

Bringing Your Foster Dog Home

Some dog fostering tips from "Doggerel" and also Steffen Baldwin (Chief Humane Agent in Union County, Ohio and the Founder and President/CEO of the Animal Cruelty Task Force of Ohio):

1. Start slow. Make introductions to people and your pets with gentleness and caution. Please keep in mind what restrictions your dogs may be limited to (i.e., no children, no dogs, no men). Moving is stressful for everyone, and moving into a new home with new people will likely cause even the most social dogs a bit of stress. Go slowly on your first few days. Allow for decompression from the shelter.
2. Assume that all dogs are not house trained. Even if the dog is an adult, even if he has lived in a home before, start with the assumption that the dog is *not* house trained. Again, moving into a new place is stressful, so even dogs who were formerly in a home may have forgotten what that means in a new environment. Establish a potty schedule/routine.
3. Use crates and baby gates. Crates and baby gates will be your best friend as a foster parent! Crates are happy, safe places; never use them to punish a dog. Feed meals in crates if the dog is having a hard time getting adjusted. Treat and praise the dog for entering the crate. Always provide choice for going into a crate for a safe space. Make a "Safety Den" with your dog crate. This includes: soft bed or bedding, favorite toys, kong, and covered partially with a blanket to allow for reduced stimuli.
4. Chill out/Decompression time. Your new foster is going to need quiet time in your house, before anything else. Basically, the dog needs to CHILL OUT, which we call "decompression time". Skipping this step is a sure-fire way to make sure you have problems. You should have a quiet, crated area for your new foster to decompress in. Make sure the foster dog is provided with lots of ways to be stimulated mentally (Kongs with frozen peanut butter, interactive toy games, etc). You can also have music playing in their space for portions of the day. **Specifically, classical music, since the piano tempos slow down the racing heart-beat of a stressed dog.**
5. Two weeks is the standard amount of time it takes and about how long you should plan to spend before moving on to letting your foster dog and your own dog meet through a process of slow introduction. If you wish to do this, we can provide step by step help to make it as successful as possible.