BDB9-396E-9DDAE9BA880B26EC>
 - "Healing Their Emotions," a video studying the emotional and mental needs of dogs from the Great Puppy Mill Rescue: http://www.bestfriends.org/video/ht_emo/VidPlayer.html
 - Emotions in Canines and in Humans:
http://www.paw-rescue.org/PAW/PETTIPS/DogTip_EmotionsInCaninesAndHumans.php
 - Medical and Behavioral Surveillance of Dogs Deployed to the World Trade Center/ Pentagon:
<http://www.searchdogs.org/articles/Medical%20and%20Behavioral%20Surveillance%20of%20911%20dogs.pdf>
- **General** – These websites offer dozens and dozens of article links on all topics:
 - Can We Help You Keep Your Pet? <http://www.wonderpuppy.net/canwehelp/behaved.htm>
 - Dr. P's Dog Training Library, assembled by Mark Plonsky, PhD, Canine behavior consultant and professor of Psychology, University of Wisconsin at Stevens Point:
<http://www.uwsp.edu/psych/dog/library.htm>
- **Fear and Anxiety Links:** <http://www.wonderpuppy.net/canwehelp/1dbfear.php>
- **Crate Training Links:** <http://www.wonderpuppy.net/canwehelp/1crate.php>
- **Finding Lost Pets:**
 - "Finding Your Lost Dog," by Kathy "Kat" Albrecht:
<http://www.bestfriends.org/theanimals/pdfs/allpets/findinglostdog.pdf>
 - HSUS "Finding a Lost Pet": http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/finding_a_lost_pet.html
 - ASPCA "Tips on Finding A Lost Pet":
http://www.asPCA.org/site/PageServer?pagename=pets_findlosttips
- **Submissive/Excitve Urination:**
 - Ahimsa Rescue Foundation Article on Submissive Urination:
http://www.ahimsarescuefoundation.org/submissive_urination.htm

- HSUS Fact Sheet on Dealing with Submissive or Excitement Urination:
http://files.hsus.org/web-files/PFL_PDF/Submissive_Urination.pdf
- **Urine Marking:**
 - ASPCA article on Urine Marking:
http://www.asPCA.org/site/PageServer?pagename=pets_urinemarking
 - The Pet Place: Urine Marking: <http://www.petplace.com/dogs/urine-marking/page1.aspx>
 - Pets For Life Series: Reducing Urine Marking:
<http://www.oregonhumane.org/petcare/pdf/Reducing%20Urine%20Marking.pdf>
 - HSUS Tip Sheet: Urine Marking:
http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/our_pets_for_life_program/cat_behavior_tip_sheets/urine_marking_behavior.html
- **Coprophagia (stool eating) and Pica:**
 - Canine Concepts, UK: Why Does My Dog Eat Stools?
<http://www.canineconcepts.co.uk/ccp51/cc/dog-behaviour/eating-faeces.shtml>
 - Study of Coprophagia in the Canine: <http://home.gci.net/~divs/behavior/coprophagia.html>
 - Pawprints and Purrs, Inc.: Coprophagia in Dogs:
<http://www.sniksnak.com/doghealth/coprophagia.html>
 - Pedigree.com: Canine Pica:
<http://www.pedigree.com/dogsandpuppies/adult+dogs/behavior/facts+about+dogs/canine+pica.asp>
- **HSUS Tip Sheet on Introducing Pets:**
http://www.hsus.org/pets/pet_care/our_pets_for_life_program/dog_behavior_tip_sheets/introducing_pets_to_a_new_dog.html