



## Dark Horse Dogs, Finding Your Foster

(A more in depth look at making sure we're picking what you need, NOT what you want.)

You've been approved! Now we find a dog!

Whether it's from animal control, one we already have with our rescue (maybe this dog isn't right for the particular foster home it's currently in), or a specific dog you were drawn to online, we make a plan, and we meet the dog.

Meet and greets depend on where the dog is. If it's at animal control, we go to animal control. If we're moving a dog to a new foster, we can go to where the foster is now, we can come to your home, or we can meet in the middle.

We make a plan on when you'll take the dog. If you're ready and willing to take the dog home that day, we will have all the supplies ready.

### **Picking the dog that's right for you!**

Did you just fall in love with the cutest dog online that you desperately have the urge to save? Welcome to our world. But, before you delve in, did you read about this dog? Did you watch any videos available? Handling video? Leash tests? Did you do your homework on this cute dog, or did you immediately decide this was your match because it was cute? If it's the latter, start over. You're not doing this right.

Even if you pick a dog you think will be your perfect match, it may not be. That happens! So, what's the backup plan if they aren't your perfect match? **THERE IS NO BACKUP PLAN!** If we had to find a backup foster for each dog we found an original foster for, we wouldn't be able to save any dogs. Finding one foster home is hard enough. Depending on the situation, the dog, and the other dogs we have with the rescue at the time, we can occasionally come up with a better solution and have a dog moved. But this cannot be expected. As a foster, you've committed to fostering this dog, even if it's hard. There are ways to function in your home, even if dogs don't get along, cats hate the dog, or the dog is uncomfortable with kids. It's not ideal, but it is manageable with some effort. And it's not forever. Communicate with us, listen to us, follow our tips and advice, and we will do our best to get everyone in a better scenario. We aren't magic though and we do NOT have a kennel or emergency place to house dogs. We do not want our dogs and families living in unhappy situations, but we need time to work on plans, and we need families willing to try different things, and not just quit when it gets hard. The dogs in the shelter ended up there, because humans quit. Our job now, is not to quit.

**Do you have a cat(s)?** First...why? We probably don't know if a dog is cat friendly. Depending on the facility the dog is in, we can request a cat test but not every facility does this, and if a dog passes a cat test, it does not mean that dog is perfect with cats. It just gives us an idea of reactions but is no guarantee of being good or not being good with cats. Families with cats would need to understand that they'd need to make sure their cat(s) have a safe and secure place, which a dog cannot access. Just in case the dog and cat weren't a long term match. You need to be prepared for worst case. Keep everyone safe while fostering and then we make sure we list the dog is not cat friendly, when we are looking for adopters.

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**Do you have kids?** Unless the dog is an owner surrender that states the dog lived with kids and did well, we do not know if the dog is kid friendly. And owner surrenders are not always honest. The adults would be expected to make sure all interaction with any children and dogs, is appropriate and that children are NOT left alone and unattended with the dog. It is the adult's responsibility to be safe, careful, and go slow, during a transition period. Your child should not be hugging, kissing and getting in the dog's face. You do not know this dog! This dog does not know you! SAFETY IS FIRST!! Kids laying on top of dogs, pulling on their ears, messing with their mouths, climbing in their crate, is NOT, I repeat, is NOT cute. It's a bite waiting to happen. And the dog ends up paying for it, when it was the adult's responsibility to teach their children how to appropriately interact with animals. Teach your children to treat these animals with respect. Give them space to relax and feel comfortable with you, and your family. These aren't stuffed animals. They're real animals. With teeth. Respect the animal and their teeth.

**Do you have a dog(s)?** Some dogs have leash tests you can view, some do not. Some dogs will be great with other dogs, some will not. And just because a dog likes one dog, does not mean it will like all dogs. Families that have existing dogs are strongly urged to do slow introductions. We personally, practice a full 2 week shutdown. A new dog comes in and it has its own space, away from the chaos of the home. The new dog is not introduced to our dogs immediately. This dog is kept separate to focus on decompression and creating trust and a bond with us (the humans). We are the main caregivers for this dog. We feed them, take them potty, and we leave them alone. Yes, we wrote that. We do not really pay them much attention at all. We exist together, until we slowly get more comfortable with each other. Dogs may follow us around, and some may choose to avoid us completely in the beginning. That's absolutely okay! We do not approach them to try to get them to cuddle or be affectionate. They do not need this immediately. They need space, consistency, decompression, and they need to learn who they can trust. It's very difficult to trust a new person that is constantly pushing you past your comfort level. Most humans don't even realize they're doing it. Dogs do not need our pity and cuddles. They need us to save their lives. Cuddles can come later. We want those cuddles to come later, by avoiding any immediate human error.

We do understand that not all families want to keep dogs separated. It's not supposed to be forever. The separation is to allow everyone in the home to get used to the smells and sounds of new dogs, and to bring the energy and anxiety down. Before the meets happen. Moving to a new place with complete strangers is scary and confusing enough. Trying to add all the extra factors too soon, increases the likelihood a dog may make a mistake. Humans and animals can, and do, make poor decisions when overwhelmed. If two dogs seem like a good match, a strict shutdown isn't always needed. We do a strict shutdown because it's what works in our homes.

But we would still recommend dogs have time to separate and chill out in the beginning. Do you go on a first date, move in with that person the same day, and spend 24 hours a day together? No, you don't. It's too much, too soon. Take breaks.

**What kind of lifestyle do you have?** Are you a couch potato who prefers to stay home and watch Netflix? Then don't pick a 1 year old, hyperactive breed, which will bounce off walls. Pick a dog that is older and would love to lay on the couch with you all day. Choose a dog that will mesh best. Just because we want a specific dog to be our match, doesn't mean it will be. CHOOSE WISELY FOR SUCCESS!



**Are you a busy household with people/kids in and out constantly?** Then picking a scared and shutdown dog, which is terrified, is NOT your match. Although they look pathetic and you may want to save a pathetic looking dog, those dogs need something different. This isn't about you and making yourself feel good by trying to save the most pathetic looking one. ALL the dogs at animal control need to be saved. Those happy ones you see? They need it too! And those happy ones are often more successful, in a shorter time frame! Those happy ones acclimate pretty well, and often have less behavioral challenges/concerns. Those happy ones usually make for happier humans taking care of them, and often have quicker adoptions because they are compatible with a wider range of homes to adopt them. In turn, your happy foster gets adopted, and you get to take another happy foster! You can save more lives in a shorter timeframe by remembering that happy dogs are just as deserving as the sad ones. And the longer we overlook those happy ones in the shelter, the more at risk they are of shutting down, and no longer being that bright and happy dog.

**Are you an adult only – quiet home?** Those pathetic looking dogs might just be your match! Those terrified and shutdown dogs need something different. They need time, space, quiet, and to feel safe. They often take a bit longer to come out of their shell and allowing them to do so, in their own time, is crucial.

**Can you meet the dog prior to committing?** Yes! We would schedule a time to go in and meet dogs. Kids are allowed, but kids are not allowed in the pavilions. Kids can wait in the outdoor area and we can bring the dogs out. Dog intros are allowed but slightly more challenging. Your dog would also need to stay outside, your dog needs to be up to date with required vaccinations, and you'd need to sign a waiver. And if you brought your dog for a meet and you wanted to take a dog home, you'd need at least a crate in the car to keep the dogs separated. We prefer people come with 2 separate cars, or a volunteer can drive the dog separately to your home. We do not/will not, throw 2 loose dogs that don't know each other, in a car.

**What gender should you look for?** If you have a female bully breed, please do not look at female bullies. We do not allow female to female, bully adoptions. Male to female matches are our best bet, but we do allow families who have a male, to adopt a male, as long as they're a good match. Female to female is not negotiable. This is a rule for a very real reason.

**Can you have a job?** Yes! Foster homes can and do have jobs. We all work! You can work and foster!

**Do you need to have a fenced yard?** Foster homes are NOT required to have a fenced yard. It's preferred but not a deal breaker. We do require that you walk your dog responsibly and keep them and others safe while you're in public. This also falls in line with making sure you're picking a dog that's best for your lifestyle. If you don't have a fence, and you're not an active walker, picking a young and hyper dog will likely be a struggle. That dog will not get enough activity and will likely make the household chaos and craziness.

We all have a specific aesthetic we're attracted to, this is normal. But being cute does not make that dog right for your home. We want you to be successful! If you fail, the dog fails, and we fail. We do not like failure. Let's choose wisely.

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