

# **WELCOME TO THE WORLD OF FOSTERING**

A Guide for  
Save Our Shepherds  
Foster Homes



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## **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to the world of Save Our Shepherdsfostering. You are embarking on a wonderful and sometimes nutty journey, culminating in a new beginning for a deserving German Shepherd.

This manual details each step in the foster home experience and is based on the experience of hundreds of animal lovers who've trod this path before you. Please read it thoroughly and ask any questions that occur to you, before your first foster animal arrives. Even if you have fostered before, you'll find it worthwhile to review the manual from time to time. It describes important Save Our Shepherds Rescue policies and procedures, and offers new and (we hope) helpful ways to make the fostering experience easier and more rewarding for both the German Shepherds and their benefactors (us).

As a foster home, you have one of the most important jobs, if not the most important one, in the Save Our Shepherds Rescue organization. It will be you who will spend the most time with your foster German Shepherd, and it may be your recommendations that will be primary in the selection of the right adoptive family. You will evaluate the German Shepherd's temperament and reinforce with basic obedience and house manners as needed. You will also be responsible for some necessary paperwork, which we keep to a minimum, and most important - giving love and security to a special pet at an often difficult time in his or her life. In short, you will be a nurse, a teacher, a record keeper, a behaviorist, a groomer and a friend —basically, a parent.

If all of this sounds like too much, it is not. You don't need to know everything about German Shepherds -- our organization is full of people who share a wealth of knowledge and true dedication to the task. If the SOS person you call doesn't know how to answer your question, he or she will find someone who does. Besides providing help with many of the issues that arise in fostering, this manual provides the names and telephone numbers of people who are ready, and happy to answer your questions. Few people are organized around a cause more unifying than the love of a truly exceptional companion animal.

The question we're asked most often is, "Don't you become so attached to these dogs that it's hard to give them up?" Of course we become attached (and you will, too). However, when you know that the animal you have fostered is going to a good home, and you see the joy on people's faces when they meet their new German Shepherd, you're reminded of why you became involved with rescue in the first place -- to give something back to the animals. Each time you help match a displaced animal with a loving family, you'll know you've done something fine that is rare and lasting.

Thank you for joining Save Our Shepherds Rescue as a foster home. You will not regret it.

**Good luck, and thank you!**

**Save Our Shepherds Rescue, Inc.**

## INTRODUCING THE FOSTER DOG TO YOUR FAMILY

- ◆ A little forethought now — as you're first bringing an "orphaned" animal into your home — can make life much easier for you, your foster German Shepherd, and the permanent members of your family — canine, feline and human.

### Some tips:

**Meeting your children:** Always supervise when small children are around your foster dog; as you cannot know how the dog will react to children, especially if he has never been around children or if he has had a bad experience with them. Teach the children to respect the dog's privacy when he goes to his special place (his crate, his bed or just a corner of the room) to be alone. Do not let children try to take a toy away from a dog or bother him at mealtime. Even though your children may enjoy watching their own pets eat, explain that even the nicest foster dog might bite if he hasn't always been treated well or if the dog thinks the children will take his food.

**Meeting your pets:** Your pets may resent the intruder, and if the foster dog is frightened he may exhibit aggressive behavior to mask his fear. Even an initially friendly greeting may be replaced by a squabble over a special place, a toy, food etc. So, keep the foster dog away from your pet until you, your pets and your foster dog know more about one another. Even then, the foster dog should not share dishes with your pets.

Here are more specific suggestions for the initial meeting between your foster dog and your pets:

### Dogs

- ◆ Find a neutral territory — away from your dog's "turf". Put both dogs on loose leads and have each dog controlled by a different person.
- ◆ If you are at home, put all food and toys away. Let the dogs approach each other and sniff for ten or fifteen seconds. Be matter of fact. Keep the leads loose, because using a lot of tension on either dog's leash may make one or both dogs assume that there is a threat, prompting protective aggression.

*Note: For everyone's sake it is advisable to isolate the foster animal from the rest of your family for the first 24-48 hours — not sharing other pets' toys, water bowls, beds, etc. with him. This may be difficult, but it's only prudent.*

Now call both dogs away, but don't pull on the leash -- if they show no sign of aggression, repeat the procedure for slightly longer. If there are signs of aggression, correct immediately (see the section on Training and Behavior) and keep the dogs apart. If you see two wagging

tails, and one or both dogs go into the “play” stance, you can let them play together — but keep the leads on for a while for security.

- ◆ Keep all toys picked up until a firm friendship has been established. Then, introduce the least-special toys first. Feed the dogs from separate bowls, far enough apart (e.g. at opposite ends of the kitchen) that they won't feel threatened or a need to defend their food. The dogs may even be crated for feeding times if need be.

## Cats

- ◆ Be particularly careful to pick a meeting place that affords the cat an escape route. A first meeting in a room with only one exit door will make the cat very wary.
- ◆ Do not force a meeting; often dogs and cats work things out very well on their own, given enough time and space.
- ◆ Don't hold the cat in your arms. He will feel restrained and threatened, the dog will feel jealous, and you are likely to get scratched.
- ◆ If the dog growls or barks, correct him (see Training and Behavior).

Finally: Your own and other volunteers' experience will be invaluable in making safe and successful introductions. However, even if your dogs are accustomed to guest animals and are very accepting, go step-by-step. There is always a possibility that even a timid dog, if rescued from neglect, may rebound and begin to test the pack order.

## CAUTION

While it is Save Our Shepherds policy to accept only non-aggressive animals who are not known to snap or bite, this is not a guarantee. Should your foster animal growl, snap, bite or show any other sign of aggression, **call one of the Directors IMMEDIATELY.**

## CARING FOR THE FOSTER DOG

This section provides general information. Should situations or questions not covered in these materials arise, please call one of the Save Our Shepherds officers immediately.

The principle behind fostering is to provide the German Shepherds entrusted to our care with a home environment in order to evaluate their habits and behavior, and to offer the new owner a more thorough background on the dog. It is not our job as foster parents to spoil the foster dog – rather, it is our job to help the dog learn to live happily in a home.

### Identification

*The first thing to do for your foster dog is to be certain that he has a buckle or snap collar that fits, that all previous tags have been removed, and that a Save Our Shepherds ID tag is attached to the collar. **It is important to do this the first day.** If the dog does not have a collar and Save Our Shepherds tag, you might also attach a temporary ID tag with your own name and telephone number. It can prove helpful, if despite your best efforts, the foster dog is found exploring your neighbor's property.*

*Second, write the name and telephone number of your foster dog's veterinarian on the cover of this manual and on any emergency telephone list you keep posted. Having this information at hand will save precious time if a medical emergency arises. Also, know the nearest animal emergency clinic, and have that telephone number posted as well.*

### Where should the foster dog stay?

**Foster dogs need to live in your home, but they do not need run of the place. The ideal solution: crating.**

Even an immaculate, vetted, well trained, housebroken dog needs a place of his own, where he can become accustomed to strange surrounding and schedules, recuperate from surgery, or just get away from things (besides, you will appreciate a little respite from the work of keeping the foster dog out of trouble). Nothing is better suited for that purpose than a sturdy crate of appropriate size. Moreover, since adopters are urged to crate their dogs, your use of a crate will help the dog become acclimated to his new forever home.

The typical foster dog soon regards the crate as his private den, where he can go when he needs a safe and secure place to rest. An excellent discussion of the value of crating in housebreaking and problem prevention is in your copy of **Second-Hand Dog** by Carol Lea Benjamin, pp. 37-40.

**NOTE: Save Our Shepherds strongly advises crating whenever the dog is unsupervised.** If you do not have a crate, just call the Foster Coordinator, Intake

Coordinator or one of the Directors for a loaner. Save Our Shepherds will **not** be responsible for any damage caused by a foster dog who is not crated when unsupervised, whether DAMAGE IS TO PEOPLE, PERSONAL PROPERTY, OR ANY OTHER ANIMAL, INCLUDING THE SAVE OUR SHEPHERDS OWNED DOG!

A couple of chew toys or tennis balls (not ones that belong to your own pets) will keep him happy. Rawhide, even though relished by most dogs, is not generally recommended. Rawhide may cause intestinal blockage if large pieces are swallowed, and “bones” made of it are often prized treasures that may cause fighting. Pigs’ ears are also a frequent cause of disagreements among dogs. Plastic bones (e.g. Nylabones®) are also not recommended. Vinyl and sponge toys can disappear in minutes, hard rubber toys like Kongs® and Booda® rope toys will last longer. Don’t offer shoes, even ones that you don’t want any more, as they are full of toxic chemicals, and dogs cannot distinguish between old, inexpensive shoes, and new, very expensive shoes!

## Water

A foster dog, like any pet, needs free access to fresh water. During his first few hours with you, however, you should give water sparingly, to minimize chances he’ll drink too much because he is anxious and have an accident. Some foster homes find that limiting water intake for an hour or two prior to bedtime aids the foster dog in being able to “hold it” longer at night.

## Feeding

Save Our Shepherds does not pay for food while the dog is in foster care, unless that food is specifically ordered by one of our veterinarians for a medical reason. We suggest that a premium natural food of lamb and rice be fed to the dog. Bear in mind that a sudden change from one food to another can cause diarrhea. When possible, mix the new food half-and-half with the old food and gradually increase the amount of the new food daily to aid in the transition.

Limit the dog’s exercise to no sooner than one hour before and two hours after meals, to help prevent bloat or torsion. The dog should be fed twice daily.

Sometimes, the foster dog just won’t eat for a day or two. If that happens, first eliminate possible distractions — toys, children and pets. Leave the food for 20 minutes, then pick it up and wait two hours before offering it again; if he doesn’t eat for 24 hours, add a small amount of canned dog food or warm broth. Once he is accustomed to his surroundings and has regular exercise, he will probably eat better, and you can eliminate the canned food or broth.

## Vomiting and Diarrhea

If your foster dog has diarrhea or vomits, withhold food for 24 hours and offer small amounts of water or ice frequently. Then resume feeding with a bland diet, e.g. one part boiled ground turkey or chicken with two parts boiled rice. If the diarrhea or vomiting persists, or there is blood in the vomitus or diarrhea, fever or apparent pain, call your SOS representative and ask about seeing your foster dog’s veterinarian. Take a stool sample and make a note of its color,

consistency, odor and frequency, to help the doctor narrow the search for the cause. In the interim, a child's dose of PeptoBismol® or Immodium® AD can be given for any diarrhea.

## Weight Management

Excess weight is a common problem for all dogs, often because their pleading eyes win extra food from misguided humans. Table scraps are allowed in the form of vegetables and fruit -- these and ice cubes make excellent treats for dogs (but not to be given from the table). **DO YOUR FOSTER DOG A FAVOR THAT WILL PROLONG HIS HEALTHY LIFE: DO NOT OVERFEED!**

If you are not sure whether or not the dog is overweight, here's how to tell: run your hands over his sides -- you should be able to feel his ribs without having to push in. Similarly, you should be able to feel his backbone as you run your hand along his spine without having to press in. A trim dog should have no "love handles" around his waist; there should be a definite narrowing at the waistline.

If your foster needs to lose weight (as many do) start his weight-loss diet right away. Low fat foods, such as fresh fruits or vegetables, can be given as treats. Show your love not with extra treats, but with an extra kiss, hug or pat.

## Feeding Undernourished/Malnourished Dogs

If your foster dog is extremely thin or malnourished, his veterinarian may recommend that he be fed a high quality puppy food rather than adult food. Often, canned food may also be added to help entice the undernourished dog to eat. Feed the undernourished/malnourished foster dog frequent, small meals rather than one or two large meals – feed him three to four times per day. Dogs who refuse to eat dry or canned food may be fed a mixture of boiled chicken, turkey, or hamburger, mixed with rice – add a pinch of garlic powder (no salt) for flavor. Once the dog is eating the chicken and rice without difficulty, dry or canned food may be added to the chicken and rice, and the dog gradually weaned back to the dry or canned food.

## Exercise

All dogs benefit from frequent walks each day, even short ones of 10-15 minutes. Don't be surprised if your foster dog is unfamiliar with the concept of walking on a lead. He may have been "on the road" for much of his life, and may not know what to make of a collar or leash, or the idea of staying alongside you. But with a little practice, even the most confirmed "Dog about Town" will turn into a contented stroller.

Never walk a foster dog off lead. Even if he seems content to never to leave your side and comes to you every time he's called, off-lead exercise is so risky that SAVE OUR SHEPHERDS POLICY PROHIBITS IT.

Some additional suggestions:

1. Use a leash made of either cotton webbing or leather (single ply nylon may be suitable for an easygoing dog weighing less than 25 lb.). Nylon leashes for bigger dogs are not recommended, as they can be uncomfortable to hold if the dog pulls.
2. A training collar, properly used, is a must (unless you enjoy being pulled around like a caboose on a runaway train). The training collar is designed to snug and release instantly — allowing you to signal the dog with a sharp tug and an instant release. With it, you can teach the dog many things, one of the most important being heeling — staying close by your side when you go for a walk.

It is very important to put the training collar on correctly, because if put on incorrectly it will not release properly. Before putting the collar on, make sure it forms a “P” when you are facing the dog. After you put it on and have the dog standing at your left side, jerk the collar upward and release; it should release instantly. If it doesn’t, you probably have it on the wrong way and it could choke the dog, so remove it and start again.

**REMEMBER: THE DOG SHOULD ALWAYS BE ON YOUR LEFT SIDE WHEN USING A CHOKE-TYPE COLLAR AS DESCRIBED ABOVE.**

3. A Flexi-lead® can serve as an alternative to a regular leash. Available in specialty stores and catalogs, they work like a spring-loaded tape measure. You let the dog “reel out” as far as you want and then push a kind of trigger to lock the lead at that point. When he moves back toward you, the device takes up the slack automatically. However, when walking your foster dog (or any dog) on a Flexi-lead, never allow your dog to run up to unknown dogs – this can lead to a disagreement, and is considered rude behavior on the part of the dog, as well as that of the human.
4. A fenced area where the dog can roam free is a great advantage, but **always keep a new foster dog under surveillance.** Some dogs can jump very high, dig very fast, climb quite skillfully, and squeeze through remarkably small spaces. Don’t assume that just because your own dog(s) don’t get out that the foster dog won’t; some have survived on their wits for so long that they try to escape just for practice.
5. Many dogs will play and exercise in a kennel run, but some just sit and wait for human playmates. Observe the dog carefully; a dog that has been confined or tied from puppyhood will need to be walked to increase his stamina and mobility gradually. A 15-minute walk with you is often better than 30 minutes alone in the yard.

## **GROOMING**

Although quality food and regular exercise are important to the health of the dog’s skin and coat, and some dogs appear to be nearly self-cleaning, regular grooming is essential to maintain their health, comfort, and handsome appearance.

### **Brushing**

Regular brushing - weekly and more often as needed - helps prevent mats in medium to long coated dogs and reduces the amount of shed hair you'll otherwise find wherever a dog has come to rest. Various types of brushes may be required for different dogs - a stiff bristle brush, a slicker brush, a heavy greyhound comb, and a flea comb are the most useful. The inexpensive, two-sided brushes are handy, but not very durable.

Before brushing, rub the dog's whole body briskly with your fingers to loosen dead skin and hair, and locate any mats and spot lumps, bumps, scratches, fleas and ticks. Brush in the direction of hair growth; if there are mats, pick them apart from the end of the hair toward the skin, using your fingers or a comb. Knots form quickly in the thick hair under the ears of longhaired dogs and can be avoided by weekly combing and brushing.

## Ears

Ears may require occasional cleaning. Brush the flaps gently, and examine them for thickened areas or black "gunk" which may signal an infection. Any odor from the ear may also signal an infection. Remove visible dirt with cotton ball or a cloth-covered finger. If you suspect an infection, please notify your SOS representative.

Use a non-medicated commercial ear cleaner, such as OtiClens. Apple cider vinegar mixed half-and-half with rubbing alcohol also makes a good ear cleaner, provided the ears are not red or infected. Most cleaners are used as a flush -- drip a small portion into the ear canal, massage gently around the base of the ear, allow the dog to shake his head to clear the debris from the canal, and wipe the ear out with cotton. Do not use cotton swabs like Q-tips®, because they can push debris further into the ear canal and potentially damage the eardrum.

Black, foul-smelling debris may indicate the presence of an infection or mites. Repeated head shaking, scratching of the ears, or rubbing of the ears are additional signs. Use the medication the veterinarian recommends, and follow directions exactly. Ear mites can be spread to other dogs and cats, so keeping your foster dog separated from your own pets until a veterinarian examines him is strongly advised.

## Nails

Left long, a dog's nails force his toes up and spread his feet, break off well above the quick (which then bleeds profusely), and catch in rugs, underbrush, or in your clothing. Gravel or pavement may keep his nails worn down if he walks on such surfaces often, but usually nails must be clipped or filed.

### Suggestions for successful nail clipping:

1. Check the dog's nails every two weeks. If they're not trimmed before they grow overly long, the dog may have difficulty walking, and you're more likely to cut into the quick when you do trim them.

2. Invest in a good nail clipper from a specialty store or catalog. Many sold in pet stores, supermarkets, and discount stores are incapable of making a decent cut without discomfort to the dog.
3. Until you and the dog are comfortable with clipping, plan to do only one foot (or if indicated, one nail!) at a time.
4. Put the dog in a comfortable position, preferably on his side. Begin holding the toes and nails while reassuring the dog so that he remains quiet. An alternative technique is to place the dog in a corner, asking someone to steady him if he won't stand. However, don't use the corner technique on a fearful dog. Straddling the dog backwards, pick up a foot as one does a horse's hoof. Slight pressure on the pad makes the nails easy to see and trim.
5. Holding one paw firmly, press on one pad so that the nail extends. Cut off a tiny bit of the hook on the nail tip. Praise the dog profusely. If the dog is not accustomed to this procedure, do only one additional nail at this time.
6. Your dog may still have his dewclaws (about an inch up the inside of the leg). Keep these nails trimmed, too.
7. No matter how careful you are, you may cut the quick and cause the nail to bleed. To stop the bleeding, have cornstarch, Kwik-Stop® or another styptic product handy. If no styptic is available, you can try scraping the nail along the surface on a soft bar of non-perfumed soap. Keep the dog quiet while a clot forms.

German Shepherds need the hair between their toes and pads trimmed regularly to allow the pads to grip, help keep the feet dry and, in climates with cold winters, to reduce the accumulation of ice on their feet. To trim, spread the toes gently and carefully trim the hair evenly. When finished, the foot should have a rounded, neat appearance, like that of a cat's foot.

## Bathing

A healthy, normal dog need not be bathed often, because even mild shampoos remove necessary natural oils and may cause dry, irritated skin.

When a bath is necessary, make it enjoyable. First rub him with your fingers to find and remove any mats. Brush out dead hair. Put a cotton ball in each ear to protect the canal from water.

Choose a good quality, mild dog shampoo (**never use people shampoo - the pH is wrong and could cause problems to the skin**), and avoid getting it in his eyes. If you are using a flea shampoo, scrub his head and ears first so that the fleas won't simply migrate there and escape the body scrub. If the veterinarian has recommended a medicinal shampoo, follow the directions exactly.

Using a spray hose with lukewarm water, get the coat thoroughly wet. Apply shampoo with a sponge, a rag or your hands. Scrub with a sponge, fingers or a brush. Be methodical about covering the whole dog, including the pads of his feet. Rinse repeatedly with a spray hose or many buckets of water. It is essential to remove all traces of shampoo.

Excess water can be stripped off with the flat side of a shedding blade, or an artificial “chamois” type of cloth may be used to remove excess water from the coat. At this point, your dog will probably attempt to shake and get you as wet as he is ☺ Towel dry. A just-washed dog will usually choose to roll – often on your good rug or new sofa -- so have him on a leash. If you use a blow dryer, set the temperature to low or cool; brush hair in the direction of growth to avoid too much fluff.

**Do not use flea-dips, unless prescribed by the veterinarian, as these can often cause more problems than benefits. Why use something on your dog’s skin that would harm your hands if you didn’t wear rubber gloves? Most dips are made of harsh chemicals and dry up the dog’s skin, thus causing more irritation. Dips have been known to be fatal for some dogs. The same goes for flea sprays, some of which may contain chemicals, which might cause an allergic, or a toxic reaction.**

If needed, contact your SOS representative for flea control medication, such as Front Line TopSpot® or Advantage®.

## Teeth

Although few dogs suffer from tooth decay, many have gum disease, which may cause inflammation, bad breath, loose and infected teeth, and eventually, tooth loss. In severe cases, periodontal disease can lead to serious infections elsewhere in the body.

Chew toys and biscuits help prevent the accumulation of tartar, but many veterinarians recommend daily or every-other-day teeth cleaning with specially formulated and dog-palatable products you can buy from wholesale catalogues or pet stores.

If you decide to brush the foster dog’s teeth (to reduce bad breath, for example), follow this procedure:

1. Purchase a good pet toothpaste; they come in poultry, beef, malt, and mint flavors and contain fluoride plus enzymes specific to the dog’s mouth chemistry. (Human toothpaste is not recommended because it is ineffective, foams too much, and may cause stomach upset if swallowed.
2. Moisten an ordinary soft toothbrush with warm water and apply pet toothpaste to the brush. Gently brush the cheek surfaces of the incisors, the front-most teeth. Gradually over the next few sessions, extend the toothbrush further back in the mouth, so that eventually all teeth are brushed. The cheek surfaces of the teeth build up the most plaque (since the tongue removes much of the plaque from the inside surfaces of the teeth), so focus on brushing the cheek surfaces and let the tongue take care of the inner surfaces.

## HEALTH CARE

This section summarizes general health issues that may arise while you are fostering. The first part pertains to keeping your own dog(s) healthy despite exposure to a number of foster dogs, some of whom may have had less than adequate care prior to their rescue. The second part covers health precautions for you and your human family, and the last part addresses medical problems sometimes encountered by foster dogs.

In most cases, before the rescue dog enters your home, he or she will have been examined by a veterinarian, brought up-to-date on vaccinations, spayed or neutered (unless there are extenuating circumstances), test for intestinal parasites, tested for heartworms, and started on treatment for any other problems identified during the veterinarian's examination. Your SOS representative will let you know if any further veterinary care is required while the dog is living with you.

Please monitor the dog's behavior, gum color (pink is normal), endurance, movement, skin and coat quality, eating and drinking habits, and elimination habits. If any abnormalities develop or if you feel a veterinary appointment is needed, call y Your SOS representative, whose pre-authorization is required.

## EMERGENCIES

**IN AN EMERGENCY, CALL THE NEAREST APPROVED VETERINARIAN FROM OUR APPROVED VETS LIST WITHOUT WAITING FOR AUTHORIZATION. Call while en route when possible, or upon arriving at the emergency facility -- Save Our Shepherds authorizes necessary diagnostic and stabilization procedures. However if surgery is recommended, one of the SOS officers must be notified, and in any case we must be notified as soon as safely possible.**

## KEEPING YOUR DOG AND YOUR FOSTER DOG HEALTHY

### External Parasites

Every attempt is made to have the foster animal come to you free of fleas, ticks, and other external parasites. However, these little beasts are tricky, and an occasional one may slip through.

Fleas: To prevent the occasional flea from setting up housekeeping in your home, vacuum carpets at least weekly during flea season (spring, summer and fall) and consider using a borate product or insecticidal spray in the house (borates are relatively non-toxic products which kill by drying out the flea and eggs). The use of biological predators sprayed on your lawn and garden will help control the fleas and is safe for both humans and animals. Program, Advantage® and TopSpot® (available through our veterinarians – check with the Foster Coordinator or the Medical Advisor) help stop the flea's life cycle and you may wish to consider using one of these products. One of the best defenses, though, is maintaining healthy skin and haircoat through good diet, and attending to underlying medical problems that can affect the

skin. If your dog does get fleas, be sure to treat the house and the dog (with flea shampoo, spray, or powder). Make sure clean bedding is provided.

Ticks: The most common ticks in this area are the American Dog Tick, Brown Dog Tick and the Deer Tick. All can transmit diseases (such as Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever and Lyme Disease) to pets and people. Erlichiosis is another common disease that can be transmitted by ticks.

To remove a tick, grasp the entire tick (including the mouth), with tweezers (do not use your fingers) and pull gently, without squeezing the tick so hard that it regurgitates its contents back into the dog. Pull gently and slowly! Try to remove the tick completely, and then clean the area with an alcohol-free antiseptic, or soap and water. Wash your own hands well since some disease-causing organisms can penetrate intact skin. Dispose of the tick in a Ziploc® bag.

Other external parasites make their presence known by causing the dog to itch and/or to lose hair. Itching is manifested by excessive licking, chewing or scratching. Since itching has a number of causes other than skin parasites, you should see your veterinarian to determine the cause of your own dog's itching, or talk with your Save Our Shepherds veterinarian if you have questions about a foster dog's itching.

## Internal Parasites

Fecal examinations and heartworm tests are routinely performed on Save Our Shepherds dogs, and the dog is treated if parasites are found. However, because whipworms only release eggs periodically, the dog may have whipworms even if the fecal exam is negative. A recent study reported that 14% of dogs in the USA had whipworms (the study reported that 36% of dogs had whipworms, hookworms and/or roundworms).

If the foster dog is found to have intestinal parasites (which will be noted on the animal's record), you should pick up and dispose of his stools promptly to prevent the worms they harbor from infesting your property. Continue treating the dog with any medication sent home with your foster dog for intestinal parasites as directed.

While most intestinal worms can be detected only with the aid of a microscope, the presence of two types of worms may be determined by the naked eye.

Roundworms resemble a spaghetti strand and may be found in vomited material or in the stool.

Tapeworm egg packets look like rice grains, and may be attached to the surface of the stool, or to the haircoat near the anus or tail. Occasionally, these may also be found in the dog's bedding.

Dog should not be permitted to drink from toilet bowls or streams, as these can be sources of **Giardia**, a cause of diarrhea. Another cause of diarrhea can be **Coccidia** (more frequently seen in puppies). Both of these organisms will require treatment as prescribed by a veterinarian.

## Heartworms

Heartworms are a year-round problem in the southern United States, and all Save Our Shepherds dogs receive preventative (Heartgard® or Interceptor®) every month throughout the year. Please make sure you notify the SOS representative as soon as you get your foster dog to ensure that your foster dog receives his heartworm preventative monthly (provided his heartworm test is negative).

## Kennel Cough

Kennel cough (bordetella) is a general name for a range of symptoms of upper respiratory infection. There are a number of viruses that cause “kennel cough” type illness -- kennel cough vaccine is available, and recommended. Note, though, that is effective against only one strain of the disease. It is generally not fatal, but is inconvenient and it is highly contagious to other dogs. If not treated, secondary bacterial infections and bronchitis may result and these pose a greater risk than the kennel cough itself.

Symptoms are nasal and eye discharge, a “honking” cough, “reverse sneezing”, and squeezing the dog’s trachea makes the dog cough. Infected dogs should see a vet to confirm kennel cough, and ensure that there is not a more serious problem. Dogs should be kept isolated from your dogs and treatment involves treating the cough (cough syrup can be given -- a pediatric dose of Robitussin® may be given), rest, and antibiotics to prevent secondary infection if necessary (consult the Medical Advisor if in doubt).

Every effort is made to ensure that foster dogs do not have diseases transmissible to other dogs. It is nonetheless possible for a dog, particularly one that has been kenneled in a shelter, to be harboring kennel cough. If the foster dog has a cough, you will probably notice it during the first day or two, while he’s isolated from the rest of your family. Your foster dog should be vaccinated for kennel cough before you receive him; however, this does not guarantee that he will not catch kennel cough. You should ensure that your own dogs are vaccinated for kennel cough on a regular basis as recommended by your veterinarian (be certain to tell your veterinarian that you will be providing foster care for other dogs).

## Other Diseases

Your dog should have an annual physical examination, and be kept current on distemper/parvo and rabies vaccinations as recommended by your veterinarian. Your own dogs should also be kept on a monthly heartworm preventative, and if you foster a heartworm positive dog, you must be conscientious about ensuring that your own dogs stay current on their heartworm prevention program. Keeping your own dog on a regular monthly flea preventative is beneficial as well.

## Warning Signs to Watch For

Although we have never had a rescue German Shepherd develop serious contagious disease after being taken into foster care, the possibility always exists. You will want to monitor your foster GSD for any signs of serious illness. Below are listed some serious canine diseases whose symptoms you should be familiar with. If you are certain that your foster dog is displaying symptoms of Parvo, distemper, or rabies, get him to a vet immediately and board the dog at the vet until further diagnosis is made. If you are uncertain, but think your foster dog might have symptoms of one of these diseases, or if he has kennel cough, isolate him from your own dogs and contact your SOS representative immediately.

## Parvo

The canine parvo virus is extremely contagious. It is transmitted and spread by contaminated feces. Most adult dogs who have been vaccinated are not at great risk for contracting parvo -- it is primarily a disease of puppies, but it is a risk for all unvaccinated dogs.

The first sign is vomiting, followed by depression, fever, and bloody diarrhea. If you suspect parvo, get the dog out of your house and to a vet immediately; DO NOT WAIT to see the dog gets better. Prompt removal from your home is essential to prevent spread to your dogs. If the vet confirms a diagnosis of parvo, the dog should remain at the clinic while you consult with the Medical Advisor and the Directors. Parvo is extremely contagious, and treatment is expensive and the dog must be hospitalized for the entire time; in cases of parvo, there are times when euthanasia must be considered.

Meanwhile, you will need to bleach and disinfect everything in your home that the infected dog came in contact with including floor and carpet. Use a solution of 1 part bleach (Clorox®) to 29 parts water (8.5 Tablespoons bleach to one gallon of water), most other household cleaners will NOT kill the parvo virus. If you are concerned about bleaching your carpet, contact the Medical Advisor -- there are special products available to disinfect your carpet without damaging it. You may want to contact your own vet about giving your own dogs a killed-virus parvo booster, and discuss possible need to keep your dogs quarantined and out of contact with other dogs for several weeks until you can be certain that they were not infected. Incubation time for parvo is about 7 to 14 days. During this time an infected dog may spread the disease, but not show symptoms yet.

## Distemper

Initial symptoms of distemper resemble upper respiratory infection: greenish nasal discharge and runny eyes, fever. These symptoms progress to signs of central nervous system disease: seizures, "chewing gum" fits, and sometimes hard pads. Again, most vaccinated adult dogs are not at high risk, but unvaccinated adults and puppies are.

Distemper is caused by a highly contagious virus. If you suspect distemper, take the dog to the vet immediately and have the dog boarded at the vet until diagnosis is made. Distemper can be difficult to treat and may have lasting side effects. Once a diagnosis of distemper is made by the vet, the Save Our Shepherds officers should be consulted and a decision will need to be made to either attempt treatment (at possible great expense) or to euthanize the dog.

## Rabies

Symptoms of rabies are signs of central nervous system disease: frenzied, vicious snapping and attack, signs of paralysis of the head muscles or facial muscle spasms. Rabies is caused by a virus that is spread through contact with saliva or blood of an infected animal. Rabies may be carried and transmitted by dogs, cats, foxes, skunks, bats, and other wild mammals. If your foster dog is NOT vaccinated for rabies, and he gets bitten by a wild animal, cat, or dog, isolate the foster dog immediately, contact the Medical Advisor and the Foster Coordinator, and make arrangements to get the dog to a vet for treatment of the bite wound and make plans to quarantine the dog. Average incubation period for rabies is 2 to 3 weeks, but it can be as long as several months. Immediately contact Animal Control for your area, inform them of the bite, and ask them to handle catching the animal if possible -- do NOT try to catch the animal yourself lest YOU get bitten and infected also. If your foster dog is bitten by a dog or cat whose owner you can identify, ask the owner to provide proof of current vaccination. Call the clinic to confirm that the animal was indeed vaccinated. If the owner is unable to provide such proof, try to get their name, address, and phone number. They will have to arrange to have their pet

quarantined under veterinary supervision (home quarantine is NOT sufficient in this case). Seek assistance from your vet or local Animal Control if the owner is not cooperative about this, and notify the Foster Coordinator. Tennessee state law requires rabies vaccination of dogs at least every 3 years, provided the 3 year vaccination was given and cats require the yearly vaccination. Many canine rabies vaccines are effective for up to 3 years, so if the biting dog was vaccinated within the past 3 years, there may be no problems with rabies. In this case, a 2-3 week house quarantine, in isolation from your dogs, for the bitten foster dog is still a safe precaution.

If you suspect your foster dog has rabies, get him to a vet immediately for quarantine and diagnostic testing. If there is any chance that you or your dogs had contact with blood or saliva from the infected dog, consult your vet about treatment for your dogs, and contact your physician about treatment for you. DO NOT WAIT. The sooner treatment is begun, the lesser the chances of problems.

## Heat Exhaustion

During summer heat, you should always be on the look out for signs of heat exhaustion when exercising your dogs. In our summer heat, a dog's internal body temperature can soar with only a few minutes of heavy exercise. Your foster dog may not be in as good physical condition as your own dogs and may not tolerate the same level of exercise that your dogs can. Heavy panting, excessive drinking OR unusual lack of interest in drinking even when the dog is hot and panting, very pale or very red gums and mucous membranes, deep red-purple tongue, blood-shot whites of the eye, are all symptoms of heat stress. Get the dog into water, or ideally get running water from a hose going over the dog, particularly his feet and belly. Keep his tongue wet, but do not allow him to gulp large amounts of water or he may bloat. DO NOT give the dog icy cold water, and do NOT try to pack ice around him. Use cool or tepid water. If water is not available, an old field trainer's trick is to put rubbing alcohol on the dog's belly and pads of his feet. The alcohol evaporates rapidly cooling the skin.

If the dog does not show signs of cooling down within a few minutes, or his temperature is 105 or higher, get him to a vet IMMEDIATELY.

## Other conditions

Rescued dogs often lack house manners, including not knowing what not to eat. Non-productive vomiting, abdominal soreness or swelling, may be symptoms of a foreign body in the digestive tract. This requires immediate veterinary attention.

Other symptoms such as unexplained lumps, coughing, unusual lethargy, sudden changes in behavior may indicate health problems and should be investigated.

## KEEPING YOUR HUMAN FAMILY HEALTHY

Because small children like to put things in their mouths, they are at risk of ingesting dogs and cats fecal parasites. To decrease this risk, follow the recommendations in the "Internal Parasites" section above, and keep cats from defecating in flower and plant pots, and dispose of all dog fecal material promptly.

Pets and people may share some skin problems, such as ringworm (fungal infection) and scabies (caused by a mite). While every effort is made to ensure that the foster animal is free of contagious skin diseases, it is nevertheless possible for such a problem to become evident

while the dog is with you. See the “Itchy Skin and Hair Loss” section below for information on dogs. If anyone in your household develops a skin problem that is diagnosed by your physician as ringworm or scabies, please contact one of the Directors.

People with suppressed immune systems (such as those undergoing cancer chemotherapy, taking drugs to suppress rejection of organ transplants, or those infected with HIV) are more susceptible to diseases carried by pets and by other people. If anyone in your household has a suppressed immune system, ask your physician about steps you can take to minimize your risk.

## MEDICAL PROBLEMS THAT MAY ARISE WITH FOSTER DOGS

### Itchy Skin and Hair loss

The most common causes of itchiness and hair loss in dogs are allergies to inhalants (such as pollen, house dust, and molds), specific food ingredients (corn is a common allergen), and/or fleas. During the short course of foster care, there is very little you can do to diagnose or treat the specific problem. However, you can minimize the dog’s discomfort by keeping your house flea-free, bathing the dog with an anti-itch shampoo, and with the approval of our veterinarian, giving an antihistamine such as Benadryl® (sold generically as diphenhydramine) at about 1 mg per pound body weight three times daily, or Chlor-Trimeton® (sold generically as chlorpheniramine) at a dose of one 4mg tablet three times daily.

Other causes of itchy skin and hair loss include ringworm (a fungal infection which is diagnosed through a fungal culture), mites (identified by examining a skin scraping with a microscope) or endocrine disorders such as hypothyroidism or Cushing’s disease. Both ringworm and scabies mites are transmissible to humans and other pets, so be sure to isolate the pet and wash your hands after touching this pet. Children and pregnant woman should not come in contact with the dog until checked and cleared by a veterinarian.

### Ear Scratching and Head Shaking

If the dog’s ear canals have a foul odor, or if he is shaking his head or scratching his ears excessively, he may have an ear infection. The most common underlying cause in dogs is allergies to inhalants (pollens, molds, house dust) or specific food ingredients. Other factors that may play a role are water entering the ear during swimming or bathing, lack of air circulation due to debris matted onto the hair at the entrance of the ear canal, ear mites, or a foreign object in the ear canal.

If an ear infection was diagnosed during the dog’s veterinary exam, follow the veterinarian’s treatment recommendations. Generally, ears should be cleaned before medication is applied so that the medication will come into direct contact with the skin.

To clean a dog’s ear canals, which are L-shaped internally:

1. Raise the ear flap as far as it will go to straighten out the “L”
2. Pour the liquid (or ointment) prescribed by the veterinarian into the canal until it drips out the top

3. Massage the base of the ear for about 10 seconds to loosen debris from the walls of the ear canal
4. Let go of the ear and allow the dog to shake his head, which will move the debris from deep in the canal up onto the ear flap
5. Wipe the earflap clean with gauze or a soft paper towel. Once the ears are clean and dry, apply the prescribed medication

If the dog has smelly ear canals and is scratching his ears and shaking his head, but an infection has not been diagnosed, clean the ears following the instructions above and call the Medical Advisor or the Foster Coordinator if the signs recur within one week. Use only a commercial non-medicated ear cleaner, not an antibacterial one (the antibacterial agents in medicated cleaners kills only some bacteria, allowing others to flourish). Avoid hydrogen peroxide (its free radicals damage skin and impair normal healing) and alcohol (which stings already irritated skin, almost ensuring the dog will not tolerate future ear treatment – only use alcohol in normal, healthy ears!). Do not insert cotton-tipped swabs (such as Q-tips®) into the ear canal, as they can push debris deeper into the canal and may damage the eardrum. If the condition persists, see the veterinarian and do not clean the ears before the appointment.

### Vomiting, Diarrhea and Bloat

The most common cause of diarrhea in foster dogs is an abrupt dietary change and recent significant life stresses. It is not uncommon for most dogs coming into rescue to experience a few days of loose stools. Some dogs will vomit, although vomiting may also indicate that something may be obstructing his gastrointestinal tract, that he's eaten something toxic, or that he has other underlying problems.

**If you suspect an obstruction or toxin, immediately call SOS representative, and our veterinarian, or (for suspected toxin), call the National Poison Control Center at 1-900-680-0000.**

Most cases of vomiting and diarrhea are self-limiting and respond well to conservative therapy. Withhold food for 24 hours, but offer water or ice chips (small amounts at a time if the dog is vomiting). After 24 hours, feed several small meals of bland food (boiled rice with a small amount of boiled hamburger or chicken mixed in) daily until vomiting and diarrhea have subsided. Then gradually, over a week, reinstate high quality dog food.

Bloat, also known as gastric dilatation/volvulus(GDV) or gastric torsion, is an emergency condition characterized by the stomach filling with gas, often because the stomach has twisted on its axis, closing off the entrance and exit. Clinical signs are discomfort, uneasiness (pacing, etc.), retching without producing vomitus, and eventually enlargement of the abdomen. **TAKE THIS DOG TO THE VETERINARIAN IMMEDIATELY.**

To minimize gastrointestinal distress like vomiting, diarrhea, and bloat feed high quality dog food twice daily. Don't exercise him less than an hour before or two hours after meals. Provide plenty of fresh water at all times. If a dietary change is necessary, make a gradual transition from the old diet to the new.

Frequent dry coughing (not associated with the dog pulling so hard on his leash that his collar is pushing on his trachea) may indicate that the dog has kennel cough, (even though he has been

vaccinated for it, this is still a possibility) which may be transmitted to your own dog. If your foster dog develops a cough, isolate the foster dog and talk with the Medical Advisor or the Foster Coordinator about having the dog seen by our veterinarian.

## Seizures

A seizure is a period of abnormal electrical activity in the brain and may be characterized by unconsciousness, convulsions, trembling rigid limbs, jaw snapping or a tightly clenched jaw, vocalization, or loss of bladder and/or bowel control. If your foster dog has a seizure, protect him from hurting himself (if he's banging his head on the floor, put a pillow under his head), and focus on observing all possible details.

**KEEP ALL HANDS AWAY FROM THE PET'S MOUTH.** Bear in mind that a dog in the midst of a seizure is out of control. He may snap and bite involuntarily, and may be unable to relax his clenched jaws. BE CAREFUL.

Once the seizure ends, call our veterinarian and describe the seizure, i.e. how soon after eating it occurred, what the dog was doing prior to its onset (whether he was roughhousing, sleeping etc.), whether he acted differently shortly before the seizure, whether a part of the body, such as one leg, started trembling first, or if the entire body started shaking, whether the dog responded to your voice during the seizure, how fast the heart was beating (place your hand on his chest during the seizure if you judge it safe to do so), how many minutes the seizure lasted, if the dog behaved strangely after the seizure, and how long this phase lasted.

## Heartworm Treatment

Some foster dogs may have a heartworm infestation, which is a serious condition caused by *Dirofilaria immitis*, which are worm-like parasites. Heartworms can interfere with normal bloodflow from the right side of the heart to the vessels, which serve the lungs. If heartworms are left untreated, the disease can reduce the dog's quality of life, lead to congestive heart failure and failure of other organs, and ultimately may lead to death.

Heartworms are transmitted through mosquito bites, and can be transmitted to other dogs (including your own dogs, if they are not on regular heartworm preventative). Keeping your dog(s) on heartworm prevention medication as prescribed by your veterinarian is your best defense against heartworms, and all foster homes must agree to keep their own dog(s) current on heartworm prevention medication.

If you are fostering a heartworm positive dog, you will most likely be taking your foster dog to one of our veterinarians for heartworm treatment. The initial treatment consists of two injections, usually given 24 hours apart. As a general rule, your foster dog will remain hospitalized for two or more days.

Before beginning heartworm treatment, your foster German Shepherd should be in good health and condition. If he was underweight when he came to you, he should have a chance to gain weight before treatment. Usually getting rid of intestinal worms and a few weeks on puppy or performance diet will get a dog in good shape for the treatment. The dog should be spay/neutered and should have had sufficient time to recover from that before heartworm treatment. Since the recovery phase involves a lot of time in a crate, it helps to get the dog

used to being crated. Usually, staying crated indoors is sufficient rest, and our veterinarian will give you more specific directions at the time your foster dog is released after treatment.

During the recovery phase the adult heartworms are dying and being reabsorbed into the dog's blood stream. The greatest danger of complication is that dead worms will break loose and form an embolism or a clot blocking blood circulation and causing rapid death. To prevent this, it is absolutely necessary that the dog be kept still and quiet. This means being kept crated AT ALL TIMES, except when going out on leash to relieve himself. For potty purposes, the dog should be kept on leash and taken outside to do its business and be brought back into the crate immediately. **NO WALKS. NO PLAY. NO EXERCISE** of any sort. Right after treatment your foster German Shepherd will probably not be feeling well and will be content to sleep in his crate. However, as he feels better, he will want to run and play -- it is up to you to resist his pleading eyes and keep him confined! This is particularly important for the first full two weeks. If the dog is doing well, and his veterinarian approves, he may take short, slow walks beginning in the 4th week following treatment. It is common for the dog to shed coat heavily following heartworm treatment; groom him regularly to remove dead hair. As his health recovers, his coat will recover also.

As your foster dog recovers from the treatment, he may experience a lack of appetite, upset stomach, drooling, or panting. Generally, his appetite will return in a few days to a week, but you can offer him canned food, or boiled chicken and rice if he refuses his regular diet. Some dogs may experience some discomfort in the hip/back area after treatment, and may be given buffered aspirin if approved by the veterinarian who has treated your dog.

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** Should your foster dog show signs of fever, difficulty breathing, changes in gum color, excessive coughing, or become depressed, consult the veterinarian who treated your dog for advice, and notify one of the Directors as well. **Any uncontrolled bleeding from the mouth or nose, blue or pale gums, or collapse constitutes an extreme emergency -- get this dog to the nearest available veterinary clinic, and call either the Medical Advisor or one of the Directors while en route, or on arrival at the clinic.**

Generally, your foster dog will need to be seen by his veterinarian about 4 weeks after the initial heartworm treatment for a follow-up visit. Plan on leaving your foster dog for 6-8 hours on this visit, at which time he will receive medication to rid him of any remaining "baby" heartworms, or microfilaria.

One month after your foster German Shepherd's last treatment, the dog will be due for monthly heartworm preventative, and should stay on regular heartworm prevention for the rest of his life. We recommend using Heartgard® for dogs treated for heartworms). It is important that the dog's new adoptive owner understand that, in Tennessee, dogs **MUST** receive regular heartworm prevention year-round for their entire lives.

Heartworm treated dogs should receive an occult heartworm test about 9-12 months after treatment. Any sooner than that is useless because the dog may still be carrying antigens from the pre-treatment heartworms. About 9-12 months following treatment, most treated dogs should be testing Occult negative.

## TRAINING AND BEHAVIOR

Save Our Shepherds doesn't expect you to formally "train" your foster dog, but you are certainly going to begin (or renew) his education. While dogs will be dogs, that doesn't mean that they can't learn new or better manners, at any age. He should learn to walk fairly quietly on a leash, to sit and to lie down on command, to tolerate confinement and grooming without hysterics, to be reliably house trained, and to come when called – at least from the end of a leash!

Some rescue dogs know the basics required to fit comfortably into foster homes; the rest will surprise you with how quickly they learn as you work with them and they begin to pay attention to you. Most rescue dogs are apt pupils, and eager to spend time learning how to do what it is that you want them to do! Should you encounter any behavioral problems that you cannot solve, please contact our Training & Behavior Advisor.

Refer to the book *Second Hand Dog* by Carole Lea Benjamin for information on training and behavior problems. Don't hesitate to seek help from members of our Save Our Shepherds family. Behavioral change can sometimes be very difficult, but with patience and consistency many behavioral issues can be resolved to a certain degree. If your foster dog's behavior or training problems persist, contact your SOS representative to discuss possible solutions.

### Training

Don't be permissive with the dog even if you feel sorry for him! Some behaviors you may allow or even enjoy in your own dog may make your foster dog harder to place. For example, he should not be allowed on your furniture, and he shouldn't be allowed on your bed. He may sit or lie near the dinner table, but he should not be given anything from the table. He should not be permitted to jump on anyone. If your foster is a jumper, see the section on behavior problems for help in ending this bad habit.

You are, of course, free to make your own house rules, but the foster dog will fit more easily into the adoptive family's home if you establish consistent and fairly conservative behavioral limits. For the first several days, supervise him strictly – don't just open the door, take off his lead and let him roam the house. At first, give him free roam of only one or two rooms, allowing him to drag his leash so that you can take it to keep him from wandering. Baby gates are great for confining the average German Shepherd, and the crate is invaluable. You can give him access to more rooms as he earns it with his good behavior.

### You're the Pack Leader

All canines live in and need a structured pack order. The pack leader (YOU!) will be constantly challenged by the lower members (the dogs). If the pack leader fails to exercise leadership, a behavioral vacuum occurs and must be filled. Thus the foster dog may test you with excessive barking, not coming when called, aggression, food guarding, etc.

Keep in mind that dogs want to be led and are comforted by the fact that you are the pack leader. Become the leader by taking control and exerting your authority. Use your voice to your advantage – lower it to give commands, and raise it excitedly to praise your foster dog. Most of all, let the dog know you mean business.

## Time on His Paws: Every Good Dog's Downfall

A bored dog may exhibit signs of frustration by barking, whining, chewing on himself or your drapes, etc. Burn up the excess energy wisely by having the dog chase balls or jog (on a leash) with you, health (and summer heat!) permitting. Once the excess energy is consumed, the boredom-based behavior usually abates.

Don't encourage mischief or endanger the dog's safety by leaving things he shouldn't have within reach. Put shoes, socks, pantyhose, and underwear away (such things are common causes of life-threatening intestinal obstructions in dogs). Fence off flowerbeds and expensive plants. In short, dog proof your home, and crate the dog when you are not at home.

## The Art of Command

The foundation of all dog training is willing obedience. The dog must obey commands, promptly and with enthusiasm. Begin your system of training early on -- the day your dog joins the household. Maintain it day after day, act after act. Put the emphasis on positive reinforcement for every positive act -- a gentle pat or a kindly spoken word. This is not only the kinder way to teach, but it's also more effective than punishment, because it satisfies the dog's drive to earn the approval of the pack leader (you).

Standard commands are: Come, Stay, Stand, Sit, Down, and Off. Telling the dog to "Sit down" will only confuse him -- he doesn't know whether you mean "Sit," or "Down!" If he jumps on you, say "Off!," not "Down," which means to lie down. Don't lose your temper, or give too many commands at one time. Control yourself if you wish to control your dog. Consistency and patience are critical -- if you are consistent and patient, your foster dog will learn, and quickly.

If your foster dog doesn't respond to oral commands, put him in position using firm but gentle hand pressure while saying the desired command, such as "SIT." When he does what you want him to do, praise him warmly -- "GOOD SIT!" He'll quickly learn to do what you ask, if you give him plenty of praise and positive feedback.

Commands should be spoken in the same, consistent tone each time. Because repetition brings understanding, a given command must mean the same thing each and every time. Dogs hear far better than we do, so there's no need for shouting, and no point to it. Give the command in exactly the same tone every time, making it clear that you expect every command to be obeyed, and you'll soon have a dog that responds to even a mere whispered request. Your friends will consider you to be positively masterful 😊

Remember that a dog who has been tied out, or left alone in a backyard or a kennel all of his life is unlikely to be impressed by a little pressure on a buckle collar. Yanking him around during a walk will only convince him that it's not much fun being tied to you. If you are not an experienced trainer, resort to common sense. Tire him out with a little play, let him settle down from the excitement, and then, using a training collar, do some leash work. When he pulls ahead, stop -- then turn in the other direction suddenly so that he's no longer ahead of you, but behind you. Eventually he will realize that it's your walk and that he has to follow your lead.

## Disciplining the Errant German Shepherd

When your foster dog does something that must be corrected (i.e. removing the turkey from the Thanksgiving table), a nonviolent admonition must be administered immediately, or not at all. If

the turkey's absence is not discovered for several hours, and you then correct the dog upon this discovery, the dog will not connect his misdeed with your reprimand. He may conclude that you have lost your mind, and that he need never listen to anything you say, or he may become frightened of you because of your incomprehensible and unpredictable behavior.

Never, never, never, correct a dog's error by striking him. Instead, use a low, gruff voice of disapproval – saying something like “Oh, what a baaaaaad, baaaaaad dog.” To him, it will sound like his mother's scolding. As we all know, that's more effective than any physical punishment.

A correction technique used by many trainers is to take the loose flesh just behind the dog's jaws in both hands, and shake it back and forth as you look him in the eye, saying “Bad dog, bad dog!” in a low, guttural voice. The idea isn't to cause pain, but to fill him with the certainty that he has disappointed the pack leader. This technique was adapted from careful observation of what mother dogs do when puppies disappoint them.

A dog who receives plenty of attention and exercise is seldom destructive and less likely to be noisy. Make a practice of taking your foster German Shepherd for walks and playing games with him. Even the dog whose owners are away during the day can be happy, provided that he receives plenty of attention while they are home.

## BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS AND HOW TO SOLVE THEM

### Barking

It is natural for dogs to bark in play or excitement, but no dog needs to bark all the time. The message of a bark is, “There's something strange happening. Be alert!” The barking doesn't tell you whether the arriving person is a friend or a stranger, but once the person has been identified as a friend, the barking should be replaced by a greeting ritual.

A correction is indicated every time the dog barks without cause. Tell him firmly “QUIET!” or “NO BARKING” and be ready to enforce the command with a correction, such as shaking a shaker can, which can be made by putting a few pennies or pebbles into an empty soda can and taping the opening securely).

Another way to stop excessive barking is to teach the dog to bark on command – once mastered, the “NO BARK” command is easily taught. In any case, don't get into a yelling contest with your foster dog. He'll likely think it's a game: “I bark, she barks. I bark, she barks.”

Barking from the crate is a different story entirely! If the dog is not hungry, not thirsty, and does not need to go potty, try ignoring the behavior. Reassuring the dog that “it's okay” only tells him that it is okay to bark non-stop in the crate -- in other words, it reinforces the undesired behavior. While it will try your nerves to listen to a barking dog in a crate, often the best response is no response, and the behavior will cease given enough time, and patience. Give the dog praise when he is quiet in the crate, and he will soon learn that being quiet brings good things to him!

## Begging

A dog who begs can be extremely annoying. If you give him what he asks for, he'll soon be obnoxious, obese, and poorly nourished as well. Moreover, he will learn to be demanding at other times, which may lead to bullying and aggressiveness.

The cure is consistency: the dog is never to be fed from the table. Insist that all members of your family (and guests) respect this rule, and the dog will soon learn that begging is not profitable. Remember – consistency is the key.

If you take in a foster dog who is a devout beggar, you can reform him. Here's how: place a leash and training collar on him just before mealtime. The first instant he cozies up to his chosen human patsy, give a quick snap of the lead to one side and say "NO!" in a firm tone of voice. Ignore any further signs of begging. In a few days, if you are consistent, the dog will realize that your mealtime isn't his snack time, and he'll give you peace.

## Chewing

Chewing is natural for dogs, and not just when they're teething. They do it for fun, because they are bored or anxious, or because they have more energy than they know what to do with. When you catch the dog chewing something "illegal," rattle a shaker can and say "NO" or "NO CHEWING" in a firm voice. Remove the object that was being chewed, and replace it with an appropriate toy. Be sure to praise the dog for taking the toy ☺

Proper confinement can also play an important role in solving chewing problems. When you cannot supervise your foster dog, a crate will help tremendously.

## House Soiling

Foster dogs may or may not be reliably house trained. Most are adults, and therefore have certain advantages over puppies: greater learning capacity, more appreciation for praise, greater bowel and bladder control, and less frequent need to relieve themselves. However, not all fosters are adults, and even adults make mistakes. If a problem occurs, the key to successful housebreaking is consistency and positive reinforcement.

Even if your foster dog was perfectly trained in his previous home, a nervous reaction to a strange or new situation or scent, such as that of another dog, may cause a lapse in manners. In addition, he may not know how to tell you that he needs to go out. As you and he begin to communicate, the house training will progress rapidly.

There will be fewer problems if the dog has a crate to call his own while you are away. He will be reluctant to soil his "den," and if you take him out three to four times a day to a specific place, he'll quickly learn to "go" there. It may help to use a specific word to describe it (everyone has his or her own preferred term). Eventually, the dog will "go" on command, and don't forget to praise him when he does!

Accidents happen, and unless interrupted, they may become habits. The key here is to show the dog what to do, rather than punishing him for what he had to do. When an accident occurs, you must not strike him (for this or any misdeed), but rather take him immediately outdoors. It is never a good idea to call him to you for punishment, as he'll soon stop coming to you. What

works is catching him in the act, taking him to the area you want him to use, and then praising him, repeatedly.

Some dogs trickle may urine due to nervousness. This is an entirely involuntary action, usually triggered by excitement or fear. Punishment only heightens the apprehension and makes the situation worse. When you arrive home, speak quietly, behave calmly, and don't make a fuss or tower over the dog. As he gains confidence in you, in himself, and in his surroundings, he will soon stop the nervous urination.

Urine mistakes will mar floors and carpeting unless cleaned quickly. Recently introduced products containing active enzymes, such as Nature's Miracle®, do a good job on the stains and the odors as well. Alternatively, soaking the soiled area with vinegar helps dilute and neutralize the urine – use towels to blot it up.

## Jumping

Dogs jump on people as a way of greeting them, but uninvited jumping is the mark of a dog with no manners. It must be managed, as it can be dangerous, and it may be annoying to visitors. Solving this problem is not difficult, but it does require time and effort. The key is to be ready when you think the dog will jump.

You may choose the shaker can correction, leash and training collar correction, or nudging the dog off balance with your knee as a means of correcting the behavior. With the shaker can, place the dog in a situation where you know he will jump on someone. When he does jump, rattle the can loudly and say "NO, NO JUMPING" or "OFF" in a firm voice. If you choose the leash and training collar, have both on the dog when he jumps on someone. Use both hands on the leash, give it a quick snap and say "NO, NO JUMPING" or "OFF" in a firm voice. A particularly effective technique on a large dogs like a German Shepherd is to use your knee to nudge (NOT kick) them off balance when they jump up. Be ready to get your knee up first to push him down. Command "OFF" as you push him away. It is more effective if the dog is caught by surprise. Then, call him to you, have him sit in front of you, and praise him. He will appreciate your "good dog!" even more when he stays on all fours.

## Whining

Dogs whine when they are under stress, as when they feel abandoned (separation anxiety), or when they are frustrated. The worst thing you can do is to reward this behavior. Saying, "Oh, you poor boy, what's wrong?" only encourages and reinforces the unwanted behavior – after all, the whining worked to get your attention, didn't it? Sometimes simply saying "ENOUGH!" will let the dog know you hear him, and he'll stop, but continuous shouting is seldom helpful, and can make the behavior worse by increasing his anxiety. Instead, give him things to do to take his mind off the cause of his anxiety, such as practicing sits or downs, or playing a game of fetch outdoors – a tired dog is a happy dog. ☺ Only give attention when the dog is not demanding it! In any case, most dogs simply stop whining eventually. As they develop confidence in themselves and in the effectiveness of other techniques (such as giving you the "pitiful look" as only a German Shepherd can do), the whining almost always ceases.

## APPENDIX A

### Save Our Shepherds Rescue, Inc. List of Approved Veterinarians

**Please Note:**

Unless it is an emergency all veterinary care must be pre-approved by an SOS Officer.

#### **SHELBY COUNTY**

Dr C.A. McCutcheon, DVM  
Park Animal Hospital  
3734 Park Avenue  
Memphis, TN 38111  
901-458-0863

#### **HARDEMAN COUNTY**

##### **Old Hatchie Veterinary Clinic**

1017 N Main  
Bolivar TN 38008-9313  
731-658-3555

## APPENDIX B

### Save Our Shepherds Rescue, Inc. Useful Phone Numbers

#### **Board of Directors/Officers**

Bonnie Maher-Hazel, President/ Director  
901-428-3067 (cell)  
[bonnieszena@yahoo.com](mailto:bonnieszena@yahoo.com)

Carol Murphy, Vice President/Director  
731-658-2231 (home)  
941-544-1846 (cell)  
[carol@justfurkids.com](mailto:carol@justfurkids.com)