

Your guide to responsible pet owners

Small critter edition

DON'T SWEAT THE SMALL STUFF

PLUS:

Caring for a small breed
SMALL dog breed profiles

- Chihuahua
- Miniature Pinscher
- Maltese



10 cool
things about
WEAS

My first day at the boarding kennels - a dog's perspective



I'm pretty old by dog standards, and I am arthritic. My owners have been packing their musty leather bags, and I am getting very anxious. Jane, who loves me very much, bundles me into the car and off we go. We drive out into the country, pass through the blue gums, and finally stop. A smiling young man opens the black metal gate, and we travel up a short, dusty road to a building. It is quiet. Jane puts on my orange lead and I drag myself off the springy back seat onto the hard stony soil. I look around. I don't know where I am, but it is peaceful and pretty. A strange woman pops out from the little flower garden and waves. She bends down to pat me. I can smell other dogs on her, but I can't see or hear any.

Jane leads me to the wooden front door and we climb up a step. We walk through a tidy office and down a beige tiled corridor. The strange lady entices me with a piece of wots and shuts a glass door between us. I guzzle

it down. She watches me for a moment or two, and then I hear her walking away. I find myself in a cosy, airy room with a big soft black mattress to lie on. I need to investigate. I sniff around. I see sunshine on the other side. I limp through the opening and find myself in a bigger room that overlooks a vast stretch of golden veld. There are grey and blue mountains in the distance. For whatever reason, I am not scared. The wind chimes are tinkling in the breeze and the radio is playing.

I hear Jane's car drive off. I realise that I have been left behind and I am a little puzzled. Moments later, the man with the smiling face encourages me down an outside passage. I find a large fenced-in run all for myself. It has dark green shade cloth on two sides, with a blue triangle semi-cover overhead for shade and lots of short apple-green grass. Next to the silver gate is a large bowl of fresh water. I lap it up.

The smiling man then disappears. I can hear other dogs messing around next to me; they are happy. Suddenly there is a bit of an uproar. The smiling man reappears after a few minutes with a bowl full of biscuits covered in yoghurt. I scoff them down. There is quiet as all the other dogs busy themselves in their bowls too. The weather is fine; I sleep a little. The journey was long.

I am woken up by the strange lady. She talks to me in a kind, soft voice and sits next to me on the lawn. I roll over for a tummy tickle and she obliges. I think I quite like this place, but I am wondering about Jane. Will she come to fetch me, and if so, when? I look out of my run enclosure. I see cars and trucks passing on the highway and hear the

swishing of tyres against the hot tarmac. As the sun rises higher in the sky, I am taken back to my day room. A thick, grey blanket has been laid out on the floor, which is scattered with some chews, and I stretch out. I listen to some more music and I'm out for the rest of the day. Later, the smiling man takes me for a walk around the property. I sniff lots of interesting new smells on the way. He waits patiently for me to do my business, and cleans up behind me. The smiling man takes me back to my day room. He surprises me with my brush and gives me a bit of a rub-down. It's back to the run again, and I hear the excited uproar of my companions. Feeding time descends on us. I peer into my bowl. It is my food from home. I feel relaxed at last.

The orange sun starts to set, and a cool breeze rises. It's back to the building yet again, and I flop down in the sleeping area on the big mattress, which is now covered with my checked fluffy blanket, and my things surround me. I am missing Jane. I lie on her jersey and savour her odour, which comforts me.

I have had a great day. There was no noise or any frightening disturbances. It's dark now and some humans are doing the rounds, checking to see that we are all snuggled up. The lights are turned off and I hear the squeaking noise of the alarm being activated. I am content to know that if each day is like this, I can stay a while. I am safe and fall soundly asleep. The next morning I wake up in my new environment, looking forward to being here today.

Text: Louise Schomburg, Skyview Kennels