

Ruth Care Manual



The Care and Maintenance of a Chihuahua Corgi Mix

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Why is Ruth the Way She Is?

A Brief History of Ruth

Ruth was found on the streets of Santa Maria and brought to the Santa Ynez Valley Humane Society in October of 2012. A tiny dog, she had barely left puppyhood by the time she was found. As a stray fending for herself, Ruth could not hope to defend herself physically from any aggressor, and must have learned to survive by demonstrating her harmlessness and submission, which kept her safe from bigger animals and unfriendly humans. Being very conscious of her size, Ruth knew that just about any living thing she came across could be a threat. Fear and caution kept her alive until her rescue.

After leaving the shelter for her forever home, Ruth quickly learned two things: familiar humans are a source of comfort and protection, and that the displays of submission that served her well on her own could be used to her advantage. She knows her human friends and family think she's cute when she acts small and helpless and plays this up for attention. It's okay to indulge her a little bit, but don't let her get too demanding.

Daily Routine

Giving Ruth a Comfortable Lifestyle

Dogs thrive on predictability, and their care is easiest when their lives follow a predictable structure. Ruth has gotten used to the typical sort of day:

- A little bit of spooning before it's time to get up.
- A brief morning walk, at least enough time to urinate, and ideally enough time to defecate as well.
- Alone time while her human companion goes about his or her own daily routine.
- A walk upon the human's return, with enough time to urinate and defecate.
- Some food to graze on throughout the evening.
- A nighttime walk, with enough time to take care of any remaining necessary bodily functions for the night.

Following this routine will give Ruth a sufficient level of comfort, and keep her satisfied from day to day.

Walks

Bringing Ruth to the Outside World

Walks are very important for Ruth's health. Not only do they give her the opportunity to relieve herself of bodily waste, they also provide physical and mental stimulation, and the chance to socialize with neighborhood humans and dogs.

The Walking Process The process of walking Ruth is a mixed bag, and depends largely upon her mood. If she is in a good mood, she will by and large be eager and cooperative. If she is less excited, she may be pensive and sniff the ground a lot. In either case, she will inevitably want to stop and inspect objects on or by the sidewalk. This can be very psychologically rewarding for her, so it is recommended that you allow her to stop and sniff things when she wants to, within reason.

Coaxing It will sometimes be necessary to coax Ruth along, should she become entranced by the odor of some object on your path, or simply become hesitant to walk further in the direction you'd like to go. There are a few options you can take when this occurs, in order of severity:

- Verbally coax her, in a high, gentle voice, to come along now.
- Give her a light tug on the leash, to let her know that it's time to get moving.
- Use a low, stern voice to let her know that she's making you displeased.
- Give her a tap on the rump with your foot.
- Pick her up, carry her a couple of steps, and then set her back down again.

New Humans and Dogs Ruth is generally interested in strangers, especially humans, and to a lesser extent, other small dogs. She can be a bit spooked by larger dogs. As long as the human companion of a dog indicates that the dog is friendly, Ruth should have the opportunity to interact with it. If a dog is *not* friendly, or if Ruth becomes frightened enough that she begins shaking, she should be picked up and carried until the dog is about ten feet past.

Nota Bene: Cats Ruth is not entirely sure what cats are. She understands that they are animate creatures, and that they are not humans or other dogs, but they do not seem to otherwise fit within her scheme of categorization. This can result in some crossed wires, which generally translates as a practical matter into a prolonged staring session. If this case should occur, first try the general coaxing methods mentioned above, and failing this, gently pick her up and carry her away.

Additional Reading: Calming Signals Dogs have a rich system of body language inherited from the canid ancestors, called calming signals. I highly recommend reading [this](#) resource for learning about calming signals, and urge you to read Ruth's behavior with knowledge of calming signals in mind.

Feeding Ruth

Schedule Ruth does not eat discrete meals at scheduled times. Rather, she prefers to graze, primarily in the evening and night time. She ought to have food available to her throughout the day, especially beginning in the late afternoon. She should receive about 2/3 cup of food in the late afternoon or early evening, and she may eat as much or as little as she wants.

Treats Ruth is very interested in human food, and it always makes a good treat. However, not all human foods are friendly to the canine physiology, and some can have catastrophic, even deadly effects on dogs. The sorts of food that dogs can and can't have is well documented.

- One [nice list](#) of dog-friendly human foods by the dog whisperer himself, Cesar Millan.
- The ASPCA has a [brief list](#) of foods dogs *shouldn't* eat.

In general, you should consult the internet before giving Ruth human food. She is passionate about cheese, but it is quite unhealthy for her and should only be used sparingly, such as when she has accomplished a great feat. Baby carrots are a more nutritious perennial favorite of hers.

Bedtime

Sharing the Bed It is important that you allow Ruth to share your bed when it is time to sleep. Since adoption, she has almost never slept alone, and having to do so can be very stressful to her. She is accustomed to having some 'wind down' time in bed where she can nest, and prefers that you are nearby while she does this. Winding down puts her in the mood to cuddle, should you be willing to engage in such with her.

Nesting Ruth loves to nest in blankets. This can take two forms: she may trample down a section of blanket into a crater-like formation and curl up cozily within the crater, or she may burrow under the blanket and bask in the warm darkness she has created for herself. Either way, be careful not to sit or step on her while she is nesting; be conscious of her location on or under the blanket.

Cuddling Ruth is an accomplished cuddler, preferring to take the position colloquially known as ‘little spoon’. When you are reading to sleep, you can either pick her up and set her next to you, if she is above the blanket, or simply get under the covers and pull her to your stomach or chest, if she has already burrowed. This process works just as well for morning cuddles.

Leaving Ruth Alone

Separation Anxiety Ruth is generally a very well behaved dog. Like many dogs, however, her worst behaviors come out when she is left alone. The anxiety created by being left alone can manifest itself in such unacceptable behaviors as indoor excretion, chewing, and digging. In the long term, therapeutic training can alleviate this condition. In the short term, however, separation anxiety can be mitigated in other ways.

For Brief Periods of Time If you have to leave Ruth alone for an hour or two, she will likely be able to handle this with minimal difficulty. She should be able to roam the living space freely, or else she will try to burrow under the door and try to find you. Make sure she has a comfort blanket and some water to drink, and keep any food or fragile material out of reach so she does not chew or eat it. Make sure she cannot escape.

Important note: if you make a big production of leaving Ruth alone, giving her extra pets and treats and kisses, she will get the idea that you are leaving for a very long time, and become especially stressed out, even if you’re only stepping out briefly. When you go out, act as though you’ll be right back, and Ruth will not harbor especially great dread at your departure.

For Extended Periods of Time If you have to leave Ruth alone for longer periods of time, it may be ideal to leave her in her crate. This helps alleviate her anxiety by limiting her options. Frequently Ruth will rely on the activities of the humans around her for guidance; the absence of human authority, and the resulting pressure of independent decision-making, places upon her great existential stress. Thus the crate, while unpleasant in its own way, will greatly limit her anxiety. Ideally Ruth should not spend more than 5-6 hours in the crate.