

Tips for Adopters of Three-Legged Dogs

Dogs can be very resilient and often a three-legged animal soon forgets the missing limb altogether. Three-legged dogs can live long, happy and healthy lives with minimal adjustment to their lifestyle or to yours.

To keep your three-legged dog safe and happy:

- Use identification: Microchip your dog and have her wear an ID tag.
 - Keep your dog on a leash when walking.
 - Always keep your dog in a fenced-in area when she's unsupervised outdoors.
 - Three-legged dogs may feel more vulnerable. To increase your dog's confidence, expose her to new experiences, but allow her to do it at her own pace. To help keep the new experiences positive, be sure to reward and praise her.
 - It's natural to feel over-protective toward a dog who has lost a limb. But it's important to let a dog be a dog.
 - Maintain a healthy diet for your dog. Three-legged dogs should not be allowed to become obese because they have fewer limbs on which to distribute their weight.
 - Exercise the dog regularly. Short, frequent walks and swimming are excellent ways to keep your dog physically fit.
 - It may be easier for a three-legged dog to hop along at a quick pace rather than to walk slowly. Watch for signs of exertion and stop to rest as needed.
 - Ask your vet which supplements will help to support your dog's joint health.
 - Provide raised water and food bowls, so that your three-legged dog can drink and eat without having to bend down.
 - Watch for elbow hygroma, a fluid-filled swelling around the elbow that may occur when there is too much weight on one elbow.
 - Take good care of the dog's remaining foot pads. Keep nails short and trim the fur at the bottom of your dog's feet for comfort and to prevent slipping.
- Stairs, uneven ground and raised surfaces may be difficult for your dog to navigate, so be patient and provide help as necessary.
 - Be aware of slippery surfaces in your home. Three-legged dogs have less balance and can easily slip on hard surfaces such as wood, tile, linoleum or marble. This is especially true when dogs are running or playing. To prevent slipping, put down throw rugs and runners. Rugs also provide a soft surface for a dog to rest on.
 - Check for uneven ground in the yard, and make sure that there are no deep holes. Three-legged dogs can trip on uneven surfaces and hurt themselves.
 - Clear away piles of sticks and leaves in your yard. Larger sticks may catch on a dog's nails and cause damage.
 - Provide soft surfaces for your dog to lie on that are elevated from the floor or ground.
 - For larger dogs, consider purchasing a lightweight harness with a handle on the back to help you lift your dog in and out of vehicles or out of harm's way.
 - Three-legged dogs may feel vulnerable in the presence of unfamiliar dogs. When your dog is around other dogs, be aware of the body language of all the dogs.
 - Dogs carry 60 percent of their weight on their front legs. If your dog is missing a front leg, protect the remaining front limb from strain or harm. Some ways to do this:
 - Use a car seat harness with wide chest bands.
 - Dogs missing a front leg may easily jump or climb up onto raised surfaces but have problems getting down. It may be best to keep your dog off of the furniture.
 - Your dog may have more trouble with certain toys, such as treat balls filled with kibble, which require a continual hop/stop motion. This type of movement places a lot of strain on the single front leg. Instead, use interactive toys that can be enjoyed from a fixed position, such as a Kong filled with peanut butter or cheese.

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