

# Guide for Dog Foster Families

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## Introduction:

Thank you so much for your interest in fostering pets for Caldwell County Animal Care Enforcement. By opening up your home to foster pets, you're not only helping to save lives, but you're also providing the individual attention and love these animals desperately need.

Our foster program is designed to help pets from our shelter get a second chance at finding a home — a chance they may not have received at the shelter. Many of the pets who need foster homes require extra care and attention, which shelters often don't have the staff or resources to provide. But in a loving foster home, every animal can get the individual attention he or she needs to find a forever family.

Foster homes are asked to provide care for the pets, as well as transportation to and from veterinary appointments as needed, and transportation to the shelter for routine medical care. Care for fosters includes feeding according to size and needs, exercise according to energy levels, and lots of play time and positive socialization.

Although fostering is a lot of work, it is a very rewarding experience. By participating in this program, you are saving lives and helping many different types of pets find the families they've been longing for. Through fostering, we can work together to save lives!

## Why Foster a Dog?

### Kennel Stress

Our dogs come in as strays, injured animals, and owner surrenders, no matter their past, the shelter environment is most likely a lot different of an environment than what they are used to. Staying in an unfamiliar place with stray dogs coming in and out can be very stressful on these animals and they may not present well in their kennels as they would in a foster home.

### Learning More About the Foster

When our dogs come in as strays it is very hard to learn about their personalities due to the shelter environment being such a stressful place. When an animal is staying with a foster, they tend to open much more than they would in a kennel. From being in a foster's home we learn if the animal is potty trained, we learn about their personality, what their favorite toys are, if they do good with other dogs or cats, how they do on a leash, and so much more! Fosters give us the opportunity to get these dogs adopted much faster than they would staying in the shelter.

### Overcrowded Shelter

With Caldwell County Animal Care Enforcement being the county animal shelter, we stay very busy and are usually very crowded. Caldwell County Animal Care Enforcement takes in strays, animals picked up by our enforcement officers,

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injured animals, and even owner surrenders by appointment. Because of the number of dogs constantly being taken in we need to have fosters on hand to help us with our shelter population. Due to our limited capacity kennels, we are always in need of fosters.

## Top Tips for Foster Parents

- ♥ Check in regularly with Animal Services about your foster – return calls in a timely manner.
- ♥ Ask for advice if your dog/puppy has stopped eating or has undesirable behaviors.
- ♥ If your dog seems unwell, please check with Animal Care Enforcement so we can provide medicine if needed.
- ♥ Keep foster dog separated from other animals in the house until they have been introduced properly and get along. Your personal pets may need some time to adjust to the foster dog as your pet may be territorial over the home or family.
- ♥ Please let us know if you need any food, leashes, or a crate to house the dog(s).
- ♥ Foster dogs must be kept on a leash when going outside, if you have a fenced in yard, please monitor them.
- ♥ Send photos regularly to [cbuff@caldwellcountync.org](mailto:cbuff@caldwellcountync.org) so we can find adoption or rescue placement

### Foster families need to provide:

- ♥ A healthy and safe environment for their foster pets.
- ♥ Transportation to and from the shelter and all vet appointments as needed.
- ♥ Socialization and cuddle time to help teach foster pets' positive family and pet relationships.
- ♥ Lots of exercise and positive stimulation to help them develop into great pets.
- ♥ Species and age-appropriate food at least twice daily.
- ♥ A clean and sanitary environment for the foster pet, disinfected twice daily.

**Foster families will be given a checklist and report card to ensure pet is receiving proper care while in the home.**

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## How long will the dog need to be in Foster Care

Ideally, foster pets stay in their assigned foster homes until they get adopted. We cannot guarantee a length of stay but we are willing to work with you if it is not working out and you need to return your foster pet.

\*Please provide us with a reasonable notice to find them a new place to reside. \*

If you have travel plans while you are fostering an animal, you will need to contact us ASAP so we can help you make plans for your foster until you return. Please provide at least one week's notice to ensure that we can find placement for your foster. If your trip is over a holiday, please provide a minimum of two weeks' notice.

You are not required to continue to foster an animal if you feel it's not working out. However, we may not have an immediate alternate foster home for the animal, we will work on moving your foster out as soon as possible, but ask for your understanding and patience. Please call us during business hours if this situation arises.

Please send photos regularly to help staff advertise the dog for adoption. This will help move the foster pet out of your home more quickly.

## Health & Wellness

### Intake Procedure

Your new foster dog/ puppy received vaccines, flea control, and deworming upon coming into our shelter environment, most animals have no reaction to our intake procedure, but if you do notice your foster becoming lethargic or having loss of appetite, please contact us. If the animal does feel slightly off after receiving vaccinations, they should be back to their normal self after about 24 hours.

If you are beginning the foster period after the dog has already been here in the shelter for a couple days, you should not have to worry about any reactions. We do deworm our animals so if you notice any worms in the dogs' stool, they should already be dead. If you happen to notice worms that are still alive, please contact us so we can deworm the animal again.

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Depending on the animal you are fostering you may be asked to bring them in for routine medical care. The kennel tech at animal services will go over medical needs with you and will call you to schedule appointments.

While many pets do not require medications, some do, if your foster needs medications, staff will be sure to show you how to administer them before you take the animal home.

## Veterinary Visits

All vet visits must be pre-authorized unless you are willing to pay for the visit yourself. Check with Caldwell County Animal Care Enforcement staff first as we may be able to treat the injury/ illness at the shelter. If the injury/ illness cannot be treated by shelter staff, Caldwell County Animal Care Enforcement will make a vet appointment.

Many common medical issues are covered under the shelter's veterinary protocol, and medicine can be administered by Animal Services staff. Please do not administer any unauthorized medicine yourself, as it could overdose or interact with other medicines the dog is taking.

## Spay/Neuter

-Spay and neuter surgeries are scheduled through Animal Services at one of our contracted clinics. If your foster dog is not already spayed/neutered, you may be given a date and time to drop off for the surgery. If spayed/ neutered while in your care the veterinarian will send home discharge and post-op instructions after picking up your foster dog.

-Unaltered puppies 4 months of age and older will need to be separated prior to being spayed/neutered to reduce the chances of unwanted breeding.

## Signs of Illness and What to Do Next

Animals generally do a good job of masking when they don't feel well, so determining if your foster is under the weather will require diligent observation of the pet's daily activity and appetite levels. It's a good idea to keep track of these levels in a journal. You'll also want to record any of the following symptoms, which could be signs of illness.

**Eye discharge.** It is normal for pets to have some discharge from their eyes when they wake up and some may have more than others, depending on the breed. But if your foster has yellow or green discharge or swelling around the eyes (making it hard for them to open his eyes), or the third eyelid is showing, you need to contact Animal Services to schedule an appointment.

**Coughing and nasal discharge.** Coughing can be common if you have a foster dog who is pulling on a leash. If the coughing becomes more frequent, or your foster is a feline, watch for discharge coming from the nose. If the discharge

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is clear, the infection is probably viral and medication may not be needed but check with the staff to find out if an appointment is necessary.

If the discharge becomes colored, the animal may have a bacterial infection. Be sure to monitor breathing. If the pet seems to struggle to breathe or starts wheezing, call the staff immediately. Also, once you notice nasal discharge, monitor their eating habits more closely to ensure that he or she is still eating.

**Loss of appetite.** Your foster may be stressed after arriving in your home, and stress can cause lack of appetite. But if the pet hasn't eaten after 24 hours, (less time for kittens and neonates), please notify staff. Also, if the pet has been eating well, but then stops eating for 12 to 24 hours, call the staff to set up an appointment. If you feel a change in diet is necessary, please follow the provided food change chart. An abrupt change in diet can cause diarrhea, which can lead to dehydration.

**Lethargy.** The activity level of your foster will vary depending on age and personality. Keeping an activity log and journal will help you notice whether your foster is less active than he normally is. If the pet cannot be roused or seems weak and unable to stand, it's an emergency, please contact us ASAP.

**Dehydration.** Dehydration is usually associated with diarrhea, vomiting and/or loss of appetite. To test for dehydration, gently pinch the dog's skin around the scruff area. If the skin stays taut, the dog is dehydrated. Please call us to schedule an appointment.

**Vomiting.** Sometimes pets will eat too quickly and will immediately throw up their food. Occasional vomiting isn't cause for alarm, but if your foster has thrown up two or more times in one day, please notify the foster department.

**Diarrhea.** It is important to monitor your foster's pooping habits daily. Soft stool is normal for the first two or three days after taking an animal home, most likely caused by stress and a change in food. If your foster has liquid stool, however, please contact us so that an appointment can be scheduled to ensure that the pet doesn't need medications. Keep in mind that diarrhea will dehydrate the animal, so be proactive about contacting us. If your foster has bloody or mucoid diarrhea, please contact us immediately.

**Frequent ear scratching.** Your foster pet may have a bacterial infection, yeast infection or ear mites if she scratches her ears often and/or shakes her head frequently. These conditions can be treated, please call us to schedule a medical appointment.

**Swollen, irritated ears.** If your foster has irritated, swollen or red or pink ears that smell like yeast, he may have an ear infection called otitis. This type of infection is more common in dogs who have very floppy ears, like basset hounds or Labradors. These pets may need to have their ears cleaned more often to ensure that the infection does not re-occur.

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**Hair loss.** Please contact us if you notice any hair loss on your foster pet after getting them home. It is normal for pets to have thin fur around the lips, eyelids and in front of the ears, but clumpy patches of hair loss or thinning hair can indicate ringworm, dermatitis or the early stages of mange. It is important to check your foster's coat every day.

Though vaccinated upon intake, shelter dogs may suffer from kennel cough, giardia or intestinal parasites. Symptoms of kennel cough include a dry hacking cough, often with phlegm discharge, discharge from the nose and/or eyes, decrease in appetite, dehydration and slight lethargy. Symptoms of giardia or intestinal parasites include vomiting, diarrhea (often with a pungent odor) and/or dehydration. If your foster dog is displaying one or more of these signs, please contact us. These ailments can worsen if left untreated.

## Socialization

### Scared and Nervous Dogs

A good amount of our dogs brought in will develop kennel stress and do not present well in the shelter. Due to the shelter environment being highly stressful to dogs and puppies, the animals may remain nervous until they are adopted or taken in by a foster. With these highly nervous dogs it is important to give them time, your nervous foster dog may need a few days before opening up to you. Give the foster dog space and time to come out of their shell, do not add any other stressors to an already nervous dog such as, loud dogs or children, and cats. It is important to get these shy dogs into foster homes so that they are given a proper chance to open up. A shy or scared dog in the shelter may turn out to be the most friendly and outgoing dog once given the chance of a foster.

### Can my Foster Dog Play with my Personal Pets?

There are a few guidelines that we ask foster families to adhere to regarding their personal pets. While foster pets playing with other pets is often fine, we advise that you consult with your veterinarian before fostering to ensure that all of your personal pets are healthy and up-to-date on all vaccines. Animals in shelters are very susceptible to illness and can carry or catch different diseases. If, for any reason, your personal pet becomes ill while you are fostering, we cannot provide medical care for your personal pet.

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## Other Dogs

We do dog test at the shelter, so we get a good idea of if the dog you are fostering is going to be dog friendly or not. We do also allow you to bring your dog to the shelter to pick out someone that will for sure do well with your dog. If taking a foster home dog to meet your dogs, keep both dogs on a leash and let them introduce slowly. It is good to let them meet outside of the house first just in case your dog(s) happen to be territorial over the home.

## Cats

Dogs are not tested with cats in the shelter due to the highly stressful environment. It is always best to separate your foster dog from your cat until introduced slowly and properly. (Please see our "How to Introduce Dogs to Cats" packet).

## What if my Foster Bites Me?

If any of your foster pets bite you and break skin, causing you to bleed, you need to report the bite to us within 24 hours of when the bite occurred. The law requires that we report all bites. The teeth of the animal, not the nails, must have broken the skin. If you are unsure, then please report the bite anyway.

## Behavior

### Potty Training

Unless the animal was surrendered, we do not know of our dogs' past and if they have been potty trained. We do get an idea of who is potty trained by watching and seeing who potty's in the outside portion of their kennel, but we are never 100% sure if a stray dog is potty trained before going to a fosters home.

Taking the foster out frequently and reacting positively when the dog does potty outside will encourage the dog to use the bathroom outside more often. Watching for signs that the dog has to use the bathroom like whining, pacing the floor, and standing at the door to go out, and then acting on those signs quickly will help to make sure the foster goes outside.

### Other Concerns

If you have any other concerns about your foster dog's behavior, please contact Caldwell County Animal Care Enforcement staff. We are more than happy to help walk you through remedies or management techniques for common unwanted behaviors.

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## Emergencies

What constitutes a medical emergency? A good rule of thumb is any situation in which you would call 911 for a person. Here are some specific symptoms that could indicate an emergency:

- Not breathing or labored breathing
  - Bloody diarrhea, vomiting, weakness, high fever (above 103.5 degrees)
  - Signs of extreme dehydration: dry mucous membranes, weakness, vomiting, tenting of the skin (when the skin is pulled up, it stays there)
  - Abnormal lethargy or unable to stand
  - Unconsciousness or unable to wake up
  - Cold to the touch
  - Broken bones
  - Any trauma: hit by a car, dropped, stepped on
  - A large wound or profuse bleeding that doesn't stop when pressure is applied
  - Loss of appetite for more than 24 hours
- If your foster displays any of these symptoms, please follow the emergency phone protocol. If the animal is vomiting or has diarrhea, but is still active, eating and drinking, you can probably wait until the next day to get help.

### Animal Services Contacts:

**\*\*Due to these numbers being our personal lines, please send a text and/or E-mail first if possible and we will contact you ASAP! \*\***

- **Behavior concerns/Emergencies-**
- Cora Buff: [cbuff@caldwellcountync.org](mailto:cbuff@caldwellcountync.org)
  - (828) 310-0250
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## Showcasing Your Foster

### Web Presence

If the dog's picture is already on our Web site, you should write a new story about the dog's personality. A good story makes a big difference in the number of calls the dog gets, so be descriptive! Try to include things like:

- If the dog is good with other animals and children
- How well the dog does with using the bathroom outside
- The dogs' interest: if they like to outside, hiking, swimming, sunbathing etc.
- The dogs' temperament and personality
- Favorite toys, favorite things to do
- What makes your foster dog unique!

### Write a Short Biography

Biographies can be short and to the point, they should focus on the positive aspects of the dog. If the dog has some bad habits, this can be discussed in person with any potential adopters. The bio should generate interest, not turn people away. We don't want to mislead people; however, we really try to focus on the positive. Please email the bio to [cbuff@caldwellcountync.org](mailto:cbuff@caldwellcountync.org).

### Photos

If your dog's picture is not yet on the website or Facebook page, there are several options for getting pictures taken and posted. If you would like to take the pictures yourself, you are welcome to do so. Please email them along with the bio to [cbuff@caldwellcountync.org](mailto:cbuff@caldwellcountync.org)

A photo of your foster dog behaving well in a home will be sure to grab the attention of potential adopters and rescues.

You are welcome to take your dog to the shelter during one of our regularly scheduled digital photography sessions as well. We can inform you of these dates and times a couple of days before they are to take place.

Feel free to advertise your foster pet on your own social media as well, let people know that the dog is available and adoption ready!

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## Getting to Adoption

### What if I Want to adopt my Foster?

If you want to adopt a foster animal, you will need to complete an adoption application and follow the full adoption process. If you do decide to adopt your foster, please contact animal services staff right away because once the pet is up for adoption, we cannot hold him/her for anyone, including the foster parent.

### What if I Know Someone Interested in Adopting?

If someone you know is interested in adopting, please contact the shelter and give them the details ASAP, we cannot hold him/her for anyone, but we do want to accommodate referrals from foster parents if we can.

### Staying in Touch

Please email us at [cbuff@caldwellcountync.org](mailto:cbuff@caldwellcountync.org) frequently so we can post updated pictures to get your foster adopted as soon as possible.

### Adoption Process

For anyone interested in adopting your foster dog the process is very simple. We will set up a meet and greet time for potential adopters to meet your foster at the shelter. Some fosters like to stay present for the meet and greet since they will know most about the foster dog, but that is completely up to the foster. If you would like to write up a note about the dogs' temperament and personality to give to potential adopters to read through, that is also helpful.

If a potential adopter decides to take the dog for a trial period, we will keep you in mind if they end up having to return the dog. If they decide to adopt directly after the meet and greet we will keep you in mind for a future foster!

**We also try to schedule regular adoption events, you may be asked to bring your pet in to be seen by potential adopters**