

# UNIQUELY AKITA

*Serving the Mid-Atlantic states since 1984 through education, support, and rescuing wonderful Akitas that would otherwise be euthanized in area shelters.*



FALL 2021

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## Featured Orphan: Quinn

By Puller Lanigan

Meet Quinn, ARMAC's newest orphan. She is around 15 months old and still very much the puppy. She has been in about three homes. According to everyone who has met her, she's very sweet but a typical untrained young Akita.

I had the pleasure of taking Quinn to the vet to update her vaccines, and she was the Quintessential Akita! For a first time meeting, she totally won me over. She was wild and anxious to run, run, run in the big exercise pen. Quinn does like to jump on people. However, she doesn't land hard. She is soft in her actions and soft in temperament. She took the command 'off' easily, and hopped off me/the counter/shelves. She doesn't seem to be foot sensitive and rides well in the car. Quinn loves



everyone she meets. As we stood in line waiting for the vet, she was surrounded by dogs and was very entertaining. She got bored, but she would stand up and put her paws on my shoulders and lean into me for a hug or lay on the ground and try to wriggle close to another dog - just out of curiosity. I am sure she will set some boundaries when she is a bit older, but she has a lovely temperament and fun attitude about life. She will be available for adoption once she is spayed.

## ARMAC Contacts

### Puller Lanigan

(301) 680-0788  
puller@akitarescue.org

### Jodi Marcus

(703) 730-0844  
jodi@akitarescue.org

### Betty McDade

(703) 524-9163

### Lisa Gray

(571) 237-7335  
lisa@akitarescue.org

### Newsletter

annette@akitarescue.org

## The Myth of "Suddenly Out of the Blue" Behavior

By Robin Bennett

No matter where you work, there are some common phrases you hear from people all the time. In an office it might be, "The printer is broken again." or "Where is the stapler?" In real estate it might be "Location, location, location." The dog training profession is no different. One phrase I hear frequently is "Suddenly, out of the blue, my dog..."

This phrase is generally associated with some unwanted or inappropriate behavior the dog has started to display. For instance, "Suddenly, out of the blue, my dog started barking at strangers." Or "Suddenly, out of the blue, my dog bit my niece."

In an attempt to understand the sudden behavior change in their dog, most owners attach significance to some routine event that immediately preceded the behavior. Usually, it involves a person (the child must have hit the dog), or location (he wasn't like this until he came back from the vet's office), or activity (he never did this until we started doing training).

And while some of those associations might be valid, normally the sudden, out of the blue behavior is more likely to be related to the age of the dog and the dog's overall temperament. **More importantly, most of the time these behaviors are completely predictable and in many cases, avoidable with proper intervention.**

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# Suddenly Out of the Blue

*Continued from page 1*

There are two distinctive times that I receive training calls for what I have come to dub the “suddenly my dog starting doing X, Y, Z” behaviors: The dog is either six-seven months of age or approximately 18 months old.

**Between six and seven months of age** dogs hit adolescence and it’s not unusual for a dog to start testing his confidence level. Also during this time many dogs go through a fear impact period where they can become suddenly nervous with new experiences. This is a time when many owners first start noticing their dog barking at the doorbell, strangers or other dogs. Incidentally, you’ll note this is also the age many dogs get neutered/spayed and often the veterinarian’s office gets an unfair bad rap for causing the perceived new problems in the dog.

**Then, around 18 months of age**, dogs are reaching maturity and any type of unwanted behavior usually becomes even stronger. This is true of that jumping behavior which was so cute in your 3-month-old Labrador but is now knocking people to the ground. It’s also true of growling, snarling or barking. **Dogs grow “into” not “out of” aggression.** So if you are seeing any unwanted behavior in your dog, particularly growling, barking, showing teeth, hiding, or snarling, you can bet these behaviors will become stronger when the dog reaches maturity. Don’t wait! Start working on these behaviors now.

Here are some things you should do with your 6-7 month old puppy and continue doing until he is an adult:

- Increase your dog’s social activities and outings. Don’t stop taking your puppy to new places. At 6-7 months of age you should continue to go places that provide a positive experience for your dog. Take lots of treats and toys and let the dog have fun!
- Give your dog time to get adjusted to new locations. If something seems scary, take treats and try feeding your dog in that environment. Give him enough space from other people and dogs so that he can relax. Don’t force your dog to tolerate a new environment. Instead, help him to have fun by playing games or feeding him there. If that’s not possible, then take your dog home and contact a local positive trainer who can provide more one-on-one assistance to help your dog overcome his fears.
- Enroll your dog in positive obedience classes to help build his confidence and teach him alternative behaviors you can use when he is wants to bark, chase, run, or lunge.
- Continue to let your dog meet friendly strangers ... and every stranger can become friendly if you give them really tasty treats to feed your dog.
- Realize that if your dog is showing unwanted behaviors, they will continue to get worse as he matures.

By understanding your dog’s developmental stages, you can anticipate his behavior and intervene to keep the “sudden out of the blue” occurrences to a minimum.

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## Adopted Orphans



**Nori**

Nori in her new home with her new mom, Roseanne. Have a happy, wonderful life Miss Nori!!



**Rio**

Rio has a home!! The Dahmers recently lost their Akita, Hinoki. What better way to honor her than to give a home to another rescue. They fell in love with Rio when they met him.



**Duke**

Duke, formerly Klondike, is a Foster Failure! David and Vivian Canneti have decided to keep Duke. Congratulations to all!

# Desensitizing Your Dog to a Muzzle

By Sandra Robbins BS, CVT, VTS (Anesthesia & Analgesia), CPDT-KSA, KPA-CTP

## Why use a muzzle?

Comfortably wearing a muzzle is a great skill for any dog to have. Chances are it will be necessary to wear one at some point during their life. The veterinary hospital is the most common place a muzzle may be needed. Some veterinary procedures are painful and having a dog who is comfortable wearing a muzzle is beneficial. Acute abdominal pain, trauma (such as a broken leg), or back pain are examples of issues an owner may encounter at home with their dog that can be extremely painful. Any dog has the potential to bite and pain can make that more likely.

Muzzles can also provide greater freedom for many dogs. Muzzles should never be viewed as punishment, and we can often help dogs learn to ask to wear their muzzle. Historically, muzzles have been associated with aggressive or biting dogs. There was a stigma attached to muzzles that suggested people using them were not kind to their dog.

Muzzles can also be used to prevent dogs from ingesting inappropriate items such as discarded food, corn cobs, dead animals, food wrappers, and bark mulch. These items can cause GI upset or obstructions and may require expensive and invasive surgeries. There are basket muzzles specially designed for this purpose.

Many dogs are fearful and fear increases the risk of biting. This danger often leads to an isolated life and makes it difficult for owners to give their dog enough enrichment and exercise. By teaching a dog to wear a muzzle, you can safely work on behavior modification while allowing your dog to be around other dogs and people. A bonus for the dog that does not want to be approached by unfamiliar people is that the average person does not want to approach a dog wearing a basket muzzle.

## What kind of muzzle is best?

There are different kinds of muzzles. For short procedures at a veterinary clinic, a sleeve muzzle may be used. This type of muzzle prevents a dog from opening their mouth, which makes it difficult to pant, drink water, or eat treats. A basket muzzle allows the dog to pant, take treats, and drink but reduces potential injuries from a bite. There are many different styles of basket muzzles, including custom fit muzzles that may be needed for those dogs with wide or flat faces.

## Desensitization/Counterconditioning steps

Desensitization starts with a muzzle, tasty treats, and a quiet environment. There are four main parts to this process: introducing the muzzle, increasing the time the dog's face is in the muzzle, attaching the straps, and then increasing activity while wearing the muzzle.

### Step 1- Introducing your Dog to the Muzzle

- Start with the muzzle on the floor with treats in and around it.
- Allow your dog to approach and move the muzzle to get the treats.
  - If your dog seems nervous about this step, try leaving the muzzle in an area of your home where they may feel more comfortable approaching it. Every now and then replenish the treats that are in and around the muzzle.
- Hold the basket muzzle with the opening facing your dog and the straps moved out of the way. Put treats inside the muzzle and offer it to your dog to approach and eat the treats.
- It should always be your dog moving towards the muzzle, not the muzzle moving towards your dog.
- When offering the muzzle, make sure it is near you and at your dog's nose level.



Photo courtesy of Sandra Robbins BS, CVT, VTS (Anesthesia & Analgesia, CPDT-KSA, KPA-CTP)

### Step 2- Increasing Time of Your Dog's Nose in the Muzzle

- Present an empty muzzle in one hand with treats in the other hand behind your back. When your dog puts his nose in the muzzle looking for treats, instantly feed them through the muzzle.
- Prolong the time between treats while your dog's nose is in the muzzle.
  - If your dog backs out of the muzzle, let them without pushing the muzzle toward them.
- Start with treating once every other second for three to five seconds
  - One, treat, three, treat, five, treat
- Then give one treat every third and fifth second for five to ten seconds
  - One, two, treat, four, treat, six, seven, treat, nine, treat
- Extend the time gradually in this way so that your dog is not expecting constant treats



Photo courtesy of Sandra Robbins BS, CVT, VTS (Anesthesia & Analgesia, CPDT-KSA, KPA-CTP)

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# Desensitizing Your Dog to a Muzzle

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## Step 3 – Introducing the straps

- While your dog's nose is in the muzzle waiting for the next treat, begin to lift the straps of the muzzle near your dog's head and then drop them and give your dog a treat.
  - To free your hands for connecting the straps around your dog's head, consider resting the muzzle in your lap or on a pillow.
- Progress with the straps slowly up and around your dog's head until your two hands can touch behind your dog's head.
  - When you first get the straps connected, immediately disconnect them, and give your dog a treat.
- The next time after connecting the straps, give your dog a treat and then take the muzzle off.
- Gradually increase the number of treats your dog can eat while wearing the muzzle.



Photo courtesy of Sandra Robbins  
BS, CVT, VTS (Anesthesia &  
Analgesia, CPDT-KSA, KPA-CTP

## Step 4- Make it fun

- Once your dog seems comfortable wearing the muzzle, have them wear it for something fun like a hike with you or a ride in the car.
- It is important to monitor your dog for discomfort while wearing the muzzle and take it off before they become worried about it.
- Creating positive associations with the muzzle will make it a more pleasant experience for your dog.

If your dog seems to be having a difficult time with any of these steps, back up to a step they seemed more confident with and reinforce before moving on to the next step.

To make the muzzle look more fun and less intimidating, decorate it! Some fun options are to use decorative tape or to glue colorful gems to it. You could decorate your dog's muzzle to match your favorite sports team's colors. Your dog won't care what the muzzle looks like, but bright colors create a different association for the people around your dog.

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## Rainbow Bridge



**Zoe**

Loved and missed by Laura and Stephen Dodge



**Keiko**

Loved and missed by Jenn & Bill Stabley



**Raiden**

Loved and missed by the Hayes family

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# Akita Walking Styles

By Jodi Marcus

My dogs all seem to have their unique behaviors while walking. I believe the walks should be enjoyable for both of us. I walk them on a loose 6-foot leash, only bringing them to heel when necessary. We have some “red” spots, where more reactive dogs can get highly aroused. The dogs at these locations are behind fences in their back yards. The first is home to a small white terrier type dog, Fritz, and an American bull dog mix. The little one shrieks insults and the bigger one barks, runs away and comes back to bark again. Next door to them, Nina, a Rottie, and Duchess, a pit bull, reside. These two trash talk, hurl nasty names and sometimes get so aroused they fight with each other. The most perilous house is where the tenant comes out with his two pitties off leash. They are generally well behaved, but have been known to go after dogs walking by. A sure sign they are out is the open garage door. In this case, we cross the street or wait until they are done doing their business. The last area, on our return walk, is where Leia, a Malamute, lives. Leia used to escape quite often and would attack any dog she saw. Now that she is older, she confines herself to giving passing dogs the evil stink eye, something she does very well. She will sit or stand with that hard, challenging stare daring the passing dogs to react to her. Other times, she just lays on the ground napping or sunning herself. Now onto my dogs’ walking styles.

Ally always had that bad-ass walk proclaiming her queen of the neighborhood. She totally ignored any dogs behind fences. To notice them would be so far beneath her dignity. After all, she is an AKITA out being walked by her mom. Those poor things are stuck behind the fence and never get walked. One cannot but pity them. At 13, she still set a brisk, no nonsense pace. It was only broken to do the necessary or lift her leg to mark her territory. When we met people, she was content to sit or lay beside me while I talked, but did not want any contact.

Sakura, a returned rescue dog, was very reactive initially. She quickly learned “leave it” and that listening brought much praise and many pets. Now if she passes the challengers behind the fence without a reaction, she will look to me for the expected praise and happy talk. She likes to meander, sniffing here, sniffing there. She likes to nibble on greenery. Getting her to walk at a normal pace requires encouragement and can be stopped short by an interesting odor. When she poops, it is as though she has lost a heavy load (literally). She tries to do zoomies on the leash because she feels so much better!! Try picking up poop with a dog doing zoomies. Yeah, not easy. She has pretty much learned to ignore all the “red spots” except Leia. If Leia is standing or sitting giving the “stink eye”, Sakura will start to react, but stop with a correction. If Leia is laying down or napping, Sakura confines herself to just watching her suspiciously.

Hank meanders too. Hank is a “Curious George”. He has to check out anything new in the neighborhood. If a neighbor has brought his motorcycle out of winter storage, Hank has to go sniff it all over. If there is a scrap of paper that wasn’t there yesterday, he has to check it out. If a trailer is parked differently, we have to go up the driveway to check it out. The sewer drains have to thoroughly sniffed to make sure all is well with the kitties who seek refuge there. He adores people and the attention he gets. He knows where the people live who like to pet him. If no one is outside, he will linger in front of the house a bit just in case they see him and want to come outside to enjoy his company. Normally easy to walk, if Hank sees any person, especially children, out and about, he will try to drag whoever is walking him over to them for attention and petting. He glories in their attention.

Bertie is similar to Ally. He is a no nonsense walker. He projects great presence and majesty as he walks and receives many admiring comments from neighbors and people passing in cars. Barking dogs behind fences are to be pitied. After all, they are stuck there and are not AKITAS. However, when we approach Leia’s home, he reminds me of men on the beach: puffing his chest out, sucking in his tummy, up on tiptoes, head high. He keeps glancing sideways to make

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## Obedience Training

### DC/Maryland

Your Dog’s Friend  
Rockville (301) 983-5913  
Mutt Magic Training Services  
Baltimore (410) 889-9352  
Bark Busters  
Timonium (410) 308-3768  
Capital Dog Training Club  
Silver Spring (301) 587-5959

### Virginia/West Virginia

Best Behaved Dogs  
Fairfax (703) 931-8521  
Club Pet Int.  
Chantilly (703) 471-7818  
Paw Paws Canine College  
Slanesville (304) 492-4075

## Kennels/Boarding

### DC/Maryland

Country Critters  
Millersville (410) 787-9592  
Stacy King  
Myersville (301) 293-1737

### Virginia

The Bigger the Better Canine  
Camp  
Nokesville (703) 328-7884

## Akita Friendly Vets

### DC/Maryland

Friendship Animal Hospital  
DC (202) 363-7300  
Rocky Gorge Animal Hospital  
Laurel (301) 776-7744  
Palmer Animal Hospital  
Myersville (301) 371-3333  
Smithsburg Veterinary Clinic  
Smithsburg (301) 416-0888  
Park Circle Animal Hospital  
Hagerstown (301) 791-2180  
VetUrgency  
Frederick (301) 288-8387

### Virginia/West Virginia

Ballston Animal Hospital  
Arlington (703) 528-2776  
MapleShade Animal Hospital  
Dale City (703) 670-7668  
New Baltimore Animal Hospital  
Warrenton (540) 347-0964  
Regional Vet Referral Center  
Springfield (703) 451-8900  
Animal Medical Center of Cascades  
Sterling (571) 434-0250  
Morgantown Vet Care  
Morgantown (304) 599-3111

## Additional Orphans

### Rebel

Rebel came to us from a breeder in Pennsylvania last November. This cute, stocky guy is three years old, and a favorite at the kennel.



Rebel is a fun loving boy who loves his toys. He has been an outdoor dog all his life, so he will need an introduction to an indoor environment (ceiling fans, etc). He loves coming in at night and crates well.

### Gloria

Four year old female. Turned over to shelter by owner for fence fighting with the neighbor's dog. Ignored other dogs at the shelter and passed her food aggression test. She was a staff favorite at the shelter, spending time in their offices. She rides well in a car. Our kennel owner loves her and says she is very sweet and easy to care for. She exhibited no aggression toward other dogs at the kennel so far.



### Cosmo



Cosmo is around 18 months old. He is a nice guy. Cosmo is crate trained, rides well in a car, and behaved well at the vet. When he was evaluated, there were cats nearby and he was not predatory toward them. Cosmo recently visited the cardiologist and was diagnosed with a small hole in his heart. This should not affect his ability to live a normal

lifestyle or lifespan. The staff at the cardiologist loved him. He will be available once he is neutered.

### Bear

Bear is a nine month old male. Although Bear is a very nice guy, he is a big, untrained, energetic teenager testing his limits. He loves people, and is a really good looking boy. We are just getting to know him. Experience with the breed is preferred.



## Walking Styles

*Continued from page 5*

sure she has noticed him in all his handsomeness. If she is not there, he deflates quickly. At adoption events, Bertie tolerates people petting him and kids hugging him because he is "working". Walking around the neighborhood, he prefers not to be touched or to socialize with any of the neighbors.

Bodie, like Ally and Bertie, walks as if he has an important destination. He is a bit spooky at times: machinery starting up suddenly, a plastic bag crackling in the wind. He will start, but recover quickly. He is a territory marker extraordinaire. Most of my males mark territory with a squirt, or a few drops. Not Bodie. If he is marking territory, and especially if he is covering where someone else has gone, he lets loose with a full stream as if to obliterate any prior spoor. He does it throughout the entire walk, never running out of ammunition. He also puffs up for Leia, walking as though he were Beau Brummel on the strut when we pass by her yard. He is happy to sit and hang out if I talk to anyone, but prefers to be left alone by them.

Reisi is easily spooked. A neighbor working on his car, playing loud music can stop her in her tracks, as can workman doing construction on someone's house. She used to stop, sit, and refuse to go further. Now, after stopping, she will proceed cautiously, obviously feeling relieved once we are past whatever scared her. She is also a scout. She walks sniffing some, but turning her head from side to side, front to back to make sure the Akita-eating

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### ***FOSTER HOMES NEEDED!!!***

Ever thought of fostering? If you can find it in your heart, we urge you to complete the paperwork now. For more information, please visit: [www.AkitaRescue.org](http://www.AkitaRescue.org)

# Thank You



Thank you to all the individuals and businesses who support us in so many ways: providing financial support or discounts, fostering, providing transportation, performing house checks, evaluating dogs, volunteering at events, etc.

Thank you to all who have chosen ARMAC as your Amazon Smile Charity! We received \$182.43 for activity from April 1 to June 30.

We couldn't do this without all of our supporters!



## Thank You for your donations!

- Lisa & Ken Bennett
- Sarah Cowell
- Kathleen DeWees
- V. Glynn
- R. Lee Harvey
- David Hawkins
- Derek Hirohata
- Janet Hochule
- Bill & Lynn Loewy
- Sue Mincemoyer-Gray
- Diane Schad
- Robert Wellenstein

## A big Thank You to our Fredericksburg Pet Show Volunteers!

- David Canneti
- Travis & Teresa Dahmer with Rio
- Lisa Gray
- David Hawkins
- Charlie & Jodi Marcus
- Susan Rush
- Cheryl Winslow

## Walking Styles

*Continued from page 6*

monster is not lying in wait for her. The Akita-eating monster could be hiding anywhere, taking on any shape, waiting to pounce on an unwary Akita. It could be hiding under that car parked in a driveway, now 6 inches closer to the sidewalk than it was yesterday. (The closer the better to snatch the careless Akita.) It could be that garbage bag flapping in the breeze. That garbage can driven by the wind could transform at any moment into the monster. With all these serious concerns, she ignores all dogs while she is walking. She definitely does not want to meet anyone and would prefer I not stop to talk on our walks.

Rico loves to go for walks. He will cry and moan with eagerness when it is his turn to have the leash attached. If he could, he would jump for joy. Rico's walking style used to be "balls to the wall". He would take off and go at top speed with short stops for necessities. Because of his congenital birth defect in his hips, a brisk pace is more comfortable for him. His shoulders are starting to bother him a bit now. He has slowed down some, but still walks with intent. His walk is the shortest of them all, but distance does not seem to matter. He still gets to go for a walk and that is what is important to him. He, too, will sit next to me if I stop to talk, but prefers not to socialize with the neighbors.

What about your dog? What is their walking style? Send us a description and we will include it in a future newsletter.

## Postcards From Home



Pictures of Axel and his best bud and how happy he is on his walks now. We love him!

Rio is doing well. He has lots of energy! He still fusses in his crate. The first day we left him alone for few hours, he escaped the crate. He didn't get into anything but I had to break out the chain you gave us for Hinoki. He will gently wake us up with a hand lick around 6-630. He is a quiet dog (except in the crate). He doesn't react if someone rings doorbell, or if he sees something on walks. He sits on command very well and is working on lay. He loves to roll in the grass and on the rug.





# ARMAC

PO Box 4266

Manassas, VA 20108

[www.akitarescue.org](http://www.akitarescue.org)

*Akita rescue Mid-Atlantic Coast, Inc. has been serving the eastern seaboard for over 25 years. We fulfill a wide variety of Akita needs in the greater Washington DC area. We help educate potential Akita owners; we offer support to Akita owners, not only those who adopt from us, but all Akita owners regardless of where they got their Akita. But most importantly, we save the lives of Akitas that would otherwise be euthanized in area shelters. All of our fostered Akitas are spayed/neutered, vaccinated, micro-chipped, and temperament evaluated prior to adoption. Potential adopters are screened carefully and thoroughly to ensure we have a perfect match between family and Akita. Our assistance doesn't stop at adoption. We offer support to our adoptive family-lives throughout the lifetime of their Akita.*

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