



## **NEW ZEALAND CHIHUAHUA RESCUE CHARITABLE TRUST ("NZCR") FOSTER MANUAL**

Hello and thank you for your interest in becoming a NZCR foster carer!

We greatly appreciate your support and commitment to helping dogs who otherwise may not be given the opportunity to live. Fostering is an integral part of any rescue and we simply could not help any dogs without carers like you!

Our foster programme takes in rescues all over New Zealand and aims to re-home them as stable, loving, social pets. As such, many of the dogs who come into our programme may require extra care and attention due to their former circumstances.

As a foster carer, you will provide care and attention for the foster dog. Together with transporting the dog to and from vet appointments as required, feeding them, exercising them and socialising them.

While we understand that the past information of the dog is relevant, we ask foster carers to treat foster dogs as "normal dogs" and make sure they are subject to rules and boundaries. It is our view that feeling sorry for the dog gives rise to issues with behaviour and obedience. When the dog arrives, he or she is a clean slate and should be treated as normally as possible.

While foster caring has its rewarding points, we understand there may be times where you require support. In this event, please do not hesitate to reach out to us. You are part of the NZCR team and we all work together towards the same aim – re-homing as many dogs as possible.

Kind regards,

Casey Walters  
**Managing Trustee of NZCR**

Alex Coker  
**Trustee of NZCR**

## PREPARING FOR YOUR FOSTER DOG

Foster dogs ideally stay in the one assigned foster home until they get adopted. We rely on foster homes to create a stable environment for the foster dog and be their home for the time being.

Foster families need to provide the following:

- A healthy, safe environment for the foster dog.
- Transportation to and from vet appointments.
- Socialisation and handling.
- Exercise and mental stimulation.
- The time and commitment required to successfully foster a dog.
- Meet with potential adoptees in order to introduce the dog.

The first thing you need to do is to ensure that you have all the basic items required to foster. NZCR appreciate any assistance in supplying items for the foster dog. However, if you need any items for your foster dog, please contact the NZCR as soon as practicable.

### **We recommend you need the following basics:**

- Food bowl and water bowl
- A crate
- Bed
- Bedding
- Leash and collar or harness
- Dry Dog Food
- Dog Treats
- Dog Toys

## BRINGING HOME A FOSTER DOG:

### **Travelling**

We ask that dogs travel within a travel crate, or are attached with an attachment to the seat of the car. Foster dogs are not to be transported on peoples' laps or allowed to remain loose within the car. This is extremely dangerous for the foster dog and illegal. Your foster dog needs to be secured whenever being transported in the car.

### **Dog Proofing the House and Garden**

Once you ensure you have all the items required, the second step is to check that your home is fully fenced and any access points under the house have been blocked. You never know how a foster dog will react to a new environment so it is important that your home and garden are 100% secure. It may be beneficial to secure your front door with a child-gate, to prevent escapees!

Foster dogs are to live inside, not outside. Do not chain the dogs or leave them unattended in a kennel or run.

Please do not leave dogs unsupervised, even if you have a fully fenced yard. When you leave the home, the foster dog needs to be crated. This limits the risk of the foster dog getting themselves into trouble or having any negative experiences.

Prior to the arrival of the foster dog, please remove any potentially unsafe items or items that could be easily chewable, inside and outside of the home (such as: cords, remotes, ornaments, plant pots, inside plants etc). Cupboards may also need to be latched (such as those containing cleaning) and rubbish bins secured. You should put child-safe gates in any rooms you do not wish the foster dog to have access to.

### **Bringing Your Foster Dog Home**

When you are approved as a foster carer, NZCR add you to our database of foster carers. Once a dog comes into the care of the Trust, we examine the database for a potential match. We assess the traits of the dog, together with the schedule and skills of the foster carer, in order to match dogs as closely as possible.

Please do not overwhelm the foster dog with affection or too many new experiences at once. Some of our dogs have had very little interaction with humans (and/or other dogs) and too much stimulation at once can upset the foster dog. Do not introduce your dog to too many strangers within its first few weeks at your home. You need to establish a bond so that the foster dog learns to trust you and therefore rely on you when uncomfortable.

Dogs enjoy routine. It is important to establish a daily routine for the dogs in terms of feeding, toileting, walking and sleeping. Do not feel sorry for the dog once you hear of it's past and/or witness it's fearful behaviour. You are the pack leader and there to show the dog that they are safe but expected to behave in a respectful manner within your home.

### **Introducing Your Personal Dog(s) to the Foster Dog**

A member of the NZCR team will arrange for the foster dog to be given to you, or meet you with the foster dog. You will then need to slowly introduce the dog to any existing pets you might have. Please ensure that you supervise the interactions and that they are one-on-one. Keep dogs on leashes and do not offer treats or toys (as this may start a fight between the dogs).

It is often a better idea to introduce dogs on 'neutral territory' such as a park, where you can walk them side by side. Let our team know if this is your preference and we can meet you at a local park prior to you taking the foster dog home if you are located near one of our team members.

Again, do not leave your foster dog alone with your personal dogs under any circumstances in order to keep both your pets and the foster dog safe. It is impossible to predict the outcome and how the foster dog may react in any given situation.

### **Introducing Cats and Other Small Animals to the Foster Dog**

While we do try to ensure that our dogs 'quirks' are known prior to foster care, we cannot ensure that they are 100% cat-safe or small animal safe.

You will need to ensure that the introduction between the foster dog and other pet is completed safely and carefully for both. Be wary of the fact that a defensive cat may scratch and harm your foster dog, as well as the fact that your dog is capable of causing harm to your cat or other small animal.

We suggest that you do not allow the foster dog to directly meet the small animal or cat. It is better that you firstly allow the dog to view them from behind a gate, inside dog pen, or from their crate. You can also exchange bedding between a cat and dog (to help them get used to scents).

This can be a lengthy process. Once you are ready to introduce them face to face, the dog should be on a leash. Try to keep the interactions short and positive initially. Do not leave your foster dog unsupervised with any cats or other small pets.

Please note: if you do not feel comfortable fostering the dog at any time, please let NZCR know as soon as you can. Be honest and do not feel obligated to continue. One of the team members will make alternative arrangements for the dog.

**Children and Dogs**

Please never leave a foster dog unattended with a child. While we try to ensure that dogs placed in a family environment are suitable to be around children, it is impossible to know with certainty what level of tolerance each foster dog may have. Often, we do not have a comprehensive history of the dog and we ask you to remain cautious.

You must supervise all interactions and remind your children of the rules of being around dogs. These include: not touching a dog when he or she is eating, playing with a toy, or sleeping. Do not tease dogs, or take toys from them. Do not chase dogs, or scare dogs intentionally. Do not pat a dog without checking it is okay with the owner, or without adult supervision.



*Codi*



*Cinnamon*



*Lady Bug*

## **CARING FOR YOUR FOSTER DOG**

Your goal as a foster carer is to help prepare your foster dog to live successfully in a home environment. We ask you to ensure they develop good habits and skills. If, at any time you feel overwhelmed or that the dog has any serious behavioural or temperamental issues that you cannot work with, please contact NZCR immediately.

### **Feeding**

We prefer that all dogs are fed on dry food, unless they require a specific diet, which will be discussed with you directly. Adult foster dogs are fed twice a day - once in the morning and once in the evening. The amount will be based on the age and weight of your foster dog.

If you have a puppy – they will require more frequent feeding due to the fact that Chihuahuas (particularly between 6-10 weeks old) are susceptible to becoming hypoglycaemic (low blood sugar). For this reason, it is important not to miss meals, or exercise your foster puppy too much, as this can deplete their biochemical resources. Signs of hypoglycaemia in a puppy include: Trembling, disorientation, lack of co-ordination, weak, tired and lethargic, no appetite, trouble standing. This is a very serious issue and can result in death. As such it requires immediate veterinary treatment. Offer the dog honey, or rub it on the inside of its gums and contact NZCR immediately.

Our website contains examples of food enrichment ideas under the “foster” section. These are great ways to work your foster dogs’ brain and senses. We ask that you include these types of activities in your daily routine where you can.

Please ensure your foster dog always has access to fresh clean water. Treats can be given and are a good idea to train your foster dog and teach them to begin to trust you.

Be careful when feeding or giving treats to your foster dog, in front of other dogs, as some foster dogs may be food aggressive. Ensure that your personal dogs are kept away when the foster dog is being fed in order to prevent a fight.

If there are any known food allergies that relate to your foster dog, these will be discussed with you. If you notice that your foster dog has stopped eating or drinking and their energy level has changed please inform NZCR as soon as possible.

### **Toilet Training**

Many small breeds are notorious for being difficult to toilet train! However, if there are no medical issues present, toilet training is simple, but it requires persistence, routine and rewards. Being toilet-trained ensures that your foster dog has a better chance of being adopted. If your foster dog is not toilet trained, you need to ensure that you begin training as soon as possible – essentially it is the same as training a new puppy.

In the morning, the dog should be let out of its crate and taken outside immediately. Once the dog has relieved itself, make a fuss and reward him or her with a treat. The same should be repeated each time the dog has a nap – take them straight outside.

If you see the foster dog sniffing, this can be an indication they are looking to relieve themselves. Pop them outside and wait. If successful, make a fuss and reward. Some dogs may also sit next to the door or let out a bark in an effort to get your attention.

You will begin to learn your foster dogs' toilet schedule – some can hold on for hours at a time, others need to go more frequently. Age is a huge factor as to how long your foster dog can hold on for.

The key to successful toilet training is routine. If the dog is not in the crate, on you for cuddles or completing training, he or she should be outside with the opportunity to toilet there.

If your foster dog begins to go inside, say in a firm, calm voice “no” and place them outside. If your foster dog has an accident inside please do not scold or punish them. This will only create fear and mistrust. Remove the dog from the area and clean up the accident using an enzymatic cleaner so that the scent is not left.

### **Crate Training**

It is important that your dog learns that the crate is a safe, relaxing environment and not a punishment. Chihuahuas are den animals; they tend to love a small space which is why they often burrow down into blankets. However, due to your foster dog's past history, they may not immediately feel comfortable with the idea of a crate.

Try to associate the crate with positive things such as treats and pats. Leave the door open and create a cosy environment. When your foster dog hops in, reward him or her. Put toys inside and encourage the dog to go in. We also recommend you feed foster dogs inside their crate to help with the positive association and minimise the potential for fights between the foster dog and other dogs.

We also recommend that foster dogs should sleep in the crate. Letting the foster dog sleep on your bed, or with other members of your family can lead to circumstances where the foster dog connects too closely to you/your family and has to adjust again once adopted. If the dog is able to sleep with other members of your pack, this may create the same issue.

It can take some time to train a fearful dog to love their crate, please be patient and do all you can to reinforce the idea that the crate is a 'happy place'.

### **Grooming**

Prior to being placed, we generally have the dog groomed. But if you are not confident with upkeep of basic grooming (ie. bathing and nail trimming) please let us know and we will arrange an appointment with a chi-knowledgeable, rescue friendly groomer. Please note: you need written approval from the Managing Trustee prior to booking any appointments.

If you are willing to bath your foster dog yourself, please use dog-friendly products, shampoos and conditioners and take care not to get the ears wet or put anything in the ear. Chihuahuas do not need regular bathing and grooming as some breeds may. Once a month is more than enough.

Teeth can be brushed – if your foster dog becomes familiar enough to allow it! Otherwise, it may be necessary for us to consult the vet regarding a dental.

If you notice any swelling, tender-spots, redness or discharge on the skin or fur, please contact NZCR straight away and we will organise a vet appointment for the foster dog.

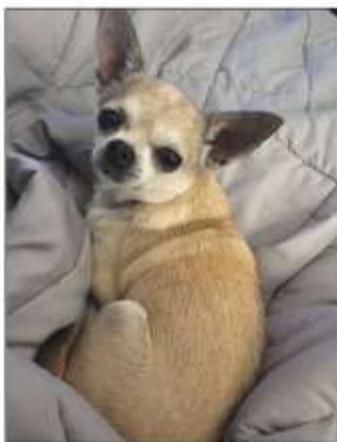
**Exercise**

Please ensure that you take your foster dog out (on a leash) at least once every second day for approximately 30 minutes. Of course, there will be days where weather or work schedules may not enable you to do so, but Chihuahuas are still dogs and require exercise accordingly. It is not enough to simply have a large backyard!

A walk also enables the dog to get out of their usual environment and develop confidence. This will assist them in terms of making them more adoptable. In time, they may enjoy activities such as fetch and you can take them to your local park to interact with other dogs.

Chihuahuas can be a fragile breed. Please remember that they should not be encouraged to jump or leap as they are prone to luxating patellar issues (knees that slip).

Please ensure your foster dog is leashed at all times in public, even though the park may be an ‘off leash’ park. This minimises the risk of the dog catching any diseases, getting themselves into trouble, nipping a person or other dog, being nipped themselves, escaping and hurting themselves or worse.



*Sassi*



*Basil*



*Ricky*

## HOW DO I HELP MY FOSTER DOG GET ADOPTED?

Once your foster dog has been spayed or neutered, received any other veterinary treatment required and been assessed as ready to adopt, we will begin to advertise the foster dog. In order to best prepare and present the foster dog, please consider the following.

1. **Address Known Behavioural Issues:** As you get to know your foster dog, you may become aware of certain “quirks” he or she may have (ie. a fear or wariness of people). The more you are able to work with them in terms of resolving any issues and training them, the more adoptable they become. In the example listed above, you may work with them to specifically make them more comfortable around strangers. This will ensure that when they are introduced to prospective adopters they are more confident. Lack of toilet-training is also a huge draw-back for a lot of adopters.

If there are any serious behavioural or temperamental issues that make the dog unsuitable to be adopted after he or she is de-sexed, please let us know. If you are struggling with any behaviour or temperament issues, please also reach out to us.

2. **Grooming:** Please ensure that the dog is well-groomed, including their nails. If you require assistance, as noted above, please contact NZCR.
3. **Supplying Quality Photos and Biographies:** Please stay in regular contact with NZCR and provide us with quality photos of the dog, together with information about their personality. We will use this information to write descriptions of the dog for our social media pages and websites in an effort to draw in Adopters. If you would prefer to write the dog’s biography, great! Please let us know. We may also arrange for a professional photographer to take photos of your foster dog. However, this will be co-ordinated with you so as to ensure the least amount of disruption.

### What if I know someone who wants to adopt my foster dog?

If you know someone interested in adopting your foster dog, please ask them to fill out the application form (found on our website) and email this with some pictures of their property to our email: [contact@NZChihuahuarescue.co.nz](mailto:contact@NZChihuahuarescue.co.nz).

Once the dog is up for adoption, we assess all applications and contact the most suitable adopter. We cannot guarantee the dog will be adopted by your friend but in order to be considered they need to send their application in as soon as possible. We do not place dogs “on hold”. We will try to accommodate referrals from foster carers where practicable.

### What if I want to adopt my foster dog?

Have you fallen in love? We understand! It can be hard to say goodbye but please consider carefully whether this is what you truly wish to do. It is difficult, but fostering is a crucial part of the rescue and no doubt, there will be plenty more fosters requiring your help soon enough!

If you are certain you wish to adopt the foster dog, please contact NZCR to confirm as soon as practicable.

There is no need to apply via the forms on our website. The adoption fee is still applicable as this is how we recover the costs spend on each dog for use on the next dog that will come in!

### **What happens when your foster dog is ready for adoption?**

When your dog is deemed ready to adopt we will upload their profile to the website and discuss the drafting of their profile with you. We will post the same on our social media to create interest.

Once someone is interested in your foster dog and their application has been received, we will contact you to discuss the next steps. Generally, we like the foster carer to be involved in the meet and greet as they know the dogs the best at this point. The prospective adopter can then ask any queries they may have. Please let us know if you would like a NZCR team member to be present, we can ask the prospective adopter to meet you either at a park locally, their home or your home, please confirm your preference.

After the meet and greet, a NZCR team member will be in touch to discuss whether or not you believe there is a match. If this is the case we will make arrangements with you and the Adopter for a trial to begin. A trial is for a period of one month.

## **MEDICAL TREATMENT**

We will supply you with any known information about your foster dog such as dates of vaccines, or any medical issues or conditions. Vet books will also be provided if the foster dog came with any – please take care not to lose these.

NZCR have a network of vet clinics which are to be utilised in the event of any medical issues, for routine treatments and de-sexing. If the foster dog requires a vet appointment (for a vaccine or de-sexing) a member of NZCR will be in touch and confirm the vet for you to liaise with in your area. This way you will be able to confirm with the clinic a suitable time and date.

It is your absolute responsibility to keep NZCR informed of any potential health issues in relation to your foster dog. If you believe your foster dog needs veterinary treatment please contact NZCR with a description of the issue and/or any photographs you have taken. The foster dog is then to be taken to an approved vet clinic specified by NZCR in order to receive treatment. Prior approval must be given directly by the Managing Trustee for any vet appointments.

Vaccines, de-sexing and any other medical treatment for a foster dog is paid for by the Trust but must be approved by the Managing Trustee. Please note: If you do not contact NZCR prior to taking the dog to the vet, you are liable for the full cost of the treatments for yourself.

If your foster dog appears to be suffering any of the following, please contact NZCR: Eye discharge, coughing, loss of appetite, dehydration, lethargy, vomiting, pain or strain urinating or defecating, Diarrhoea, frequent scratching, appears swollen on any part of the body, or has hair loss.

Again, we reiterate the fact that if you do not contact NZCR prior to taking the dog to the vet, you are liable for the full cost. Please contact NZCR prior.

### **Medication**

If your dog requires medication, please ensure this administered according to vet advice and do not stop any medication without being advised first. If your dog is not responding to a certain medication or treatment, please advise NZCR and a follow up vet appointment will be booked.

### **Emergency Treatment**

If your foster dog is in need of emergency treatment please contact NZCR as soon as possible.

If this is absolutely impossible (ie. in circumstances where the delay would lead to a potential death), please proceed to the nearest vet clinic, or after hours clinic and then contact NZCR as soon as possible to inform them of the situation.

### **REIMBURSEMENTS:**

If you wish to be refunded for any disbursements spent on a foster dog you will need to obtain approval in the form of written consent from NZCR prior. Please contact us prior to the purchase, or you run the risk of being declined reimbursements.

Where reimbursements have been agreed, you will need to forward invoices via email, together with evidence of your correct bank account, such as a bank statement, blank cheque or encoded bank deposit slip. Once approved, you will be notified and the reimbursement forwarded to your nominated account.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

We greatly appreciate biographies and photos of your foster dog, but we ask that you do not post them directly to your own personal social media profiles. We have had one case where a member of the public found a foster carer's residence and showed up at their home. We were advised she found them by searching their full name (displayed on Facebook) in the White Pages. It is important to note that address information is also stored in places like the Electoral Roll and/or Companies Register.

Please also refrain from creating any social media pages for your foster dog. If you wish to share pictures and information with others via social media, please join our Foster Carers and Adopters Group on Facebook and share the information there. That Group is a closed group for foster carers and adopters only. We are also happy to receive pictures (and/or updates about your foster dog) to post on the NZCR Facebook or Instagram Accounts – social media can play a crucial role in getting dogs homed but it should be via the official NZCR accounts.

If any prospective adopters contact you directly to inquire about your foster dog, please refer them to NZCR directly. Do not pass out team members names, phone numbers or other details.

# SCHEDULE 1

**Note to Team Member:** Please fill out a copy of this schedule, copy the page and attach this to the handbook for the foster carer. Please retain the original and provide to the Trustees.

**Name of Foster Carer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of the Dog:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

**De-Sexed:** Yes / No

**Micro-Chipped:** Yes / No

**Registered:** Yes / No

**Known Health Issues:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Known Behavioural Issues:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**If you have an emergency please contact the below named NZCR Team Member:**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Best contact number:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Disclaimer:** This manual is a compilation of relevant policies, practices and procedures in effect at NZCR. This manual is designed to introduce foster carers to NZCR, familiarise you with our policies as they pertain to you as a foster carer and provide general guidelines on rules and other issues. The manual does not claim to include every conceivable situation. It is merely to provide a guideline and unless laws prescribe otherwise, common sense shall prevail. National and local laws are to be adhered to. Policies are applied at the discretion of NZCR. We reserve the right to change, withdraw, apply or amend any of our policies or benefits, including those provided in this manual, at any time. NZCR may notify you of such changes via email, personal message, amendment or reprinting of this manual and may make such changes at any time, with or without notice and without a written revision of this manual. Please understand it is your responsibility to read and comply with the policies contained therein and any revisions to it. Please see the "Agreement" section of your foster application form for additional terms you will be bound by.