

Animal name: Cooper

Animal number: 006644

Physical description: Large-sized mixed breed, black and white

Description of identified behavior concerns:

Cooper arrived at the shelter March 21, 2019, (undocumented intake type or date of impound). His neuter paperwork notes he was on Rimadyl. (a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory) .Later records note that he is overweight and on a diet.

Cooper participated in playgroups and “tolerated” other dogs but did not play. This note followed a note that Cooper had been adopted 3/30/2019 (left on 4/1 after neuter surgery) and returned the same day due to attacking the resident dog.

Between 2/25 and 5/8 (undocumented year) Cooper has 29 logged walks or other out of kennel enrichment sessions on his care logs; this averages about 2 outings per week during this time period.

He was adopted October 30, 2020 and then was surrendered back to the shelter 3/27/2021 due to bites. Cooper bit the owner's aunt (undocumented location or level of bites) one year prior to surrender. The surrendering owner's son was bit in the face (undocumented level) six months prior to surrender, and the latest bite occurring on 3/26/2021 was to a neighbor child when Cooper escaped from his home and chased them down and bit them causing a single puncture on the calf (Moderate III). This surrendering owner stated that Cooper “can open unlocked doors and opened front door” but the bite report states that the door was not fully closed at the time of the incident.

4/11/2021 A behavior observation was made noting reactivity towards other dogs, taking treats outside the kennel as well as “did not look for attention”. This staff member noted that they would have another staff member take out Cooper before “move to the floor”- assuming this means to make a dog available to the public. Later on the same day, a different member of behavior took him out and noted that he barked at a staff member who was cleaning but that he was easy to remove and return to his kennel.

8/19/2021 The first note is made reporting Cooper snapping at handlers. This note stated this occurred when reaching for the slip leash upon return to the kennel after observing high arousal/anxiety in the kennel area.

8/24/2021 A note was made that a volunteer had observed the Cooper will get “growly when pet on the chin or chest”. In a separate note that day, Cooper had been taken out by a behavior staff member who had noted that Cooper was “jumpy and nippy” in an outdoor environment and chose to move inside where they played fetch for 30 minutes. After this “for no apparent reason” he began “jumping and snapping”.

9/7/2021 Cooper was exposed to a cat in a crate to which he responded by “barking, lunging and running around the crate to get the cat”.

Cooper was adopted on 10/30/2021 and returned 11/5/2021 and was reported to be a “different dog outside”, not taking food or responding to previously trained cues in addition to lunging and barking at all other animals which made walks unmanageable for this person. The adopter said they loved Cooper and he was a great dog inside the home but felt they could not meet Cooper’s needs due to reactivity and anxiety. Cooper had been easy to manage in the apartment though they also mentioned that he preferred to be outside and would spend lots of time “staring out the slider”. When this adopter attempted to allow Cooper some off leash time in a park, he chased a squirrel 2 blocks “crossing traffic” and needed to be “cornered in someone’s backyard” to be placed back on leash. This adopter was very dedicated and had made an appointment with his veterinarian to possibly talk about starting anti anxiety medication but he also stated he was unsure if he could wait the 5 days to get professional help for their situation.

Around 5/2023, Cooper began having meet and greets with an interested adopter. 6/5/2023 notes there has been a 10th meet and greet with (assuming) the same adopter and her dogs, with progress being noted as, “no reactivity beyond the initial lunge which evolves into walking next to each other with relaxed posture and no engagement or reactions”.

On 8/25/2023, Cooper met a group of strangers in the shelter facility while on a slip lead being walked by a familiar volunteer. His tail was slightly above spine level, pulling forward slightly to approach with soft face and tail wagging side to side, he nudged one person’s hand with his nose and made soft eye contact before continuing back to his kennel.

In person observations:

On kennel approach, dog was initially tense, but loosened up quickly once handlers got closer. Waited at kennel door for leash to be placed and ate readily when offered food. Once leashed, walked out of kennel, briefly oriented towards back up handlers then turned to the exit. With 3 feet of space walked by a small child with their parent during public hours. Pulled moderately out to back lot. Saw a small stuffed dog and paused with weight back before approaching slowly and began sniffing, circled around then was prompted away easily by handler. A large stuffed dog was in view a few moments later and Cooper approached the dog with tense face, furrowed brow and lowered head, the stuffed dog moved slightly and Cooper quickly flinched backward and then oriented away to exit the situation. Approached multiple people with ears back and soft eyes, sniffed hands quickly then moved away.

After entering a nearby yard, Cooper engaged with a handler for some light training exercises with high value treats. When treats stopped and that handler walked away, Cooper began jumping with clapping paws and teeth clacking, after a moment vocalized with a quiet bark. This indicated that Cooper was highly aroused and frustrated with the slowing of reinforcement. He was directed away from that situation with mild leash pressure to discontinue making contact with that person.

Active avoidance was observed around a staff member's dog who was walked calmly around the area with at least 10' of distance; displacement sniffing, turning away and walking away were observed.

Summary of risks to humans and management requirements:

Low level of affiliation to people (spends less than 10 seconds in proximity when no food present to multiple and diverse people) and multiple, three Moderate III bites (one to a child's face) effort put into biting a child. Persistent jumping and teeth clacking.

Identified leveling:

Children: High VI

Adults: Medium III

Summary of risks to conspecifics and management requirements:

Mildly fearful and avoidant with conspecifics, low level of affiliation with conspecifics but will socially signal.

History of attacking dogs, unknown bite/injury level

Identified leveling: Medium III

Summary of risks to other domestic animals and management requirements:

Cooper's history indicates unmanageability around domestic animals as well as regular wildlife in urban areas. He has multiple triggers and presents behaviors indicative of a high level of risk. Management may involve requiring a fenced yard with multiple air locks on every exit. His initial surrender notes state that Cooper can open unlocked doors which presents another level of management needed for safety. Muzzling and use of a double attachment protocol would be recommended at all times off property.

Training to work towards desensitization to triggers may mitigate risk off property while still keeping management protocols in place.

Identified leveling:

High VI:

- Threat display in response to unidentified triggers
- fixation with tense body language
- Attention not diverted
- Recovery of more than two minutes at a distance of 6ft or closer

Recommendations and options based on risk assessment and management requirements:

- The level of effort Cooper went to during the bite incident on 3/26/2021 was significant. Although it remains unclear if Cooper opened the front door on his own or if it was not closed correctly, Cooper chose to leave his property and chase a neighbor and bite them. The statement that Cooper can, in fact, open closed doors adds a significant level of risk and added management. The needs for a potential household for Cooper to be kept successful would be to have airlocks installed (exercise pens, baby gates, etc.) at each exit/entrance to the home with either padlocks or deadbolts on the doors to prevent Cooper from escaping. Cost for this could be \$30+ depending on the home.
- A yard would need a sturdy, solid 6' fence, again, with airlocks at entry points and physical locks.
- Training for Cooper may require the involvement of a Veterinary Behaviorist and a certified behavior consultant (CDBC), knowing it could possibly take years to work toward desensitization to triggers (potential cost \$8,400/year trainer is an insufficient level for this type of risk)
- Cooper should wear a well fit muzzle when off property due to his history of bites as well as reactivity towards multiple triggers (\$50+)
- Cooper's home should not have children living there or visiting often. When/if visitors with children visit, Cooper would need to be securely confined with multiple barriers (i.e. in a crate in another room with a baby gate and door closed with child proof lock)
- Cooper's home should not have any other animals living in the home or on the property