

Foster Manual



Thank you for participating in our greyhound-fostering program. Fostering is the heart and soul of our organization and is a unique and rewarding way to make a difference in a retired racing greyhound's life. Through fostering, you will touch the lives of so many greyhounds, and in return, they will touch yours. Fostering helps make the transition into their "forever home" a smooth and safe one.

Up until the time of retirement, these wonderful athletes have spent their lives in the company of only other greyhounds. Since most of this time was spent either on the farm or at the track, they have had little to no contact with the outside world. They have not seen cats, glass doors, swimming pools, ceiling fans, children etc. As a foster parent, you will be the one to introduce your foster to the wonderful world of retirement. You will teach them how to go up and down stairs, not to counter surf, what "good dog", "NO" and "NO Kitty" all mean. As a foster parent, you will be their first bond, and with Homeward Bound Greyhound Association's help, will prepare them for their forever home and the retirement they so deserve.

Thank you for helping us to make a difference, one greyhound at a time!!!

THE PICK-UP

You will be informed about the date of the haul and what time to be at the pick-up location. Please plan on helping with the unloading, walking and bathing of your foster dog. This is very likely their first bath. They will be dirty and you will most likely get wet. Please be sure to dress appropriately.

The following items will be given to you at the pick-up:

- A lead
- A muzzle
- A crate if one is requested
- A coat during cold weather months

INTRODUCTION INTO YOUR HOME

When bringing a newly retired racer into your home, there are several guidelines to follow that will make this introduction a safe one for all concerned. It is important to remember that the majority of these hounds have chased a lure for a living and even though they are, for the most part, gentle creatures, some have a higher prey drive than others. If you have other pets in your household, special care should be given to ensure the safety of all concerned. Remember, this is all new to your foster hound and their adrenaline may be much higher initially so always proceed with caution. Please keep in mind, the more effort you put into fostering early on, the more quickly your foster dog will find their forever home.

INTRODUCTION TO OTHER DOGS IN YOUR HOME

If you have other dogs in your home, regardless of the breed, there are several ways in which you may choose to introduce them:

1. ON NEUTRAL GROUND

Try to introduce your dogs to your foster on “neutral ground”, for example, the front yard. If you have more than one dog and you have help, bring them out one at a time and let them sniff each other. Remember that everyone should be on a short lead and always muzzled for the introduction. Never let your dogs rush your foster. Pay close attention to the reactions of each dog. If any signs of aggression (growling, snapping, biting, etc.) or dominance (head in an arch over the back of the other dog with tail up over their back and ridged stance) are observed correct immediately with a firm “No”.

2. INSIDE YOUR HOME

Meeting each other on neutral ground is not always an option. If this is the case and you must bring your foster into the house, do so with as little commotion as possible. If you are introducing more than one dog to your foster, try introducing them one dog at a time. You might want to start with your dogs in another room. Before any introduction, muzzle all dogs. This is your dog’s home so it is not necessary that they be on a lead to meet your foster when introduced in your home. As each dog is

introduced to your foster, watch his or her behavior. After you are sure they are ok, introduce the next one.

INTRODUCING YOUR FOSTER TO YOUR CAT

Because the majority of fosters are “straight off the track” we are not always able to cat test them before sending them to your home. Although we can get a general take on them from their trainers, there are NO GUARANTEES!!! Even though the majority of greyhounds are “cat correctable”, there is a small percent whose prey drive will get the better of them.

1. Introduce your foster to your cat indoors with your foster on lead and muzzled.
2. Walk your foster around until they see the cat. Always remember to keep your foster on a short lead for more control, as you never know if your cat might take that moment to dart across the room in front of them.
3. Once the cat has been spotted, slowly walk your foster towards the cat paying close attention to his/her actions. If your cat hisses and swats your foster and foster turns away and shows signs of being afraid of the cat, that’s GREYT. If your foster totally ignores your cat, that’s even better. If your foster shows some interest, give a small tug on his/her lead while saying in a firm voice “NO KITTY”. You may have to repeat this several times until they get the picture. Using a spray bottle is a wonderful tool for teaching your foster what NO means. If you see that they are interested in your cat(s), as you tell them NO KITTY, spray them with a stream of water. Although some greyhounds are not fazed by this method, most do not like it and will stop whatever behavior is related to the water.

If your foster exhibits any of the following signs after seeing your cat:

- Teeth clicking or snapping
- Fixed gaze or stare which cannot be broken by a verbal “NO” or water spraying
- Trembling or lurching
- Ears alert (which alone could simply mean curiosity)

SEPARATE them immediately by placing the foster in their crate or the cat in a different room with the door shut. Once you have secured the safety of all involved, notify your foster coordinator right away so that they can arrange for a foster swap or further guidance.

INTRODUCING YOUR FOSTER TO SMALL CHILDREN

When you introduce children to your foster do so with an abundance of caution:

1. First, ALWAYS MAKE SURE YOUR FOSTER IS MUZZLED.
2. Hold your greyhound on a short lead and walk them towards the child, NEVER LET YOUR CHILD RUN AT THE FOSTER.

3. Teach your child the proper way to greet your foster by extending their hand for the foster to sniff. Teach your child to pet the foster gently and to begin under the neck moving up to the head and NOT by reaching over his/her head to pat them.
4. It is very important that your children or their friends respect your fosters' sleeping quarters. DO NOT let your children play in or around your fosters' crate. Likewise, DO NOT allow children to lie on your foster dog's bed. Greyhounds have never had to share their sleeping quarters before. Never let your child approach a greyhound that is lying down without calling the greyhound's name first. GREYHOUNDS CAN SLEEP WITH THEIR EYES OPEN.
5. ALWAYS keep your foster muzzled while children are playing nearby as this will help prevent accidents should a child step or fall on your foster dog.
6. Foster dogs should NOT be allowed on the furniture. This is especially important when children are present in the house. Allowing your foster dog on the furniture places them in a superior roll above that of your children. If your foster is on the couch and a child tries to climb onto that couch, the child may get bit. To avoid this, NEVER ALLOW YOUR FOSTER ON THE FURNITURE. Besides the child factor, a foster that is allowed to get on furniture in a foster home, may be denied that privilege in their new forever home. This can be a difficult habit for their new family to break and confusing for your foster.

NEVER LEAVE YOUR FOSTER DOG ALONE WITH SMALL CHILDREN

SOCIALIZING YOUR FOSTER DOG

It is your job as a foster parent to introduce your foster dog to as many new things as possible. Remember to proceed with caution while introducing your foster to new things, but always let them know you are there to lean on. Also, remember, greyhounds are very smart. If they think you are apprehensive about something, they will be too. Always have treats on hand when they have conquered a new challenge and reward them if they respond in a positive manner.

Introduce your foster to:

1. As many people as you can.
2. People with hats, beards, uniforms, wearing sunglasses, backpacks and carrying packages.
3. People with wheel chairs, walkers, baby strollers or people using crutches.
4. All sizes of children, keeping in mind to watch them carefully. If you see your foster is uncomfortable around children of certain ages or size, then forgo this step.
5. To other breeds of dogs, cats, birds and any other animals you may see while out. The purpose of this exercise is to familiarize your hound to all that is around him/her, you never know if the adoptive family may live on a farm and own horses. Any new experience they master gets them one step closer to their forever home and also lets us know what type of home they may be best suited for.
6. All types of flooring (e.g. carpet, wood, and tile) and stairs.

ROUTINES AND POSSIBLE ISSUES TO WATCH FOR

SLEEP AGGRESSION

While your foster is sleeping, pay close attention to him/her. Keep in mind, at the track they have not had to share their space with anyone, so at first they may have some space issues. It is important that they have a crate they can go to for comfort.

NEVER let a small child sit or lie on your fosters' bed. That is their safe place and should be respected at all times.

REMEMBER, GREYHOUNDS CAN SLEEP WITH THEIR EYES OPEN so call out their name when they are lying down so they know you are approaching. If a greyhound is surprised while sleeping and reacts negatively, (growling or biting) it does not necessarily mean they are aggressive or vicious. It generally means they have been startled. As a whole, greyhounds are gentle, sociable, affectionate dogs and are for the most part, well adjusted around other animals and people.

POSSESSIVENESS

Possessiveness of beds, food, toys or even their crate in the beginning is not out of the ordinary. Most of these things are new to them and therefore, they may feel the need to protect them. Usually a stern "NO" or the handy spray bottle accompanied by a stern "NO" will do the trick.

PACK MENTALITY

It is very important to understand the "PACK" mentality and your role in the "PACK". Greyhounds have been raised in a pack setting since birth. Unlike other breeds that are separated from their siblings at an early age, greyhounds are raised, schooled and raced with ONLY greyhounds. It is natural, then, for them to establish a "pecking order". Because of this, a greyhound that has been "alpha" in his or her past group may well enter your home thinking they will be the alpha there also. Make sure you are in charge, not your foster, or your own dog for that matter. It is important that you are aware of your role in promoting peaceful relations among the pack. Close supervision and recognizing subtle signs of aggression are paramount in providing safety for your family and your pets. Be observant of all behaviors that may signal the onset of a problem.

FEAR AND DOMINANCE

Recognizing subtle signs of dominance or aggression can stop a bad situation dead in its tracks. Signs to watch for are:

- Your foster positioning itself in a stiff stance, usually with tail erect over his/her back, above another pet that is lying down, playing with a toy or eating. This signifies their desire to establish their place as the boss and want the respect from the rest of the

“pack”. Should this happen, gently pull them away from the situation accompanied with a firm “NO”.

- Your foster turning their head to the side when someone tries to pet them. This may indicate they are frightened and want to be left alone.

NEVER put your face directly in the face of your foster unless you know that this is a behavior they are comfortable with. You will know they feel threatened as they will become still and rigid and their tail will stop wagging. Some dogs will see this as a challenge or threat and do what is required to protect themselves.

RESIST the urge to hug or join your foster if they are lying down, especially if they are on their favorite bed. Remember, while at the track, these hounds have had very little personal items to call their own, so a crate and a bed are at the top of their list.

FEAR FIGHTING

Fear fighting among animals is usually the result of one of them being injured. This type of behavior is usually one of pain and the injured animal striking out at what or whoever may have caused the pain. If other animals are present during the injury, the injured animal may attack and a vicious fight may ensue, sometimes to the death. Very often, the owner will not be present when the attack occurs and will assume the animal “just went berserk” and “tried to kill” the other animal. Very rarely will this be the case, as generally an animal will not turn on one of its own unless in a great deal of pain. **NEVER TRY TO HANDLE AN INJURED ANIMAL UNLESS IT IS MUZZLED FIRST.**

REMEMBER, YOU ARE IN CHARGE

Animals will almost invariably revert back to instinctual behavior without a “Pack Leader” and greyhounds more so than most animals as they have been raised in the pack setting. It is important your foster knows you are the one in charge. You must set guidelines that they must follow. When setting these guidelines, remember the environment they have come from and what was expected of them there. In their past environment, they were required to do little more than run, rest, eat and potty and they were required to obey. They are now in a place where much is expected of them and more stimuli than they have ever faced before is coming at them from all sides. This new list of rules can cause a very challenging adaptation period for your foster. These fosters rely on you to keep things in order and to enforce rules that are meant to protect all those in your household. You may find yourself crawling on the floor towards the foster or lying with them on their bed in an effort to comfort them, especially if they are shy. **RESIST** this urge.

SHY GREYHOUNDS

If you are trying to establish a trusting relationship with a shy foster, avoid eye contact until you are sure they do not perceive it as a threat. Stay on your feet or sit but do not

crawl. When you are trying to form a bond with a shy foster, do not rush the process. Act as if you are walking past them and gently touch them saying something kind and reassuring as you pass. Sit on a piece of furniture and let the foster approach you; it may take a while but as your foster becomes more relaxed, it will happen. Have treats in your pocket and offer your shy foster one each time it approaches you on their own, this will help them bond with you and will instill trust.

YOUR FOSTER AT PLAY

If you have observed aggressive behavior in your foster or other pets in your household while they are playing, especially outdoors, consider this a potential for disaster. As soon as you observe this behavior, stop it immediately! Racing greyhounds are especially prey driven and competitive by nature. Competing for a toy or jockeying for position for the lead in a game of chase are perfect examples of a setup for fighting. Even the most gentle of dogs can have a sudden urge to take a toy or be ahead in a race, which can produce devastating injuries in a pack response. Better safe than sorry so keep a muzzle on your foster while they are running outside.

GAMES OF FETCH

NEVER play fetch with a foster that has shown a competitive streak unless you are playing with just your foster. If you have several dogs, play with the foster separately, thus avoiding a bad situation.

PLAYING WITH TOYS INSIDE

If your foster growls at another dog or person while they (the foster) are playing with a toy either inside or out, correct them right away with a stern “NO”. If it continues, take the toy away and put it up. Do not let small children play with your fosters’ toys and vice versa.

MEDICAL CARE

VACCINATIONS AND WORMING

All greyhounds receive routine vaccinations and an initial worming prior to placement in a foster home.

GIVING MEDICATIONS

Your foster will be given heartworm preventative and flea preventative (when weather warrants) prior to entering your home. If you have your foster longer than the first month, the foster coordinator will supply monthly medication to you for your foster.

PARTICIPATING VETERINARIANS

Arrangements for medical care are made by the foster coordinator or president and are scheduled with veterinarians that provide services to HBGA at a reduced cost.

Because we are a non-profit organization, we are not in a position to reimburse foster families for routine medical care provided by their personal vet if the care could have been provided by our vet.

Participating vets are:

_____ () -
_____ () -
_____ () -

EMERGENCIES

In the event of an emergency, get vet care immediately, with the foster’s health and safety being the priority. If the foster can be transported to a participating vet without endangering his/her life or health, please do so. If this is not possible, obtain care by the best means available. If anesthesia is required, be sure the vet is familiar with greyhounds and anesthesia. Notify the foster coordinator of emergencies as soon as possible.

GENERAL CARE AND UP KEEP OF YOUR FOSTER

CRATING YOUR FOSTER

Your foster has spent the majority of his/her racing life in a crate and it is an important tool for training them while they are in your home. Your foster will need the security and routine of a crate at first and it will keep them out of trouble and your house intact. CRATING YOUR FOSTER IS NOT A CRUEL THING TO DO. Greyhounds are very smart and will pick up on your vibes. If they detect from you, even the slightest discomfort in crating them, they will run with it. When it is time to crate your foster, (at night initially and whenever you leave the house or they are eating) just do it! Do not act like it is a big deal, walk them to the crate with your hand on their collar and put them in using a phrase like “kennel up”, “get in your house”, etc. Use the same phrase each time. Once your foster sees it is not a big deal to you, it will not be a big deal to them.

NEVER PUT YOUR FOSTER IN A CRATE WITH THEIR MARTINGALE COLLARE ON. THIS COULD RESULT IN THEIR COLLAR GETTING CAUGHT ON THE CRATE AND YOUR FOSTER CHOKING TO DEATH.

NEVER use the crate for punishment. Put your foster in the crate at different times; not only when you leave the house. Do not let your foster associate anything negative to the crate. It is up to the adoptive family to decide whether they want to allow their Greyhound out of his/her crate when they are away, so your foster needs some “crate time” each day to keep them accustomed to crating.

If at all possible, place the crate in your bedroom. Your foster has been used to being in a room full of other greyhounds and being separated from other dogs and humans may

prove to be very stressful. This is also recommended if you plan on getting any sleep. The first couple of nights will probably be the hardest. You foster may decide he/she needs to cry to you the entire night. This is almost guaranteed if he/she is kept in another room.

Leaving a radio or TV on while you are away will also help them as they have never been without some sort of noise at the track. In the case of a greyhound, SILENCE IS NOT GOLDEN.

There are a few exceptions to the crating rule. If you have a foster who exhibits a great deal of stress while being in a crate and you are afraid he/she will hurt themselves, muzzle them and put them in a room, secured by a baby gate, away from other animals. If there are no other animals, confine them to one room, (probably the kitchen in case they have an accident) and notify your foster coordinator, they will direct you as to what should be done next. DO NOT CONFINE THEM TO SMALL SPACES LIKE BATH OR LAUNDRY ROOMS, this can frighten them and result in destructiveness. These areas also tend to contain chemicals that could cause serious harm if your foster gets into them.

MUZZLING YOUR FOSTER

Your foster will come to you with a muzzle. Please keep this muzzle on your foster at all times for at least a week if small animals or children are present. Always use the muzzle when your foster is running with other greyhounds/non-greys or when being transported in your vehicle. Do not let other animals or children play with their muzzle. Always remember the muzzle when your foster is going on a home visit.

FEEDING

Feed your foster a high quality food. Acclimate your foster to a particular routine to make it easier for you. When feeding your foster, never do so close to your own pets. Feed your foster dog in a separate room or at a different time. Your foster's crate may be a nice place for your foster to eat as it creates a good feeling about their crate and prevents competition over food. Upon receiving your foster, you will be instructed on the amount of food your foster will need. In most cases, your foster will be fed twice a day. In some cases where it may be important, to add some weight to your foster, you may be instructed to get some additional items to add to your fosters' food such as cottage cheese or yogurt.

Never feed your foster:

- Raw meat
- Food that may be spoiled. Discard any uneaten food after your fosters' designated eating time. Leaving food out, especially moist food, can promote the growth of bacteria and lead to an upset stomach, vomiting and diarrhea.

- Chicken bones, pork bones, or fish bones – these can be swallowed and their sharp ends can pierce the stomach or intestinal walls.
- Chocolate
- Supplements – unless instructed to do so by the foster coordinator or vet.
- Alcohol

WALKING

We encourage you to take your foster for walks and teach him/her to walk calmly on a lead. Prior to your walk, make sure their collar is on properly and secure. Greyhounds are sight hounds and can see up to ½ mile away. If something catches their eye, they could take off and be gone before you know it. A greyhound can reach 45mph in three strides. It is very important that you do not use a flex lead on your greyhound.

Your foster will come with a tag collar. This collar should never be removed from your foster. This is the only collar that can be left on them in their crate, and should they get away from you by slipping out the door or out of their martingale collar, they will still have ID on them. There are no exceptions to this rule!

GREYHOUND PLAY DATES OR RUNS

While it is ok for you to get together with other greyhound owners for walks or runs, remember it is important for them to be muzzled if doing the latter. It is not acceptable for you to take your foster to dog parks to run with other breeds for any reason. Being sight hounds that chase a lure for a living, a small dog running across a field looks a lot like prey. Even if you muzzle your foster, it is not allowed. If your foster is muzzled and he gives chase, he can still kill something small through his muzzle, however, when muzzled, he is unable to defend himself if attacked at a dog park.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Outdoors, greyhounds can run at a fairly good speed, even in a small yard. Be sure to look for small stumps, bushes with sharp thorns or branches at greyhound eye level. Also, check for poisonous plants such as:

- Azaleas
- English Holly Berry
- Foxglove
- Jerusalem Cherry
- Jimson Weed
- Milk Weed
- Mistletoe
- Oleander
- Philodendron
- Rhododendron

- Water Hemlock
- Yew

DOOR SAVVY GREYHOUNDS

Greyhounds are sight hounds and being such, will bolt out the door after something that catches their eye if the opportunity presents itself. Train your foster that it is not acceptable to hover around the door. Likewise, teach any children in the home the rule of NOT standing in the doorway with it open.

HOUSEBREAKING YOUR GREYHOUND

Greyhounds are generally very easy to housebreak and can usually be accomplished within a few days.

- When you are home, keep your foster with you on a lead so you can catch him/her in the act of having an accident. Correct the hound with a firm “NO” and take him/her outside. Always shower your foster with praise when they use the potty outside.
- When you are not home, your foster should be kept in his/her crate.
- Never correct your foster if you didn’t catch him/her in the act.
- Do not allow your foster to have free run of the house until you are sure they are completely housebroken.

GROOMING YOUR FOSTER

Basic grooming care should be given to your foster while in your care. This includes brushing them and looking for fleas and ticks. Should you find any fleas or ticks, notify your foster coordinator and we will assist with the problem.

BATHING

Most greyhounds will have already been bathed when you get them. You will find that they will not need a bath while in your care if they have had one already but you may want to wipe them off from time to time. Baby wipes are very good for spot cleaning. If you feel you need to give them a bath, do so with gentle shampoo and cool water. If the water is too warm, they will pass out on you in the tub!!

NAIL CLIPPING

Nail clipping is an important part of grooming. Do not let this get out of control. If you feel the nails are too long and you do not feel comfortable trimming them, let your foster coordinator know and he/she will assist you with clipping them.

MEET AND GREETES

Part of being a foster is being able to have the dogs at Meet and Greets. HBGA requires that each foster parent is present at a minimum of two meet and greets per month. If

you will be unable to fulfill the meet and greet requirement, please contact your foster coordinator immediately. A member of HBGA may provide transportation for your greyhound in your absence. When at events, as a foster parent, you are a representative of our organization. Our focus is educating the public about the desirability of greyhounds as pets. It is HBGA policy to remain neutral and not take a stand on the greyhound racing industry.

QUESTIONS? WHO TO CALL

- Foster Coordinator: **Ashley Roach (513) 293-1608**
- President: **Krista Williams (513) 227-2289**
- Other: _____