

WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN FOSTERING A SHAMROQ DOG

Firstly, thank you for joining SHAMROQ and helping us save a life. Below is some information that will help you in your role as a SHAMROQ foster carer. Please don't hesitate to contact us any time should you have any questions or concerns.

WHAT HAPPENS FIRST?

The first step is completing a SHAMROQ Inc. Foster Carer Enquiry form. This will give us some insight into the type of dog that'd be best suited to your situation. Following that, a SHAMROQ volunteer will attend your home to conduct a property check, for the purpose of making sure the dog will be safe and secure, and further ascertaining the type of dog best suited to your property.

On some occasions there may be areas of concern in boundary fences, gates or retaining walls that may require some dog-proofing before we can proceed. A lot of the dogs that come into our care are found in pounds because they are experts at escaping so, whilst some fences may suit some of the less escape-prone dogs, we need to err on the side of caution when placing dogs we have little or no history on.

WHAT IS REQUIRED IN A FOSTER HOME?

In addition to being able to safely and securely contain a Northern Breed, we also require of our foster carers that any resident dogs in the home have current vaccinations. Your foster dog may have just been released from a pound environment, so this is as much to protect the health of your dog(s) as your foster dog.

Any resident dogs are also required to be desexed*. Not all SHAMROQ dogs will have been desexed prior to placement with a foster carer, and we don't want to risk any accidents. Any SHAMROQ dogs that have not been desexed prior to release from a pound will be desexed as soon as possible, taking into account their individual health and situation.

Whilst we understand that many other rescue groups require foster carers, we require that no dogs be fostered for other organisations whilst there is a SHAMROQ foster dog residing in your home. If there's an altercation requiring veterinary attention between two foster dogs belonging to different organisations, it can be a bit of a grey area which rescue group is responsible for the costs.

**SHAMROQ has some foster carers who are CCCQ-registered, ethical breeders and as such have entire (undesexed) dogs that are kept separate from SHAMROQ foster dogs where required. This is the only exception to our requirement for resident dogs to be desexed and will only apply to ethical breeders who are registered with CCCQ (Dogs Queensland).*

CHOOSING A FOSTER DOG

All the SHAMROQ dogs requiring foster care are listed on our website and Facebook page along with all available information. Please be aware that most dogs found in pounds are unclaimed strays and as a result there's little information available about the dog's history, traits and temperament. Where possible, pound staff will test the dog's sociability with other dogs, however there is rarely any opportunity to assess the dog with cats, pocket pets or children, so again we will err on the side of caution when placing a dog we have no history on. If you think one of the listed dogs requiring foster care is a good fit for your family, please let us know.

Once you are expecting a foster dog, we'll forward you a Foster Care Agreement to complete. This ensures both parties understand the arrangement and are agreeable to the terms.

WHAT COMES WITH MY FOSTER DOG?

SHAMROQ foster dogs will have a collar, lead and an identification tag with SHAMROQ's contact number on it in case of escape. Please ensure their collar and identification tag are on at all times.

You'll need to provide food, heartworm, intestinal worm, flea and tick treatments...and love. SHAMROQ is sometimes sent donations of food and care items, and will contact you in those instances.

INTRODUCING YOUR FOSTER DOG INTO YOUR HOME

Once your Foster Care Agreement has been submitted, we then organise for your new foster dog to be brought into your care. We can either arrange for you to collect the dog yourself, or have a volunteer deliver the dog to your home.

Meeting a new dog can be overwhelming for both your own dog(s) and particularly for dogs that have just been released from a high-stress pound or shelter environment. It's best to introduce them for the first time on neutral ground. We recommend taking them for an on-lead walk together around the neighbourhood. Please keep in mind that your new foster dog may not have current vaccinations at this point, so public places like dog parks should be avoided until we have rectified this.

We recommend that any items that may cause altercations between the dogs are not left laying around to begin with. Remove all toys, bones and left-over food whilst the foster dog is settling in to avoid triggering an incident. We ask that you feed them separately, or keep them a good distance apart while they're eating, and supervise meals so you can intercept if one dog decides to investigate what's in the other dog's bowl.

Children should be supervised at all times when in the company of the foster dog, as with any dog.

DURING YOUR FOSTER DOG'S STAY

Please ensure you've carefully read the Terms & Conditions that form part of your Foster Care Agreement. This agreement is to protect you, SHAMROQ and, most importantly, the dogs. Please adhere to these conditions. We often don't know the history of a dog and will always act with caution and regard for all involved.

Please **do not** let your foster dog off-lead in un-fenced areas at any time, regardless of how you feel they will respond. Any events that occur have the potential to put both the dog(s) at risk, and SHAMROQ may be liable for issues that occur as a result of your actions.

Please exercise caution if you choose to allow your SHAMROQ foster dog into fenced public dog parks, and please refrain from doing so until your foster dog has been vaccinated and immunity has taken effect (2 weeks after vaccination has taken place).

Should you need any advice or have any queries at any time during the foster care period, please don't hesitate to contact SHAMROQ.

IF IT ISN'T WORKING

There may be some issues while your foster dog is settling in. Please report these immediately. It's not unusual for a dog to act differently in the first couple of weeks in a new environment, before their personality starts to emerge. SHAMROQ works with some qualified positive-reinforcement behaviour professionals and we will be able to provide tips and assistance in solving any teething issues, or in some cases a behaviourist will attend your home to see the dog in action and provide advice. No issue is too small to let us know about, and often seeking assistance early can make all the difference.

Fostering is a temporary arrangement so if you feel your foster dog needs to be moved to another home, for whatever reason, please don't hesitate to contact us and we will act on it as quickly as possible. Sometimes it may take us a few days to secure a suitable new carer for the dog, so please bear with us, and in the meantime we will provide advice on managing the situation in the interim.

VETERINARY CARE

All SHAMROQ dogs are provided veterinary care and treatment during their time in foster care, and at the point of adoption they'll be desexed, microchipped, have tested clear for heartworm and have current C5 vaccination.

Your foster dog may require some or all of this to be undertaken whilst in your care. SHAMROQ will cover all these costs, along with any other veterinary care costs that may arise during the foster period, providing the injury or illness requiring treatment is not a direct result of an intentional act by the foster carer. SHAMROQ will utilise approved, affiliated vets and any appointments must be arranged via our Adoption & Care Co-ordinator. Please contact SHAMROQ immediately should you feel your foster dog requires veterinary attention.

FOSTER DOG APPOINTMENTS

Your foster dog will have some appointments to attend whilst in your care (e.g. vet, photo shoot, meet-and-greet). If you're unable to get your dog to these appointments yourself, we can arrange someone from our volunteer network to assist.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Once your foster dog has settled in and their personality starts to emerge, then the adoption process can begin. First we'll organise with you for your foster dog to attend a session with one of our associated professional pet photographers to have photos taken for their adoption profile.

Following this, we'll send you an information form to complete about your foster dog...because you know them best! The information you provide will assist us in putting together an adoption profile that allows prospective adopters to learn who your foster dog is and what he or she needs in a forever home, so include as much information as possible. Any little details are encouraged.

Once dogs are listed for adoption on our website and on Facebook, we will begin to take applications for prospective adopters. In most cases, we ask suitable applicants to attend a meet-and-greet with the dog, and to bring along their own dog(s) if they have any. Your feedback on how the meet-and-greet went will be important. Please avoid taking your own dogs along to meet-and-greets as it can detract from seeing how your foster dog interacts with any potential new fur-siblings.

All adoptions begin with a two-week trial period, so there is a chance your foster dog may be returned to you should things not work out in the new home.

EMERGENCIES

In the event your foster dog escapes, or requires urgent veterinary attention, please contact our Adoption & Care Co-ordinator on 0403 960 893 immediately.

HOW LONG WILL A FOSTER DOG STAY?

This is a question we can't answer. It may be anything from a few weeks to months, depending on how long it takes for the right forever home to be found. If you are going on holidays, or require alternative care for your foster dog during their time with you, please provide SHAMROQ as much notice as possible.

I DON'T THINK I WANT MY FOSTER DOG TO LEAVE

What we refer to as "foster-failing" is very common. Often foster carers find that their foster dog fits so well into their family that they want them to become a permanent addition. There's absolutely no pressure for this to happen, and when it does, it's not an automatic step to adoption. Though we certainly give due consideration to foster carers who desire to adopt their foster dogs, we will always consider the best long-term interests of the dog. There must be approval from Landlords, or relevant Council permits obtained (when the addition of another dog will be surplus to council regulations for number of dogs). The standard adoption conditions and fee will apply to foster-fails.

PLEASE KEEP IN CONTACT

Please keep in touch and let us know how your foster dog is going. You can email us at admin@shamroq.org.au or send us a message on our Facebook page. As mentioned previously, for urgent matters, contact our Adoption & Care Co-ordinator on 0403 960 893.

