

BRITISH COLUMBIA CHIHUAHUA RESCUE

www.chirescue.org



GUIDE TO FOSTERING

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British Columbia Chihuahua Rescue

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO FOSTERING

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I. INTRODUCTION TO FOSTERING

Welcome to B.C. Chihuahua Rescue's (BCCR) family of foster homes! Your decision to foster an abused, neglected, unwanted Chihuahua -- or one who has been very much loved but whose owner is no longer able to provide care due to illness or serious family trauma -- is vital in saving the lives of Chihuahuas and Chihuahua mixes who find loving new homes through B.C. Chihuahua Rescue.

You'll find a wealth of experienced rescue volunteers on hand to provide support and advice via our Management Team and BCCR e-mail discussion list! BCCR is 100% "no kill" unless deemed absolutely necessary by a veterinarian because of severe illness or injury.

What is a rescue Chihuahua?

Rescued Chihuahuas and Chihuahua mixes are generally in a desperate situation through no fault of their own. They are often family pets that are suddenly unwanted or inconvenient because of a family move, divorce, allergies, a deceased owner, an impulsive purchase from a pet store, or a dozen other reasons. We also see a significant number who end up in animal shelters with little or no history.

i) General Guidelines

In order to be an approved foster home, you must have completed a Volunteer Foster Home application approved by the BCCR Management Team, along with a signed "Code of Ethics".

If you are contacted or find out about a chi that needs our help, you **must** contact your Foster Coordinator and Assistant Foster Coordinator for approval prior to proceeding. You must obtain this in order to determine if BCCR has the funds, an available foster home, and a transport to take this dog under our umbrella. ***Remember, you may not foster unless approved to do so.***

In the event of extreme emergency, such as a dog who may be scheduled for immediate euthanization, you should phone your Foster Coordinator or the Assistant Foster Coordinator to assist you with providing immediate attention. Remember, our first goal is to save the dog, so in urgent situations you should keep this in mind.

If you are getting the foster dog directly from a shelter or private individual, you must always obtain a signed "**Surrender Form**" and submit it to the BCCR Secretary.

ii) Preparing to Foster

Fostering is a **family commitment**. Your entire family will be affected by the process so it's important that your husband, wife, children, live-in companion and anyone else sharing your living quarters be agreeable and prepared to play a positive role. Not only is this essential for your own domestic harmony, but a pet which is cared for by the whole family is a happier, better-behaved, socialized and confident pet ... and therefore a more adoptable pet!

For this reason, too, it is important that your foster be treated as a family pet and not an 'outsider'. We strive to place well-adjusted animals into new homes. A dog, which is merely provided with the essentials of survival (food, water and shelter) without human love, understanding and contact, will not be easily placed into a new home. If you love your foster, chances are good that prospective new owners will love your foster ... and adopt him/her.

It's a good idea to sit down with your family to decide what type of foster your household and lifestyle can best accommodate. For instance, if leg-lifting and marking presents a major problem, you may want to give preference to female dogs (though they can mark, too!) If you are often away from home, you would be wise not to take a foster that requires a great deal of attention, training, or suffers from separation anxiety. How long are you prepared to foster a dog?

When you agree to foster, it's important to understand that BCCR cannot guarantee a specific time span. Foster pets have been fostered for as little as two days or as long as a year. How long your foster stays with you depends on many variables such as:

- Size, age, gender and temperament of the dog
- How many other Chihuahuas are up for adoption
- Number of approved adoption applicants
- Your attitude. If you care for your foster dog, it comes across to prospective new owners. If you are negative about your foster it will be difficult, if not impossible, to place in a new home.

You may want to search at local garage sales and thrift stores for doggie/kiddy gates, collapsible pens, extra towels, blankets, bowls, collars, leashes etc.

Finally, for the protection of your personal pets, it is important that they be kept current on vaccinations as well as flea or worm treatments/preventatives if needed.

We strongly advise that you obtain/confirm your own liability insurance coverage.

If you are residing in a rental apartment, condo, etc, we require a letter from your landlord stating that they are in agreement with you fostering for BCCR.

iii) **Volunteering to Foster a Specific Dog**

Information about incoming fosters will generally be posted directly to you in an email from the Foster Coordinator and/or the Assistant Foster Coordinator with a request for someone to foster. If you are interested in fostering, please e-mail both the Foster Coordinator and Assistant Foster Coordinator as soon as possible so we can address your questions and concerns, look at available foster homes and begin making arrangements for transport, etc.

iv) **Introducing a Foster Dog to Your Home**

There are several ways to bring a new dog into your home. If you have other pets, especially dogs that may react negatively at first, or overwhelm a foster, you might consider having them meet in a neutral outdoor setting first, such as a nearby park. Take your dog(s) for a walk and have another volunteer or friend meet you in the park with the foster dog. They will usually be happy to go back home with their new “buddy”.

If you feel it more appropriate to bring a foster directly into your home and you have other pet(s), consider beginning with a safe gated-off area such as a kitchen, laundry or utility room where the dogs can safely sniff and introduce themselves through the gate. This isn't necessarily because of aggression, but your pet(s) will be curious and may overwhelm and frighten an already-stressed foster dog.

Some people find that a drop of vanilla extract on the back of the foster's neck and your dog's neck neutralizes scent and makes the introduction go more smoothly.

Once the foster is more comfortable, it's important to give him/her a little “tour” of your home and yard, i.e. show them where the food and water is, which door leads to the yard, etc. Do not overwhelm your foster as they have gone through a great deal of stress through transport to your home.

v) **Assessing Your Foster and Submitting a Profile**

A critical part of fostering is to assess the temperament of your foster dog and work with issues such as socialization, housetraining, etc when needed. You will find the e-mail discussion list a great source of helpful suggestions and support in working with your foster dog.

In order to make the best possible match between foster dog and adoption applicant(s), we must have as much information as possible about your foster, which will be put on our website and Petfinder along with a photo. See the next page for a sample profile or visit the adoptions page of our website. While we realize it may take a little while to accurately assess your foster, you are responsible for submitting a profile and photo to **nstinydogs@eastlink.ca** as soon as possible. It can always be updated.

ADOPTION PROFILE (sample)

Name of Dog: "Trinket"
Location: Vancouver, BC
Age: 4 years
Gender: Female
Color: Fawn / White
Coat: Smooth
Weight: 12 lbs.

Reason for Relinquishment:	Barked when alone
Any aggressive behavior?	No
Any history of biting?	No
Any other behavior problems?	Barking
Purebred or Mix?	Chihuahua
Spayed or neutered?	Spayed
Current with vaccinations?	Yes
Any medical conditions?	No
Any medications taken?	No
Housebroken?	Yes
Crate Trained?	Yes
Good with children? Older	(10+ years)
Good with other dogs?	Yes
Good with Cats?	No - chases them
Rides well in car?	Yes
Adoption Donation	\$250.00 CDN

NOTES FROM FOSTER MOM: Trinket is a really sweet dog that likes to play with her toys, cuddle in bed, go for walks (she LOVES this), and will make someone a great companion.

Trinket is a high energy dog that needs to be allowed to run in a fenced area a couple of times a day. She walks well on lead but, if she sees a cat or squirrel, she will do her best to chase it. Younger children that move fast are also very attractive to her. She will 'mouth' their hands and feet, but will NOT bite. She adores car rides and walks and likes to cuddle and sleep under the covers. She will make a great dog for an active family that has time to spend with her.

Please write and ask about me - Trinket

vi) Veterinary Requirements

BCCR provides necessary veterinary care including spay/neuter, updating vaccinations, and urgent dental or other care prior to adoption. We generally vaccinate for the standard DHPP; rabies vaccinations are the responsibility of a new owner unless the dog must be transported across US/Canada border for fostering. In this case, the Rabies vaccine must be a minimum of 30 days old in order to gain access to the United States of America.

Once your foster has settled in, you may need to take him/her to a licensed veterinarian. Before proceeding with any treatments, you must obtain an evaluation and estimate of cost, and submit it to the Management Team for approval and payment arrangements. Whenever possible, we work with veterinarians who give us a “rescue discount” and agree to direct-bill BCCR... please contact the Foster Coordinator and the Assistant Foster Coordinator to see if your veterinarian is on our approved list and if not, to have a letter of request sent to your veterinarian.

Please do not conduct vetting practices in your home. All vetting must be done by a licensed veterinarian not the foster family members.

vii) Foster Expenses

BCCR makes every effort to have veterinary costs direct-billed to us, but there may be occasions when you agree to pay directly and be reimbursed for veterinary or other expenses. **You must always obtain approval for any expenses, which you wish to be reimbursed for, and submit original receipts to the Treasurer within two weeks of the actual receipt.**

viii) The Adoption Process

When your foster dog is assessed as ready for adoption, incoming or existing Adoption Applications inquiring about your foster will be forwarded to you. Please review the application carefully and discuss the applications with the Foster Coordinator/Assistant Foster Coordinator. You must cc all of your correspondence with applicants to both the Foster Coordinator and Assistant Foster Coordinator.

When these are addressed and satisfied, you must contact the adoption applicant(s). Keep in mind that you are the one fostering the dog, and therefore know first-hand what the dog's needs are. You must ensure that any adoption applicant understands and fills those needs and can provide the best possible home.

Once you have communicated with the applicant and are satisfied that they may be suitable, you should arrange for them to meet the dog. You can then observe and determine how the dog interacts with the family. Please consult your Foster Coordinator and Assistant Foster Coordinator if distance presents a significant

obstacle to this process. A home visit to the applicant may also be arranged at this time, either by you or by an approved BCCR volunteer located closer to the applicant. The Foster Coordinator/Assistant Foster Coordinator can set the homevisit up for you. The results of the home visit must then be reported to the Foster Coordinator and Assistant Foster Coordinator and will be sent to the Management Team to review and be voted upon.

Note: We require that you do home visits accompanied by another volunteer or friend, for security reasons. Other breed rescue volunteers are often willing to accompany you and vice-versa.

If the application, home visit etc are satisfactory, the Management Team will vote on proceeding with the Adoption. If approved, you collect the adoption donation and have the adoptive home sign an adoption contract. Unfortunately we are no longer able to accept personal cheques. Payment must be in the form of cash, certified cheque, or money order.

Remind the adopter that should they EVER be unable to keep the dog or encounter problems, they must immediately contact you or a member of the Management Team. You may wish to provide a small “care package” of food, a favourite toy or blanket to help your foster have something familiar in new surroundings. The new home should be prepared with collar or harness, leash, toys, bed etc.

If at any time you have any questions or require advice concerning your foster dog and the adoption process, please contact your Foster Coordinator and the Assistant Foster Coordinator. Remember, all information concerning adoptive homes is strictly confidential and their privacy must be respected at all times.

We encourage you to follow-up with the new owner(s) to provide advice and support while they and the dog are settling into their new routine together. It will also reinforce the family’s willingness to give their new pet time and love to adjust to its new surroundings. As new owners, they will also be invited to join our e-mail discussion list. Please encourage them to do so.

ix) **Tips on Fostering**

- Be available to answer inquiries from prospective applicants. If they have to wait 4 days to hear back from you, it makes BCCR look unprofessional and they will become discouraged. This is **very** important.
- Be enthusiastic when communicating about your foster. They may wish to know everything physical about the dog, right down to how many white toenails it has! This becomes nit-picky ... stress the intangibles as well, i.e. “very feminine-looking dog”, silky hair, sweet face, loving disposition, cute tricks or habits, manners, etc. But be honest!
- **Insist the entire family be involved and meet the dog.** This is a family commitment; it’s unfair to expect one person to choose for everyone. Also, a

single family member may be “window-shopping” and not in a position to make a decision.

- Show your foster in his/her best light. A bath or even a quick brushing will do wonders when the family meets him/her, and of course, the pet should be let out to relieve itself before meeting the adoptive party! Similarly, try to keep your personal pets somewhat in the background or even completely out of the way so as not to distract attention from your foster.
- Explain that a new pet may take a few days to adapt to a new home. Encourage the adoptive applicants to allow the pet that time and support.

x) **If You Want to Adopt Your Foster Dog**

If you personally would like to adopt your foster, you must apply to the Management team for approval and if obtained, you must pay an adoption donation and sign an adoption form, as would any adopter. Send your application to the Foster Coordinator/Assistant Foster Coordinator and it will be sent to the Management for approval.

xi) **If You Can No Longer Foster**

If your circumstances change and you are no longer able to foster, either permanently or temporarily, contact your Foster Coordinator and Assistant Foster Coordinator immediately.

II. TROUBLE-SHOOTING

i) The Invisible Foster

If your new foster promptly vanishes under the bed or couch and seems inclined to stay there indefinitely, don't worry. Some dogs need as much as several days to realize that they are in no danger. Leave food and water close by and just carry on with your regular routine. If you are seriously concerned, contact your Foster Coordinator and Assistant Foster Coordinator.

ii) Housetraining

It seems to be a law that even the most perfectly trained pet will have an "accident" the minute it arrives at your home. This is usually due to apprehension of some kind on the pet's part. Males, particularly intact males, will want to "mark their territory". The first step when a new dog arrives is to put it outside and praise it when it relieves itself.

You may sometimes find that a dog is not completely housebroken. You are in a perfect position to remedy this quickly and efficiently by being firm at the very outset. And don't forget—volunteers who have experienced the same thing are only as far away as your computer and e-mail!

Failing all else, ask the list about doggie diapers and indoor piddle pads ... many of us have experience with these products.

iii) Other Pets

Your own pet(s) and a foster may become pals immediately, or they may grumble and mutter at each other for days. If so, relax and let them work it out. They will soon come to an agreement and will tolerate each other. A human "fussing" over them may only prolong or even aggravate the situation.

iv) Destructive or Aggressive Behaviour

Almost all pets are destructive because they are bored. Your first step is to restrict the pet to an area where little damage can be done, such as the kitchen or utility room. Provide appropriate toys, leave a radio or TV on when you're not home and provide playtime and exercise when you *are* home.

On occasion, as a foster home, you may encounter a dog with aggressive behavioral problems such as fear biting, etc. Please note that you must always act in a responsible manner and that taking a dog into your foster care is at your own risk and you assume full responsibility to protect yourself, family and the general public from harm. If you encounter difficulties or feel uncomfortable in any way in providing a safe environment for the foster and the public, you must **immediately** contact your Foster Coordinator and Assistant Foster Coordinator and the

Management Group will help you with this situation. We are here to help you, and many of us have successful experience in working with aggressive Chihuahuas and mixes.

BCCR's Management Team, Regional Coordinators, and/or any of its members cannot be held responsible should you fail to comply with these procedures and we strongly advise that you obtain your own liability insurance coverage.

III. HEALTH ISSUES

This is not intended as a veterinary reference. Following are the most common things you may encounter as a foster home; we strongly suggest you purchase a veterinary first-aid book or do some research on the Internet as well as participate in our e-mail discussion list which addresses various canine health issues. Please remember that you must obtain permission to have your foster vetted from your Foster Coordinator/Assistant Foster Coordinator.

- i) **Worms/Fleas**
Check incoming fosters for signs of fleas or worms; you may wish to administer a worm treatment and flea preventative – please consult your Foster Coordinator and Assistant Foster Coordinator for advice if needed.

- ii) **Diarrhea**
Occasionally your new foster may experience some diarrhea caused by stress or a sudden change in diet. A tiny amount of Pepto-Bismol administered on food or with an oral syringe is recommended. Kao-Pectate recently changed their formula and there is some question now as to its safety for use with animals.

- iii) **Coughing**
Chihuahuas can be prone to “collapsing trachea” or “reverse sneezing”. The e-mail discussion list can help educate you in what to look for and what to do. You should also familiarize yourself with the signs of kennel cough, though we have been fortunate in not experiencing this to any degree.

- iv) **Vaccinations**
Current policy is that all dogs must be kept current on vaccinations however, there is some discussion regarding the appropriateness of continuing to vaccinate in older dogs. Please discuss with your Foster Coordinator and Assistant Foster Coordinator if you have any questions or concerns about this.

FOODS TO AVOID GIVING DOGS (Drs. Foster & Smith, Inc)

Items to Avoid	Reasons to Avoid
Alcoholic Beverages	Can cause intoxication, coma and death
Baby food	May contain onion powder, which can be toxic to dogs. Nutritional deficiency if fed in large amounts
Bones (fish, poultry or meat)	Can cause obstruction/laceration of the digestive system
Cat Food	Generally too high in protein and fat
Chocolate, coffee, tea and Other caffeine	Contains theobromine or theophylline which is toxic to dogs, affecting the heart and nervous system
Citrus oil extracts	Can cause vomiting
Eggs (raw)	Contains the enzyme avidin which decreases the absorption of biotin (a B vitamin), causing skin and coat problems. May also contain salmonella
Fat trimmings	Can cause pancreatitis
Fish (raw)	Can result in a thiamine deficiency leading to loss of appetite, seizures and death. More common if raw fish is fed regularly.
Grapes and raisins	Fed in large quantities can cause kidney damage
Human vitamins containing iron	Can damage the digestive system, liver and kidneys
Liver (large amounts)	Vitamin A toxicity affecting muscles and bones
Macadamia nuts	Contain an unknown toxin which can affect the digestive and nervous system and muscles
Marijuana	Depresses the nervous system, may cause vomiting and changes in heart rate
Milk & dairy products	May cause diarrhea in some dogs
Moldy or spoiled food	Multiple toxins leading to vomiting and diarrhea
Mushrooms	Can contain toxins which affect multiple systems in the body, cause shock and possibly death
Onions & garlic	Contains sulfoxides and disulfides, which can damage red blood cells and cause anemia.
Persimmons, fruit pits	Seeds and pits can cause intestinal obstruction
Potato, rhubarb and tomato Stems & leaves	Contains oxalates which can affect the digestive, nervous and urinary systems
Salt	May lead to electrolyte imbalance in large quantities
Sugary foods	Leads to obesity, dental problems and diabetes
Table scraps	Not nutritionally balanced, should never exceed 10% of total diet. Trim fat. Do not feed bones.
Tobacco	Affects the digestive and nervous systems, can result in rapid heartbeat, collapse, coma and death.
Yeast dough	Expands and produces gas in the digestive system, causing pain and possible rupture of the stomach or intestines.

IV. COPIES OF FORMS

*Please ask the Foster Coordinator/Assistant Foster Coordinator to supply these for you. You can also obtain them through our “members only” section on the BCCR website.

V. MAILING ADDRESS

- General correspondence
- Adoption and other donations, receipts, all things relating to finances
- Adoption Apps, Contracts, Home Visit Reports, Code of Ethics

The current mailing address for BCCR (as of January 2010) is:

BC Chihuahua Rescue
24 Prideaux Street
Unit 209
Nanaimo, BC V9R 2M4

VI. WORKING WITHIN THE COMMUNITY

As an approved BCCR member, you may feel free to contact your local shelter and establish a working relationship with them. Please see “Rescue Etiquette” below.

You may also wish to contact veterinarians, dog groomers, other related pet services and pet stores which do not sell animals, to let them know about BCCR and introduce yourself. You can also put up approved (check with your Foster Coordinator) flyers or notices on bulletin boards.

You may search the Internet for shelter/SPCA websites for Chihuahuas who may need our help, but before proceeding with a rescue, you must consult your Foster Coordinator and Assistant Foster Coordinator. A Regional Coordinator can also be contacted.

RESCUE ETIQUETTE WITH ANIMAL SHELTERS

Animal Control Officers are NOT the bad guys. They perform a very unpleasant, yet necessary service. Please do not go to their shelters and criticize or condemn them - imagine how hard their job must be.

Here are some guidelines of working with animal shelters

1. Follow the rules and guidelines of the shelters. The #1 reason shelters dislike rescuers is because they don't follow the rules and think they deserve preferential

treatment. If there's a fee, check with the Foster Coordinators and many times we'll pay it (these must be pre-authorized). If there's a waiver for non-profit, we can also provide them the necessary proof.

2. Keep your commitments. If they require proof of sterilization, provide it BEFORE they have to ask you for it. If you say you will pick up a dog on Friday, pick it up on Friday.

3. Don't ask them to hold animals. Please don't ask animal control to hold a dog for you for 2 weeks or 2 months. They are not a boarding facility.

4. Wait your turn. When private citizens are in the shelter, quietly wait your turn. If the shelter's policy is to give preference to the public before rescues, abide by it. Offer assistance, information and guidance to the new owner as an alternative.

5. Be polite and professional. Even if the staff ignores you, smile and act professional. Say "Thank you" and "Please". Always express your appreciation for all that they do that is positive. Acknowledge the good things they do rather than focus on their grim tasks.

6. Ask permission before handling animals, opening cages, taking photos, loading up cages etc.

7. NEVER insult a citizen. Never approach, attack or abuse a citizen releasing an animal. Your criticism is going to serve two things:

a) make them hesitant to ever use animal control (hence, dumping dogs along roadsides or free ads) or

b) make it unpleasant for the Animal Control Officer who must accept any and all excuses from ANYONE.

Remember that EACH one of us is representing BCCR when we are in shelters, at adoptions or dealing with the public.



Thanks for all you do for the BCCR and for the little dogs that need us!