

Foster Guidebook

PEPPERTREE RESCUE, INC.

Everything you need to know about fostering a dog!

FOSTER GUIDEBOOK

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Section 1: Introduction

Thank you so much for fostering and being willing to open your heart and home to our wonderful dogs. By taking a dog into your home, you are saving their life, and often the life of another dog because you have made space for them at the shelter. We don't have a facility to house animals, so we rely on fosters like you to allow us to continue saving dogs.

Our dog foster program is designed to help dogs get a second chance at finding a home, a chance that they may not have received at a shelter. Many of the dogs need extra care and attention.

Foster homes are asked to provide care for the dogs, as well as transportation to and from veterinary appointments as needed, and to and from adoption events. Care for foster dogs includes feeding according to their size and needs, exercise according to their energy levels, as well as play time and training.

Insurance and fostering: Insurance companies typically require that you let them know if you have a dog, and this can apply to fostering as well. It is important to check with your home or renter's insurance to make sure you are covered for a dog, and that they do not have any restrictions. Liability often falls to the property owner so you will want to make sure you are covered, and if you are renting that the property owner is also covered.

Emergency information

In case of emergency, please contact the foster coordinator immediately. If your call goes to voicemail, call the hotline at (518) 435-7425 and/or any other volunteers you are able to reach.

If you believe that your foster dog may sustain permanent physical injury or death if they are not seen immediately by a veterinarian, please proceed to the nearest emergency clinic and call us either on the way or when you get there.

Not sure if it's an emergency? Please refer to the graphic on the next page!

LEVELS OF EMERGENCY FOR FOSTERS

Please review the information below to determine what type of emergency you have and what to do.



RED: IMMEDIATE PHONE CALL

- ✓ Lost dog
- ✓ Dog bite/broken skin
- ✓ Bleeding profusely
- ✓ Hit by car or otherwise seriously injured
- ✓ Having trouble breathing
- ✓ Unresponsive
- ✓ Ingested a dangerous item
- ✓ Unable to stand or walk
- ✓ Seizure / disoriented / drunk walking / ataxia

* Please call your Foster Coordinator immediately. If it goes to voicemail, continue to call through the Staff phone tree list. In the event of a dog bite, please be sure to record all contact information of anyone involved.



YELLOW: SEND A TEXT | TO YOUR FOSTER COORDINATOR (during business hours)

- ✓ Vomiting for more than 24 hours or more than once / twice in a day
- ✓ Cut or puncture wound
- ✓ Lethargy and low appetite / not eating
- ✓ **Colored** nasal discharge
- ✓ **New** limping
- ✓ Incident of aggression

* You will receive a response from your Coordinator within 24 hours of sent text message.



GREEN: EMAIL IS FINE :)

- ✓ One episode of vomiting or diarrhea
- ✓ Reverse sneezing or regular sneezing
- ✓ Itchy skin
- ✓ Watery / goopy eye(s)
- ✓ Dirty / stinky ears
- ✓ Broken nail
- ✓ Hot spot / skin irritation
- ✓ Visible worm in poop
- ✓ Diarrhea for more than 24 hours
- ✓ Straining to urinate / blood in urine
- ✓ Chewed or removed sutures or staples
- ✓ Coughing

NO MATTER WHICH LEVEL OF EMERGENCY, IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT YOU BE AS DETAILED AS POSSIBLE IN YOUR DESCRIPTION SO THAT OUR STAFF CAN BEST ASSIST YOU.

ONE TAIL
AT A TIME
DOG
RESCUE



Frequently asked questions

Where do the dogs come from?

We accept dogs from two major sources: shelters, and owner surrenders. Owner surrenders come from local residents who are no longer able to keep their dogs for a variety of reasons. The dogs that we pull from shelters may come from local shelters, or shelters in the southeastern USA, where euthanasia rates are much higher due to high stray populations and limited access to spay/neuter. The vast majority of our dogs were someone's beloved pet and were relinquished due to personal or financial reasons, rather than behavioral.

What do foster families need to provide?

Foster families need to provide:

- A healthy and safe environment for their foster dogs
- Transportation to and from adoption events and veterinary appointments as needed
- Plenty of love, care, and cuddles!

How much time do I need to spend with a foster dog?

As much time as you can. With that said, the amount of time will vary depending on the dog. We require that our foster dogs be kept primarily indoors and provided with appropriate outdoor exercise. They can never be left in outdoor kennels, roaming loose, or tied out unattended.

How long will the dog need to be in foster care?

All dogs stay in foster care for a minimum of 1 week, and our average length of stay is about 30 days. There are many factors impacting a dog's length of stay, including their breed, size, age, behavior, and medical needs.

What if I want to adopt my foster dog?

If you want to adopt your foster dog, you must complete an adoption application, to be reviewed by the Board. If you decide to adopt your foster dog, please contact the foster coordinator right away. You will be required to sign an adoption contract and pay the full adoption fee, we do not provide a discount for fosters. Unless otherwise specified, the adoption fee is \$300, due in the form of cash or a check made payable to Peppertree Rescue.

Can my friend/neighbor/family member adopt my foster dog?

The short answer is yes, as long as their home is determined to be the best fit for your foster dog. Anyone interested in adopting must first complete an adoption application, to be reviewed and approved by the Board before a final decision on placement is made. All dogs are listed for adoption on our website when they are ready, and adoptions are not first come, first serve, but rather based on best fit.

Who will take care of my foster dog if I am travelling?

If you have travel plans while you are fostering a dog, you will need to contact the foster coordinator to find an alternate foster home or boarding facility to house your foster dog until you return. Please provide at least one week's notice to ensure that we can find alternative placement for your foster dog.

You cannot leave your foster dog with an unauthorized person or pet sitter. Pet sitters have not signed the release waivers for the foster program.

What if my foster dog bites someone?

If your foster dog bites someone and breaks skin, causing bleeding, you must report the bite to the foster coordinator as soon as possible, always within 24 hours. Please CALL.

If your foster dog "nips" (no broken skin), you need to report this behavior as soon as possible, however a phone call is not necessary, you may email or text the foster coordinator.

What if my foster dog becomes injured or ill?

Please refer to the "Levels of Emergency" graphic on page 4. Peppertree will cover the cost of necessary veterinary care, however in the absence of a medical emergency, all treatments and procedures must be preapproved. In a true emergency, please proceed to the nearest emergency clinic.

What if my foster dog is not working out?

You are not required to continue to foster a dog if you feel it's not working out. However, we may not have an immediate alternate foster home for the dog. As mentioned above, we don't have our own facility so we rely on foster homes and, if necessary, boarding partners. We will work on moving your foster dog out as soon as possible, but ask for your understanding and patience. Please email the foster coordinator if this situation arises. If it is an emergency (i.e. someone is in physical danger), please text or call.

Section 2: Preparing for your foster dog

When you take your foster dog home, he may be frightened or unsure about what's happening, so it's important not to overwhelm him. Prepare a special area for the foster dog to help ease his adjustment into a new home environment. It is better to confine the foster dog to a small room or area (such as a crate) at first, to let him adjust before giving him free rein of your home.

We require that all foster dogs be housed indoors. A garage, backyard, or outdoor run is not a suitable accommodation for a foster dog.

During the first week, minimize the people and pet introductions to your foster dog, so that he is only meeting people and animals who live in your home. Interactions with children and other pets should be closely supervised. Do not ever leave your foster dog unattended with young children or your personal pets.

Please plan to bring your foster dog immediately home after picking him up.

Supplies you'll need

- Two bowls: one for food, and one for water
- A supply of dry dog food, we will provide you with NutriSource Chicken and Rice. We request that you do not change the dog's diet unless there is a medical reason to do so.
- A collar, ID tag, and leash (these will be provided for you)
- A crate and/or baby gate (these can be provided on request)
- A soft place to sleep
- Treats and toys – make sure that the toys are durable and appropriately sized for your foster dog. Please DO NOT give your foster dog rawhide.

Dog-proofing your home

Many of our dogs are coming from shelter environments, and we do not know how they will behave in the home. Please survey the area in which you plan to initially house your foster dog, and either remove or secure anything that would be unsafe or undesirable for the dog to chew or pee on. Peppertree Rescue is not responsible for any damage to your home or possessions.

Section 3: Bringing home your foster dog

Taking care of a foster dog requires a commitment from you to ensure that they are happy and healthy. Thank you so much for opening your heart and home to them.

Choosing a foster dog

The foster plea goes out at least once a week. This email contains basic information on the dog – a picture, whether they are good with other pets and children (if known), and any other information that we have about them. We no longer list breed on the foster plea, unless we have undeniable evidence of the dog's heritage. This is because visual identification of breed is notoriously inaccurate.

If you see a dog that you are interested in on the foster plea, reply back and let the foster coordinator know. If you have any questions, we will do our best to get answers. It is usually not possible for fosters to meet the dog before committing to foster. You must be prepared to separate your foster dog from other pets if they do not get along.

Please note: Peppertree Rescue does not have a facility to house dogs. If you feel you can no longer foster a dog, we will need to find a new foster home. Please consider this before making a commitment to foster.

Getting your foster dog home

Unless other arrangements have been made, you are expected to pick up your foster dog and bring them to your home. If the dog has come from a transport, you will be meeting the transport at a predetermined time and location. Please plan to take your foster dog immediately home after picking them up. If you cannot do this, you should not be taking the dog that day/time. Please let us know so that we can make other arrangements.

We can sometimes find a short term foster if you are unable to meet a transport on the given day/time. However, you should always plan to travel to the Albany area to pick the dog up.

Please make sure that your foster dog is secured in your vehicle. This means using a crate, leash (tied to something), or doggy seatbelt. Dogs frequently jump out of cars and become lost when doors or windows open.

Decompression

All dogs take time to decompress after a stressful experience. This is why we require fosters to wait at least one week before dogs are listed for adoption. Some dogs take much longer than this, and some dogs take a bit less time. In general, the younger the dog, the more quickly they will decompress. During the decompression period, it is important that you limit your foster dog's experiences and interactions so as not to overwhelm him. The decompression period is when we receive the most phone calls from fosters reporting fearful behavior and aggression. Providing your foster dog with a safe area to escape from overwhelming experiences will help minimize his stress levels. Remember that dogs don't bite "out of the blue." For most dogs, biting is a last resort after multiple warnings have been ignored.

Dog introductions

If you have other dogs in the home, you will need to introduce them one at a time to your foster dog, ideally outside. The foster dog **MUST** have space to get away. If your foster dog appears stressed in any way, please stop the introduction and bring them to the safe area that you should have already prepared for them. Signs of stress include: panting (when it isn't hot), licking lips, rigid body, tail tucked under or pulled up straight and stiff, hackles raised (bristling), yawning, "whale eye" (can see the whites), head to the ground, avoiding interaction, hard stare, growling, snarling, showing teeth.

As mentioned above, you must be prepared to separate your foster dog from resident dogs. If your foster dog is showing aggression or fearful behavior towards other dogs in the home, please separate the dogs immediately and contact the foster coordinator for directions. Do not attempt to reintroduce the dogs on your own.

Cat introductions

The vast majority of our dogs are not "cat tested." Please assume that they are not trustworthy with cats, and be prepared to separate them. Slow introductions can be done by exchanging blankets or towels between the dog's area and the cats' area to help them get used to each other's smell. Do not allow your foster dog to chase or otherwise harass your cats. Likewise, do not allow your cats to harass the dog.

For more information about cat introductions, please visit:
[How to Introduce a Dog to a Cat](#)

Children and dogs

Interactions with children must always be supervised. Do not allow children to chase or harass the dog. Remind children to leave the dog alone when he is eating, chewing, or sleeping. Children's toys should be picked up, many dogs will eat them and they can cause an intestinal blockage. Do not allow young children to walk the foster dog.

For more information about children and dogs, please visit:
[Family Paws Parent Education](#)

Section 4: Daily care

Feeding

All foster dogs should be fed a diet of dry dog food, unless otherwise specified by a veterinarian. We use NutriSource Chicken and Rice, and ask that you use the same, unless

there is a medical reason to change foods. Feed your foster dog once or twice daily, following the recommendations on the bag. Fresh, clean water should always be available.

You may give whatever treats you like, however please do not give the dog rawhide. You may give antlers, bully sticks, etc. as long as you supervise the dog while chewing, and ensure that they are separated from other pets and children when eating/chewing.

Please note: DO NOT STICK YOUR HAND IN THE DOG'S FOOD BOWL. This has come up several times now, and we are not sure why. Not only is this very dangerous, but routinely disturbing a dog while they are eating is a surefire way to create a dog who resource guards. If you were enjoying ice cream or a delicious piece of cake, and someone took it out of your hands, would that make you respect them? Or would it make you upset? Your dog feels the same way.

Medication

If your foster dog is prescribed a medication, you **MUST** follow the directions on the label. Those directions are written by the manufacturer or the veterinarian. Using too much or too little medication can be extremely dangerous. Some medications, such as many steroids (prednisone), need to be tapered in dose, rather than stopped “cold turkey.” Again, this is why is it so important to follow the directions that you have been given by the veterinarian. Do not use any medication that is not in its original container or packaging.

It is important that you do not give your foster dog any medications, including over-the-counter products, without veterinary approval. Some medications interact with each other and cause adverse reactions. Additionally, if your foster dog has any kind of medical condition, they may be unable to take certain medications.

Daily routine

Routines are great. Dogs love routines. Regularly scheduled feedings, potty breaks, and walk times are comforting to a dog. It also makes it easier to monitor the dog's behavior for any changes.

Please keep in mind that you do not need to “wear the dog out” every day. They need to learn to settle with regular amounts of exercise. Some days you may not get to go for a 5 mile walk, and that's okay! Also, the more that you exercise a dog, the more fit they will become, and the more exercise they will need to tire. Thus, the dog needs to be able to settle down without being exhausted. A tired dog is a good dog, but the reverse is not necessarily true.

If you believe that your foster dog is injured or ill, please contact the foster coordinator.

Housetraining

It is unlikely that your foster dog will be perfectly housetrained when you bring him home. Following a routine will help establish expectations. Keep your foster dog confined to a crate or a baby gated area until you know that they are safe to leave out. Puppies can “hold it” for as many hours as they are old, up to 8 hours – so a 2 month old puppy needs to go out every 2 hours, at minimum, unless they are sleeping. No dog should ever be expected to “hold it” for more than 8-9 hours.

Crate training

Crate training, when done in a positive way, can be a very effective component of housetraining. A crate also provides a safe place for the dog when you cannot supervise them, or when they are stressed and need to get away from everyone. We recommend feeding your foster dog in a crate, and providing any high value treats or toys (Kong, bones, bully sticks, etc.) in a crate. Your foster dog should be secured in a crate or a baby gated area when you cannot supervise them, until you know that they are trustworthy.

Leash walking

The best way to encourage your foster dog to walk politely on leash is to reward the behavior that you want to see. Carry treats and reward the dog whenever they are next to you. If the dog begins pulling, turn around and walk the other way, so he learns that pulling will not allow him to get to his destination faster.

All foster dogs are sent home with a martingale collar. This ensures the dog cannot back out of the collar and escape. However, if your foster dog is pulling and you would like to try an Easy Walk harness, please let the foster coordinator know. This is a front clip harness that will discourage pulling, when used in conjunction with positive reinforcement training. Do not use a shock collar, prong collar, or choke chain on your foster dog. These aversive training tools often backfire, either causing or increasing behavior problems.

Grooming

You may bathe short-haired dogs as needed. Long-haired dogs should NOT be bathed unless you have prior experience with their coat type. Please DO NOT SHAVE your foster dog. This is usually unnecessary, and when it is necessary, it is best done by a professional groomer. Shaving the coat of a long-haired, double coated dog can cause permanent damage. If you are comfortable with it, you can trim the dog’s nails. Be aware that trimming the nails too short can cause pain and bleeding. If you are uncomfortable with grooming and feel that it needs to be done (dog is smelly, nails are too long, coat is matted, etc.), please let the foster coordinator know. Peppertree will reimburse you for grooming costs as long as the appointment is pre-approved.

Mental stimulation and exercise

Depending on your foster dog's age and energy level, he should get at least two 30-minute play sessions or walks with you per day. (Please note that not all dogs enjoy walks.)

Treat dispensing toys such as Kongs, LickiMats, and snuffle mats can be used to provide mental stimulation. Long-lasting chews such as bully sticks are also a great option. These are particularly helpful on days when the weather is poor and you may not be able to exercise your foster dog much outside.

Dog parks often seem like a great option to exercise a dog, but they come with risks. First, they are often a source of parasites, and disease (shared water dishes!). They also come with more serious risks too. While you may know your foster, you do not know each dog at the dog park. And just like you do not like everyone you meet, your foster dog may not like everyone they meet either. While we want you to treat your foster dog like your own dog, we have to remember that they are looking for a home, and if they get into an altercation or pick up a parasite, that can complicate getting them adopted.

For more information about dog parks, please visit:

[Should I Take My Dog to the Dog Park?](#)

[The Correct Way to Safely Break Up a Dog Fight](#)

Safety requirements

Foster dogs must live indoors, not outside. Please do not leave your foster dog outside unsupervised, even if you have a fenced yard. Your foster dog should be off-leash only when they are indoors or in a securely fenced area.

Foster dogs must be secured when you are transporting them in your vehicle. This can be done with a crate, leash, or doggy seatbelt. Ask yourself, if there were an accident, where would the dog go? If the answer is "into the windshield," please stop and make sure that the dog is secure before starting the car. Your foster dog needs to have their entire body – including their head – in the vehicle the entire time that it is moving. This means you may need to utilize child locks, or keep the dog secured away from the windows (it is very common for dogs to put their paws up, step on the window button, and inadvertently roll the window all the way down).

Do not ever attempt to take any object out of your foster dog's mouth. If your foster dog has something they should not have, offer them a high value treat instead, tossing the treat away from your body.

Foster dogs should always be fed separately from other pets. This usually means using a crate or baby gate during feeding time. Do not allow anyone to pester the dog while he is eating.

Section 5: Helping your foster dog get adopted

Frequently asked questions

When is my foster dog ready to be adopted?

Your foster dog must have been in foster care for a minimum of 1 week (7 days) before they can be listed for adoption. They must have been seen by a vet within the past year and be current on core vaccinations, as age appropriate. They must have been tested for heartworm and tickborne disease, if they are over 6 months of age.

If all of these conditions are met and you feel that your foster dog is ready for adoption, you will submit a biography and recent photos to the foster coordinator. These will be edited and placed on our website.

How can I help?

As you get to know your foster dog, we ask that you stay in close contact with the foster coordinator so that we can update the dog's biography online. If there are any firm requirements for the dog (fenced yard, no kids, etc.), our policy is to note these in the dog's biography on the website. This should be done in a positive manner.

Examples of positive reframes:

- fenced yard only → Rover is an active pup who will thrive in a home with a secure fence.
- no kids → Fido finds kids a little overwhelming and will be happiest in an adult-only home.
- no dogs → Princess prefers to be the queen of her castle, and will be absolutely thrilled to be your one and only pup.
- no cats → Spot is probably a bit too interested in kitties to live with them, they're just so much fun to chase!

For more information about helping your foster dog find their forever home, please visit:

[Foster Caregiver's Guide To Marketing](#)

What does the adoption process look like?

First, you will be given the application(s) that have been submitted for your foster dog. Veterinarian and landlord checks (if applicable) will be done before the applications are sent to you. A member of the application team may also interview the applicant prior to passing on the application, and if an interview has not been done, you are welcome to request one. You will review these applications and let the foster coordinator or the application team know within 48 hours whether or not you will be contacting an applicant. After contacting an

applicant, you will report back with the results of this call or email exchange and let us know whether or not you are proceeding with a meet and greet.

The decision to set up a meet and greet may depend on several factors, but ultimately comes down to whether both you and the applicant feel that this is a good potential fit for your foster dog. For example, if an applicant states that they want a couch potato, and you know that your foster dog is really a triathlete, then a meet and greet is unlikely to give you any additional information that would make them a good fit.

Most new fosters arrange to meet with applicants at an adoption event or another public venue. Depending on your comfort level, you may also meet with potential adopters at your home or even at their home. If you would like another volunteer to be present during a meet and greet or home visit, please let us know.

During the meet and greet, you will talk to the applicant and get a feel for whether this is a good fit for your foster dog. Ideally, you will meet everyone who lives in the home, including any children and other dogs. (If the applicant cannot bring their other dogs to the meet and greet for any reason, a home visit is strongly recommended.) You are not expected to introduce the foster dog to cats or other pets.

After the meet and greet, you will again report back to coordinators. If you feel that this is the right fit for your foster dog, tell us, and the application will be submitted to the Board for approval. Please note that approval is not guaranteed for any application, and you should leave the meet and greet with a disclaimer that the final decision is up to the Board.

If the Board approves the application, you and the adopter will set up a mutually convenient time for the “handoff.” Please refer to the page in your green foster folder labeled “Adoption Instructions.” The adopter signs BOTH the foster AND adoption contracts, and provides you with the adoption fee in the form of cash or a check made out to Peppertree Rescue. These are then mailed to our president. Unless otherwise specified, the adoption fee is \$300.

Please note: If you would like any additional assistance with application review, contacting applicants, meet and greets, and/or home visits, all you need to do is let us know. We have many experienced volunteers who are happy to assist.

Saying goodbye to your foster dog

Saying goodbye can be the most difficult part of fostering, but it’s worth it to see how happy you’ve made someone, and to know that your foster dog beat the odds and made it into a loving forever home because of you.

Some tips from the pros:

- Unless there is some concern, home visits are your call. If it makes you feel more comfortable, do it. If it makes you uncomfortable or the drive is too far, don’t.

- Send the dog with enough food to last several days, so the adopter has time to transition them to whatever food they will be feeding.
- Send the dog with at least one toy or blanket that smells like home. This will comfort them during the transition.
- If the adopter is picking up the dog or meeting you, make sure that the dog is secured in their vehicle before they leave. Remind the adopter that the dog will not know the area, and they need to be cautious with doors and gates for the first week so the dog does not escape.

You are expected to follow up with the adopter throughout the trial period. This means reaching out to them, at minimum, 1 day after transfer, 1 week after transfer, and 2 weeks after transfer. These updates are then sent to the foster coordinator or a Board member. After 2 weeks, if there are no outstanding medical issues, the adoption may be finalized.

If the adoption does not work out during the trial period, the dog is returned, usually to you, unless we have made other arrangements. (If you are not willing or able to take a foster dog back, please let us know before sending the dog on trial placement.) You must let us know immediately if a dog is being returned. The adopter is expected to transport the dog back to you.