

Evaluation and Recommendation

Name: Mars

Breed: Czechoslovakian Vlcak

Age: 11.5 months

History: Mars ran up to an elderly woman while off lead and jumped at her. He grabbed her sleeve with his mouth and scraped her arm. (Level 2) He was described as being playful when this occurred.

Evaluation

1) Affiliation

- a) Standing: Mars was very reserved he watched me and was not interested in meeting me. Crouching did not increase his interest. The use of food only slightly increased his interest. This is quite common in breeds with reserved temperament.
- b) Sitting: He was slightly more interested; he came up and sniffed me.
- c) Petting: After a while of being with him and touching him here and there he did allow me to run my hand down his back several times. He was unsure of me (a stranger) putting my hand over the top of his head.

2) Sit/Down with treat: He sat willingly for me even without the lure; he did do a down with food lure.

3) Body handling

- a) Full hug: Did not attempt
- b) Touching tail: After being with him a while (10-15 minutes) he did allow me to touch and hold his tale.
- c) Touching ears: He allowed me to touch his ears quite early on, but it took some time before he'd allow me to gently hold his ears for a count of 5.
- d) Touching feet: I was not able to touch his feet, he moved away with a small vocalization.
- e) Muzzle "U"-- Putting my hand over the top of his muzzle and pressing down gently: He allowed me to cup the top of his muzzle, but quickly moved away from me instead of flipping my hand off.
- f) Dominance lean: He looked away from me quickly.

4) Play, Arousal, Settle: He was in a new surroundings and unsure of himself. He was not interested in playing with me and just stood and watched me jump around and make loud playful noises He did not get excited; he did not become fearful or aggressive.

5) Frustration: He was patient and did not resort to barking, did offer typical begging behaviors: Moving closer, watching for treats, etc.

6) Food bowl guarding: Did not guard the food bowl allowed me to hold it and add treats to the dish.

7) Item Guarding: I used a small rawhide roll; he happily started chewing on it. Allowed me to come close to him and willingly traded it for a treat.

8) Prey Drive: I test this by using long floppy toy and sliding it around on the floor in a prey like manner. His initial reaction was to be startled by the motion, and then he just watched. He was not interested in interacting with the toy.

9) Startle Reflex/Reaction to distraction

- a) Aural: Dropping a bottle full of pebbles while he was looking away. Startled, but immediately came up to investigate the bottle

- b) Visual: Dropped a roll of wrapping paper within his sight. He was much more startled and did not come to investigate.

10) Dog on Dog reaction:

- a) He first met a 15 year old female Australian Shepherd. He was cautious at first, but politely sniffed her and became very comfortable in her presence. When introduced to her again after a short while, he tried to initiate play with her.
- b) We also brought out a 6 year old altered male Australian Shepherd. Mars was very excited and seemed quite happy and eager to meet him. He made play overtures (hopping up and down), with his body loose and tail wagging. The male Aussie was uncomfortable with this level of excitement and very appropriately displayed his teeth. Mars immediately turned away and backed off.

Recommendation:

His coat and eye coloring appear wolfish, but the shape of his ears and eyes, his body type is more typical of a German shepherd. He's a large dog, but not larger than many German Shepherd Dogs I've trained and shown. His behavior is very dog-like and typical of a working breed of his age.

Mars is a reserved dog that is bordering on shy. Due to his age, he is most likely going through a fear period that commonly shows up in dogs at about 10 months of age. He displayed mild separation anxiety, but was willing to work away from his owner. I saw no evidence of aggression. He is uncomfortable having his body touched, especially his feet. This is very typical of working dogs (especially German Shepherds,) it is a behavior that will need to be worked on.

He gets quite a bit of physical exercise, but needs more mental exercise and he really needs a job to do. Most working breeds will get into trouble when left to create their own job. He needs to be regularly exposed to new situations and people and taught what behavior is appropriate. This will also increase his confidence in new situations. I would also recommend instituting a NILIF (Nothing in Life Is Free) program to help Mars understand that he needs to look to his owner for more direction. Working on his recall is also a must; the recall is the most important command for a dog to know. An obedience class that covers teaching him to sit, down, stay, leave it, walk on a loose leash, and to come when called, would be very beneficial.

Though Mars is not currently around children, I feel it's always important to let owners know how to handle dog/child interactions: It is very necessary to have adult supervision for all interactions between dogs and children. Keep an eye out for inappropriate human behavior. Watch the dog's behavior for loose canine body language. Good dog body language is loose, relaxed, and wiggly. Stiffening and freezing in a dog are not good. If the dog moves from panting to holding her breath, you should remove the child from the situation. These are early signs that the dog is not comfortable.

Three very important behaviors you need to keep an eye out for. Yawning: If the dog yawns when not just waking up or going to sleep this means she's uncomfortable. Half-moon eye: This means you can see the whites of the outer edges of his eyes. Lip licking: Outside the context of eating food. All of these are considered Calming Signals. For more information on Calming Signals try On talking terms with dogs by Turid Rugaas.

Though I recommend training for Mars and do not recommend the alternatives; there are always three options when dealing with behavior issues in dogs: Training, Re-homing, and

Euthanization. Most dog owners hate to have to consider the alternatives, they need to be addressed.

If re-homing would become necessary, the new owners must be informed of his history. They must be willing to train and work with him as well. An experienced owner is a must when adopting a working breed such as Mars.

The last option is euthanization (again not an option I would recommend for Mars): This is always a difficult decision, but to keep people and other dogs' safe it needs to be considered. This is a sad option, but not necessarily a bad option. The needs of both owner and dog must be taken into consideration. Often owners feel that they have somehow failed when considering euthanization, but sometimes it's the option that is most fair to the dog and the owners. If a dog does not respond to training, or if the behavior is genetic or caused by something physical it may be the only option.

It was very nice to meet you, please feel free to contact me with any questions.

Some resources:

<http://en.turidruugaas.no/calming-signals-photos.html>

NILIF <http://www.shirleychong.com/keepers/mindgames.html>

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