

FOSTER HAND OUT



WELCOME TO THE GREAT DOG FOSTER FAMILY!

Bringing a dog or puppy into your home can be a wonderful experience. Your new family member will need your patience and understanding during this transition. Please remember that your new companion has been through many new experiences lately. Many of the dogs come to us from the South, riding in a USDA approved transport truck. After their long journey, MA state law requires that they get a vet visit, receive a health certificate, and stay at our quarantine facility for 48 hours where their needs are attended to by our loving staff. From there they either go to their forever homes, or to foster homes.

BRINGING YOUR FOSTER DOG HOME

Once your new companion is home it may take him or her a few days, to settle in and adjust, and for you to see their true personality shine through. It is possible your dog has never seen stairs before, or not had a lot of experience in a loving home. Keep this in mind as you introduce your dog or puppy to new people and new things. Sometimes new things can be scary for them. We suggest that you let your dog take the first week with you to adjust and get to know your family. Try not to overwhelm them with a lot of new people and new situations in the first few days.

WHERE DO I PICK UP MY FOSTER DOG?

The Massachusetts Department of Agriculture requires that all dogs entering the state be quarantined for a period of 48 hours at an approved facility before being released to a foster or forever home. Our approved facility is at 34D Holton Street, Woburn, MA. Dogs arrive on Thursdays and can be picked up on Saturday between 9am-12pm after the quarantine period has been satisfied.

WHAT DO I BRING TO PICK UP MY FOSTER DOG?

Your foster will come with a collar, so you will need to bring a leash. We strongly suggest bringing a crate (or a second pair of hands) for your foster dog to transport them in the car to your home. You'll receive the dog's paperwork packet that should stay with the dog wherever they go. DO NOT bring your resident dog(s) to pick up your foster dog as it is a very stressful and chaotic time to introduce them.

WHAT IS IN THE PAPERWORK PACKET?

In the brown folder packet will be your foster's medical vetting records and GDRNE ID tag. When you get home, please review all the records in the packet and make note on the cover sheet when your foster is next due for vaccines, heart worm and flea/tick preventative. Please also remove the GDRNE ID tag from the packet and put it on your foster's collar. This paperwork packet and all tags should go with the foster dog whenever transferred to another foster or an adopter.

WHAT KIND OF FOOD SHOULD I FEED MY FOSTER DOG?

While at our isolation facility your Great Dog has been eating Wellness. You should have received a complimentary bag when you picked up your dog from the kennel today. If you plan on changing to a different food, it is important to mix the old food in with the new food, and switch over slowly to avoid stomach upset. Start by mixing 3/4 old food with 1/4 new food, then 1/2 old food 1/2 new food, then 1/4 old food, 3/4 new food until you are switched over to the new food completely. Adults should eat adult food and puppies should eat puppy food.

DO YOU SUPPLY FOOD?

Yes. We can supply you with Wellness food and you can pick it up from our isolation kennel.

SHOULD I USE A CRATE?

Great Dog strongly encourages foster homes to crate puppies (this helps with house training and saves personal items from being chewed!). For older dogs, please use your discretion based on the dog's history. We can lend you with a crate if you would like.

CAN I CHANGE MY FOSTER DOG'S NAME?

You are welcome to call your foster dog anything you like, but for posting purposes and record-keeping we need to keep the foster's name as it is.

HOW DO I INTRODUCE MY FOSTER DOG TO MY RESIDENT DOGS/CATS?

It is always best to introduce dogs on neutral territory. Try to keep leashes loose and let the dogs approach each other from the side, rather than putting them face to face. This is a more natural way for them to greet, and how they will choose to greet on their own if off leash. Watch for any stiffening of their bodies; stiff body means that the dog is uncomfortable, best to calmly walk away and give them some space. Loose, wiggly body posture is good and should be encouraged. (See *section on dog body language to familiarize yourself with other signs of stress*).

It is usually a good idea to feed the new dog in a crate or in a separate room to avoid any issues over food. The same goes for bones and other high value items, best to give them to the dogs in separate spaces.

To prepare your cat for your foster dog's arrival, you should designate a safe space for them. Putting up a baby gate that the cat can get over or under but the dog can't, is a good way to make sure your cat has a safe place to retreat to. When letting them meet for the first time, it is a good idea to have the dog on leash. Don't force the cat to make contact if it doesn't want to, and make sure that it has an easy out, and doesn't end up cornered. Cats respond differently to meeting a dog, some are friendly, some run away, and some may go after the dog if they feel threatened. Because of this, and because of the sharpness of the cat's claws, it may be a good idea to trim your cat's nails prior to arrival of your foster dog.



WHAT IF MY DOG AND THE FOSTER DOG DON'T GET ALONG?

Although we strive to match our foster dogs with an appropriate foster home, there are occasions when dogs – just like people – don't get along. Please keep in mind that our dogs have had a long, hard trip to New England, so it may take a few days for them to get comfortable and for their true personality to shine through. If after a few days you feel the placement is not going to work, please contact Caitlin at caitlin.gdrne@gmail.com and let her know that the placement is not working. Caitlin will work quickly to find an alternate foster home. Because foster homes are limited and are not always readily available, it may be a day or two before the dog can be moved.

WHAT IF MY FOSTER DOG REQUIRES MEDICAL ATTENTION?

Great Dog is proud to partner with Andover Animal Hospital, who provides quality, discounted care to our dogs. If you believe a trip to the vet is in order, please contact Great Dog at caitlin.gdrne@gmail.com (please include a brief description of the dog's condition) and we'll give you the information to schedule a vet visit to bring in your foster dog at your convenience. The most common medical issues our dogs encounter in foster care are kennel cough, stress colitis and intestinal worms. Many of the medicines required to treat these issues can be mailed or dropped off to you by Great Dog. We cannot cover vetting costs at any other vet, but ours.

DO YOU PROVIDE HEARTWORM PREVENTATIVE AND FLEA/TICK PREVENTATIVE?

Yes. We count on you to let us know when your foster is due for their monthly preventatives. Please email our caitlin.gdrne@gmail.com to let us know your foster is due and we'll mail it right out to you.

HOW DOES THE ADOPTION PROCESS WORK?

Our adoption coordinators dedicate their time and effort to re-homing our dogs with loving forever families. We have an in-depth screening process that helps ensure our dogs are placed in the very best homes. The process includes a written application, phone screen, vet & personal references check, and a home visit.

WHAT IS MY ROLE IN THE ADOPTION PROCESS?

Once an applicant “passes” the phone screen and reference check, the adoption coordinator will put the applicant in touch with you to talk about the dog. The applicant will want to know about the dog’s personality, ability to get along with other dogs/cats/children, physical attributes, etc.

The applicant will then let the adoption coordinator know if they want to meet the dog. If so, they will make arrangements directly with you so a convenient meeting can be arranged. Although the adoption coordinators carefully consider the written application, phone interview, reference checks, and home visit when deciding if an applicant is a good match for a dog, your feedback is welcomed and encouraged! If you think an applicant sounds perfect for a dog, please let the adoption coordinator know. And if you’re unsure about the dog’s placement with a particular applicant, be sure to voice your concerns.

HOW DO I KNOW WHO THE ADOPTION COORDINATOR FOR MY FOSTER DOG IS?

If you do not hear from a coordinator about your foster dog, please e-mail caitlin.gdrne@gmail.com to find out if an adoption coordinator has been assigned. A coordinator is assigned when new applications are received.

WHEN WILL MY FOSTER DOG GO HOME?

It’s difficult to estimate how long a dog will be in foster care. It can be just a few days or a few weeks. A dog can go home with an approved applicant only. If an applicant has already been approved for adoption (e.g., written application, phone screen, references check, and home visit) prior to visiting your home, the dog may go home with the applicant if the meeting goes well. Sometimes an applicant may meet a dog before their home visit is done. In these cases, the dog may not go home with the applicant since they are not approved adopters. If you are not sure if the applicant is approved, please check with the adoption coordinator. Please be sure to give the dog’s paperwork packet to the adopter.

CAN I PROVIDE INPUT FOR MY FOSTER DOG’S ONLINE BIO?

Yes! As the foster family, you know more than anyone about the dog and your input for their online bio is greatly appreciated. Input (and updated photos) can be e-mailed to caitlin.gdrne@gmail.com. (Our adoptable dogs’ online bios can be accessed via our website at www.gdrne.com.)

WHAT IF I WANT TO ADOPT MY FOSTER DOG?

Many times our foster families fall in love with their foster dog and don’t want to part with them. Please let us know IMMEDIATELY if you are considering this! Once we have started working applications for your foster dog, it will be very difficult to stop the adoption. Please email us at caitlin.gdrne@gmail.com and let us know that you would like to adopt your foster dog. If your foster is available, we will give you instructions how to pay the \$475 or \$400 adoption fee and submit the adoption contract.

WHAT DO I DO WITH MY FOSTER DOG IF I AM GOING ON VACATION?

Please notify our foster coordinator Caitlin at caitlin.gdrne@gmail.com as soon as possible if you have a vacation planned. Will will locate an alternate foster for you, or arrange for the dog to board at one of our approved boarding facilities.

WHAT IS A MEET AND GREET AND AM I REQUIRED TO BRING MY FOSTER?

Meet and Greets are events held at different public locations to give people a chance to come and meet the Great Dogs currently in foster. It is encouraged that you bring your foster to as many Meet and Greets as possible. In the event that you cannot bring your foster dog, we can often arrange a ride for the dog so that it doesn’t miss out on a chance to meet their forever family.

WHAT IF SOMEONE I KNOW WANTS TO ADOPT MY FOSTER?

All potential adopters must fill out an application and go through the adoption process. Please have the interested party fill out an Adoption Application on our website: www.gdrne.com. You can also inquire as to whether or not your foster has a previous application pending. To be fair to all applicants, applications are reviewed in a first come first serve manner.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND REFERENCES FOR BASIC TRAINING ISSUES

House Training

Today's preferred method of house training is crate training. A crate used for house training should be just large enough for the dog to stand up, turn around and lie down in. Dogs typically won't soil in the same area that they sleep.

Training pads and papers are not recommended as this sends a mixed signal- it's okay to go to the bathroom in the house "sometimes". It is best to send a clear message.

Keep a close eye on your dog/puppy in the house, if they start sniffing around looking for a place to void, take them outside. When they do go to the bathroom outside praise them excitedly and feed them a treat.

If they have an accident in the house, whoops! there is not much you can do about it after the fact. But, if you catch them in the act, you can make a loud noise to disrupt them and promptly bring him/her outside. Praise them as described above if they finish what they started inside, outside.

The umbilical method- this is a handy way to make sure your dog doesn't go out of sight to go the bathroom when you are not paying attention. Use their leash to attach them to your belt loop or keep them attached to your chair.

Puppy Biting and Chewing

Teething puppies will be nippy, and they will chew on various objects. Puppies play and wrestle with their mouths. While this is normal behavior, those sharp puppy teeth can be painful!

Some ways to deal with puppy biting- make a yelping noise if they nibble too hard. This is how puppies signal to each other that a bite is too rough, and most puppies respond quite well, and will remove their mouths when they hear it. Holding still- a moving target is more fun than one that doesn't respond. While this can be difficult to do, it is effective. If standing still is not an option, remove yourself from the room the puppy is in. They will learn that rough play makes their person disappear. This is a way of using negative reinforcement to change the behavior. An alternative is to remove the puppy. Just as young children sometimes get over tired and act up, puppies do as well, and sometimes guiding them quietly to their crates for a time out and a nap is the best course of action. Other options are redirecting the play, instead of wrestling, get a ball and play fetch, or give the dog an appropriate chew toy such as a frozen Kong or bully stick.

Additional Resources for Information on Training and to find a Trainer in your area:

www.apdt.com

www.petprofessionalsguild.com

ADDITIONAL INFO FOR FOSTERS

It may be that you end up with a foster puppy who is in their crucial socialization window, or, you may be fostering an older dog who may not have had the best socialization when younger. Please let us know if you experience any behavioral issues with your foster. Here is some basic information you may find helpful.

SOCIALIZATION AND HANDLING

Puppies have a window of socialization where they are most open to being exposed to new experiences, people, and objects. This window of socialization is generally from 8 weeks to 16 weeks of age. It is important to take advantage of this window to help you dog become a well adjusted adult, fostering as many positive experiences during this sensitive period as possible. Please discuss with your veterinarian which vaccines they recommend before your dog may meet unfamiliar dogs.

Try to think of as many things as you can that your dog may be exposed to over his/her lifetime, some examples are: stairs, umbrellas, winter coats, hats, gloves, men with beards, hooded sweatshirts, people of different ages and races, crutches, wheel chairs, walkers...

The more exposure the better- but, always have high value food rewards on hand to help your dog associate these new and potentially frightening things/experiences with something positive.

If your puppy seems nervous, don't push him/her to get too close to what they are afraid of, instead, let them approach on their own terms. Encourage them and feed them as they make positive progress. You are your dog's advocate and guardian, stick up for them if you need to, they aren't always understood when they try to use their body language to express their feelings.

Also take this time to get your dog used to all different kinds of handling- make it fun! Feed them while you touch their paws, press on their toes (as would be done during a nail trim), look in their mouths, play with their ears, etc.

This will make vet visits, and giving medications if needed in the future, less scary and more routine.



DESENSITIZATION

Don't despair if your dog is older than 16 weeks, there is a well adjusted, happy, life in their future too if you are willing to work with them a little. Helping them adjust to new things, or scary things, isn't all that different from what you would do with a puppy during the socialization period, it just may take a little more time and patience.

Most instances of "aggression" in dogs are actually caused by fear. When dogs are pushed to or past their "threshold", (the point where they feel threatened enough to act out in order to protect themselves or resources they deem valuable), this is when we most often see aggressive behavior. Threshold distances and reactions vary from dog to dog- just as it would in a human. (You may be perfectly fine seeing a spider from a foot away, but your best friend may run screaming or swat at it).

Once we have determined where the dog's threshold is, we do our best to avoid it. Instead, we slowly introduce the dog to the thing that makes it anxious by feeding treats and retreating if we see signs of stress (to be listed later). In this way we change the dog's mindset- "seeing other dogs while on leash means I get food! And, when I start to feel nervous, my human lets me move away and get more space so I feel comfortable again! Seeing other dogs (kids, men with beards, vacuum cleaners, etc.) isn't so bad after all!"

Putting some time in to help our dogs feel more at ease in the world and learn to trust us is time well spent and will only increase your bond with your new best friend.

SIGNS OF STRESS

Many people are aware of some of the signs of stress in a dog, but there are many other more subtle signs that will help you communicate and train your new dog.

Commonly Known Signs of Stress and Appeasement

- Tucked tail
- Shaking
- Cowering
- Growling

Less Commonly Known Signs of Stress and Appeasement

- Urine Marking
- Panting
- Shedding
- Pinned ears
- Licking lips and/or nose
- Refusal of food
- Yawning when not tired

Avoidance Behaviors

- Turning head away
- Inattention
- Looking away
- Licking genitals
- Excessive sniffing

Watch Out, You've Gone Too Far (or are about to)!

- Freezing
- Freezing in combination with "whale eye" when the dog looks at you out of the corner of its eye and you can see the whites of the eye.
- Growling in combination with freezing and/or whale eye.



A good example of "whale eye" in combination with "freezing". How does the dog above feel about the pesky puppy barking at him outside of the photo, who is the object of his attention? While his lips aren't raised, he is actually growling as well.

LEARNING THEORY AND FINDING A TRAINER THAT FITS YOU AND YOUR DOG'S NEEDS

While there are many training methods available, it is important to make sure that you find the trainer/training class that uses the least force possible to train your dog. Dogs and other animals learn in the same basic manner that people do, and positive reinforcement is scientifically proven to be the best way to teach any living being. Not only do the dogs learn quickly, they enjoy learning, and it also helps build the bond between dog and human.

A quick note on some basic learning theory terms:

- Positive reinforcement, by definition, is adding something desirable to increase the occurrence of a specific behavior.
- We use whatever motivates the dog, whether it be food, a tennis ball, or praise, to reinforce behaviors that we like, and want the dog to repeat.
- Negative punishment, by definition, is taking away something desirable to decrease the occurrence of a specific behavior.
- We ignore, or remove our attention from the dog when it behaves in a way that it not desirable.
- This decreases the behaviors that we don't like, without physically punishing the dog, or having to use physical force.
- Positive Punishment, by definition, is the addition of a stimulus that causes pain or is unpleasant in some way, as a method to stop a dog from repeating a certain behavior. While this can seem like a "quick fix", it is not as helpful in changing behavior because while they now know what you DON'T want them to do, they have no idea what they SHOULD DO instead, and will often repeat the same behavior again even though they will be punished for it. Also, often over time, more and more physical force is often needed to get the same results. This type of training can be damaging to both the dog and to the relationship between dog and human.
- Negative punishment, by definition is the addition of a continued unpleasant stimulus that is then removed when the desirable behavior is exhibited. This type of training has the same issues as positive punishment and is not recommended.

Hopefully this basic knowledge of Learning Theory will help you in your understanding of your foster dog.



**THANK YOU FOR
OPENING YOUR HEART AND HOME
TO FOSTER A GREAT DOG!**

Don't hesitate to contact us at caitlin.gdrne@gmail.com
with any concerns or questions.