



GULF COAST  
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## Adult Dog Foster Manual

Thank you for opening your heart and home to a foster dog. Your role is vital in helping these animals transition from shelter life to their forever homes. This handbook provides guidelines to ensure a safe, supportive, and enriching environment for your foster dog.

All adult dogs entering foster care are fully vaccinated, microchipped, and spayed/neutered unless otherwise specified.

### Preparation:

Before bringing home a new foster dog, you'll want to survey the area where you are going to keep your foster dog. Remove anything that would be unsafe or undesirable for the dog to chew on. Keep counters and tables cleared of food. Remove any hazardous items such as toxic plants, chemicals, medications, electrical cords, and small objects that could be ingested. Secure trash cans and keep tables/counters cleared between meals. Make sure aquariums or cages that house small animals, like hamsters or fish, are securely out of reach of your foster dog. Relocate fragile or valuable items that could be knocked over and broken.

### Supplies Provided:

- Harness and leash
- Blanket
- Two metal bowls (for food and water)
- Dry dog food (HEB Heritage Ranch)
- Crate (as needed)
- Treats (as needed)
- Baby gate (as needed)
- Enzymatic spray and paper towels (as needed)
- Tie down for car (as needed)
- Grooming supplies (as needed)
- Wet food for medication or picky eaters (as needed)
- "Adopt me" supplies (when available)

### Travel:

Please do not transport your foster dog in the bed of a pickup truck. Please ensure they are secured inside the vehicle in a crate or tie-down. Keep windows rolled up or cracked no more than an inch. **Never leave a dog alone in a parked car—even for a few minutes.**



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H U M A N E  
S O C I E T Y**

## **Housing:**

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. Sometimes it is better to confine the foster dog to a small room or area at first, to let him adjust before giving him free rein in your home. This area should be large enough for an appropriately sized crate for the dog and should allow the dog access to his food and water dishes and toys.

We request that all foster dogs be housed indoors only. A garage, backyard or outdoor run is not a suitable accommodation for a foster dog. Never leave them outside unsupervised, even in a fenced yard. Shelter dogs may be stressed or easily startled and are at risk of escape or injury if left unattended. Your foster dog is only allowed to be off-leash in an enclosed backyard that is completely fenced in, under your direct supervision.

## **Integrating into the Household:**

During the first couple of weeks, minimize the people and pet introductions to your foster dog, so that she is only meeting immediate family and your personal pets. Introduce your foster dog to family members one at a time, allowing the dog to approach on their own terms. If you have other pets at home, it is especially important to give your foster dog a space of her own where she can stay while getting used to all the new sounds and smells. Don't leave your foster dog unattended in your home with your personal pets.

Since we don't always know a foster dog's history or tolerance level for different types of people and activities, please supervise all interactions with children and ensure the dog always has a safe place to retreat if they become uncomfortable. Teach your children how to act responsibly and respectfully around your foster dog. Ensure children:

- Always leave the foster dog alone when he/she is eating, chewing or sleeping. Some dogs may nip or bite if bothered while eating or startled while sleeping.
- Do not take away a toy or prized possession from the foster dog.
- Do not tease the foster dog.
- Do not grab or climb on the foster dog.
- Don't chase the foster dog around the house or run quickly around the foster dog; it may scare him.
- Pick up all toys. Some dogs may not be able to tell the difference between what is theirs and what belongs to the kids.

Do not allow young children to walk the foster dog because they may not be strong enough or experienced enough to handle encounters with other dogs or cats who cross their path.



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H U M A N E  
S O C I E T Y

## Introducing to Resident Pets

**Dogs:** Introduce to resident dogs one at a time, on neutral ground, and keeping both dogs on a leash.

1. Start parallel walking at a distance and gradually let them get closer, monitoring for any stiffness or discomfort.
2. Turn the foster dog around and let your personal dog approach and sniff him from behind.
3. Then, turn the resident dog around and allow the foster dog to sniff him from behind.
4. If both dogs seem comfortable, ensure you have a short leash and allow them to turn to sniff each other face to face (if they choose to). Observe their body language.
5. If either dog shows signs of discomfort, call them away from each other and try again later. Avoid pulling on the leash when separating them, as that can escalate any tension. Instead, call their name to encourage them to follow you away.

**Cats:** Although we do perform an on-site cat-test before sending a dog into a home with cats, a change in environment might reveal different behaviors. You'll need to make the introduction to the foster dog carefully and safely.

1. Start by keeping them separated at first. You can either keep your cats in a separate room or confine your foster dog to a room. Let the dog and cats smell each other through the door. Exchanging blankets or towels between the dog's area and the cats' area will help them get used to each other's smells.
2. When comfortable, do the face-to-face introduction. To start, keep your foster dog in their kennel and let the cat roam the room. Watch for any hackles, barking, or heavy staring from the dog or hissing/swatting from the cat.
3. Keeping your foster dog on leash, allow your cat out in the same area. (If you have more than one cat, introduce one cat at a time.) Do not allow the foster dog to charge or run directly up to the cat. Watch the body language of each animal closely and don't continue the interaction if either pet becomes over-stimulated. The idea is to keep the interactions positive, safe, and controlled. Never leave your foster dog unsupervised with any cats in your home.

**Important:** Make sure that high-value items (food, chew toys, plush toys, Kongs, rawhides or anything else that your dogs hold in high regard) are put away whenever the dogs are interacting with household pets. You don't want to allow the possibility of a fight. Those high-value items are best placed in the dogs' personal areas. Finally, never feed your dogs in the same room as personal pets; always separate them at feeding time.



## GULF COAST H U M A N E S O C I E T Y

**Crate Training:** Crate training is essential for safety and housebreaking. Ensure the crate is appropriately sized, well-ventilated, and equipped with bedding. Never use the crate as a form of punishment.

- Toss treats into the crate to create a positive association. Practice shutting the door for just a few seconds and gradually increase the time.
- If you notice the dog is barking, howling, or whining while crated please reach out to the foster coordinator for additional support.

### Daily Care & Enrichment

**Exercise:** Provide regular physical activity tailored to your foster dog's age, breed, and health. This may include walks, playtime, or interactive toys. A few things to keep in mind:

- Aim for at least 30 minutes to 2 hours of activity throughout the day.
- All outdoor play should be under your direct supervision. NEVER leave your foster animal alone outdoors for any period of time.
- Try to exercise your dog in the morning or evenings. Avoid exercising during hours of peak heat to protect them from overheating.
- Before taking on walks, place the back of your hand on the asphalt or sidewalk. If it is too hot for you, it is likely too hot for them!
- Older or heartworm-positive dogs may need limited activity. Ask the Foster Coordinator if unsure.

**Mental Stimulation:** Engage your foster dog with mental enrichment such as puzzle toys, scent games, and basic obedience training. This helps build confidence and reduces behavioral issues.

- **Muffin Tin Game:** Place treats in some wells of a muffin tin and cover each with a tennis ball. Encourage your dog to sniff and lift the balls to find the treats underneath.
- **Cup Game:** Hide a treat under one of three cups, shuffle them while your dog watches, then encourage them to sniff out which cup holds the treat. Praise your dog when they choose correctly.
- **Box Game:** While your dog is in another room, set several boxes on the floor and hide treats in one or more of them. Bring your dog in and encourage them to search. After they find all the treats, guide them away with another treat to signal the game is over, then either pick up the boxes or reset.
- **Dinner Game:** Call your dog for dinner as usual, but place their food bowl in a different nearby room instead of its regular spot. Encourage your dog to sniff and search until they find the bowl. Once they locate it easily, start hiding the bowl around the house.
- **Snuffle Game:** Scatter treats across the floor, a snuffle mat, or ground and let your dog find all the pieces using their nose.
- **Pupcicles:** Freeze your dog's food mixed with water and unsalted chicken broth in a popsicle mold to create tasty frozen treats.
- **Lick Mat:** Smear peanut butter on the bottom of a bowl, frisbee, or lick mat and let your dog lick it off for a calming, tasty activity.



## GULF COAST H U M A N E S O C I E T Y

**Feeding:** All foster dogs should be fed a diet of dry dog food, unless otherwise specified by the foster coordinator. We use HEB Heritage Ranch adult dog food, unless otherwise specified. Do not switch foods without prior approval. Some dogs may refuse food the first few days in a new environment. For more timid dogs, try feeding them at night when no one is around. Feed your foster dog once or twice daily; the amount will be based on the age, weight, and activity level of your foster dog. Make sure the dog always has access to fresh, clean water.

Dog-safe treats are permitted. Most dogs like to chew on things, so ensure they have toys such as nylabones, yak chews, or kongs. Keep in mind, though, that not all dogs like to share, so only give these treats when your foster dog is confined to his/her own area. Avoid rawhides or real bones as these can splinter or get caught in the digestive tract.

**Leash Training:** Use the provided leash and harness. Avoid prong collars, electronic collars, or retractable leashes. **MUST** be leashed at all times when outside of the house and yard. This means that your foster dog is not allowed to go to off-leash dog parks or other off-leash dog areas. We do not know how your foster dog will act in these situations, or how other dogs will react, and we need to ensure that all animals are safe at all times. In addition, we don't know if the other dogs they encounter are vaccinated appropriately or carry diseases.

**Potty Training:** It is unlikely that your foster dog will be completely house trained when they first arrive. Most of the dogs in the foster program have lived in a shelter for a while, often with minimal walks or chances to relieve themselves outside. At the very least, be prepared for an adjustment period until your foster dog gets used to your schedule. Because a dog has a better chance of being adopted if she is house-trained, please help your foster dog to perfect this skill by giving them regular potty breaks and praising them for successes. Most dogs will give cues — such as standing near the door or sniffing the ground and walking in small circles — to indicate that they need to go out. Take your foster dog outside frequently, especially during the first few days including: first thing in the morning, after meals, after naps, before bed, and every 2-3 hours during adjustment. Limit access indoors and use the crate between potty breaks. Praise and reward them for eliminating outside.

**Monthly Preventatives:** Administer flea/tick and heartworm prevention on the 1st of each month. Some foster dogs may have been given the ProHeart injection which acts as their heartworm prevention for up to 12 months. Pick up the medication from the shelter before close on the 1st. The Foster Coordinator will send a reminder email, but it is your responsibility to ensure the dog receives this medication. Once the medication has been given, please update their FosterLuv Profile to reflect this information.

FosterLuv Login: [https://new.shelterluv.com/public\\_foster\\_profile/LLRI](https://new.shelterluv.com/public_foster_profile/LLRI)

**Medication Adherence:** Administer all prescribed medications exactly as directed by the shelter veterinarian. Do not discontinue or adjust medications without consulting the Foster Coordinator or Clinic Manager.



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### **If It's Not a Good Fit**

If you feel the foster dog is not a good fit for your home, please contact the Volunteer and Foster Coordinator. We will work with you to address any challenges or find a more suitable match. Your feedback is invaluable in ensuring we find their perfect match.



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# DOGGIE LANGUAGE

starring Boogie the Boston Terrier



ALERT



SUSPICIOUS



ANXIOUS



THREATENED



ANGRY



"PEACE!"  
look away/head turn



STRESSED  
yawn



STRESSED  
nose lick



"PEACE!"  
sniff ground



"RESPECT!"  
turn & walk away



"NEED SPACE"  
whale eye



STALKING



STRESSED  
scratching



STRESS RELEASE  
shake off



RELAXED  
soft ears, blinky eyes



"RESPECT!"  
offer his back



FRIENDLY & POLITE  
curved body



FRIENDLY



"PRETTY PLEASE" "I'M YOUR LOVEBUG"  
round puppy face



belly-rub pose



"HELLO I LOVE YOU!"  
greeting stretch



"I'M FRIENDLY!"  
play bow



"READY!"  
prey bow



"YOU WILL FEED ME"



CURIOUS  
head tilt



HAPPY  
(or hot)



OVERJOYED  
wiggly



"MMMM...."



"I LOVE YOU,  
DON'T STOP"

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