

ANIMAL RESCUE OF TRACY

793 South Tracy Blvd. #133
Tracy, CA 95376
209-642-4324

DOG FOSTER MANUAL



*"Better to light a candle for one lost dog than to curse the darkness of man's indifference.
Saving just one dog won't change the world, but it surely will change the world for that one dog."
Richard C. Call*

Website: www.animalrescuetracy.org
Email: info@animalrescuetracy.org



A POEM TO MY FOSTER DOG

By Diane Morgan

I am the bridge,
Between what was and what can be.
I am the pathway to a new life.

I am made of mush,
Because my heart melted when I saw you,
Matted and sore, limping, depressed
Lonely, unwanted, afraid to love.

For one little time you are mine.
I will feed you with my own hand.
I will love you with my whole heart.
I will make you whole.

I am made of steel.
Because when the time comes,
When you are well, and sleek,
when your eyes shine,
And your tail wags with joy
Then comes the hard part.

I will let you go-not without a tear,
But without a regret.
For you are safe forever--
A new dog needs me now.

Introduction

Thank you for agreeing to foster a pet from Animal Rescue of Tracy (A.R.T.). Animal Rescue of Tracy is a non-profit, 501c3 organization run solely by volunteers who support and care for animals. Our program accepts unwanted and otherwise abandoned dogs and cats of all ages from the Tracy Animal Shelter and in select instances, from the general public. These animals are taken into our foster home program where they receive quality nutrition and veterinary care along with love and attention.

It takes a special person to be a foster parent. Whether you foster tiny puppies and kittens or injured or abused adult animals, they all need the TLC that only a foster parent can provide. The care received in your home can get these animals back on track and boost their chances of being placed in a permanent loving home.

Fostering means you are providing a stable, loving environment for a dog/cat that has been neglected or abandoned. You are allowing a space in our shelter to be opened up for another needy animal. We hope that the rewards you experience will outweigh the difficulty of parting with your foster pet.

Remember that each time you send a foster to his or her new home, you have an opportunity to foster - and therefore rescue - another animal. Without you, these animals would not have a chance. We appreciate your efforts and recognize that you are providing a very special service.

How Our Process Works

When a dog or cat comes into Animal Rescue of Tracy we immediately take the animal to a local veterinarian for a thorough examination to determine if there are any health issues or concerns that need to be corrected. We will then have the vet treat the animal for any condition that arose from the examination, we will have the animal vaccinated, and then schedule a spay/neuter and microchip to be placed. As the dog/cat is going through this process we begin making our calls to potential foster families. The foster family may be required to participate in this process by transporting the animal to and from the vet office.

When A.R.T. animals are ready for adoption, our foster home volunteers bring them to our adoption center at the West Valley Mall in Tracy, CA on Saturdays and Sundays. There they are viewed and held by the public. Because we believe in quality not quantity, Animal Rescue of Tracy extensively screens all potential adopters to ensure that each pet is perfectly matched into their new home. A.R.T. also performs all interviews and home visits before placing any animal.

As animals are adopted to good, permanent homes, new animals come into our foster home program and the cycle repeats itself. Being a patient, avid animal lover is a must to become an A.R.T. foster parent. Those who foster find it very rewarding.

General Guidelines

Please read & review the following important guidelines:

1. Prior to fostering, all Foster Homes must complete a Foster Home Application as well as allowing us to perform a brief home inspection.
2. All foster homes agree to accept primary responsibility for temporarily providing lodging and care of their foster dog.
3. Any medical care needed for the foster dog will be provided by A.R.T.'s veterinarian. This assures that the foster dog gets consistent care and all records of the animal's health are centralized. If veterinary services are needed, the foster home agrees to contact A.R.T. immediately.
4. Foster homes are asked to keep A.R.T. informed of their foster dogs' behavior and health if any issues arise.
5. Animal Rescue of Tracy is not responsible for any veterinary bills for resident dogs. The Foster Home assumes responsibility for any veterinary bills that result from the resident dogs becoming ill due to exposure with a Foster Dog.
6. Do not leave your foster dog with anyone not listed on the Foster Application without prior approval from A.R.T..
7. If the foster dog does not work out, or your foster home situation changes please return the foster dog to A.R.T.. Please call A.R.T. to notify us that you will be returning the dog/cat sooner than expected. We will try to place it in another foster home.
8. A.R.T. is aware that accidents can happen no matter how conscientious you are. A.R.T. will not hold the foster home responsible for any accidents beyond your control, or accidental loss or death of said foster dog.
9. Saying goodbye; If you find it hard to say goodbye, imagine how happy your foster dog will be in his or her new home—and remember how you helped make that happen.

*You paused outside to look into my cage. I tried to play it right, wanting to catch your eye with a shy glint in my own, a soft bark, that said, "Choose me," in a canine grammar I hoped you'd understand.
R.S. Jones, his account of his dog Scout's adoption from a shelter*

Getting Your Home & Family Ready For Fostering

Fostering is a commitment that will affect your entire household: your family, your permanent-resident pets, and your house and yard itself! Here are some tips to ensure that fostering will be a positive experience for you and your family.

Discuss your plans with other family members and get their input on how to make it work out best for everyone. Include in the discussion what kind(s) of dogs are appropriate for your household: small/large, young/old, active/not active. Do you thrive on a spunky dog with lots of energy who is a willing playmate for your active dog? Or, do you have an older dog who would appreciate not being pestered? How long are you gone during the day? We'll need to match you with a dog that works with your schedule. You'll need a dog that fits your lifestyle, even if he/she is only a temporary resident. Your A.R.T. representative can work with you to ensure that we understand your personal situation and what types of dogs are appropriate for you.

Supplies

A.R.T. will provide the following for your foster dog however your purchase of the food is appreciated and is tax deductible.

1. Food bowls & water bowls: it is best to have separate bowls for your foster dog and, to feed your resident dogs & foster dog separately so that they can eat in a stress-free environment as they are getting to know each other.
2. Food & Treats: A.R.T. will advise/provide you as to what kind of food or treats the foster dog has been eating. It is best to maintain the same food as to not upset their digestive system, which could lead to diarrhea.
3. Beds/ bedding or crate of their own.
4. Toys

Introducing Your Foster Dog To Your Home

Here are some tips for a smooth transition.

Everyone needs their space

If possible, it is best to keep foster dogs and resident dogs separate from each other for 2 days. This is a stressful time for both the foster dog (who may have been on the street/in the shelter before arriving at your house—a lot of change for an animal that likes to have a “pack” and some stability in his/her life!) Also there are some common sicknesses that sometimes don't show up for 1-2 weeks that dogs often get at a shelter, so separation can ensure that your dogs don't get sick.

If it is not possible to keep them separate, be aware that your resident dogs may be exposed to illness that was not determined before placement into your foster home. However, also be aware that many of the diseases that shelter dogs get (Kennel Cough, Diarrhea, etc) are stress related. Many have had poor nutrition and a hard life before coming to your home. A.R.T. cannot be responsible for resident dog vet bills; we do not have the financial resources to make that commitment.

If it is not possible to physically separate the dogs, try to ensure that everyone has their own “personal space” of a bed, a crate, or a special area. This will keep the stress levels lower for your own dogs and the foster dog. The backyard is not an acceptable place to leave the foster dog alone & unsupervised. They may be destructive (digging, tramping plants), they may be escape artists, they may bark incessantly, or they could be snatched. A crate or a room that is enclosed is the best choice.

Dog Introductions

Introduce your resident dogs to the foster dog on neutral territory, at a park or down the street from your house, for example. Introduce them on a leash, with an adult holding each leash. Allow a quick “hello” sniff or walk-by, and then separate them, even if things seem fine. This gives them a chance to think about things, and often they will seek each other out to get a lengthier greeting. Give lots of positive reinforcement so that both dogs feel safe and that the other dog is a friend, not foe. If one dog gets aggressive, separate them quickly, comfort the dogs, and slow down the pace of the introductions.

Don't force things if they are not immediate best friends; sometimes it takes a few days for dogs to accept each other. Sometimes, dogs just don't like each other. By giving them each attention separately and making them feel safe about their bed, toy and food, you can minimize any tension.

Getting along

Dogs are pack animals. There is usually one who dominates. Correction of one dog by another (whether it is your resident dog or the foster) is normal. As long as the dogs are responding positively to each other and seem to recognize the “pecking order”, this is fine. So, one dog may growl at another. If the dog reacts by moving away or showing passivity, then usually, the dogs will get along fine. If they are constantly battling for the “alpha” position, then they will have to be separated, and may not be a good fit for each other.

Never leave the dogs unsupervised together. They are still getting to know one another, and will need correction on appropriate behavior toward each other, which means supervision. If you are leaving the house, then crate the dogs or otherwise physically separate them.

Again, feed the dogs separately. This reduces stress for everyone. Food aggression between dogs is common.

*"We give dogs time we can spare, space we can spare and love we can spare.
And in return, dogs give us their all. - M. Facklam*

Working With Your Foster Dog

While your foster dog is living with you, you can provide some basic training along with lots of tender loving care. No formal training regime is needed for most foster dogs, but if you can work on the following, it will make your foster dog much more “adoptable”.

Socializing is definitely the first priority. This means ensuring that your foster dog is acclimated to meeting new people, dogs, cats, children, as wide a group as possible. If you have a shy dog, this is a big task, and should be approached slowly (but all the more important to address it so that your dog overcomes his/her shyness.) With a more outgoing dog, it’s more about curbing enthusiasm so that people aren’t overwhelmed upon meeting the dog (or knocked over with love.)

House training (potty training) is definitely desirable for both you and the future adopter. The best way to house train is to use a crate, and be vigilant about taking the dog outside regularly, including after naps and meals. If a dog is particularly stubborn about the house training, keep them on a leash in the house; this will prevent them from wandering off to hide or to go potty.

Crate training is a great way not only to potty train, but also to establish general house manners since the dog will not be roaming free in the house unless he/she is being supervised. So, no chewing on couch cushions, counter-surfing, or garbage can diving if the dog is not left alone.

Sitting is relatively easy to teach and pays big dividends. A dog that sits for his/her leash and food knows they are subservient to the person commanding them to sit. It also helps to get an overly excited dog under control.

Jumping up is a common problem with our foster dogs—they are so happy to have someone to love! But, it’s best if they are taught not to do this, since it can knock people over or just be rude. The best prevention is to see it coming and tell them to stop and sit. Once they have this down, they can be invited “up” for a visit, but only with an invitation.

Leash walking is challenging to teach. Many of our dogs have never been on a leash and have no idea how to behave. If you’re ambitious, you can work on “heel”, but even “easy” is fine. “Easy” is when the dog isn’t necessarily heeling at your side, but they are also not dragging you down the street. This takes time to learn and patience on your part. A nervous dog may not be pulling but reluctant to walk or trying to get away from you and the leash. The goal then is to get the dog to relax and walk confidently with you. We can give you some pointers on either of these cases.

Dogs & Children

Dogs and kids go together like peanut butter & jelly; they are great playmates, guardians, and confidants. But, children must learn proper handling and discipline, and dogs must learn self-control so that they do not play too rough.

Children must be supervised and taught that dogs are beings, not dolls or toys to dressup or handled constantly. Teach children not to tease or rile up the dog unnecessarily. This includes chasing around the house, which can scare a dog, who may snap if cornered or frightened.

Make sure your children know that it is not the dog's fault if the dog chews up toys that are left out. Keeping doors shut & toys in toy boxes can help minimize damage. Make sure the dog has his/her own toys, and keep them in the same place all the time (like in a basket, or in the dog's crate.)

Children like the idea of caring for a dog, but the daily work of feeding, bathing, brushing, and cleaning up after the dog is not really suited for them. Recognize that the animal enthusiasm will wane quickly, and true responsibility of caring for the dog will fall to the adults in the household. Young children should not walk foster dogs even if the dog is easy to walk. The child cannot really handle any encounters with other dogs or cats that are bound to happen.

Children should not play unsupervised with foster dogs. For puppies, teach proper handling (pick up by the body, not the limbs), and limit interaction. Children need to be taught that a puppy's mouthing is not biting, and that the puppy is not trying to hurt them. Perhaps most importantly, children must learn to properly discipline the foster dog/puppy. If the puppy wants to mouth you or your clothes, gently close your fingers around the puppy's muzzle, and firmly tell her "off." Children often react to a dog's bad behavior by hitting the dog, this is unacceptable.

Behavior Red Flags

If you see any of the following behaviors, call Animal Rescue of Tracy (209-642-4324) as soon as possible. Or email foster@animalrescuetracy.org

- Growling, lip curling, snarling, snapping, or biting directed toward a human.
- Possessiveness, tension or guarding behavior around items the dog/puppy values, such as food bowl or toys.
- Reluctance to be touched or handled on certain areas of the body. Signs to watch for are nipping, whining, fearfulness, a quick whip of the head to look to see what you're doing, or stiffening of the body.
- Fearful or aloof behavior with strangers.

**The following are not signs of aggression: mild mouthiness, chewing, jumping up, barking, food stealing, lack of obedience, or poor leash manner.

Medical Treatment

We prefer to have the foster dogs seen by our veterinarian so that all our dogs get consistent care and have their records centralized. All vet visits must be pre-approved by Kim Francis.

If the dog becomes sick or injured or you need help transporting the foster dog to our vet, please call Animal Rescue of Tracy between 9-5:30, M-F at 209-642-4324. Or for emergency and after hours call name at number. E-Mail: foster@animalrescuetracy.org. Our Vet is Jules Veterinary Center .

Make sure that your own pets are protected. We expect that resident pets are spayed/neutered, and have all their vaccinations. We recommend, in addition to DHLPP and Rabies, that your pets are immunized for Bordetella (kennel cough) since it is a common ailment among shelter dogs and usually the dogs will not show signs of having it for 7 days. We also expect that your resident dogs are treated for fleas and ticks. Our foster dogs have been treated with the heart worm and flea and tick preventatives before going into foster care.

Medical Concerns

While we strive to make sure all foster dogs are healthy before going into foster care, most illnesses have an incubation period between exposure and the onset of symptoms. Please watch your fosters carefully for any changes to their normal behavior or habits. If your foster dog shows any of the following symptoms, please call A.R.T.! Below are the symptoms you would need to be more concerned about if the dog is under 6 months old, but could possibly be a concern to other dogs as well.

- Diarrhea- If stools are soft but not watery, monitor for two days. If there is no improvement, call the third day. If stools are watery, call that day.
- Vomiting- If foster dog vomits food two or more times, call that day. If foster dog vomits bile or liquid, please call that day. If vomiting is frequent, call immediately.
- Loss of appetite-Can be normal the first day for dogs, (not puppies), as foster dog adjusts to new home. If foster dog is not eating the second day, call that day.
- Dehydration- Dehydration is generally associated with diarrhea, vomiting, and/ or loss of appetite. To test for dehydration, pinch the animal's skin gently. If the skin springs back slowly (takes more than one second), the puppy is dehydrated. Call immediately.
- Sneezing- More than three times a day, call that day.
- Coughing- Call immediately.
- Hair loss- Call immediately.
- Watery, goopy or red eyes- Call that day.
- Itchy/ dirty ears- Call that day.
- Some animals do not show traditional signs of illness. They may be less active than normal, or avoid other animals or people. These could be signs of onset of illness. Please call us if you notice any of these changes.

Letting Go

Returning your foster dog to A.R.T. for transport to their new home is one of the hardest, but also one of the most rewarding aspects of being a foster parent. It is normal to feel sad when you return your foster dog. You need to remember what a wonderful thing you did for your foster dog. You gave her your time, your attention, and your love, you made it possible for her to go to a new loving home with a family of her own, and you opened up a space at our shelter for another needy animal.

You are a very special person to have done all that for the little stranger who came to your door.

If you were comfortable with this foster, we would like to offer another foster dog to you. Without all our great volunteer foster parents this program would fail; we rely tremendously on their dedication to the animals and how they help make it happen.

*It came to me that every time I lose a dog they take a piece of my heart with them.
And every new dog who comes into my life, gifts me with a piece of their heart.
If I live long enough, all the components of my heart will be dog, and I will become as generous and loving as they are.
~Unknown*

Commonly Asked Questions about Fostering Dogs

How many dogs would I have to foster?

You may take in as many dogs or as few as you wish. Even fostering one dog would help a great deal.

Do I get to choose which dog I foster?

We try to match the foster dog to the home it will be going to. If you require a particular size, or if you need a dog who is good with children or other pets, we do our best to meet that criteria. We encourage the foster home to meet the prospective dog at the shelter before bringing it home, to insure a good match.

How much will it cost to foster a dog?

Animal Rescue of Tracy pays the cost of all veterinary care, food, and other supplies the dog may need.

How long does it take for a dog to get adopted?

We cannot make any promises regarding how long a particular dog will be in your home. On average, it takes between 4 weeks to 6 months, and sometimes longer, for a dog to find a permanent home. A dog recovering from health problems may take a bit longer than a healthy dog.

Will I be involved in choosing the dog's new owner?

We have found that foster homes are the best judge of what kind of home is the best fit for their foster dog's particular needs. You can be involved in the screening process of potential adopters, in order to find the best home for the dog, if you would like.