



# FOSTER GUIDE

for dogs

A HELPFUL GUIDE FOR VOLUNTEERS WHO  
PROVIDE TEMPORARY FOSTER CARE FOR  
CANINES

# Guide for Dog Foster Homes

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## Top Tips for Foster Parents

- ♥ Check in regularly with your Foster Coordinator.
- ♥ Ask for advice if your puppy/dog has stopped eating.
- ♥ If your dog seems sick, check immediately for hydration – she should be drinking water, urinating, have elastic skin tone and a moist mouth.
- ♥ Wash your hands and change your shirt after handling sick animals to prevent spread of illness.
- ♥ Never let your dog run loose outside; guard against escapes.
- ♥ Don't leave your foster dog unattended with any resident animals.
- ♥ Feed your foster dog separately from other pets in your home until you are certain of their behavior when food is present.

## Health & Wellness

### Veterinary Visits

All vet visits must be pre-authorized unless you are willing to pay for the visit yourself. Check with your Coordinator first.

We must be very cautious when deciding whether or not a foster animal needs to go to the vet, as office visits add up very quickly. Each case will be evaluated individually by what is best for the animal as well as economically feasible for the shelter and FoCCAS.

Authorization to foster parents for vet visits can be given for any of the following:

**Puppies under 12 weeks of age:**

- Diarrhea that lasts for more than a day
- Vomiting and diarrhea for more than 6 hours
- Vomiting more than once in an hour
- Not eating for more than 12-24 hours
- Lethargy without fever for more than 12 hours
- Lethargy with fever

**Dogs older than 12 weeks of age:**

- Diarrhea that lasts for more than 1-2 days

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Diarrhea and occasional vomiting for more than a day  
Vomiting more than 2-3 times in an hour  
Not eating for more than 24 hours  
Lethargy without fever for more than a day  
Lethargy with fever

Your foster dog may not display any signs of illness until quite ill. Therefore, it's up to you to observe your dog closely each day. Call your Foster Coordinator if you see:

- Unusual discharges from the eyes, nose or other body openings
- Abnormal lumps
- Limping
- Difficulty getting up or down
- Loss of appetite
- Abnormal waste elimination
- Other abnormal behavior

## Diarrhea

Diarrhea can be caused by several factors, including stress, change of diet, poor diet, eating garbage, parasites and viruses. If your foster dog has diarrhea and has no other symptoms, rule out change of diet by feeding your dog 2 cups of cooked rice mixed with one cup of cottage cheese or cooked hamburger meat for a day or two, and then reintroduce dry kibble.

Provide plenty of fresh water since diarrhea can cause dehydration. To check for dehydration, pull the skin up over the shoulder blades. If it snaps back quickly, the dog is not dehydrated. If the skin goes down slowly, then the dog is dehydrated and needs fluids. Call your Coordinator immediately if you suspect your foster is dehydrated. In an emergency, take your foster directly to your vet.

## Distemper

Distemper is an extremely contagious and often fatal viral disease. It is an airborne infection that can be transmitted with or without direct contact with an infected dog through mucus, urine and feces. Some of the symptoms include squinting, congestion of the eyes, pus from the eyes, weight loss, coughing, vomiting, nasal discharge and diarrhea.

Contact your Coordinator immediately if you suspect Distemper.

## Fleas

We attempt to treat all foster dogs for fleas prior to leaving the shelter, but additional flea treatments are available if needed. Puppies younger than 4 months should not be treated with toxic chemicals. Puppies over 8 weeks of age and adult dogs can be treated with topical flea treatment.

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Flea treatments contain insecticides that can cause nerve and liver damage, impair the immune system and even cause cancer. Regular flea combing is the best way to control and monitor the fleas. Vacuum all areas of your house that your foster uses at least every two to three days. Good food, minimal stress, proper hygiene and TLC help keep the dog from getting fleas or an illness.

To check for fleas, inspect your dog daily, including rear groin, belly, tail, neck and under the chin and head. Look also for black specks of flea dirt, which is actually digested blood. Before you begin combing, get a bowl of tap water and put a few drops of dish soap in it. You can put any fleas you find in the water and they will drown. (If you don't use soap, the fleas may swim to a fluff of fur and jump out of the water.) If fleas are present, treat as soon as possible. Change bedding and vacuum the floors daily. The washing machine will remove fleas, eggs and dirt.

If your foster dog had fleas, watch his stools for short pieces of white rice that are tapeworms, which come from ingesting fleas. Tapeworms can cause diarrhea. If you see tapeworms, call your Coordinator, who can provide you with medication.

## Injured Dogs

Injured foster dogs will have specific needs. They'll most likely be recovering from surgery and will come with veterinary orders. Generally fracture, cast or other surgery patients may need to be confined to a crate or a small room to limit mobility.

This type of foster situation may require you to schedule follow-up appointments with the dog's veterinarian. As with all foster dogs, watch for signs of illness, since injured foster dogs are under additional stress and are more prone to illness. Lots of human contact is important for healing injured dogs. Active play should be limited, but cuddling, petting, talking, brushing and massaging are all good social activities for a recovering animal.

## Kennel Cough

The shelter is much like a child day care – as soon as one dog has a cold, most all the dogs in the shelter get a cold. Just like people who have colds, kennel cough develops when the dog is stressed or when the immune system is compromised. Kennel cough usually goes away as soon as the dog has a warm, quiet and soothing place to sleep, where they can drink lots of water, eat healthy food and receive lots of TLC!

Kennel cough is typically a dry, hacking cough. There may be some discharge from the nose and a clear liquid that is coughed up. It's generally a mild, self-limiting illness of the trachea and bronchi encountered in all age groups of dogs, but especially in those under unusual stress.

Because kennel cough is contagious, infected dogs should not be around other dogs until they're over their cough. If you have a dog at home and plan to foster a dog with kennel cough, we have found that if your own dog is healthy and has been vaccinated annually, then he will most likely not get sick.

Talk to your vet about giving your own dog the Bordetella nasal vaccination. Immunity to kennel cough is usually established 3-4 days after vaccination.

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Make sure your foster dog has plenty of fresh water and healthy food. If your dog is not eating, try cooking up something special and smelly such as eggs, chicken or steak. Take short, leashed walks. If your dog's energy is good and the cough seems mild, try some Vitamin C (5-10 mg/lb, 2-3 times a day with food) and Vitamin E (3-5 mg/lb, once a day). If you don't see improvement of the cough or cold after 3 days, or if the condition worsens, call your Coordinator.

Strenuous activity can bring on coughing episodes, so limit activity and encourage rest. Even baths can be stressful to the system and should be avoided. However bringing your foster dog into the bathroom while you're taking a shower can be beneficial as the steam can help loosen mucus. Incubation of kennel cough is 5-10 days; its course is 10-20 days with symptoms generally more marked the first week. Fever, lack of appetite and a yellow-green-brown nasal discharge can indicate secondary infections. Call your Foster Coordinator if any of these symptoms occur.

## Parvo

Parvo attacks the intestinal tract, white blood cells and heart muscle. Signs of infection are depression, loss of appetite, vomiting, severe diarrhea, fever and sometimes kennel cough symptoms. The illness is contracted through contact with the infected feces of another dog. Call your Coordinator immediately if you believe your foster dog may have this illness.

♥ Learn more about parvovirus:

[www.aspcapro.org/resource/shelter-health-disease-management/canine-parvovirus-timeline](http://www.aspcapro.org/resource/shelter-health-disease-management/canine-parvovirus-timeline)

## Parasites

Parasites can cause diarrhea, stomach bloating or vomiting. Parasites include tapeworms, roundworms, hookworms and mange. Tapeworms will look like pieces of rice coming out of your foster dog's anus or in his stool. Round worms and hookworms may be vomited, and roundworms look like spaghetti (hookworms are smaller and rarely distinguishable without the aid of a microscope).

Mange is an infestation of tiny mites that bite and cause intense scratching, reddened skin and loss of fur. Only rare cases of mange (sarcoptic) are contagious to humans. If you suspect your foster dog has parasites, call your Coordinator immediately.

## Vaccination & Worming

Your foster dog's vaccination and worming history will be given to you. Your dog has most likely been vaccinated for Rabies, Distemper, Parainfluenza, Parvo and Bordetella.

If you're fostering a puppy, you need to return the pup to the shelter for boosters.

8-10 weeks: DHLPP and Bordetella

11-13 weeks: DHLPP and Bordetella

14-16 weeks: DHLPP-P and Rabies

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Annual boosters recommended

Most likely, your foster dog had one dose of wormer upon arrival to the shelter. If you see worms in the dog's stool, return to the shelter for more wormer. You will be instructed on the correct dosage and frequency.

♥ These tips can help keep your home free of infection:

[www.aspcapro.org/infection-control-foster-homes](http://www.aspcapro.org/infection-control-foster-homes)

♥ Learn about household toxins that cause seizures:

[www.aspcapro.org/resource/shelter-health-poison-control/most-common-causes-seizures-dogs](http://www.aspcapro.org/resource/shelter-health-poison-control/most-common-causes-seizures-dogs)

## Spay/Neuter

Spay and neuter surgeries are generally done at the shelter prior to transport or adoption, occasionally depending on the timing of when your dog was pulled, it may need to return for surgery. You will be advised of this and should receive a surgery date several days in advance so arrangements can be made to return your dog to the shelter.

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## Behavior

### Housetraining

Be patient with your foster dog. Even housetrained adult dogs will make mistakes, especially if they've been at the shelter for a long time and have been eliminating in their kennel. If there are smells in your house from another dog or cat, some foster dogs may "mark" their territory. This action should be redirected immediately with a calm "Oops" – then escort him outside where he can finish. You will then want to use some odor neutralizer (like Nature's Miracle) on the areas where the dog "marked" to insure he will not smell and mark that area again.

You can begin to housetrain a puppy at 8 weeks of age. Even if you bring home an adult dog who is housebroken, you will want to follow these guidelines until your foster dog adjusts to his new situation and to your schedule.

Determine where you want your foster dog to eliminate – it could be the backyard, side yard or an indoor spot such as a Pup Head, litter system or one you have designed. Then take him there every time with a spoken command (such as "do your business"). Take him out when he wakes up, after he eats or drinks, after a play session, or at least every 2 hours. Puppies should go out every 45 minutes until you learn their pattern.

Stand with him for 5 minutes. If he eliminates, reward him (with treats, praise, a favorite game and your own special happy dance). If he doesn't go in 5 minutes, take him back inside and try every 15 minutes until he goes. Every time he goes, make sure you reward him!

Supervise the puppy closely while you're inside. If he starts to sniff the floor, or even squats to go, interrupt with a calm "Oops," scoop him up quickly and take him to the approved spot and praise when he finishes. If he eliminates in the house while you're not paying attention, don't correct him – it's not his fault. Clean it up and go back to your schedule. Use an odor neutralizer to get rid of the smell. Never put the dog's face in his mess or yell at him; he won't understand you, and you will only be teaching him fear.

### Crate Training

Crates provide safe havens and dens for dogs. They calm them and can help prevent destructive chewing, barking and housetraining mistakes. Puppies should not be crated for more hours than they are months old, plus one. For example, a 4-month-old pup should not be crated longer than 5 hours.

How long an adult dog can be crated will depend on many factors. For example, if your foster dog was left outside, he has never been required to hold it for any period of time. It will take time for this dog to learn to hold it, and you will need to start slowly. Older dogs and dogs with some medical conditions may only be able to successfully hold it for short periods of time. Rigorous exercise should be given before and after any long periods in the crate, and good chew toys can be in the crate to help relieve boredom. You may want to crate your new foster dog for the first few nights in your bedroom – most of them feel more secure in their crate and it protects your house from accidents.

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Crates should never be used as a means of punishment; they're not to be used for keeping puppies under 6 months out of mischief all day either. Crates should be thought of as dog playrooms, just like child playrooms with games and toys. It should be a place dogs like to be and feel safe and secure.

## Attention & Playtime

Gentle and calming human contact is important for dogs. Human handling is especially important for the healthy development of puppies. Be sure to give your foster dog several minutes of playtime periodically through the day.

Do not allow children to behave with the foster dog in a manner you would not want the child to behave with a younger sibling. Teach children to leave a dog alone when he is eating, chewing and sleeping. Never allow a child to remove a toy or any other prized possession from a dog.

Do not play tug of war or wrestle with your foster dog. If you have a shy or fearful dog, do not throw a toy toward the dog, because he may think you are throwing things at him and become more fearful. After you have finished playing with a toy, put it away so that you are controlling the toy and the playtime. When giving the dog a toy or treat, have him sit before giving it to him. That way he has to work to get the toy or treat – making it a reward.

## Behavior Issues

Many of the behaviors that we find problematic – such as barking, whining, digging, chewing, scavenging and hunting other animals – are really just normal dog behaviors and can be explained as “dogs being dogs.” The easiest way to coexist with our canine companions is to provide more appropriate outlets for these behaviors.

If your foster dog is exhibiting any behavioral issues, ask yourself the questions below:

- Is my foster dog getting enough exercise?
- Is he being left alone for long periods of time?
- Does he have interesting toys to keep his mind engaged and stimulated?
- Is he getting enough attention and playtime?
- Am I reinforcing bad behavior? Some examples include verbally scolding a dog when he is seeking attention or engaging the dog when he uses bad manners to get you to play.
- Does my foster dog have a safe place that is dog-proofed with appropriate chew toys, or am I leaving my own belongings within reach?
- Am I providing specific outlets based on his natural instincts and drives?

We don't expect foster parents to be miracle workers. If your foster dog requires more attention, exercise or training than you can provide, talk to your Coordinator – another foster home might be best for both you and the dog. Regardless of the issue, we don't condone punishment, which will not address the cause of the behavior and in fact it may worsen behavior that's motivated by fear or anxiety.

Punishment may also cause anxiety in dogs who aren't currently fearful. People often believe their dog makes the connection to discipline because he runs and hides or “looks guilty.” But dogs display submissive postures



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like cowering, running away or hiding when they feel threatened by an angry tone of voice, body posture, or facial expression. Your dog doesn't know what he's done wrong; he only knows that you're upset. Punishment after the fact will not only fail to eliminate the undesirable behavior, but may provoke other undesirable behaviors, too.

♥ Try these easy enrichment ideas:

[www.aspcapro.org/resource/saving-lives-behavior-enrichment/tips-canine-enrichment](http://www.aspcapro.org/resource/saving-lives-behavior-enrichment/tips-canine-enrichment)

## Showcasing Your Foster

### Regular updates

If your dog's picture is already on the shelter's or rescue's website, you could improve his/her chances of finding the perfect home by providing information about his personality. A good bio makes a big difference in the number of calls the dog gets, so be descriptive! Try to include things like:

- What does the dog like to do? (play fetch, go for walks, etc.)
- Is he a cuddler?
- Does he have experience with other animals and children?

Of course, any cute things that he does or anything you want to point out about his fur or appearance is good as well. It can be as long as you want, but the typical description is a paragraph or two.

If the dog has some bad habits, this can be discussed during the first phone conversation. The bio should generate interest, not turn people away. We don't want to mislead people; however we really try to focus on the positive. Please email the updates to the Coordinator.

### Photos

If your dog's picture is not yet on the website, there are several options for getting pictures taken and posted. If you have access to a digital camera and would like to take the pictures yourself, you are welcome to do so. Please email them in .jpg format to the Coordinator short videos are also welcome.

You are also welcome to take your dog to the shelter during one of the regularly scheduled digital photography sessions.

## Getting to Adoption

### Out and About

Once your dog has received the necessary vaccinations, feel free to pack up your pup and expose him/her to the rest of the world – visit outdoor festivals and cafes, parks, etc. If he/she is adoptable you may even find his/her new adoptive family. If he/she is going to rescue, you will be providing valuable socialization.

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♥ For more helpful tips on marketing your foster dog, see our Adoption Ambassadors section:

[www.aspcapro.org/ambassadors](http://www.aspcapro.org/ambassadors)

## Home Sweet Home

If your pet is up for adoption we will probably ask you to weigh in on the suitability of potential adopters. The information you can provide about your foster dog can prevent a lot of heartache. Use your best judgment, coupled with advice given to you by your Coordinator, in choosing a home for your foster dog. You know his needs best and can explain them to potential adopters. Once you have found a good fit, follow the shelter's procedures for completing the application and accepting payment for the adoption.

And, of course, let your Coordinator know immediately when a match has been made, so that everyone can celebrate another life saved!

Thank you again for the gift of your time, love and experience to help FoCCAS save the lives of adoptable dogs!