



MANUAL FOR FOSTER PARENTS

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www.MUTTVILLE.org
senior dog rescue

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About This Manual

This manual is designed to provide foster parents with a comprehensive overview of the Muttville Senior Dog Rescue Foster Program. It is meant to be a helpful resource for foster parents and should answer many of the questions that may arise before and during foster care. Throughout this manual, dogs are referred to neutrally, or using the female gender (she/her), but only for convenience and consistency. Foster parents should always consult with their Foster Mentor for specific help and assistance. All information is subject to change.

Program Overview

Muttville was founded in 2007, and since then has given a forever home and new life to over 1700 senior dogs that might otherwise have been euthanized. Muttville is a foster-based program that caters to the special needs of senior dogs who do not do well in a shelter environment. Muttville foster homes provide temporary homes for senior dogs until a forever home is found.

Muttville's Foster Program is designed around a Mentoring System. Each foster family is assigned a Foster Mentor, an experienced Muttville foster parent that provides guidance and support to help make the foster experience a success. The Foster Mentor serves as the single point of contact for the foster family: answering questions, training issues, connecting the family with any needed supplies and services, and serving as a foster's liaison to Muttville operations. The Foster Mentor also provides initial orientation for new foster families, and serves as a resource throughout the foster process, beginning with connecting the foster family with a dog in need and culminating in a successful adoption.

Be a Successful Foster Home

In order to become a foster parent, you will need to:

- *Agee to and sign the Foster Agreement;*
- *Agree to and allow a home visit;*
- *Join the Muttville Meet-up community to stay up-to-date on adoption and other outreach event(www.meetup.com/muttville)*

Responsibilities of a Foster

Being a foster parent is more than just caring for a homeless dog. You are helping this dog get ready for her forever home. Our dogs often come from difficult situations; they may have been dumped at a shelter, or their human may have passed away. These are stressful circumstances which may impact their behavior. As foster parents, we are helping these dogs learn how to adjust and this may include

providing some training. There is no such thing as a “perfect” dog, so be prepared to put some work into your foster dog.

In order to do this we ask that foster homes follow these guidelines:

- *Provide a safe and loving home to a senior dog;*
- *Provide training to help your foster dog become more adoptable;*
- *Foster dogs must be on leash at all times when outdoors unless in your own secured, fenced yard;*
- *Ensure your foster dog attends at least 2 adoption/outreach events monthly;*
- *Any behavioral issues that you believe may hinder adoption must be reported to your Foster Mentor, the Executive Director, the Shelter Manager, or the Business Manager immediately;*
- *Get your foster dog to veterinary appointments*
 - *Foster dogs must be seen by Muttville-approved veterinarians*
 - *Mentors need to be informed*
 - *Foster dogs must be seen by Muttville-approved veterinarians;*
- *Foster parents must respond within 24 hours to communication from Muttville, and specifically when dealing with potential adopters always cc your mentor; Be in contact with your foster mentor on any updates, appointments or milestones;*
- *Be Your Foster Dog’s Advocate, Help Her Get Adopted;*
- *Provide text, photos, and/or videos to complement your foster dog’s online profile;*
 - *This may require attending an official Muttville photo event.*
- *Have your dog wear an “Adopt Me” vest when out of the house*
- *Carry Muttville cards with you to share with the public.*

The adoption process will require the following:

- *Respond to adoption applications and provide feedback*
- *Be willing to find a time for you foster to meet new families (either at an event, at Muttville headquarters, or at the adoptive family’s home)*
- *Conduct a home check or arrange for one to be conducted, when appropriate, for your foster dog’s adoption*
- *Follow-up with the adoptive family and provide support during the first two weeks of the adoption.*

Your foster mentor is here to help you with this process. You know your foster dog better than anyone else, and we want you to be happy for them when they find their forever home. This is your opportunity to advocate for them.

Before Bringing a Foster Dog Home

Before you bring your foster dog home, it is important to prepare yourself, your family, and your home for a new canine companion. Fostering is a family affair, so please make sure that everyone in your household is ready, willing, and able to provide a loving home. Make sure everyone understands their responsibilities, and as well as the temporary nature of fostering. We have foster mentors and other foster families who are available to answer questions or provide advice about these discussions.

Fostering is a big commitment. While having a dog in your home is a lot of fun, they also take a lot of time. Dogs need to be fed twice per day, and require daily exercise. If you don't have access to a backyard, your foster dog will need to be walked at least 3 times per day. It is important to be realistic about what you are able to provide a foster dog.

Bringing Your Foster Dog Home

Planning where you will keep your dog before you bring her home will make the entire process easier for everyone. When you first bring a foster dog home, you'll want to confine her to a single room, such as a kitchen or family room. This room should not be an isolated room, but a room where you spend a large part of your day or evening, as dogs are pack animals and want to be with you – senior dogs should not be kept outside on their own. This room is especially important when you are at work or away from the house, as it will be a new environment in which the dog needs time to become familiar and comfortable.

It is important to establish a regular routine quickly so that your foster dog can begin to adjust to your household. During this period, please keep stimulation to a minimum. We recommend avoiding lots of visitors, your neighbors' dog(s), or parties during the first few days while the dog is acclimating. Give your foster dog some time to get used to you before you introduce additional new situations and potentially overstimulate the dog.

Remember that every dog goes through a transition period when it moves into a new home. Every dog is different, so some may acclimate in a day, while others may take a week or more. Your new foster dog has to learn your routine and your expectations of her. During this transition period, accidents do happen. But with patience, you will find that once your foster starts to become comfortable in your home, she will blossom and you may see a whole new personality emerge. It is incredibly satisfying!

If you have other animals in your home, it is important to introduce your new foster dog slowly. For the health and safety of both your animal(s) and the foster dog, please be sure your animals are current on their vaccinations.

Your Foster Dog and Children

As a general rule, children under 16 year of age should not be left alone and unsupervised with a foster dog. 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 she is eating, chewing, and sleeping. Never allow a child to remove a toy or any other "prized" possession from a dog. Remember that senior dogs may be more fragile than younger dogs and children need to be gentle at all times.

Introducing your foster dog to your dog(s)

Introducing your foster dog to your dog(s) should be done gradually and calmly. It is best to do introductions outside of your home, just in case your dog becomes territorial inside the home.

If possible, introductions should be done with 2 handlers. One person should have your dog on a leash, and the other should have the foster dog on a leash. Walk them next to each other, side by side, allowing them to sniff each other. Make sure you do not pull the leashes tight; tension in the leashes may be picked up by the dogs and cause them to become tense. Be prepared to pull them apart if there are any signs of aggression. Be sure you are giving your dog lots of love and praise during the introduction. You will want to supervise the dogs together before leaving them alone to make sure they get along well. Remember, this is a new situation for both dogs and can be very stressful.

It is important to take measures to prevent resource guarding, as this can escalate quickly. Before you bring the dogs inside, be sure there are not any chews or toys around the house. You should also feed your dog and your foster dog separately and supervise them, especially in the beginning. These small steps can help set your foster dog up for success.

Introducing your foster dog to your cat(s)

Cats must also be introduced to your foster slowly. Begin by keeping your cat and foster dog in different rooms. Allow the dog to become comfortable in her own room. Once the dog is comfortable, let her explore the rest of the house for short periods while the cat is in another room. This will allow them to pick up each other's scent. After a few days, allow the two to meet but keep the dog on a leash. During the first few meetings, the cat and dog will probably not interact face to face. A dog is a predatory animal. It is a natural instinct for a dog to want to chase a cat. Assume the dog will chase the cat so that you are prepared. Never allow the dog to intimidate the cat by barking or chasing.

Each time the dog acts inappropriately (e.g., barks), let her know these behaviors are unacceptable; try using a quick sharp tone, like "uh uh" to get her attention and redirect her energy. On the other hand, if the cat bops the dog on the nose as a warning, that's a good sign and should not be discouraged. When they set up boundaries between themselves, they are beginning to establish a working relationship. Let them interact for about 30 minutes, keeping your foster dog on leash in case you have to restrain her. Then return the cat back to its safe haven and give the dog lots of praise and a treat.

Increase the amount of time they are together each session. It is important to be patient and encouraging in their interactions. If you are relaxed, they will be more at ease. Always praise friendly behavior profusely. Don't rush the introduction or force them to interact more than either is willing. Pressing them to accept each other will only slow down the adjustment process. You should use your best judgment as to when they can interact with the dog off-leash.

Observe their interactions carefully. A dog that is showing overt aggression, such as snarling, growling, or baring teeth, will probably never accept a cat. If there is any aggression, the foster dog is probably not

the right fit for your home and you should contact your Foster Mentor immediately. Until the dog can be re-homed, the cat and dog should be kept in rooms safely apart from one another.

Transporting your foster dog

The safest way to transport your foster dog is in a secure crate in the back of an SUV or station wagon. The crate should be secured so that it does not tip over or move around. Alternatively, a grill can be placed between the back of the vehicle and the back seat. Of course, not everyone has an SUV or a station wagon. It is important to secure the dog with a seatbelt in case of an accident, and to prevent the dog from obstructing your view or distracting you.

We recommend having towels available whenever you transport your foster dog. Like humans, dogs can get carsick, and accidents have been known to happen in cars.

You might need a few treats to encourage a dog to jump into a car. If you can get a dog to put her front paws up, then you can lift her back end by supporting her hind quarters. If you need to completely lift your foster dog, the best way is by putting one arm behind her hind legs and one arm in front of her front legs – essentially a scoop. Another way is to have one arm just behind her front legs, and one hand behind her hind legs. This way the dog’s weight is being supported in the same general area of its legs. Keep in mind, many dogs do not really like to be lifted. Muttville can also provide you with a ramp to help your foster get in and out of your vehicle.

Muttville has a transport network that can help with transportation if you are not able to do it. Contact your Foster Mentor to arrange transport well in advance, if necessary.

The Adoption Process

Promoting your foster dog

The goal of the foster program is to get your foster dog adopted. Muttville relies heavily on its foster families to help promote their foster dogs. You should get in the habit of walking your foster dog while wearing an “adopt-me” vest. This is a great way to advertise your dog, and invites passers-by to talk with you. It is also a good idea to have Muttville business cards readily available, so you can hand them out when people ask you about your foster dog.

Muttville also relies on foster families for help with online profiles. You know your foster dog better than anyone else; help us tell the world what makes your foster dog so special! When she does something extremely cute, send a write-up to your Foster Mentor so we can add it to her profile. Better yet, take some pictures or video of your foster dog.

Muttville also has professional photographers who volunteer to take photos of our adoptable dog. If your foster needs a better photo, contact your Foster Mentor to arrange to visit the photographer. A good photo on the online profile, can make a very big difference in getting your foster adopted.

Other things you can do to promote your dog include using social media and flyers. Do you use Facebook? Post your foster dog's profile for all of your friends to see. One friend may tell another friend and who knows... Also, feel free to post flyers at your workplace, at your child's school, at the local coffee shop, or wherever might be appropriate. Make sure you consult with your Foster Mentor if you decide to develop your own materials.

When an Application Comes In

As the foster parent, you play a big part in finding your foster dog's forever home. Adoption applications are received by headquarters and reviewed by staff. Once approved, the application is forwarded to the foster parent and their Foster Mentor.

You are then responsible for following up with the potential adopter as soon as possible, within 24 hours of receiving the application (do not forget to include your Foster Mentor). Remember, adopters may be looking for dogs at many rescues. We want to make sure they adopt from us, so we want to contact them immediately, so that we do not lose them!

Your initial contact with the potential adopter is an opportunity for you to screen them more thoroughly, and for you to tell them about your foster dog. If there are any issues with the application, you will be informed and may be asked to follow-up, your Foster Mentor can help you with this process. You will want to ask the potential adopters questions to ensure that they can provide a safe and loving home to a Muttville dog. As the foster parent, you know your foster dog better than anyone, and will be best able to determine if the potential adopter is a good fit for your foster dog. If you are satisfied that this adopter can provide a safe and loving home, the next step is to schedule a meet-and-greet. This can occur at your convenience. You may choose to meet the potential adopter at your home, in their home, at a neutral place such as a park, or you can meet at Muttville headquarters.

After the meet-and-greet, you will provide a recommendation on this adoption to Muttville staff or your Foster Mentor. If your foster is not a good fit for the adopter, speak to your mentor about the issues, maybe another Muttville dog would be better for them. In general, your foster's adoption can be a difficult thing, as it can be very emotional. As a foster parent, we grow very connected to our foster dogs, and it is hard to let go. Be thoughtful about the standards you are setting for the potential adoptive home. Sometimes the best homes are not what we expect. If there are any red flags, you can recommend to headquarters that a home visit be done. Again, you would be the most appropriate person to conduct the home visit, but if you are not able to, headquarters can assist in arranging this visit if necessary.

Finalizing an Adoption

When it is finally time to hand over your foster dog, please be emotionally prepared. Even if you feel sad, the new parents are excited and happy about finding a new companion. Please remember to rejoice and

celebrate that you have helped an old dog find a new beginning – you were instrumental in saving a life. And every time one of our dogs is adopted, one more dog can come into our program and another life can be saved.

When you transfer the dog to the adoptive family, you'll need to collect the adoption fee and a signed adoption agreement. If the adopter is over 62 years old, the adoption would be part of our Seniors-for-Seniors program. In this case, the fee will be waived, but we do invite the adopter to make any donation they can. Be sure to bring two copies of the adoption agreement when you meet the adopter; one for them to keep and one for Muttville.

The payment and signed adoption agreement need to be submitted to Muttville. If the adopter does not owe a fee or pays online (via Paypal), the signed adoption agreement can be scanned and emailed to Muttville and your Foster Mentor. If you cannot bring the payment and signed agreement to Muttville Headquarters or an upcoming event, they can be mailed to: P.O. Box 410207, San Francisco, CA 94141.

Muttville offers a two-week trial period to adopters, which starts when the adoption agreement and payment are received. It is important to keep in touch with the adoptive family during this time to provide support and assist with any issues that arise. Check in after 24-48 hours to see how the dog is adapting to the new home, the family may have questions about the dog's habits or routines, do not be afraid to share your experience of having the dog transition and adapt to your home life. At the end of the two week period, you are responsible for connecting with the adoptive family and confirming that the adoption is final. If the adoptive family changes their mind, inform headquarters and your Mentor so that arrangements can be made to retrieve the dog and return the adoption fee. Many foster families choose to not take in another foster dog until the adoption is finalized, just in case the dog comes back. If you already have new foster dog, you may not be able to take your previous foster dog back into your home.

Remember that throughout this process your Foster Mentor is available to help. Your Mentor will be heavily involved during your first adoption, and can accompany you on the meet-and-greet and/or during the transfer to the adoptive home if schedules permit. You are not alone in this process!

Screening Questions

Foster parents often say their goal is to find a home even better than their own! Your input is critical so it is important for you to be prepared to speak with the applicant. Remember, we aren't trying to "grill" anyone – this isn't a witch hunt. But, it is our responsibility to the foster dog to ensure she goes to a safe and loving home. To this end we offer the following guidance:

- *This should be a two-way dialogue, rather than just a one-sided question and answer session. Instead of just answering a question, use this as an opportunity to learn more about the potential adopter and find out if they are a good match. For example, if they ask you how much exercise does she get, turn this around to "he gets a fair amount of exercise, how do you plan on exercising him?" and probe for specifics.*

- *Don't over-sell or under-sell your foster dog. This should be an open and honest discussion about what the potential adopter is looking for and how this matches the needs of your foster dog.*
- *Be objective about personality traits. The best way to approach this is to ask about what they are looking for in personality before you talk about what type of personality your foster dog has. This way you can find out if they really are a good match, or if they are going on appearances alone.*
- *Find out how they would approach training and/or behavior problems. Again, don't tell them what you are doing, but find out how they would handle this. Better yet, find out how they handled this with previous dogs. This is where the hypothetical questioning can come in handy. For example, you can ask, "What would you do if you came home to find out she just chewed your brand new \$200 shoes?"*
- *Find out what the family's expectations of a "rescue" dog are. Inquire about how are they going about finding a dog? Is this a thoughtful process?*
- *On a final note, just because the potential adopter might approach something differently than you, this does not mean they would not be a great home. That said, trust your instincts. If you don't feel good about the potential adopters, let your Mentor and headquarters know.*

Deciding to Adopt Your Foster Dog

Some families will establish a deep connection with their foster dog. Sometimes this happens right away, and sometimes it happens over time. If at any point you are considering making your foster dog a permanent member of your family, contact your Mentor and Muttville prior to introducing your foster to another potential family.

Foster homes are still responsible for completing an adoption agreement and paying the adoption fee if they chose to adopt. Your Mentor can help you through this process.

Basic Foster Dog Care

Feeding Your Foster

The food you feed your foster dog is important because, as the saying goes, "you are what you eat," and this applies to dogs as well as humans. Muttville can provide dog food if you need it. However, many foster families choose to provide their own food. If you decide to provide food, please use only high quality dog food and does not contain artificial preservatives or colors, for more information, see the list below

Senior dogs tend to do better with easy-to-digest, highly palatable food. For some senior dogs, wet food may be required either due to physical limitations as kibble can be harder for them to digest, causing dehydration and weight gain. Canned foods, healthy frozen foods, and raw foods are all good options for your dog. Some older dogs like their food on the "soupy" side, this can be done by adding water, unsalted beef or chicken broth to their food. Be sure to check labels if you do decide to add broth, as many broths contain onions which can be toxic for dogs.

The Whole Dog Journal suggests looking for specific words and ingredients on food labels:

- *“Chicken” is better than “poultry”*
- *“Chicken meal” is better than “chicken by-products” which is better than “chicken digest” which is better than “animal digest” (which is the worst!)*
- *Good sources of protein (whole meats or single source meat meal, like “chicken meal” rather than “poultry meal”)*
- *Whole meat source as one of the first two ingredients (chicken or chicken meal)*
- *Whole, unprocessed grains, vegetables and other foods (unprocessed food has a greater chance of having its nutrients and enzymes intact)*

Food should NOT contain:

- *Meat by-products*
- *Fat or protein named generically (e.g., animal, poultry fat, meat meal), it should instead read “beef” or “chicken fat” or “lamb meal”*
- *Food fragments (brewer’s rice, corn gluten, etc.)*
- *Artificial preservatives (BHA, BHT, ethoxyquin)*
- *Artificial colors*
- *Sweeteners*
- *Propylene glycol*
- *Corn*

Dogs can have sensitive stomachs, and may react to a change in diet with diarrhea and/or vomiting. If this happens, feed your foster dog a bland diet. This should be cooked rice mixed with either boiled chicken or cottage cheese (two cups rice to one cup protein) for a day or two. Once the stomach distress is gone, you can gradually re-introduce the dog food.

Feed your foster dog several small meals each day rather than one large meal. Dogs do best with consistency. Create a consistent schedule for feeding your foster dog. Feed at the same times every day. Create a separate space for your foster dog to eat so they will feel comfortable.

The quantity of food you provide your foster dog will vary depending on weight, age and activity level. Please refer to the suggested amounts on the dog food package you are feeding your foster dog as the amounts may change depending on the brand. Remember to reduce this amount to compensate for any treats, including chews. Obesity is an epidemic for pets in the US, and can lead to health problems, exacerbate existing health issues, and reduce overall quality of life. Please do not over feed your foster dog, if you have any questions about how much food your foster needs, consult with your Foster Mentor. And always provide plenty of fresh water!

Supplements

Just like humans, many of our senior dogs have issues that require pills or supplements. If your foster dog requires any pills or supplements, please provide them as labeled. Muttville can provide treats designed for giving your foster dog pills and advice, as needed. Muttville also has many supplements and medications already in stock, so please check with Muttville staff and your Foster Mentor prior

to purchasing new medications and supplements. Please do not give your dog any medications not provided by Muttville staff or approved veterinarians without first checking in with your Foster Mentor.

Exercise

Exercise is essential for all dogs, senior or otherwise. An overweight and sedentary dog will develop health problems. Muttville recommends walking your foster dog twice daily so she stays in great shape. It will benefit your dog's lungs, heart, digestion, and joints to have daily, consistent exercise, and you! Every dog is different in the way she ages and the exercise she can handle. Watch your foster dog for over exertion. Heavy panting without recovery, drooping head and tail or coughing can be signs of over exertion.

Some older dogs love going outdoors even though they can no longer walk as well as they once did. We use doggie strollers for our older but curious dogs. Getting them out is important for their mental and emotional health as well as their physical well-being.

Leash Walking

For many dogs, both small and large, Muttville recommends walking the dog on a harness and not just using the collar. Senior dogs may have sensitive necks which will be irritated by being pulled on by a collar and leash. Harnesses come in many different styles to address different leash behaviors by the dog. Muttville can help you find the appropriate harness for your dog if it is needed.

Muttville recommends using the "six foot rule" when walking your foster dog. This means leaving at least six feet between your foster dog and any other dog you meet. This keeps handlers and dogs safe from possible conflicts and also reduces the transmission of diseases. This rule can be challenging, as many dog parents encourage their dogs to greet new dogs while walking. However, nose-to-nose greetings can be stressful for many dogs, as dogs typically greet each other from an angle. One simple way to avoid an oncoming dog is to just cross the street, or start to walk in a wide semicircle around the oncoming dog. Most people recognize that this is a sign that you don't want your dogs to meet. If this is not possible, you can announce to the oncoming walking that you are walking a foster dog and you would prefer that the dogs do not greet each other. Sometimes it is impossible to avoid another dog, so just stay calm, walk between your foster dog and the oncoming dog, and move past quickly. Muttville recommends against using retractable leashes when walking your foster dog. It is impossible to have control with a retractable leash, and they can easily tangle or break. We can provide a leash if you need one.

Behavior and Training

Most potential adopters are looking for dogs with basic manners. Some of our senior dogs were previously in loving homes and have some basic house manners. However, some dogs need some remedial training, or have never had any obedience training. This is where the foster family is so important. Dogs learn best with positive reinforcement, not punishment. Reward good behavior with

treats and praise. In addition, it is important to establish leadership with your foster dog. You are the leader and make the rules. You will need to create an environment for your foster that sets a calm, firm tone and says, "Everything's OK, because I'm in control."

Basic Training Tips:

- Short, five minute training sessions several times per day are more effective than longer periods of training all at once. Dogs will tire out, both physically and mentally, if you try to do too much.
- A positive reward can be anything your foster dog really responds to. This could be treats, special toys, praise, affection or a game she really loves. Each dog is different. It is important to find the treat that your foster dog responds to best, as this will be the best motivator.
- Be consistent with your terminology. If you are teaching your foster dog to sit, always use the same command. If you say "sit," "please have a seat," "sit down," etc., you will confuse the dog and she won't know how to respond.
- Use a sound like "uh uh" or "tsk tsk" instead of saying "no." The canine mother would use this type of sound to correct her pup. Only use "no" for very serious matters. If it is overused, the dog will no longer respond.
- What might hardly get one dog's attention might be overwhelming and terrifying to another. Be sensitive to each dog's temperament and find the best way to get their attention in order to redirect them away from undesirable behaviors without seeming frightening or threatening.
- Be patient and calm. Dogs respond to your tone of voice and facial expressions as well as your emotions. Dogs were once predators and can read your body language quickly.
- Never ever lose your temper with a dog or strike her. We want to create and support a harmonious canine/human relationship.

If your foster dog exhibits behavioral issues, additional training may be warranted. Muttville has relationships with several trainers who are available to consult with our foster families. Let your Foster Mentor know if you need to consult with a professional trainer.

Socialization

After your foster dog has settled in and has acclimated to her new home, it is time to get her out into the world. The more you can do this, the better socialized she will be. Get her used to different people and different environments. Start slowly and don't over stimulate as many foster dogs may not have had exposure to what seems like a "normal" environment. When you are out and about, you should remain calm as this will help your foster dog key off of your behavior. Remember to always be aware of your surroundings. Always keep a good handle on your leash and be extremely careful around busy streets, or in parks where there are squirrels or birds or other distractions. If your dog reacts to someone or something on your walk, interrupt the behavior by crossing the street or walk in a different direction.

Housetraining

Be patient with your foster dog. Even housetrained dogs make mistakes, especially when you first bring your foster dog home and she is trying to learn your routine. Smells from other animals may prompt some dogs to “mark” out their territory. Previous accidents should be cleaned with an odor neutralizer, as these odors may continue to encourage accidents.

If you catch your foster dog having an accident inside, immediately re-direct her with a calm “uh uh” and escort her outside where she can finish. Never put the dog’s face in her mess or yell at her; she will not understand you and you will only be teaching her to fear you.

Housetraining takes patience and consistency. If your foster dog was never housetrained, you will need to take her out about every 2 hours. Take your foster dog outside when she wakes up, after she eats or drinks, and after play. Stay outside with her about 5 minutes. If she eliminates, reward her with treats, praise, or a favorite game or toy. If she does not go in 5 minutes, take her back inside and try again in 15-20 minutes, and repeat until she eliminates. Every time she eliminates, make sure you reward her!

You will need to supervise your foster dog closely. If she starts to sniff the floor, or even starts to squat, interrupt with a calm “uh uh” and immediately take her outside. Praise her when she finishes.

Crate training

Crates provide safe havens and dens for some dogs. They calm dogs and can help prevent destructive chewing, barking, and housetraining mistakes. Do not expect your foster dog to be able to stay in a crate for 8-10 hours at a time. If you do not know your foster dog’s past experience with a crate, it may take her time to learn to hold it and you will have to start slowly. Senior dogs may not be able to hold it for very long periods of time, so frequent trips outside are important.

Crates should never be used as a means of punishment for your foster dog. If used for punishing, the dog will learn to avoid going in the crate. Crates should be thought of as dog play rooms – just like child play rooms, with games and toys. It should be a place dogs like to be and feel safe and secure when they are there.

Steps for introducing the crate:

- 1. 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 she is tired and sleepy. Keep all chew toys in the crate so that she can go in and out as she 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 just inside the door so she doesn’t have to go all the way inside the crate.*
- 2. If your foster still refuses to go near the crate, put the smelliest, tastiest wet food in the crate and shut the door. Let the dog hang outside the crate for a while, smelling the food inside. Soon she should beg you to let her in!*
- 3. Now that she is familiar with and willing to go near the crate, throw some of her favorite treats in the crate. Let 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 her go in and get them. This time, when she goes in, shut the door and give her another treat through the door. Then let her out and ignore her for 3 minutes. Then, put some more treats in the crate, let her go in, shut the door and feed her several treats through the door, let her out and ignore her for 5 minutes.

4. Next time, use a Kong filled with treats so that it is time-consuming to get the food out of the ball. Place the Kong in the crate, allow her to go inside, shut the door, and talk to her in a calm voice. If she starts to whine or cry, do not talk to her or she will see it as a reward for this behavior. She must be quiet for a few minutes before you let her out.
5. Gradually increase the time in the crate until she can spend several hours there. We recommend leaving a radio (soothing music or talk radio) or TV (mellow stations such as educational, art, or food) on while she is in the crate and alone in the house. Rotate toys from day to day so she doesn't become bored with them. She will instinctively not go to the bathroom where she sleeps/lives. Put a blanket in her crate to endorse the fact that this is her cozy home.

Be wary of dog crates during hot weather. Some dogs may want to lie on the cool floor instead of a crate. And make sure the crate is not in direct sun. Be sure exercise is given before and after any long periods in the crate. Once your foster dog is used to and using the crate, keep toys inside the crate at all times.

Attention and playtime

Lots of human contact is important. Attention and playtime is a reward for your foster dog. Be sure to give her several minutes of playtime periodically throughout the day.

Muttville recommends against playing tug of war or wresting with your foster dog. If you have a shy or fearful foster dog, do not throw toys toward the dog, because she may think you are throwing something at her and become more fearful. After you have finished playing with a toy, put it away. This reinforces that you control the toy and the playtime. When giving the dog a toy or treat, have her sit before giving it to her. That way she has to work to get the toy or treat, making it a reward.

Health and wellness

Dogs, like humans, get sick from time to time. Be on the lookout for any 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. Keep your Foster Mentor informed of any health issues that might arise with your foster dog.

If your foster dog has any of the following symptoms, you should monitor closely:

- Vomiting and/or diarrhea with no other symptoms; the dog is active and is eating and drinking normally.
- Coughing and sneezing with no other symptoms.
- Slightly elevated or low temperature with no other symptoms.

A vet visit is not necessary right away, but if the above symptoms continue or worsen, let your Foster Mentor know and follow-up with the vet.

If your foster dog shows any of the following signs or symptoms, a trip to the vet is in order; let your Foster Mentor know that your foster needs to see a vet:

- *continuous diarrhea or diarrhea with blood*
- *black, tarry stool*
- *continuous vomiting or vomiting blood*
- *difficulty breathing*
- *bluish or white gums*
- *heavy bleeding that cannot be stopped (from any part of the body)*
- *rapid weight loss*
- *loss of appetite greater than one day*
- *severe lethargy or depression*
- *collapsing or trouble standing or appears uncoordinated*
- *unconsciousness*
- *sudden inability to bear weight on one or more limbs*
- *frequent urination or inability to urinate or move bowels*
- *bloated or distended abdomen*
- *ingested toxins or poisoning*
- *attacked by another animal*
- *confusion*
- *major trauma such as hit by a car or falling from a building*
- *sudden blindness or deafness*
- *severe itching and/or hair loss*

Remember, these lists are not all-inclusive. If your foster dog doesn't seem to be him/herself, it may be time to see the vet.

What are normal vital signs for a dog?

Temperature: 100.5 – 102.5 °F

Heart rate (dogs under 30 lbs): 120 – 160 beats per minute (bpm)

Heart rate (dogs over 30 lbs): 60 – 120 bpm

Respiratory rate: 25 breaths per min

Gum color: pink

Diarrhea

Diarrhea can be caused by several factors, including stress, change in diet, poor diet, eating garbage, parasites, or viruses. If your foster dog has diarrhea and has no other symptoms, feed her a bland diet (2 cups rice to 1 cup protein such as cottage cheese or chicken). If the diarrhea persists, she will need to see the vet.

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 may be dehydrated and need fluids.

Kennel cough

Kennel cough is the equivalent of a human cold. Like a cold, it is easily transmitted between dogs in a shelter. Kennel cough develops when a dog is stressed or when the immune system is compromised. Therefore, senior dogs may be at greater risk if their immune system is weakened.

Symptoms of kennel cough include a dry, hacking cough, which may be accompanied by nasal and/or eye discharge. Unfortunately, symptoms of kennel cough may not develop for several days, after a dog is already placed in a foster home. Kennel cough is transmitted thru bodily fluids, such as saliva and dog hair, but is not airborne.

Because kennel cough is highly contagious, infected dog should not be around other dogs until they are over their cough. Muttville recommends that if you have a dog of your own, you vaccinate your dog against kennel cough with the Bordatella nasal vaccination. If you have a dog and your foster dog develops kennel cough, you may consider treating your own dog prophylactically if she is not already vaccinated, or keep them separated.

Dogs with kennel cough typically do not lose their appetite or show a decrease in energy. However, be cautious with exercise since strenuous activity can bring on coughing episodes.

Like the common cold, kennel cough often resolves once the dog has a warm, quiet and soothing place to sleep, drinks lots of water, eats healthy food, and receives lots of TLC. It typically resolves in 3-6 weeks. In senior dogs, it may take longer to resolve, and there is an increased risk of kennel cough turning into pneumonia, so it is important to monitor a dog with kennel cough closely. Contact your Foster Mentor immediately if symptoms appear to be worsening.

Parasites

Parasites can cause diarrhea, stomach bloating, or vomiting. Parasites include tapeworms, round worms, hookworms, and mange.

- *Tapeworms will look like pieces of rice coming out of your foster dog's anus or in his stool.*
- *Round 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.*

If you suspect that your foster dog has parasites; follow-up with your Foster Mentor and take her to the vet. Once diagnosed, parasites are easily medicated and treated.

Incontinence

Urinary incontinence in dogs is simply a loss of the dog's ability to control her bladder. Some of the causes of incontinence can be cured; some just have to be managed. In older dogs, kidney failure, hormone imbalance, and urinary tract infections are the main reasons for incontinence. If your foster dog begins to drink or urinate more frequently, she may need to see the vet. Incontinence is almost never a behavior issue. You can generally tell if it is incontinence if the dog pees in her sleep or in beds, and do not realized that she is peeing.

In the meantime, Belly Bands, which wrap around your male foster dog's belly are a safe way to keep him from marking or having an accident in your home. Britches for females work the same way. You can read more about them at <http://www.kennelkomforts.net/>. Muttville can provide both if they are needed.

Poisons

There are many household products that are toxic to dogs. A *partial* list of poisons is below:

- Medications for people, including Ibuprofen.
- Recreational drugs; marijuana etc.
- Flea and tick products. Problems can occur if dogs accidentally ingest these products or if small dogs receive excessive amounts.
- People food such as chocolate, coffee, alcohol, macadamia nuts, grapes, raisins, onions.
- Rat and mouse poison.
- Household plants including azaleas and rhododendrons, tulips and daffodils, sago palms.
- Chemical hazards, antifreeze, paint thinner, and chemicals for pools.
- Household cleaners.
- Heavy metals.
- Fertilizer.
- Wild mushrooms.

If you have any questions about something your foster dog has ingested, call the Poison Control Hotline at 1-800-876-4766 and be sure to keep your Foster Mentor informed.

Your Foster Mentor

Remember you have a Mentor assigned to you, who is there to help. Your Mentor is your one-stop-shop for all things foster-related. Please do not hesitate to call on your Mentor with questions, concerns, or suggestions. Your Foster Mentor will be in touch with you frequently to get updates on the status of your foster dog. In addition, please reach out to your Foster Mentor for the following:

- For help with arranging transport
- To provide updates to your foster dog's online profile
- If your foster dog shows signs of illness
- If your foster dog has behavioral problems
- If you need supplies or referrals
- For help with an adoption application
- To arrange a home visit
- If you are temporarily unavailable to foster for any reason

Whenever you are sending an email about your foster dog, whether to Muttville staff or a potential adopter, you should also include your Foster Mentor.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1: How long are dogs in foster homes?

A1: Each foster dog is different. We have known foster dogs to be in a home for only a day, and there are also dogs that have been in homes 6-9 months. The more you promote your dog and work with her to resolve any issues she might have, the quicker she will be adopted!

Q2: Can I adopt my foster dog?

A2: Yes! Some foster families are looking for a foster-to-adopt arrangement, where their ultimate goal is to adopt, but they want to “try out” the dog first by fostering. Often foster families fall in love with their foster dog and decide they want to keep her. We lovingly call these “failed fosters”, and this happens all too frequently!

Q3: What if I need to go out of town?

A3: If you are planning a trip, you’ll work with your Foster Mentor to find someone in our foster network to temporarily foster while you are away. Please inform your foster mentor at least two weeks in advance; the more notice you are able to give us the better!

Q4: If I have my own animals, can I foster dogs?

A4: Yes! However, keep in mind that it is important to introduce your animals to your foster dog slowly and appropriately. Please see the specific sections above for more information on introducing your foster to other dogs and/or cats.

Q5: What supplies do I need to foster?

A5: Muttville can provide any supplies that you need, including dog beds, food and water bowls, leashes, and collars. It is also a good idea to have Muttville contact information (business cards, flyers, etc.) handy for when you are speaking with people about your foster dog. You need to provide space, basic training, exercise and love!

Q6: Do I need to have prior medical knowledge or dog experience to foster a dog?

A6: No. Of course any previous experience will be of help, but it isn’t required. Keep in mind that you may be asked to dispense medicine to your foster dog so you will have to be comfortable following a veterinarian’s instructions.

Q7: Can I take my foster dog to an off-leash dog park for exercise and socialization?

A7: No. Foster dogs must be on-leash whenever they are outside. The only exception is when they are in your backyard. While off-leash dog parks can be fun for some dogs, there are far too many unknowns for them to be a safe and healthy experience for a foster dog. Diseases are easily transmitted and the

temperaments of visiting dogs are unknown, thus creating a huge liability to Muttville. In addition, please do not take a leashed dog to an off-leash dog park. This can create barrier frustration and aggression in dogs.

FOSTER MENTOR CONTACT SHEET

Foster Mentor: _____

E-Mail Address: _____

Phone Number: _____