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# FOSTER CARE ESSENTIALS FOR DOGS

FIX WEST TEXAS

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## SECTION 1: PREPARING FOR A FOSTER DOG

Taking home a new foster dog is incredibly exciting. Not only does it prevent dogs from overstaying in a shelter environment, it adds value to foster dogs' social, emotional and physical well-being, and provides valuable information to interested adopters looking for a new dog to add to their family. Keep in mind, though, that humans can see the benefits of foster care immediately, but foster dogs may initially be frightened or even unsure about what exactly is happening. In this section, we help prepare you and your home for the foster dog so you are ready to go. Let's get started.

### Supplies you'll need

We greatly appreciate any help that you can provide in supplying items for the foster dog. Here's what you'll need to help the foster dog make a smooth transition to living in your home:

- **At least one bowl for dry food and one for water:** Stainless steel or ceramic tend to work best.
- **A supply of dry dog food:** All dogs are fed dry food unless a special diet is needed.
- **A collar and a leash:** All dogs should be on a secure leash and collar when outside your home.
- **A soft place to sleep:** Old towels or blankets work well.
- **A crate:** The crate should be large enough for the dog to stand up and turn around in, but not much bigger than that.
- **Dog treats:** Giving treats is a good way to help train and build a positive relationship with the foster dog.
- **Dog toys:** Make sure the toys are durable and appropriate for the size of the foster dog.

Additional supplies that we recommend:

- A baby gate: This comes in handy when you want to keep certain areas of your home off-limits.
- Grooming supplies: A well-groomed dog has a better chance of getting adopted.

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*These are general supplies that you'll need to care for the foster dog, but there may be restrictions regarding some of them, such as food and toys, which you'll be informed about when you pick up the dog.*

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### Housing and outdoor access

Adult foster dogs and puppies should live indoors, with outdoor access via walks on leash or spending time in a secure fenced-in yard. Dogs love the outdoors, but please don't leave the foster dog outside unattended without access to indoor space. A dog door that leads to a fenced-in yard is an excellent option for house-trained dogs, but keep in mind that some foster dogs will not know how to use one, so you'll have to teach them. In addition, some dogs may attempt to escape from a fenced yard if unattended.

For most dogs, we recommend having a crate, and for puppies, we recommend having additional containment options, such as a closed room or an exercise pen, to keep them out of trouble. If you have questions about what is appropriate for the foster dog you'll be caring for, please discuss your housing situation and options with a Fix West Texas team member before bringing the foster dog home.

## Dog-proofing your home

Before bringing the foster dog home, there are a few things you can do to dog-proof your home to help keep the dog safe and prevent your valuables from being damaged. Here are some tips:

- Remove anything that would be unsafe or undesirable for the dog to chew on or knock over.
- Securely store human and pet food, as well as medications, lotions and cosmetics, to keep the dog from eating those things and possibly getting sick.
- Move houseplants out of reach. Some dogs like to play with them or may knock them over.
- Move electrical and phone wires out of reach. Dogs may chew on or get tangled in them.
- Keep the toilet seat down and keep the lids on trash cans and food containers. Dogs love to explore, so it's up to you to prevent the foster dog from getting into mischief.

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*Remember, never underestimate the foster dog's abilities.*

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## Resident pets

Fix West Texas strongly recommends that you keep your own pets separate from foster animals for the health and safety of all the animals. Please be aware that dogs often come to Fix West Texas with unknown histories and if your dogs are young or not fully vaccinated, they may be at risk of contracting disease. In these cases, we recommend that you wait 7-14 days before introducing the foster dog to your resident pets. If one of your pets becomes ill or injured, Fix West Texas will not provide medical care for your pet.

If you do decide to introduce your resident pets to the foster dog, we have some guidance (see below) on the best steps to take to keep everyone safe and promote positive interactions.

## Dog-to-dog introductions

If you choose to integrate your own dogs with the foster dog, you'll want to introduce them to the foster dog one at a time and supervise their interactions at first. Even if both dogs have a history of being social with other dogs, you will still want to introduce them properly to start their relationship off on a positive note.

Before bringing the foster dog home:

1. Do a sweep of your home and remove all high-value items (e.g., toys, Kongs, rawhide chews) lying around. This will reduce potential conflicts over items that your own dogs hold in high regard.
2. Create a separate feeding space for the foster dog, because you will always want to feed the foster dog separately from your resident dogs.

After you bring the foster dog home:

1. Introduce the foster dog to one of your dogs outside. Keep the dogs on leash and take them for a short walk or have them meet in your yard. Allow them the space to get adjusted to one another and sniff each other.

2. If the dogs' body language is positive and they appear to be getting more comfortable with each other, drop the leashes and let them interact. If they continue to get along, let them enter the house.
3. Keep all interactions supervised and end on a positive note.

## Dog-to-cat introductions

If your cat is social around dogs and you choose to introduce your feline to the foster dog, you will want to do the introduction at a **slow and steady pace**.

Before bringing the foster dog home:

1. Create a separate "territory" for the foster dog to stay in initially. This area (e.g., a spare bedroom) should be equipped with everything the dog needs.
2. Put out blankets or towels for the foster dog and the cat to leave their scent on.

After bringing the foster dog home:

1. Keep the cat and the dog separated at first.
2. Over a one- to two-week period, let the dog and cat smell each other through a closed door. Exchanging blankets or towels between the dog's area and the cat's area will help them get used to each other's smells.
3. After a week or two, do the face-to-face introduction. Keeping the foster dog on a leash, allow your cat out in the same area. If you have more than one cat, introduce them one at a time.
4. Do not allow the dog to charge or run directly up to the cat.
5. Try to distract the dog as best you can so that the cat has the chance to approach.
6. Watch the body language of each animal closely and don't continue the interaction if either pet becomes over-stimulated or hostile.

We kindly ask that you avoid leaving foster dogs and resident cats together unsupervised. Sometimes unexpected loud noises (e.g., fireworks) can startle fearful pets and cause them to redirect those fears. Supervision helps to ensure that all animals are as safe as possible.

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*The idea is to keep the all animal-to-animal interactions positive, safe and controlled.*

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## Children and dogs

Dogs in our care often come with an unknown history and most times, we will not know the full scope of their personalities. We recommend talking with your children about fostering and explaining what boundaries the foster dog may need.

Here are some ways to make fostering an enriching experience for all:

- Dogs can startle easily when approached unexpectedly. Give the foster dog the space to sleep and eat without disruptions. For example, the dog could sleep in the crate or a spare room.
- Show your kids how to engage in safe and respectful play with the foster dog. Teach them not to tease the dog or rile him up.

- Teach your children not to take away a toy or prized possession from the foster dog. Even when you want to take a toy from the dog, you should always “trade up” — exchanging the toy for another item or food of equal or higher value.
- Not all dogs enjoy being held or overly petted, but some do and sometimes it depends on their mood. An adult should always be present when children are interacting with the foster dog to ensure safety.
- Store away children’s toys, as dogs are unable to tell which toys are for dogs and which are for kids.
- Children should not walk the foster dog without an adult present, and younger children should not be allowed to hold the leash, since the dog may be too strong for the child to handle alone.

## SECTION 2: DAY-TO-DAY CARE

Having a routine for the foster dog’s day-to-day care will help to ensure that the dog is happy, healthy and comfortable.

### Feeding

All foster dogs should be fed a diet of dry dog food, unless specified otherwise by Fix West Texas. Here’s some guidance on feeding:

- Feed the foster dog once or twice daily. The amount will be based on age and weight: See the chart below.
- Leave fresh water out at all times, providing multiple bowls if you have resident pets.
- Giving treats is a sure way to win the foster dog’s heart. Use treats to reward desired behaviors.
- Many dogs love chew toys. Try Greenies, antlers, Nylabones or Dentabones. Keep in mind that not all dogs like to share these high-value items. Give these treats when the foster dog is confined to his own area.

Weight of dog	Amount of food per day*
5 pounds	1/2 cup to 5/8 cup
10 pounds	3/4 cup to 1 cup
20 pounds	1 1/4 cups to 1 3/4 cups
40 pounds	2 1/4 cups to 3 cups
60 pounds	3 cups to 4 cups
80 pounds	3 2/3 cups to 5 cups
100 pounds	4 1/4 cups to 6 cups

*\*These amounts are meant to be fed to the foster dog over a 24-hour period.*

### Daily routine

It’s important to establish a daily routine of regularly scheduled feedings, potty breaks and walk times. Dogs take comfort in having a routine they can count on, which can be beneficial for them when they transition to their adoptive home.

## House-training

The dogs who come into our care often have unknown histories, and we may not know whether they are house-trained. You'll want to be proactive in helping to identify if the foster dog is potty-trained or will require training.

With that said, accidents will happen — even if they are house-trained. Most of these dogs have lived in a shelter and will need time to adjust to a home setting and a new routine. So, give the foster dog ample opportunities to go potty in the desired location. And be sure to give him lots of praise and rewards when he “goes to the bathroom” in the appropriate place.

As you work with the foster dog on this skill, keep in mind that house-trained dogs have a better chance of being adopted. Here are some tips for house-training a dog:

- Take the dog outside to go potty three to six times per day (depending on age) and set a regular schedule.
- Initially, you may need to take the dog out more frequently, to remind her where the door to the outside is and to reassure her that you will take her out for potty breaks.
- Bring treats with you on walks to reinforce good potty behavior. If the dog urinates indoors on a pee pad, reward that too.
- Most dogs will give cues (such as standing near the door or sniffing the ground and walking in small circles) to indicate that they need to go out.
- Keep the dog in a crate when you are not available to supervise him indoors. This will help teach him to “hold it” until someone can take him outdoors. Dogs are “denning” animals and they instinctively avoid going potty in a crate.

We know how frustrating indoor potty accidents can be, but it is super important to be patient with the foster dog. Never use discipline or punishment after a potty accident because it can create mistrust between the dog and you. Punishment is also unlikely to teach dogs not to go potty inside; it's more likely to teach them that it's not safe to go potty in front of humans.

If accidents occur, we recommend using an enzymatic cleaner. Nature's Miracle and Simple Solution are two products containing natural enzymes that tackle tough stains and odors and remove them permanently.

## Crate training

Crates provide foster dogs with their own space, which helps them to decompress, feel safe and feel like they have autonomy. A crate can be a comfy place for the foster dog to rest and have “downtime” and can also limit her access to the entire house until she knows how to behave appropriately. To keep the dog associating the crate with positive things, don't ever use the crate as a form of punishment. In addition, a dog should never be left in a crate for an extended period of time (no longer than eight hours).

You can prevent problems by setting the dog up for success with crate training. Done in a positive way, crate training can be an effective component of house-training. Being crate-trained increases foster dogs' adoptability.

Here are some tips for crate training:

- **Keep it positive:** The dog should only associate good things with the crate, so start by putting treats and/or toys in the crate and encouraging him to go in.
- **Go at the dog's pace:** Some dogs warm up to the crate slowly. If the dog is afraid to go in, place a treat in the crate as far as she is willing to go. After she takes the treat, place another treat a little farther back in the crate. Keep going until she is eating treats at the very back. Next, feed the dog her next meal in the crate, with the door open so that she can walk in and out at will.
- **Patience is critical:** Crate training a fearful dog can take time, so be patient and encouraging. If a crate is properly introduced, the foster dog will eventually enter it happily and settle down.

## Grooming

A clean and well-groomed dog has a better chance of getting adopted. Here are some grooming tips:

- Bathing the dog on a regular basis will help keep him clean and also get him comfortable with baths.
- Longer-haired dogs should be brushed regularly to avoid matting.
- If you are comfortable with trimming dogs' nails, we would be happy to have you trim the nails of the foster dog, if needed. Proceed slowly, checking to see if the dog is comfortable with what you're doing, and use caution to avoid cutting the nails too short.

Contact Fix West Texas if you feel the dog needs to see a professional groomer or if you would like assistance with nail trimming.

## Mental stimulation and exercise

Daily playtime provides the foster dog with stimulation, encourages socialization and releases excess energy. Here are a few ideas:

- The dog should get at least two 30-minute play sessions or walks with you per day (less if the dog is older or has a low energy level).
- Try a variety of toys (balls, squeaky toys, rope toys, etc.) to see which ones the foster dog prefers.
- Discourage the dog from playing with your hands, since mouthing won't be a desirable behavior to adopters. Redirect the dog to a toy.
- Offer the foster dog a food-dispensing toy (aka food puzzle) for mental stimulation. You hide treats in the toy and the dog has to figure out how to get the treats out. Try a TreatStik ([treatstik.com](http://treatstik.com)) or Kong product ([kongcompany.com](http://kongcompany.com)).

## Safety requirements

Because the dogs often come to us with unknown histories, we don't know how they will act in many different situations. Here are some safety requirements that foster caregivers need to follow:

- Foster dogs should live indoors and should be sleeping inside each night.
- Please do not leave the foster dog outside unsupervised, even if you have a fenced yard. Watch the foster dog when she's outside at all times, to ensure that she doesn't escape or have any negative interactions with other people or animals.
- The foster dog should only be off-leash in an enclosed backyard that is completely fenced or an enclosed indoor area.

- When walking or hiking with the foster dog, please keep him on leash at all times. Foster dogs are not allowed to go to off-leash dog parks or other off-leash dog areas.
- When transporting the foster dog, please keep her inside the vehicle. The foster dog should not ride in the bed of an open pickup truck.
- From a medical standpoint, it's best if the foster dog does not meet any dogs who are strangers to you. The reason is that those dogs may not be vaccinated or may carry diseases. Plus, having recently come from a shelter setting, foster dogs can be vulnerable health-wise.

## First 48 hours

You have the foster dog, so now what? Here are some pointers for the first 48 hours:

- Be mindful of the dog's body language and allow the dog time to settle in and adjust to the new sights, sounds and smells. How long that takes will vary, depending on the dog's confidence level, but it's important to be patient and let the dog set the pace.
- Letting foster dogs have the full run of your home in the beginning can be overwhelming for them. So, consider setting up the dog in a spare room at first and then gradually opening up the rest of your home.
- Food is the way to a dog's heart. Reward the behaviors you want to see in your home.

## SECTION 3: MEDICAL AND EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS

### Medications

It is not uncommon for foster dogs to require some type of medication during their stay in a foster home. When fostering a dog on medications, please make sure:

- You give the medication as instructed.
- You give all of the prescribed doses and do not end medication early unless directed by Fix West Texas or a Fix West Texas approved veterinarian.

If the foster animal has not responded to prescribed medications after five days (or in the time instructed by a veterinarian), please contact Fix West Texas for guidance.

### Signs of illness and what to do next

Dogs from unknown circumstances who have spent time in an animal shelter environment may suffer from common, non-life-threatening ailments. Common conditions include infections, parasites or diarrhea. If the dog is displaying one or more of the symptoms listed below, please follow the instructions given and contact Fix West Texas using the contact information provided to you. If the animal is displaying a concerning symptom not included here, contact Fix West Texas for guidance.

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*Reminder: If you seek alternative or emergency veterinary care for the foster animal without Fix West Texas' authorization, you will be responsible for any costs incurred.*

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### Appetite loss or not eating

The foster dog may be stressed after arriving in your home, and stress can cause lack of appetite. Allow the foster dog time to adjust to the new environment. But if the dog hasn't eaten after 24 hours, please notify Fix West Texas. Also, if the dog has been eating well, but then stops eating for 12 to 24 hours, call Fix West Texas to set up a vet appointment. Please do not change the dog's diet without contacting Fix West Texas. An abrupt change in diet can cause diarrhea, which can lead to dehydration.

<b>When to contact Fix West Texas</b>	If the dog hasn't eaten in 24 hours.  If the dog has been eating well but suddenly stops eating for 12-24 hours.
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### Coughing

Coughing is common in dogs who pull on the leash. If the coughing becomes more frequent, however, and there is discharge coming from the nose, contact Fix West Texas to find out if a vet appointment is needed. (It may not be necessary in all cases.) Be sure to monitor the dog's breathing. If the dog seems to struggle to breathe or starts wheezing, call Fix West Texas immediately and follow the emergency contact protocol.

<b>When to contact Fix West Texas</b>	If the dog is coughing and there is clear or colored discharge from the nose.  If you notice any discharge and need guidance on next steps.  <b>If the dog is struggling to breathe or starts wheezing, follow the emergency contact protocol.</b>
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### Dehydration

Dehydration is usually associated with diarrhea, vomiting and/or loss of appetite. To test for dehydration, gently pinch the dog's skin around the scruff area. If the skin stays taut, the dog is dehydrated. Please call Fix West Texas within 24 hours to schedule a vet appointment.

<b>When to contact Fix West Texas</b>	If after doing the above test, you believe the dog is dehydrated, especially in combination with other symptoms of concern.
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### Diarrhea

It is important to monitor the foster dog's pooping habits daily. Soft stool is normal for the first two or three days after taking a dog home; soft stool is most likely caused by stress and a change in food. If the foster dog has liquid stool, however, please contact Fix West Texas so that an appointment can be scheduled to determine whether the dog needs medication.

Keep in mind that diarrhea will dehydrate the dog. If the foster dog has bloody or mucoid diarrhea, please contact Fix West Texas through the emergency contact protocol.

<b>When to contact Fix West Texas</b>	If the dog has liquid stool.
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	<b>If the dog has bloody or mucooid stool, follow the emergency contact protocol.</b>
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### Discharge: eyes and nose

It is normal for dogs to have some discharge from their eyes when they wake up and some may have more than others, depending on the breed. But if the foster dog has yellow or green discharge, or swelling around the eyes (making it hard for him to open his eyes), or the third eyelid is showing, you need to contact Fix West Texas to schedule a vet appointment. Sneezing can be common in a dog recovering from an upper respiratory infection. If the sneezing becomes more frequent, watch for discharge coming from the nose. If you notice discharge, contact Fix West Texas to find out if a vet appointment is needed (it may not be necessary in all cases).

You can try nebulizing the dog to relieve her discomfort. Nebulizing can be done in two ways:

1. Place the dog in the bathroom with a hot shower running. (Do not place the dog in the shower.) The steam can help clear out the discharge.
2. Put the dog in a carrier, cover it with a towel, and place a nebulizer or humidifier under the towel.

If the discharge becomes colored, contact Fix West Texas to schedule a vet appointment.

**Be sure to monitor the dog’s breathing.** If the dog starts to wheeze or breathe with an open mouth, follow the emergency contact protocol. Also, once you notice nasal discharge, monitor the dog’s eating habits more closely to ensure that he or she is still eating.

<b>When to contact Fix West Texas</b>	If the discharge becomes colored. If you notice any discharge and need guidance on next steps.  <b>If the dog starts to wheeze or breathe with an open mouth, follow the emergency contact protocol.</b>
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### Ears: scratching, swelling or irritation

If the dog is scratching her ears frequently and/or shakes her head often, she may have ear mites. When you look in her ears, you may see a dark discharge that resembles coffee grounds. Ear mites are easily treatable, so contact Fix West Texas to schedule a medical appointment.

If the dog has irritated, swollen, or red or pink ears that smell like yeast, she may have an ear infection called otitis. If you see any of these signs, please follow the steps for setting up a medical appointment.

<b>When to contact Fix West Texas</b>	If you see dark discharge in the dog’s ears, or the scratching or headshaking persists even without signs of discharge.  If the dog has irritated, swollen or reddened ears.
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### Hair loss

Please contact Fix West Texas if you notice any hair loss on the foster dog. It is normal for dogs to have thin fur around the lips and eyelids and in front of the ears, but clumpy patches of hair loss or thinning hair can indicate a condition that may require treatment.

It is important to check the foster dog’s coat every day. Some conditions causing hair loss can be contagious to other pets or people. Until the foster dog has a medical evaluation, we recommend keeping him or her separate from other pets.

<b>When to contact Fix West Texas</b>	If you notice patches of hair loss or thinning hair, with or without irritated skin.
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### Lethargy

The activity level of the foster dog will vary depending on age and personality. Keeping an activity log will help you notice whether the foster dog is less active than usual. If the dog cannot be roused or seems weak and unable to stand, it’s an emergency, so start the emergency contact protocol.

<b>When to contact Fix West Texas</b>	<p>If lethargy is combined with other symptoms, such as loss of appetite or eye or nose discharge.</p> <p><b>If the foster dog cannot be roused, seems weak or is unable to stand, follow the emergency contact protocol.</b></p>
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### Urinary issues: pain or strain

Upon arrival in a foster home, a dog may not urinate for a while because of stress. If the dog hasn’t urinated in more than 24 hours, however, please contact Fix West Texas. Additional indications that the dog may have a urinary issue include:

- Straining to eliminate
- Has blood or discoloration in urine or feces
- Vocalizes while eliminating
- Makes frequent attempts to urinate

If the foster dog has any of the above symptoms for more than 24 hours, contact Fix West Texas to schedule a medical exam.

**If you notice the dog straining to urinate with little or no results, or crying out when urinating, please contact Fix West Texas immediately. This symptom may indicate a urethral obstruction, which can be life-threatening.** It’s a particular concern in male dogs; while urethral obstruction is not impossible for females, it is less common.

If the foster dog continues to have potty issues and a medical exam was normal, see the information pertaining to that topic in “Section 4: Behavior Support.”

<b>When to contact Fix West Texas</b>	<p>If the dog hasn’t urinated in more than 24 hours.</p> <p><b>If the dog is straining to urinate with little or no results, or crying when urinating, follow the emergency contact protocol, as this can indicate an obstruction.</b></p>
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### Vomiting

Sometimes dogs will vomit up bile or other liquids. This is normal, but please contact Fix West Texas if the dog has out-of-the-ordinary vomiting. Don’t worry about one or two vomiting episodes as long as

the dog is acting normally otherwise (eating, active, no diarrhea). If the foster dog is continuously vomiting after meals, it may mean she is eating too quickly. A slow-feeder bowl can help her slow down.

<b>When to contact Fix West Texas</b>	If the dog is vomiting in conjunction with other symptoms, such as loss of appetite, diarrhea or lethargy.
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## Criteria for emergencies

What constitutes a medical emergency in a dog? A good rule of thumb is any situation in which you would call 911 for a person. Here are some specific symptoms that could indicate an emergency:

- Urinary blockage (which can be life-threatening for dogs, particularly males)
- Not breathing or labored breathing
- Extreme dehydration: dry gums, weakness, vomiting, not urinating, skin tenting (when the skin is pulled up, it stays there)
- Abnormal lethargy or inability to stand
- Unconsciousness or inability to wake up
- Cold to the touch
- Broken bones
- Any trauma: hit by a car, dropped, stepped on
- A large wound or profuse bleeding that doesn't stop when pressure is applied
- Loss of appetite for more than 24 hours

If the foster dog displays any of these symptoms, please follow the emergency phone protocol. If the animal is vomiting or has diarrhea, but is still active, eating and drinking, continue to monitor the dog. If the vomiting or diarrhea continues for more than 48 hours, contact Fix West Texas.

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*If you think the foster animal may incur permanent damage or pass away if not seen by a veterinarian immediately, please proceed to the approved emergency clinic and start the emergency phone chain on the way.*

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## Emergency response and foster caregiver's next steps

If an emergency response and/or disaster situation occurs in your area, Fix West Texas will provide as much support as we can to you and the foster pet. Depending on the circumstances, an extended stay in your home may be necessary for the foster pet, or the foster pet may need to go to a specific location provided by Fix West Texas.

Please know that we will work within safety guidelines and to the best of our abilities to assist you and the pet in a safe and efficient manner. If a disaster situation occurs, we will communicate next steps directly to you. To ensure that we can communicate with you, please keep your contact information up to date with us. We truly appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

## SECTION 4: BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

One of your goals as a foster caregiver is to help prepare the foster dog for living successfully in a home. So, we ask that you help the foster dog to develop good habits and skills through the use of positive reinforcement training, which builds a bond of trust between you and the foster animal. The basic idea is to reward desirable behaviors and ignore unwanted behaviors.

### Common behavioral concerns and what to do next

#### Excessive vocalization

Increases in vocalization are common when there are changes in the environment, such as a move to a new place or a change from being an outdoor to an indoor pet. In these cases, the increase in vocalization may be temporary. But if it continues, the most common cause of excessive vocalization is attention-seeking, a learned behavior.

The best strategy for remedying this behavior is to ignore it. Typically, dogs will initially vocalize more and for longer periods of time before they finally give up. It's important to ignore the behavior because if you give in, the dog will learn that louder and longer vocalization is the way to get your attention.

In addition, try increasing the dog's mental and physical stimulation by increasing interactive play, walks and other exercise. You can also increase mental exercise by using a food puzzle, working on new tricks and skills, and giving the dog plenty of toy options to keep her busy and entertained. Give the dog some company overnight by leaving a radio station on with soft music and voices.

<b>When to contact Fix West Texas</b>	If additional guidance is needed.
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#### High energy

Younger dogs and working dog breeds have boundless energy. Ways for them to safely discharge some of that energy include play, walks, training, hikes and runs. Excess energy can also be a result of boredom, and the solution is the same — increase the dog's mental and physical stimulation.

Exercise is a basic need for any dog and being unable to use up excess energy in a healthy way can be as damaging as not getting adequate nutrition or veterinary care. For younger dogs, add more physical activities to their routine and switch toys out each week.

<b>When to contact Fix West Texas</b>	If you need more ideas for mental and physical stimulation.  If it's a challenging lifestyle match and you are unable to provide additional mental and physical stimulation.
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#### Overstimulation and arousal spikes

Overstimulation and arousal spikes typically happen when a dog is presented with a lot of new stimuli all at once. That scenario can occur when pets are moved from a shelter environment into a home. Overstimulation can show up as excessive vocalization, jumping up, running in circles and/ or doing "zoomies." Arousal spikes are very similar to overstimulation and often have similar causes. Stress and frustration can also cause arousal spikes. Arousal spikes often manifest as leash biting, mouthing, unrelenting jumping up, nipping and rough play.

The best strategy for dealing with this behavior is to remove the stimuli causing it. If the stimulus is a specific toy or play style, disengage from the dog by walking away or guiding the dog to another room to give her some time to decompress. This strategy shows the dog that you will not engage with her when she reacts like that. Arousal spikes can be a barrier to adoption, so working with foster dogs on extinguishing these behaviors will help them get adopted.

<b>When to contact Fix West Texas</b>	If the behavior escalates to rough mouthing or play biting, or when it starts to be unmanageable.
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### Potty issues due to behavior

Accidents and house-training issues happen for a number of reasons. Because we don't know the history of most of our dogs, we can never guarantee that they are house-trained. Even dogs who have a history of being house-trained may have accidents when they first come to your home.

The key to potty training is setting the dog up for success. The first step is to show the dog where you want him to go to the bathroom — either on pee pads or outside. Take the dog on leash to the desired spot, wait until he goes potty and then reward him with treats and lots of praise.

While he is learning, it is important to give the dog multiple opportunities per day to go potty. When you are unable to supervise the foster dog, have him relax and rest in his crate so he doesn't go to the bathroom in the house. It also helps to feed the dog at the same time every day and stick to a routine. Dogs will often give signs that they need to go potty, such as walking in small circles, standing by the door or whining.

It's possible that a dog's potty problems are due to a medical issue rather than a behavior issue. See "Section 3: Medical and Emergency Protocols" for detailed information.

The chart below gives a general breakdown of behavioral causes and next steps you can try.

<b>Why?</b>	<b>Common causes</b>	<b>Actions to try at home</b>
<b>The dog doesn't know where to go</b>	In this brand-new environment, the dog isn't sure where to go potty. Put the dog on leash and take her to the appropriate location.	When she goes potty, reward her with treats and lots of praise.
<b>Something is causing stress</b>	New people, animals, smells, housing and diet are stressful for pets.	Try to identify and eliminate the source of stress. Establish a routine. Give the dog ample time to adapt to the new routine.
<b>Not enough opportunities to go potty</b>	You may not be taking the dog out frequently enough.	Give the dog multiple opportunities throughout the day to go to the bathroom. Feed the dog on a consistent schedule so you can predict when she will need to go potty.

Regarding “accidents” that happen around potty issues: We know how frustrating this can be, but it’s super important to be patient with the dog. Never discipline or punish a dog for accidents because it can create mistrust between the dog and you.

We recommend using an enzymatic cleaner to clean up all such accidents. Nature’s Miracle and Simple Solution are two products containing natural enzymes that tackle tough stains and odors and remove them permanently.

<b>When to contact Fix West Texas</b>	<p>If you need additional guidance and support regarding potty issues.</p> <p>If you suspect it is a medical concern.</p>
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### Resource guarding

Resource guarding happens when a dog guards his food or toys or something that he considers valuable. It can be caused by a number of things, including adjustment to an in-home lifestyle, past experiences and the need for safe boundaries. It is often a learned behavior from a time when the dog needed to defend his food or toys from other dogs, and he wasn’t sure where his next meal would come from.

To help eliminate a dog’s resource guarding, the goal is to create safe boundaries around feeding time. Always feed the resource-guarding dog separately and away from other pets or children. Try to be patient and don’t ever punish the dog. Work toward creating that safe space to build trust.

When to contact Fix West Texas	<p>If the behavior escalates and the dog redirects it onto humans, or there doesn’t seem to be any cause.</p> <p>If resource guarding is not manageable with separation.</p> <p>If you need additional guidance about how to manage resource guarding.</p>
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### Rough play and play biting

These behaviors are usually due to an animal having excess energy or simply a lack of manners. Engaging the dog and teaching her proper play skills will help provide appropriate outlets for her energy, which will prove beneficial when she goes to her adoptive home.

One general rule is to avoid using your hands to play with the dog. If you find the dog focusing on your hands as playthings, redirect her attention to a toy. If redirection does not work, stop engaging her in play or giving her attention. Another effective strategy is to increase the dog’s mental and physical stimulation by using food puzzles, interactive toy play, opportunities for self-play or teaching her tricks.

<b>When to contact Fix West Texas</b>	<p>If the behavior escalates to rough mouthing or play biting or starts to be unmanageable.</p> <p>If it’s a challenging lifestyle match and you are unable to provide additional mental and physical stimulation.</p> <p><b>If the bite breaks skin, contact Fix West Texas immediately.</b></p>
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## Separation anxiety and isolation distress

Dogs are social creatures; they greatly enjoy the company of humans and most enjoy the company of other animals as well. They often form close attachments with people and other animals, and can become anxious when their favorites are not nearby. They might respond to that absence with excessive barking or whining, pacing, chewing and tearing things up.

Remember, after you bring the foster dog home, he may need some time to get adjusted to the new environment and build trust in you. He'll need a space where he can feel safe and the time to acclimate to your routine.

You can help build his confidence by providing plenty of mental and physical stimulation (e.g., food puzzles, interactive toy play, teaching tricks). If the dog seems to be experiencing separation anxiety, don't make a big production of coming and going from your home.

<b>When to contact Fix West Texas</b>	If the foster pet is hurting himself.  If it's a challenging lifestyle match and you are unable to provide additional mental and physical stimulation.
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## Shy or fearful dog

Helping a shy dog build confidence around interacting with people can be one of the most rewarding aspects of being a foster caregiver. Keep in mind that socializing such a dog requires patience and compassion on your part, since shy or fearful dogs do not understand that we are truly trying to help.

To help a shy dog adjust to your home, follow these steps:

1. Before bringing the dog home, set up a special room for him, a space with few hiding places. Make it a comfortable, welcoming place by including a soft bed, food and water, and toys. Put him in the room when he arrives in your home.
2. Sit calmly in the room with him several times a day, allowing him to get used to your scent and presence. Don't approach him; let him come to you when he is ready.
3. Food is the best way to win a dog's heart, so offer him extra-delicious treats when you are spending time with him in the room. He'll start associating you with positive things. To build his confidence and trust in you, try tossing treats behind him. While it may seem logical to have the dog take treats from your hand, that can be very scary for a fearful dog and he may panic once the food is gone.
4. Once the dog seems comfortable in your presence, continue that positive association by trying to engage the dog in play using interactive toys and games.

Remember to always be patient and calm around the dog. The reward of having him warm up to you will far outweigh all the hard work you put in, and you and the dog will have a very special bond. Take it just as slow with other people that you introduce the dog to.

<b>When to contact Fix West Texas</b>	If additional guidance is needed.  If the behavior escalates and the dog becomes defensive, or when the behavior starts to be unmanageable.
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## Other behavioral concerns

Many of the canine behaviors that we may find problematic (e.g., barking, whining, digging, chewing, scavenging, chasing) are just normal dog behaviors and can be explained as “dogs being dogs.” The easiest way to coexist with our canine companions is to provide more appropriate outlets for these behaviors and to avoid inadvertently reinforcing undesirable behaviors. Some examples of the latter are giving a dog attention (even negative attention like scolding) when she is jumping up, barking or begging, or allowing her to pull constantly on leash.

If the foster dog is exhibiting any behavioral issues, ask yourself these questions:

- Is the dog getting enough exercise?
- Is the dog being left alone for long periods of time?
- Does the dog have chew toys and food puzzles (e.g., Kongs) to keep him engaged and stimulated?
- Am I reinforcing undesirable behavior?
- Am I reinforcing desirable behavior by rewarding good behavior when I see it?
- Am I providing adequate supervision when the dog is out of the crate?
- Am I providing specific outlets for physical and mental stimulation based on dogs’ natural instincts and drives?
- Could the dog have a medical issue?
- Have I discussed these concerns with Fix West Texas so that I know how to address them appropriately?

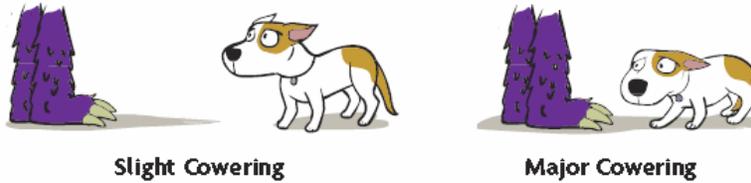
We do not expect foster caregivers to be miracle workers. If the foster dog requires more attention, exercise or training than you can provide, talk to your Fix West Texas contact. Moving the dog to another foster home might be best for both you and the dog.

Regardless of the issue, **we do not condone punishment**, since punishment will not address the cause of the behavior and, in fact, may worsen behavior that’s motivated by fear and anxiety.

## Dog body language

You can learn a lot about dogs simply by observing their body language. The illustration below depicts what dogs are trying to communicate to us. It is helpful to know what dog body language means in order to develop a trusting relationship with them and respect their boundaries.

### Body Language of Fear in Dogs



Slight Cowering

Major Cowering

### More Subtle Signs of Fear & Anxiety



**Licking Lips**  
when no food nearby



**Panting**  
when not hot or thirsty



**Brow Furrowed, Ears to Side**



**Moving in Slow Motion**  
walking slow on floor



**Acting Sleepy or Yawning**  
when they shouldn't be tired



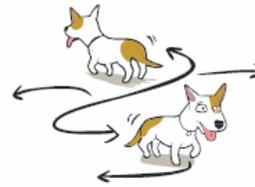
**Hypervigilant**  
looking in many directions



**Suddenly Won't Eat**  
but was hungry earlier



**Moving Away**



**Pacing**

Dr. Sophia Yin, DVM, MS

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1 Source: 2011, Lili Chin, Doggie Language, [www.doggiedrawings.net](http://www.doggiedrawings.net)

## Emergency conditions

If the foster dog is exhibiting extreme behavior that puts another animal or a person at risk for or has resulted in bites or severe injury, contact Fix West Texas immediately using the emergency contact protocol provided to you when you picked up the dog. Behavioral emergencies include:

- Biting, aggressive lunging, attempting to bite
- Fighting with or biting other animals
- Unexpected guarding behavior (as opposed to a known condition for which a behavioral modification plan has been provided) or guarding behavior under treatment that escalates rapidly

## SECTION 5: THE DOG'S FUR-EVER HOME

### Finding adopters and finalizing adoptions

One of the most gratifying experiences of fostering a dog is finding an adoptive family who can continue the loving home experience you've provided. In some cases, foster animals may board a transport to another city, and in other cases you may fall in love and adopt the animal yourself, but in most cases, you will play an important part in promoting the animal for adoption and finding the pet's next home within our own community.

Unless you've been specifically instructed that a dog cannot be promoted for adoption, all foster animals are available to be promoted for adoption, even if they are not yet ready to be adopted because of age or another reason. How can you promote the foster dog for adoption? Here are some ideas:

- If appropriate, introduce this great dog to your neighbors, friends and acquaintances. Talk about the pet's endearing qualities and show off those positive attributes.
- You've probably already thought of this, but do share lots of photos and stories about the dog on social media.
- Tell your coworkers, hang a flyer in the break room, post information about the dog on your company's intranet or internal social network where appropriate.

Fix West Texas will also be promoting the foster dog for adoption and since you are the person who knows the most about the animal's behavior in a home environment, you'll play an important part in sharing information with potential adopters.

As soon as you identify a potential adopter, or if you would like to adopt the foster animal, notify Fix West Texas.

### Saying goodbye

Saying goodbye can be hard, but if you've helped find a great home for the dog, you can pat yourself on the back knowing that you have brought joy and happiness to both the pet and the adopters. Saying goodbye is truly the best part of fostering because it means you've opened your home (and heart) to help save lives.

Make sure that the adopters have your contact information and let them know they can always update you on the dog's progress. Receiving updates can make fostering even more rewarding, as you can see the positive impact that you've had.

Thank you so much for fostering!

## [ADDITIONAL RESOURCES](#)

For lots more information about cats and their care, please visit the websites below.

- [bestfriends.org/resources/cats](https://bestfriends.org/resources/cats)
- [fearfreehappyhomes.com](https://fearfreehappyhomes.com)
- [shelterdogplay.org/fosterandadopterresources](https://shelterdogplay.org/fosterandadopterresources)