

**<Rescue Name>**  
**Foster Guidelines Manual**

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## Introduction

<Rescue Name> is engaged in the rescue and re-homing of <type of animal> that are or will be homeless. We accomplish this through a network of volunteer foster homes. Our mission is as follows:

<Insert Mission Statement>

We operate through a network of volunteer Foster homes. Our Foster homes and volunteers are our most valuable resource, without which we could not operate. We cannot ever thank you enough for the help that you so lovingly give to these animals in need. It is our hope that this guide will provide information to aid the valuable work you do.

At the time an animal is placed into a foster home, <insert who the contact is for the foster home>.

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Name	Title	Phone	Email

## Bringing a Foster Into Your Home

Animals coming into foster care are under some stress – from loss of their owner, neglect or abuse, time spent on the street or in shelters, etc. They need stability and time to adjust to new people, animals, surroundings and routines. A first instinct may be to hug them, love them and try to reassure them. Unfortunately, an animal that is in a new situation may at first be frightened, rather than reassured, by a touch or attempt to pick it up or even an outstretched hand. Many will need time to “come around,” and it is best to let them do so at their own pace.

When an animal is anxious or fearful, let it come to you, even though it may take hours or days or even weeks. Talk to it, using a calm and gentle tone; avoid quick movements; encourage it with a treat, or coax it – but do not force an interaction initially unless it is necessary for the animal’s health or safety.

- When you bring a foster in, put one drop of vanilla extract on the back of its neck and above the tail – as well as on each pet in your home. Do this **before** they meet. It gives them all the same “over scent” and can help the introduction phase.
- Volunteers should not place a new arrival (foster) with their own animal(s) until both have had time to adjust to the change, the personality of the foster has been observed, and the volunteer is certain that the foster animal does not have a contagious disease or parasites that could harm resident animals.
- Foster animals should not be left alone with resident animals for any length of time, especially during the first days.
- Foster animals should be provided with a bed/crate in a quiet area, with food and water available. Typically, a sectioned-off area of the home should be made available. This should be an area where the likely initial “accident” will be okay. The crated animal can then be placed in the area and the door of the crate opened. The animal will leave the crate when it is ready.
- If the foster animal is not current on vaccinations, it must be taken to a licensed veterinarian within a few days after arrival, and should be isolated from the volunteer’s resident animals until it has been checked and evaluated by that veterinarian.

## Supervision of Fosters

- Foster animals should not be allowed off lead or out of a fenced area without restraint, nor left outside without supervision.
- If an animal must be left alone for a period of time, it should be crated or in a safe, secure area of the house
- Volunteers should supervise interactions of the foster animal with people and other animals, and especially with children. No one should force attention on an animal – and the animal should not be placed in a situation that is frightening to it. No animal should ever be left unsupervised with young children or with larger animals.
- Cats traveling in a car must always be crated. Dogs may use a crate or an auto-safety harness.

## Feeding Foster Animals

- Foster animals must be fed a complete and healthy diet.
- “Free feeding” – leaving food out for an extended period of time – is not recommended. Animals should be given 2 meals daily (in some cases more often for the tiniest). Food should typically be made available for 15 minutes; if it is not eaten within that time it should be removed. This helps the volunteer establish a schedule for the animal to relieve itself. It also allows the volunteer to monitor what each animal is eating and observe any abnormalities that may need attention.
- Some animals have sensitive or easily-upset stomachs, especially if they are very stressed. When this is apparent, a diet of cooked, white rice and boiled chicken is suggested for a period of time. Dry kibble can be added gradually.
- Some animals have allergies, and may need special diets.
- Some animals (especially former strays) have had to scrounge for food and fight to keep what they have found. This sometimes results in an animal that is very protective around food, bones, toys, bedding—anything it considers his and must protect. Therefore, leaving these items around freely is not suggested until you have had a chance to observe the animal’s behavior.

## Housetraining

- Crating is often the most effective way of housetraining. Sectioning off small areas is also acceptable and the use of “piddle pads” is encouraged for animals that are very susceptible to inclement weather, cold temperatures, or have difficulty getting outdoors.
- If an animal seems to constantly be going and having accidents a visit to the vet is recommended to rule out any physical reason for this (i.e. urinary infection, etc.)
- Expect accidents initially – and some amount of marking by male animals. Have an enzyme-based cleaner on hand to remove any scent.
- General housetraining guidelines
  - Confine animal to a small area along with his bedding, whenever you cannot actively supervise it
  - Feed on a regular schedule
  - Dogs need to be taken outside every few hours to relieve themselves. Reward when they eliminate appropriately. Come back in and place the dog back into the confined area.
  - If a dog is caught IN THE ACT of relieving himself in the house, in a calm voice, simply say, “Outside” and bring it right outside to continue relieving itself. Never scold it *after* the fact. Animals associate praise, rewards, or correction with what they are doing right at that moment – not with what they were doing just before.
  - Length of time between outdoor visits can eventually be increased as progress is made.

## Crating

- Crating is not, as some believe, cruel. Crating is improper if it is used as a punishment, or if the animal is confined for long periods of time or kept in a cramped space. When used correctly, crating is effective and animals are receptive to it.
- Animals like routine and they like a place (den) they can call their own. For the most part animals will not “mess” where they sleep/eat. For this reason confining or crating them is effective for housetraining. If an animal is messing where it sleeps/eats, it may be due to an infection or something else that is wrong.
- The animal can eventually be left out of the crate, though the crate should be left open in the sectioned off area so that it may go in and out as it pleases. Dogs often feel safe in their crate and will seek it out when they want to relax.

## Animal Limits

Town/city ordinances often dictate the maximum number of allowable pets in households. <Rescue Name> advises all foster homes to know and adhere to the limitations of their city or town.

## Veterinary Care Guidelines

When an animal is placed in the care of the foster home, it is the foster's responsibility to obtain full vetting of the animal, training and/or rehabilitation of the animal. Approved expenses incurred that are directly related to an animal in <Rescue Name> care are reimbursed to the foster home

1. All fosters should be taken to a veterinarian
  - a) Immediately, if the animal is injured or seriously ill
  - b) Within 2-3 days after arrival
  - c)
2.  All healthy animals 2 lbs. and 8 weeks need to be spayed/neutered.
3.  All animals must be given an exam. Any signs of illness/injury should be noted on the intake report.
2. Each animal should have the following:
  - Complete physical exam which will include an assessment of oral health, status of patellas, and any infectious, parasitic or contagious conditions
  - Distemper-Hepatitis-Parainfluenza-Parvovirus and Rabies vaccination, if no record of these vaccinations exist or if the animal is overdue for these vaccinations. No other vaccinations are covered and no vaccine titer testing is to be done.
  - A Heartworm test. If the test is positive, details on the stage, treatment plan and estimate of costs need to be provided in writing
  - Fecal test and any needed dewormings
  - Isolation boarding, if determined necessary by the veterinarian
  - Flea and or tick treatment
  - Initial nail trim, if medically indicated
  - Spay and neuter, if the animal is intact.

3. All puppies and kittens must be vaccinated immediately upon intake (ownership/control/responsibility for the animal) with Distemper/Parvo for puppies and Panleukopenia/URI for kittens. The vaccinations should be repeated every 3 weeks.
  - If your household has substantial turn-over, with new animals coming and going, boosters will be given every 2 weeks until they are 4 months of age.
4. Treatment for any other minor medical condition (diagnostic tests and/or treatments). If you find the cost will exceed **<insert max dollar limit>**, please obtain pre-approval.
5. Consider inoculating your own animals (at your own expense) against kennel cough. Shelter animals sometimes have kennel cough and it is highly contagious.
6. All fosters must be spayed/neutered prior to adoption. Do not make the appointment to do so on your own without contacting **<insert contact name>**. There are some lower-cost spay/neuter clinics that you may not be aware of, which **<Rescue Name>** may require you to use.

## Managing Veterinary Costs and Billing

1. If the foster animal requires anything that would not be considered routine, such as a sonogram to identify severity of a heart condition or surgical correction of luxating patellas, you must obtain approval beforehand.
2. *If an animal requires emergency health care, however, do not delay.*
3. If possible, foster homes should arrange with their vet to bill **<Rescue Name>** directly for treatment of foster animals. The **<Rescue Name>** Treasurer can help set this up, if the vet is willing to bill directly.

## Reimbursement Procedures

***Every effort will be made to reimburse expenses incurred for rescue animals as soon as possible when the following procedures are followed:***

A reimbursement form with copies of veterinary bills must be mailed to the Treasurer. If you have access to a scanner, the form and bills may be scanned and emailed to the Treasurer.

**The following expenses will be considered individually and must be submitted for pre-approval:**

- Any Veterinarian expenses for illness other than provided for in this document under the Veterinary Treatment Section of this manual.
- Any surgical procedure except spay/neuter.
- Dental Cleaning and treatments

- Boarding at kennel if foster care is not available or isolation is required.
- Any other expenses related to rescue and/or adoption not covered in Veterinary Treatment Section.

Please make all effort to submit the receipts within thirty days. <Rescue Name> cannot pay finance charges. Should finance charges be assessed, it will be up to the foster home to square this with the vet.



## Adoption Process

- When an animal is considered ready for adoption, the foster home will need to provide a biography and picture to the webmaster to be uploaded onto the website.
- Applications and/or email inquiries will be forwarded to you. We ask that you respond within 24 hours. If you're responding to an email inquiry, an important point to make is that the adoption process begins when an application is submitted. Applications are handled on a first come, first served basis. That does not mean that adoptions are handled as first come, first serve. An applicant may be deemed not appropriate for the type of animal in question. Our primary concern is placing your foster animal into the right adoptive home.
- All appropriate applications will be forwarded to you as soon as they are received. When you receive an application, here are the steps you'll need to take.
  1. Call the applicant and talk to them about your foster animal. Be sure to give full disclosure about the animals. If you think this is a potential good fit for your foster dog, you would proceed to the next step. If you don't think this is a good fit, you may tell the applicant right away or if you prefer, contact a Board member who will call the applicant.
  2. If you think the applicant might be a fit, the next step is to contact the veterinary reference and the personal references provided in the application. Please don't hesitate to ask if you need help in making these connections. A form will be emailed to you for your use in documenting on the results of the reference checks.
  3. If after the reference checks are completed, the applicant looks to be a good prospect, a meet and greet may be scheduled. The meet and greet may occur at your home or may combined with the required home visit. A form will be emailed to you for your use in documenting on the results of the home visit.
  4. If after steps 1 – 3 the applicant appears to be the right fit for your foster animal, share your information with **the <name of person responsible for approving adoptions>**. The adoption may be approved at that time, or under certain other Board members may need to be involved.

- Listed below are some items to be discussed and considered while you are speaking with the applicant.
  - The adoption donation.
    - Special needs dogs are handled on a case by case basis. Know what the adoption donation is prior to contacting the applicant so you can discuss this for your specific foster animal.
  - How will the applicant get the dog to their location if they don't live in your vicinity? Potential adopters should be encouraged to make the trip to you to pick up your foster animal, should the adoption be approved. In the event that this isn't possible, we're always willing to work out some arrangements.
  - Meet and greet play dates – As stated in Step 3 above, when possible we encourage this type of interaction. It increases the likelihood of a successful adoption.
  - If asked, your foster animal may not be allowed to be 'tried out' in a potential adopter's home.

## **Confidentiality**

- It is important to keep the confidentiality of the previous owner. You will have documents such as the surrender form and medical records that have the previous owner's information on it. The medical records will need to be copied and given to an adopter, however any personal information about the previous owner must be blacked out.