

# Dog Foster Manual



Friends  
for  
Animals  
of Metro Detroit

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## **Foster Program Overview**

Thank you for opening your heart and home to one of our shelter's orphaned dogs. Your generosity will provide young and old, injured and sick, abused and under socialized dogs a chance to grow or heal before finding their forever homes. FAMD began its foster program in June 1996. The foster program plays an integral part in the shelter's ability to adopt out as many as 1,300 orphans annually.

## **How the Program Works**

Volunteers of the Foster Team work with shelter staff to determine which animals are most in need of foster care. As an approved foster volunteer, the Foster Coordinator will then contact you to see if you are available. We will match you with dogs or puppies that are a good fit for your lifestyle and capabilities. Our goal is to set your family and the animals up for success. We will also arrange for a meeting and pick up time for you and the foster pet. The shelter will provide you with all the necessary supplies for fostering, and support you throughout the entire process. We are always available to address any questions and concerns.

# Reasons to Foster

Fostering is a wonderful experience for you and your family—you can feel good knowing you have helped save an animal's life. Even better, you've created space in the shelter to accommodate other homeless pets. Foster animals provide companionship and purpose—your act of kindness is repaid in rewards that are beyond words.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is expected of me as a foster parent?**

You are a critical member of the shelter team! As a foster parent, you will be expected to:

- Love and care for your foster dog with shelter-provided supplies and advice.
- Teach your foster dog boundaries and behaviors that will make them more adoptable.
- Help market your foster dog by taking photographs, writing descriptions, and keeping them visible to potential adopters.
- Return your dog/puppies for surgery at the appointed time.

### **What types of cases (dogs or puppies) will I get? Can I pick and choose the cases?**

Yes! We do not want you to feel overwhelmed by taking a case that you are not prepared for. We have all types of cases, from small bottle babies that require round the clock nursing, or a mellow adult or senior dog that just wants some extra space to stretch their paws. The most common cases are:

- Puppies too young and/or immature to be adopted.
- Puppies and young dogs that require more socialization than available at the shelter.
- Older or senior dogs that will be more comfortable in a home environment.
- Injured dogs and/or those recovering from surgery.
- Dogs suffering from “shelter stress” in need of a calming home environment.
- Dogs with colds or with special medical needs.
- Abandoned mothers with litters of puppies.
- Dogs that need to lose/gain weight.
- Any dog when the shelter becomes overcrowded.

### **How long are animals in foster homes?**

It completely depends on the dog and the situation. It can be anywhere from a weekend to several months. Dogs recovering from an injury, and senior dogs may stay much longer. If at any time you need to bring your fosters back early due to emergency, feeling overwhelmed, or vacation time, call the Foster Coordinator to arrange a time to drop off.

### **Can I adopt my foster pet?**

You are likely to fall in love with the dogs you foster. We encourage you to be selective with how many you adopt. Our adoption counselors are great at finding loving families, and we encourage you to be selective. If you decide to adopt, fill out the adoption questionnaire at [www.metrodetroitanimals.org](http://www.metrodetroitanimals.org). We must have the questionnaire filled out to be able to put an animal on hold for you. All adoption questions are handled by the adoption counselors at The MaryAnn Wright Animal Adoption and Education Center. You can reach them at 313-943-2697 ext. 6001. The foster coordinator does not authorize adoptions.

Learning to bond with a foster animal, see the animal grow and thrive

under your care, and then passing the animal on to an adoptive home is immensely rewarding. It is also sad to see a foster animal leave. Give yourself time to grieve the loss, but also think about the animal's new life ahead.

### **If I have my own animals, can I foster?**

Yes, but keep in mind that it's always a health risk to expose your animal to other animals whether it's walking at parks, vet waiting rooms or other common animal areas. The health risk is minimal if your animals are current on their vaccinations, maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle, and are not elderly or very young.

### **What supplies are needed to foster?**

Foster parents provide space, basic obedience training, exercise and love for the animals. The shelter will provide you with all the other supplies needed throughout your foster experience. If you purchase your own supplies, FAMMD does not do reimbursements, however, we can provide you with a Gift in Kind receipt.

### **Do I need to have prior medical knowledge or expertise?**

No, but you may have to dispense medicine to your foster pets, so you will need to be able to follow veterinarian's instructions if fostering a sick or injured animal.

### **What if my foster pet becomes sick?**

You must contact the Foster Coordinator if the pet becomes sick. Additional detail is provided in the Health section beginning on page 12.

**All vet care must be cleared before making an appointment.**

Contact numbers are provided below:

**During shelter business hours**  
Monday-Saturday 8am-4pm  
Lindsay at: 313-410-4622 (text is best)  
Contact the shelter at: 313-943-2697 x. 1018

**After hours**  
Trish at: 313-525-8329

**If you take the animal to the vet without permission, refunds may not be possible.**

### **How can I help my foster dog become more adoptable?**

First and foremost is marketing. If no one knows about your foster dog, or how wonderful they are, then it's next to impossible to find them a forever home. Supplying great photos and a good bio regularly, and giving a foster pet regular exposure by telling your friends and family about them will help create a "network effect" and will speed up the process.

### **What if I have children?**

Fostering is a wonderful family experience and can build a foundation of philanthropy in your children. The shelter staff will work with you to select a dog that is age appropriate for your children. You must also be diligent about providing guidance, instructions and rules to your children about caring for a foster dog. Never leave your children unattended with your foster.

### **Can I let my foster roam outdoors?**

NO! Foster dogs are always strictly indoor dogs; please guard against escapes! They can and will push out screens, escape from balconies, jump high fences, and take advantage of doors/windows left open by visitors and/or children. Foster dogs cannot be left unattended outdoors. Many foster dogs are escape artists, so be vigilant during outdoor activities and ensure gates and doors are secured. Also be careful when

opening exterior doors that the dog does not run outside.

## Getting Ready to Foster

After being approved to foster, but before you bring a foster animal home, we suggest you prepare yourself, your family and your home for a new foster animal companion.

**Be Physically and Mentally Prepared.** Fostering is a family affair, so please make sure that everyone in your household is ready, willing and able to provide a loving home for an orphaned animal. Many adults and children have a hard time “giving up” an animal to its forever home. Make sure everyone is ready for this.

Be realistic about the time commitment to a foster animal, and make sure your daily activities will allow for it.

## Selecting an Appropriate Shelter Dog to Foster

Now that you're ready to foster, it's time to find an appropriate shelter dog to bring home. After being approved by the shelter staff as a qualified foster home, the Foster Coordinator will contact you to see if any of the dogs/puppies are a good match. We will contact you directly to schedule a meet and greet with the potential foster dog. The shelter staff may also recommend a different dog based on your lifestyle, experience or situation. After meeting the dog in person, you and the shelter staff will decide if it is a good match. Both you and the shelter staff must feel that it's the right match to proceed!

## Where to Keep Your Foster Animals



The goal of fostering an animal is to provide additional care and socialization in a family environment. Your foster dog should feel like a welcome member of your family, spending time with you when you are available to directly supervise the dog. When you have to be away from your home, we strongly recommend keeping the dog in a crate. This will not only prevent unexpected damage in your home but it will also help keep them safe.

## **Fostering – The First Week**

Now that you're home with your foster dog, you should start a regular routine so your dog can begin to adjust to your household. During this adjustment period, please keep stimulation to a minimum. Some recommendations include:

- Find a quiet room to keep the dog in. This room should have the crate, comfy bedding, food and water in it. Draping a sheet or blanket over the crate would also be a nice way to help them feel safe. Leave part of the crate uncovered for air flow and viewing.
- Don't introduce your foster dog to people who are visiting for at least the first week. For the first 7-14 days (could be more or less) your foster dog should lay low while he tries to figure out just what this new situation is. You may not see any unwelcome behavior initially. Eventually all will be revealed.
- If possible, get the bed the dog was laying on in the shelter. This way he/she will have something that smells like them for comfort.
- During the first week you should try to spend quality one-on-one time with your new foster dog. The most important thing to do during this initial transition time is to clearly establish the household rules. In addition, take care not to "indulge" your foster dog's timid, tentative or fearful behavior; we understand how tempting this may be as many of our orphans have come from less than ideal situations, but in the long run it does not benefit the dog. Take cues from your foster dog - what works for one dog does not work for all dogs. Go slow!
- Do not introduce your foster dog to other dogs (other than your own

resident dog). This includes neighborhood dogs, and dogs belonging to your family or friends. Why? There is no way to tell how your foster dog will behave when introducing him to other dogs. If your foster dog bites a person or dog, you are required to report it to the shelter immediately. If you want your foster dog to meet another, dog you need to contact the shelter to arrange a time for them to meet at the shelter, with the dog trainer or trained staff member.

## Important Rules Regarding Your Foster Dog

In addition to the requirements and responsibilities outlined in the Foster Dog Parent Agreement, and throughout this manual, foster parents MUST abide by the following rules:

- No off-leash park visits.
- Foster dogs must be on leash at all times when outdoors unless in your own secured, fenced yard.
- Any aggressive behavior must be immediately communicated to shelter staff.
- All vet visits must be pre-approved by calling the Foster Coordinator.
- Foster parents must respond within 24 hours to communications from shelter staff.
- Supervise interaction with children.
- Be mindful of your foster dog's body language and cues.
- End playtime on a happy note.
- Do not let playtime escalate so much the dog cannot listen.

## Feeding Dogs

- Dogs should be fed twice a day, puppies should be fed three times a day.

- The amount of food depends on the dog's age and weight. As a general rule, adult dogs get 1 cup per 20 lbs, and puppies get 3 cups daily (both divided throughout the day.) Feeding instructions will be provided by the medical staff and must be adhered to. Changing diet can cause extreme health issues.
- Give the dog or puppy 15-20 minutes to eat the food and then remove it.
- If your foster dog is unwilling to eat the dry dog food you can add some warm water or a small amount of canned food.
- You should NEVER feed your foster dog in the same room as your pet.
- Fresh water should always be available.

## **Crate Training**

Crates provide safe havens 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 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 previously left outside, he/she has never been required to hold off on going to the bathroom 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 should be available in the crate at all times. 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.

## **Introducing the Crate**

Place the crate (with a blanket inside) in a central part of your home. Introduce your foster dog to the crate after a good walk, when they're tired and sleepy. Keep all chew toys in the crate so that he can go in and out as he pleases, selecting toys to play with. Feed your dog in the crate with the door open. If the dog hesitates going in, place the bowl inside the door so their head is in and their body is outside.

If your foster still refuses to go near the crate, put the smelliest, tastiest wet food (or a few soft dog treats) in the crate and shut the door. Let the dog hang out outside the crate for a while, smelling the food inside. Soon he should beg you to let him in!

Now that the dog is familiar and willing to go near the crate, throw some of his favorite treats in the crate. Let him/her go in and get them, and come right out again. Do this exercise three or four times. Then, throw more treats in and let him go in and get them. When he/she is in the crate, shut the door and give him another treat through the door. Repeat this until your foster dog is comfortable going in on their own.

Next time place treats, peanut butter, freeze-dried liver or frozen food in a Kong, as a long-lasting treat to enjoy in the crate. After your foster has gone in, shut the door and talk to him/her in a calm voice. Your foster may whine, and that is normal. Try asking for behaviors like sit or down to redirect him/her, and reward with treats and praise. The foster dog must be quiet for a few minutes before you let him out. Gradually increase the time in the crate until the dog can spend 3-4 hours there.

We recommend leaving a radio (soothing music or talk radio) or TV (mellow stations: educational, art, food) on while the dog is in the crate and alone in the house. Rotate the dog's toys from day to day so he/she doesn't become

bored of them. Don't put papers in the crate - the dog will instinctively not go to the bathroom where he/she sleeps/lives. Instead, put a blanket in the crate to endorse the fact that this is his/her cozy home.

To help your foster get accustomed to the crate, place his/her favorite bed inside it and place it in your bedroom. If you're fostering a puppy, you can try placing a heat disc next to him/her. Warm the heat disc in the microwave for 6 minutes. It will stay warm for up to 10 hours. The disc must be completely cool before reheating or it will warp. Warmth makes puppies sleepy.

Make sure the sides of bedding are tucked in firmly so the puppies don't get lost or suffocated in a fold of the bedding.

## **Introducing Your Dogs To Foster Dogs**

The shelter staff will assist you with introducing your dog to a foster dog. You should bring your dog to the shelter for a meet and greet in the outdoor corrals before you bring a foster dog home. Even if your dog has many different canine playmates, you should still bring your dog to the shelter to meet a potential foster dog. Dogs are like people, and sometimes a dog may not like another dog for no apparent reason.

### **What to Do Once You Are Home with Your Foster Dog**

- Be alert and make the reintroductions gradually and calmly. Even if they got along great at the shelter, your dog may be extremely territorial in their home.
- If possible, go for a walk around your neighborhood with both dogs and two handlers.
- Walk the dogs side by side on leashes and allow them to sniff one another and become familiar with each other.
- Do give your own dog LOTS of love and praise.

- Do leave leashes on the dogs when you are in the home, so that you can get immediate control if needed. You may only need to do this for a short time.
- Do talk normally. Letting the dogs know that you are fine; they are fine; everything is fine!
- Be patient and go slowly with your foster dog, as they may have been through a stressful surgery, abusive situation or a lot of recent changes.
- Don't leave your foster dog unattended with your resident dog. Even if they seem to get along well in your presence, you should separate the dogs when you cannot supervise them.
- Always crate your foster when you leave the house.
- If at any time you feel overwhelmed, unsure of training, or the dogs are not getting along, contact your Foster Coordinator.
- Fostering should be a positive experience. We want you to have fun, but we also want everyone to be safe!

## **Introducing Your Cats To Foster Dogs**

- Before bringing your foster dog into the house, secure your cat in a separate room. Have a buddy to help with the meet.
- Keep your foster dog on a leash in the house until you know how the dog will behave with cats. Keep the door to the cat's room closed in the beginning.
- If the dog pulls towards the cat, they need to be kept separate.
- While the cat is secured in a room with the door closed, use extra special treats/food/squeaky toys to redirect the dog's attention to you.
- Reward behavior, even if the dog just looks over his/her shoulder to you.

- Repeat that several times until you can get the dog to come to you, use lots of praise.
- Repeat the process, then ask the dog to sit and ignore the cat behind the door.
- Repeat this process until the dog is proficient at it.
- USE LOTS OF PRAISE, it's difficult to ignore kitties!
- In a room that is not confining, so the cat has ample space to safely leave the room, start the whole process over, the dog must be leashed.
- Begin near the cat, but not close enough to reach the cat.
- Squeak the toy to get the dog's attention. Reward when he/she even just looks over their shoulder at you.
- Repeat the process of the dog leaving the cat's area to come to you and sit.
- Repeat until the dog actively seeks your attention over the cat.
- Still use a leash in the house until you are quite confident the dog will not chase the cat.
- Be mindful that any external excitement in the environment can trigger the dog to chase the cat, even if he/she has not been chasing the cat recently. Use caution at all times.
- If anytime during the training process you are uncomfortable or unsure, it may be easier and less stressful to keep them separate when the dog is enjoying free time in the house.
- Remember this process can take months.
- Remember a sleeping kitty is less likely to spark prey drive in a dog than a cat in motion.
- If at any time you are overwhelmed with training or it is not working out, you may bring your foster dog back. We want you to be successful and safe, we want fostering to be a positive experience for your family.
- If you need assistance with training, reach out to the Foster Coordinator.

# Puppy Behavior

- Nipping is a common behavior in puppies. If a puppy nips you, a loud yelp will usually get their attention so you can give them a proper toy to chew.
- Body parts do not belong in puppy's mouths. Always have toys available to redirect them with. Chewing on our clothes and body parts can lead to much bigger problems as they grow up.
- Try to start your foster puppies off on the right paw by keeping them off of the furniture, not letting them jump, etc. This will make their transition to a forever home easier. Not all families allow pets on furniture.
- Puppies should never be left unsupervised outside of their crate.
- A single puppy will cry a lot the first couple of nights. Make the crate as comfortable as possible by providing a blanket, heat disc and stuffed animal. Microwave the heat disc for 6 minutes and cover with blankets. That will stay warm for up to ten hours. Never reheat the disc until it is completely cool or it will melt.

# Housetraining Puppies

Puppies will start to eliminate on their own at about 3 weeks of age. Puppies need to eliminate when they first wake up, about 20 minutes after eating, and after playing vigorously.

Once puppies have begun to eliminate on their own, outdoor housetraining should begin. If it is necessary to use an indoor elimination location, it should be as small as possible. Keep it consistently covered with something like newspaper or puppy pads. This will help puppies learn to keep elimination in one area and ease housetraining in the new home. Neonate puppies under 4



weeks will need to be stimulated with a damp cotton ball or gauze. They cannot potty on their own, so you have to help them.

## **Socialization of Puppies**

- The day after you bring them home handling should start.
- Beginning at 3 weeks of age, it is important to begin having other people, friends, co-workers, etc. handling puppies frequently. Make sure each puppy is handled and played with regularly.
- Gradual exposure to new and different things and people, sights, and normal household sounds is important to ensure that your foster animal is well adjusted.
- Puppies learn to play by wrestling with their littermates.
- Get puppies used to nail trims.
- Get puppies used to baths.
- If ever you are overwhelmed or need help, if you are comfortable, we do have puppy trained volunteers that will come to your house for feedings and socialization. They can also help clean the puppy area.
- Let your Foster Coordinator know if you need assistance.

## **House Training Older Dogs**

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 re-directed immediately with a calm "Ah-Ah" and escort them outside where they can finish. You will then want to use some odor neutralizer (like Nature's Miracle) on the areas where the foster dog

“marked” to ensure he/she will not smell and mark that area again. It is important to learn the dog’s cues when they have to potty or are trying to mark, this will help prevent unwanted behavior.

- Potty your foster dog when he/she wakes up, after meals or drinks, after a play session, before putting them in their crate, when letting them out of their crate, or at least every 2 hours.
- Stand with him/her for 5 minutes. If he/she eliminates, reward them (with treats, praise). If he/she doesn’t go after 5 minutes, take them back inside and try every 15 minutes until he/she goes. Every time he/she goes, make sure you reward him/her!
- Accidents happen, don’t fret. Clean it up and go back to your schedule. Use an odor neutralizer (like Nature’s Miracle) to get rid of the smell. Potty training requires patience, the more vigilant you are in the beginning, the faster they learn.
- **Never** rub the dog’s face in their mess, or yell. That only leads to fearful behavior. Remember to use praise instead everytime they get it right so they learn faster. We are force free at our shelter.

## When To Call/E-mail For Behavioral Help

- Growling or snarling at humans
- Snapping or biting
- Fearful/hiding that does not improve
- Rough play; such as ripping clothes
- Panic and destructive when left alone
- Crate training concerns

# Training

Most potential adopters are looking for dogs with basic manners. You might feel it's appropriate to let your own dog jump on people, sleep on the bed, or beg for food, but please don't let your foster dog have these same indulgences. Set boundaries for your foster dog and be consistent.

- Encourage your foster dog to stay off furniture, as not all adopters allow dogs on furniture.
- Encourage your foster dog to sleep on a dog bed, as not all adopters allow dogs to sleep in their bed.
- Foster dogs are in crates when you cannot supervise them or when you are not home.
- Tricks are awesome! Teaching a dog to shake, roll over, dance, etc. could be the award winning move that helps a family choose your foster. It is super cute and fun. If you need assistance with training, contact your Foster Coordinator.
- If you would like to schedule training for your foster or schedule swimming appointments, contact the Foster Coordinator.
- We cannot reimburse you for training or swimming appointments without prior approval. If you wish to pay for appointments, we can provide you with a gift in kind receipt.
- If you choose training on your own, it must be with a trainer that is FAMD approved. Contact the Foster Coordinator for approved trainers.

# **Your Foster Dog's Health**

Your foster dog may not display any signs of illness until they are quite ill. Therefore, it's up to you to observe your dog closely each day. Call the Foster Coordinator if you see abnormal behavior; unusual discharge from the eyes, nose or other body openings, abnormal lumps, limping, difficulty getting up or down, loss of appetite or abnormal waste elimination. It's a good idea to keep a foster journal to record findings daily. It is difficult to see change sometimes. Don't forget nail trims are important too. If you are unable to trim on your own, schedule an appointment with the Foster Coordinator.

## **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, confirm you are feeding the correct amount of food. Over feeding may cause diarrhea as well.
- 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. Dehydration can be fatal to a puppy - if you deem your foster dog to be dehydrated, call the Foster Coordinator immediately.
- Contact the Foster Coordinator if your foster dog has diarrhea. You will schedule a fecal sample to be checked. IV Fluids may also need to be given.
- Appropriate medications and supplements will be prescribed by our medical department.
- Administer medications correctly, and make sure to give them for the prescribed amount of time.

# Kennel Cough

- 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, crowding or close confinement. Kennel cough exists in shelters, boarding kennels, groomers, veterinary offices, off-leash areas, etc.
- 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 your dog will most likely not get sick.

# Poisonous Foods and Household Items

Many household products can be toxic to dogs. Remove any rat or mouse poisons, antifreeze and windshield wiper fluid from your home before fostering! Store cleaning products and the items listed below out of reach of pets:

- |                    |                |
|--------------------|----------------|
| ● Chocolate        | ● Castor beans |
| ● Caffeine         | ● Lilies       |
| ● Grapes/raisins   | ● Tulip bulbs  |
| ● Macadamia nuts   | ● Marijuana    |
| ● Mushrooms        | ● Sago palm    |
| ● Onion and garlic | ● Azalea       |
| ● Rhododendron     |                |

# Marketing Your Foster Dog

You will be critical in marketing your dog for adoption. Think about what you would want to know about your dog if you were considering adoption, and what type of person or family would be the perfect environment for your foster dog.

**We need your help with the following marketing needs:**

- Take photos of your foster dog in a variety of poses—both full body and head shots.
- Write a biography of your foster dog that captures their personality and characteristics.
- Provide the photos and biography to the Foster Coordinator  
([todonnell@metrodetroitanimals.org](mailto:todonnell@metrodetroitanimals.org).)
- Communicate with the Foster Coordinator to determine when your foster dog will be ready for adoption.
- Identify potential adopters and find opportunities to show off your foster dog in safe environments. (Please remember—no off-leash dog parks.)
- Distribute flyers in strategic locations to garner interest in your foster dog.
- Social media is a great platform for networking your foster.
- Share your foster frequently with a cute story!
- You may share on social media, however, let any interested parties know they have to fill out the adoption questionnaire and we cannot guarantee any adoptions. The Adoption Center will contact them when they receive the questionnaire.

# Tips For Taking Great Photos

**We can't stress this enough...a picture is worth a thousand words.**

The picture is the first thing people see when they visit the shelter's listing on Petfinder.com, the FAMD website, or if they view the bio posted at the shelter. If the dog has a poor picture, visitors may move on to another dog without clicking or reading your dog's description. If you want to give your dog the best chance possible, take large, clear, good quality (high resolution) pictures of the dog alone. A good picture is often the difference between a dog who generates inquiries and one who doesn't.

- Take a lot of digital pictures. You may have to take 50 pictures to get 1 or 2 really great shots. If you don't have a digital camera, borrow one from a friend or contact the shelter and we can arrange for a special photo session.
- Pictures taken outside in natural light are usually much better than those taken inside or with a flash. Lighting is very important for accurately capturing a dog's coloring and detail. Have the sun or light source behind you and check to make sure you're not casting a shadow on your subject.
- Use treats and/or a squeaky toy to capture the dog's best expression. Sometimes having two people makes this process easier.
- Try taking pictures using a neutral backdrop. Select a background that contrasts with the dog's coloring. Darker-colored dogs will show up better against a lighter backdrop. Most dogs look great against a lush green lawn.
- Try different props. If the dog likes to fetch, you might get a picture of the dog with his favorite ball.
- Wrap a bandana around the dog's neck to add a streak of color (especially good for solid and darker-colored dogs). A bright, cheerful collar is a nice touch.

- Avoid having choke chains in your pictures.
- The dog is the subject of your picture so the dog should take up the majority of space in your picture. Avoid excessive amounts of background. The dog's eyes should be focused on you. Try to capture at least one "hero" shot, where the focus is on the dog's face. A full body picture is also a great way to show size and scale.
- Exercise the dog before your photo shoot. A calmer dog is easier to photograph, and a panting dog looks like they're smiling! Before snapping the photos, take the time to get the pet as calm and relaxed as possible, so the photos don't show an animal that looks anxious or scared.
- Check out the competition. Visit [Petfinder.com](https://www.petfinder.com) and look at the photos of similar dogs and see which ones pop out to you. Then try to mimic these shots with your own foster dog.
- If your first attempts fail, don't be discouraged. Just keep trying and have fun. When you are having fun, your foster dog will probably be having fun too!
- If you need help, we have volunteer photographers - call the Foster Coordinator to schedule an appointment.

## **Tips for Writing a Great Bio**

**Accentuate the positive and let potential adopters know why they should consider your dog.**

You will improve your dog's chances of finding a home if you write a thorough description. A good bio is part press release, part story telling. Don't turn it into a lengthy restaurant review, but instead try to pull the reader into the bio so that they can start to imagine a life with this new canine friend. It can be very helpful to read the bios of other similar dogs on [Petfinder.com](https://www.petfinder.com).



Tell it from the animal's perspective—the most compelling thing you can write on behalf of an animal is what you imagine the animal is thinking, feeling or remembering. A list of just facts probably won't catch a potential adopter's eye.

The introductory paragraph should describe “who your dog is.” This will help a potential adopter visualize the dog. Your second paragraph might go into personality traits, and provide information about training, tricks or cute behavior. Your final paragraph should outline the perfect (required) forever home environment. Remember to keep it positive.

## **Preparing for Your Next Foster Animal**

Once your foster dog has been adopted or has returned to the shelter, we ask that you take at least a week before welcoming a new foster animal. This gives you a much needed break—time to grieve and time to prepare your home for the next foster.

## **Sanitizing Your Home between Foster Animals**

In order to prevent disease and parasite infestations in your home, thoroughly clean areas where the foster animal has stayed. The one week “break” period between foster assignments provides the opportunity to do this.

- Wash bedding in hot water, detergent and bleach.

- Discard non-washable toys (those that can't be bleached or washed in a washing machine.)
- Disinfect all washable surfaces with a mild bleach and water solution (bleach/water ratio of 1:32 or 4oz of bleach per gallon of water is recommended). Bleach solutions should be prepared as needed, because they lose their strength after 24 hours. Bleach is inactive in the presence of organic matter so clean up dirt, hair, feces, etc. **before** disinfecting. **Bleach solution must stay in contact with the surface being sanitized for at least 10 minutes to be effective.**
- Vacuum all carpeted areas.
- Soak toys in bleach water for 20 minutes and scrub and bleach crates, carriers, scoops, food bowls and litter boxes.
- Clean any urine or feces soiled areas with an enzyme cleaner immediately to avoid residual odor (Nature's Miracle Stain and Odor Remover works well).

Regularly clean up all waste in the yard to decrease the risk of spreading disease.

## Quarantine Periods

Sometimes an animal is sent into a home before evidence of a serious disease has manifested. Quarantine periods are used to allow infectious diseases to die off in the environment. This protects future foster animals from being infected with the virus or disease. To prevent difficulties when cleaning and disinfecting your foster area, remove as many of your personal household items as possible. Limit unremovable fabric surfaces, or cover with a blanket or sheet. For ringworm, parvo, calici and any other extremely infectious diseases, the foster coordinator will give you a proper dilution of Rescue disinfectant to sterilize your room with. You will wipe down surfaces and walls 3 times in a row and let the rescue dry in between. We typically would wait 2

weeks before you would be able to take new fosters home.

For URI and parasitic infections, you can just clean with bleach water.  
Never mix chemicals!

## Contact Info

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