

We sadly lost our Leonberger in May 2010 and felt that we would like to rescue our next dog. Having always had two dogs leaving our 5 year old Newfoundland without a buddy was not an option. There are too many pets that are unwanted or have been given up on and in the light of the recession some of the large breed dogs are being left without a home as they cost too much to look after.

We contacted Leonberger rescue and Newfoundland rescue to see if we could re home one. It wasn't very long before we were told there was a young newfy bitch a year old in need of a home. We knew that she came from a puppy farm and that we were to be her sixth home in just 12 months of her life.

We embarked this knowing she would be a challenge, why had four homes (5 including her breeder) given up on her.

We picked Maya up July 2010 she was a whirling dervish just crying out to be loved. She definitely had her issues. Her bladder control was poor, she did not want to be separated from anyone that gave her love, her lead walking was virtually nil and her recall none existent not helped by the fact she didn't know her name.

On a positive note she was gentle, very pretty and got on with our other Newfy and she was definitely keen to have treats which meant she could be bribed. It was soon evident that unless we did something to curtail her ever building behaviour issues we would be looking to pass her on again.

We do like a challenge, after contacting our vets they advised we use a behaviourist and we contacted Stephanie to set about a programme to train and modify her. A massive task to eliminate 5 previous homes mistakes. To add to this we began to see that every few months her hormone levels seemed to go up and down which clearly affected her training and behaviour.

We set about teaching her and us to use and respond to clicker training, this for us in the past has not worked but we are so pleased with the way Maya has responded. We extended the time she needed to go out for a wee and as she settled it was evident that her lack of bladder control was probably down to stress. Working in a school I had the 6 weeks of the school holidays to condition her to being separated from us all for short periods, now she is happy to be left for the morning.

The lead control has been one of the hardest to conquer, her instinct is to just go and the excitement of a walk just made it impossible for her to not pull. 12 months down the line walking has turned into a pleasure, she is still excited in new places but no longer scared just keen to explore. The difference now is when we call her when off lead she wants to come back to us.

The hormone imbalance hopefully has been addressed by having her spayed but we have had to wait to see her through a combination of seasons and Phantom pregnancies.

She is now coming up to her 2nd birthday and is here to stay. We can see her becoming a very good and well trained dog but it has been a massive commitment from the whole of our family.