

Molly the Thief

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We got Molly when she was 6 months old-a black lab mix who loves nothing more than to go for runs and be snuggled. Actually, there is one thing she loves more... She loves to steal.

We discovered this habit when we came home from work one day to find her curled up in her crate (which we leave open for her to sleep in). She didn't come out to greet us, which seemed suspicious. We persuaded her to come out, and found a large stash of goodies under her dog bed and at the far back of her crate. Included but not limited to were: tupperware containers, a large chopping knife, a dish towel, a few utensils, and the item which became her favorite-a chewed spatula which she proudly took in her mouth and paraded around the room with.

After a few moments in the house, we also realized that we were short a rice cooker too. She had yanked the appliance off the counter and had chewed the electrical cord clean off.

After scolding her (even though I knew was useless as the damage had already been done), we decided that she would need to spend the day in her locked crate when we left the house.

We confidently came home the next day expecting to find Molly in her crate as we had left her. When we opened the door, we quickly realized this was not the case.

She had somehow managed to chew through the plastic at the bottom of the crate where the door latches shut. Once the bottom wasn't secured, she had banged at the door and had propped it open. Once again, her crate was filled with all the dishes that were left in the sink including another chopping knife, a frying pan was in the middle of the living room, the drawers in our kitchen were all opened up (their contents strewn about the floor), and little Molly had our brand new spatula in her mouth.

On day three, we came home to find that Molly had chewed through the duct tape that was being used to hold the door shut on her crate. Our pantry doors were open and our living room floor was covered in all our baking/cooking supplies: picture 1lb bag of flour, oatmeal, sugar, curry powders, spices, baking powder, cereals, etc... The floor was also covered in what you might expect to happen after eating all of these things. From the bathroom to her crate was a trail of all the goodies she found in the bathroom garbage can. Our new rice cooker was still on the counter with an electrical cord attached, but it seemed to be

missing the outlet plug which was chewed off clean. Found more stuff in her crate including a spatula.

New plan. Get rid of everything imaginable in our apartment that we don't need. Keep counters free of all appliances, dishes, food, etc. close all bedroom and bathroom doors. Put a lock on the pantry. Get rid of anything decorative and unnecessary that Molly could get her little paws on. Duct tape crate shut and put the crate against a wall when leaving the house. Give Molly some bones and a kong to chew on while we're gone. Do a double or triple lap of the house to make sure nothing is forgotten. Empty all garbage cans and do all dishes before leaving. Make sure Molly went for a long run before even considering to leave her alone.

Knowing that it wasn't realistic to continue this way, we rented dog training dvd's, bought books of all kinds, had behaviour consultations with local trainers, researched the internet-all to figure out how to effectively curb Molly's bad habits. We were told she had anxiety when we left, and that was the reason she was lashing out. Enter Rory O'Neil...

Solutions: Start clicker training. Give Molly her very own spatula to chew on-believe it or not, once she had her own, she never went looking for another one. Fill a bucket/basket with all her toys and keep switching them up so she always discovers new ones. Drop little treats and kibble in the bucket before we leave the house so she gets into the habit of going into her basket willingly. Tether her in the living room so she can be 'free' without having full range of the house. These were the simplest, most effective ideas that we'd heard to date. They worked very well, and Rory was never short of new ideas to try when other ideas weren't working. Molly was happier because she wasn't in her crate all day, and you could tell how proud she was to be left all alone in the house!

Rory has also been assisting us with issues with our other dog, Simon. Simon is fearful towards other dogs and deals with this by being aggressive. This situation had gotten to the point where we were afraid of walking him-for fear we'd run into another animal. This is still an ongoing issue, but it has become manageable with Rory's help. We are more aware of how our behaviour was affecting his-We know what NOT to do, and how to avoid potentially dangerous situations.

It didn't take long to see that Rory knew very well what she was doing. She has an immediate positive effect on animals. They respond to her. Very importantly, Rory knows how to respond to the biggest problem of all-pet owners. She is great at 'translating' between the animal and the owner. She is non-judgmental and very calm-assertive. We felt a huge relief when she stepped into our lives-she helped us achieve a better relationship with our pets and also a better understanding of how 'we' can be the biggest part of the issue at hand. Even

after we moved away and were unable to have direct training with Rory, she was wonderful at giving us lots of support through email. This was a huge comfort. We would highly recommend Rory's services to anyone with pet issues of a small or large scale. She has been one of the most influential people we've ever met, and we trust her training 110 percent.

She would make a wonderful addition to any organization, and we would highly recommend her services. You will not be disappointed.