



Dog Foster (DF) Handbook

2911 47th Ave N
St. Petersburg, FL 33713
727-522-6566

Monday, Wednesday-Friday, 1:00-7:00
Saturday & Sunday, 10:00-6:00

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I. INTRODUCTION TO THE FRIENDS OF STRAYS DOG FOSTER PROGRAM

A. What is a Dog Foster Home?

A dog foster home is a temporary living arrangement for dogs in our program. Dogs may stay in foster while they are awaiting placement in a permanent home or until they can move into our shelter. We rely on our foster homes to take a dog into their care to help that dog's mental or physical well being or to create space in our shelters for other dogs in need of rescue. Foster families provide shelter, food, care, and love. The number of animals we can save depends entirely on the number of people we have to foster them.

B. Why Foster?

Most of all, fostering saves lives! The more animals there are in foster homes, the less shelters have to kill animals because their kennels are full. Also, many homeless dogs are not ready to be adopted. Finding a foster home for them may be the only way for them to get from a shelter, where they may be at risk of death, to their forever home.

But being a Friends of Strays Foster Parent has rewards beyond saving a life. It can be a chance to have an animal companion without a lifetime commitment—puppies are wonderful, but do you really want a year of puppyhood?! A foster dog can be a great temporary companion for an existing pet (if medically and behaviorally safe to introduce the animals). In some cases, you can experience the special challenge of helping a dog recover from an illness or injury or the trauma of losing a beloved owner or home. You can also gain valuable handling knowledge and experience by working to train your foster dog or help your foster dog overcome a behavioral issue. And it's incredibly fulfilling to give extra TLC to these four-legged friends that need our help. But above all, you get the satisfaction and joy of knowing that you have saved a life!

C. What Types of Dogs Need Foster Care?

Foster homes are most needed for pregnant dogs, moms with newborns, orphaned puppies less than 8 weeks old, young puppies, senior dogs, dogs needing medical care, dogs needing behavioral training, and dogs who cannot go to our shelter due to lack of space. Basically, foster care is for all our dogs and puppies who need a little extra TLC! Fosters also help us save many more dogs than we could with just our

shelters. Some foster homes choose to specialize in fostering a specific type of dog—for example, only seniors—while others choose to foster any dog in need.

D. What are the Responsibilities of a Dog Foster Home?

In general, foster homes are responsible for providing foster dogs with adequate food and water, shelter from the elements, exercise, and plenty of love. In addition to providing the basics, foster parents may also be asked to administer any necessary medications or other medical care and/or follow a behavioral or training plan with their foster dog. Foster parents are responsible for picking up their foster dog from our shelter and transporting them to and from any medical appointments. Foster parents are also expected to actively market their foster dog for adoption, be responsive to potential adopters, arrange meet and greets with potential adopters, provide meet and greet feedback to our Dog Foster Adoption Team, and arrange hand off with their foster dog's adopter.

In addition, foster parents play a crucial role in rehabilitating rescued animals. They are in a unique position to help our most in need animals learn how to love and trust again. Foster parents can help these animals become more “adoptable” by providing socialization and basic training. By teaching or re-teaching a dog how to live in a home setting, foster parents help increase the odds for a smooth and successful transition into a permanent adoptive home.

II. CONTACTS

A. Dog Foster Team

As a Friends of Strays Dog Foster Parent, you have an entire team of people to support you. The following is an overview of the individuals at your service. We want you to have a positive experience fostering for Friends of Strays, so please do not hesitate to contact us if you are experiencing any difficulty or have any questions or concerns.

Foster Coordinator: foster@friendsofstrays.org, 727-522-6566 ext 102

While you are fostering a dog this is your primary contact for any general questions or concerns.

Medical Team: medical@friendsofstrays.org, 727-522-6566 ext 101 Our medical team can assist you with scheduling spay/neuter surgery, vaccinations, and other preventive care or medical treatment for your foster dog. In case of emergency, please call this number immediately.

Adoptions Counselors: adoption@friendsofstrays.org, 727-522-6566 ext 102

This team will assist you with all activities related to the adoption of your foster dog. This includes information on pre-adoption, meet and greets, and making arrangements to finalize an adoption. All foster dog adoptions must be coordinated through this team. They will also arrange for the “surrender” of your foster dog to the shelter at the end of their foster placement.

Community Outreach Manager: claire@friendsofstrays.org, 727-522-6566 ext 107

This team will assist you with getting your foster dog out to events. This extra visibility can help get your foster dog adopted more quickly.

Communications Manager: holly@friendsofstrays.org, 727-522-6566 ext 100

The Communications Manager provides extra support in getting your foster dog adopted. This person will ensure that your foster dog has his “best face forward” on Friends of Strays’ website, that your foster dog attends adoption sites and events (if appropriate), and that if your foster dog cannot attend sites or events, she is getting the additional marketing needed to find an adoptive home. Please send weekly updates and pictures to this email address to assist in marketing your foster dog.

Shelter Director: mari@friendsofstrays.org, 727-522-6566 ext 105

Last resort contact in case of an emergency.

III. BECOMING A FOSTER PARENT

A. Responsibilities and Considerations

Fostering is a tremendously rewarding experience, but it takes a lot of time and effort. The basic responsibilities are:

- Provide a safe, clean, and caring environment
- Provide food, water, toys/enrichment, and shelter
- Provide exercise and socialization, as appropriate
- Monitor any medical and/or behavioral problems
- Transport to/from any medical appointments
- Transport to/from adoption sites and events
- Respond to email inquiries regarding your foster dog and communicate with potential adopters

- Arrange a date, time, and place for potential adopters to meet your foster dog and provide meet and greet feedback to our Adoption Team
- Take pictures and video of your foster dog and create a bio for your foster dog (or assist us with that process)
- Arrange hand off to your foster dog's adopter

In addition to the basics, please consider the following before deciding if fostering a dog is right for you:

- Are you permitted to have dogs in your residence (e.g., if you rent, does your landlord allow dogs)? Are there any restrictions on the type of dog that is permitted (e.g., breed, size, etc.)? If there is a required pet deposit, are you willing to pay it prior to taking a foster dog? If you live in a community with shared walls (e.g., apartment, condominium, townhome), will a dog's barking or whining present a noise issue?
- If you do not live alone, is everyone in your residence ok with you fostering a dog? Fostering is a household affair. Even if you do all the work, everyone will be affected by having this addition to your household. This is especially important if you have roommates. Everyone in the household needs to consent to your fostering a dog and understand and follow the Dog Foster Program's protocols for the health and safety of you, the other residents, and your foster dog.
- If you have other animals:
 - How will they react to a new dog in the home?
 - Are they spayed or neutered? Some of our foster dogs will not yet have had spay or neuter surgery, so we want to ensure that they don't have contact with any "intact" dogs.
 - Do any of them have any health issues that might make them more susceptible to disease or other medical concerns?
 - Have they been fully vaccinated for DAPP, Rabies, and Bordetella? If your dog(s) are not up to date on vaccines, you should wait a minimum of 5 days after your dog's vaccinations have been administered before taking in a foster dog. We also recommend that you follow your vet's recommendations regarding the addition of a foster dog to your home.
 - Do you have the ability to separate your foster dog from your resident animals? We recommend that you keep them separate for at least the first week. There are two reasons for this. First, we want to protect your resident animals from any undiagnosed medical conditions. Second, from a behavior perspective, it is usually best to slowly introduce a new dog to the "pack."

- Do you have the time to devote to caring for a foster dog? Young puppies may need to be fed as often as every few hours. Adult dogs need the stimulation and exercise of a daily play. As a foster, you are expected to provide transportation, put forth marketing efforts, and administer the adoption process for your foster dog.
- If you are interested in fostering puppies, please review the [What to Expect When You're Expecting \(to Foster Puppies\)](#) document.
- **PLEASE NOTE THAT YOU ARE NOT PERMITTED TO TAKE YOUR FOSTER DOG TO ANY DOG PARK OR OTHER OFF-LEASH AREA.**

B. Application Process

If you are reading this, you are likely already approved to foster dogs. But if not, and you are interested in becoming a Friends of Strays Foster Parent, you first need to submit our dog foster application on our website or at the shelter. We will review your application and contact you if we have any questions.

Once you have been approved to foster dogs, you will receive a welcome email and other important documents. If you use Facebook, please ask to join our [Friends of Strays Staff & Volunteers Facebook Page](#) and use this page to market your foster dog.

IV. GETTING STARTED

This section describes the steps you need to take before bringing home a foster dog. Your advance preparation will help ensure that your foster experience is a good one for you, your foster dog, and any other animals or people living in your home. These guidelines are designed to answer the most common questions and ease the transition for all concerned. You also have the entire DF Team for backup.

A. Preparing for Your Foster Dog

The following is a checklist of items you will need before bringing home a foster dog. Friends of Strays will do our best to provide you these items, pending availability:

- Food and water bowls.
- Handling equipment: In most cases, we will be able to provide you with a collar, a leash, and other handling equipment specific to your foster dog, but it would be a good idea to have these items on hand. We recommend using a martingale collar (a type of dog collar that provides more control over a dog

without the choking effect of other collars and offers less opportunity for slipping out of their collar).

- Food and treats. We feed the dogs in our program Hills Science Diet. However, any good quality food is okay. Puppies and nursing or pregnant moms should get puppy food or gruel (depending on their age). It's a good idea to have both dry and canned food available.
- Chew toys and other enrichment items, appropriate to the size and age of your foster dog. If you provide rawhides, watch your foster dog the first time to ensure there is no problem, such as trying to swallow too large of a piece.
- Travel carrier or crate (for transporting your foster dog, keeping your foster dog safe and out of trouble while you're away, and help with house-training). If you don't have a crate, we can usually loan you one.
- Dog bed or blankets to provide your foster dog with a comfortable place to sleep.
- If you are fostering puppies, puppy formula and puppy pads, newspaper, or old sheets.
 - Hand sanitizer.
 - Bleach.

****For any equipment that we loan to you (collar, leash, crate, etc.), please make sure to return it to Friends of Strays at the end of your foster experience.****

Once your home is ready, make sure that you understand all of the information that Friends of Strays has provided you and asked questions that you have in advance. Our correspondence contains critical information that you will need to know before beginning, and throughout, your foster experience. **It is very important that you thoroughly read all of the emails we send you, including any attachments, to ensure the safety and well being of you and your foster dog.**

B. Selecting Your Foster Dog

Everyday Friends of Strays is identifying dogs that need a foster home. For all dogs needing foster, our Team posts a "plea" email and posts in our Dog Foster Google Group. We rely on you to contact us (by replying to the plea emails or emailing foster@friendsofstrays.org about a dog you see on the plea board) if you are interested in fostering a featured dog.

Because we are often dealing with dogs at risk for euthanasia, our foster pleas are very time sensitive, and our ability to save a dog often relies solely on our ability to find a foster within a very short timeframe. Because of this, it is imperative that you frequently check your email and notify us if you are interested in a particular foster

dog. Your quick response to a foster plea can literally mean the difference between life and death for these dogs.

When corresponding with Friends of Strays, it is important to let them know about any special considerations you might have:

- Do you have dogs that haven't been spayed or neutered?
- Are your dogs current on all vaccinations?
- Do you have young children?
- Do you have a high-traffic home?
- Can you keep the foster dog separate from your resident animal(s)?
- Do you have any other fosters already in your home?

Our foster team will work with you to determine if a foster is a good match for you. Upon finding a match, you will be sent a foster match email and a foster pick up email that details important information about fostering for Friends of Strays. Please be sure to read these emails **before** picking up your foster dog.

C. Picking Up Your Foster Dog

After Friends of Strays has confirmed a match for you and you have read the foster match email, foster pick up email, and everything else we have emailed you, you are ready to pick up your foster dog. Usually, this will be from our shelter location, but could also be from another foster's home.

We recommend that you bring the following:

- Travel Carrier/Crate (one can be borrowed, if needed)
- Blankets/Covers to protect your car from scratches or accidents
- Paper towels/wipes for car cleanup, if necessary

If you don't have a travel carrier/crate, check with the foster team to see if it is needed for your foster dog. We will fit your adult foster dog with an appropriate collar. Puppies don't need a collar, but should be transported in a travel carrier/crate.

Before taking your foster dog to your car, please make sure they are secured on a leash or in a travel carrier/crate before taking them to your car. If you are fostering a puppy that is: (a) younger than 16 weeks of age OR (b) 16 weeks of age or older but has not had at least one DAPP vaccine that was given at 16 weeks of age or older, **do not allow the puppy to touch the ground in any public area; this includes at Friends of Strays! Put them in a travel carrier/crate or carry them!** If your foster dog can touch the ground and is on a leash, give them an opportunity to relieve themselves before placing them in your car.

Rescue dogs can be scared and disoriented by the changing environment and are often excellent escape artists. If the Foster Team has told you that your dog is a flight risk, please follow these extra precautions:

- The dog must wear a Martingale collar AT ALL TIMES.
- The dog must wear a drag leash AT ALL TIMES including inside the house.
- The dog must always be on a HELD leash when the dog is outside, including within an enclosed area like a yard or patio; the dog must never be off leash.
- The dog must be transported in a travel carrier/crate and not removed from the travel carrier/crate until the dog is safely indoors.
- All household members must understand and follow these rules.

D. At Home With Your Foster Dog

When you get home, make sure your foster dog has a chance to relieve himself before going inside. Neither of you want to start out with any accidents! Begin by showing your foster dog his sleeping area, either the crate (strongly recommended) or a place with his own bedding. If you have other animals, we recommend you keep them separated from any resident animal for at least the first week. If you want to introduce your foster dog to your resident dog(s) after the first week, we can provide more information on the "best practice" for introducing dogs upon request.

If your foster was sent home with special handling equipment and/or a drag leash, please leave those items on at all times. We place this equipment on your foster dog for their protection and to reduce the likelihood of an escape.

Do not leave your foster dog unattended in a fenced yard. If you have a doggy door, please keep it closed unless you are present to monitor the dog(s) at all times in the fenced yard. Although your yard may seem "escape proof," too often our foster dogs have managed to find a way out. This is also their time to begin bonding with people again, and being left alone outside could cause them increased anxiety. Fully vaccinated dogs can be taken on walks but always on a leash; however, **never allow your foster dog to be off leash in public.** This means **no dog parks or other off-leash areas.** At this point, we don't know enough about the foster dog, or the other dogs at the park, to know how they will react.

Please do not feed your foster dog "people food." In limited cases, you may be asked to give your foster dog "people food" (e.g., yogurt or pumpkin to help with diarrhea), but in general it's best to stick to dog food. Puppies and nursing or pregnant moms should get puppy food or gruel (depending on their age) for the additional nutrition. If you want to bathe your foster dog, you can use a mild shampoo or detergent. Do

not, however, bathe your foster dog for 24 hours after treated with a topical flea medication as the shampoo could negate that treatment.

Special precautions need to be taken with puppies. Puppies should be housed in a private, confined area. We recommend a bathroom or any room where they will not have full access to the residence. Very young, small puppies can be confined to a crate initially. Confining puppies not only helps protect your possessions, it also keeps them out of harm's way. Puppies have an uncanny knack for being able to get themselves into precarious situations! Again, do not allow your puppy(ies) to touch the ground in any public area; this includes at Friends of Strays. **Do not take your puppy(ies) to a public place**, even if it's just to go to the bathroom! This includes parks, pet stores, veterinary clinics or hospitals, boarding kennels, play yards, running trails, etc. It's very important that they are not exposed to the "germs" out in the world. If puppies need to be taken out in public—for example to the Clinic or an adoption event for which they are approved—they should be transported in a crate and only placed in a pen that has been sanitized. You should always have hand sanitizer handy and ask everyone (friends, family, neighbors, etc.) to use the sanitizer before touching your puppies. If your residence does not have a private outside area where unknown/unvaccinated dogs cannot go, you will need to use puppy pee pads as puppies cannot go outside on the ground.

If you need to have your foster dog moved, even temporarily, please contact Friends of Strays as soon as possible so they can find another foster home. We ask that you keep your foster dog until a new placement is found, if possible. **Foster dogs can never be placed in the care of a neighbor, friend, pet sitter, roommate, or even a potential adopter without Friends of Strays express advance permission.** **Foster dogs are NOT allowed to travel outside of the Pinellas County area.** Because all foster dog medical care is provided at the shelter, it is important that foster dogs stay close enough to receive care in an emergency. If you plan to travel, please contact Friends of Strays to make arrangements for the care of your foster dog while you are gone.

IF YOUR FOSTER DOG GETS LOOSE OR IS LOST, IMMEDIATELY NOTIFY OUR SHELTER DIRECTOR AT 727-522-6566 EXT 105 OR 727-522-6566 EXT 102.

E. Feeding Guidelines

Puppies under 6mo: AM, Afternoon, & PM - 1/2 cup dry food with 2 tbsp wet food

Puppies 6mo-1yr: AM & PM - 1 cup dry food with 2 tbsp wet food

Large Breed Adult Dogs: AM & PM - 1 cup dry food with 2 tbsp wet food

Small Breed Adult Dogs: AM & PM - 1/2 cup dry food with 2 tbsp wet food

V. BEHAVIOR ISSUES & TRAINING YOUR FOSTER DOG

It is common for a dog to experience some behavioral problems and need a period of adjustment when placed into a new environment. Foster parents are in a unique position to help increase the “adoptability” of their foster dogs by providing some basic training. This also gives you the opportunity to strengthen the bond with your foster dog and get him/her to trust people again. If you need help addressing behavior issues with your foster dog, please contact the Foster Team at foster@friendsofstrays.org. You should receive an email response within 72 hours. If it is time sensitive, please note that in the subject line of your email, and contact the Shelter Director at Mari@friendsofstrays.org if you don't receive a timely response.

Follow the [Dog Foster Bite Protocol](#) (found on the FOS website and emailed to you) if your foster dog bites you, a member of your household, or anyone else. Note: Dog to dog bites and any injuries caused to another animal should also be reported to the Dog Foster Team.

The following is a list of common behavioral problems as well as suggestions for behavior modification.

A. Lack of House-Training

Chances are your foster dog may need at least a refresher course in house-training. Many rescued dogs have spent most of their lives outside and never learned the rules of living indoors. Other dogs may have once been house-trained, but may still have an accident or two when transitioning into a new home. Here are some key points to keep in mind during the process that are almost universally applicable:

1. **Holding It:** Every dog has their time limit. Puppies under six months are typically unable to hold it in for more than a few hours. Prepare for this! A healthy adult dog, even among smaller breeds, should have no trouble holding it for 8-10 hours in a crate or overnight. There are, of course, always exceptions.
2. **Frequent Outings:** To avoid accidents, you will want to make sure your foster dog has plenty of opportunities to go outside (if they are fully vaccinated). You also want to give them ample time. Walk them for at least 15 minutes to encourage them and give them plenty of time to go potty. When they do go outside, you want to capture this wanted behavior (just like when teaching a

dog a new command). By capture, we mean giving lots of praise and treats for doing what we want.

3. **Reward Only!:** It's vital to successful housetraining that we NEVER scold a dog for going potty inside, even—especially—when we catch them in the act. More often than not, the dog won't understand that you are scolding them for going inside. They are more likely to think you are scolding them for going at all, and as a result they will want to hide from you to do their business. (This means sneaking off to quiet, isolated corners of the home or behind furniture, and no one wants to play "Find the Smell!"). Instead our focus should be on praising and treating every time the pup goes outside. If your pup is learning for the first time or is struggling with learning outside from in, you can amp up the reward by "jackpotting" even a little outdoor tinkle with a BUNCH of treats and praise (or toys, or whatever your pup thinks is a great reward).
4. **Prevention & Redirection:** If you are still in the process of housetraining, make sure you have eyes on your pup at all times. Keep a lightweight leash attached to their collar always (what we call a "drag leash" or "drag line") so that, the second they start to go, you can quickly pick up the end of the leash and walk them outside. Remain neutral until they're outside, and as soon as they start to finish their business out there you can reward! If you are preoccupied with other tasks, limit their access. Use a crate or exercise pen to keep them from going wherever they please.

B. Chewing

Destructive chewing is a phase that all puppies go through. It usually starts around three months and can last until the dog is one year old. During this time, the dog's adult teeth are coming in and chewing helps relieve the pain. Adult dogs may also have problems with chewing, but for different reasons. Adult dogs usually chew on inappropriate things because they are anxious or bored, or because they have never been taught what is appropriate to chew on. The best solution for destructive chewing is providing your foster dog with something that is acceptable to chew on. Alternate chew toys daily and do not leave all toys out all the time. Dogs generally get bored of toys and find alternative things to chew. If you catch your dog chewing on something inappropriate, interrupt them with a neutral (non-praise, but also non-punishment) noise that gets their attention. A mild "eh eh" or "no" or a light clap of your hands are a couple ideas. Offer them an appropriate toy or chew instead as a means of redirecting the chewing behavior.

If the destructive chewing occurs when you are away, consider confining the dog to a crate. A crate will help keep both the dog and your home safe. It is also important to make sure that your foster dog is getting plenty of exercise. There is an adage that

“a tired dog is a good dog”. Sometimes a dog chews for no other reason than they are bored (as one might chew on the cap of a pen in a dull meeting). It’s important to make sure your dog has not only plenty of physical stimulation, but mental stimulation as well. Mental stimulation can include training games, puzzle toys, even a kong stuffed with tasties. A dog can run around the yard for an hour and still have stores of energy (or at least enough for chewing!), but put that same dog in front of a puzzle toy that takes them fifteen minutes and suddenly you have one pooped pup!

C. Separation Anxiety

It is common for foster dogs to experience some separation anxiety when left alone. The severity of the anxiety can range from pacing and whining to much more destructive behavior. A dog may experience separation anxiety simply because he has a very dependent personality, or because she is reacting to a history of abuse or abandonment. Whatever the reason, separation anxiety can be difficult to deal with because you are not around when it happens. The most common sign that a dog may be suffering from separation anxiety is destructive behavior when left alone. A dog may scratch frantically at the door or make other attempts to get out of the house, or the dog may chew on things or engage in other destructive behaviors. If you have reason to suspect that your foster dog is suffering from separation anxiety when you are away, consider confining the dog to a crate. If used appropriately, the crate will help the dog feel safe and secure and hopefully relieve some of the anxiety. And, until the separation anxiety itself can be examined and dealt with, a crate will help keep both your home and your foster dog safe.

If you do have the time to work with your foster dog, there are several things you can try to help alleviate separation anxiety. Start out by leaving the dog in your home for very short intervals. Tell the dog to wait and then walk outside for a few minutes before returning. When you return to the house, praise the dog for waiting. Begin to gradually leave the dog for longer and longer periods of time. It is important that, when you leave, you remain calm and not make a big deal out of leaving. It is also important that you not be too excited when you return. You want to praise the dog, but calmly. You don’t want your return to be such an exciting event that the dog anxiously anticipates the moment of your return. Perhaps the most effective treatment for separation anxiety is time. Be patient. As your foster dog spends more time with you, he will begin to feel more secure in knowing that when you leave, you always come back. Some destructive behavior that appears to be related to separation anxiety may, in fact, be the product of boredom, so make sure your foster dog gets plenty of physical and mental stimulation per the “Chewing” Section above.

D. Crate Training

Friends of Strays strongly recommends using a crate for your foster dog. A crate is a great way to keep both your foster dog and your home safe. If you decide to use a crate, make sure that the crate is always a positive place for your foster dog. Never use a crate for punishment. When introducing a dog to a crate, use a happy tone of voice and tell the dog to “kennel up.” When the dog enters the crate, give her lots of praise and perhaps a treat reward. If you have a difficult time getting the dog to enter the crate or if the dog seems afraid, try leaving the crate door open and placing the dog’s food and water bowls just inside the door. Any time your foster dog shows any sign of curiosity in the crate, praise and reward him. You will notice the dog going to the crate and looking at you for assurance and praise. Allow the dog to wander into the crate and eat at his leisure. Once the dog seems more comfortable with the crate, you can try confining the dog to the crate for short intervals.

Never confine a puppy to a crate for longer than 3-4 hours at a time or an adult dog for longer than 8-10 hours at a time. Remember, the dog will not want to soil his crate, so forcing the dog to stay in the crate longer than he can comfortably “hold it” is inappropriate.

VI. MEDICAL CARE

Because most foster dogs are rescued from shelter environments, Friends of Strays can not ensure that they will be healthy when they are placed in your care.

A dog that appears healthy at the time of placement can sometimes show signs of illness several days later. For this reason, it is very important that foster dogs are kept separate from your own animal(s), at least for that first seven days, and that you keep your own dogs up-to-date on vaccinations, including Bordetella.

It is important that you thoroughly clean all items and areas that have been in contact with a sick foster dog. You can use a 10% bleach solution to reliably kill most viruses and bacteria. Items and areas that need to be cleaned should be thoroughly wetted with the bleach solution and allowed to stand for several minutes before rinsing. Foster homes that have recently fostered a dog or puppy with Parvo or another extremely contagious disease must wait six months before fostering another unvaccinated dog or puppy. **When replying to foster pleas, please let the Foster Team know if you have had a sick animal in your home.**

The Friends of Strays Medical Team provides all medical care for our foster dogs. We *will not* reimburse foster parents for the cost of ANY medical care outside of Friends of Strays.

A. Routine Medical Care

The FOS Medical Team schedules all routine and preventive medical care. However, if you have not been contacted by the team and you know that a vaccine or monthly preventative is due or other medical care is needed, please contact them at medical@friendsofstrays.org.

Friends of Strays vaccinates for DAPP (Distemper, Adenovirus, Parainfluenza, and Parvo Virus), Bordetella (vaccinates against the most common form of Kennel Cough), and Rabies. In addition, all dogs receive flea/tick and heartworm (HW) prevention. Dogs and puppies are dewormed.

Please reference the following table for scheduling your foster dog’s routine medical care:

	2 Wks.	4 Wks.	6 Wks.	8 Wks.	10 Wks.	12 Wks.	14 Wks.	16 Wks.	6 Mos.
Strongid (Dewormer)	X	X	X						
Flea/Tick Preventative			X		X		X		
HW Preventative			X		X		X		
Bordetella			X						
DAPP			X	X	X	X	X	X	
Rabies						X			

HW Test									X
Spay/Neuter				X					

Note: Adult dogs receive the following upon intake (unless we have documentation that they have already received these): Strongid (dewormer); DAPP, Bordetella, and Rabies vaccinations; HW test (if 6 months or older); and HW preventative and flea/tick preventative, and they must receive their second DAPP within four weeks of receiving their first DAPP. In some cases, the HW test and microchip are taken care of at the time of their spay/neuter surgery.

B. Spay/Neuter Surgery

Puppies are spayed or neutered at 8 weeks of age unless they are underweight (less than 2 pounds), malnourished, ill, or are generally just not healthy enough for surgery. Older dogs are spayed or neutered as soon as they are medically ready. Nursing moms can be spayed after their pups have been weaned and the mom’s milk has dried up. If the pups are weaned by 6 weeks of age, the moms can often be spayed when their pups have surgery at 8 weeks of age. ***Because of the limited number of surgery slots, it is vital that you keep your scheduled appointment.***

Your foster dog needs to be healthy for at least seven days before surgery. Please notify us if prior to his/her surgery date he/she is exhibiting any upper respiratory symptoms such as a runny nose, sneezing, coughing, and/or congestion or any other signs of illness; if so, his/her surgery will need to be delayed. You will receive the pre-surgery instructions the day prior to their surgery date. Drop off is between 8:00 - 8:30AM at the shelter, and pick up is on the same day between 4:00 - 6:00PM. If you can’t make your appointment, please let us know us know immediately. If it is within 12 hours of your appointment, you need to call the Medical Department at 727-522-6566 ext 101. ***We understand that emergencies arise, but our surgery slots are very limited. If you think that you might not be able to make your surgery appointment, please contact us as we may be able to get another dog into that surgery slot.***

C. Emergency Medical Care

The FOS Foster Team can assist you with most medical questions; however, if you have a medical emergency, please call 727-522-6566 ext 101 (during open hours) or 203-530-9586 (after hours/on call); please follow up with an email to the Medical Team (medical@friendsofstrays.org) as well.

Please give as much detail as possible. Be sure to include:

- Your foster dog's name and ID Number
- Your name and phone number
- A detailed description of your concerns
- Is your foster eating and/or drinking? If not, how long has it been without food and/or water?
- Any vomiting, diarrhea, coughing, or sneezing? If so, how long has this been going on?
- Does he/she seem lethargic?
- Any eye or nose discharge? If so, what color is it?

Symptoms of an Emergency:

- Not moving or unable to stand up
- Bleeding
- Not eating for more than two feedings if an unweaned puppy
- Not eating for more than 24 hours if an adult
- Not breathing or open mouth breathing
- Drooling profusely
- Tremors or convulsions
- Appears drunk or unstable when walking or loses balance when walking
- Constant vomiting or diarrhea

If you aren't sure if it's an emergency, call and leave a message. You will receive a call back if it is an emergency and an email back if it is not an emergency. If you are concerned about your foster dog and haven't heard back from the Medical Team, please contact holly@friendsofstrays.org.

IMPORTANT NOTE REGARDING FRIENDS OF STRAYS MEDICAL CARE:

Florida has some of the highest euthanasia rates in the country. As a leader in the national no-kill movement, Friends of Strays must necessarily focus on saving as many animals as we safely can each day. Because of this, we must get each foster dog intaked and into their foster home as quickly as possible in order to save shelter space. Each day a foster dog spends at our shelter means another dog that will be euthanized because we had no space in which to house it.

Our medical care reflects this. At intake, each dog receives a physical exam, vaccinations, a broad-spectrum dewormer, and flea and heartworm prevention. We do not routinely test for non-serious illnesses and conditions, such as intestinal parasites and skin parasites. Instead, we treat such illnesses and conditions

symptomatically. In addition, intake exams are done by medical technicians, not veterinarians (unless we deem a vet check necessary). Please also note that because of the conditions from which most of our dogs are coming, it's very common for them to have worms, parasites, fleas, and/or upper respiratory infections (URIs). In general, our system of care recognizes that fosters are in the best position to identify non-serious illnesses and conditions, report them to FOS, and quickly receive treatment to address them. This system means that each foster dog is receiving appropriate treatment/care in a home environment, and enables Friends of Strays to continue pulling as many dogs as possible off of euthanasia lists.

In terms of ongoing care, we aim to provide the same level of care as an animal lover of average means could reasonably provide. This means that if your foster dog falls ill, suffers an injury, or is in discomfort, they can be seen by a tech or vet, as we deem appropriate, within a timeframe commensurate with the issue and can receive medications and routine diagnostics, such as x-rays and blood tests, as we deem necessary. However, just like an animal lover of average means, we are unable to go above and beyond and provide extraordinary medical care. This means we cannot provide expensive diagnostics, like MRIs (which cost thousands of dollars), or a guarantee of expensive prescription medications or foods, although we will always provide this if it is donated.

VII. GETTING MY FOSTER DOG ADOPTED

Friends of Strays takes full responsibility for finding permanent adoptive homes for our foster dogs; however, it is a collaborative process with the foster parent. Foster parents are encouraged to let others know that their foster dog is available for adoption, but any person interested in adopting a foster dog needs to go through Adoption Team and follow the Dog Foster Program's adoption procedures.

As soon as you take your foster dog home, we want to begin the process of getting him or her to their forever home. But if you have foster puppies that are newborns or under 6 weeks, your focus should be on getting, and keeping, them healthy and happy. Before 7 weeks of age, puppies are not yet available for adoption. Of course it never hurts to start getting the word out to family, friends, and neighbors, about the fabulous puppies you are raising! At 8 weeks of age, which is when dogs are posted to our website, the adoption process begins, but please note that all foster dogs must have had their intake exam before becoming available for adoption.

If your foster dog did not come to you with a name, the first step is naming your foster dog. We need to get a name as soon as possible so we can get them in our

system and up on our website (if they are old enough and have had an intake exam). With older dogs, we like to get a name immediately. With very young pups, it may take a little longer to pick a name, but we need to have a name by the time they turn two weeks old. If your foster dog already has a name, we will continue to use that name to avoid confusion since they are already being tracked in our system by that name. Please note that your foster dog's name may not be the same or closely similar to a dog's name that is active in our system.

A. Marketing

As soon as possible, please email a bio that you have written for your foster dog to holly@friendsofstrays.org.

Please also send Holly photos and videos of your foster dog. Please send the best pictures you can get of your foster dog. Ideally, we prefer to have at least one good picture of his/her face (looking right into the camera makes a huge difference), a full picture of your foster dog to give people an idea of overall size, and a picture that shows personality. Pictures taken outside avoid the green eye syndrome of a flash. Dogs with videos get more adoption inquiries because people love to see the dog in action. Making a video is especially helpful for an adult dog as it does a better job of conveying personality. The video doesn't have to be long or fancy; you can send raw video footage, and the Marketing Team will edit it to make a fabulous video.

Your foster dog's profile will be posted to our website at 8 weeks old; we may also post it to any other adoption networks available to us like Petfinder. Please also use this Facebook page to market your foster pup! The sooner we can get your foster dog posted, the sooner they have a chance of getting into a forever home. After your foster dog is 8 weeks old, please check the FOS website at friendsofstrays.org/adopt to ensure that your foster dog is posted as an available dog.

B. When Can My Foster Dog Be Adopted?

Unless a specific medical or behavioral condition affects their availability, puppies are available for adoption at 8 weeks of age and older dogs are available immediately after their intake exam.

Phone and Email Inquiries

Most of the inquiries about your foster dog will come through the Friends of Strays Adoption Center. This team receives all adoption inquiries for FOS, including dogs and cats, and routes them to the appropriate place.

We ask foster parents to respond to each potential adopter as soon as possible but no later than 24 hours after the inquiry, so it's very important that you frequently monitor your emails. Since you know your foster dog best, it's important that each potential adopter hears directly from you. Before scheduling a meet and greet (M&G), please start a dialog with the potential adopter; ask for the characteristics that they are looking for in a dog and share with them some of your pup's unique traits. This is also a good time to let any potential adopters know about any major medical and/or behavioral issues and/or any of your pup's special needs.

If it seems like a good match, please arrange a M&G as soon as possible (no later than 5 days after the inquiry). You should schedule the first inquirer that seems like a good match as the first M&G. **We adhere to the guideline that the first inquirer of which you are notified that submits the first acceptable application will have priority to adopt your foster dog.** Please DO NOT tell any potential adopters that they are the first / second / third ones to meet your foster dog, make any other representation as to their priority / order, or make any guarantee that they will be able to adopt your foster dog. This can lead to confusion and cause hurt feelings, which we want to avoid at all times. **Please DO, however, let potential adopters know that there are or may be other potential adopters.**

Meet and Greets

If a potential adopter wants to meet your foster dog, the first step is to arrange a M&G. **All M&Gs must be at least 30 minutes long.** They should take place in a safe and familiar environment. If your foster pup is four months or younger, M&Gs must occur in your home (**do not take a puppy to a public place for a M&G**). If your foster pup is older than four months, M&Gs should occur in your home if at all possible. The foster home has proven to be the best place to have M&Gs as the pup is already familiar with this environment and will be at his/her best. If you are not comfortable having a potential adopter come to your home please contact us for assistance.

During the M&G, continue the dialog with the potential adopter and ask questions that you believe will help you determine if they are a good match for your foster dog. Please pay close attention to the interaction between the potential adopter and your

foster dog and make sure that you share with the potential adopter any behavior and/or medical issues. Please use safe hygiene practices at the M&G, especially for puppies. Puppies that have not been fully vaccinated (typically puppies four months or under) are very susceptible to contagious diseases that can be present in public areas. Make sure that everyone uses hand sanitizer before handling your puppy and consider having potential adopters drape a towel over their clothing, as some diseases can be carried on clothing.

Never allow a dog-dog M&G if your foster dog is not fully vaccinated.

D. The Adoption

After the M&G, please email the Foster Team your thoughts on the M&G and why you believe the potential adopter is (or is not) a good fit for your foster pup. Please let us know immediately if you have any concerns that you would like us to address if the potential adopter applies. If after the M&G the potential adopter wants to pursue the adoption, please refer them to our adoptions team at adoptions@friendsofstrays.org or 727-522-6566 ext 102. Upon receiving an application, we will contact you for your M&G feedback if you have not already submitted it. We will review the adoption application and address any questions and concerns that we might have on our end.

Upon receiving your M&G feedback and our approval of their application, we will arrange an appointment for the potential adopter to interview with an FOS Adoption Counselor at our shelter to finalize the adoption. **FOS Adoption Counselors are trained staff members and are responsible for making the final adoption decision.**

After the adopter attends the adoption interview and pays the requisite adoption fee and surgery deposit (if applicable), the pup is ready to go to his/her forever home immediately following the adoption interview.

If you are not present for the interview, the adopter will contact you to make arrangements to pick up your foster dog. **Before you release your foster dog to the adopter, the adopter must show you a signed adoption contract for verification.**

Because you'll know in advance when your foster pup is going to his/her forever home, you'll have plenty of time to say "good bye" - not without a tear - but with no regrets because you know there is another rescue pup needing your help. Saying goodbye will likely be difficult, but we hope you also feel tremendous joy in the role that you have played in getting your foster dog to his/her new forever home!

Thank you for reading this Handbook and for helping us save another life!