



PAWS FOR LIFE
K9 RESCUE



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photography

FOSTER CARE MANUAL

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THANK YOU FOR JOINING THE PAWS FOR LIFE K9 RESCUE FOSTER PROGRAM!

Welcome to the world of fostering. It is an incredibly rewarding experience and the dog that is looking at you right now is alive because you have opened up your home and your heart.



Your foster dog is confused and is counting on you to teach them that the world is safe and loving, that polite manners are important and that they can rely on people for structure and security.

This manual is intended to assist you in helping your foster dog succeed. It may seem strict at times but it has been developed by experienced rescuers, trainers and pit bull people to acclimate the rescued pit bull to her new life in the most successful way.

Throughout the foster period, we ask that you please contact your Foster Coordinator if you have any questions or concerns.

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THE TRANSITION PERIOD - THE FIRST 48 HOURS

Your new foster dog is fresh out of the shelter. She is exhausted, confused, stressed and probably afraid. She had just gotten used to the routine of the shelter and is now in a totally new situation with new people, new sounds, sights and smells. Although this transition period is handled differently by each dog, it is helpful to remember that every dog finds security in an established routine. For most dogs this can be done in 48 hours or so, some will require a little longer.

REQUIRED SUPPLIES:



You will be provided with a crate, Kong toy, leash, martingale collar, ACPB dog tag and a bag of food. If possible, we ask that you provide food after the initial bag is finished so that we can use the funds to care for other dogs. We also ask that you provide treats, peanut butter (for Kong stuffing) and additional toys as needed. We are grateful for your assistance and will reimburse for food as needed, please discuss with your foster coordinator.

STEP 1. ARRIVING AT HOME.

Take your new foster dog for a long walk. Leave other household dogs at home. Don't worry about training at this point, just walk at a brisk pace for a good 30 minutes or more. Do not use any leash corrections (more on that later). If she is pulling heavily, try doing an abrupt about-face and changing direction several times until she realizes that she should be paying attention rather than pulling. If you have soft treats with you, walk backwards when she pulls and make kissing noises to get her attention. Give her treats as she walks towards you. Although this first walk isn't a really training session, it helps to start using some basics. Walk long enough to tire her and be sure that she has relieved herself. You can speak to her occasionally but be mostly quiet. Reward her pee and poop with a "good, go pee" or "good, go poop".

STEP 2. THE SECURITY OF A CRATE AND ESTABLISHING A ROUTINE

The crate will be your foster dog's new home. She will eventually earn her freedom but will always return to her crate whenever you go out, sleep, or cannot supervise her. Placing the crate in a room that is frequently occupied by you is helpful. However, it should be away from other household dogs and household commotion during the transition period. The crate should be cozy, with old blankets or towels for bedding. Many dogs prefer the security of a covered crate so try placing an old sheet over the top.

Immediately following your first walk, give her fresh water and place her in her crate. Toss a handful of treats or food in her crate and give a command such as "in your crate" in a pleasant but calm tone. Close the door. Sit quietly beside the crate until she lays down. Do not speak or look at her. If sufficiently tired from the walk, she should nap.

After a couple of hours, open the crate door, put her leash on and take her for a short walk. Let her relieve herself and reward as before. When you return home, repeat the same procedure by tossing treats in her crate and giving the command.

Meals are fed twice a day. Try to feed as close to the same time every day. While she is in the crate, bring the food to the crate and open the door. Sit in front of the door blocking her exit. Hand-feed her half of the meal. Place the bowl with the remaining half of the food in the crate with her and close the door. Leave the room. Go back in 10 minutes and remove the bowl regardless if there is food still in it. Repeat this procedure for the next several meals. Subsequent meals should be fed in the crate. If she doesn't eat all of her food within 10 minutes, remove the bowl. Picky eating is not tolerated, she will learn to eat when she is fed and it is important that you are in control of this resource. Occasionally hand-feed as you did the first few meals. Feeding in the crate reinforces "my crate is a happy place where all good things happen".

Water should be available every time she is taken out of her crate for walks, except before bed.

Kong toys are another way to tackle boredom and to reinforce the happy crate feeling. The first few times you give her the Kong, stuff some peanut butter in it and put it in her crate. Once she gets the hang of it, you can stuff it with treats and peanut butter. For longer entertainment, stuff it and freeze it.

FOR THE FIRST 48 HOURS YOUR ROUTINE SHOULD BE SIMILAR TO THIS:

- * wake up, go for walk
- * in crate, breakfast
- * go for walk
- * in crate, Kong
- * go for walk
- * in crate, dinner
- * go for walk
- * in crate, bedtime

Crate Tips:

The crate is a happy place... All meals, treats, bones, kongs, etC. should be given ONLY in the crate to reinforce that message.

Ignore whining or barking in the crate so she doesn't learn to use those behaviors to get her way.

Most dogs do better with the crate out of site of the front door. It can be very stressful for them see you leaving the house and can increase separation anxiety.

STEP 3. BE SURE TO LET YOUR FOSTER DOG SLEEP

Many dogs sleep a tremendous amount during the first few days, some even longer. Remember that they are physically and emotionally drained and rest is much needed. It is possible that your foster dog has also recently had spay/neuter surgery and is also uncomfortable. Don't worry if she is tired during this phase, it is a normal response. Just be sure to provide a quiet, restful environment.

STEP 4. LEARNING TO COPE WHILE GAINING CONFIDENCE

During this period, it is very easy to unintentionally reward poor behavior caused by insecurity and create more issues and anxiety. Remember that your voice and physical contact are rewards; be judicious with them. Avoid a lot of oohing and aahing or gushy talk at first. This is her time to recover from the recent changes in her life. She will best handle this if you offer structure, security and routine with minimal praise or reward. There will be plenty of opportunity for praise in the future.



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STRUCTURE, LIFE LESSONS AND CANINE PARENTING

Pit bulls are a working breed and have been selectively bred over centuries to be tenacious. They put everything they have into what ever it is that has their attention. That means they can be strong-willed and pushy when it comes to everything from chasing a squirrel to giving you kisses. This tenacity and drive also makes them exceptionally responsive to training. They are "shameless people-pleasers" and while they may occasionally test their limits, they are very responsive to structure, boundaries, and your affection as a reward for good behavior. As the canine parent, you control the resources (food, treats, affection, freedom), this is what makes you the leader. Your job is to teach your foster dog to make the right choices and that there are consequences to making the wrong choice through your control of the resources.

THE CRATE VS. FREEDOM

For the first two to four weeks, keep your foster dog confined to her crate or a tie down when she is not being exercised or trained. By setting these clear limits in the beginning, you are giving the ability to *earn her freedom* with good behavior. Make her work hard for freedom in the house. She needs to be obedient, calm, and respectful. Put her through a quick training session of "sit", "down", and "watch me" before letting her explore the house. If she starts bouncing off of the walls or not listening to your direction, back in the crate she goes. Some dogs will earn freedom sessions very quickly, others may take weeks or months.

EVERYTHING IS EARNED AND IT COMES FROM YOU

The following things are privileges that your foster dog must earn: praise, petting, treats, play, food and freedom. All of these wonderful things

1. Come from YOU 2. Because she did something that you asked of her. How does she earn them? By sitting, butt on the floor, patiently waiting. Her motto will be "I sit for everything", it will be her way of saying "please." And you as a parent will teach her to say "please" for everything.

MENTAL STIMULATION AND GOING TO SCHOOL

For a working breed, physical exercise is very important but so is mental exercise... it is often even more tiring as well. Several times a day, run through the basics of sit", "down", "stay" and "watch me". Make it fun and mix it up a little so it doesn't get boring. Do a few commands before every meal, play time and freedom sessions out of the crate.

Reinforcing these basic manners is great stimulation but also creates a strong and deferential bond to you as her leader.

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIORS

Let's face it, this is a shelter dog with an unknown history. She is bound to make mistakes in addition to testing her limits. How do you handle it? The number one consequence for an unacceptable or undesired behavior is loss of freedom. Use an "Uh uh" or "wrong" to stop the behavior. If she doesn't cease immediately, follow it with a "too bad" and return to the crate. No further conversation, no "no" or "bad dog", just a quiet return to the crate. The crate is not punishment, it is the loss of freedom that makes the point. With consistency, she will quickly learn to make better choices to maintain her freedom.

BEDS, SOFAS, AND HOUSE RULES

Your bed and sofa are the HIGHEST REWARD locations. They are exceptionally privileged places that leaders sit or sleep. Your sweet foster dog is going to want very much to join you on them but permitting it effectively tells her she has a high rank in the household order. Only after she has demonstrated that she is worthy, through consistently excellent behavior, may she join you IF SHE IS INVITED. When she gets to this point, she must also learn an "off the _____ " command and immediately follow it when told.

LOVE, AFFECTION, AND NURTURING

She can have as much love and attention as she earns. Acknowledging her when she does something right will help her understand what behaviors are acceptable and which ones aren't. Even a smile and wink from you means the world to your foster dog.



SAFETY

Through the nature of our relationships with our dogs, by taking one into your home you are promising to keep her safe and protected. You must learn to read her body language, learn her stressors, and show her that she can trust you to keep her secure.

- * Always keep your foster dog on a leash when not in a secure, private yard.
- * Foster dogs should not be exposed to other animals until proper introductions have been done with an ACPB volunteer or you receive permission by your foster coordinator.
- * Dog parks are off limits unless your foster dog is a puppy and you have received permission from your foster coordinator.
- * Supervise your foster in all new situations, when with children and strangers. Report observations to your foster coordinator.



CLASS

During the foster period, your foster may be enrolled in a training class. We hope that you will be able to attend as the class has many valuable lessons about pit bulls, training and management. If you cannot attend, we will attempt to have a volunteer bring your foster to school.

FOSTER FEEDBACK

During the foster period, we will ask for feedback on how your foster is adapting to home life. It is incredibly important information because it will allow us to match her to the right adoptive home and/or offer more intervention if needed. We will be looking for the following information:

Energy Level : High (could run all day), Medium (likes to play but settles down after a little while), Low (couch-potato).

Play style: Mouthy, toy preferences, etc.

Training Motivators: food, affection, etc.

Fears/stressors: anything that concerns her.

Leash behaviors: easy, pulls, barks or lunges at other dogs.

Behavior towards people/children: outgoing, shy, aloof, etc.

House-training concerns: any trouble with the basics.

Behavioral Tip:

Subtle signs of stress may manifest as:

- * *yawning*
- * *turning away*
- * *frequent blinking*
- * *shaking off*
- * *nose-licking*
- * *sniffing the ground*
- * *More obvious signs are trembling, whining, panting, etc.*

Pay attention to her body language and be sure not to push her beyond her capabilities. Use treats to acclimate her to slightly stressful new situations, turning them into positive experiences.

Basic Manners, What's your name? and "Watch Me"

Chances are, your foster has no idea what her name is and has had little training. Your job as her temporary parent is to teach her a few commands, which we call "basic manners". The great thing is that with positive reward training, your foster dog will learn quickly, eagerly and make you look like a pro!



LEARNING A NAME AND FOCUSING ATTENTION

The first step in training is for a dog to learning their name and how to focus their attention on you. We teach this as name association followed by "watch me". Your foster dog will learn that her name means "stop what you are doing and pay attention" and "watch me" means "focus you attention on me and ignore distractions". Obviously, learning a name is important so you can get her attention whenever you need it.

STEP 1: Begin with a handful of soft, tasty treats. Place your foster on a leash. Using a higher pitch, happy voice, say her name and immediately give her a treat, repeat about 10 times. Stop and let her sniff around. Say her name again, if she looks back at you, give her a treat. If she doesn't, wait about 20 -30 seconds and repeat her name. Give her a treat if she looks at you. If she doesn't, take the treat place it in front of her nose, then bring it up to your nose, holding it between your eyes and say her name. When she makes eye contact, give her the treat. Repeat the process of rewarding her when she looks at your eyes when you say her name. Continue the training session for about five minutes. Repeat several times a day. Always use her name with a happy voice and never to reprimand. She must associate her name with only positive things.

STEP 2: Once you are certain she knows her name, you can begin teaching her "watch me". As with teaching her name, begin with soft treats and with her on a leash. Hold a treat between your fingers, but hidden from her view. Let her smell it then draw your fingers up to your face. Say her name and "watch me". Continue holding the treat to your face as she holds your eye contact for 2-3 seconds. Give her the treat and say "good, watch me!". Repeat several times and give her a break. Repeat the sessions a few times a day, gradually asking her to hold her look for longer durations.



STEP 3: Increase the distractions. After a week or so, when she can hold eye contact for 15 seconds or more, start to make it more challenging. Holding the treat to your chin, have her hold eye contact and take a step to the side and back. Reward her for holding her gaze. If she breaks, simply bring the treat to her nose, back to your face and say "watch me" and continue. You may have to say "watch me" during continued holds to remind her. Repeat brief sessions. increase your movement throughout the day and gradually.

STEP 4: Begin using "watch me" outside and on walks. The increased stimulation and higher level of distractions will require you to take a few steps back and reward for briefer gaze holds. As she builds confidence and understanding that "watch me" can be applied anywhere, you can ask for longer holds.

