



Northern Chautauqua Canine Rescue



DOG FOSTER HANDBOOK

2nd Edition, 2026

Introduction

Welcome to the dog foster program at NCCR! Every year NCCR accepts around 300 – 350 dogs and puppies. Some of these dogs need a special care and extra TLC before they are ready for adoption. Some of our canines are too young for adoption, are pregnant, or have a behavioral or medical concern that needs time and treatment to help them recover. We rely on our foster families to help these dogs! Thank you for becoming an NCCR foster family! We are excited to work together with you to care for these dogs while they await their forever homes.



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Fostering Process

Notification

NCCR maintains a list of active foster homes, and may contact you if a dog is in need of fostering. A request for foster care for a dog, puppy, or litter of puppies may be sent out via email, or you may be called directly. NCCR makes every effort to match dogs with foster homes that are appropriate to their needs, as well as the foster family's needs. Sometimes, notification of the need for a foster home may be on short notice, as there are occasions where placement may be urgent and advance notice cannot be given due to mitigating circumstances.



Pick Up

You will schedule an appointment with NCCR to pick up your foster dog. This appointment can be made at the time you are notified of the request to foster, and you can advise us of your need for any supplies. The shelter can generally provide you with food, a crate, a collar and leash, harness, dishes, toys, and potty pads. If you would like to request a meet and greet between your dog and a potential foster dog before committing to fostering a particular dog, please notify NCCR ahead of time if possible. You will be given the specific information regarding where and when to pick up your foster dog, as well as any other relevant information. Upon picking up your foster dog, you will be asked to sign a foster agreement and be provided with paperwork including medical records, medications, and any other supplies that you may need.

Keeping Appointments

The need for follow up appointments will vary with each foster dog. In some cases, you may need to bring the foster dog to the shelter or veterinarian for scheduled vaccinations or other procedures. A foster dog may also need to attend an event, or visit the shelter for a meet & greet with a potential adopter. You will be given as much advance notice as possible if there is a need to bring your dog to an appointment.

Adoption

You will be notified by phone and/or email when your foster dog has an approved application from a potential adopter. You may be asked to speak with the applicant over

the phone to discuss the dog and help the applicant determine whether the dog will be a good match for them.

If no applications for your foster dog are received within the first two weeks, you may be asked to provide clear, updated photos of the dog, as well as an updated write-up for the dog's biography listing on NCCR's website or social media accounts. The biography information should include details about the dog's ideal home setting and some of their great qualities or quirks. Include information about how they are with other pets, if known, their exercise needs, and their unique interactions with you. Periodic updates may be requested if your foster dog stays with you for an extended period of time. You are encouraged to "network" for your foster dog – share his pictures and information on social media accounts, tell your friends and family about him, and, *if it is appropriate for your foster dog*, take him out and about with you to help him get noticed.

The Basics

Feeding

Unless otherwise specified, adult dogs should be fed a good quality dry dog food according to the specifications of the particular brand of food, generally twice daily. You can add canned dog food and/or water to the dry food if needed to encourage eating. Unless otherwise mentioned in this manual, foster dogs should not be fed human food of any kind. Chocolate, caffeine, grapes/raisins, mushrooms, onions, and garlic are toxic to dogs. Dogs should have access to fresh water at all times. Treats that are formulated for dogs are a great way to train, build relationships and are also ok to give in moderation. Be mindful to reduce the amount of your foster dog's regular food when treats are plentiful in order to avoid overeating and excess weight gain.

Cleaning Up (See also Sanitation Guidelines for Foster Caregivers, pg. 25 – 27)

It is important that foster dogs have a clean home environment. You should regularly wash their bedding and any other material items they come into contact with. The yard should be scooped regularly. We should also be good stewards to our community and practice always picking up after our dogs when on walks.

In the event that you have a foster dog with something that may be contagious, you can request specific cleaning protocols from NCCR.

Creating a Safe Place to Foster

Prior to bringing home a foster dog, it is best to have a plan for where the dog will stay when you are not at home or able to monitor him. The shelter recommends crate training your foster dog. Resources for crate training are available upon request for guidance on the process. If crating is not an option, make a space where the dog, as well as your home and possessions, will be safe while you are not available to monitor the dog. Your foster 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 foster dog.

Do a thorough check of your fencing. You may be fostering a 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



allow them to climb and jump over. It is not required that NCCR foster parents have a fenced yard, but you would then be required to keep your foster dog on a leash or long-line any time you are outside of your home. It is also recommended that your foster dog drag a leash for the first few times in the yard, in case an escape attempt is made. Dogs must be under supervision when outside at all times.

Tools for Fostering

Leash: Utilize a 6-foot leash for walks and training opportunities. Dogs must be on a leash at all times when they are outside of a securely fenced yard. Foster dogs should not be walked on a flexi-lead (retractable leash). For times when you need a longer leash, use a long-line and make sure that you are in a secured space away from other dangers.

Collar: A flat buckle style collar with ID tags should be worn by your foster dog at all times. The collar should be snug, but not tight. You should be able to fit two fingers underneath. Martingale (cinching) collars should only be worn when you are directly handling and supervising your foster dog, as they can pose a strangulation hazard. Any form of corrective collar is not permitted to be used on your foster dog unless you have received special permission in writing, as well as training for appropriate use.

Harness: It is encouraged to utilize a properly fitting harness for walks with your foster dog. An appropriately fitted harness relieves pressure from the neck and creates a safer and more enjoyable walking experience for the dog.

Crate: A crate can be plastic or wire. The crate should be big enough for the dog to be able to turn around and stand up, but not too much bigger, as this can allow them to have a “potty space” and a sleeping space, which can delay housetraining.

X-Pen/Baby Gates: Both are great tools to limit your foster dog’s space in the home



while still allowing them to observe normal household activities. These are highly recommended for fearful dogs.

Dog toys: Toys should be durable and a safe size for the dog. Rawhides, human toys, and household items such as old socks or shoes should not be used. Be sure to pick up all toys when your foster dog is around young children or other pets, as resource guarding may trigger undesirable or unsafe behavior. Removing and adding toys into rotation can help keep them new and exciting, and provide a unique enrichment activity.

Puppies

Set-Up

It is important to have a space for puppies, with or without a mom, that is warm, able to be fully sanitized, separate from all household pets, and puppy proof. This can be created with an x-pen, or it can be a separate room such as a bathroom or laundry room. Space for puppies should be free from all electrical cords, small items they could chew up or choke on, or anything breakable. Make sure the toilet lid is closed and latched using a toddler-proof latch if you will be using a bathroom as their space, and always check the washer and dryer for puppies inside before starting the appliance if you will be using the laundry room as their space.

Feeding

Pregnant and nursing moms and all weaned puppies under the age of twelve months should be fed a food that is formulated for puppies. All dogs and puppies over the age of three weeks should always have access to plentiful fresh water. Monitor them when they are eating to ensure that each puppy is getting enough food and that no one is being pushed away from the bowl by the mother or the other puppies.

Begin weaning the puppies at around the age of four weeks. Offer them a gruel of canned puppy food that is watered down into a soupy consistency. Over the course of the next week gradually reduce the amount of water to make it thicker. Begin to introduce some soaked kibble by week five. Dry kibble can be offered from eight weeks on. These ages are guidelines and each puppy advances at their own rate. They should all be fully weaned by eight weeks. Feed the recommended amount of food per each puppy three times a day as instructed for the brand/type of food you are feeding, unless instructed otherwise by NCCR. Feeding guidelines/information is generally available on the package of food itself.

Bathing

If you have a mom with your puppies, it is likely that she will take care of all the cleaning of young puppies. If you find yourself needing to clean your puppies, try to avoid a full bath. Use a damp rag or wash only the parts of the puppies that need it. If a full submersion bath is necessary, make sure the water is warm and that the puppy is fully dried prior to returning to his bed in order to avoid chilling.

Socialization

Puppies should be slowly and intentionally introduced to a variety of people, places and other **fully vaccinated and healthy pets** in the home. Create positive associations between your foster puppies and the things that they will experience in their world. Introducing them to a variety of people, clothing types, surfaces, toys and other objects, and household sounds will help them become well-adjusted dogs in their new homes. Do not force your puppy to engage with anything that causes them to be afraid.

Mother and Litter

In many ways when you have mom, your job will be much easier. She will generally, feed, clean and provide all the care the puppies will need until they start to wean. It is best to keep the mom with the puppies until they are a full 8 weeks old and ready to be adopted out on their own. Contact NCCR if you are concerned that the mother is not providing enough care for her young puppies, or if she seems to be seeking separation from them before her puppies have turned 8 weeks of age. Provide a separate and quiet space in your home for a pregnant mom or for a mother with puppies. Mother dogs may feel more agitated or protective through certain times of the process, and being in a low-traffic area of your home will help her feel safer. Once the puppies are four weeks of age, begin allowing the mom some breaks from them. Gradually increase her time away and the frequency of the time away as the puppies age. If she seems uncomfortable with this, simply allow her the choice to leave without actually encouraging her to leave them. She will make the choice when she is ready.

Common Behavior Concerns & Training Guidelines

Your foster 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 foster dog. Since we are still getting to know the dog and are never able to guarantee behavior, you should never leave your foster 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 foster parents comply with this restriction. It is important to provide your foster dog with a consistent training plan. Following plans set in place by NCCR staff for your foster 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 foster 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 foster dog, please notify NCCR and appropriate training and guidance will be provided.

Resource Guarding

The dog you are fostering may feel the need to protect their possessions or personal space. They may show their discomfort by freezing, growling, or snapping. **Never** punish your foster dog for exhibiting these behaviors, as this is likely to make the problem worse. Understand that your foster 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 note 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 foster 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 treat. Utilize the command “trade” for this exercise.
4. If he is guarding a space such as a bed or couch, teach your foster dog the “off” command. Utilize high value food to lure him off the item. You should also limit his

exposure to this item when possible. Close a door or place something uncomfortable in the space to discourage him from going to it.

Separation Anxiety

The dog you are fostering may feel distress from being left home alone. Your foster 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 foster dog. Being proactive to prevent the anxiety in the first place is your best chance at success. Here are a few tips to help the transition to your home go more smoothly for everyone:

- Exercise: provide your foster dog with 20 to 30 minutes of exercise before leaving.
- Provide them with a long lasting, special, and safe treat for your departure.
- Leave and return calmly. Ignore your foster dog's over-excitement upon your return, and interact with him only once he is calm.
- Minimize your foster 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. Teach your foster dog that cues like getting dressed to leave or jingling car keys are nothing to get excited about.
- Utilize pheromone products to calm your foster 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 foster 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 foster dog when he jumps up on you. Even negative attention 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 foster 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 foster 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 foster dog, or a dog on a leash that is coming toward you.
- Always have treats on hand. From a comfortable distance (*before* your foster dog reacts), treat your foster dog for seeing an arousing situation but not reacting to it. This creates a “feel good” association for your foster 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 foster 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 foster dog from being put into situations where they may feel the need for a more exaggerated response such as growling, snapping, or biting. When fostering, we hope to reduce the situations where a dog may be uncomfortable. Please note and report any situations that make your foster dog uncomfortable.

Housetraining

Patience is key with housetraining. Your foster dog may be completely housetrained but may still have accidents. They do not 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 foster dog genuinely does not know how to go potty where it is appropriate. For dogs and puppies over the age of 8 weeks, follow these guidelines to set them up for success from the beginning.

- Determine where you want your foster dog or puppy to eliminate. Take him there every time.
- Your foster 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 puppies.
- 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 foster 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 the dog or puppy 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 the dog's most comfortable place in your home. Create a comfortable and welcoming environment for them. 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 foster 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 foster 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 foster 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 foster dog before taking the foster 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 foster 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 foster 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 foster dog with your dog unattended or unsupervised.

Meeting Cats

It is rarely known how your foster 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 foster 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 foster 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 foster 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 will be discussed with the foster parent prior to pick up. However, it is possible for symptoms to develop after the dogs are taken home. Because of this, it is very important to keep your foster dogs in a separate area, with separate bedding and without contact to your other household animals for the first 7 – 10 days. NCCR is not responsible for the medical treatment or care of any other animals within the foster home in the event that something is inadvertently contracted

from a foster pet. It is expected that all veterinary care for your foster dog will be provided by NCCR or an approved veterinarian. Foster 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. A foster parent may not take a foster pet 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 foster dog unless previously authorized by NCCR or an NCCR-approved veterinarian. Failure to comply with this rule may result in loss of eligibility to foster for NCCR. Any unauthorized veterinary care will not be reimbursed by NCCR.

Fleas

Whenever possible and appropriate, your foster dog will be treated preventatively for fleas & ticks before going home with you. Flea & tick treatment should be applied monthly. NCCR will provide topical or oral flea & tick preventative medications on an as-needed basis.

Ear Mites

A dog with ear mites will have crusty black debris in their ears. The ears will often be itchy and may have a foul odor. Treatment is simple with medication, though sometimes more than one treatment is required for complete resolution.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea can be caused by a variety of things, including a change in diet and stress. Soft stool or diarrhea is to be expected the first couple days after coming 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 in adult dogs and 24 hours for puppies, or if it is accompanied with lethargy, loss of appetite or vomiting or contains blood.

Vomiting

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 in adult dogs and 24 hours in puppies or is accompanied with 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 foster 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. Affected dogs should be kept isolated from other dogs for at least 2 weeks after symptoms resolve.

Parvovirus

Parvovirus is a highly contagious and serious illness in dogs. It is generally seen in young puppies, but there is the occasional case where an adult dog who is not fully vaccinated can contract it. The symptoms include bloody diarrhea, vomiting, and lethargy. **Any of these symptoms in puppies should be reported to NCCR immediately.** Keep the puppy separated from other dogs and in an area easily disinfected until the affected animal can be seen by a veterinarian.

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 have brown or yellow discharge, redness, or a bad odor. These infections can be itchy so dogs will often shake their heads or paw at the ears. Most ear infections are easily treated but some may be more difficult if underlying conditions, such as allergies, are present. NCCR should be notified and a veterinary appointment scheduled so treatment can be started.

Hospice

NCCR has a hospice foster program for dogs that enter the shelter with a terminal illness. These dogs may have a variety of different medical conditions and will need individualized care to address their needs, but still have a reasonably good quality of life such that euthanasia is not immediately recommended. NCCR will provide palliative care for these dogs, and we ask that our foster families provide them with a loving and compassionate home. Hospice dogs will require periodic veterinary checkups to monitor the progression of their conditions and determine the best plan of care for their individual needs.

Monitoring your hospice dog's quality of life is important. Dogs are exceptionally good at hiding pain and discomfort. As their caregivers, we need to look for the more subtle signs that they may be ready for the end of their lives. These signs may include: a significant loss of appetite, significant weight loss, soiling in the house when that has not been typical for them in the past, having more bad days than good days, difficulty breathing, or changes in behavior. Notify NCCR promptly if you are concerned about any of these symptoms. Fostering a hospice dog can be difficult and emotionally challenging, but providing loving in-home care offers the dog improved quality of life, personalized care, and timely monitoring of symptoms so that any discomforts can be promptly and appropriately addressed. All of fostering, but especially hospice care, is a

special process and one that takes immense compassion. Always know that NCCR is available to help you through the harder times of this journey.

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 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 the foster dog immediately to one of the following approved after-hours veterinary clinics:

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 foster dog's medical records with you. Notify the veterinary clinic that this is a foster pet 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, 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:

- Kennel Cough (mild to moderate) - Clear ocular/nasal discharge, sneezing or coughing, dog is otherwise eating and active
- 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
- Weight loss of less than 10%

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

- Kennel Cough (severe) - Significant ocular/nasal discharge, sneezing or coughing, any degree of signs where the dog is also lethargic or anorexic (not eating/no appetite)
- Diarrhea - No stool improvement after 3 days (if dog is active and eating), diarrhea lasting 24 hours (if dog is lethargic and anorexic)
- Vomiting - No improvement after 24 hours (if dog is active and eating), vomiting of less than 24 hours (if dog is lethargic and anorexic)
- Poor appetite of over 48 hours
- Lethargy of more than 48 hours
- Lack of bowel movement of over 48 hours
- Weight loss of more than 10%
- 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)
- **Puppies:** 24 hours of diarrhea, lethargy or poor appetite

If your foster dog is displaying non-emergency symptoms that may require treatment or medication, please promptly contact NCCR at JNicholsNCCR@gmail.com, AND call or text (814)580-7269 so that we can schedule a veterinary appointment in a timely manner if necessary.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can I let my foster dog interact with my personal pets?

A: We do our best to notify foster parents of all known illnesses that a dog may have. Unfortunately, a dog can carry a disease or parasite without showing symptoms for quite some time. We highly recommend keeping foster dogs and personal pets separated for at least 7-10 days before introducing them or allowing them to share a common area of the home. Personal pets must be up to date on vaccines, parasite preventatives and be generally healthy.

Q: How much time will I need to dedicate to fostering a dog?

A: The time commitment will vary with each dog. A bottle-fed puppy will require feeding every 2 hours around the clock but a senior dog may only need a brief walk or a short play session. Many foster parents work full time jobs or have other commitments. NCCR will work with you to find a dog that matches your lifestyle.

Q: How long will I be fostering each dog?

A: The length of need for fostering will also vary with each dog. Generally, you will be fostering for two to four weeks, though some dogs can have significantly longer time needed in foster.

Q: What should I do if my foster dog bites or seriously scratches me or someone else?

A: In the event that your dog bites or seriously scratches a person, you must contact NCCR within 24 hours of the incident to report it. If the bite or scratch broke the skin, then it is required by law to have it documented and the animal quarantined. This includes accidental or unintentional bites and scratches that are non-aggressive in nature. The quarantine process is simple and requires that the dog remain in your home or at the shelter for a 10-day period and be isolated from people and pets that he was not previously interacting with. We hope to avoid these situations whenever possible, but they can happen and NCCR is here to support you and your foster dog through the process.

Q: What should I do if my foster dog escapes? A: If your foster dog escapes, you should make every attempt to get him back into the home as soon as possible. If you are unable to get him back quickly, contact NCCR right away.

Q: What if I want to adopt one of my foster dogs?

A: Foster caregivers may apply to adopt their foster dog or puppy if no other pre-existing approved adopter has already arranged to adopt your foster dog. You will need to notify NCCR, come to the NCCR facility to complete the adoption process, and pay the standard adoption fees.

Q: What if one of my friends or family members wants to adopt?

A: Foster parents are encouraged to find adopters for their foster dogs through friends, family members or social media. The potential adopter should submit an adoption application and, if approved, will be contacted to make arrangements for next steps.

Facilitating Communication & Adoptions with Approved Applicants

NCCR's foster families often act as intermediaries between the Shelter and the adopter. It is important that you are familiar with NCCR's adoption guidelines and practices so that you can facilitate meet & greets, answer questions knowledgeably, and assist with adoptions in accordance with NCCR's policies.

Although there may be exceptions on a case-by-case basis, if you are asked to facilitate an adoption for your foster dog, please follow these steps:

- When you are notified of an approved application for your foster dog, please contact the applicant by phone, text, or email to answer any questions they may have about the dog or the adoption procedures. If you have been asked to contact an approved applicant but are having trouble reaching them in a timely manner (greater than 48 hours), please notify NCCR management.
- Arrange a meet & greet. You may meet at your own home, the applicant's home, NCCR property, or any other appropriate meeting area, such as a public park. When possible, it is best to meet in an area where your foster dog will not be disturbed or distracted by other people or animals. If the applicant's other household dogs are involved in the meet & greet, it is best to meet on neutral territory first to allow the dogs time to check each other out before introducing the foster dog into their home or yard. Please notify NCCR of the date, time, and location as soon as the appointment is scheduled.
- If the applicant would like to participate in a Slumber Party prior to deciding whether to adopt, they **MUST** sign a Slumber Party agreement form, and either be given a paper copy of the Slumber Party Handbook or download a digital copy from NCCR's website. Please encourage the applicant to READ the handbook prior to taking the foster dog home. The foster parent is responsible for promptly delivering the signed Slumber Party agreement back to NCCR, either in person, by mail, or a scanned or photographed copy can be emailed.
- If the applicant would like to proceed with adoption of the foster dog, the foster parent is responsible for notifying NCCR so that the adoption forms can be digitally transmitted to the applicant via email or text. The adoption contract must be reviewed, signed, and payment completed BEFORE the applicant is permitted to take custody of the foster dog.
- If the applicant/adopter is unwilling to complete the adoption process digitally and would prefer to sign a paper contract and/or pay via cash or check, they must schedule an appointment to complete the dog's adoption at the Shelter office in person. If they are unable to do so, you must make arrangements with NCCR in advance to obtain a paper contract for the applicant/adopter to complete prior to

placing the dog in his or her custody. You are responsible for returning the completed contract and cash or check payment to NCCR in a timely manner (mail out the next day, or drop off in person within one week from the time of adoption), either in person or by mail.

- The applicant/adopter should NOT be permitted to take custody of the foster dog until either the Slumber Party agreement is signed and returned to you, or the adoption contract and payment are completed and you are authorized by NCCR to release the dog into the applicant's/adopter's care.

The foster parent is responsible for giving the applicant/adopter any written medical records, NCCR ID tag, microchip tag, and rabies vaccination tag, any medications or supplements for the foster dog, and any favorite items belonging to the foster dog (blanket/bed, toys, etc.). If the adopter is signing a paper adoption contract, please give them their copy of the contract. If they are participating in the Slumber Party program, please give them a paper copy of the Slumber Party handbook or make sure they have a digital copy that they are able to access and review.

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact NCCR.

Sanitation Guidelines for Foster Caregivers

Standard Operating Procedures

(Consistent with NY Agriculture & Markets Law Article 26-C & Shelter Best Practices)

1. Purpose and Scope

These guidelines establish minimum mandatory sanitation and hygiene standards for foster caregivers to reduce disease transmission, maintain animal health, and ensure compliance with New York Agriculture & Markets Law Article 26-C governing animal shelters and shelter-operated foster programs.

These standards apply to all animals placed into foster care by the organization.

2. General Principles

- Foster homes are considered extensions of the shelter for purposes of disease control.
- Sanitation practices must be sufficient to:
 - Prevent the spread of infectious disease
 - Maintain animals in a clean, dry, and healthful environment
 - Protect human health
- Cleaning and disinfection must be appropriate for species, age, and health status of the animal.

3. Hand Hygiene

- Hands must be washed with soap & warm water:
 - Before and after handling animals
 - After cleaning items or areas that come in contact with animals (Bedding, dishes, etc.)
 - After contact with animal bodily fluids (urine, vomit, feces, blood, saliva)

Hand sanitizer is not effective against many pathogens and should only be used under circumstances in which soap and water are not immediately available. Sanitizer does not replace hand washing.

4. Animal Housing and Environment

- Animals must be housed in areas that are:
 - Clean, dry, well-ventilated, and free from excessive odors
 - Separated from resident pets when required by NCCR

- High-risk animals (puppies, and dogs under medical treatment) must be housed in designated areas that are easy to clean and maintain sanitary conditions.

5. Cleaning and Disinfection Standards

5.1 Routine Cleaning

- Solid waste (feces, food waste, vomit) must be removed at least daily or more often as needed
- Food and water bowls must be cleaned daily with hot water and dish detergent
- Bedding must be laundered whenever soiled and at least weekly

5.2 Disinfection

- After cleaning with detergent, surfaces must be disinfected using an approved disinfectant against common shelter pathogens (e.g. parvovirus).
- Disinfectants must be:
 - Used according to label instructions
 - Mixed at the correct concentrations
 - Given appropriate contact time with surfaces to be fully effective
- Common acceptable disinfectants include:
 - Accelerated hydrogen peroxide products
 - Properly diluted bleach solutions (where appropriate and safe to use)

6. Elimination Areas

- Dog elimination areas must be:
 - Picked up promptly
 - Cleaned to minimize odor, disease transmission, and to avoid attracting insects

7. Laundry and Bedding

- Bedding, towels, and soft toys must be:
 - Laundered separately from household laundry when possible
 - Washed with detergent and hot water
 - Thoroughly dried before re-use

8. Isolation and Disease Prevention

- Foster caregivers must follow isolation instructions for animals with:
 - Diarrhea
 - Respiratory symptoms
 - Skin diseases

- Known or suspected exposure to contagious illness
- Supplies (bowls, toys, etc.) must not be shared between isolated and healthy animals.
- Cleaning should go in order from healthy animals first to sick animals last, not the reverse.

9. Pest and Waste Control

- Food must be stored in sealed containers to prevent pests and spoilage
- Waste must be disposed of promptly in sealed trash bags
- Foster homes must be maintained free of rodents, insects, and other vermin

10. Chemical Safety

- Cleaning chemicals must be:
 - Stored securely away from animals
 - Used only as directed
 - Never mixed with other chemicals
- Caregivers must ensure adequate ventilation when using chemicals to clean or disinfect

11. Reporting and Compliance

- Foster caregivers must immediately report:
 - Unsanitary conditions they cannot correct
 - Signs of infectious disease in their foster animals
 - Repeated episodes of diarrhea, vomiting, or any abnormal or atypical behavior in their foster animals
- Failure to follow sanitation guidelines may result in removal of animals from the foster home.

12. Training and Support

- NCCR shall provide:
 - Written sanitation instructions
 - Approved disinfectant guidance
 - Access to NCCR staff and management for questions or concerns

These guidelines are intended to meet or exceed sanitation and disease control requirements under NY Agriculture & Markets Law Article 26-C and align with accepted animals shelter best practices for foster-based care.



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