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| **FOSTERING GUIDELINES** |
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| This document states our guidelines for caring for a dog in foster. These guidelines are in no way an exhaustive list. Should you encounter an issue not covered in these guidelines, then please contact your area coordinator or a member of admin for advice.  References to the foster dog in the masculine include the feminine.  **Introductions**  You and the dog:  On meeting the foster dog, do not reach over his head to pet him as he may perceive that to be a threat. Instead, pet the dog under his chin with slow and steady movements as you approach. If the foster dog is shy or fearful do not make direct eye contact or stare. Again, the dog may consider that to be a threat. Do not pick up a foster dog that does not know you very well; that is good way to get nipped!  Other dogs:  If you have your own dog(s) it is important that you introduce your dog(s) to the foster dog on neutral territory, not in your home. Walk them together before taking them into your home. If that is not possible, put your dog(s) outside in the garden or block them off in the home so that they do not overwhelm the foster dog when he first enters. We suggest that you let them greet through a baby gate. The introduction can dictate the dogs’ ongoing relationship and it is important that they get off on the right paw.  Children  Be cautious when exposing the foster dog to children that are not in your household and to strangers. Get to know the foster dog a little first. In most cases, we do not know the dog’s history and so we cannot predict how the dog will react in these situations. Be aware that if the dog bites, even if through fear, he may have to be euthanised. Do not put your foster dog in a situation that will cost him his life.  Settling in:  The best way to allow a foster dog to settle in is to simply ignore him until he comes to you; let the dog wander about your home and garden as you observe. Praise the dog when he does come to you. The dog needs to find confidence before you can successfully interact together.  **Health**  Veterinarian approval:  If a veterinarian is needed, please contact us for details of an approved facility. You must be willing to take foster dog to vet appointments when needed. All vet visits and procedures must be pre-approved by Philomena Murphy.  Initial health check:  Any foster dog whether he is recued or surrendered must be checked by a vet within 48 hours of collection. If that has not been completed before you receive or collect the dog then please take him to an approved vet. You must ensure that the vet:   * scans the dog for a microchip; * performs a full health assessment; * weighs the dog; * vaccinates the dog, if needed; and * if required, books the dog in to be neutered.   Under no circumstances should a foster dog be allowed outside of your home if he is not vaccinated. If you are fostering an unneutered dog then you must take the necessary precautions to prevent unwanted breeding with your own or visiting dogs. You must ensure that the dog receives flea treatment and is wormed. Your area coordinator should be able to provide flea treatment.  Grooming:  Foster dogs must be kept clean, brushed and have their nails clipped. Grooming can be arranged if necessary but weekly brushing is essential. Potential adopters could visit at any time and it is important that the foster dog makes a good impression. Let the dog adjust for at least 2-3 days before attempting to groom him.  Feeding  Your foster dog should always be fed in a crate or a safe place. Some dogs may have issues with food as a result of their past and may not eat well with other dogs, so separation at mealtimes is advised. Please do not overfeed the dog. An overweight dog has a shorter lifespan and can develop health problems.  **Training**  Basic training:  Teach the dog basic commands, such as: “sit”, “down”, “leave it”, “wait” (as in ‘do not bolt out of the front door’), “stay” and “quiet”. Teach the dog how to walk on a lead. Good manners help the dog to become more adoptable and build up his confidence; it will also give you good one-to-one time with him.  Discourage the foster dog from getting on the furniture and on your bed. You may enjoy it, but the future adopter may not. You are helping the dog to be more adoptable, and providing a clear signal to the foster dog and to your own dog(s) that the foster dog has a lower status in the pack. That is reassuring to your own dog(s) but also to the foster dog who is trying to figure how and where he fits in.  Housetraining  Toilet the foster dog outside on a lead or in a restricted area, until he has adjusted to the new surroundings and you feel comfortable that he will come into your home when called. Do not assume that the foster dog is housetrained as changes in homes and families are stressful for the dog and it may forget or need some time to adjust to your routine. Praise the dog when he does his business outside and do not be harsh with him over any accidents. Sometimes a foster dog will need to be taken all the way back to basics with toilet training and patience is a must.  Crating  Crating at night or when leaving the home is a good idea. It will give your dog(s) a break and also protect your home from accidents and/or destructive behaviour. At night, the crate can be moved into your bedroom if you prefer. The foster dog should never be out of your sight for the first week. If you can’t watch him - crate him! It is important to remember that your dogs were there first. It doesn’t hurt a foster dog to crate him when necessary to give your own dogs a break.  Outside the home  Be very cautious when taking the dog away from your property. Until the dog has bonded with you he is very likely to bolt at the first opportunity. Some dogs back up when frightened or startled and can slip out of their collars. Check the foster dog’s collar and if slipping seems a possibility let us know; we will provide a more secure collar. If the dog does happen to break free try to approach him as calmly and nonchalantly as possible; rushing up to him will only make him run away. The foster dog should be kept on a lead at all times.  To ensure that your foster dog is getting the right standard of care and not placed in dangerous or stressful situations, he must not be walked in packs of more than six dogs.  **Getting ready for adoption**  Your foster dog must stay with you for at least two weeks before he is available for adoption, so that he can be fully assessed. If you have not heard from your area coordinator after that period then please contact them.  Potential adopters may need to visit the dog before any adoption can be finalised, particularly if they have dogs or children, as that will help all parties know if the dog is the right match and prevent further disruption to the dog later down the line. The visit does not need to take place at your home, but it would be helpful if you could be available as you will know the dog and his behaviour better than anyone.  **Key things to note:**   * You must let us know immediately if you lose possession of a foster dog. * You must let us know immediately if the dog requires medical attention. * You must return a foster dog to us if you are planning a holiday or break. Pet sitters are not approved to foster and we will ensure that an appropriate fosterer is available. * You must sign a confidentiality agreement and have been home checked before being approved to foster. * You must sign a foster agreement for each dog you foster.   **Need help?**  If the foster dog is not working out for any reason, then contact us immediately. You are not a failure; the foster dog just is not the right match for your home. We are here to help you, so if something is not working or if you are struggling then please ASK FOR HELP! |
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