

FURKIDZ 911 CONNECTION

THE FOSTER EXPERIENCE



OUR REFERENCE HANDBOOK

(Revised 4/23/2009)

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- Must agree to contact the Foster coordinator at the point of any medical difficulty with any foster dog.
- Must agree that all decisions made by medical staff and FurKidz 911 Connection are final.
- Must agree to immediately report any bites and/or aggressive incidents with a foster dog to the Foster coordinator.
- Must agree that all foster dogs are the property of FurKidz 911 Connection, and must be relinquished to the rescue upon request.

(PLEASE SIGN COPY ON LAST PAGE)

The Foster Reference Handbook

INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO OUR TEAM OF DEDICATED FOSTER VOLUNTEERS

Foster homes are the backbone of any rescue organization and our Foster parents are the most important people in our organization. Our Foster parents welcome foster dogs into their lives and homes just as if they were their own. They give him or her all the love, attention, and training you would expect any responsible dog owner to do.

FOSTER PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

The FurKidz 911 Connection Foster program enables us to save the lives of dogs that might otherwise have had to be euthanized. Fostering and saving a dog from death means giving this dog a second chance in life when this dog has been abandoned, abused, homeless or is no longer wanted. This important program provides a safe place for foster dogs to stay, where they can get the care and socialization they need until they are ready to be placed in their forever homes.

THE COMMITMENT

Being a Foster parent takes a considerable amount of time, dedication, and genuine caring. It may range from a few days to several months depending on the dog's situation. It is a big commitment and it is not a job for everyone. As a Foster parent, you will be responsible for learning about and assessing the dog's temperament, character and abilities. Determining how the dog reacts to a new environment, other pets, new situations, and family members is a large part of this responsibility.

You must also consider the possibility of additional time for vet checks, spay/neutering, emergency care, and meeting potential adopters. Yet the fulfillment and sense of purpose you receive in knowing that you helped one more dog find its way into a safe, happy home is overwhelming each time you successfully place a dog.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

The following guidelines were created to help you with the care of your foster dog and help you understand the policies and procedures of FurKidz 911 Connection Foster program.

OUR EXPECTATIONS OF FOSTER PARENTS

- Be responsible and dependable.
- Have dog experience and loves dogs.
- Have a fenced in yard or some other secure area for the dog.
- Have the time to devote to a foster dog.
- Have patience to deal with situations which may arise.
- Be willing to find their foster dog a home.
- Be supportive of the adoption process.
- Provide the best possible home to a dog that will be in their life temporarily.

It is critical that our foster parent understand what is expected of them and willing to work in a "ONE TEAM" environment.

HOUSING YOUR FOSTER DOG

Only take on the number of dogs that you can house comfortably, can feed and clean, and provide socialization for. Always keep the needs of your own personal pets in mind whenever you consider fostering.

Housing your foster dog is a key factor in the overall success of your foster experience - your home life can be greatly enhanced or disrupted based on how you set up your environment. Think smart and safe. Wherever you decide to house your foster dogs, keep in mind that the area must be easy to clean and to disinfect.

In the beginning, we recommend an area that is separate from your household pets. A spare bedroom, bathroom, or utility room can be ideal if uncluttered and dog proof.

PROTECTING YOUR OWN PETS

Prior to being placed into foster homes, all dogs who are old enough will be vaccinated and wormed as necessary.

When bringing any foster dog(s) into your home, keep in mind that it may be carrying an illness that could affect your own pet's health. Separate foster dogs from your own pets for at least one week. It may be difficult, but the only way to avoid possible exposure of your pets is to keep them separate from your animals for just awhile to make sure your pets are protected. However, we **highly recommend** that your pets be current on all vaccinations **and** that your dogs are also current on the Bordatella vaccination (Kennel Cough).

If your foster dog seems healthy and you choose to introduce them to your pets, it is a good idea to prohibit sharing of food and water bowls and toys. Introductions should be made with great care and under constant supervision.

FEEDING YOUR FOSTER DOG

Many of our foster homes provide food (quality dry dog food) and use the expense as a charitable donation. Food can be provided to fosters upon request.

To avoid causing potentially harmful digestive problems, do not feed cow's milk, human formulas, table scraps, more than a very small amount of canned food (and then only if absolutely necessary to stimulate appetite) or "generic" pet foods.

TRAINING AND SOCIALIZING YOUR FOSTER DOG

One of the most important parts of your job as a foster parent is to convince your foster dog that humans are kind and loving. Some dogs will adjust quickly to you and their new environment, but some will require even more patience and understanding. To make their transition into your home an easy one, you will need to give your foster dog a day or so to adjust themselves to their new surroundings.

You should teach basic commands and obedience training to your dog. He should know sit, come, down, stay, and should be able to walk good on lead. Exercise at the end of a leash is extremely important in creating social standing for your foster dog. Please be certain that in walking your foster dog that he is walking beside or behind you. This positioning will reinforce that you are leading him and he will be more comfortable following you than acting as the leader.

Dogs that need socialization will benefit greatly from being around other dogs that are comfortable with people. It's important to get out and have him meet other dogs and people to determine his reactions to them.

Understand that all dogs are rescue dogs and their behavior can be unpredictable. Be prepared for some adjustment problems in the beginning. It can be stressful for both you and the dog to be in a new situation. Be patient. If the going gets tough we will help out with advice and encouragement.

HOUSE TRAINING

It is always advisable to work with a foster dog at first as if he was a young puppy when it comes to house training issues. Even if he was considered house trained already, he'll need constant supervision when loose. Many dogs never learned house training habits outside of their own home, and the foster dog will need to be tested to make sure he is soundly housebroken. This is one of the most important basic training issues to be covered.

GROOMING YOUR FOSTER DOG

Do not bathe your foster dog too often because that will dry out the skin, deplete healthy oils from the coat and skin, and lead to scratching and irritation. Frequency is largely dependent on the breed and activities of the dog. Dogs who spend a lot of time outside or engage in outdoor activities that expose them to dirt, bugs and/or debris typically require more bathing, perhaps every 6 weeks or more frequently. Some groomers recommend bathing double-coated breeds only about 3 times a year and suggest that smooth-coated dogs can go a lot longer between baths than can curly-coated breeds such as poodles. Too frequent bathing can cause the coat to soften and reduce its insulating qualities.

Only use shampoo intended for dogs. Shampoos intended for human use, even baby or pH balanced brands, should never be used on dogs. Products containing natural ingredients are often best. Towel-dry any excess water from your dog's coat. If your dog tolerates it, you may want to try blow-drying. Be sure to use a dryer with very low or no heat.

We strongly urge you to trim your foster dogs' claws on a regular basis with a good pair of pet nail trimmers. Besides helping to reduce snags and scratches (on your furniture, clothing, and your own skin!), regular nail trimming – once a week, more or less – can help socialize your fosters. The handling they receive during this procedure will help them get used to being gently restrained and worked with. Your efforts in this regard will help your fosters to be well adapted and easier for their future owners to manage. Contact FurKidz 911 Connection if you would like instruction on proper and safe trimming.

TRANSPORTING YOUR FOSTER DOG

Transportation is a big part of being a foster parent. Foster parents provide transportation to the veterinarian and to special events at which the dogs are shown. A foster parent may be required to deliver or pick up the foster dog.

When transporting your foster dog, use a secure travel crate or a dog car restraint to keep him, and you, safe while traveling. The safest place for dogs to ride is in the far back. If you use a crate, be sure it is secured in the car. Remember that even if a dog is in a crate, if the crate is not secure, the entire thing can fly up and hurt the dog, or even hurt you, during an accident. If you are using a harness, make sure that you have hooked it to the seat belt securely.

ADOPTION PROCESS FOR YOUR FOSTER DOG

FurKidz 911 Connection will regularly receive applications on dogs in our foster homes and we have a process where they are screened. If an applicant is interested in a foster dog and has passed the initial screening, the foster parent can arrange a "Meet and Greet" with the potential applicant to allow them to interact with the dog. This may entail driving some distance and/or allowing the potential applicant to visit the dog in your home.

From time to time, FurKidz 911 Connection will have events and other activities which will promote the adoption of your dog. These may include adoption days where dogs are brought out for public viewing, displays on websites, fundraisers, etc. Foster parents are expected to arrange to have the foster dog available and provide the appropriate information for the event.

The first thing is to make certain that they are healthy enough to be placed. It is especially important that they not have any illness that can be transferred to other dogs. Second, make certain your foster dog has received all vaccinations or treatments they are due. If not, inform the Foster coordinator as soon as possible. Next, it is also very helpful for the new owner of your foster dog to benefit from what you have learned about the dog during their time in your home. Feel free to take the opportunity to share your insights via a letter to their new owner. You can also include your e-mail or phone number so that they may correspond with you about the progress of your foster after they have been adopted. Know that in some cases, new owners may not choose to correspond after the fact. However your letter can help make the transition to their new home easier if you can share with them all that you know about your foster. Also you might send a favorite or special toy with them. This can make their new home feel more like home.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY FOSTER DOG BECOMES ILL?

There are typically many symptoms to indicate a dog is not feeling well. Always be observant of your foster dog. Symptoms of illness may include: diarrhea, vomiting, loss of appetite, lethargy, weight loss, runny eyes or nose, sneezing, and coughing. If during the day, you have concerns that your foster dog may be getting sick, don't wait until night time when veterinarian staff are unavailable.

If your foster dog is vomiting or has diarrhea in the evening, but is still active, alert, eating and drinking, you can probably wait until the next day to receive help. If the dog is lethargic and shows no interest in food or water, however, it is wise to seek emergency help as soon as possible.

FurKidz 911 Connection will find ways to pay for the medical care of the dog during the time it is being fostered (routine check-ups, vaccinations and treatment of emergencies should they arise). Since we are a new organization, we will do our very best to provide financial assistance. In order to control our expenses; however, the foster parent will utilize a veterinarian provided by FurKidz 911 Connection and will notify appropriate rescue personnel prior to any medical treatment for the dog to ensure finances and treatment options are appropriately aligned.

DISEASES THAT ARE TRANSMISSIBLE FROM ANIMAL TO ANIMAL:

Distemper/Upper Respiratory Virus (Dogs and Cats) – These are the basic yearly vaccinations your pet(s) should be kept current on at all times for both their protection and that of the foster dogs.

Parvo Virus (Dogs) – Annual vaccinations protect against this serious and often fatal canine disease. Your own dogs must be kept currently vaccinated against parvo at all times. Be aware that parvovirus is not a disease that affects puppies only. Unvaccinated elderly animals are at risk, and must always be kept current on their parvovirus inoculations.

The following are infestations that there is no vaccination to prevent, so identifying them and understanding how they are transmitted is important to avoiding the problem.

Roundworms – Roundworms are big worms. Typically they are white, about the diameter of a spaghetti-strand and about 4 inches in length. Roundworms are particularly common in puppies and may produce no symptoms other than diarrhea. However, it is also common for roundworms to be seen in the dog's stool or to be vomited or coughed up. Dogs can be born with roundworms, get them from their mother's milk or through the feces of an infected animal. This commonly occurs through shared water and food bowls, bedding materials, or even in the yard. So your pets could pick up this worm from an infected foster dog.

Tapeworms – This worm looks like rice when they are dead or like a short piece of spaghetti noodle, when still alive. They will usually be seen in the stool or on the hair around the dogs rear end. You may also find them on the ground, carpet or bedding. Another sign may be diarrhea streaked with mucous.

Dogs most commonly get this worm from fleas or specifically from eating the flea or intestines of other animals (mouse, bird, rat, etc.) that has fleas. What this should mean to you, is that even if your animals are flea free, they could come into contact with fleas if your foster dog has them.

Hookworms - This worm is generally invisible to the unaided human eye. They are about a 1/2 inch long and very thin. Signs of hookworms vary, but may include nonspecific diarrhea; dark black (tarry) diarrhea; bloody diarrhea; vomiting; poor or no appetite, pale mucous membranes in the mouth and generalized pallor; weakness, emaciation and poor growth.

Ringworm – Ringworm is a skin infection caused by a fungus, not an actual worm. Ringworm is transmitted in a variety of ways, although physical contact with an infected dog is the most common. Dry scaly spots will appear after one to two weeks, and are usually confined to the hairier regions of the scalp, forearms and face. Hair will break off at the roots, creating bald spots. Exposure occurs through physical contact of any type with an infected animal. Animals should receive immediate attention by a veterinarian.

Mange – The parasite that causes mange is transmitted through physical contact. This animal-to-human form is less serious than the human-to-human form, and usually cures itself in three to four weeks. Infected animals suffer blisters, scabs and hair loss. Physical contact with infected animals and their bedding should be avoided. There are two types of mange: sarcoptic and demodex. Sarcoptic mange can be transmitted to people and other animals. Demodex cannot be passed from one animal to another.

DISEASES THAT MAY BE TRANSMITTED FROM ANIMALS TO HUMANS:

Roundworms, Tapeworms, Ringworm, Mange and Giardia. Giardia is an intestinal disease occurs throughout the world and is common in cats and dogs. Like many zoonosis, Giardia is contracted by the fecal-oral route. Symptoms may include weight loss and chronic diarrhea. There are now reliable tests and drugs for treating Giardia, but a veterinarian or physician should be contacted at once! Giardia can be prevented through proper and thorough hand washing.

DOG PROOFING YOUR HOME

The following tips are designed to help you keep your foster dogs safe.

- Know which plants are toxic. Many outdoor plants, flowers, and shrubs are poisonous.
- Electrical cords, computer cables, or wires (tie up loose cords & keep out of sight).
- Draw strings from draperies or blinds.
- Cleaning supplies, rags, sponges, chemicals, detergents.
- Remote controls, knick-knacks.
- Candles, potpourri, air fresheners.
- Fireplaces, wood stoves.
- Be careful of your foster dog around furniture. A rocking chair can harm a tail or leg, and a curious dog may crawl under an open recliner or sofa bed.
- Keep doors and windows closed. Keep screens on windows and sliding glass doors securely fastened and in good repair.
- Many dogs will eat cat feces from litterboxes. Aside from being a nasty habit it can be dangerous. Cat litter can cause an intestinal obstruction, not to mention intestinal worms the cat may have passed on.
- If you leave your foster dog outside unsupervised, please make sure he is fenced.
- Gasoline, oil, paint, fertilizers, pesticides, auto supplies, etc. should be in secure containers and out of reach.
- Be especially careful with antifreeze and rat poison, both taste good to dogs and both can be deadly if ingested.
- Pools, ponds, hot tubs and drainpipes are also dangerous.
- Fire rings, barbecues and other heat/fire sources.
- Walk around your property and look for other areas and items that could be hazardous (broken glass, nails, sharp objects).

Foster Parent Name: _____

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Foster Parent's Signature

Date