

## Chapter 3 – Fostering

### Becoming a Foster Home

Good foster homes make an incredible difference in rescue. They provide a warm, safe and loving environment – many times for the first time in a rescue Airedale’s life. They show a rescue Airedale that people can be kind and food and water are plentiful. A foster family teaches a rescue Airedale the ropes of living as a household family member. They evaluate a rescue Airedale as to how they get along with other dogs, cats, kids and everyday living. They work with other SOAR volunteers to find the best home possible for a rescue Airedale and send them on their way to their new life.

Without foster families to do all of this for our rescue Airedales, our success rate at placing them in forever homes would not be as high. Sure, fostering involves a time commitment and a piece of our heart goes with each rescue Airedale placed, but it is one of the most important and rewarding parts of rescue you can do. The phone calls and e-mails from the adoptive home sharing new first experiences and photos of happy faces make it all worthwhile.

### Qualifications of a Foster Home

All of our foster homes go through the same screening process as a prospective adopter. They fill out an application, have references checked and receive a home visit. If you are already a SOAR adopter who has gone through this process, you need not do it again. However, if something has changed in your situation since your application, you should make us aware of it.

You also need to consider the pets currently living in your home. They should be able to accept an unfamiliar dog coming into their living space.

Before you become a foster home, you **MUST** sign a SOAR Volunteer Agreement form and mail it to the SOAR Vice President Volunteers.



You should be Airedale experienced. In other words, you have owned an Airedale. Knowing and living with the breed helps you to understand some of their personality traits and prepares you for what to expect. You also need to understand safety issues involved with rescue Airedales. They are often times adult dogs in unfamiliar surroundings, frightened and liable to bolt and run away at every opportunity. You will need to make every effort to keep the dog safe!

### Things to Know

SOAR can point you to literature concerning how to introduce your foster to other dogs or animals in your household (in addition to what you find in this chapter). This should help make introductions with your family dogs go smoother and help ease territorial issues.

### Collar, Leash, Tag and Microchip

Your foster should arrive with a new martingale collar and leash as well as a SOAR tag provided by your state coordinator. Your foster should also be microchipped. If there was no time to have this done prior to your foster’s arrival (i.e. you were the one to pick him up), you need to request these items from your state coordinator. The collar and tags should be kept on the dog at all times.

## **What to Expect When Your Foster Arrives**

Some of our rescue Airedales come into rescue groomed, spayed/neutered and up to date on shots. However, this is not the norm. The rescue Airedale usually needs to have a wellness vet check and shots in addition to being bathed and groomed. They may also need to be spayed/neutered and have medical issues taken care of. All of this can be done before your foster comes to you unless you would prefer to help SOAR and handle some of this yourself (you are not expected to pay for it.)

Your new foster may come with some behavior issues. We try as much as possible to learn what we can about the Airedale from previous owners, but many times getting information is just not possible. Some Airedales may need to be housebroken. Even if they are housebroken, they may have mistakes in the house until they get used to your routine. Talk to your state coordinator about what you can handle with your foster. We try the best we can to work within your boundaries.

## **Introducing the Foster to Your Home**

Ideally, your foster should come to your home as early in the day as possible, giving him/her as much time as possible to adapt to the new household before nightfall. Dogs become more insecure at dusk and overnight. The better the adjustment on the first day, the easier the change will be for the dog and you. Following are some suggestions to get your new foster used to your household and family. These are also great suggestions to pass on to the new adoptive family.

- When arriving at your home, the foster dog should first be taken out into the back yard and played with gently. The dog should be walked with just one or two older family members until the dog urinates and/or defecates. This is to ensure that the first place the foster eliminates is outdoors and not accidentally in the house. Even well house-trained dogs can become confused in a strange household, especially when upset and/or excited. The dog's diet should not be changed for at least two weeks. The schedule for meals and exercise should remain as close as possible to what the dog was familiar with in the former household, and as long as that was adequate.
- Next, take the foster dog for a walk through the house on a leash. Let the dog investigate but also let him/her know the house rules. The leash used in the house can be held or allowed to drag, but never used to tie the dog. Don't let the dog out of your sight.
- Take the foster dog three or four times a day to the place where he/she will be sleeping overnight and also to the place where he/she will be when the family is away from home. He or she will then be familiar with both places before being left alone or put to bed.
- Don't let the foster dog out of your sight unless confining the dog to a crate of a room, and then, stay close by at first to be sure the dog is not upset by the separation.
- Always leave the dog calmly and pleasantly with a radio playing, soft lighting, bedding, water, toys and a treat. Always return to the dog calmly and pleasantly by going to the dog and putting the collar and leash on before taking him out of a confined area. This calm return, preferably by one adult alone, prevents separation anxiety. Rescue dogs have already lost at least one family and are inclined to become anxious when separated from the new family. The more excited the dog is allowed to become when the owner returns, the more anxious the dog will become about being separated. Separation anxiety is one of the primary causes of failure of the rescue dog in a new home and is usually preventable. If the dog will be alone much of the day, he/she should be allowed to sleep in or near the bedroom of a family member overnight. Dogs who spend too much time away from the family tend to bark, chew, dig or lick/chew their coats.

- If the dog becomes very upset at being confined, be sure you are confining him in the same way as the former owners. If you have no information, experiment to see what the dog might tolerate. Spend time with the dog in an appropriate room with the door closed. Try the kitchen, the laundry room or bedroom. They are the most likely rooms a former owner would have used. Leave the room briefly, close the door, then return to the room and resume what you were doing, saying nothing to the dog. Gradually leave for longer periods of time. If the dog gets upset, return to what you were doing and temporarily discontinue trying to leave. Your experiences can be very helpful for a new family in understanding their rescue dog's attitude and behavior. You should realize, however, that leaving the dog in the company of other dogs does not prepare him for being left alone when he goes to his new home.
- Keep the leash on the dog when he is with you. The dog will feel more secure and you will prevent confusion. With the leash you can prevent mistakes, including escaping out an open door that has cost many rescue dogs their lives. Also, nothing is more disturbing to a new dog or puppy than to be loose in a strange house and chastised at random by strangers. It is grossly unfair to the new dog, but it is also unfair to allow him to make a mistake that is certainly going to be repeated. Keeping the dog with you on a leash when not confined is an ideal solution. A leash or short "handle" can be treated with Bitter Apple to prevent chewing or a lightweight chain leash can be used. Simply take the dog away from any mistake he/she is about to make, then substitute a toy, a biscuit, a little play or simple affection. If the dog gets too wild or uncontrollable, either separate by confining the dog, use an obedience lesson or take him for a walk. If the dog becomes too demanding, have him sit before petting, treats or play, and practice on long down stays. The leash can be attached to a buckle collar or head halter but should never be left on the dog out of sight of an adult. A choke collar should only be on the dog when the dog is on a leash and the leash is in your hand.
- The foster dog should not be left outdoors unsupervised for the first month. Dogs have a strong homing instinct and if a dog left alone can get out of a yard during the first month, he/she will attempt to return to the former home. Some dogs are very agile and can jump a high fence when stimulated. Others are intelligent and curious and can find other ways out of a yard if they have time to investigate.

## **Children**

If there are children in the household, they should be supervised with the new foster for the first month unless they are teenagers, assuming the role of primary caretaker. This is to be sure that rules for both the dog and the children are being followed. Left unsupervised, puppies and young children will play as if they are all puppies together, usually with poor results, as the dog gets older. Contact the coordinator about consulting with a trainer or behaviorist if the dog shows any fear of any child at any time. If the dog uses his/her teeth playfully or affectionately at any time, that behavior **MUST** be totally stopped as soon as possible.

Children can be taught to play at retrieving by throwing a second toy rather than take anything out of the dog's mouth. They can play hide and seek and they can run with the dog. Children should not run toward the dog or after the dog. Children can feed the dog and also add goodies to the dog's food while he is eating, so the dog thinks anyone around his food dish is adding food to the dog's bowl. Children should practice at heeling and on-leash stays with a trained dog, under supervision. The dog should always sit before being fed or petted by anyone, especially a child.

Children should never roughhouse or wrestle, play tug-of-war with the dog, or take anything out of the dog's mouth. These games lead to the dog feeling competitive with the child as if the child was another dog. This attitude can lead to rough, inappropriate behavior in a clever, competitor like the Airedale terrier.

## **Other Family Dogs**

Other family dogs should be out of sight when the new foster is brought into the house. The new dog should be walked from room to room on leash. Praise him as you introduce him to the scent of the other dogs' favorite sleeping places. Then take the new dog outside or out of sight while the other pets are brought in to be praised and introduced to the scent of the new dog indoors. Next, take them outdoors, out of sight of the new dog and praise them as they scent the area where the new dog urinated. At that time, very social dogs can be introduced one at a time, to the new dog while loose in the back yard. However, if you are not absolutely certain of the results, then take them both for leash walks outside.

If you wish to be very cautious, walk them on neutral property with a chain link fence between them. You can use a schoolyard, sports field or tennis court. Walk them parallel, one on each side of the fence. Keep praising them and keep them moving as you gradually let them get close enough to sniff and get acquainted. If either, or both, wish to stop and urinate, let them. If they seem totally relaxed and friendly, continue the walk without the fence and take them to the house and turn them loose in the yard. If either dog looks tense, stiff-legged, defensive or barks or growls, take them away from each other and temporarily keep them out of sight of one another. Spend a week letting them each get used to the scent of the other, both indoors and out, and then try to walk on either side of the fence again.

Rescue dogs are neutered males and spayed females. If you have a male who has been neutered recently, he will retain many of his former habits. You will need more care with your introductions to other male dogs. If you have multiple dogs and the new dog has accepted the dominance of your dominant dog, the others can be introduced more quickly, usually one at a time.

Always watch for problems arising over food. Feed your dogs separately and keep them out of each others' dishes. Watch for problems over toys. If a dog is becoming competitive or defensive over a special toy, give it to that dog only when he/she is alone. Watch for problems, either of aggressiveness or shyness, at the door where the dogs go in and out. Also watch for any dog laying claim to a family member and not letting other dogs approach. Dogs also have favorite resting places. A new dog should respect the dogs already in the household. Watch for problems if the foster takes over another dog's "A" spot. Dogs have to develop their own pecking order, but YOU can control food, toys and household behavior.

## **Other Family Pets**

If an Airedale terrier has already lived with a cat, he/she should adapt to another easily. Otherwise, begin with encouraging each to feel positively about the scent of the other. Allow the dog to sniff the cat tray, but otherwise keep it inaccessible because cat feces are very attractive to dogs.

Keep baby gates at the stairs to the basement or upstairs, so the cat can get safely away from the dog if the need arises. It is usually the dog that has to be kept under control around a cat, bird, bunny or other animal. Using a leash, take the dog away from the animal, even into another room if necessary to maintain control.

## **Expenses**

SOAR pays all of the bills related to our rescue Airedales. This would include vet expenses, medications and grooming in addition to things like a crate or baby gates, obedience classes and dog food. Most of our foster homes will donate food and some of the other expenses. If you do, let us know and we can give you a receipt for your taxes as we are a 501(c)(3) organization.

If you need to take your foster to the vet, contact SOAR's treasurer and they will get a credit card number to the vet. Please ask your vet for a discount for rescue if possible. SOAR has Expense Report forms for any out of pocket expenses. Your state coordinator can help you if you are not sure what is covered. Checks are issued promptly.

## **The Next Step**

While the dog is in foster care, it's important for the foster home to observe and evaluate him/her. Does he have any house manners? Does he get along well with other dogs, cats, etc.? Will this dog require serious obedience training or does he respond to basic commands? Does he walk well on a leash? Are car rides enjoyable or a nightmare? Does he dig, try to escape, bark excessively, etc.? Foster homes should be willing to set limits for the dog. See how he reacts to being crated or gated when alone. Is he responsive to commands? Is he happy? Does he cringe when verbally corrected? Any and all observations assist us in determining who the best prospect might be to adopt your foster.

Give your foster as many different experiences as you can. Take them for a walk in town. Have a friend come over to visit. It is important to know how the foster behaves in different situations. Finding out that the foster reacts strongly to men with beards, is terrified of vacuum cleaners, or anxious around small children will also help SOAR find the perfect home.

Remember that you are preparing your foster for life with another family. You never know what that life will be like, so teach your foster things like how to stay off the furniture and to wait patiently for meals. Find out how your foster lets you know they need to go outside. And most important, give them lots of love and understanding.

## **Behavior Issues**

If your foster is showing signs of aggression or any other behavior problem, contact your state coordinator. They need to know there is an issue. If you feel you can handle it and help the foster improve, we will be happy to work with you. If you need help, your state coordinator knows of trainers and behaviorists who can help. If you feel you cannot handle the behavior issue on your own even with the help of professionals, your state coordinator can step in to take the Airedale and place them with a trainer for a while or with another more-experienced foster home.

## **Length of Time in Foster Care**

Time in foster care is time well spent for many dogs. A good rule of thumb is no less than one week in foster care. Usually we prefer two weeks. You may be tempted to move a dog more quickly, but remember the placement you select will likely be your foster's home for the rest of his life. Hasty, convenient placements often backfire and the dog gets bounced again, or the home keeps the dog and is miserable with his behavior. We don't promise your foster can be placed in two weeks. It takes as long as it takes to find the right match for each dog.

Many homes who adopt hastily soon experience "buyer's remorse." They become angry and hostile with rescue when they find unexpected behavior or health problems that weren't discovered in foster care. It can be difficult to impossible to extract dogs from an unhappy situation if the owner does not cooperate.

*A male was removed from an outdoor situation on a chain. After a short time in a first-time foster home, he was placed in an adjoining state with owners who were very excited. Soon after placement the owners called. They were experiencing problems with dominance and growling. They disregarded all advice from rescue volunteers and were playing tug-of-war and other rough games. They allowed him to sleep on the bed and couch. After some aggressive behavior directed at the wife, they sought local training help. They refused to surrender the dog to rescue, preferring to handle things themselves. When training failed to correct the behavior they notified rescue to say they did not want the dog. Within 24 hours, while rescue was making arrangements to retrieve the dog, they euthanized him.*

It has been our experience that the two-week mark is often the end of the “adjustment” period and the foster’s behavior may change. They are starting to feel comfortable in your home with your routine and begin to act more like their usual self. This is why we recommend at least two weeks in foster care.

## **Foster Home Participation in the Placement**

Your state coordinator will be receiving and screening applications for adoption. When they have approved applicants who might be a good fit, they will share the application and home visit information with you. You are encouraged to talk with the prospective adopter yourself and even meet with them if possible to see how they interact with your foster. You can be as involved as you would like to be in the placement of your foster. When the final decision is being made, the foster home should always have veto power if they have serious objections to the placement. They deserve to be part of the placement decision.

One important thing to remember is that neither the foster family nor the state coordinator should be placing the Airedale independently. Each should be communicating with the other throughout the process. If you do decide to meet with a potential adopter, do not promise them your foster dog. Talk over your visit with the state coordinator afterwards and go from there. There are lots of paperwork and procedures involved that the state coordinator needs to handle before an adoption can become final.

## **Placement Procedures**

You will be the keeper of your foster’s vet records and occasionally some additional paperwork. Keep this all together so that you can pass on appropriate papers to the new adopter.



- ✓ First, PLEASE gather all of the vet records, including all vaccinations, tests, results, spay/neuter, surgeries or anything else you have about the dog to show that the dog is up to date on everything and that SOAR has taken care of anything pertaining to this dog’s health. We have seen some people put these records in something as nice as a special folder along with notes from the foster family about the dog’s likes, dislikes or anything that would help the new family adjust to the dog. You can also just put these records in something as simple as an envelope. Regardless of how fancy, this information MUST travel with the dog to his new home. Our Placement Contract asks the new family to take the dog to their own vet within one week from the date of adoption so that they are satisfied that the dog is healthy and ready for his new life. Many vets will not want to want handle a dog without any records. If the new home does not have this information, it makes us look bad and disorganized. We should be taking care of medical issues, spay/neuter and inoculations, but to the new home or the new vet, it doesn’t look like we are.

Be sure to black out the previous owner’s name on any vet documents. We do NOT send AKC paperwork to a new adopter. Return this to the coordinator if you happen to have it.



- ✓ If the dog has a favorite toy, blanket, treat, etc. please send this along also. A blanket with your smell on it that goes with him or her helps them transition into the new home. It holds a little bit of you (the foster family) in it. Many new families like to know what the dog's birth date is. If you know this info, please include it.
- ✓ You MUST bathe the dog a day or two before he or she is scheduled to meet their new mom or dad. The dog should also be groomed if possible. A little "fluffy" looking is okay, but if it is approaching dreadlocks, the dog needs to be scheduled for a grooming. I know that some of you will bath or groom yourself, and we appreciate that, but if not, contact a groomer. You can ask the groomer if they will give a discount for rescues, but even if they say no, get them bathed for sure and groomed (if needed) ANYWAYS! SOAR will pay for this expense if you need to have a professional do it. Again, sending a smelly dog that should have been bathed and groomed reflects badly on us. Most adoptive families are anxiously awaiting the arrival of their new dog and this can really turn them off. We are asking these families to give us an adoption donation of \$300 to \$400, and in return, we should be giving them a dog that is truly ready to start their new life with them. A clean, groomed dog feels better about himself or herself, and it really helps them "show off" to their new mom and dad.
- ✓ If the Placement Contract was not handled ahead of time, the Placement Contract MUST filled out at the beginning of the transport by either the coordinator or the foster family. These people are the most familiar with this information. We are asking that the Placement Contract be signed and a donation received at the time the new family gets their dog. Again, it does not reflect well on us when we are asking for this form to be signed without being filled in completely or properly. Also, there should be TWO copies of the form filled out as the new family should have their own copy to keep. Please don't leave this important step to a transport volunteer who may know nothing about the information or the dog.
- ✓ If this is to be a foster Placement Contract, you should have a third copy handy to give the new family for the final placement. Make sure you include a self-addressed envelope so the new family does not have to wonder where to send it.
- ✓ You should also fill out a Foster Home report for the new family so that they can know as much as possible about your foster and make his transition easier.
- ✓ Send along at least a couple of days of food that your foster is used to eating – more if the transport is a long one and may involve overnights. This gives the transporters something your foster is used to eating to feed him along with way if necessary. It also gives the new family something to mix with your foster's new food to help them transition. Familiar treats and water are also recommended.

## **Adopting Your Foster**

As much as we hate to lose a good foster home, we realize that sometimes you will bond with a particular foster. Just let your state coordinator know of this so they can take care of the paperwork and procedures to make the placement permanent.

## **Failed Placements**

We hope this never happens, but in reality, it sometimes does. If so, you will be the first person contacted to see if you are in a position to take your foster back while we look for a new home.