



## **Fostering Protocols Malinois Rescue League**

Fostering is one of the most important jobs in rescue. As a foster, you will be providing us with valuable information about the temperament of your foster dog which helps us to find the best possible match for his/her permanent home. You will also be helping to prepare your foster dog for his/her future life through training and daily management.

We have developed breed specific training and management protocols that we require all fosters to follow. These protocols were designed to help ensure the safety of our fosters as well as the dogs. In addition to keeping everyone safe, following these protocols will put your foster dog in the best possible position for a successful adoption while maintaining a confident and balanced temperament.

Dog behavior management is an essential component of dog training. In daily management, we control the dogs environment in such a way to stop and/or prevent unwanted behaviors until the dog is fully trained.

Not all dogs have the same temperament or behavior issues, so here I will discuss the basics of management and training and will customize the protocols further for each individual dog as needed.

Prior to the arrival of your foster dog, we will schedule a virtual chat with you to go over the protocols and answer any questions you may have.

### **DO'S AND DONT'S**

#### **DONT'S**

- DO NOT INTRODUCE YOUR FOSTER DOG TO RESIDENT DOGS OR ANY OTHER ANIMALS UNTIL YOU RECEIVE APPROVAL FROM MRL.
- DO NOT TAKE YOUR FOSTER DOG OUT WALKING UNTIL YOU RECEIVE APPROVAL FROM MRL.
- DO NOT TAKE YOUR FOSTER DOG TO ANY KIND OF DOG PARK.

## DONT'S CONT.

- Do not allow your foster dog to get up on any furniture.
- Do not tether your foster dog.

## DO'S

- Crate your foster dog according to the protocols below.
- Feed in crate.
- Use a drag line.
- Ignore pushy and demanding behavior.
- Be aware of giving too much attention or affection during the first few weeks.
- Have your foster dog earn all treats.
- Use caution when giving your foster dog bones or bulky sticks, etc.
- Give your foster dog only one or two toys to play with at a time.
- Let us know immediately if your foster dog exhibits any reactivity towards other dogs or humans.

## **RESIDENT DOGS**

Regardless of how well you know your own dog, introductions of your foster to any resident dogs or any other household or farm animals, must be done over a period of time. This is extremely important, as one mistake could inadvertently cause your foster dog to develop life long aggression issues towards other dogs.

## **WALKING**

Do not take your foster dog out walking until you receive approval from MRL. It is important that you build a relationship with your foster dog first so that he/she will look to you if any kind of problem should arise.

## **DOG PARKS**

Dog parks are not a good idea and must be avoided.

## **NO DOGS ON FURNITURE**

Do not allow your foster dog to jump up on couches, beds, etc. This can cause the dog to think his/her status is equal to yours as well as start a bad habit that the permanent adopters may not allow.

## **TETHERING**

Never tie the dog out, as this builds frustration and eventually leads to aggression.

## **CRATE**

Crating is a huge part of management. Crating time will depend upon your foster dogs temperament, how much time you put into training and whether or not there are other resident dogs in the home.

For dogs without serious behavior issues, expect to crate the dog for at least the first two weeks at all times, unless you are directly working with the dog. This includes training sessions, direct play time or when practicing time spent on the “place”

Ideally, the crate should be in a place where the dog can be part of the household, he should not be sequestered.

If the dog barks or cries while in the crate, it is best to ignore him. For dogs that have issues with the crate and exhibit excessive vocalization or continuously try to break out to the point of injury, let me know and I'll help you work the dog through it.

*\*\*\*\*Again, crating rules will be different for dogs with aggression or when there are multiple dogs in the home.*

## **FEEDING**

Food is a valuable resource that we can use for training, food can also help our dogs see us as the leader because food is a resource that we control. Ideally, if you have the time, all food should be fed from your hand for at least the first two weeks, while having the dog work for it. If hand feeding is not possible, a food puzzle is a good option.

All food must be earned, so if you must feed from a bowl, at the very least, ask the dog to sit and then release to eat after compliance.

Unless you are hand feeding, the dog should always be fed while in his/her crate. This will help to prevent resource guarding issues from beginning and it will also help to make a positive association with the crate.

If eating out of a bowl, give the dog 15 minutes to finish, after 15 minutes remove the food bowl and any uneaten food.

\*\*\*\*\* **Never free feed** \*\*\*\*\*

## **DRAG LINE**

The dog should be wearing a drag line whenever he/she is out of the crate for at least the first week. Dogs with more serious behavior issues may wear them longer. A drag line is a long line or long piece of rope without a loop or knot at the end so it doesn't get caught on furniture, etc.

\*\*\**Never attach a drag line to a prong, martingale or choke collar, only use a flat collar*

## **PUSHY & DEMANDING BEHAVIOR**

Pushy and demanding behavior is anything your dog does to try to get your attention. This includes, but is not limited to:

Barking, whining, pawing, nudging, mouthing, jumping on and staring at you. These behaviors should be ignored, COMPLETELY. Scolding the dog, pushing him away from you, giving him a command, and even looking at him/her are all forms of attention. I cannot emphasize enough that any behavior you mark with attention, even negative attention will reinforce the behavior and you will likely to see more of it.

When your foster dog exhibits pushy and demanding behaviors, quietly turn your back and walk away. Once the dog settles, you can give him/her a command and then reward with attention, this way you are giving the attention on your terms, not the dogs.

The dog will see you as the leader once you set clear limits and can effectively communicate the rules by always rewarding correct behaviors as they occur, while preventing or immediately removing the rewards for undesirable behaviors before they are accidentally reinforced. When you are consistent and stick to the plan, the good behaviors become habits and the dog will look to you to guide him/her.

## **AFFECTION & ATTENTION**

During the initial management phase, the dog will be learning where his/her place is in the hierarchy of your home. Pushy and demanding behaviors should be ignored (see below) but you should also limit attention and affection during the first few weeks which will help your foster dog understand that he/she does not have equal status with any humans in the household. If your dog is in the crate or practicing staying on a "place" you should basically ignore him/her unless giving a command.

## **TREATS**

Treats should only be given to the dog when earned during a training session or when you ask something of the dog.

## **BONES, ETC.**

Again, all treats must be earned. You can give the dog a bone to chew on while he/she is in crate. Once dog loses interest in bone, remove it from the crate. This also helps to prevent resource guarding issues from beginning and helps to provide a positive association with the crate.

## **TOYS**

Treat toys as if they were a library book. You own all of the toys and the dog can borrow them. They should not have a "toy box" with unlimited toys at their disposal, instead, give the dog one or two toys at a time and then put the toys away when finished. You can cycle through different toys.