**Top Tips for Foster Parents**

* Check in regularly with your Paw and Claws staff. Facebook or Instagram messenger is often quickly answered, even after hours.
* Ask for advice if your puppy/dog has stopped eating.
* If your dog seems sick, check immediately for hydration – she should be drinking water, urinating, have elastic skin tone and a moist mouth.
* Wash your hands and change your shirt after handling sick animals to prevent spread of illness.
* Never let your dog run loose outside; guard against escapes.
* Do not leave your foster dog unattended with any resident animals.
* Feed your foster dog separately from other pets in your home.

**Health & Wellness**

**Veterinary Visits**

All vet visits must be pre-authorized unless you are willing to pay for the visit yourself. Check with us first.

We must be very cautious when deciding whether or not a foster animal needs to go to the vet, as office visits add up very quickly. Each case will be evaluated individually by what is best for the animal as well as economically feasible for the shelter.

Authorization to foster parents for vet visits may be given for any of the following:

**Puppies under 12 weeks of age:**

Diarrhea that lasts for more than a day

Vomiting and diarrhea for more than 6 hours

Vomiting more than once in an hour

Not eating for more than 12-24 hours

Lethargy without fever for more than 12 hours

Lethargy with fever

**Dogs older than 12 weeks of age:**

Diarrhea that lasts for more than 1-2 days

Diarrhea and occasional vomiting for more than a day

Vomiting more than 2-3 times in an hour

Not eating for more than 24 hours

Lethargy without fever for more than a day

Lethargy with fever

Your foster dog may not display any signs of illness until quite ill. Therefore, it is up to you to observe your dog closely each day. Call or message us if you see:

* Unusual discharges from the eyes, nose or other body openings
* Abnormal lumps
* Limping
* Difficulty getting up or down
* Loss of appetite
* Abnormal waste elimination
* Other abnormal behavior

**Diarrhea**

Diarrhea can be caused by several factors, including stress, change of diet, parasites, viruses, poor diet, or eating garbage.

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. Call us immediately if you suspect your foster is dehydrated.

**Distemper**

Distemper is an extremely contagious and often fatal viral disease. It is an airborne infection that can be transmitted with or without direct contact with an infected dog through mucus, urine and feces. Some of the symptoms include squinting, congestion of the eyes, pus from the eyes, weight loss, coughing, vomiting, nasal discharge and diarrhea. Contact us immediately if you suspect Distemper.

**Fleas**

Most foster dogs have been treated when arriving at the shelter, but additional flea treatments are available if needed. Puppies over 8 weeks of age and adult dogs can be treated with topical flea treatment.

To check for fleas, inspect your dog daily, 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. If fleas are present, treat as soon as possible. Change bedding and vacuum the floors daily. The washing machine will remove fleas, eggs and dirt.

If your foster dog had fleas, watch his stools for tapeworms which often look similar to pieces of rice, which come from ingesting fleas. Tapeworms can cause diarrhea. If you see tapeworms, we can provide you with medication.

**Injured Dogs**

Injured foster dogs will have specific needs. They may be recovering from surgery and will come with veterinary orders. Generally fracture, cast, or other surgery patients may need to be confined to a crate or a small room to limit mobility.

This type of foster situation may require you to schedule follow-up appointments with the dog’s veterinarian. As with all foster dogs, watch for signs of illness, since injured foster dogs are under additional stress and are more prone to illness. Lots of human contact is important for healing injured dogs. Active play should be limited, but cuddling, petting, talking, brushing and massaging are all good social activities for a recovering animal.

**Kennel Cough**

The shelter is much like a child day care – as soon as one dog has a cold, most all the dogs in the shelter get a cold. Just like people who have colds, kennel cough develops when the dog is stressed or when the immune system is compromised. Kennel cough usually goes away as soon as the dog has a warm, quiet and soothing place to sleep, where they can drink lots of water, eat healthy food and receive lots of TLC!

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.

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 he will most likely not get sick.

Talk to your vet about giving your own dog the Bordetella nasal vaccination. Immunity to kennel cough is usually established 3-4 days after vaccination.

Make sure your foster dog has plenty of fresh water and healthy food. If your dog is not eating, try cooking up something special and smelly such as eggs, chicken or steak. Take short, leashed walks. If your dog’s energy is good and the cough seems mild, try some Vitamin C (5-10 mg/lb, 2-3 times a day with food) and Vitamin E (3-5 mg/lb, once a day). If you don’t see improvement of the cough or cold after 3 days, or if the condition worsens, call us.

Strenuous activity can bring on coughing episodes, so limit activity and encourage rest. Even baths can be stressful to the system and should be avoided. However bringing your foster dog into the bathroom while you’re taking a shower can be beneficial as the steam can help loosen mucus. Incubation of kennel cough is 5-10 days; its course is 10-20 days with symptoms generally more marked the first week. Fever, lack of appetite and a yellow-green-brown nasal discharge can indicate secondary infections.

**Parvo**

Parvo attacks the intestinal tract, white blood cells and heart muscle. Signs of infection are depression, loss of appetite, vomiting, severe diarrhea, fever and sometimes kennel cough symptoms. The illness is contracted through contact with the infected feces of another dog. Call us immediately if you believe your foster dog may have this illness.

* **Learn more about parvovirus:**

[**www.aspcapro.org/resource/shelter-health-disease-management/canine-parvovirus-timeline**](http://www.aspcapro.org/resource/shelter-health-disease-management/canine-parvovirus-timeline)

**Parasites**

Parasites can cause diarrhea, stomach bloating or vomiting. Parasites include tapeworms, roundworms, hookworms, whipworms, and mange. Tapeworms will look like pieces of rice coming out of your foster dog’s anus or in his stool. Round worms and hookworms may be vomited, and roundworms look like spaghetti (hookworms are smaller and rarely distinguishable without the aid of a microscope).

Mange is an infestation of tiny mites that bite and cause intense scratching, reddened skin and loss of fur. Only rare cases of mange (sarcoptic) are contagious to humans.

**Vaccination & Worming**

Your foster dog’s vaccination and worming history is available from the shelter. Your dog has most likely been vaccinated for Distemper, Canine Hepatitis, Parainfluenza, Parvo and Bordetella.

Rabies vaccinations are usually given when the dog is spayed or neutered and is over 4 months old.

Puppies will need several vaccine boosters and doses of wormer- every two weeks. You can bring them in, staff can do a home visit, or you can give them at home if you are comfortable with that.

Most likely, your foster dog had one dose of wormer upon arrival to the shelter. If you see worms in the dog’s stool, return to the shelter for more wormer. You will be instructed on the correct dosage and frequency.

* **These tips can help keep your home free of infection:**

[**www.aspcapro.org/infection-control-foster-homes**](http://www.aspcapro.org/infection-control-foster-homes)

* **Learn about household toxins that cause seizures:**

[**www.aspcapro.org/resource/shelter-health-poison-control/most-common-causes-seizures-dogs**](http://www.aspcapro.org/resource/shelter-health-poison-control/most-common-causes-seizures-dogs)

**Spay/Neuter**

Spay and neuter surgeries are generally done at the Huntsville Veterinary Clinic, but any time a dog has to undergo anesthesia for a procedure, he should be altered at the same time. Hernias can also be fixed at this time.

**Behavior**

**Housetraining**

Be patient with your foster dog. Even housetrained adult dogs will make mistakes, especially if they have 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 redirected immediately with a calm “Oops” – then escort him outside where he can finish. You will then want to use some odor neutralizer on the areas where the dog “marked” to insure he will not smell and mark that area again.

You can begin to housetrain a puppy at 8 weeks of age. Even if you bring home an adult dog who is housebroken, you will want to follow these guidelines until your foster dog adjusts to his new situation and to your schedule.

Determine where you want your foster dog to eliminate – it could be the backyard, side yard or an indoor spot such as a puppy pad. Then take him there every time with a spoken command (such as “do your business”). Take him out when he wakes up, after he eats or drinks, after a play session, or at least every 2 hours. Puppies should go out every 45 minutes until you learn their pattern.

Stand with him for 5 minutes. If he eliminates, reward him (with treats, praise, a favorite game and your own special happy dance). If he doesn’t go in 5 minutes, take him back inside and try every 15 minutes until he goes. Every time he goes, make sure you reward him!

Supervise the puppy closely while you’re inside. If he starts to sniff the floor, or even squats to go, interrupt with a calm “Oops,” scoop him up quickly and take him to the approved spot and praise when he finishes. If he eliminates in the house while you’re not paying attention, don’t correct him – it’s not his fault. Clean it up and go back to your schedule. Use an odor neutralizer to get rid of the smell. Never put the dog’s face in his mess or yell at him; he won’t understand you, and you will only be teaching him fear.

**Crate Training**

Crates provide safe havens and dens 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 pup 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 left outside, he has never been required to hold it 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 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.

Crates should never be used as a means of punishment; they’re not to be used for keeping puppies under 6 months out of mischief all day either. Crates should be thought of as dog playrooms, just like child playrooms with games and toys. It should be a place dogs like to be and feel safe and secure.

**Attention & Playtime**

Gentle and calming human contact is important for dogs. Human handling is especially important for the healthy development of puppies. Be sure to give your foster dog several minutes of playtime periodically through the day.

Do not allow children to behave with the foster dog in a manner you would not want the child to behave with a younger sibling. Teach children to leave a dog alone when he is eating, chewing, and sleeping. Never allow a child to remove a toy or any other prized possession from a dog.

**Behavior Issues**

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 with us – another foster home might be best for both you and the dog. Regardless of the issue, we don’t condone punishment, which will not address the cause of the behavior and in fact it may worsen behavior that’s motivated by fear or anxiety.

Punishment may also cause anxiety in dogs who are not currently fearful. People often believe their dog makes the connection to discipline because he runs and hides or “looks guilty.” But dogs display submissive postures like cowering, running away or hiding when they feel threatened by an angry tone of voice, body posture, or facial expression. Your dog doesn’t know what he’s done wrong; he only knows that you’re upset. Punishment after the fact will not only fail to eliminate the undesirable behavior, but may provoke other undesirable behaviors, too.

* **Try these easy enrichment ideas:**

[**www.aspcapro.org/resource/saving-lives-behavior-enrichment/tips-canine-enrichment**](http://www.aspcapro.org/resource/saving-lives-behavior-enrichment/tips-canine-enrichment)

**Showcasing Your Foster**

**Web Presence**

If your dog’s picture is already on the shelter’s website, you should write a biography about his personality. A good bio makes a big difference in the number of calls the dog gets, so be descriptive! Try to include things like:

* What does the dog like to do? (play fetch, go for walks, etc.)
* Is he a cuddler?
* Does he have experience with other animals and children?

Of course, any cute things that he does or anything you want to point out about his fur or appearance is good as well. It can be as long as you want, but the typical description is a paragraph or two.

If the dog has some bad habits, this can be discussed during the first phone conversation. The bio should generate interest, not turn people away. We don’t want to mislead people; however we really try to focus on the positive.

You are welcome to promote the dog on your own social media too. Just be sure to include a link to our website so any potential adopters can fill out an application- thepetshelter.org

**Photos**

If your dog’s picture is not yet on the website, if would like to take the pictures yourself, you are welcome to do so. We can also take pictures at the shelter or in your home.

**Adoption**

**Adoption Events**

If we have adoption events for the puppies or dogs at your home, you and your family are welcome to come and meet potential adopters and discuss the personalities of your foster dogs with them.

* **For more helpful tips on marketing your foster dog, see our Adoption Ambassadors section:** [**www.aspcapro.org/ambassadors**](http://www.aspcapro.org/ambassadors)

**Based on material generously shared by Seattle Animal Shelter**

**ASPCApro.org/ambassadors**

Supplies to send home with fosters

* Food
* Treats
* Crate
* Bedding
* Collar, leash, harness
* Comb or brush
* Scale
* Pet carrier
* Dog toy variety pack
* Wipes
* Puppy Yard

Please write down items that will need to be returned to the shelter \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_