

Pit Bulls *for* Life

Foundation of Alberta

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FOSTER HOME HANDBOOK

WELCOME

Thank you so much for opening your heart and your home to our pit bulls. We rely heavily on our foster families and are very grateful in your decision to become a part of the Pit Bulls for Life Family.

We have received your application and have most likely discussed fostering over the phone with you. The following is a guideline of what Pit Bulls for Life feels to be an appropriate handbook for your future with us as a foster family. If at any time you feel that there may be some content that you disagree with or would like to add something, we are forever working to better ourselves for the love of the breed. Your opinion will be taken with gratitude and changes will be made where necessary.

You will be contacted as soon as a possible fit comes along for you. When this happens we will discuss the dog at hand and arrangements will be made to meet your foster dog. Help will be provided to you at any time during the foster dogs stay with you. If something happens that you can no longer care for this foster dog, don't worry we will make appropriate arrangements if need be. We want what is best for our dogs and of course we want the best experience for our foster families, so that they want to continue fostering for Pit bulls for Life.

Tia Lenz

Pit Bulls for Life

President

ALL ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION

Our Mission Statement:

The Pit Bulls for Life Foundation of Alberta is a not for profit organization of volunteers that dedicates there time to the rescue, rehabilitation and adoption of Pit Bulls and Pit Bull like breeds in Alberta.

Pit Bulls for Life Foundation of Alberta are a volunteer based organization that dedicates their cause to the belief that Pit Bulls are like any other breed of dog. If cared for properly make a loving pet and companion for any type of home. We believe in giving every pit bull a chance to prove that they are just misunderstood and can fit into any type of situation if cared for and trained appropriately. Pit Bulls for Life also believe in changing the view of pit bulls to the public through education and making first-class examples of the dogs in our program. Pit Bulls for Life strongly disagree with breed specific regulations and will do what it takes to change the possibility of this happening in our province.

Pit Bulls for Life are recently based out of Parkland County, Alberta (since Dec 1, 2009). Before then Pit Bulls for life was situated in Calgary, Alberta where it developed its belief in Pit Bulls are like any other breed. Through growth and learning we have discovered that Pit Bulls in Alberta should be protected against the ring fighters, the breed haters and the down lookers of strong breeds. We have also discovered that it is not the breed that needs restrictions it is those that abuse the strength, obedience and love that a Pit Bull is willing to give to a human. Through this we will fight for the love and beauty of this strong breed. We have dedicated this rescue to protect their right as a breed and find decent, loving homes for these misunderstood animals.

PREPARING FOR YOUR FOSTER DOG

Whether you have owned or fostered a Pit Bull before these helpful hints may save you some time, money and a little grief from holes in your yard, to chewed up belonging and us big vet bills.

Don't worry it's not all chewing and destruction.

We would like that you treat your foster as if they were your own. Food, play and sleeping arrangements are at your discretion. We hope that you will follow some of our guidelines to improve that adoption quality of your foster.

The following are guidelines only:

We suggest that you have somewhere to house your foster during the times when you are not at home. Pit Bulls for life are more than happy to provide you with a kennel if you do not already have one. We take pride in knowing that our adopted pit bulls go to their forever homes being properly crate trained.

Regular walks are an absolute wonderful idea for the obedience, exercise and adoptability of your foster.

Feeding arrangements are suggested to be a ritual when it comes to our pit bulls. We suggest the sit stay and okay commands before feeding. We would like the dogs not to be fed too many table scraps. An essential doggy diet is highly recommended. Treats are always a good thing!

If your foster has found something to chew that it is not supposed to we suggest replacement training and providing as many tough bones, logs, tire biters, Kong balls and other non destructible toys for them to try to destroy.

If obedience training is something you are interested in with your foster, Pit Bulls for Life has an available training facility through the Edmonton Humane Societies Pitty Program. We are more than willing to help out with this part of your fostering.

We expect as many cuddling moments, pats on the head, belly rubs and good dogs as you can fit into your schedule during your foster time together.

MEDICAL MUSTS

- Vaccinations
- Spay or Neuter
- Dewormed (puppies)
- Micro chipped

EMERGENCY PROTOCOL

Pit Bulls for Life have numerous veterinarian clinics that have offered discounts to our dogs. If you prefer your own veterinarian clinic we ask that you request a discount for us. The following is a list of Pit Bulls for Life friendly veterinarian clinics as well as a price list for our basic Medical Musts:

Centre Street Veterinary Clinic
Suite 15, 6219 Centre Street N.,
Located in Simons Valley Square
(403) 295-1554

Spruce Grove Veterinary Clinic
5 South Avenue
Spruce Grove, AB T7X 3A8
(780) 962-3233
(780) 914-6680 afterhours emergency only

Ranchlands Veterinary Clinic
7750 Ranchview Drive Northwest
Calgary, AB T3G 1Y9
(403) 239-5212

Riverview Veterinary Clinic
7 102 Erie Street South
Devon, AB T9G 2J4
(780) 987-4838

The following are approximate cost(s). These do vary by clinic and do not include GST:

\$150	Gets a Pit Bull Neutered
\$200	Gets a Pit Bull Spayed
\$50	Gets a Pit Bull Vaccinated for one year
\$15	Gets a Pit Bull Microchipped

In case of an emergency please be advised that stabilization is automatically approved for the foster dog in need. You must contact one of our authorized Pit Bulls for Life Members for approval of any veterinarian bills greater than or equal to \$250.00.

INTRODUCTION

Fostering a dog or puppy can be an extremely rewarding experience. While perhaps slightly more involved than fostering a cat, fostering a dog can be very satisfying and a lot of fun. By providing a little training and a lot of love, foster homes can drastically affect the “adoptability” of the dogs they foster. The information in this chapter will help you familiarize yourself with some of the needs, behavioural issues, and health concerns that are associated with fostering dogs and puppies.

SUPPLIES NEEDED

The following is a checklist of items that you will need to foster a dog or puppy.

Checklist

- ✓ Food and water bowls
- ✓ Leash and collar (your foster dog will most likely come with these)
- ✓ High-quality dog or puppy food
- ✓ Chew toys (Kong products are indestructible)
- ✓ Crate or kennel will be provided by the organization (for keeping dogs safe and out of trouble while you’re away and to help with house-training)
- ✓ Dog bed, blankets, or towels to provide your foster dog with a comfortable place to sleep
- ✓ Lots and lots of good quality treats!

BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

It is common for a dog to experience some behavioural problems and need a period of adjustment when placed into a new environment. Foster homes are in a unique position to help increase the “adoptability” of their foster dogs by providing some basic training. The following is a list of common behavioural problems as well as suggestions for behaviour modification.

Lack of House-Training

Chances are your foster dog will need at least a refresher course in house-training. Many rescued dogs have spent most of their lives outside or in a pound type environment and never learned the rules of living indoors. Other dogs may have once been house-trained, but may still have an accident or two when transitioning into a new home. The most important element of effective house-training is extensive supervision. Correcting a dog for eliminating in the house is only effective if the dog is caught in the act. For this reason, it is essential that the dog be under your supervision at all times. There will, of course, be times when you are unable to watch the dog constantly. During these times, you can confine the dog to a crate. The crate should be just large enough for the dog to be able to comfortably stand up, turn around, and lie down. Because a dog will try not to soil the area where he sleeps, he will usually not urinate or defecate in a crate. When the dog is allowed out of the crate, he should be taken outside immediately. If the dog eliminates outside, give him lots of praise. If the dog does not eliminate, it is important that you supervise the dog closely once you re-enter your home. If you catch the dog having an accident in the house, tell the dog “NO” in a firm (but not angry) voice. Take the dog straight outside and give him a chance to finish eliminating outside. If the dog does eliminate, give him lots of praise. When house-training a dog, use common sense. Give the dog a chance to eliminate outside following meals and naps. Pay attention to the dog’s behavioural signals. If you observe the dog circling, sniffing the floor, or moving toward the door, take the dog outside.

House-training Don’ts:

- ✓ Do not rub the dog’s nose in it! This method of training has been proven ineffective by trainers and behaviourists. The only message a dog gets from this type of “training” is that you are angry. The dog will likely not learn to eliminate outside and may instead learn to fear you.
- ✓ Do not correct the dog after the fact! Again, this method of training has been proven ineffective. Punishing a dog for something she did much earlier will not yield the results you are looking for. Yes, the dog will behave submissively and perhaps look guilty, but this is because the dog knows you are punishing him, most likely for what they are doing at the moment of punishment.

House-training is not a process that happens overnight. Be patient. Any progress you can make with your foster dog on house-training will make your life easier and help improve the dog’s chances for successful placement.

Chewing

Destructive chewing is a phase that all puppies go through. It usually starts around three months and can last until the dog is one year old. During this time, the dog's adult teeth are coming in and chewing helps relieve the pain. Adult dogs may also have problems with chewing, but for different reasons. Adult dogs usually chew on inappropriate things because they are anxious or bored, or because they have never been taught what is appropriate to chew on. The best solution for destructive chewing is providing your foster dog with something that is acceptable to chew on. Have plenty of chew toys available at all times. If you catch the dog chewing on something inappropriate, tell the dog "NO" in a firm (but not angry) voice, and replace the item with something more appropriate. If the destructive chewing occurs when you are away, consider confining the dog to a crate. A crate will help keep both the dog and your home safe. It is also important to make sure that your foster dog is getting plenty of exercise. A tired dog will sleep, not chew!

Separation Anxiety

It is pretty common for foster dogs to experience some separation anxiety when left alone. The severity of the anxiety can range from pacing and whining to much more destructive behaviour. A dog may experience separation anxiety simply because he has a very dependent personality, or because she is reacting to a history of abuse or abandonment. Whatever the reason, separation anxiety can be difficult to deal with because you are not around when it happens. The most common sign that a dog may be suffering from separation anxiety is destructive behaviour when left alone. A dog may scratch frantically at the door or make other attempts to get out of the house, or the dog may chew on things or engage in other destructive behaviours. If you have reason to suspect that your foster dog is suffering from separation anxiety when you are away, consider confining the dog to a crate. If used appropriately, the crate will help the dog feel safe and secure and hopefully relieve some of the anxiety. And, until the separation anxiety itself can be examined and dealt with, a crate will help keep both your home and your foster dog safe. If you do have the time to work with your foster dog, there are several things you can try to help alleviate separation anxiety. Start out by leaving the dog in your home for very short intervals. Tell the dog to wait and then walk outside for a few minutes before returning. When you return to the house, praise the dog for waiting. Begin to gradually leave the dog for longer and longer periods of time. It is important that, when you leave, you remain calm and not make a big deal out of leaving. It is also important that you not be too excited when you return. You want to praise the dog, but calmly. You don't want your return to be such an exciting event that the dog anxiously anticipates the moment of your return. Perhaps the most effective treatment for separation anxiety is time. Be patient. As your foster dog spends more time with you, he will begin to feel more secure in knowing that when you leave, you always come back. Some destructive behaviour that appears to be related to separation anxiety may, in fact, be the product of boredom. Try providing chew toys or other play items that will entertain your foster dog while you are away. There are several products on the market that work quite well. One of the more popular toys keeps dogs engaged by making them work for food or treats. Once the toy is filled with some kind of small food item, the dog must work by rolling and tipping the toy until a treat falls out. Most of these products allow you to adjust the level of difficulty, and can keep a dog entertained for significant periods of time.

Don't forget to make sure that your foster dog gets plenty of exercise. A tired dog is much less likely to engage in behaviours associated with anxiety or boredom.

NOTES ON CRATE TRAINING:

A crate is a great way to keep both your foster dog and your home safe. If you decide to use a crate, make sure that the crate is always a positive place for your foster dog. Never use a crate for punishment. When introducing a dog to a crate, use a happy tone of voice and tell the dog to "kennel up." Once the dog has entered the crate, give her lots of praise and perhaps a treat reward. If you have a difficult time getting the dog to enter the crate or if the dog seems afraid, try leaving the crate door open and placing the dog's food and water bowls just inside the door. Allow the dog to wander into the crate and eat at her leisure. Once the dog seems more comfortable with the crate, you can try confining the dog to the crate for short intervals. Never confine a puppy to a crate for longer than four hours at a time, or an adult dog for longer than eight hours at a time. Remember, the dog will not want to soil his crate, so forcing the dog to stay in the crate longer than he can comfortably "hold it" is inappropriate.

HEALTH ISSUES

Because most foster dogs are rescued from shelter environments, it's difficult for rescue partners to ensure that they will always be healthy. A dog that appears healthy at the time of rescue could easily begin to show signs of illness several days later. For this reason, it is very important that foster homes keep their own dogs up to date on vaccinations.

Common Illnesses in Dogs

The following information is intended to help you better understand and recognize some of the more common illnesses in dogs.

Canine Distemper

Canine distemper is a viral disease that is often fatal. Distemper is most commonly seen in puppies 3-6 months old. Early signs resemble a severe cold. The vaccine for canine distemper is considered very effective.

Signs & Symptoms: Eye congestion and discharge, loss of appetite, vomiting, weight loss, nasal discharge, and diarrhea

Treatment: Veterinary care including fluid therapy and antibiotics

Transmission: Very contagious

Parvovirus

Parvo is a disease that is most common in puppies and young dogs. It causes the sloughing of the lining of the intestinal tract. Parvovirus can survive in the environment for six months or longer. This means that other unvaccinated dogs can become infected with parvo simply by coming into contact with places where an infected dog has been. A bleach solution is the best way to disinfect areas that may have been contaminated. The vaccine for parvovirus is considered very effective.

Signs & Symptoms: Lethargy, loss of appetite, vomiting, and diarrhea (usually bloody)

Treatment: Veterinary care, including fluid therapy and antibiotics

Transmission: Very contagious to other dogs, especially through contact with infected feces or vomit

“Kennel Cough”

Kennel cough is a respiratory tract infection that has been linked to several different viral and bacterial causes. Coughing is usually stimulated by physical exertion or by touching the throat area. Kennel cough is self-limiting, usually lasting 1-3 weeks. Antibiotics are often given to prevent secondary infections.

Kennel cough is very common in shelters and other boarding facilities. There is a vaccine for bordetella, one of the main agents responsible for causing kennel cough.

Signs & Symptoms: Cough, runny nose and eyes

Treatment: Veterinary care, including antibiotics and cough suppressants

Transmission: Very contagious to other dogs

Ringworm

Ringworm is a fungus related to athlete's foot; it's not actually a worm.

Signs & Symptoms: Irregularly shaped areas of fur loss; the skin of the areas will usually appear rough and scaly

Treatment: Veterinary care, including an injection and/or topical treatment

Transmission: Very contagious to other dogs, cats and people, but usually requires direct contact with the infected animal

Fleas

Fleas are tiny insects that feed on the blood of dogs, cats, humans and other animals. Although each flea only consumes a small drop of blood, fleas usually attack in large numbers.

Signs & Symptoms: Intense itching and scratching

Treatment: Veterinary care, including an injection and/or topical treatment

Transmission: Very contagious to other dogs, cats and people

Round, Tape, and Hook Worms

Worms affect a dog's digestive system. They are most commonly seen in puppies and young dogs.

Signs & Symptoms: Large belly, diarrhea, and an inability to gain weight

Treatment: Veterinary care, including de-worming medication

Transmission: Contagious to other dogs and cats, but only through contact with (and subsequent ingestion of) feces

Cleaning Procedures

It is important that all items and areas used by a sick foster animal be cleaned thoroughly.

You can use a 10% bleach solution to reliably kill most viruses and bacteria. Items to be cleaned should be thoroughly wetted with the bleach solution and allowed to stand for several minutes before rinsing. Foster homes that have recently fostered a dog or puppy with parvo or another extremely contagious disease may be asked to wait several months before fostering another unvaccinated dog or puppy.

Routine Veterinary Care

PBFL will provide foster dogs with routine veterinary care prior to placement in permanent adoptive homes. The following schedule outlines the various types of routine care provided.

PROCEDURE SCHEDULE

6 – 8 Weeks	10 – 12 weeks	14 – 16 weeks	4 - 6 months
DA2PP (corona if recommended by vet) Deworm (follow vet instructions)	DA2PP	DA2PP Rabies Kennel Cough (if recommended by vet)*	Spay/Neuter Microchip

DA2PP	distemper, hepatitis, parainfluenza, and parvovirus), coronavirus if needed Initial dose given shortly after rescue to dogs that are at least 6 weeks old Booster given 3-4 weeks later Additional boosters given as needed every 3-4 weeks until at least 14 weeks of age
Rabies vaccine	one dose given shortly after rescue to dogs that are at least 14 weeks of age
Bordetella vaccine	(“kennel cough”) One dose given shortly after rescue to dogs that are at least 14 weeks of age
De-worm	Initial dose given shortly after rescue (only routinely given to puppies under 6 months of age) Second dose given only if needed
Spay/neuter	done shortly after rescue (puppies must be at least 4 months old)

To help ensure the health and safety of your foster dog, the rescue organization asks that you adhere to the guidelines set forth, including the following:

1. Always keep an ID tag attached to a properly fitted collar that will remain on your foster dog at all times.
2. Keep your foster dog under your control at all times, going outside only on a leash or into a securely fenced area.
3. Let PBFL know if you are no longer able to care for your foster dog. Do not give your foster dog to another person or agency without first receiving permission from your rescue partner.

FINDING THE RIGHT HOME

Pit Bulls for Life takes pride in finding the right forever home for our dogs. We will do everything in our power to guarantee that to our foster and foster families. We understand that you along with us care about where these dogs end up. This is why we highly involve our foster parents in the adoption process.

When an adoption questionnaire is first received it is reviewed by our foster coordinator. The foster coordinator if pleased calls the applicant for a short interview. If all goes well, we will forward the information to the foster family to review. The foster family can then call the applicant for a second interview to discuss the foster dog at interest. We then ask for the foster family and foster coordinator to get into contact and discuss the applicant (by phone or email), before setting a meet date.

The meeting will take place after all parties have approved. We recommend that all applicants involved (family, roommates, pets) attend the meeting. The meeting place is to be determined at the foster family's discretion.

A follow up home check will be set-up if the meeting goes well. This may be done before the potential home meets the foster dog for pre approval.

If at any time the applicant becomes difficult or aggressive or the foster family is uncomfortable in any way the adoption may be terminated immediately at the foster family's discretion. At which time the foster coordinator should be notified to the situation to be put on file and the foster coordinator can contact the applicant to further discuss the situation if necessary.

THE INTERVIEW

The interview is not meant to grill the applicant. It is meant to get to know the applicant better and get to know the intentions of the applicant with the foster dog at interest. Basic questions about lifestyle can be asked as long as it is not intended to be used against that person according to race, religion or lifestyle choice of the individual. It is encouraged to discuss the foster dog at interest including all there quirks and possibly problems needing to be addressed.

If at any time the foster coordinator or foster family feels that the dog of interest would not be a good candidate for the applicant then other steps should be taken to suggest another foster dog in the program or in another local rescue group.

REIMBURSEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

In order for a reimbursement for products, veterinarian bills or obedience classes to take effect a pre-approval must have been made with an authorized Pit Bulls for Life member. The amount will be discussed and approved at that time.

The reimbursements request form must then be filled out with the original receipt(s) of the purchase(s) attached. This form can be used over the course of a year and reimbursement(s) can take place at the end of that year if the applicant is willing to wait to be reimbursed.