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**PAW PATROL DAYTON**  
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# Foster Handbook



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## **Introduction**

Thank you so much for your interest in fostering pets for Paw Patrol Dayton. By opening up your home to foster pets, you're not only helping to save lives, you're providing the individual attention and love these dogs desperately need.

A foster coordinator will get in touch with you to sign up for one of our scheduled orientation and training sessions. In the session, we'll go over this manual and answer any questions you have about the program. The trainer/canine behavior consultant will typically be there as well and you'll also be able to ask any behavior or training questions you may have.

Foster homes are asked to provide daily care and love for the dogs. Care includes feeding according to size and needs, exercise according to energy levels, and lots of play time and positive socialization.

Although fostering can be a lot of work at times, it is a very rewarding experience. By participating in this program, you are saving lives and helping many different types of dogs find the families they've been longing for. Our key to success is our network of volunteers and foster family homes. We do not operate out of a shelter or have a facility in which to house our adoptable dogs; rather we rely on volunteers who lovingly open their hearts and their homes, offering temporary accommodations. Once integrated into one of our foster families, a dog that may have come to us frightened, timid, or otherwise emotionally scarred, will blossom and flourish with the tender loving care it receives there, often within just a few days.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **What do foster families need to provide?**

- A healthy and safe environment for their foster dogs.
- When possible, transportation to and from vet appointments, meet-n-greets, adoption events and fundraisers. When this is not possible, fosters are expected to work with other volunteers on getting the dog transported to and from the necessary location.
- Socialization and cuddle time to help teach dogs positive family and pet relationships.
- Exercise and positive stimulation to help them develop into great dogs. We have a trainer/canine behavior consultant you can contact for ideas on ways to accomplish this that works best for you and the foster dog.

### **How much time do I need to spend with my foster dog?**

As much time as you can. With that said, the amount of time will vary depending on the energy level and needs of the dog you are fostering. We realize that you have other things going on outside of your volunteering/fostering for Paw Patrol and we greatly appreciate the time you are giving to your foster dog. The time you spend with your foster dog will help to make their stay easier on you and them by helping to form a bond between you.

### **Can I foster a dog if I don't have a fenced yard?**

Yes. Even if you do have a fenced yard, we request that you supervise all outdoor activities with the foster dog. We also ask that you always keep him/her on a leash when you're on walks.

### **How long will the dog need to be in foster care?**

Ideally, foster dogs stay in their assigned foster homes until they get adopted. We do not have a building to house animals so these dogs rely on foster homes as their "home between homes." If there is an emergency or another reason you can no longer keep your foster dog, we will work with you to find another foster home for the dog. However, please understand this cannot often be done immediately and may take a bit of time.

### **How often will I need to take my foster dog to events & meet-n-greets?**

The amount of meet-n-greets you may need to attend is difficult to put a number on. We begin the adoption process with an adoption application so as to only schedule meet-n-greets with potential adopters that are pre-approved. This cuts down on the number of meet-n-greets you will need to do, however, we still cannot be sure of how many it will take before your foster dog is adopted.

As for adoption events and fundraisers, we would like for you to attend as many of those as possible. We realize that you will mostly likely not be able to attend them all but please do your best to attend as many as you can. The more your foster dog is out there to be seen the quicker your dog is likely to find it's forever home.

### **Will I need to give medication to my foster dog?**

Most all of the dogs that we have in our foster program are rescued from shelters and various places. We do our best to ensure that we are aware of all the conditions that a foster dog may have prior to going to a foster home, however they may frequently need to be placed in your home prior to seeing a veterinarian. If your foster dog should need medications, we (or the vet) can show you how to administer them and are always available to help you with any questions you may have.

### **Can I let my foster dog play with my personal pets?**

Yes, but there are a few guidelines we ask foster families to adhere to regarding their personal pets. While foster dogs playing with other pets is fine, we advise that all your personal pets are healthy and up-to-date on all vaccines. We also ask that you give your foster dog a minimum of 2-3 days to "decompress" from all the stress they've been under and to allow them to get to know their new place before introducing them to your personal pets. We suggest introducing them slowly and for short periods of time to begin with. You can contact our trainer/canine behavior consultant if you need help with how to do this.

### **What if I want to adopt my foster dog?**

If you want to adopt a foster dog, you will not need to complete an adoption application. However, please contact a foster coordinator right away because once the dog is up for adoption we cannot hold him/her for anyone. Therefore, we will not place the dog up for adoption to the public if the foster home wants to adopt him/her.

### **Who will take care of my foster dog if I need to go out of town?**

If you have travel plans while you are fostering a dog you will need to contact a foster coordinator as soon as possible. Since we don't have a facility and we are run on donations, we need as much notice as possible so that we may find an alternate temporary foster home. Except in emergency situations, we would like to have at least a 2 week notice. If your travel plans are over a holiday, please give us 3-4 weeks' notice as that is a much more difficult time to find a temporary foster home.

### **What if my foster dog bites me or shows aggression?**

If any of your foster dogs bite, snap, or shows aggression, you need to contact the trainer/canine behavior consultant immediately. The law requires that we report all bites that break the skin. The teeth, not the nails, must have broken the skin. If you are unsure of whether the bite is a reportable incident, then please report to a director anyway.

### **What if my foster dog is not working out?**

You are not required to continue to foster a dog if you feel it's not working out. However, we may not have an immediate alternate foster home for the dog. As mentioned above, we don't have our own facility to house dogs. We rely solely on wonderful volunteer foster homes such as yours. We will work on moving your foster dog out as soon as possible, but ask for your understanding and patience. We will try to find another foster dog more suitable to your needs to help get the current foster dog out sooner. If the reason it is not working out is because you are having a behavior/training issue, please contact our trainer/canine behavior consultant to help remedy the problem. If the behavior is an issue for you, then most likely it will be an issue for a potential adopter as well.

### **Can I also foster dogs for another organization while fostering for Paw Patrol?**

The easy answer is yes, you can. However, we ask that you do not bring an unvaccinated dog into your home until all the other dogs (foster or permanent) have been altered and vaccinated. This will avoid any breeding accidents, as well as passing on contagious diseases that the dogs have not developed immunity for yet.

## **Preparing for Your Foster Dog**

We know you are super excited to have your new foster dog, however, remember that they have just been through a lot. Although you know he/she is safe now, he/she does not know that yet. Your foster dog may be frightened or unsure about what's happening, so it's important not to overwhelm him/her. When possible have a place set up before your foster dog arrives. Give the foster dog a space that is quiet and away from other dogs to give him/her time to adjust to the new surroundings slowly. This area should be large enough for an appropriately sized crate for the dog and should allow the dog access to his/her food, water dishes, and toys. It's best to give the dogs a few days to decompress from all the changes and stress they've been under. A great first step is to take your new foster for a walk around the block or your yard before going inside your home. This lets him/her learn about his new environment, gets some nervous/excited energy out, and allows the dog time to use the bathroom before going inside.

All foster dogs MUST be housed indoors only. A garage, backyard, or outdoor run is not a suitable accommodation for a foster dog.

During the first couple of days and possibly up to a week, minimize the amount of people and pet introductions to your foster dog so that he/she is only meeting immediate family and your personal pets. If you have other pets at home, it is especially important to give your foster dog a space of their own where they can stay while getting used to all the new sounds and smells. Don't leave your foster dog unattended in your home with your personal pets. In addition, since many of the dogs may not have been to a vet or had vaccinations yet, we recommend they not be exposed to any new pets or places other than your own until they have seen a veterinarian and been appropriately vaccinated.

### **Supplies You'll Need**

Paw Patrol will provide you with any supplies that you may need. However, we greatly appreciate any help that you can provide in supplying items for your foster dog. Here's what you'll need to help your foster dog make a smooth transition to living in your home:

- At least one bowl for dry food and one for water
- A supply of dry dog food. All dogs are fed dry food unless a special diet is needed.
- A collar with an ID tag and a leash. Even though foster dogs are microchipped, they still need an ID tag
- A soft place to sleep
- A baby gate is always useful to keep the foster in an area or out of an area
- A crate: The crate should be just large enough for the dog to stand up and turn around in, and not much bigger than that. This will help house train the dog and often helps them feel safe.
- Dog Treats: Giving treats is a good way to help train and build a positive relationship with your foster dog. Just be sure you don't overfeed with treats and make them sick.
- Dog toys: Make sure the toys are durable and appropriate for the size of your foster dog.

### **Dog-proofing your home**

Foster dogs often come from a shelter environment and even if they have previously lived in a home, we don't always know how they will react in a new home or what their rules were in the old home. So, before bringing home a new foster dog, you'll want to survey the area where you are going to keep your foster dog. Remove anything that would be unsafe or undesirable for the dog to chew on, and latch securely any cupboards and doors that the foster dog could get into. People food and chemicals can be very harmful if consumed by dogs, so please store them in a place that the foster dog cannot access.

Never underestimate your foster dog's abilities!! Here are some additional tips for dog-proofing your home:

- Make sure that all trash cans are covered/ latched or kept in a cabinet or closet (Don't forget about bathroom cans, too!).
- Keep the toilet lids closed.
- Keep both people and pet food out of reach and off all counter tops.

- Move house plants or secure them. Some dogs like to play with or eat them, and some plants can be toxic to dogs.
- Make sure aquariums or cages that house small animals, like hamsters or fish, are securely out of reach of your foster dog.
- Remove medications, lotions, or cosmetics from any accessible surfaces.
- Move and secure all electrical and phone wires out of reach. Dogs may chew on or get tangled in them.
- Pick up any clothing items that have buttons or strings, which can be harmful to your foster dog if consumed.
- Relocate knickknacks or valuable that your foster dog could knock down or that you do you want to accidentally get broken or damaged.

### **Dog Introductions**

If you have personal pets that are dogs, you'll want to introduce them to your foster dog one at a time and supervise their interactions at first. It's a good idea to introduce them outside in a large yard or on a walk, keeping all the dogs on leash and allowing them enough space to get adjusted to one another. (See the additional handout "Introducing Dogs to Each Other")

Make sure that high-value items such as food, special toys, bones, chew toys, or anything else your dog holds in high regard, are put away while the dogs are getting used to each other. It's best to always feed your foster dog separately from your personal dogs.

### **Cat Introductions**

We can't be sure that a foster dog has been "cat-tested" and even if a dog has been "cat-tested" it's best to use caution when introducing your foster dog to your cat(s). Start by keeping them separated at first. You can either keep your cats in a separate room or confine your foster dog to a room. Over a one- to two-week period, let the dog and cats smell each other through the door, but don't allow them contact with one another. Exchanging blankets or towels between the dog's area and the cat's area will help them get used to each other's smells.

After a week or two, do the face-to-face introductions. Keep your foster dog on a leash, allow your cat out in the same area. If you have more than one cat introduce them one at a time. Do not allow the foster dog to charge or run directly up to the cat. Try to distract the dog as best you can so that the cat has the chance to approach without fear. Watch the body language of each animal closely and don't continue the interaction if either pet becomes over-stimulated or aggressive. The idea is to keep the interactions positive, safe, and controlled. (See the additional handout "Introducing a Cat and a Dog")

Never leave your foster dog unsupervised with any cats in your home.

## Children and dogs

Since we don't always know a foster dog's history or tolerance level for different types of people and activities, please teach your children how to act responsibly and respectfully around your foster dog. We will do our best to place you with an appropriate animal for your home situation, but you should still supervise all interactions between children and your foster dog. Key things to remind your children:

- Always leave the foster dog alone when he/she is eating, chewing, or sleeping. Some dogs may nip or bite if bothered while eating or startled while sleeping.
- Do not take away a toy or prized possession from the foster dog.
- Do not tease the foster dog.
- Do not chase the foster dog around the house or run quickly around the foster dog as it may scare him.
- Pick up all your toys. Some dogs may not be able to distinguish between what is allowed to be chewed on and what isn't.

Do not allow young children to walk the foster dog because they may not be strong enough or experienced enough to handle encounters with other dogs or cats that cross their path.

## Daily Care

**Feeding.** All foster dogs should be fed a diet of dry dog food, unless otherwise specified by the foster coordinator. Feed your foster dog once or twice daily; the amount will be based on the age and weight of your foster dog. Make sure the dog always has access to fresh, clean water. You can give your foster dog treats of any kind (unless he/she has known allergies); giving treats helps you and your foster dog to bond with each other. Most dogs like to chew on things, so try Greenies, antlers, Nylabones, or Dentabones. Keep in mind, though, that not all dogs like to share, so only give these treats when your foster dog is confined to his/her own area. Rawhides are not recommended as the dog may choke on small pieces that break off.

**Daily Routine.** When you first take your foster dog home, take care to not overwhelm him/her with too many new experiences all at once. Sometimes, too much stimulation can cause a dog to behave unexpectedly toward a person or animal, which is why it is a good idea to keep introductions to a minimum during the first couple of weeks after you bring your foster dog home. It's also important to establish a daily routine of regularly scheduled feedings, potty breaks and walk times. Dogs take comfort in having a routine they can count on. Also, on a daily basis, be aware of your foster dog's appetite and energy level. If he/she's not eating well or seems listless, something may be wrong medically. You might want to record your observations to make it easier to notice any health issues.

**House Training.** It's unlikely that your foster dog will be perfectly house-trained when you take him or her home. We usually don't have a lot of information about the history of most of the dogs that come into our foster program. Even if they are said to be house-trained they may still have a few accidents from changing living quarters or until they know the bathroom routine and you know their bathroom needs. Since a dog has a better chance of being adopted if he/she is house-trained, please help your foster dog to perfect this skill. Take your foster dog outside to go potty multiple times per day (3-6 times a day for adults and 10-12 times a day for puppies, possibly more). Initially, you may need to take him/her out more frequently to remind her where the door to the outside is and to reassure him/her that you will take her out for potty breaks. Most dogs will give

cues, such as standing near the door or sniffing the ground and walking in small circles, to indicate that they need to go out. Keep the dog in a crate when you are not available to supervise him/her indoors.

If your foster dog has an accident inside the house, don't discipline or punish her. It will only teach her to fear and mistrust you. Clean up all accidents with an enzymatic cleaner. Nature's Miracle and Simple Solution are two products containing natural enzymes that tackle tough stains and odors and remove them permanently. However, do use positive reinforcement to help teach her where it is proper to eliminate. Always keep treats on hand and stay outside with your foster dog when he/she is learning. That way, as soon as he/she uses the bathroom you can praise her and give her a treat.

**Crate Training.** Crate training, done in a positive way, can be an effective component of house-training. A crate can be a safe place for your foster dog to have "down time" and can also limit his access to the entire house until he knows the rules. A crate should never be used as a form of punishment and a dog should never be left in a crate for an extended period. You can prevent problems with crate training by setting your foster dog up for success. He/she should only associate good things with the crate, so start by putting treats and/or toys in the crate and encouraging him/her to go in. Some dogs warm up to the crate slowly. If he/she is afraid to go in, place a treat in the crate as far as he/she is willing to go. After he takes the treat, place another treat a little farther back in the crate. Keep going until he/she is eating treats at the very back, then feed him/her his next meal in the crate with the door open, so that the dog can walk in and out at will. Keep a special bone or chew toy in the crate that the foster dog can only have while in his/her crate, this will make it more enjoyable and special for your foster dog.

Crate training a fearful dog can take days, so be patient and encouraging. If a crate is properly introduced and used, your foster dog will happily enter and settle down.

**Grooming.** A clean and well-groomed dog has a better chance of getting adopted, so bathe your foster dog as needed and brush him regularly if he has longer hair or requires more frequent grooming. Contact a foster coordinator if you feel your dog needs to see a professional groomer.

**Mental stimulation and exercise.** Depending upon your foster dog's age and energy level, he or she should get at least two 30-minute play sessions and/or walks with you per day. Try a variety of toys (balls, squeaky toys, rope toys, etc.) to see which ones your foster dog prefers. Remember to discourage the dog from playing with your hands, since mouthing won't be a desirable behavior to adopters. You can also offer your foster dog a food-dispensing toy for mental stimulation. You hide treats in the toy and the dog has to figure out how to get the treats out. There are many varieties of these toys out there that you can use and these will come in handy as you continue to foster. If you have a shy or fearful dog, do not throw a toy toward the dog, because he/she may think you are throwing things at him/her 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 if you have a dog that has trouble listening, otherwise leave toys where the dog can get to them easily. This saves your other household items from being chewed because there are no other choices. When giving the dog a toy or treat, have the dog sit before giving it to him/her. That way he has to work to get the toy or treat – making it a reward.

**Safety requirements.** Foster dogs must live indoors, not outside. Please do not leave your foster dog outside unsupervised, even if you have a fenced yard. We ask that you supervise your foster dog when he is outside at all times to ensure that he doesn't escape or have any negative interaction with other people or animals. Your foster dog is only allowed to be off-leash in an enclosed backyard that is completely fenced in. When walking



or hiking with your foster dog, please keep him/her on leash at all times. Since we do not know how your foster dog will act in these situations, or how other dogs will react, we need to ensure that all animals are safe at all times. In addition, we don't know if the other dogs they encounter are vaccinated appropriately or carry diseases, so it is best if your foster dog does not meet any unknown dogs. Having likely come from a shelter setting, foster dogs can be vulnerable health-wise. Also, your foster dog cannot ride in the bed of an open pickup truck. When your transporting foster dogs, please keep them inside the vehicle.

### **Helping your foster dog get adopted**

You play a big role in helping to get your foster dog adopted. Since you are the one who lives with the foster dog you know him/her better than anyone. As you get to know your foster dog we would like you to keep us updated about their personality, temperament, training, and more by posting in our Facebook group 'Paw Patrol Fosters'. If you do not use Facebook then please send an email with your foster dog's name in the subject line. This interaction should take place at least every other week, if not more often. At times, the trainer/canine behavior consultant may post questions about how your foster dog is doing regarding a certain issue (house training, aggression, leash skills, etc) – please answer these questions promptly and honestly. When potential adopters are looking for a new family member, they want to know as much about the dog as they can to try and make the right decision for them. We want to know what the foster dog is like so we can be sure to match them up with the right adopter to minimize the chances of the dog being returned and having to go through the whole process again.

Things adopters frequently ask:

- Is the dog house-trained and/or crate-trained?
- Is the dog good with kids/men/women/cats/other animals/dogs?
- Does the dog know any basic commands?
- What is their energy level?
- What does the dog like to play with?
- Does the dog have separation anxiety or aggressive issues towards food/people/dogs/cats etc?

Feel free to write a little bio about the dog in the Facebook group, we encourage this, though it may be edited for publishing. We also need any quality photos that you take of your foster dog in your home; we can use those photos to create photo albums to accompany the online bio of the dog. Photos should also be posted in the Facebook Foster group or emailed (only if you don't use Facebook).

We would like you to attend as many adoption events and fundraisers where foster dogs are welcome to help get your dog "out there". It's much easier to fall in love with the real thing than on the internet with just a picture and some words. We realize that you have busy lives outside of your fostering and understand that you can't make it to them all, but please do your best to make it to the ones that you can. We want to find these pups the home they are so deserving of as quickly as we can and we can't do that without you! Plus, we like seeing your smiling faces here and there 😊

## Signs of Illness and What to Do Next

### **All vet visits must be pre-authorized by the executive director!**

Dogs generally do a good job of masking when they don't feel well, so determining if your foster dog is under the weather will require diligent observation of the dog's daily activity and appetite levels. It's a good idea to keep track of these levels in a journal. You'll also want to record any of the following symptoms, which could be signs of illness:

- **Fleas.** Foster dogs will be treated for fleas as soon as possible upon receiving the dog. Additional flea treatments are available if needed. Puppies younger than 4 months should not be treated with toxic chemicals – blue dawn dish soap should be used on puppies to kill fleas. Puppies over 8 weeks of age and adult dogs can be treated with topical flea treatment. 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. To check for fleas, inspect your dog, 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 blue dawn 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. 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 a foster coordinator, who can provide you with medication.
- **Eye discharge.** It is normal for dogs to have some discharge from their eyes when they wake up and some may have more than others, depending on the breed. But if your foster dog has yellow or green discharge, or swelling around the eyes (making it hard for him to open his eyes), or the third eyelid is showing, you need to contact the executive director for her recommendation on how to proceed.
- **Coughing and nasal discharge.** Coughing can be common if your foster dog is pulling on leash. If the coughing becomes more frequent, however, watch for discharge coming from the nose. If the discharge is clear, the infection is probably viral and medication may not be needed, but check with the executive director to find out her recommendation on how to proceed. If the discharge becomes colored, be sure to report that to the executive director as soon as you can as a vet appointment may be needed. This could mean a bacterial infection. Be sure to monitor the dog's breathing. If the dog seems to struggle to breathe or starts wheezing, ccontact the executive director immediately. Once you notice a nasal discharge, monitor the dog's eating habits more closely to ensure that he or she is still eating.
- **Loss of appetite.** Your foster dog may be stressed after arriving in your home, and stress can cause lack of appetite. But if the dog hasn't eaten after 3 days, please notify the executive director. Many dogs when they first arrive in a new home are too stressed to eat and that's okay. Offer the food at every meal and let them make the choice to eat or not eat. Usually by the third day, their survival

instincts kick in and even if the dog is still nervous they will eat. If the dog has been eating well but then stops eating for 12 to 24 hours, notify the executive director. Please do not change the dog's diet without contacting the executive director. An abrupt change in diet can cause diarrhea, which can lead to dehydration. If you must change the dog's food, please try to do so gradually by incorporating the new and old food together so as not to cause a large disruption in the dog's digestive system.

- **Lethargy.** The activity level of your foster dog will vary depending on age and personality. Keeping an activity log and journal will help you notice whether your foster dog is less active than he normally is. If the dog cannot be roused or seems weak and unable to stand, it's an emergency – please contact the Executive Director right away.
- **Dehydration.** Dehydration is usually associated with diarrhea, vomiting, and/or loss of appetite. To test for dehydration, gently pinch the dog's skin around the scruff area. If the skin stays taut, the dog is dehydrated. Please call the foster coordinator the next business day to schedule a vet appointment. Pedialyte can be given in the meantime to help hydrate the dog.
- **Vomiting.** Sometimes dogs will eat too quickly and will immediately throw up their food. Occasional vomiting isn't cause for alarm, but if your foster dog has thrown up more than two times in one day, please notify a foster coordinator. It could be indicative of infection and the dog may need to see a vet.
- **Pain or strain while urinating.** When a dog first goes into a foster home, he or she may not urinate due to stress. If the dog hasn't urinated in more than 24 hours, however, please contact the foster coordinator. Also, if you notice the dog straining to urinate with little or no results, or crying out when urinating, please contact the foster coordinator immediately because it may be indicative of an infection or an obstruction.
- **Diarrhea.** It is important to monitor your foster dog's pooping habits daily. Soft stool is normal for the first two or three days after taking a dog home, most likely caused by stress and a change in food. 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 for a day or two, and then reintroduce dry kibble. If your foster dog has liquid stool, however, please contact a foster coordinator so that an appointment can be scheduled to ensure that the dog doesn't need medications. Keep in mind that diarrhea will dehydrate the dog, so be proactive about contacting the foster coordinator. If your foster dog has bloody or mucoid diarrhea, please contact the foster coordinator immediately.
- **Frequent ear scratching.** Your foster dog may have a bacterial or yeast infection (or, in rare cases, ear mites) if she scratches her ears often and/or shakes her head frequently. These conditions can be treated by a veterinarian, so please call the foster coordinator to schedule a medical appointment.
- **Swollen, irritated ears.** If your foster dog has irritated, swollen or red or pink ears that smell like yeast, he may have an ear infection called otitis. This type of infection is more common in dogs who

have very floppy ears, like basset hounds or labradors. These dogs may need to have their ears cleaned more often to ensure that the infection does not re-occur.

- **Hair loss.** Please contact a foster coordinator if you notice any hair loss on your foster dog. It is normal for dogs to have thin fur around the lips, eyelids and in front of the ears, but clumpy patches of hair loss or thinning hair can indicate ringworm, dermatitis or the early stages of mange. It is important to check your foster dog's coat every day.

### **Common Ailments in Shelter Animals**

Shelter dogs may suffer from kennel cough, giardia, or intestinal parasites. Symptoms of kennel cough include a dry hacking cough, often with phlegm discharge, discharge from the nose and/or eyes, decrease in appetite, dehydration and slight lethargy. Symptoms of giardia or intestinal parasites include vomiting, diarrhea (often with a pungent odor) and/or dehydration.

If your foster dog is displaying one or more of these signs, please contact the foster coordinator. These ailments can worsen if left untreated.

### **Criteria for emergencies**

What constitutes a medical emergency in a dog? A good rule of thumb is any situation in which you would call 9-1-1 for a person. Here are some specific symptoms that could indicate an emergency:

- Not breathing or labored breathing
- Symptoms of parvovirus: bloody diarrhea, vomiting, weakness, high fever (above 103.5 degrees)
- Signs of extreme dehydration: dry mucous membranes, weakness, vomiting, tenting of the skin (when the skin is pulled up, it stays there)
- Abnormal lethargy or unable to stand
- Unconsciousness or unable to wake up
- Cold to the touch
- Broken bones
- Any trauma: hit by a car, dropped, stepped on
- A large wound or profuse bleeding that doesn't stop when pressure is applied
- Loss of appetite for more than 24 hours

If your foster dog displays any of these symptoms, please contact the executive director, followed by the trainer/canine behavior consultant and any other board member. If the animal is vomiting or has diarrhea, but is still active, eating and drinking, you can probably wait until the next day to get help.

## **Behavior support**

One of your goals as a foster parent is to help prepare your foster dog for living successfully in a home. So, we ask that you help your foster dog to develop good habits and skills through the use of positive reinforcement training, which builds a bond of trust between you and your foster pet. The basic idea is to reward desirable behaviors and ignore unwanted behaviors.

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.

You must not punish a dog for a behavior that you find undesirable because punishment is ineffective at eliminating the behavior. If the dog is doing something undesirable, distract him or her before the behavior occurs. It is also important for every human in the foster home to stick to the rules established for your foster dogs, which will help them to learn faster.

When interacting with your foster dog, refrain from wrestling or engaging in play that encourages the dog to be mouthy and “play bite” on your body. Also, try to refrain from inviting dogs up on the couch or bed. Not all adopters find this habit acceptable.

Some foster dogs will have behavioral issues, which we may or may not be aware of at the time of their rescue. Some of these behavior challenges are separation anxiety, destruction of property, fear issues or aggression toward other animals. We will only place dogs with behavioral issues with a person who feels comfortable working with the dog on his/her particular issues. We will provide that person with all the necessary information so that proper care and training can be given to the foster dog.

If you feel unable to manage any behavior that your foster dog is exhibiting, please contact the trainer/canine behavior consultant to discuss the issue. We will guide you and help in every way that we can. If the behavior is extreme enough to warrant use of a trainer, we will provide one for you. Please understand that we have limited resources, so for basic training and minor behavior problems, we will personally work with the dog.

**Thank you for opening your heart and home to a dog in need!!!!**

