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cheerfuldogs chronicles

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Issue 26

A World of Dogs: Home Advantage

Most rescue groups rely on a network of foster volunteers for their life-saving work. As a rescue strategy, it works if done well.

Having foster homes solves space constraints, drastically cuts the occurrence of communicable diseases, and better prepares the dogs for adoption into permanent homes. A foster dog sleeps in a real home. Baths and human interaction are part of her routine. She is walked on leash every day, and lives as part of a family. Consequently, potential adopters get a much clearer picture of the dog's true personality than they would from the frightened, bored, frustrated, and desperate version of her they'd likely find in a shelter kennel.



For many shelters, a primary obstacle to expanding their foster programmes has been finding enough foster homes. The problem may not be just a shortage of dedicated dog lovers, but also that it requires a lot of skills and resourcefulness on the part of the foster volunteer to implement the programme properly. Besides a basic knowledge of pet care, husbandry and health, the foster volunteer needs to be able to read canine body language to understand and recognise stress in the dog she cares for. She must also be adept at managing situations in the home so that the fostered dog can be comfortable in a fear-free environment. Sometimes, help from a qualified professional is needed.



cont.

... home advantage

Another problem a foster volunteer may face is the emotional toll of taking in a dog and have him as your own, only to hand him over to someone else a few weeks or months later. Good-byes can be tearful and countless rescue dogs have gone into homes as fosters but emerged as family members because parting with them was just too hard. But other foster volunteers swear that, even at a personal level, the rewards outweigh the costs. Many stay in touch with adopters through email or social networks, getting photo updates and little notes about their former charges' new lives. At the end of the day, more lives — of perfectly lovable dogs — are saved. Surely that's worth a dip into a box of Kleenex every now and again.



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Did You Know: The Dog Rose?

The dog rose — Latin name *Rosa canina* — is native to Europe and parts of Africa and Asia. This wild, climbing shrub has been associated with dogs since ancient Greek and Roman times.

Why dog rose? Nobody knows for sure. One explanation is that people once believed the plant's nectar or root could cure rabies. Another is that *dog* is meant as a negative to describe the rose as wild, common, and therefore “inferior”.

Medicinal value. Dog roses are the source of rose hips, which are high in antioxidants and vitamin C and are used to make teas, jellies, and syrups. But beware, rose hips are inedible to humans and dogs in their raw state and must first be processed.



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