



Dog Foster General Guidelines

Version 1.0
June 1, 2012

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to foster a dog for Vegas Shepherd Rescue. Foster homes like yours allow us to rescue more dogs, and we appreciate your generosity in opening your home to a rescue dog.

By providing a foster home, you're providing a stable, loving environment for a dog that has been neglected and/or abandoned. You're also providing much-needed socialization, and basic training, that will make our dogs more appealing for adoption and better members of their adoptive families.

General Guidelines

Please read & review the following important guidelines:

1. Prior to fostering, all Foster Homes must complete an online Foster Home Application as well as Foster Home Agreement and home sometimes home inspections.
2. All Foster Homes agree to accept primary responsibility for providing lodging and care of their foster dog until a permanent adopting family is found.
3. Food donated to Vegas Shepherd Rescue will be made available to all Foster Homes, as it is received. Otherwise, it is the responsibility of the Foster Home to provide an acceptable dog food.
4. Medical care will be provided only via a Vegas Shepherd Rescue representative. If you think your Foster Dog needs any medical care, including vet visits or over-the-counter medications, please contact your VSR representative before acting.
5. Foster Homes are asked to keep their VSR contact apprised of their foster dogs behavior and if any issues arise.
6. Foster Homes are not required to foster any dog that they do not wish to foster. However, there may not be an immediate alternate foster home for your dog. We will work on moving your foster dog out as soon as possible, but ask for your understanding as we work on it. Only those dogs that have received prior approval for fostering and are deemed adoptable by a Director of Fostered Dogs fostered within VSR's Foster Program. Volunteers and/or Foster Homes are not authorized to pull dogs directly from the shelter or accept Owner-Surrender dogs.



7. We do not foster-to-adopt. Potential adopters should go through our regular application process rather than become Foster Homes. Foster Homes are asked to commit to fostering for a minimum of 6 months before they consider adopting a dog, whether it is from VSR or elsewhere.

8. All applicants for a particular Foster Dog must go through the Vegas Shepherd Rescue application process (online application, interview by Director of Fostered Dogs, home visit). If a friend or family member of the Foster Home wishes to adopt your Foster Dog, that's great! But, the adopter must go through the same process as other applicants.

9. Your own dogs should be current with their vaccinations. We also recommend that you vaccinate your dogs with a Bordetella vaccination to prevent kennel cough, a common illness with shelter dogs.

10. Vegas Shepherd Rescue is not responsible for any veterinary bills for resident dogs. The Foster Home assumes responsibility for any veterinary bills that result from resident dogs becoming ill due to exposure with a Foster Dog.

11. If you are planning a vacation, please notify VSR as far in advance as you can. We will need at least 2 weeks to arrange for alternative placement for your foster dog. If you want to take your foster dog with you, even for just a weekend, you MUST notify VSR beforehand. If VSR has an applicant interested we may make arrangements to keep your dog locally to be able to show him/her.

12. Do not leave your dog with anyone else without prior approval from VSR. Anytime a foster dog is left we MUST have a signed release of liability.



Getting Your Home & Family Ready for Fostering

Fostering is a commitment that will affect your entire household: your family, your permanent-resident pets, and your house and yard itself! Here are some tips to ensure that fostering will be a positive experience for you and your family.

Discuss your plans with other family members and get their input on how to make it work out best for everyone. Include in the discussion what kind(s) of dogs are appropriate for your household: small/large, young/old, active/not active. Do you thrive on a spunky dog with lots of energy who is a willing playmate for your active dog? Or, do you have an older dog who would appreciate not being pestered? How long are you gone during the day? We'll need to match you with a dog that works with your schedule. You'll need a dog that fits your lifestyle, even if he/she is only a temporary resident. Your Smiley Dog representative can work with you to ensure that we understand your personal situation and what types of dogs are appropriate for you.

Supplies

You should have the following on hand before your foster dog arrives:

- Food & water bowls: it is best to have separate bowls for your foster dog, and to feed your resident dogs & foster dog separately so that they can eat in a stress-free environment as they are getting to know each other.
- Food & Treats: VSR can sometimes supply food and treats depending on our donations. Otherwise, we will advise you as to what kind of food or treats is best for your foster.
- Dog crate: We strongly recommend you have a crate for your foster dog. Crate training is a very helpful way to introduce a dog into a new home. We can supply you with a crate if you do not have one, and give you some excellent articles on crate training if you are unfamiliar with it.
- Bed: Cotton blankets or large beach towels are best as they are washable and less likely to be chewed up by your foster dog.
- Toys: Kongs are excellent for stuffing- they will keep your foster dog occupied, especially while you are away from the house. Stuffed toys or balls are also great, depending on your dog's temperament. VSR can sometimes provide these depending on our donations.
- Collar & Leash: We will provide a collar and leash for your dog. A VSR ID tag will be on your dog's collar as well. This collar and tag should stay on at all times as it will help ensure the dog is returned to VRS if the dog ever gets out and is picked up by Animal Control.



Introducing Your Foster Dog to Your Home

Everyone needs their space

If possible, it is best to keep foster dogs & resident dog separate from each other for the first 2 days. This is a stressful time for both the foster dog (who may have been on the street/in the shelter/in a transition foster home before arriving at your house – a lot of change for an animal that likes to have a “pack” and some stability in his/her life!). Also, there are some common sicknesses that sometimes don’t show up for 1-2 weeks that dogs often get at the shelter, so separation can ensure that your dogs don’t get sick.

If it is not possible to keep them separate, be aware that your dogs may be exposed to illness. However, also be aware that many of the diseases that shelter dog get (Kennel Cough, Diarrhea, etc) are stress related. Many have had poor nutrition and a hard life before coming to your home. VSR cannot be responsible for resident dog vet bills, we do not have the financial resources to make that commitment. We advise you to keep you resident dogs up to date on all vaccinations. If it is not possible to physically separate the dogs, try to ensure that everyone has their own “personal space” of a bed, a crate, or a special area. This will keep the stress levels lower for you own dogs and the foster dog.

The backyard is not an acceptable place to leave the foster dog alone & unsupervised, however. They may be destructive (digging, trampling plants), they may be escape artists, they may bark incessantly, or they could be snatched. A crate or a room that is enclosed (like a kitchen) is the best choices.



Dog Introductions

Introduce your resident dogs to the foster dog on neutral territory, at a park or down the street from your house, for example. Introduce them on leash, with an adult holding each leash. Allow a quick “hello” sniff or walk-by, and separate them, even if things seem fine. This gives them a chance to think about things, and often, they will then seek each other out to get a lengthier greeting. Give lots of positive reinforcement so that both dogs feel safe and that the other dog is a friend, not a foe. If one dog gets aggressive, separate them quickly, comfort the dog, and slow down the pace of the introductions.

Don’t force things if they are not immediate best friends; sometimes it takes a few days for dogs to accept each other. Sometimes, dogs just don’t like each other. By giving them each attention separately, and making them feel safe about the bed, toys, and food, you can minimize any tension.

Getting Along

Dogs are pack animals. There is usually one who dominates. Correction of one dog by another (whether it is your resident dog or the foster) is normal. As long as the dogs are responding positively to each other and seem to recognize the “pecking order”, this is fine. If they are constantly battling for the “alpha” position, then they will have to be separated, and may not be a good fit for each other.

Never leave the dogs unsupervised together. They are still getting to know one another, and will need correction on appropriate behavior toward each other, which means supervision. If you are leaving the house, then crate the dogs or otherwise physically separate them.

Again, feed the dogs separately. This reduces stress for everyone. Food aggression between dogs is common, but if corrected early can be reversed and eliminated.

Cat Introductions

First, make sure that your cat has his/her own sanctuary – preferably a room where the foster dog will not be allowed to go. If you can keep the cat’s food & litter box in this room, and keep the door closed, then the dog & cat can sniff each other under the door for a few days before meeting face to face. This will make things go a lot smoother, as they will most likely feel they have already “met”. Supervise the dog’s behavior even at the door, reinforce playful, curious behavior and correct any aggression or obsession.

When introducing the dog & cat for the first time, put the dog on a leash & just allow the cat to walk by if he/she wants to. Here, you’re looking to evaluate both dog & cat. Is the cat fearful or curious? Is the dog happy/playful or chomping at the bit?

After introductions have occurred, keep in mind the following tips:

- Never leave the cat & foster dog unsupervised, even if it looks like they get along great. A playful dog can still unintentionally harm a cat.

- Make sure your cat has places to jump up to in each room or hide under where the dog can't get him/her.
- Playful chasing is normal, but always remind the foster dog to play nice/slow down/not run.
- Don't allow the dog to stare down the cat. The dog should know that he/she is not allowed to obsess on the cat.
- The cat may swipe at the dog or hiss in order to correct. This is usually a great help in ensuring the dog knows his/her place. But, keep an eye on interactions to ensure the cat doesn't injure the dog, as well.

With all resident pets, allow the animals to accept one another on their own time. Never push them towards each other or force interaction. Many animals become companions and playmates, while others simply tolerate each other.

Working with your foster dog

While your foster dog is living with you, you can provide some basic training along with lots of tender loving care. No formal training regime is needed for most foster dogs, but if you can work on the following, it will make your foster dog much more "adoptable".

- **Socializing** is definitely the first priority. This means ensuring that your foster dog is acclimated to meeting new people, dog, cats, children, as wide a group as possible. If you have a shy dog, this is a big task, and should be approached slowly (but all the more important to address it so that your dog overcomes his/her shyness.) With a more outgoing dog, it's more about curbing enthusiasm so that people aren't overwhelmed upon meeting the dog (or knocked over with love!)
- **Food aggression** with other dogs is a fairly common trait, however food aggression towards people is not acceptable. If your foster dog is growling when you are near his food, you need to work on correcting this behavior. Hand-feed the dog, so that it's clear the food is yours, and you are the giver of food. Then, when feeding with a bowl, take it away several times during the meal, giving it back after the dog sits & waits politely. With a non-food aggressive dog, these are still good tips, along with taking chewies away & giving them back. If the dog growls a bit, tell them "no" and then practice taking it until they get the idea. Repeat daily. If your foster dog is showing food aggression with your dog over food and chews, always feed them separately. Another good reason to crate your foster dog, as you can use that place as a safe place to give treats, chews, and toys.



- **House training** (potting training) is definitely desirable for both you and the future adopter. The best way to house train is to use a crate, and to be vigilant about taking the dog outside regularly, including after naps and meals. If a dog is particularly stubborn about house training, keep them on a leash in the house; this will prevent them from wandering off to hide to go potty.
- **Crate training** is a great way not only to potty train, but also to establish general house manners since the dog will not be roaming free in the house unless he/she is being supervised. So, no chewing on couch cushions, counter-surfing, or garbage can diving if the dog is not left alone. We have more materials on crate training available to you.
- **Sitting** is relatively easy to teach and pays big dividends. A dog that sits for his/her leash and food knows they are subservient to the person commanding them to sit. It also helps to get an overly excited dog under control.
- **Jumping up** is a common problem with our foster dogs – they are so happy to have someone to love! But, it's best if they are taught not to do this, since it can knock people over or just be rude. The best prevention is to see it coming and tell them to stop and sit. Once they have this down, they can be invited "up" for a visit, but only with an invitation.
- **Leash walking** is challenging to teach. Many of our dogs have never been on a leash and have no idea how to behave. If you're ambitious, you can work on "heel", but even "easy" is fine. "Easy" is when the dog isn't necessarily healing at your side, but they are also not dragging you down the street. This takes time to learn and patience on your part. A nervous dog may not be pulling but reluctant to walk or trying to get away from you and the leash. The goal then is to get the dog to relax and walk confidently with you. We can give you some pointers on either of these cases.
- **Squirt bottles** can be a great way to get the point across to a dog that is not responding to a verbal correction. Fill a squirt bottle with plain water, and set the nozzle to stream (not spray.) A quick squirt in the face with a verbal command such as "no" or "down" at the same time can be very effective. It does not hurt the dog, but it catches them off guard and can be helpful in getting their attention. Generally, you can move to verbal commands only after a time.



Dogs & Children

Dogs and kids go together like peanut butter & jelly, they are great playmates, guardians, and confidants. But, children must learn proper handling and discipline, and dogs must learn self-control so that they do not play too rough. Children must be supervised and taught that dogs are beings, not dolls or toys to dress-up and handled constantly. Teach children not to tease or rile up the dog unnecessarily. This includes chasing around the house, which can scare a dog, who may snap if cornered or frightened.

Make sure your children know that it is not the dog's fault if the dog chews up toys that are left out. Keeping doors shut & toys in toy boxes can help minimize damage. Make sure the dog has his/her own toys, and keep them in the same place all the time (like in a basket, or in the dog's crate.) Children like the idea of caring for a dog, but the daily work of feeding, bathing, brushing, and cleaning up after the dog is not really suited for them. Recognize that the initial enthusiasm will wane quickly, and the true responsibility of caring for the dog will fall to the adults in the household. Young children should not walk foster dogs, as, even if the dog is easy to walk, the child cannot really handle any encounters with other dogs or cats that are bound to happen.

Children should not play unsupervised with foster dogs. For puppies, teach proper handling (pick up by body, not the limbs), and limit interaction. Children need to be taught that a puppy's mouthing is not biting, and that the puppy is not trying to hurt them. Perhaps most importantly, children must learn to properly discipline the foster dog/puppy (a sharp "no" or squirt with a water bottle). Children may think that squirting the dog is fun, and need to learn to only use it sparingly, Children often react to a dog's bad behavior by hitting the dog, is unacceptable.



Medical Treatment

Prior to any medical procedure being done, you must contact a VSR representative and get approval. Failure to get prior approval will mean that you forego reimbursement for treatment. In addition, even if you are willing to cover vet expenses, we prefer to have the dogs seen by the vets on our list so that the dogs get consistent care and have their records centralized.

If the dog is sick, injured, needs to be spayed/neutered, or needs a doctor's visit for immunizations, your VSR representative can make a vet appointment for you at a convenient time for you to have the dog seen. If you need help transporting the dog to the vet, please let us know.

For medical emergencies, please call immediately:

Gary G. Baldwin 702-371-5832

Tammy Willet 702-429-4410

Make sure that your own pets are protected. We expect that resident pets are all spayed/neutered, and have all their vaccinations. We recommend, in addition to DHLPP and Rabies, that your pets are immunized for Bordetella (kennel cough) since it is a common ailment among shelter dogs. Your VSR representative will keep track of your foster dog's immunization records and medical treatment.