

What To Do When Your Foster Dog Arrives

1. Make a Vet appointment ASAP. If you know when the dog will arrive call for an appointment in advance. Make the dental appointment at the same time. If it is not needed you can always cancel it but if you wait it may take a while to get an opening. Make the spay/neuter appointment also, if needed.
2. Be sure to take the Medical Check List with you.
3. Make an appointment with a groomer.
4. If there is a chance the dog may have fleas give it a Capstar and keep it isolated in a non-carpeted area.)
5. Start a daily diary of the dog's stay in foster care. You can do it daily but if the dog is around for a bit, you can group several days together. You will give this to the dog's new family when it is adopted.
6. Start a photo album. Try to take pictures daily.
7. If the dog needs a bath and you can't get into the groomer, it is best to do it sooner rather than later. The first few days are usually the honeymoon period when the dog will accept handling pretty easily. (Of course if the dog appears aggressive, don't put yourself in any danger).
8. If the dog came from a shelter or is very dirty or mangy looking, isolate the dog from your dogs until after the vet visit. If you do this with a babygate, do a double gate so that they can't sniff each other through the gate. This is to keep your dogs safe from anything infectious. Some rescues isolate the dog for 10 days in case of an illness that has an incubation period. This is your option. Most of us just don't have the means to do this.
9. If the dog is nervous or submissive, it is often best to crate or set up an ex-pen and keep the dog confined for a while. Let him watch the activities of the family from a safe distance so that he has time to settle down.
10. Pick up any pooh immediately until after the vet visit in case it has worms or other disease in it.
11. Feed separately from your dogs. It is often good to feed in the crate initially so the crate will have good associations. Eventually you will want to work on picking up the dish etc. to be sure he has no food aggression but that can come after a few days.
12. Crate the dog at night but do it in your room or the room with your dogs so that the new dog is not isolated from the pack (assuming you aren't isolating for health reasons). Use a rug or blanket over the crate to close off sensory input; he will often settle down better that way. If the dog barks and carries on so that you cannot sleep, move the dog to another room and close the door. Try again the next night. Often after a couple of nights of this, they will realize that if they bark, they won't be allowed to stay with the pack and they will settle down better.
13. If the dog is a mess, be sure to get several really clearly illustrative "before" photos.
14. Consider changing the dog's name. If the dog came from a bad situation, many believe leaving the name behind helps the dog adjust. (The dog may have only heard his name when he was being hollered at or punished.) If you change the name, it does not have to sound anything like the old name. The dog will adjust to the new name just fine and it might be best to have a name that sounds totally different to rid the name of the negative associations.

15. If your dogs do not do well together, re-read "Introducing Dogs" and Deb's article on "alpha". Make sure you are handling the alpha signals appropriately. And don't judge either dog too harshly.
16. If you have problems that we cannot help with, and Deb's articles aren't helping, then please, please call or email Deb for assistance. She needs a lot of information and much prefers a phone call.
17. REMEMBER that if the dog is a biter, we WILL put it down. Don't do anything that might cause the dog to bite. The dog is nervous and sometimes terrified. If the dog is cornered or doesn't want to do something, back off. Lure the dog to do things rather than using force. Never reach under the bed to get the dog out. Never put the dog in a situation where it feels so threatened that it must bite. You can work on issues later when the dog is feeling comfortable and secure.
18. If you think it won't work, talk to the rest of us. Have us tell you of the absolutely hopeless dog situations we have had where we were sure the dog had to go to another foster home but then we found out that time took care of the problem!!!! And if it really isn't going to work, let us all hear the story so we can find the best new home for him.
19. If the dog is marking, you can use belly bands or piddle pants at first. But this doesn't mean you stop training. If the dog is marking or having potty issues, then read Deb's article on housebreaking the adult dog and set up a safe area where the dog can be when you cannot literally watch the dog and catch it as it starts to lift or squat. Set up a potty pen outdoors. We will purchase an ex-pen for this purpose.
20. Don't expect everything to be 100% easy. If it were, we wouldn't need to foster. Most dogs will have some things to work on and that is what our job is all about. We aren't babysitters. We do have to identify and work on the issues of each dog.