



## **Leashes of Love Rescue's Foster Program Handbook**

### **Section 1: Introduction**

Thank you so much for your interest in fostering pets for Leashes of Love Rescue (LOLR). By opening up your home to foster pets, you're not only helping to save lives, you're providing the individual attention and love they desperately need. Many of the pets who need foster homes require extra care and attention, which shelters often don't have the staff or resources to provide. But in a loving foster home, every pet can get the individual attention they need to find a forever family. Foster homes are asked to provide care for the pets, as well as transportation to and from veterinary appointments as needed, and transportation to Leashes of Love Rescue events for meet and greets. Care for foster pets includes feeding according to size and needs, exercise according to energy levels, and lots of play time, training, and positive socialization. Although fostering is a lot of work, it is a very rewarding experience. By participating in this program, you are saving lives and helping many different types of pets find the families they've been longing for.

Once you have completed and submitted your foster application, our foster coordinator will get in touch to have a conversation with you about potential foster matches.

### **Frequently asked questions**

Where do the rescue pets come from?

- Returned adoptions
- Shelter rescue from California
- Local owner relinquishments
- Strays brought in by the public
- Transfers from local rescues and shelters

What do foster families need to provide?

Foster families need to provide:

- A healthy and safe environment for their foster pet
- Transportation to and from LOLR for scheduled meet and greets and all vet appointments as needed
- Socialization help teach pets positive family and pet relationships
- Lots of exercise, training and positive stimulation to help them develop
- Communication to the foster coordinator about their foster pet's behaviors and medical needs

How much time do I need to spend with a foster pet?

As much time as you can. With that said, the amount of time will vary depending on the energy level and needs. For dogs, it's ideal to spend around two hours a day exercising and playing with them to ensure that they receive adequate socialization and stimulation.

Can I foster even if I have a full-time job?

Yes. The foster application is designed as a survey to help the foster coordinator match you with the best animal for your needs and your current schedule. Just be sure to factor in time to provide ample exercise before and after work.

Can I foster a dog if I don't have a fenced yard?

Yes. Even if you do have a fenced yard, we request that you supervise all outdoor activities with the foster dog. And we ask that you always keep them on a leash when you're on walks. We also ask that they are not taken to dog parks.

How long will my foster pet need to be in foster care?

Ideally, foster pets stay in their assigned foster homes until they get adopted. Caring for a foster pet can last up to 2-3 months. If you are unable to continue fostering, please let LOLR's foster program coordinator know as soon as possible.

Will I need to give medicine to my foster pet?

A lot of the pets that we have in our foster program are rescued from shelters and have been exposed to shelter illnesses. While we do our best to ensure that we are aware of all the conditions that a foster pet may have prior to going home, many illnesses have incubation periods, meaning symptoms can arise after they come to your home. So, while some don't require any medicine, others may. If your foster pet needs medications, we will show you how to administer them at the Foster Home Check.

Can I let my foster pet play with my personal pets?

There are a few guidelines that we ask foster families to adhere to regarding their personal pets. While foster pets playing with other pets is often fine, we require you to bring in your pet's recent medical information to ensure that all of your personal pets are healthy and up-to-date on all vaccines. They can be susceptible to illness and can carry or catch different diseases. If, for any reason, your personal pet becomes ill while you are fostering an LOLR pet, we cannot provide medical care for your personal pet.

Can I foster a pet with LOLR if I'm currently fostering other animals?

We ask that you wait on fostering for LOLR if you are fostering another pet. Medical and

behavioral protocols vary between rescues and shelters, and because of this, we can't run the risk of situations occurring between the pets. These could include, but aren't limited to, transmission of diseases, unpredictable behavior leading to injury or death of a foster pet, or personal injury. We can always conduct a home check prior to fostering with us to pre-approve your home for future foster pets.

#### What if I want to adopt from LOLR, or my foster pet?

If you want to adopt one of our available pets, you will need to complete an adoption application and follow the full adoption process. If you decide to adopt your foster dog, please contact the foster coordinator right away because once the pet is brought in for an adoption meet and greet, we cannot hold them for anyone, including the foster parent.

#### Who will take care of my foster pet if I need to go out of town?

If you have travel plans while you are fostering, you will need to contact the foster coordinator to find space for your foster until you return. Please provide at least one week's notice to ensure that we can make adequate accommodations for them. You cannot leave your foster with an unauthorized person or pet sitter. We have a specific process for foster parents, and pet sitters have not undergone that process or signed the foster contract for the foster program. If you have someone who normally watches your current pets while you are away, they will need to—and are more than welcome to—contact the foster coordinator to complete our foster process. Additionally, if someone you live with—that has gone through the foster process as well—will be watching the foster pet, their contact information will need to be given to the Foster Coordinator before you leave town.

#### What if my foster dog bites me?

If any of your foster pets bite you and break skin, causing you to bleed, you need to report the bite to the foster coordinator within 24 hours of when the bite occurred. The law requires that we report all bites. The teeth of the animal, not the nails, must have broken the skin. Even if the bite doesn't break skin, please let the foster coordinator know so they can follow up with a trainer.

#### What if my foster pet is not working out?

You are not required to continue to foster a pet if you feel it's not working out. We may not have immediate space for the pet, but we will work on moving your foster pet out as soon as possible and ask for your understanding and patience. Please call the foster coordinator during business hours if this situation arises.

#### Can I foster a pet to fulfill a community service obligation?

Unfortunately, LOLR cannot sign off on court-ordered community service hours for fostering. Community service is supposed to be supervised work, and fostering is unsupervised, since it takes place in your home. If you need community service hours, on-site volunteering is an

option.

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## Section 2: Preparing for your foster pet

When the Foster Coordinator brings your foster pet to your home, they may be frightened or unsure about what's happening, so it's important not to overwhelm them. Prepare a special area for the foster pet to help ease their adjustment into a new home environment.

Sometimes it is better to confine the foster pet to a small room or area at first, to let them adjust before giving them free rein in your home. This is especially helpful when bringing in a foster cat, or a scared dog if you have other pets.

We request that all foster dogs be housed indoors only. A garage, backyard or outdoor run is not a suitable accommodation for a foster dog.

During the first couple of weeks, minimize the people and pet introductions to your foster pet, so they are only meeting immediate family and your personal pets. If you have other pets at home, it is especially important to give your foster pet a space of their own where they can stay while getting used to all the new sounds and smells. Don't leave your foster pet unattended in your home with your personal pets until you are comfortable that all of the animals can interact safely.

### Supplies you'll need

Leashes of Love Rescue will provide you with any supplies that you may need. However, we greatly appreciate any help that you can provide in supplying items for your foster pet. Here's what we provide to help your foster pet make a smooth transition to living in your home:

- At least one bowl for dry food and one for water
- Approximately one month's worth of wet and/or dry food, according to their dietary needs.
- A collar with an ID tag and a harness and leash
- A blanket or bed
- A crate: The crate should be large enough for the dog to stand up and turn around in, but not much bigger than that.
- Dog or cat toys
- Grooming supplies if we have any

For the duration of fostering, we will continuously supply the pet's food and medications, however, we ask that fosters (if they are able) to keep up on purchasing things like treats, pill pockets, pee pads, litter, or toys. LOLR cannot reimburse you for these items, but we can give you a donations receipt for a tax write-off.

## Pet-proofing your home

Foster dogs come from a shelter environment, and even if they have previously lived in a home, we don't always know how they will react in a new home. So, before bringing home a new foster pet, you'll want to survey the area where you are going to keep them. Remove anything that would be unsafe or undesirable for them to chew on, and latch securely any cupboards and doors that the foster pet could get into. People food and chemicals can be very harmful if consumed by animals, so please store them in a place that the foster pet cannot access.

Never underestimate your foster pet's abilities. Here are some additional tips for pet-proofing your home:

- Make sure that all trash cans are covered or latched and keep them inside a closet. (Don't forget the bathroom trash bins.)
- Keep the toilet lids closed.
- Keep both people and pet food out of reach and off all counter tops.
- Move house plants or secure them.
- Make sure aquariums or cages that house small animals, like hamsters or fish, are securely out of reach of your foster pet.
- Remove medications, lotions or cosmetics from any accessible surfaces.
- Move and secure all electrical and phone wires out of reach
- Pick up any clothing items that have buttons or strings, which can be harmful to your foster pet if consumed.
- Relocate knickknacks or valuables that your foster pet could knock down.

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## Section 3: Bringing home your foster pet

Taking care of a foster pet requires a commitment from you to make sure they are happy and healthy. Thank you so much for opening your heart and your home to these pets who desperately need your help. Without you, we could not save as many as we do.

### Choosing a foster pet

The foster coordinator will work with you to select a foster pet who matches best with your answers on the foster survey. We will always do our best to match you with a pet who would thrive the best with your lifestyle and schedule.

When you and the foster coordinator have decided on a foster pet, a meet and greet will be scheduled so you and your household (including any resident dogs) can meet them.

## Dog introductions

If you have personal pets who are dogs, you'll want to introduce them to your foster dog one at a time and supervise their interactions at first. If possible, it's a good idea to introduce them outside in a large yard or on a walk, keeping all the dogs on leash and allowing them enough space to get adjusted to one another.

In addition, make sure that high-value items (food, chew toys, plush toys, Kongs, rawhides or anything else that your dogs' hold in high regard) are put away whenever the dogs are interacting. You don't want to allow the possibility of a fight. Those high-value items are best placed in the dogs' personal areas. Finally, never feed your dogs in the same room as the foster dog; always separate them at feeding time.

## Cat introductions

We can't ensure how a foster dog will react to a cat, even if they've been "cat-tested". If you have personal pets who are cats, you'll need to make the introduction to the foster dog carefully and safely at your home. Start by keeping them separated at first. You can either keep your cats in a separate room (equipped with food, water, litter boxes and beds) or confine your foster dog to a room. Over a one- to two-week period, let the dog and cats smell each other through the door, but don't allow them contact with one another. Exchanging blankets or towels between the dog's area and the cats' area will help them get used to each other's smells.

After a week or two, do the face-to-face introduction. Keeping your foster dog on leash, allow your cat out in the same area. (If you have more than one cat, introduce one cat at a time.) Do not allow the foster dog to charge or run directly up to the cat. Try to distract the dog as best you can so that the cat has the chance to approach without fear. Watch the body language of each animal closely and don't continue the interaction if either pet becomes over-stimulated or aggressive. The idea is to keep the interactions positive, safe and controlled. Never leave your foster dog unsupervised with any cats in your home.

## Children and dogs

Since we don't always know a foster dog's history or tolerance level for different types of people and activities, please teach your children how to act responsibly and respectfully around your foster dog. We will do our best to place you with an appropriate animal for your home situation, but you should still supervise all interactions between children and your foster dog. Key things to remind your children:

- Always leave the foster dog alone when they are eating, chewing or sleeping. Some dogs may nip or bite if bothered while eating or startled while sleeping.
- Do not take away a toy or prized possession from the foster dog.

- Do not tease the foster pet.
- Don't chase the foster pet around the house or run quickly around the foster pet; it may scare them.
- Pick up all your toys. Some dogs may not be able to tell the difference between what is theirs and what belongs to the kids.

Do not allow young children to walk the foster dog because they may not be strong enough or experienced enough to handle encounters with other dogs or cats who cross their path.

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## Section 4: Daily care

### Feeding

All foster pets should be fed only the food they go to your home with. Make sure to follow their feeding schedules as best as possible, and that they always have access to fresh, clean water. You can give your foster pet treats as giving treats may help you and your foster bond; however, please check with the foster coordinator with which treats would be okay to use. Most dogs like to chew on things, so try Greenies, antlers, Nylabones or Dentabones. Keep in mind, though, that not all dogs like to share, so only give these treats when your foster dog is confined to his/her own area. Only give them these types of treats while you're around. Do not give them rawhide chews.

### Daily routine

Sometimes, too much stimulation can cause a pet to behave unexpectedly toward a person or animal, which is why it's a good idea to keep introductions to a minimum during the first couple of weeks after they come to your home. It's also important to establish a daily routine of regularly scheduled feedings, potty breaks and walk times. Dogs take comfort in having a routine they can count on, as do cats, although their needs may look different.

Also, on a daily basis, be aware of your foster pet's appetite and energy level. If they are not eating well or seems listless, something may be wrong medically. Contact LOLR's foster coordinator right away if you notice this type of behavior. You also might want to record your observations to make it easier to notice any health issues.

### House-training

It's unlikely that your foster dog will be perfectly house-trained when they come to your home. Most of the dogs in the foster program have lived in a shelter for a while, often with

minimal walks or chances to relieve themselves outside. At the very least, be prepared for an adjustment period until your foster dog gets used to your schedule.

Because a dog has a better chance of being adopted if they are house-trained, please help your foster dog to perfect this skill, if possible. Take your foster dog outside to go potty multiple times per day if possible (3-6 times daily, depending on age). Initially, you may need to take them out more frequently to remind them where the door to the outside is and to reassure them that you will take them out for potty breaks. Most dogs will give cues — such as standing near the door or sniffing the ground and walking in small circles — to indicate that they need to go out.

If your foster dog has an accident inside the house, don't discipline or punish them. It will only teach them to fear and mistrust you. Clean up all accidents with an enzymatic cleaner. Nature's Miracle and Simple Solution are two products containing natural enzymes that tackle tough stains and odors and remove them permanently.

### Crate training

Crate training, done in a positive way, can be an effective component of house-training. A crate can be a safe place for your foster dog to have "down time" and can also limit their access to the entire house until they know the rules. A crate should never be used as a form of punishment and a dog should never be left in a crate for an extended period of time.

You can prevent problems with crate training by setting your foster dog up for success. They should only associate good things with the crate, so start by putting treats and/or toys in the crate and encouraging them to go in. Some dogs warm up to the crate slowly. If they are afraid to go in, place a treat in the crate as far as the pet is willing to go. After they take the treat, place another treat a little farther back in the crate. Keep going until they are eating treats at the very back, then feed them their next meal in the crate with the door open, so that they can walk in and out at will.

Crate training a fearful dog can take weeks, so be patient and encouraging. If a crate is properly introduced and used, your foster dog will happily enter and settle down.

If your foster dog cannot be properly crate trained, or you are fostering a small dog, a playpen or baby-gated part of the house might be the best option for them. They should have their food, water, toys, bedding, and pee pads set up in this designated area with them.

### Grooming

A clean and well-groomed pet has a better chance of getting adopted, so bathe your foster dog as needed and brush them regularly. Contact the foster coordinator if you feel that your foster dog needs to see a professional groomer, and if you are uncomfortable trimming their nails.



### Mental stimulation and exercise

Depending on your foster pet's age and energy level, they should get at least two 30-minute play sessions or walks (for dogs) with you per day. Try a variety of toys (balls, squeaky toys, rope toys, etc.) to see which ones your foster pet prefers. Remember to discourage them from playing with your hands, since mouthing or scratching won't be a desirable behavior to adopters. You can also offer your foster pet a food-dispensing toy for mental stimulation.

### Safety requirements

Foster dogs must live indoors, not outside. Please do not leave your foster dog outside unsupervised, even if you have a fenced yard. We ask that you supervise your foster dog when they are outside at all times (even if you have a doggie door) to ensure that they don't escape or have any negative interactions with other people or animals. Your foster dog is only allowed to be off-leash in an enclosed backyard that is completely fenced in. Also, please do not allow foster dogs doggie doors access even if you are home. This may encourage dogs to see this as a way out and try to escape.

When walking or hiking with your foster dog, please keep them on leash at all times. This means that your foster dog is not allowed to go to off-leash dog parks or other off-leash dog areas. We do not know how your foster dog will act in these situations, or how other dogs will react, and we need to ensure that all animals are safe at all times. In addition, we don't know if the other dogs they encounter are vaccinated appropriately or carry diseases, so it is best if your foster dog does not meet any unknown dogs.

Also, your foster dog cannot ride in the bed of an open pickup truck. When you're transporting foster dogs, please keep them inside the vehicle.

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## Section 5: Helping your foster pet get adopted

### Frequently asked questions

How often do I bring my foster pet to Leashes of Love Rescue's events?

The more adoption events you attend, the more likely your pet will get adopted. In the event your foster pet has a meet and greet scheduled, the the foster coordinator will contact you to work out a time you can bring them to our events, if you are unable.

Towards the end of the meet and greet, you will be asked to join and provide more details about your experience with the pet in your home. This has proven to be very helpful for potential adopters to get a sense of the pet's personality when they are relaxed and in a home environment.

If your foster has non-emergency concerns while in your care, you will be asked to bring them in for check-ups and re-checks for anything new or existing medical concerns they may be experiencing.

How can I help my foster pet find a great home?

As you get to know your foster pet, we ask that you stay in constant contact with the foster coordinator so that they can update information as we learn more about them. Weekly or bi-weekly progress surveys will be sent to your email, and we encourage you to be as detailed as possible. We also welcome any quality photos that you take of your foster pet in your home; we can use the photos to create a kennel card and accompany the online biography. Creating a Facebook or Instagram account for your foster is also encouraged to reach more of an audience.

What if I know someone who's interested in adopting my foster pet?

If someone you know is interested in adopting the pet, please contact the foster coordinator and give them a heads up. Also, tell the prospective adopter to start the adoption process by calling in to complete the adoption application at [www.LOLR.org](http://www.LOLR.org). Once the pet is up for adoption, we cannot hold them for anyone, but we do want to accommodate referrals from foster parents if we can.

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## Section 6: Medical and emergency protocols

If you are fostering a pet who is on medications, please make sure that they receive all prescribed doses. Do not end medication early for any reason.

### Veterinary care

LOLR provides medical care for our foster animals at our approved veterinary clinics only. Because we are ultimately responsible for your foster pet's well-being, our clinic staff must authorize any and all treatment for foster pets at our approved veterinary partners.

If your foster pet needs to go to the veterinarian, please notify the LOLR foster coordinator by phone, and by way of email ([lolrescue@outlook.com](mailto:lolrescue@outlook.com)). We will schedule an appointment with one of our preapproved veterinary clinics. Similarly, for emergencies and after hour concerns with your foster pet, you will need to call our the foster coordinator immediately.

Remember, foster parents will be responsible for payment of any medical care if they take their foster animal to a veterinarian without authorization from the foster coordinator.

## Signs of illness and what to do next

Pets generally do a good job of masking when they don't feel well, so determining if your foster pet is under the weather will require diligent observation of their daily activity and appetite levels. It's a good idea to keep track of these levels in a journal. You'll also want to record any of the following symptoms, which could be signs of illness.

**Eye discharge.** It is normal for dogs to have some discharge from their eyes when they wake up and some may have more than others, depending on the breed. But if your foster dog has yellow or green discharge, or swelling around the eyes (making it hard for him to open his eyes), or the third eyelid is showing, you need to contact the foster coordinator to schedule a vet appointment.

**Coughing and nasal discharge.** Coughing can be common if your foster dog is pulling on leash. If the coughing becomes more frequent, however, watch for discharge coming from the nose. If the discharge is clear, the infection is probably viral and medication may not be needed, but check with the foster coordinator to find out if a vet appointment is necessary. If the discharge becomes colored, make a vet appointment because the dog may have a bacterial infection. Be sure to monitor the dog's breathing. If the dog seems to struggle to breathe or starts wheezing, call the foster coordinator immediately and follow the emergency contact protocol. Also, once you notice nasal discharge, monitor the dog's eating habits more closely to ensure that he or she is still eating. If your foster dog displays any of these symptoms, separate them from other pets and call the foster coordinator.

**Loss of appetite.** Your foster pet may be stressed after arriving in your home, and stress can cause lack of appetite. But if the pet hasn't eaten after 24 hours, please notify the foster coordinator. Also, if the pet has been eating well, but then stops eating for 12 to 24 hours, call the foster coordinator to set up a vet appointment. Please do not change the pet's diet. A change in diet can cause diarrhea, which can lead to dehydration.

**Lethargy.** The activity level of your foster pet will vary depending on age and personality. Keeping an activity log and journal will help you notice whether your foster pet is less active than they normally are. If the dog cannot be roused or seems weak and unable to stand, it's an emergency, so start the emergency contact protocol.

**Dehydration.** Dehydration is usually associated with diarrhea, vomiting and/or loss of appetite. To test for dehydration, gently pinch the pet's skin around the scruff area. If the skin stays taut, the pet is dehydrated. Please call the foster coordinator the next business day to schedule a vet appointment.

**Vomiting.** Sometimes pets will eat too quickly and will immediately throw up their food. Occasional vomiting isn't cause for alarm, but if your foster pet has thrown up two or more times in one day, please notify the foster coordinator. It could be indicative of infection.

**Pain or strain while urinating.** When a pet first goes into a foster home, they may not urinate due to stress. If a foster dog hasn't urinated in more than 24 hours, however, please contact our clinic and foster coordinator. Also, if you notice the dog straining to urinate with little or no results, or crying out when urinating, please contact the foster coordinator immediately because it may be indicative of an infection or an obstruction. If you are fostering a cat, especially a male cat, this can be fatal, and would constitute as an emergency situation.

**Diarrhea.** It is important to monitor your foster pet's pooping habits daily. Soft stool is normal for the first two or three days after taking a pet home, most likely caused by stress and a change in food. If your foster pet has liquid stool, however, please contact our clinic and schedule an appointment, and bring in a fecal sample. Keep in mind that diarrhea will dehydrate the pet, so be proactive about contacting the foster coordinator. If your foster pet has bloody or mucoid diarrhea, please contact the foster coordinator immediately.

**Frequent ear scratching.** Your foster pet may have a bacterial or yeast infection (or, in rare cases, ear mites) if they scratch their ears often and/or shake their head frequently. These conditions can be treated by a veterinarian, so please call the foster coordinator to schedule an appointment with one of our vets.

**Swollen, irritated ears.** If your foster pet has irritated, swollen or red or pink ears that smell like yeast, they may have an ear infection called otitis. This type of infection is more common in dogs who have very floppy ears, like basset hounds or Labradors. These dogs may need to have their ears cleaned more often to ensure that the infection does not re-occur.

**Hair loss.** Please contact the foster coordinator if you notice any hair loss on your foster pet. It is normal for pets to have thin fur around the lips, eyelids and in front of the ears, but clumpy patches of hair loss or thinning hair can indicate ringworm, dermatitis or the early stages of mange. It is important to check your foster pet's coat every day.

#### Common ailments in animals from shelters

Shelter dogs may suffer from kennel cough, giardia or intestinal parasites. Symptoms of kennel cough include a dry hacking cough, often with phlegm discharge, discharge from the nose and/or eyes, decrease in appetite, dehydration and slight lethargy. Symptoms of

giardia or intestinal parasites include vomiting, diarrhea (often with a pungent odor) and/or dehydration.

If your foster dog is displaying one or more of these signs, please contact the foster coordinator. These ailments can worsen if left untreated.

### Criteria for emergencies

What constitutes a medical emergency with a pet? A good rule of thumb is any situation in which you would call 911 for a person. Here are some specific symptoms that could indicate an emergency:

- Not breathing or labored breathing
- Symptoms of parvovirus: bloody diarrhea, vomiting, weakness, high fever (above 103.5 degrees)
- Signs of extreme dehydration: dry mucous membranes, weakness, vomiting, tenting of the skin (when the skin is pulled up, it stays there)
- Abnormal lethargy or unable to stand
- Unconsciousness or unable to wake up
- Cold to the touch
- Broken bones
- Any trauma: hit by a car, dropped, stepped on
- A large wound or profuse bleeding that doesn't stop when pressure is applied
- Loss of appetite for more than 24 hours
- Diarrhea in small animals

If your foster pet displays any of these symptoms, please follow the LOLR emergency protocol.

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## Section 7: Behavior support

One of your goals as a foster parent is to help prepare your foster pet for living successfully in a home. So, we ask that you help your foster pet to develop good habits and skills through the use of positive reinforcement training, which builds a bond of trust between you and your foster pet. The basic idea is to reward desirable behaviors and ignore unwanted behaviors.

You must not punish a pet for a behavior that you find undesirable because punishment is ineffective at eliminating the behavior. If the pet is doing something undesirable, distract them before the behavior occurs. It is also important for every human in the foster home to stick to the rules established for your foster pet, which will help them to learn faster.

When interacting with your foster pet, refrain from wrestling or engaging in play that encourages the pet to be mouthy and "play bite" on your body.

Most foster pets will have behavioral and/or medical issues, which we are aware of at the time of their rescue. Some of these behavior challenges are separation anxiety, destruction of property, fear issues or aggression toward other animals and people. We will only place pets with behavioral issues with a person who feels comfortable working with the pet on their particular issues. We will provide that person with all the necessary information so that proper care and training can be given to the foster pet, including connecting you with LOLR's trainers.

If you feel unable to manage any behavior that your foster pet is exhibiting, please contact the foster coordinator during business hours to discuss the issue. We will guide you and help in every way that we can. If the behavior is extreme enough to warrant the pet returning to us, please understand that we will need some time to secure space for the pet.