

## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT FOSTERING A DOG OR CAT

Fostering a rescued animal is very rewarding and you are also saving a life at the same time. You will love the animal but never lose sight of the fact that it is not yours. You are a CARETAKER ANGEL for that animal, guiding, teaching and giving him confidence so he can transition easily to a new home. If you are considering being a foster parent or are one already there are a few things you should be aware of. Make sure that the Rescue you are fostering for is reputable and has the welfare of the rescued animals at heart. After all you do not want to endanger the lives of any of your pets by introducing rescued animals to your home environment that have not been properly vetted. Know your Rescue, THAT is most important as some put more into their animals than others. You as the public have a right to know what is coming into your home. A reputable Rescue will make sure the animal has had a complete check-up at the vet plus whatever vaccinations are required prior to bringing the animal into your home. If you value the health of your own animals - do not foster without SEEING PROOF the rescued animal saw a vet, was vaccinated, is not sick nor infested with fleas or worms. Ensure the treatment was done professionally by a vet and not by the Rescue purchasing some over the counter stuff. Make sure the animal does not have diarrhea because of a parasite that is contagious. But remember that diarrhea can be seen in an animal in a new environment caused by nerves for a couple of days, but there is no blood in the stool! Get the Rescue to SHOW you the vaccination papers (do not take anyone's word for it) AND show you the vet invoice and record for anything they claim was done to the animal.

Accidents can happen! Ringworm can show up that the vet did not spot because it was too early. Kennel cough can show up after a couple of days fostering. A puppy can develop parvo even after seeing the vet. An allergy can be mites. A reputable Rescue will get the vet to do everything to protect for foreseeable things, but the foster has to be careful too and sensible. Check the animals every day. Do not mix home and foster cats until they have been there long enough to find out if they have rhino for instance. If you get feline leukemia in your house then it is a possible problem for the future fosters. You cannot catch leukemia or Feline AIDS.

At Gerdy's we vet our animals immediately. There is a Heartworm test done, flea and worm treatment, intranasal Bordetella vaccine, and shots (if timing is right). The dogs are boarded for 2 full days until the Bordetella vaccine takes effect. We recommend to fosters with dogs that their own dogs are immunized to date including Bordetella (kennel cough). We recommend, as a precaution, that foster dogs NOT POOP in the backyard with the home dogs in case of worm eggs in stool infecting the soil. If stools are picked up immediately it is all right. It is ALWAYS possible the foster dog can pass along kennel cough if it is being incubated at the time of foster placement and unknown to the Rescue group. Decency says the Rescue group pays any vet costs for treatment of home dog affected. That is why we ask that home dogs be fully vaccinated and that the vaccines are current, for their protection. Gerdy's NEVER take a sick dog to a foster home, but recognizes that a dog can get sick AFTER being put in foster - that is why we insist the home dog be protected. Fosters can catch things from home dogs too! We do what we can to keep a home dog well, but things can overlap. We do not intentionally place ill dogs in foster homes. We provide all the food, medication from vet if required and expect the foster to give as prescribed - eye drops, antibiotics, etc - on time.

With cats, the first thing Gerdy's does is the feline AIDS/Leukemia test, and only places in foster, cats that have tested negative. However cats who are positive for FIV are perfectly adoptable in a home with other cats if they are all sterilized and of non-fighting nature. We do not place Feline leukemia-positive cats in foster homes. Rhino infected cats are vetted until recovered and the vet says when they are well enough to go into foster (if other cats are in home). Also we deworm,

vaccinate, deflea when we get them—Gerdy's is VERY THOROUGH—we do everything for our cats. Home cats are expected to be immunized by owners for their protection. We supply the food we want the cat to have and the vet care. Any vet medications are to be given as prescribed, by the foster on time and for length of time prescribed. We do not allow our cats if in foster or adopted to go outside. We put a LOT of money into their vet care before putting them up for adoption. We do not want them to catch diseases outside like feline leukemia or Feline AIDS—our cats have been tested and found negative. There are fishers, coyotes, and other predators outside, even in the country suburbia areas, traffic dangers, as well as people doing harm to cats for pleasure. Gerdy's DOES NOT foster cats in homes where their cats are outside cats.

When you are fostering you do not need a dog license. It is short term and is not your dog. If you have animal adverse neighbours, good idea to tell them what you are doing for the Rescue and that it will not be long term. Still people being people and nasty at that, it is possible to have complaints just for the sake of complaining. They are technically correct about the extra dog, but most understand, especially when told the dog's story. We have never heard of a complaint about a short term foster, after all a lot of people look after relatives' animals when they go on vacation. But if it happens, you can check with your Mayor (always work the top!) and ask if an exemption can be made in foster cases out of compassion. With Gerdy's vet visits are ALL done and PAID FOR by us (or you with our approval first at the vet concerned). This is because we work with discounts and do not get them at all vets, just the ones we work with. You are not allowed to vet on your own or to any other vet. Call us and we vet IMMEDIATELY if an emergency or give you approval and call the vet concerned and make arrangements for the foster to bring in for treatment.

If at all possible, we invite the foster to the showing of the dog—remember showing does not mean the dog will be taken by the people—sometimes it is not a good fit after all for many good reasons. We ALWAYS put the dog FIRST in any situation! Including your dogs! We introduce the dog to yours, we try to provide a crate if we can for security both yours and his, you know that dogs feel more secure sometimes especially a foster dog. We spend time with you as they are introduced and answer any and all questions, we leave both our phone numbers for you to call ANYTIME. Gerdy gives you her cell, pager, and home number! We NEED feedback from the foster—that is to help US because sometimes people lie to get a dog placed out of their home, or lie by omission! You might get a counter surfer, we want to know ALL naughty stuff done as well as the good. A lot of foster animals go through a depression—they are mentally LOST. They ALL get better with time. Just be matter of fact and treat him like a normal dog or cat, one of your own pack—no different, no extra favours. Dogs HAVE to find their own place in the pack, do not promote them and demote one of your own without realizing it. Treat him as your new additional dog would be, training and expectations the same. Remind yourself of the basics—realize some dogs have been abused or mistreated—NEVER go grab a collar, crawl or reach under table, etc to grab him—a frightened dog will retreat, these guys respond to kind words AND a treat or bit of food, and will eventually come over on his own. They need to learn to chill! The abused dog cowers when an arm is raised or newspaper is picked up, a broom is in use, or when loud voices prevail. The response to time in a tranquil home is astounding—such is the joy of fostering, to see an animal bloom into the personality he was born with, full of joy and in the moment—when all the uncertainties are gone from their faces and body language—and they start to be normal dogs again, happy and confident.

Adoption—the end of the foster period—it is bittersweet. But when you see the look on the new families faces as they gaze at the object of their affection and the dog soaking up the praise happily—then you know success as a foster. You have guided a confused, unhappy animal to being able to start a brand new life anew with people who love him. You have given him the ability to react in a positive manner, re-housetrained him on occasion, showed him how to walk on leash,

sit, etc and even how to shake a paw! You have taught a dog how to play, who never played before from neglect. You present a shiny coated dog to the new family, not the dull and listless coat he had before from no brushing and inferior food. You have trained a dog to trust you around his food bowl, and shown him a dog bed sometimes for the first time in his life, and taught him it is his to lay on. You put on his first dog coat for his first ever walk. Your life is full of firsts for that foster dog. And as he leaves you behind, trotting off with his new family—you cry and wipe your eyes, you are glad for him but miss him too. And like most good foster people you ask “when do I get the next one?” Each is an adventure, different in every way. You develop a wonderful understanding of animals and it helps your relationship with your own as well. Fostering is indeed a win-win situation!

If you wish to foster a cat or dog for Gerdy's Rescues, please email us at [info@gerdysrescue.org](mailto:info@gerdysrescue.org) and we will get back to you. Fosters have to be a reasonable travel distance.