



FOSTER GUIDELINES

Thank you, for offering your time and home to foster a dog in need. We appreciate it, and without you, we could not help our labs in need.

Veterinary Care:

Our dogs have either seen a vet within reasonable time before surrender & we have their records, &/or we arrange to take them as part of the surrender process. However, if you think there is a medical problem, let us know right away. Do not take the dog to a vet on your own; all veterinary care must be pre-approved as to the vet and anticipated expense. If you have a veterinary emergency make your best efforts to reach the contacts listed above first and immediately. If, in your judgment, the dog is in imminent distress, don't wait, get them in and try to reach us before anything beyond first aid emergency treatment is carried out.

The First Night

Make sure your foster lab has gone potty prior to entering the home. Walk them around your house like they are a guest in your home (on leash if possible). Show them the water and food dish, a bed if available, and most importantly the door to indicate they have to go potty. Try and go outside this door every half hour for the first few hours with your dog each time saying let's go POTTY. When they do please let them know they are great and even give them a treat. It helps them associate the potty place quickly to avoid accident. If there is another dog in the home please meet outside in the yard on neutral territory prior to entering the home together. Please watch your lab for signs of stress and anxiety such as heavy breathing, pacing, door darting, car door darting, digging under the fence, trying to slip out of their collar, etc. Do not leave your new foster outside the back yard unattended until you are comfortable that they are adjusting well. The dog may like you as a foster but still may be a bit confused as to why they are in your home and start owner searching.

This can be a stressful night for you and the lab. The lab doesn't know what to do, where to sleep, how long to sleep, how to tell you they have to go to the washroom, etc. Please be patient and give some guidance while understanding the lab may need a day or two to figure things out and relax.

General Notes and Protocol

Dog Behaviour

Fostering requires patience and tolerance. Even a well-behaved & well-trained dog can have problems adjusting to a stranger in a strange house, especially in the first few days, such as accidents from stress or simply not being sure where & how to exit the house to do his business. He may not be willing to go in front of you (if dogs have been scolded for going), or may be afraid to go without you, or to go out on his own for fear of abandonment outside. You might have to go out with him for a while until he's ready to be outside on his own. Either way, praise him for going for the first few days to reinforce house training from the start. He may also have changed food & have loose stool or vomiting from this, or from stress, or loss of appetite, lethargy, depression, anxiety. He may



have destructive behaviour or separation anxiety. Don't expect too much too fast, you have to take some cues from the dog & take it in stride. If problems are severe or last longer than 2 days, call us to discuss.

The “5-day & 21-day rules”: Day 5 is generally when you will start to see the “real” dog's personality begin to emerge as his confidence in his new environment grows & he's had a chance to recharge. This may be longer for dog that is elderly or has known health or behaviour issues. Don't assume you “know” the dog or have seen it all & relax your authority or routines too quickly. For longer-term fosters, the 21-day “rule” is another milestone, and applies to both behaviour & health issues, ex. 12-year old foster in poor health from neglect took 4 weeks to be able to go 8 hours at night without an accident, but by 8 weeks, could go over 10 hours.

Safety

No matter how well-behaved or trustworthy the dog appears to be, every dog is an unknown to some extent & always err on the side of assuming there's a risk in introducing the dog to people, especially children, and to other animals. Safety of all is always our concern.

Do not let the dog go off-leash except in your own fenced yard (including a friend's yard if there's a dog off leash) & don't take him into a leash-free park - we want to avoid accidents or injuries. Some foster dogs could be looking for ways to escape as they are unfamiliar with their new setting. Don't take the chance - it isn't worth the risk. Please make sure you LEAVE the collars we place on the dogs on the dogs. If you feel you need another type of collar on the dog slip it over the one already in place and they can wear two if need be.

Don't leave the dog unattended with people, especially children. It is usually best not to take the dog to other houses until you have established a reasonable continuity with the dog yourself (varies with age & training of dog).

When you go for a walk please use the same route each time. This is done in case the dog slips their collar they have some idea of where their temporary home is and may possibly return on their own. Please also understand not all fosters will walk well on leash and the walk may present a challenge that requires your patience and strength. Bring treats on the walk and if they pull on the leash have them sit and give them a treat, say OK and start the walk again.

Fosters and Children *****

Labs are generally great with people and including children, this however does not mean that kids should be pushed near the lab forcing an introduction - **GO SLOW**. **Do not allow children in the dogs face, hugging, kissing** or any kind of pushy movements at all. Please think of it like you were meeting a stranger for the first time, it takes time and trust to make the connection and set everyone at ease. With children and the higher energy and noise it may take a wee bit longer. Your foster may be going through a very anxious transition and we want everyone to mesh properly so GIVE IT TIME.



Fosters and Your Dog(s)

Take the time to watch the interaction between the dogs, your dog may be sensitive to a new canine in the house and not like you petting, feeding and paying extra attention to them. Make sure you are careful to observe behaviours. It is also best not to leave your dog and the new dog unattended when you go out the first few days until we are sure everyone gets along. If you need to go out separate the dogs.

Food

Please feed the food provided in the quantities provided. **Do not supplement** the dog's food with any table scraps especially when dealing with a lab that has allergies.

When feeding your foster dog ensure you DO NOT feed them beside or close to your dog. Many arguments have broken out over food with perfectly happy dogs. Do not leave the room while the dogs are eating, again observe all behaviours.

Some labs may "Counter Surf", meaning trying to and take food off the counter - for a lab this can be normal behaviour. To make things easier at the start of fostering your lab, please ensure all food items and anything of value in the home is placed safe and securely out of reach.

Training

We value your help in training the dog if needed!_ Even if the dog is only with you a short time, you can make a difference - just teaching a puppy to sit & give paw helps adopters see the potential in the dog. If you observe behaviour problems, please discuss it with us at the rescue.

Leaving a Foster Alone

Protect the dog from accidents (like stairs) & protect your property from damage by the dog. Leave him in a closed room or area of your house such as an interior hall where he can move around but not access other areas of house. (Use a different area than for time-outs so dog doesn't associate you going out with him being disciplined.) The dog should be able to see you've gone out but don't make a big deal about leaving or coming home (which can increase separation anxiety). If you have other animals, separate them while out, no matter how well they seem to get along while you're there, you can't be sure how they'll be when you're out. Please try graduated leaving which means only go for short periods of time and increase the duration if possible so you can better test the labs behaviour in your home.

Driving With Your Foster

Restraining a dog by tethering a place with leash is the safest option. Experiment in the driveway or with a short trip around the block. And even if well-behaved in car, some turn into escape artists the minute you open a door, so it is advisable to keep the leash on the dog in car so you have something to grab. If you have a garage, a good precaution is to only allow dog in and out of car within closed garage. Do not leave the dog unattended in the car or with children.



Being a Foster Parent

Please know that you are not alone in fostering. We know you've had previous experience with dogs and are willing to roll with what comes, but a foster dog can bring challenges and surprises, and we're here to help you along the way. Contact us with any questions and/or concerns.

Foster Reports

We want to hear from you about your experiences with your foster dog. We do as much as possible to find out about the dog before accepting it into the program, from surrendering owners, shelter workers, & principally our own temperament assessment. But that's not always a complete picture and you, living with the dog, are an invaluable resource we rely on. Your observations about the dog – everything from its general behaviour, training level, likes/dislikes, energy patterns, interactions with people & other animals, how well he walks on leash, how well he travels in car, eating habits, etc. – all help us to choose the best adoption match. Providing this information to the adopting family is key to the success of the placement. Keep us informed through phone calls and email whether you have any problems or just want to say that your foster dog did something wonderful that day. If you can, snap some pictures and send along too!

Getting Too Attached &/or Wanting to Adopt:

It happens! You wouldn't be fostering if you didn't love dogs! It's understandable, but we do need you and so do the dogs, so try to resist. It happens too often that fosters want to adopt the first dog they foster & then stop fostering. Occasionally it happens that a foster doesn't want to adopt but can't quite "let go" when decisions have to be made about placements. So, if you have been thinking about adopting "if the right dog comes along", then it's a good idea to write down your idea of the "right dog" now and look at it again if you find yourself wavering. It also helps to focus your thinking on what you are doing for the dog's life & not what the dog is doing for your life. There is no shortage of dogs. There is always another one waiting for a foster home.

If you can make it past the first dog, you've won a big victory in the attachment battle, and it does get easier as you begin to experience a variety of dogs coming and going. But if Mr. or Ms. Right really does come along, do speak up, and we hope you'll continue to foster or volunteer in other ways.

Finding an Adoptive Home

Please remember, that's our job. You can tell people you are fostering the dog and it may be available for adoption. You can encourage anyone interested to apply, but remain non-committal. There may be reasons related to the dog's history why a home that seems right to you might not be.

On behalf of Lab rescue and your foster dog we would like to thank you for opening your heart and home!

Labrador Retriever Adoption Service Inc. 115 George Street, P.O. Box 254 Oakville, Ontario L6J 0A2

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