

7 Things You Should Know about Fostering a Dog with Kennel Cough!

Kiera Rogerson -Community Pet Coordinator at Lynchburg Humane Society

1. **It's okay to put your own pets first, but that doesn't mean you can't foster!** Keep your resident pets up to date (recommended every 6 months) with their Bordetella vaccine anytime you foster dogs with LHS. If your dog is generally young and healthy, up to date on their Bordetella vaccine and does not have secondary concerns, with proper precautions they are much less likely to contract kennel cough. Dogs in shelters have suppressed immune systems due to the stress of shelter life, which makes them more susceptible. Seattle Animal Shelter's Dog Foster manual says "If you have a dog at home and plan to foster a dog with kennel cough we have found that if your own dog is healthy and been vaccinated annually, then your dog will most likely not get sick."
2. **Keep the dogs separated! Quarantine for everybody's best interests.** By doing so you are not only placing your pets' safety first, but allowing the foster dog a chance to recover in a home. Kennel or crate the pet ideally in their own room. If possible have different routes to the outdoors and separate the yard. Maybe your foster pet goes out front on leash so your resident pet can go out back in the yard without risk of exposure. Pets should be separated until the 10 day treatment has been completed. Some coughing may linger and be treated but the infection has subsided.
3. **Know what to expect!** There are varying levels of kennel cough, which usually starts with a viral infection causing mild sniffles and cough. Fighting this virus decreases the pets immune system making them more susceptible to secondary bacterial infections (think how humans get sinus infections from colds or even allergies). Dogs in homes can fight this virus much easier than stressed shelter dogs. Shelter dogs also inevitably come in contact with more germs that cause these secondary infections. Expect nasal discharge and coughing hacks. Their phlegm and slobber are what spread the contagion. The medical team and Community Pet Coordinator will discuss the pets individual concerns and treatments with you.
4. **Wash your hand and minimize contact! (Hmmm sounds familiar)** This is pretty straight forward, if they are sick you don't have to let them sleep in your bed and give them smooches. Minimize contact with walks and meals (and some love). Just being in a home is much better than a kennel and improves their healing process. Change your clothes when coughed or slobbered on.
5. **Don't let dogs share toys or water bowls!** This should go without saying, if they are separated they shouldn't be doing this anyway.
6. **Expect a different dog when they get better!** While recovering rest is very important, so leash walking only and lots of crate time is ultimately what is best for them. Keep them occupied by feeders or frozen kong treats (ask staff for one when picking up if they are available). You may need to encourage them to eat by giving yummy foods like wet food, baby food, chicken and rice, or eggs. Proper food and nutrition will also help them recover faster!
7. **Kennel Cough delays the adoption timeframe but you can help speed it back up.** While being treated for KC its so much harder for a dog to get adopted. By fostering dogs with kennel cough you will not only speed up the recovery of the pet but give them a jumpstart above the others by telling

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us all about the pet in the home! This is valuable information and truly helps the dogs find the best possible fit in their future adopters!