



**Northern Chautauqua  
Canine Rescue**



# **SLUMBER PARTY HANDBOOK**

# Introduction

Welcome to Northern Chautauqua Canine Rescue's Slumber Party Program! Thank you for your interest in adopting a shelter dog. We hope that the time you spend with your Slumber Party (SP) dog will help you get to know all about him and help you to make a well-informed choice about adoption. Our Slumber Party program is designed to help you to learn more about the dog you hope to adopt than what can be discovered in the shelter setting alone. Seeing your SP dog in action in your home will help you to get a much more accurate view of his behavior, training, temperament, and how he fits into your household. We hope this experience is lots of fun for both you and the dog!



# The Basics

## Feeding

Unless otherwise specified, your SP dog should be fed the diet that you are provided by NCCR. Unless otherwise instructed to do so by your NCCR Slumber Party Planner, SP dogs should not be fed human food of any kind. Chocolate, caffeine, grapes/raisins, mushrooms, onions, raw dough, and garlic are dangerous to dogs. Your SP dog should have access to fresh water at all times. Treats that are formulated for dogs are a great way to train and build relationships and are ok to give in moderation. Be mindful to reduce the amount of your SP dog's regular food when treats are plentiful in order to avoid overeating and digestive upset.

## Cleaning Up

The outdoor areas that your SP dog has access to should be scooped regularly, ideally right after he eliminates. Your SP dog will have been dewormed and/or tested for intestinal parasites prior to going home with you, but it is possible for dogs to have lingering unwanted hitchhikers in their gut even after treatment. Cleaning up promptly will help to reduce the chances of infectious material contaminating your yard. Please be a good steward to your community and practice always picking up after your SP dog when on walks, too!

## Creating a Safe Place for Your Slumber Party Dog

Prior to bringing your SP dog home, it is best to have a plan for where he will stay when you are not at home or able to monitor him. NCCR recommends crating your SP dog when you are not able to keep an eye on him. In some cases where crating is not an option, it is recommended that you make a space where the dog, as well as your home and possessions, will be safe while you are not available to monitor him. Your SP dog may be unfamiliar with being in a home, being left alone, or may simply not be accustomed to your routine. He may chew, scratch, or have accidents. Having a space where this will cause minimal impact on you and your home will help the process run smoothly for you and your SP dog.

Do a thorough check of your fencing. You may be hosting an SP dog who is a different size than your other dogs, or who is more determined to get out of your yard than your



own pets or previous yard guests. Look for holes, broken boards, or stacked items that may allow them to climb and jump over. It is not required that Slumber Party hosts have a fenced yard, but you would then be required to keep your SP dog on a leash or long-line any time you are outside of your home. It is also recommended that your SP dog wear and drag a leash for the first few times inside your fenced yard, in case an escape attempt is made or you have difficulty calling the dog back to you. SP dogs must be under supervision when outside at all times.

## **Common Behavior Concerns & Training Guidelines**

Your SP dog has likely been through several transitions over the last few days. Give him time to adjust and go slowly with his introduction to new things. We will do our best to provide you with any behavioral information available to us regarding your SP dog. Since we are still getting to know the dog and are never able to guarantee behavior, you should never leave your SP dog unattended with children or with your other pets. NCCR does not recommend or condone any forms of aversive training methods, and requires that our SP parents comply with this restriction. Following the guidelines set in place by NCCR staff for your SP dog will benefit them greatly. If you feel that a modification needs to be made, you are experiencing any behavioral concerns, or if you feel uncomfortable with the behaviors that your SP dog is exhibiting at any time, you should contact NCCR as soon as possible. Please know that you are always supported if you need to return the dog to the shelter for any reason. If you need additional training or support to manage behavioral issues with your SP dog, please notify NCCR and appropriate training and guidance will be provided.

### **Resource Guarding**

The dog you are hosting may feel the need to protect their possessions or personal space. They may show their discomfort by freezing, growling, or snapping. **Never** punish your SP dog for exhibiting these behaviors, as this is likely to make the problem worse. Understand that your SP dog may not have always had consistent access to the resources he needed and valued, and so he may feel the need to protect his resources against any perceived threat of loss. Please make note of and report any guarding behaviors you may observe in your home.

The following are some tips to manage and minimize resource guarding behavior:

1. Teach him to share by strengthening your bond with him through basic obedience training. Dogs learn that we provide good things when they respond to our communications.
2. Limit the situations in which he may feel the need to guard. If he is guarding a food item, try feeding him in a crate or in a separate room instead of in a shared space, and make sure that no one (people or other pets) disturbs him.

3. Teach your SP dog to trade. Offer him a higher value item than what he is protecting. Call him to you and give him a treat. Always return the original item to him after he has taken the reward. Utilize the command “trade” for this exercise. Never try to forcibly remove an item from your SP dog that he does not willingly allow you to take.

4. If he is guarding a space such as a bed or couch, teach your SP dog the “off” command. Utilize high value food to lure him off the item. Reward him only when he cooperates. You should also limit his access to the furniture item or area when possible; close the door or place something uncomfortable in the space to discourage him from going to it, such as putting a laundry basket on the couch to prevent him from sitting or lying there.

### **Separation Anxiety**

The dog you are hosting may feel distress from being left home alone. Your SP dog is adjusting to a lot of changes and this can cause higher levels of anxiety as he tries to



learn his new routine. Separation anxiety can vary in intensity. Minor symptoms may include, pacing, whining, restlessness, or barking, whereas a more intense reaction may include things like inappropriate elimination, destruction of objects, escape attempts, or self-injury. Please make a note of and report any behaviors that indicate separation anxiety in your SP dog. Being proactive to prevent the anxiety in the first place is best. Here are a few tips to help the transition to your home go more smoothly for everyone:

- Exercise: provide your SP dog with 20 to 30 minutes of exercise before leaving (please note, some dogs may require longer exercise sessions or more vigorous exercise to tire them out).
- Provide them with a long lasting, special, and safe treat just before you leave.
- Leave and return calmly. Ignore your SP dog’s over-excitement upon your return, and interact with him only once he is calm.
- Minimize your SP dog’s anxiety regarding your routine when preparing to leave the house by “going through the motions” even when you are not actually leaving: put on your shoes and pick up your keys, but then sit down to watch tv, put on your coat and go to the door but don’t leave, then make a phone call instead. Teach your SP dog that cues like getting dressed to leave or jingling car keys are nothing to get excited about.
- Utilize pheromone products to calm your SP dog.
- Leave for only a short period of time, just a few seconds, building up to a few minutes, then gradually longer over the course of days, then weeks. This is a slow process, but well worth the effort.

## Jumping Up/Mouthing

It is common for dogs to have moments where they become over-excited. One place we often see this is when dogs greet people by jumping up on them and mouthing. This can lead to an accidental injury, and should be discouraged. There are several things we can do to help dogs learn more appropriate ways to show excitement. Begin training when your dog is in a situation that normally does not make him very excited, then gradually build up to more excitement-inducing situations as he gains more control over his behaviors.

- Make sure your SP dog is getting enough exercise and activity. Leashed walks often do not provide enough exercise for dogs to burn off their energy. Play fetch in a fenced area where he can run, play “brain games” where he has to figure out treat puzzles, sniff out hidden toys or treats, or play with a flirt pole to get him moving without having to exhaust yourself in the process.
- Completely ignore your SP dog when he jumps up on you. Even negative attention like pushing him off or looking at him and speaking to him sternly can reinforce the behavior.
- Reward and praise him for having all four feet on the floor or sitting calmly
- Counsel new people visiting your home to engage with your SP dog in the same ways that you do – consistency is important!

## Reactivity

A dog who is being overly reactive to a situation may present as a dog who is hiding, barking, lunging, or growling. This can happen in a variety of situations, but you are likely to see it when your SP dog is looking through a window, through a fence, or while on a leash when exciting stimuli presents itself – a passerby, a dog walking past, a fast car or bicycle going by, etc. If you are experiencing a dog that is demonstrating any of these behaviors and is not easily redirected with food or a happy voice, contact NCCR for additional information regarding how to manage the behavior.

The best method to reduce reactivity is to avoid situations that cause it whenever possible.

- Pick a walking path with the least amount of triggering stimuli.
- Pay attention to your dog. Watch for more subtle signs that he is uncomfortable with the situations: erect tail, stiff or raised body, puffing of cheeks, lip licking, or raised hackles.
- Keep distance from your dog and the object that is causing the reaction. For example, walk to the other side of the road or turn aside to take a different route when approaching a dog in a yard that barks at your SP dog, or a dog on a leash that is coming toward you.
- Always have treats on hand. From a comfortable distance (*before* your SP dog reacts), treat your SP dog for seeing an arousing situation but not reacting to it.

This creates a “feel good” association for your SP dog, rather than a negative feeling of stress or fear.

## Fear

Fear can be the result of a lack of proper socialization or the result of a negative association in your SP dog’s mind. There are several indicators that a dog is uncomfortable with a situation. Seeing the more subtle signs of fear can help you protect your SP dog from being put into situations where they may feel the need for a more exaggerated response such as growling, snapping, or biting. When hosting an SP dog, we hope to reduce the situations where the dog may be uncomfortable. Please note and report any situations that make your SP dog uncomfortable.



## Housetraining

Patience is key with housetraining. Your SP dog may be completely housetrained but may still have accidents. They do not yet know your routines, you may not know their cues, they may have had potty pads or a dog door in a previous home, or they may have had a setback while they were in the shelter. There may be situations in which your SP dog genuinely does not know how to go potty where it is appropriate. Follow these guidelines to set him up for success from the beginning.

- Determine where you want your SP dog or puppy to eliminate. Take him there every time.
- Your SP dog should go out every time there is a transition in activities – after waking up, after eating or drinking, after play time, or at least once every two hours for adults and every 45 minutes for young dogs.
- Stand or walk with him outside for five minutes. If he eliminates, reward him *immediately* with a treat and praise.
- If he does not eliminate, take him back inside and try again every 15 minutes until you have success.
- Supervise closely inside - watch for wandering, sniffing, circling, or squatting, and quickly take him out to the elimination area if you notice these cues.
- If your SP dog has an accident in the house, do not correct him. Simply remove him from the area, and then clean thoroughly with an odor neutralizing cleaner for pet stains, and reinstate the schedule as outlined above. Punishment can actually make housetraining much more difficult, as the dog may become anxious or stressed, and it is MUCH harder for an anxious dog to learn.

- Utilize a crate during times where you are not able to monitor your SP dog to prevent him from having accidents indoors. This will make the housetraining process much easier.

## **Crate Training**

The goal with crate training is to make the crate your SP dog's most comfortable place in your home. Create a comfortable and welcoming environment for him. Place his favorite blanket in it and set it up in a place where he can watch you and not feel isolated; your office while you work, the living room while you watch TV etc.

- Place his food and water in the crate.
- Begin by encouraging your SP dog to go into the crate on his own. Toss treats inside and help him practice going in without locking him in. Continue this until he goes in and out easily on his own.
- Next, toss a couple treats and close the door. Open it immediately and praise him. Allow him to leave. Repeat this several times.
- Then toss treats in, close the door, and wait about 15 to 30 seconds. Treat and praise him again. Let him out.
- Continue to gradually increase the time that he is in the crate without you leaving the room. Do it while watching TV or reading a book. Make sure he can see you the entire time.
- Then you will toss a treat in the crate, close the door and walk out of the room. Come right back. Treat and praise and let him out. Repeat several times. Begin increasing the time before your return.
- It is ideal if you are able to practice this routine for a couple days or more before leaving your SP dog at home alone.
- Leave him alone the first time for a very short time. Never leave him the first time for an entire working shift. Move through this process as slowly as needed to prevent panic. Use several short, 5–7-minute sessions throughout the day.

We do not know the history or background of many of our dogs; some may be perfectly crate trained and love it, and others may take some time. Setting your SP dog up for success from the beginning is the best way to ensure great results!



# Meeting Other Pets



## Meeting Dogs

NCCR may require a meet and greet with your dog(s) and the potential SP dog before taking the SP dog home. If it is not required, and you choose to do it at your home instead, these tips can help make the interaction safer. Please know that even a dog who was

previously noted to be dog-social may not get along with your dog, and caution should be used. Like people, dogs can be selective about which other dogs they like and which they do not, for reasons that may not always be apparent to us.

- You should introduce your SP dog to each of your dogs one at a time.
- It is best to introduce the dogs outside in an open, secure space, such as a fenced-in yard. All high value items such as favorite toys or food items should be removed from the area first.
- Recruit a second person to help you handle one dog while you handle the other.
- Put your resident dog out in the yard or in a separate room or crate. Allow the SP dog to explore your home off-leash with your supervision. The new dog will want to check out all the rooms, toys and smells. He should be allowed to do this without the resident dog being present to minimize stress for both dogs.
- Leash both dogs and take them for a parallel walk around the block. This allows them to casually see each other but not have to engage directly with each other, and provides a neutral ground to meet. Keep them separate and avoid allowing their leashes to tangle together.
- If the walk seems to go well, take them back to your yard and allow them to meet on-leash. Hold the leash at the beginning and move with the dog to prevent the leash from having tension on it or becoming tangled. It can feel a bit awkward but allows you to pull them apart easily if it is not going well.
- Next, drop the leashes and allow them to interact freely. Let them drag the leashes for the first several minutes.

- Continue to monitor all interactions. **Never** leave the SP dog with your dog unattended or unsupervised.

## Meeting Cats

It is rarely known how your SP dog has behaved with cats in the past, or if he has ever met cats before. In the event that he has been noted to be good with cats, caution



should still always be used. A new home is exciting and it is recommended that you wait at least a week or two before introducing your SP dog to your cats. Utilize a system to keep them entirely separate. They should be able to smell each other under the door, through a gate, etc., and will know that the other animal exists inside the home, but there should be no pressure to engage directly.

To introduce them, keep your SP dog on a leash and allow your cat to roam freely. If you have several cats, introduce them one at a time. Allow the cat to approach the SP dog. Separate them if you see that either animal is becoming overly aroused or if there is any aggression from either party. The interaction should be positive for everyone and no reactions should be corrected. If it does not go well, simply separate them, make note of it, and report the encounter to NCCR.

## Common Health Concerns

Any known health concerns your SP dog has will be discussed with you prior to pick up. Dogs with non-contagious mild health conditions may still be permitted to attend a Slumber Party. Dogs with contagious or more severe health conditions will be kept at the shelter until any existing illnesses have passed and are no longer contagious. However, it is possible for symptoms to develop after your SP dog is taken home. NCCR is not responsible for the medical treatment or care of any other animals within your home in the event that something is inadvertently contracted from your SP dog. It is expected that all veterinary care for your SP dog will be provided by NCCR or an approved veterinarian. SP dogs may be taken to an emergency veterinary hospital in the case of emergency, such as severe injury, prolonged vomiting, dehydration due to vomiting or diarrhea, etc. You may not take an SP dog to any other veterinarian except when given explicit verbal or written authorization by the executive director. No medications or supplements, prescription or otherwise, are allowed to be given to the

SP dog unless previously authorized by NCCR or an NCCR-approved veterinarian. Any unauthorized veterinary care will not be reimbursed by NCCR.

### **Fleas**

Whenever possible and appropriate, your SP dog will be treated preventatively for fleas & ticks before going home with you.



### **Diarrhea**

Diarrhea can be caused by a variety of things, including a change in diet and/or stress. Soft stool or diarrhea is to be expected for the first couple of days after bringing your SP dog to your home. You can try offering a bland diet of boiled ground chicken and white rice for a day or two to see if this alleviates the symptoms. If the stool doesn't improve, it may be indicative of a more serious concern. NCCR should be notified promptly if symptoms persist for more than 72 hours, or if it is accompanied with lethargy, loss of appetite or vomiting, or if the stool contains blood.

### **Vomiting**

Intermittent vomiting can be the result of stress or diet change and can be monitored. You can try switching to a diet of boiled ground chicken and white rice for a couple days to see if this helps to alleviate the symptoms. Fasting may also be needed to prevent stomach upset. If the vomiting continues for more than 48 hours or is accompanied by lethargy or loss of appetite, NCCR should be promptly notified.

### **Kennel Cough**

Kennel Cough is similar to the human cold. It can be caused by either bacteria or a virus. It commonly appears as a hacking cough, but may also present with sneezing, gagging, eye discharge, and nasal discharge. The dog may cough up a foamy mucus that can be confused with vomiting. Mild episodes of kennel cough can be monitored and do not require treatment. If your SP dog has colored discharge, persistent coughing/sneezing, or any symptom accompanied by lethargy, NCCR should be promptly notified. Kennel cough is highly contagious to other dogs and is easily spread through the air when an infected dog coughs or sneezes. Affected dogs should be kept isolated from other dogs for at least 2 weeks after symptoms resolve.

## **Ear Infections**

Ear infections are commonly seen in dogs, but certain breeds and dogs with long, floppy ears are more susceptible. Ear infections will commonly cause brown or yellow discharge, skin redness inside the ear, or a bad odor. These infections can cause itching, so dogs will often shake their heads or paw at their ears. Most ear infections are easily treated, but some may be more difficult to resolve if underlying conditions, such as allergies, are present. NCCR should be notified and a veterinary appointment scheduled so treatment can be started.

## **Medical Care & Emergencies**

### **For medical emergencies between the hours of 8:00 AM and 5:30 PM:**

Email and call the executive director at JNicholsNCCR@gmail.com, (814)580-7269 to report the nature of the situation. You will be given further instructions regarding treatment, and informed of whether you should proceed to the veterinarian for more specialized care.

### **For medical emergencies between the hours of 5:30 PM and 8:00 AM:**

Take your SP dog immediately to one of the following approved after-hours veterinary clinics (it is a good idea to call the emergency facility before going there to ensure that they are open and accepting patients):

**Northwest PA Pet Emergency Center, 429 W 38th St, Erie, PA 16508,  
(814) 866-5920**

**Orchard Park Veterinary Medical Center, 3930 North Buffalo Rd.,  
Orchard Park, New York 14127, (716) 662-6660**

Emergencies requiring immediate medical attention:

- Unresponsive or collapsed
- Severe trauma or pain
- Labored breathing or difficulty breathing
- No urine production after 24 hours of straining to urinate
- Significant active bleeding
- Seizures (more than 3 in a 24-hour period or one lasting more than 3 minutes)
- Continuous vomiting over 24 hours and unable to hold down food/water

If possible, bring your SP dog's medical records with you. Notify the veterinary clinic that this is an SP dog with NCCR. Notify NCCR as soon as possible that you have taken an animal to an after-hours veterinarian via email at [JNicholsNCCR@gmail.com](mailto:JNicholsNCCR@gmail.com), as well as **calling** (814)580-7269. Request a receipt from the veterinary clinic and present it to NCCR for prompt reimbursement.

Some conditions are not immediately concerning & are appropriate to monitor and treat at home:

- Poor appetite of less than 48 hours (dog is otherwise doing well)
- Lethargy (low energy) of less than 48 hours
- Vomiting of less than 24 hours (dog still active and eating)
- Diarrhea of less than 3 days (dog still active and eating)
- Lack of bowel movement for less than 48 hours

Some conditions may be more severe and require that your SP dog be seen by a veterinarian in a timely manner and treated promptly, but are not considered an emergency:

- Kennel Cough (severe) - Significant eye or nasal discharge, sneezing or coughing, especially if the dog is also lethargic or is not eating or has no appetite
- Diarrhea - No stool improvement after 3 days (if dog is active and eating), diarrhea lasting 24 hours (if dog is lethargic and refusing food)
- Vomiting - No improvement after 24 hours (if dog is active and eating), vomiting of less than 24 hours (if dog is lethargic and refusing food)
- Poor appetite of over 48 hours
- Lethargy of more than 48 hours
- Lack of bowel movement of over 48 hours
- Significant or unusual hair loss
- Skin, ear, or eye infections
- Mild trauma, pain, or lameness
- Mild bleeding that is no longer active
- Seizures (a single, short-lasting one)

If your SP dog is displaying non-emergency symptoms that may require treatment or medication, please promptly contact NCCR at [JNicholsNCCR@gmail.com](mailto:JNicholsNCCR@gmail.com), AND call or text (814)580-7269 so that we can schedule a veterinary appointment in a timely manner, or make prompt arrangements for the SP dog to be returned to the shelter for ongoing care if necessary.

Thank you for making a difference  
in the life of an NCCR dog!

