



Ruff Start Animal Rescue: Foster Program Guide

Welcome to the Ruff Start Foster Family!

“Saving one animal won’t change the world, but it will change the world for that one animal.”

Thank you for your interest in fostering with Ruff Start Animal Rescue! As a 100% foster-based rescue operating across Alberta (including Calgary, Edmonton, and Medicine Hat), our foster families are the absolute heartbeat of our mission.

Fostering is one of the most rewarding, fun, and heartwarming things you can do—but it is also a commitment that requires patience, dedication, and flexibility. Before you fill out your application, here is a complete look at what to expect, what we provide, and what we ask of our foster heroes.

1. What to Truly Expect: The Reality of Fostering

While fostering comes with cuddles and joyful moments, it is not just about hanging out with cute dogs. Many of our dogs come from overcrowded shelters, stray environments, or neglectful situations.

- **The Ultimate Goal:** Your job is to teach your foster dog how to live in our world, build confidence, and show them love and compassion while preparing them medically and behaviorally for adoption.
- **Expect Challenges & Decompression:** Dogs need time to adjust. Expect a dog to be overwhelmed or shut down at first. You must be willing to work through initial hurdles and give them space to learn.
- **The House-Training Minimum:** We can never guarantee that a dog arriving into care is house-trained. **All foster homes must be willing and able to work on house-training.**
- **The "3-3-3 Rule" of Decompression:**
 - **3 Days:** Feeling overwhelmed and nervous. They may not want to eat or show their true personality.
 - **3 Weeks:** Starting to settle in, understand routines, and test boundaries.
 - **3 Months:** Fully comfortable, trusting, and showing their true, wonderful self.

2. What We Provide (100% Covered)

We never want finances to be a barrier to saving a life. Ruff Start covers all necessary expenses associated with your foster animal, including:

- **Supplies:** Food, bowls, collars, leashes, crates, and bedding.
- **Medical Care:** 100% of pre-approved veterinary care, including vaccines, spay/neuter surgeries, dewormers, and microchips.
- **Support:** Access to a passionate community, behavioral resources, and mentorship from our dedicated volunteer team.

3. Foster Home Requirements & Expectations

- **Time Commitments & Flexibility:** How long a dog stays in care depends entirely on the dog and when a suitable adoption application is received for them. Small dogs often find homes quicker, while larger dogs or those with special needs may stay longer. We never rush adoptions; we focus on finding the *perfect* fit, so our fosters must be flexible with timelines.
- **Leaving Dogs Alone:** Normal work hours (a standard workday) are perfectly fine! However, foster dogs should never be left alone overnight or for extended, excessive work hours.
- **Resident Pet Requirements:** To keep everyone safe, your personal pets must be up-to-date on their core vaccines. Exceptions for intact (unspayed/unneutered) personal pets are evaluated on a strict case-by-case basis.
- **Approved Vet Clinics:** You must be willing and able to transport your foster animal to one of our designated partner veterinary clinics for routine or emergency appointments. (We are always adding new partners across our hub cities!).
- **Training Philosophy:** Ruff Start strictly utilizes and believes in force-free, positive reinforcement training methods. We expect our fosters to uphold these standards.
- **Communication via WhatsApp:** Our primary method of group support, safety checks, and daily communication is WhatsApp. Fosters must be active and responsive on the app.
- **The Adoption Process:** You know your foster dog best! We require fosters to actively participate in the adoption process by joining interview calls and hosting meet-and-greets with approved potential adopters.

4. How the Matching Process Works

We want both you and the foster dog to succeed! We will always speak to you ahead of time about the dog we have in mind for your home.

Please Note: While you can always say "no" if a specific dog doesn't feel like the right match, we ask that our foster homes aren't overly picky if the dog matches the baseline criteria and lifestyle preferences you listed on your application.

5. The Application & Onboarding Timeline

- **Step 1: The Application.** Submit your online foster application.

- **Step 2: The Interview & Home Check.** A volunteer will reach out via text, email, or phone to schedule a phone interview and coordinate a virtual or in-person home safety check.
- **Step 3: Onboarding.** Once approved, you will be invited into our WhatsApp foster community and we will coordinate getting your essential supplies to you.
- **Step 4: Saving a Life!** We match you with a dog, you welcome them home, and the journey begins.

Goodbyes are Hard (But Rewarding): Saying goodbye to a foster dog can bring a few tears, but watching them go to a carefully vetted, loving forever family knowing *you* saved their life makes it completely worth it. (And yes, "foster failing" happens, but our goal is to keep saving more lives!).

Ready to make a difference?

<https://www.ruffstartanimalrescue.com/dog-foster-application>