

## Caring for a Deaf Dog

**Tips to help make your hearing-impaired dog's life easier.**

*By Debbie Swanson*

Are you thinking of bringing home a deaf puppy? Has your older dog experienced hearing loss? Hearing-impaired dogs can live full and happy lives, particularly if you make some adjustments inside and outside your home.

Because a deaf dog may startle more easily, help him avoid the unexpected. At home: Place his bed against a wall or in a corner. Set up food and water stations outside of family traffic patterns. Teach young children a hand signal for greeting the dog. Although the dog might not need such a formal salutation, teaching kids to pause and sign, "Hello, Buster!" will result in a gentler approach. If your dog isn't watching when you leave the house, leave him a "note" (such as slippers by the front door) to signal that you'll be back shortly. Set up a room or secluded area your dog can use when he needs to retreat from young children or energetic pets. Develop a "visible doorbell" to inform your dog that guests are about to enter the house: flash a hall light or stomp your feet before you open the door.

Keep your dog safe and comfortable outside with these tips: Always use a collar and leash; consider engraving "I'm deaf" on your dog's tag. Fence in your yard. Invite friendly canine playmates over to socialize, rather than letting your dog off-leash at a park. Be sure your neighbors know your dog is deaf; tell them you never let him out alone. If they spot your dog wandering unattended, instruct them how to react (phone you, approach the dog and so on).