

Metropolitan Maltese Rescue

Foster Guidelines

Foster responsibilities regarding the dog

When any of us at MMR volunteers to foster a dog, we take on many responsibilities. The first things that concern us are the health, behavior and grooming of the dog. After those areas are addressed, the foster dog is ready for adoption and we move to the next phase; finding a suitable adopter.

Case Managers

Case Managers are MMR members who have extensive experience with fostering as well as a great track record for facilitating successful adoptions. Case Managers are chosen by the MMR Board. Every Foster is assigned a case manager by the MMR President. The case manager is the Foster's main contact to MMR. The role of the case manager is to identify potential adopters, check references, and to help manage the adoption process. They work closely with the foster through the term of the foster. The Foster and Case Manager must agree on an adopter. Should there be a disagreement, it will be resolved by the MMR President.

As a foster, you are expected to be in close contact with your case manager.

Health

When a dog is surrendered to MMR, they often bring some health problems with them. It is the Foster's responsibility to insure that health problems are addressed. Use your judgment to determine if medical treatment is required. If in doubt about seeking veterinary care, consult your case manager. In seeking medical treatment keep in mind that MMR must balance the need for medical treatment with frugal outlays for veterinary care. There are several animal hospitals that offer significant discounts to MMR. Contact your case manager if you have questions or need a reference to a MMR friendly vet.

All intact dogs should be spayed or neutered as soon as possible. If a dog has other health problems (such as dental), this often addressed at the same time as the spay/neuter. It is the Foster's responsibility to schedule the surgery and bring the dog to the animal hospital, and administer required after-care. More extensive health problems (luxating patella, for example) need to be discussed with the Case Manager to find the most cost-effective veterinary resource.

Medical expenses are paid by MMR. Please contact your case manager so that MMR can make arrangements for payment directly with the veterinarian performing the services.

Behavior evaluation

Behavior evaluation can include many things, such as housebreaking, separation anxiety, fear of men/women/children, etc. It is the Foster's responsibility to evaluate behavior, identify problems and begin appropriate action. In the case of dogs that are not housebroken, it is expected that the foster would begin the housebreaking process.

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Experience has shown that most dogs in foster homes can be housebroken in a relatively short time period with correct guidance from the Foster.

If you need help addressing behavior problems do not despair. There are a number of MMR members who are experienced with animal behavior. Do not hesitate to ask for help - your Case Manager can assist. MMR works with a number of experts in animal behavior.

Grooming

It's no secret that many dogs come to us in terrible shape. It is not unusual to receive dogs that are matted to the skin. For the dog's health and comfort, the dog should be groomed as soon as possible. If there are special circumstances that require a professional groomer, you should do so. Many groomers will provide a discount for rescue dogs. A clean, nicely groomed dog is not only more desirable to adopters; they tend to be happier and healthier too!

Fosters are asked to take photographs that can be used for adoption and/or promotional opportunities. The case manager and foster together can organize getting a digital photo taken to be posted, via the MMR website, on Petfinder.com. This photo should be submitted, along with a newsy dog biography, to the MMR President who will post it on the internet.

Finding an adopter

Goal: Facilitate the best possible adopter/dog match in order to provide a win/win situation for all parties.

The Case Manager is responsible to complete an initial screening of adoption applications. Matching of dog to adopter is dependent on you providing accurate information on the dog's personality, health and other issues that are important to making the right match. When your Case Manager finds a potential adopter for your foster, they will contact you directly to discuss pursuing that applicant. If you agree that the applicant might be the right adopter, the Case Manager will arrange for reference checks, interviews, etc. If references all check out and things are on track for an adoption, the Foster will have an opportunity to interview the potential adopter.

Finding the right adopter can be an arduous task. It can be a very emotional process, making it difficult to view things objectively. Again we stress that all fosters should work closely with their Case Manager. A Case Manager can provide objectivity when it is most needed.

Never discuss or promise a dog to a potential adopter before reference checks, interviews, home visits, and agreement between Foster and Case Manager are complete. This is especially true if there are multiple potential adopters for a particular dog.

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Adopters are not selected on a “first-come, first-served” basis. The goal is to select the best possible adopter to insure a forever after adoption. This often means evaluating more than one potential adopter. The best adopter might be the last one to submit an application.

MMR should never put ourselves in a position where the adopter can change their mind about a dog, but we cannot change our mind about pursuing an adopter. In other words, a potential adopter should be given a reasonable amount of time to visit the dog (within a week) and then 24 hours after the meeting to commit to an adoption. If this timeframe isn't possible, then contact the next potential adopter on the list.

Adopting the dog you foster

It is not unusual for a foster to decide to adopt the dog they are fostering. It is MMR's policy that fosters who are considering adopting their charge should make a commitment to adopt within two weeks of receiving the dog into foster. Payment of the adoption fee is required at the time of the decision to adopt.

Summary

The foster is responsible for:

- Medical attention to health issues
- Training/house breaking when necessary
- Behavior evaluation
- Providing an “available dog” profile that outlines the dog's personality as well as the desired requirements for an adopter
- Grooming
- Regular contact with the Case Manager regarding the above

The Case Manager is responsible for:

- Arranging direct payment for medical expenses
- Initial screening of adoption applicants
- Identifying potential adopters for specific dogs
- Insuring that reference and home checks for adopters are complete
- Facilitating transportation of the dog to the adopter
- Facilitating special assistance to foster for health and behavior problems
- Regular contact with the foster regarding the above