



Summer 2014 Edition

GRREAT Beginnings

www.GRREAT.org/fosters

Tips of the Trade

by Jessie Pickard, Adoption Coordinator

- 1) **Keep your fluffy friend comfortable this summer.** The first step: Please DON'T shave your dog! A thick coat isn't the main reason your dog may be uncomfortable in the warmer weather, it may very well be his coat's condition. A dog's healthy coat provides built-in climate control as well as a first line of defense against sunburn, thorny vegetation, and other hazards. Regular grooming is essential to your dog's health and overall well-being:
 - It helps us keep a close eye on the condition of our dog's skin, ears, and nails which may help solve small problems before they become big ones.
 - Regular brushing can prevent mats, which are not only unsightly and painful, but also help trap heat and moisture that can lead to hot spots and infections.
 - Choose a brush that is appropriate for your dog's coat type; one that strips out loose hair so air can circulate against his skin.
 - Take a look at the food and supplements your dog is getting and be sure to choose ingredients that help support a healthy coat.
- 2) **Keep your dog's head INSIDE the car!** If you need a reason why, take a look at your windshield and see the dirt, dings, and damage that accumulate on the hard glass over time. That same debris (rocks, bugs, leaves, twigs, etc) can cause a lot of damage to a vulnerable area of your dog's body. Foreign particles can become lodged in a dog's ears, nose, mouth or eyes, which can cause lacerations and infections. Strong, sustained wind can cause trauma to ear flaps and can dry eyes. Flying insects can sting, rocks can cut or blind, and an open-enough window could allow your dog to jump – OR FALL – out.
- 3) **Educate yourself about ticks IN YOUR AREA.** There is lots of general, sound info out there that is helpful for all of us to know, but a quick visit to the Risk Calculator on TICKENCOUNTER.ORG can help you plan a good strategy for your specific environment. General tick prevention strategies include.
 - Mow regularly
 - Remove weeds and leaves
 - Be sure garbage cans are rodent-proof (mice carry ticks)
 - Remove or safe-guard vegetation that attracts deer (deer carry ticks)
 - Use pesticides sparingly (they are becoming less effective and they can harm your pet)
 - Check for and remove ticks (be sure to include the head) as soon as they're noticed (a tick must be embedded 24-48 hours before spreading disease.) **TIP:** Use a hair dryer on the cool setting to help part thick coats so you can see down to the skin
 - Before a tick bites, try de-ticking using sticky Duct Tape
 - To de-tick clothes, throw everything into a hot dryer for ten minutes BEFORE washing so the ticks will desiccate and die (washing doesn't kill them, it just makes them smell nice)
 - After a tick bites, de-tick using a product designed to also remove the head. Try these: <http://www.amazon.com/Ticked-Off-Pets-Remover-White/dp/B00008434T> or <http://peticularproducts.com/tick-products.html>

Gratitude: Fostering a Golden Oldie

by Kim Wiff, Foster Home



Annie 12-046

As I write this, my husband and I are mourning the loss of our long-term-foster dog, Annie. She came to us two years ago when her owner was in the final stages of cancer, and he wanted to make sure she had a good home before he passed. Annie was the true 24 karat gold, and a real gem in every sense. At more than 15 years old, she had lived a good long life, and was still strong in spirit, but her body, in particular her kidneys, had failed her. Sadly, Annie's story is not a unique one. Every year GRREAT takes in other senior Goldens just like Annie, and it's not always easy to find a foster home for them.

Just as with the younger dogs, the senior dogs come into GRREAT for the same reasons – The changes in life's circumstances, unable to pay for vet bills, cause long-time owners to surrender their senior Golden or sometimes they are simply found as strays. It's a crushing and sad reality. Fortunately, for those of us who love old dogs, that means there are fostering opportunities. Personally, I prefer the senior Goldens. And I have a deep and abiding respect for the foster families that open their homes and hearts to them. These special dogs are typically so grateful to be with a family that pays attention to them, that it makes what has happened to them all the more painful to think about. The families that I know who prefer to foster (or adopt) the older dogs will often say, "They are my favorites." I share this viewpoint entirely.

It's totally understandable why so many love to foster the puppies and the younger dogs. What's not to love? Their energy and their antics, not to mention how cute they are, can cause practically anyone to say, "awww." The older Goldens can be another story. Sometimes people forget to see the, "awww" worthiness in those beautiful white faces and think only of their age and how long it may take to place them with a new family.

I will confess, that I used to be the same way. For several years we fostered the younger dogs and would never have considered fostering an "older" golden. All of that changed in 2003 when we fostered our first 10 year old named Cougar. He was being returned to GRREAT, and I was only supposed to keep him over the weekend. I became so taken with him, that I offered to foster him, and later made him part of our family. While we continued to foster the younger dogs, deep inside, I was hooked on the seniors. When we sold our 3-level house in "the city" we bought one in "the country" with solely fostering senior dogs in mind.

There are so many benefits in fostering the older Goldens. When you open your home to them, you are giving them a precious chance to have the life they truly deserve for their golden-years. I think we

all agree that it's certainly not their fault that they have aged and have lost the family they had devoted their life to. Yes, it is true that some of the older dogs that come into GRREAT will need special care, so do some of the younger dogs. But if you think about it, we may also need "special care" one day. So, think about yourself, and how you will want to be treated when your step slows, your vision isn't as clear, your hearing is not as keen and your memory is not as sharp.

Aside from the medical needs they may have, the senior dogs are typically calm, gentle and easy-going, and most of the time they cause no trouble in their foster homes. They often require less exercise than their younger counterparts, and they don't need as much room in your home because they are content to be by your side, sharing their Golden love with you and your family and whomever else they may meet. Most of the older Goldens are low maintenance and well-trained dogs. They fit easily into many family situations.

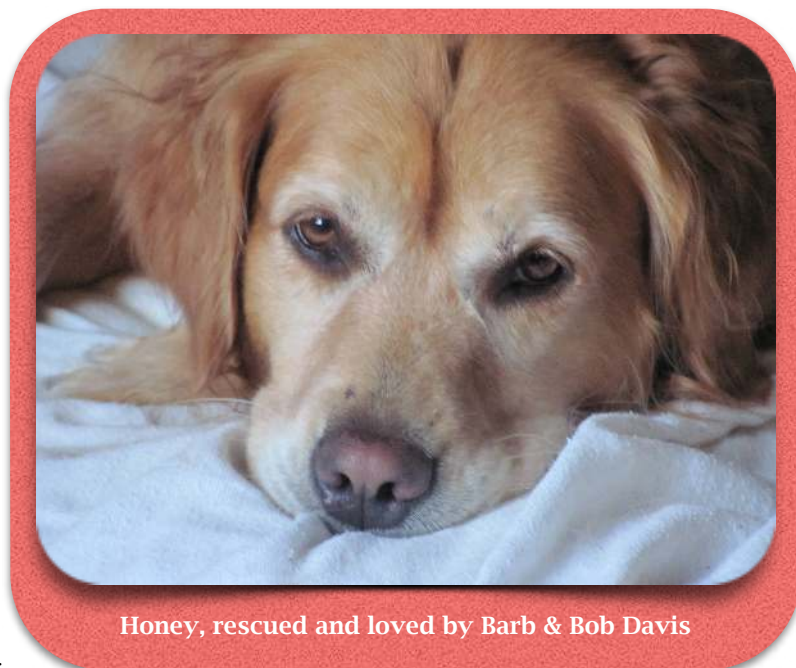
As I've already mentioned, fostering older Goldens can *sometimes* mean that they take longer to place into their new homes. And yes, just as with the younger dogs, they may come with their own set of issues from previous experiences and homes, but I can promise that once you look into those soul filled eyes and see the thanks and the gratitude, you will quickly realize that you have been given an extraordinary foster dog, and all those worries you may have had will fade away. It has been my privilege to care for and know these precious seniors these last seven years. They have touched our lives in countless ways, and it would take more than this column to explain this rewarding experience. So, take a chance, foster a senior dog and find out for yourself what others just like me already know.

My Dog is a Little Horse....err...Hoarse

by Lucinda Twining, Medical Coordinator

Located at the back of a dog's throat is their larynx (voice box) and its function is the same as the larynx in their human companions; it allows the dog to vocalize (bark, growl, whine, or "talk"). As it does in humans, the muscles open and close appropriately to either allow air to move in and out of the lungs or to allow food or water to move into the stomach.

Some dogs can develop a condition called laryngeal paralysis. This is when the muscles that control the larynx become weak or paralyzed they can no longer do their job correctly. This condition generally occurs in middle-aged or senior large breed dogs (Labrador and Golden Retrievers, as well as Saint Bernards, Newfoundlands, and Irish Setters among others). There are a few breeds where there is a genetic component to this condition and puppies are born with it; however, for most dogs, like Goldens, the actual cause is unknown; some possible causes include hypothyroidism, Cushing's disease, tumors, or trauma to the neck.



Honey, rescued and loved by Barb & Bob Davis

Often the first signs that a dog has laryngeal paralysis are a hoarse sounding bark or change in the pitch of the bark, noisy breathing, gagging or choking when eating or drinking, panting or gasping, and exercise intolerance. This condition can lead to some serious complications, so if you suspect that your dog/foster dog has laryngeal paralysis, it is important to get him/her in to see the vet.

One of the biggest problems for dogs with this condition is heat and/or exercise intolerance. As we all know, dogs need to be able to pant to help regulate their body temperature. Since laryngeal paralysis makes breathing more difficult for dogs with this condition, they may become overheated quickly which can become life-threatening.

Be sure to talk with your vet about options for treating your dog and the symptoms of various complications. Meanwhile, here are a few tips to help you manage some of the day to day care.

- Walk your dog on cool days or during the early morning/late evening hours when the temperatures are lower. Keep the walks short and exertion level low.
- When you walk your dog, do not attach the leash to your dog's collar; that can cause pressure to the dog's neck adding to breathing difficulty. Instead, attach the leash to a harness.
- If you need to take your dog outside for a walk during the warmer part of the day, you can purchase special cooling collars that can help keep your dog cooler, but again, do not keep him outside any longer than necessary and do not attach the leash to the cooling collar. Here is a website that offers cooling collars - <http://motleymutt.com/Cooling-Dog-Products/c134/index.html>.
- If your dog begins having difficulty breathing/panting, you can try putting rubbing alcohol on the pads of his paws or put his paws in cool water. Then, if he/she continues to have difficulty, it is important to get him/her to the vet or ER vet quickly.

While there is a surgical option for this condition, often dogs are not diagnosed until later in life, making surgery a little too risky for them. If your dog is young enough for the surgery, do your homework, as the surgery can have some consequences you should know about before you consent to it. However, whether your dog is too old to safely have the surgery or you decide not to proceed with the surgery for your dog, the tips above, as well as suggestions from your vet, can help you manage your dog's condition and keep him comfortable and happy.



A Handbook for Foster Homes, Both New and Experienced

by Skye Anderson

How to Foster Dogs: From Homeless to Homeward Bound, by Pat Miller (Dogwise, 2014, 158 pages, \$14.95)

Rating: 4 out of 5 Bones



Not sure you have what it takes to take on a dog - or another dog? Haven't had a dog since you were a child when your mother probably 'did it all'? Never had a dog but would love to get one? Want to learn about dogs?

Fostering may just be your answer.

You Want to Foster, But. . .

The dog world needs more foster families and yours may be just right!

You will have all the help you need if you research rescue/shelter organizations to find the right fit, gain some knowledge via books like *How to Foster Dogs: From Homeless to Homeward Bound* and from experienced people, and keep at it by asking the right questions for you.

Temporary Dogs

Foster is also a stellar reference for the experienced foster family, answering questions you may never have thought to ask.

Superb Organization, Easy to Read

Foster begins by defining the term, fostering, and by detailing the types of organizations one can foster for (or foster with), as well as the benefits for you and for dogs. *Foster* then delves into the various kinds of shelters and rescues and how to select one whose philosophy matches yours and which offers a continuing education and support program for foster families.

"Bringing Your Foster Home"

Don't know how to get ready for your foster dog, how to introduce him to your canine, feline, and human family as well as his new routine? Pat Miller is here to help, and to give solutions for when things go wrong. She also includes sections on socialization and the all-important record keeping.

Feeding, grooming, veterinary care, exercise, training (and training tools) are covered in Chapter 4 while the final chapter will help you say goodbye – if the foster-dog foster-family match doesn't work out or when you, bittersweetly, turn your foster over to his forever family. It's OK to say goodbye.

Prevention and Solutions

Chapters 5-9 discuss common issues that fosters (and all dogs) may have – and how to help those dogs. From common problems like barking, escaping and house soiling to the more complex behavior issues of fearful dogs ("Finding Courage"), and topics such as aggression and separation anxiety/distress ("Home Alone," a dog's worst nightmare).

Miller defines and offers solutions of management and training but she begins the 'problems' chapters with refuting the fallacy of dominance and the myth of the alpha dog, a much needed discussion in every dog book, for every dog family, in every dog class. Miller was one of the first to help the dog training community heal the damage the 'dominance' philosophy has caused to dogs and the bond between them and their people.

Who is Pat Miller?

Dog trainer and horsewoman Pat Miller got her start in California shelters decades ago and has made a successful business career with animals. She has a knack for jumping on the bandwagon and making a new dog sport or activity more popular by learning about it early, then teaching others and writing about it.

Must Read

Foster is a must-read for all shelter and rescue people, all foster families and even new dog people! But, it is not just a book to read once: rather, keep it handy for the life of your dog. "Ready, Set, Go!"

Read more about it: DogWise is a superb source of EverythingDog – simply the best publishing company and bookseller for dog people. Reach them at www.dogwise.com

Caveat: This book was sent to me by the publisher for review.

Skye Anderson has a master of science degree (in avian cytogenetics) and writes for Yankee Dog News and other publications. She teaches canine massage and first aid, and has presented workshops at Goldstock, the Golden Retriever rescue camp, for more than 10 years (she is a Lab and Golden Retriever person). She can be reached at skyebird48@hotmail.com.