

## **The Westie Mill Survivor**

Mill Westies will have some acquired behaviors common to most mill dogs. Your new Westie mill survivor may exhibit some of the following traits:

**FEAR OF HUMANS** – The only time mill dogs have had human contact it was a painful, terrifying experience. They have not been socialized to know that humans can be kind and can be trusted not to hurt them.

- Build trust slowly.
- Take a non-threatening posture lying on the floor with your eyes averted. Let him come near you and sniff.
- This may not happen on your first attempt, but may take a few days.
- Usually the foster home has helped remove much of this fear of humans.

**HOLDING** – Mill dogs don't know that you are not trying to restrain them, but to comfort them. They have never been held. Their only experience has been to be grabbed by any reachable part of their body – tail, legs, ears, and scruff.

- Making a touch non-threatening takes much time and patience.
- Begin by holding your Westie and petting him gently for just a few seconds, speaking softly and then placing him down carefully.
- Lengthen this holding time gradually.

**FEAR OF MEN** – Because of the cruelty they have experienced at the hands of men, most mill dogs will have a fear of men.

- They will usually bond first with the lady of the house.
- After some time they will come to trust the man of the house. Please be patient and nurturing during this time.

**SOUNDS** – Common household noises are foreign to a mill dog. They have never experienced TV, cooking sounds, telephones, doorbells, etc. Some sounds may trigger a fear reaction because it is a sound similar to one that caused terror in the mill.

- They may shrink into a corner or they may bark at these strange sounds.
- NEVER raise your voice, clap your hands or intentionally make loud noises until your Westie has become confident that these noises will not hurt him and becomes comfortable in your home.

**WALKING ON GRASS AND HOME FLOORING** – these mill Westies have spent their lives confined in a cage and may never have walked on any surface except cage wires or concrete.

- They will be afraid to step onto grass from a patio surface.
- They will be afraid to step over a threshold onto different flooring in your home, for example from a carpet surface onto tile or vinyl flooring.

- They may be so afraid of a different surface that they may not even go to their food or water.
- Please make sure that they have access to food and water at all times even if it means granting some leeway until your Westie has the confidence to cross a threshold.
- They have never walked up steps or stairs and they may be confused to know what to do. Be patient and gently guide them up each step at a time.
- Baby socks with grippers on the bottom may help your Westie walk on slick flooring and ease the transition from surface to surface.

**WALKING AND RUNNING** – Some mill survivors have been crated since birth and may walk with a stilted gate and may have to learn to run.

- Sometimes their feet will be swollen or their paws splayed from only walking on cage wire.
- For sore, swollen paw pads use Bag Balm or Musher's Secret Pad Balm.
- They may have urine burns on their paws from living in their own urine and filth. These can be very sore and makes walking painful. These sores require an antibiotic ointment.

**AVERSION TO EYE CONTACT** – Many mill survivors refuse to make eye contact with humans.

- This is an indication of fearful submission that decreases as the dog comes to realize you will not harm him and learns to trust.

**AFRAID OF HIS FOOD** – Anytime the cage door is opened on a mill dog, fear is the response because an evil human is opening the door, even if it is to give food.

- Food is used to entice a dog out where it can be reached and that usually means pain.
- It is not unusual for a mill Westie to run in the opposite direction when you sit dinner on the floor.
- Turn your back and walk away until the dog feels safe enough to eat.
- Let him eat undisturbed even if it means leaving the food out during the night so he will have access to it at a time when it is quiet, no one is around, and he feels safe enough to eat.

**LEARNING TO SPEAK ENGLISH** – your puppy mill rescue has never been spoken to.

- He does not know words.
- He has never had a name and has no comprehension of what a name is or means.
- He does not know instructions or commands.
- He can only tell by the tone of your voice what is being communicated to him.
- Always speak in kind, soft, gentle tones.
- Praise, praise, and praise often when he begins to associate words with actions.

**FLIGHT RISK** – All puppy mill survivors are fear driven – high flight risks.

- Given a chance, a mill dog will run until it can no longer go on.
- Never take your dog outside a securely fenced yard until you are thoroughly bonded.
- ALWAYS use a harness.
- If you must take your Westie outside a secure area double-check that the harness is secure.
- It may be advisable to also use a collar then run the lead from the collar through the harness for extra security.

**KENNEL SHOCK** – Things that we take for granted may cause distress and uncommon fear for your Westie mill survivor. This is referred to as Kennel Shock.

- Your puppy mill survivor may have never drunk from a water bowl, or even eaten food from a bowl.
- Mills will use an inverted watering device on the side of the cage. A bowl of water (or food) may be confusing and cause distress.
- Mills usually don't bother to remove the dogs before hosing down the cages, so they are very afraid of watering hoses and flowing water.
- Mill survivors have never played with a toy. A good way to help them learn the fun of playing is to get toys that make noise and roll them back and forth. It may take several days before your Westie will watch the game. He may try to get the toy to hide it but continue the game the same time everyday until he starts making noises with the toy and soon he will start looking forward to play time.

**MARKING / HOUSETRAINING** – no puppy mill survivor comes housetrained. o Most males will mark, and many females, too. o Put your dog on a schedule. o Always say “Potty Outside” or something similar.

- Use positive reinforcement praise and petting until he begins to put the words with the action.
- The good news is that since your dog is not a puppy he may catch on to the finer points of housebreaking more quickly than a younger dog would.
- Some however may never catch the finer points of being housebroken.

**PUPPY MILL SMELL AND COLOR** – Every mill dog has a peculiar odor and is discolored.

- The odor is imbedded in their pores and will take about a month to remove.
- Bathing in a mild oatmeal shampoo is recommended followed by an apple cider vinegar/water mix 50/50 as long as they no open sores.
- Their coats are urine and feces stained a dark yellow to brown.
- Bathing will help the coloring somewhat, but the staining will need to grow out.
- We do not recommend using a whitening shampoo, as it may be too harsh and probably will not work.
- Just be patient and you will have a beautiful, white, clean smelling Westie in just a few months.

**YOU WILL BE THE ONE** – your home will have been the first he has ever seen. Your voice the first to teach, to praise, to guide through confusing days.

- You will teach what the life of a good dog ought to be.
- You will be the one to see the very first Westie smile.
- You will teach him to play and know freedom and most of all love.

*Contributed by [Westie Rescue of Missouri](#)*