

Foster Checklist

Before I accept a dog to foster:

- 🐾 I ask questions about health, vaccinations and find out if the dog altered.
- 🐾 I verify that the dog has a sponsor that I can work well with.
- 🐾 I ask about the dogs potential behavior issues.
- 🐾 Has he been in a crate and how did he do?
- 🐾 I try to get a copy of the shelter intake and health documents.
- 🐾 I ask for some of his current food to transition him slowly to my diet.

Getting Ready for the Foster Dog:

- 🐾 I have an extra crate, ex-pen and clean bedding ready for the dog.
- 🐾 I set up the crate in a low traffic area of the house where the dog can participate in sights and sounds without being overwhelmed.
- 🐾 I put the ex-pen around the crate so my dogs cannot get up close and personal (yet).
- 🐾 I also make sure I have nyla-bones, stuffed kongs and appropriate chews on hand.
- 🐾 I stock up on high value treats.
- 🐾 I have a proper sized collar and leash dedicated to the new dog.

Welcome the Dog to a New Beginning:

- 🐾 I do not allow any access to my existing dogs no matter how stellar everyone is.
- 🐾 For the first few days to a week the new dog is not allowed anywhere except on a leash, in a crate or in a small yard without distractions, to bond and teach focus.
- 🐾 We do lots of sits and focus and follow me exercises with appropriate value treats.
- 🐾 My dogs are monitored to make sure the new dog is comfortable with their presence.
- 🐾 Usually in a few days there is not a problem with my dogs coming and going and greeting the new dog with the barrier of the ex-pen but not up to the crate yet. Move the set up if necessary to give the foster more safe space.
- 🐾 I always give lots of treats to the foster dog while crated to reward focused relaxed behavior and/or to teach that good things happen when my dogs are milling around.
- 🐾 I reward my dogs for nice sit stays and good happy behavior while being near the foster dog. .

Next steps to Acclimation

As I see the Foster dog relaxing and as my dogs are getting over the novelty of the new member of the house I follow these next steps:

- 🐾 I remove the ex pen.
- 🐾 I still do not let my entire pack swarm the Foster dog. .

- 🐾 It is ok if you have a very social dog who wants to be close to the foster dog as long as the foster is comfortable.
- 🐾 If I have not already done so, I set up a 2nd crate in my bedroom or wherever all my dogs sleep.
- 🐾 The dog should have good command of sit and focus and be relaxed around my well mannered dogs. Depending on how things are going, this can be a few days to a week or longer.
- 🐾 I can now start to introduce my most socially respectful dog off leash while I walk on leash with the foster. We take a walk in the largest safe area possible giving lots of praise and treats. ***It is best to have a 2nd person and both dogs be on leash but I take longer on the above steps ensuring I will be safe at this step.***
- 🐾 I carefully watch for signs of reactivity, stress and discomfort and back track if necessary. If at this point things are still stressful I probably have rushed thru the previous steps
- 🐾 I continue with on leash work until we are super comfortable with all dogs. Then I carefully allow Foster off leash and my best dog on leash. I watch behaviors closely before I allow the dogs to run together.

My Rules:

- 🐾 Make decisions with your head
- 🐾 Care for the foster dog with your heart.
- 🐾 Never underestimate the amount of stress a dog may be under or the time it may take to de-stress the dog. Some dogs may assimilate quickly but signs of stress can linger for months and longer with hidden triggers.
- 🐾 Do not have more dogs together than you can easily manage. **Super Important!!! People have been mauled an worse by ignoring this rule.**
- 🐾 Take an active interest and pride in making the rescue dog into the best dog you possibly can.
- 🐾 Take lots of photos and short video clips.
- 🐾 Watch for signs of stress and anxiety which will tell you how fast to move thru the steps, i.e. lip licking, yawning, avoiding eye contact etc. These signs are different than dominant behaviors.
- 🐾 Do not allow the dog long periods of time outside off lead without continuous observation from a distance
- 🐾 Always err on the side of caution.
- 🐾 There is no substitute for time and patience so don't rush!
- 🐾 Never sacrifice the safety of any dog or human.
- 🐾 Never allow an alarming behavior to continue, i.e. fence fighting, barking for long periods, rude behavior toward your existing dogs, etc.