

**You've Decided to Foster?
Now What?
Things to know BEFORE You Get Your First Foster**

Decompressing:

The kennel is a stressful environment and full of strange noises and smells. All that can be overstimulating for a dog, causing them to act out in ways they might not normally. Your foster dog is going to need quiet time in your house before anything else. It may take a week or many weeks for your new foster to get acclimated to your home. Symptoms may include lack of energy, too much energy, potty accidents, growling at other dogs, cats, or people in the home, lack of appetite, and others. Be patient and give your foster lots of space and a place to hang out in a quiet space. This includes no visitors and no taking the dog out to stores, etc. Some dogs arrive with digestive upsets upon arrival. You can feed your dog a bland diet of boiled white rice and cooked chicken. After about 48 hours, you can start slowly mixing kibble in with the rice until you are back to all kibble.

Crate Training:

Get out of your head that a crate is a form of punishment. Every good tool can be used properly or improperly. Properly used, a crate gives a dog a safe, "den-like" area which is very natural to them. Many of our dogs come from unknown origins and/or have spent months in the kennel without ever spending time alone. Your foster may come to you scared and disoriented and you should take every precaution to protect your home. When you leave your home, even if it's for a short period of time, the crate will be your best friend. There still may be times where your foster is trying to figure out life and they may have destructive tendencies. Please be patient and do all that you can to protect your home and foster. Keep all food and medicine locked behind cabinet doors. You'd be surprised how high a dog can jump if they are motivated by that loaf of bread or steak you left out. There are many articles on the Internet on how to crate train a dog, plus the BFDR Foster Page is an awesome source of information. Just ask!

Finding a Forever Home for Your Foster:

Dogs can stay in a foster home anywhere from a few days to a few months. We have even had fosters stay in a foster home over a year or more. There really is no telling when a dog will strike an adopter's fancy. We greatly appreciate you and your patience while we get your dog posted and look for potential adopters. Check out the document, "Tips For Taking Pictures of Your Foster Dog" located on the Facebook BFDR Foster page to give you tips on taking good pictures that will help get your foster adopted.

While we appreciate your input on who adopts your foster, the final decision rests on the dog's Coordinator. If you have a friend or family member interested in your foster, have them fill out an application and let your Coordinator know immediately. This will give them the best chance at adopting your foster first. All potential adopters must talk to a coordinator and be approved by them. *Requirements for adopters:* We must be able to verify home ownership or have the landlord's permission if renting, pass a general criminal background check, be able to provide a

personal reference OR pass a vet background check if they have current pets, which includes all

pets spayed/neutered, history of rabies and distemper vaccines, history of heart worm testing and on year-round heart worm preventatives for dogs, history of flea & tick preventatives for cats and dogs. It is also highly recommended all current residents be vaccinated against Bordetella (Kennel Cough) since it is highly contagious. We do not permit homes with electric fences. It is highly recommended that you do not allow potential adopters to meet your foster prior to the Coordinator approving them to adopt. No matter how much you think you know them, we have had many awkward moments when a friend or family member can't be approved due to a poor background check. *Note: Sometimes the approval process can take days if the vet won't return our calls or if the adopter doesn't respond to our request for more information. Your patience is appreciated.*

If you fall in love with your foster and decide you want to adopt them, let your Coordinator know immediately. In most cases, you get first dibs on adopting your foster, but you must let us know as soon as possible, even if it's to let us know you are considering it before your foster arrives.

Vaccines

In addition to the required vaccines, we also highly recommend your personal dog(s) be vaccinated for Bordetella (Kennel Cough). Dogs coming out of a kennel environment are exposed to other dogs and Kennel Cough is extremely contagious. Even if you are fostering a dog that is coming from another foster, transport vans and vet visits still expose your personal pets to potential risk.

Introducing Your Foster to Your Home and Resident Dogs:

Read the document, *"Tips for Adding Another Dog to Your Family"* located on the BFDR Foster Facebook Group. Beware of dogs that may bolt out of doors. Always check on the location for your foster before you open a door. Have a family chat with your kids, too. If you have kids (or adults) that are forgetful, put a dog or child gate in front of the door to remind everyone to stop and check to see where your foster is.

Fences and Crates:

We all have to leave home from time to time, whether it's for work or to run an errand. Until you are 100% sure you can trust your foster to be left out unattended, it is highly recommended you use a crate or confine the foster in a separate room by using dog gates or a closed door. NEVER leave your foster unattended in a fenced yard, even while home.

Flight Risk Fosters and Lost Dog Information:

Flight risk: Many of our dogs have come from difficult situations and are not quite used to living in a home or having a family who loves them. Therefore, all fosters can be considered somewhat of a flight risk. Your new foster may or may not know his/her name, may have never been in a car, and is starting off on a whole new endeavor. We do everything in our power to make sure your dog is delivered to you safely. If our drivers turn your leash around to use as a slip lead, please leave it on your dog until the dog and everyone in your family is in the car and the doors are shut and secure. Only then is it safe to remove the slip lead. When you get your pet home,

use the same to transfer the dog from car to yard, house, or to leash walk. Always Leave a leash on your foster for the first week. That way you can grab your foster quickly.

Lost Foster: Read the “Lost Dog Protocol” document. Even someone who is super careful may drop a leash or a gate may get blown open in a storm. Please take the time to read it.

Kids in the Home:

Do not let your kids sit on or pester your foster dog. Give your foster a safe space to go (i.e. a crate) and teach your kids to stay away from the dog if it is in their space. Do not allow your kids to feed your foster dog from their hands. Give the dog plenty of time to decompress before allowing too much interaction with them. Many dogs arrive without “soft mouth” skills and it is important that you are sure the dog is safe for your children to feed before allowing it to happen.

Retractable Leashes:

Do not use retractable Leashes EVER. BFDR does not approve of this type of leash for any dog. Even the most beloved house dog will run in terror of the noise they make when they clatter on the ground. A foster coming into a new home with new people and new experiences needs the safest leash attached to them possible.

Training Devices:

We also do not permit the use of shock collars, prong, or shock training devices to be used on your foster. Big Fluffy Dog Rescue only supports the use of positive training methods.

Tennessee Fosters:

Generally speaking, a Tennessee foster helps the foster get acclimated to life in a home setting and takes care of them through any medical issues that need to be addressed. Once that is done, the foster may be moved to a northern foster or adopter. Why move the dog to another foster if they are already settled into your home? We get this question many times as it seems unreasonable to uproot your foster only to have them settle into a new foster, then again to an adopter. The answer is, the northern region has a much higher chance of finding the perfect home for them. The south has a limited number of adoptable homes and the north has a shortage of adoptable dogs. In many cases, we may also have an adopter in the north that wants to meet the dog prior to adopting them, and this gives them that opportunity.

Medical Expenses & Preventatives:

BFDR pays for all medical expenses that have been pre-approved by Jean Harrison, Sarah Fostello, or your **Coordinator** (who will ask Jean or Sarah). Any life-threatening emergency does not require pre-approval. Immediately call Jean Harrison, Sarah Fostello, or your Coordinator in the case of a life-threatening emergency. Life threatening means that the dog is in danger of dying, not that the dog is sniffing, has vomited, has worms in its stool, etc. Expenses incurred without approval will not be reimbursed. If you choose to take your foster to a vet and pay for the appointment, it is important you always inform your Coordinator and have the vet’s notes sent to both the Coordinator and faxed to 615-322-1220 to ensure the adopter gets a copy of the entire vet history.

Unless told otherwise, all foster dogs should be on preventatives for fleas, ticks, and heartworms. The envelope that traveled with your foster should have paperwork listing the last preventatives given and the next dose due date. Please follow this dosing schedule to ensure the safety of your foster. If you need additional preventatives, please follow this link to order more. Be sure to give at least two weeks' notice: <https://fs18.formsite.com/bigfluffydogs/Flea-tick-hw-meds/index.html>.