



Fostering a Retired Racing Greyhound

Foster homes are the most important part of the Greyhounds Adoption Program SA – we couldn't assess the greyhounds and re-home them without the Foster families. Each home plays a vital role in helping our greyhounds adjust to life outside the racing kennel. Sometimes this adjustment period is easy, other times it is more difficult and the dog needs all the patience, consideration, love and understanding that you can give. Following is a list of what is required of the foster families, and what you can in turn expect from GAP.

Please don't hesitate to contact GAP at any time if you have any concerns or queries.

Foster Period

GAP requires that foster homes are as flexible as possible with the period of time their dog remains with them. The dog will usually remain in a foster home for four to six weeks, but on occasions they may be there for longer. Once a greyhound is in Foster Care and has passed its temperament assessment we simply keep it until we can find a home for it. If you cannot hold a dog for a certain period (e.g. you are going away for a holiday) please let GAP know and try to provide as much notice as possible. GAP does not expect each foster carer to have a constant stream of foster dogs and we try to be flexible in this regard. We also want to fit in with you!

As stated in the Foster Home Agreement form, foster carers must be prepared to surrender their foster dog to GAP when and where it is requested.

Emergencies

In the event of an emergency (e.g. the foster dog is severely injured) the foster home should take the dog immediately to the nearest veterinary clinic. If the dog is injured but it is not life threatening, the foster home should call the GAP Coordinator for instructions.

Foster carers are not expected to pay vet bills etc - all such expenses are covered by GAP. If the foster dog goes missing please notify GAP immediately, providing them with a list of all veterinary surgeries in the surrounding area. We will then take all necessary steps for the safe return of the dog.

You've fallen in love with your foster dog!

Don't worry, this is a common occurrence! Often foster carers become very attached to their foster dog and wish to keep him/her. GAP is more than happy to accommodate this as long as a potential adoptive family has not already met the dog and agreed to adopt it. If a foster home wishes to keep a dog, the usual adoption fee will apply.

Travel

GAP is a largely volunteer-based organisation. As such, our budget is very limited and expenses need to be kept to a minimum. Foster carers may be required to come and collect a foster greyhound or drive a foster greyhound to a vet for sterilisation or to a GAP promotion, green collar assessment, etc.

Assisting Your Dog

There are a few things you can do to get your foster dog off to a great start in his new home. By exposing the dog to as many "new" things as possible you are providing the opportunity to best assess the temperament of the dog in order that it be placed in the most appropriate home. Some things you can teach your foster greyhound are listed below.

Stairs

Many Greyhounds have never had to walk up or down stairs, and some find them awkward or even frightening at first, especially if the steps have a slippery surface. Greyhounds are very long in the body and also have a very high centre of gravity - this can sometimes make them a little clumsy as if they are unsure of where their feet are being placed. Gradual introduction to low sets of stairs initially (numbering no more than three or four) to gain the dog's confidence can later be followed by steeper stairs or those with varying surfaces (carpet, cement, wooden floorboards, linoleum etc.). Despite the above, many Greyhounds will have no difficulty with stairs right from the outset.

Floor Surfaces

Like stairs, often Greyhounds have never had to deal with slippery floor surfaces like tiles, linoleum or polished floorboards. As above, time and experience should sort out any difficulties here as long as the dog is introduced slowly and without force. If a new dog is very hesitant, placing squares of carpet pieces, towels or mats across the floor at intervals may help, over time the distance between the floor coverings can be increased, thereby requiring the dog to walk on the floor surface.

Glass Windows or Doors

Some dogs will not recognise glass as being a solid barrier when first brought into a house. Showing the dog around each new room on a lead and gently tapping on windows or glass doors may be all that is required. Temporarily placing a strip or two of masking tape across glass barriers may make them more obvious. In cases where strong visual stimuli are present on the other side of the glass (e.g. cats or other pets playing), and the dog is showing excessive interest, drawing the curtains or removing the dog from that room may be necessary.

Household noises

The sound of household appliances such as televisions, hairdryers, food processors, vacuum cleaners etc. can be frightening to any dog that has never experienced these before. Even the flushing of a toilet can be quite novel. In most cases, short exposure to such noises on repeated occasions (if carried out in a non-

threatening manner) is all that is necessary.

Toilet Training

Most Greyhounds do not come toilet trained as such. However, they are generally very clean dogs. Living in a kennel environment, most dogs do not like to soil their sleeping quarters, and will wait until turned out to relieve themselves. When first brought into the home, the Greyhound should be treated in a similar manner to a puppy being housebroken - taking the dog outside every couple of hours for the first day or so, especially after meals, play and long naps.

Praise the dog as soon as it performs in an appropriate place. Gradually, over a few days, increase the intervals between toilet breaks until a mutually acceptable routine is established. The majority of Greyhounds will virtually toilet train themselves and often never have an accident inside. Some males may need to learn the difference between indoor (potted) plants and outdoor vegetation. It is important over the first few days to watch the greyhound closely when it is inside your house, so that you may correct it immediately if it tries to go to the toilet.

When catching the dog in the act, say a firm NO and immediately take the dog outside. When it then continues to go to the toilet outside, praise the dog profusely. Do not chastise the dog if it has an accident inside but you are not there to catch it in time. Correcting the dog after the event will only serve to confuse and frighten the dog - corrections must be made at the time of the discretion, and not afterwards.

Children

Although not all foster homes will have children, it is necessary to ascertain a dog's reaction to young children. This could be done to some degree by visiting a local park or sports field, especially on weekends.

Unlike adults, children tend to move rapidly, not always in a coordinated manner, and may shriek out in high-pitched tones. To a young excitable Greyhound, this may be an incentive to chase. Such a desire may be exacerbated when rollerblades, skateboards or bicycles are added to the picture. The majority of Greyhounds are excellent with children in the home environment, preferring to walk away if harassed by a persistent child, but close supervision is essential as with any breed. Any tendency for the Greyhound to exhibit dominance posturing towards a child, barking, growling etc., should be noted and corrected.

Grooming

Racing Greyhounds are quite used to being bathed, groomed and massaged. However, it is important to determine that the dog does not have any "sensitive" areas, which may indicate injuries. The dog should accept its feet being handled, nails clipped, ears cleaned and eyes and mouth inspected, as well as being groomed all over with a soft brush.

Car Rides

Most Greyhounds are veterans when it comes to rides in the car, and usually love to go on an outing. Motion sickness would be a rare entity. However, getting into and out of a car may need to be taught. Most racing Greyhounds are transported in either a station wagon, panel van or dog trailer. Trainers will generally lift a dog into and out of the vehicle to avoid injuries. The easiest way to begin is to lift the front end of the dog and rest its forefeet on the seat or tailgate. Then transfer your hands to the rear end of the dog and lift the back legs in. Many dogs, with repeated practice will learn to hop in themselves, but some will always expect a helping hand. Experience at climbing onto a rear (bench) seat of a car and lying down

whilst driving should be gained as not all adoptive families will own station wagons. It is also important to teach the dog not to get into or out of the car until you have asked it to do so.

Other Pets

Greyhounds are generally used to being around other Greyhounds, but many have little or no experience of different dog breeds, cats or other pets. It should be remembered that Greyhounds have been bred for centuries to chase and the prey drive in some individuals means they can never be fully trusted with small animals. Many, however, will learn to accept other pets if introduced slowly and carefully, always with strict supervision. Any introductions should always be carried out on lead, and with the Greyhound properly muzzled, until the dog's reactions can be assessed. If the foster carer has to leave, even for a brief time, the Greyhound should be separated from other animals until the carer feels confident that the dog poses no threat to their other animals. Risks should never be taken with the safety of your own pets.

Possessiveness

Two things a Greyhound (or any other dog) may feel possessive about are food and its sleeping quarters. During the fostering period, the dog should learn to accept its food and food bowl being handled in a non-threatening manner. Any foster dog should be fed separately from other pets, especially when first introduced. After the first three or four days, when the dog should be learning to trust the foster carer, food can be added to the bowl gradually by hand as the dog is eating. Eventually, by the end of the foster period, the dog should accept the food bowl being taken away and, ideally, food or other objects being taken from its mouth. Needless to say, care should be taken in these circumstances and an assessment of the dog's temperament made before proceeding. The Greyhound should also permit its bedding to be handled, sat in etc. Sleep-space aggression is reported in some Greyhounds, usually in response to being woken or disturbed suddenly during a nap. Some Greyhounds do sleep with their eyes open, so it is important to ensure that the dog is awake before touching and surprising it. Greyhounds tend to sleep very deeply, and may take a while to arouse. As they are generally housed individually in racing kennels, they are not used to other dogs, children etc. tripping over them in their sleep. All of these things will help to make your foster greyhound a pleasure to be around and will help us to get more of these deserving, lovely dogs into good homes.

Obedience Training

-  Each foster carer is expected to begin teaching their foster dog the following:

WALK ON A LOOSE LEAD

"GO TO BED"

"SIT" (or Drop) and "STAY"

Please continue to use these commands during their stay with you. This will reduce confusion for the foster dogs caused by each carer using different commands.

Please be firm with your foster dogs. By being soft, and allowing undesirable behaviour to continue, you are extending the fostering process, confusing the dog, and increasing the likelihood that the dog will fail. By being patient, fair and firm, you are giving the dog the rules they need which will make them happy, and

you are helping them be a well-mannered dog that is a pleasure to be around. As mentioned earlier, racing Greyhounds are used to a fairly regimented life with few options or choices to make in its day to day activities. The majority of Greyhounds are creatures of habit, and are most relaxed when a set routine is in place. Family life does not always fall into a perfect routine, but establishment of set meal times and regular exercise and toileting opportunities will help a new Greyhound to feel at ease.

When a Greyhound is suddenly given the freedom of an entire house, and has some choice in how it spends its time, it may revert to a (temporary) second puppyhood.

Good House Manners

It is important that some basic ground rules are established for the dog early in the foster period and that all members of the family abide by them. Restricting the dog to certain rooms in the house, at least initially, may make supervision easier. This may be achieved by simply keeping doors closed or by using baby gates or other barriers.

BEDS and COUCHES

Most Greyhounds will discover soft human beds or lounge chairs within the first few days (or hours) after arrival. Although Greyhounds are the ultimate "couch potatoes", taking lounging almost to an art form, it must be remembered that their future adoptive home may not condone such practices. As a result PLEASE DISCOURAGE your foster dogs from reclining on the furniture. Once they have learnt to sleep on a couch or bed it is much harder to teach them to now get off it than it is to encourage them up there in the first place.

A soft bed of their own, located in a quiet corner, should be provided, and the dog should be encouraged to retreat there with the command "on your mat". The bed should be positioned so that the dog can take in most of the household activities without getting in the way. You may wish to move the dog's bed to just inside your bedroom, or close by, at night, so that the dog feels secure by your presence, and so that you can supervise the dog's nighttime activities.

FOOD

Some Greyhounds newly introduced to the home may maximise their opportunities by helping themselves to 'people food' left on kitchen benches or tables (also known as "counter surfing"). Because Greyhounds are so tall, reaching such places is quite easy. The obvious solution is not to leave anything tempting lying within reach. Keeping one or more squirt bottles filled with water and ready to use can be effective in stopping such practices.

PATIENCE and TRAINING

Certain concessions need to be made for a foster Greyhound as they are encountering many new experiences over a relatively short period of time. However, some will need to be given firm guidelines as to acceptable and non-acceptable behaviour within the home, and when out in public. Most Greyhounds are quite sensitive creatures and gentle disciplinary measures such as a stern, disapproving tone of voice or a quick spray with the squirt bottle are usually sufficient to get the message across.

Your foster dog must be corrected firmly if it:

Tries to push through a doorway before people

Tries to jump into or out of the car before being asked

Barks constantly

Shows other undesirable behaviour such as digging, growling, jumping up etc.

 **Please praise the dog when it does the right thing.**

Assistance from a trained animal behaviourist is available if required. Please be sure to call GAP if you have any queries.

In spite of the warnings mentioned above, most Greyhounds will walk into a house for the first time and proceed to take all in their stride as if they had been there all their lives. They are generally fairly laid back creatures with tremendous adaptability and understanding.

A lead, collar and muzzle (and rug in winter) will be allocated to each foster home prior to fostering, and these items remain with Foster home until such time as you decide to cease with fostering. All foster items are property of GAPSA and should be returned to the coordinator. If property is not returned then a fee of \$50 will be charged to cover for the items. If foster items are destroyed by the greyhound please contact the coordinator and any parts should be given to the coordinator upon issue of new items.

 **What support does the foster home receive?**

Each Greyhound in a foster home is provided with Advance dry food supplied generously by Advance and a bag of raw bones supplied by AGA Meats.

At this point in time GAP regrets that we cannot supply “wet” meat and it is strongly encouraged to have wet meat form part of your Foster Dog’s diet. Any raw or cooked meat like chicken, beef or lamb is a recommended addition. Pasta and rice are also a great addition to a dog’s diet.

Most dogs are at least wormed and bathed prior to arriving at a foster home; if they have not been, worming and flea medication will be supplied. Most dogs will be required to have the full range of treatments, including desexing/castration, teeth cleaning, vaccination, and overall vet check. As mentioned earlier, a collar, lead and muzzle is supplied with each dog. During the cooler months, a warm coat is also made available . We also have blankets available to help with bedding. Just let the coordinator know if you require these items.

 **Follow-up and monitoring**

We realise that foster carers are generously opening up their homes and hearts to these dogs, and all support/advice necessary will be given promptly. The follow up and monitoring of foster greyhounds is generally done by phone. We also appreciate that foster homes may not wish to care for dogs continually. Some may only try it once and decide it’s not for them. Others may want a break between dogs, or may have holidays or other commitments planned for the near future.

Whatever assistance an approved foster home can make will be accepted most gratefully.

🐾 **Compassion, patience and understanding**

Like humans, each dog is an individual. Greyhounds as a rule are quiet, well mannered, affectionate dogs. However, some dogs can initially be difficult to deal with. They may bark, whine, go to the toilet in inappropriate places, and exhibit other undesirable behaviours. The role of the foster carer is to assist the dog with getting over these problems. If the dog is demonstrating severe, destructive and dangerous behavioural problems then please contact one of the Coordinator and we will arrange for the immediate removal of the dog from your home. With compassion, patience and understanding, you'll be able to turn a keen athlete into the ultimate couch potato!

Thank you for opening your heart and home to our wonderful greyhounds!

Can you resist this smiling face?

