



Bringing A Foster Dog Home

As a SUR Foster Carer we are entrusting one of our dogs with you to help set it up to be better equipped to be adopted. Your first meeting with the dog is very important in establishing rules and boundaries which were probably lacking in its previous environment and could be the very reason why it has come into care. Starting off as you mean to carry on will leave the dog with no doubts and it will be a better balanced dog.

The biggest misconception with rescue dogs is people think they need to be mollycoddled...wrong. They are like any other dog that needs rules and boundaries.

The number one rule for introducing a dog into your home is to do it gradually. Do not just bring the dog in and let it roam around. If you have other dogs this is an invasion of their territory by a stranger and to the foster dog it has been thrust into a situation without any rules of boundaries. This situation can have various repercussions – dogs that fight over everything, dogs that constantly compete for things, a foster dog that will do whatever it wants whenever it wants.

When you are first introduced to your foster dog...STAY CALM. Always make sure the dog is on a lead and the other person has hold of it. DO NOT talk to it and DO NOT get down to its level. The best thing you can do is to ignore it and that includes no eye contact and just talk to the person with it. Let the dog come to you and sniff you. Don't force yourself onto the dog and don't give it any treats. You don't want to bribe your relationship with the dog. When the dog is calm you can then pat it. You are already showing it that it will get rewarded when it is calm.

If you are introducing your dog to the foster dog then do it on neutral territory which is not familiar to either dog. DO NOT allow a face to face meeting with the dogs. Take them for a long walk as this will drain their energy and give them something else to focus on. You will take your dog in the lead position and the person with the foster dog will follow a little way behind. After a while drop back with your dog and allow it to sniff the bum of the foster dog and then continue your walk with your dog in front. Again make sure there is no face to face. After a while it's time for the foster dog to sniff your dog's bum.

Gradually you can bring them closer together until the dogs are walking on the outside of each person. When they are walking calmly and there are no incidences then it is time to take them home and introduce the foster dog to its temporary home. Again it is always a good idea to have a second person on hand for this stage also.

Leave both dogs on leads and hold the leads. When going through the front door make sure you go first, then your dog and then the foster dog. So many people bring a foster dog home and throw open the door, take off the leash and let the dog loose to explore. They think it's having a great time exploring but in fact what they've done is throw the dog into utter uncertainty. They've put it in a completely foreign environment with no rules, and lots of unfamiliar smells and if they've had other pets the new foster dog will be uncertain about invading another's territory...so much pressure for a dog.

Take the foster dog to each room and avoiding the rooms you don't want it in. Make sure as you enter and leave each room that you always go first and then invite the dog to follow. The dog is still on a lead at this stage. Use a few words as possible. A simple "Come" when you want it to follow and an "Uh!" or "No!" if it does anything you don't want it to do.

If you have other members of your family then introduce them to the dog one at a time...CALMLY. Allow the dog to sniff them and ensure nobody rushes up to the dog to pat it. A lot of times we don't know the history of a dog so it needs to be treated with caution. DO NOT allow anybody to be at face level with the dog and NEVER leave the dog unattended around children.

At this stage the dog will be quite overwhelmed with all that has happened so will need some quiet time. All SUR foster dogs are required to be crate trained and a lot of them will be ok with this as they have come from a pound. The crate allows them to have a safe, time-out space when needed. After the tour of their new environment and the introductions to your family, place them in their crate. You can put a few treats in it if you like. This will let them safely take in the goings on in your home and see who's who without any pressure. Then just go about your everyday activities.

If the foster dog does not like being in the crate for extended periods you can let it out, on the lead, and take it for short walks outside. But place it back in its crate each time as this is you letting the dog know that you are in control. This may seem harsh to some people but it is really very good for the dog. You are actually alleviating the pressure from the dog of who is the alpha. The dog now knows that you will look after it and keep it safe.

Finally, once the foster dog has integrated with your family it is important that you allow the dogs to work out the hierarchy among themselves. It can be a natural tendency to show favour to your dog and try to make them the dominant dog but that may put pressure on your dog which could cause the dogs to fight. They will work it out and let you know which dog is dominant and which one is submissive, or they will take equal positions on their own). They will be happier if you allow them to make this one rule for themselves. But that's not to say you allow them to fight aggressively.

You will always have the SUR team to help you through any situation and they are always there with advice.