

Hounds in Homes

Foster Carer Guidelines

Everything you need to know about fostering a retired racing greyhound with Hounds in Homes: your responsibilities, our support, and how we find each hound their forever home.

HOUNDS IN HOMES • GREYHOUND RESCUE, SYDNEY • REHOMING GROUP NUMBER R251000253

Welcome, foster carer

Thank you for opening your home to a greyhound. Foster care is about giving a retired racer time to rest, learn and settle into life as a pet, and about helping us understand each dog so we can match them with the right family.

These guidelines outline the responsibilities, expectations and procedures for everyone in the Hounds in Homes foster program. By signing the declaration at the end, you agree to the conditions and responsibilities set out here.

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1 Support & emergency contacts

You are never on your own. Please contact the Hounds in Homes coordinators for support, guidance or emergencies.

PRIMARY CONTACT
Trisha Murphy
0422 570 822

SECONDARY CONTACT
Jenny
0414 999 945

> **In an emergency**
> If there is an emergency about your foster dog's health, safety or behaviour, contact Trisha Murphy first wherever possible. For veterinary emergencies, see section 8.

Please raise any concerns with your coordinator only. Seeking advice from others can lead to problems, and our coordinators have already lined up experienced greyhound advocates ready to help.

2 Records & Google Drive

All foster carers use the Hounds in Homes Google Drive for resources, fact sheets and record keeping.

- Resource folder for fact sheets, the library of resources and your dog's folder.
- HIH Dog Tracker, the spreadsheet we use to follow every dog.

You agree to upload

- Veterinary records and invoices
- Assessments
- Behavioural notes and updates

...to your dog's designated folder.

You agree to keep the tracker up to date

- Vaccinations
- Desexing status
- Flea, tick and worming treatments
- Medical updates
- Behavioural observations

Please update records promptly after appointments, treatments or incidents so they stay accurate.

3 Your responsibilities

As a foster carer you agree to provide safe, compassionate and responsible care. You will:

- Understand and support your dog through decompression, including the “3-3-3 rule” adjustment period (section 4).
- Give flea, tick and worming treatment on day 1 if required, and record it in the HIH Dog Tracker.
- Work through behavioural and adjustment challenges with patience, consistency and positive reinforcement methods only.
- Support your dog through common transition issues: toilet training, stairs and slippery floors, fear responses, separation adjustment and getting used to household routines.
- Use a muzzle on public outings and dog introductions where required by Hounds in Homes guidelines or NSW legislation.
- Not take your dog to dog parks or off-leash areas unless Hounds in Homes has approved it.
- Never let your dog roam unsupervised or escape the property.
- Provide daily exercise suited to your greyhound's age, health and fitness.

Your foster dog must always have

- Fresh drinking water
- Appropriate nutrition
- Safe shelter
- Comfortable bedding
- A secure environment

A foster carer must never physically punish, abuse, neglect or intentionally harm the dog under any circumstances.

4 The first days: decompression

When your greyhound arrives, they may show signs of being nervous or afraid. This is normal.

Signs of nervousness

- Heavy panting
- Timid behaviour
- Excessive water drinking
- Chewing paws
- Refusing to eat or drink
- Pacing
- Hiding in small spaces such as bathrooms or laundries
- Cowering, tail between the legs

What helps

Let them decompress in a quiet part of your home or in a large crate so they feel secure. Do not force them to interact. Give them space, show patience and understanding, and let them come to you when they are ready.

Day-one health check

- Check their ears, eyes, teeth and gums.
- Check their nails and paws.
- Look for any signs of limping or soreness.
- Check for fleas. Most have had treatment, but transport trailers are often riddled with fleas, so a dog coming off transport probably has some.
- Check for worms in their stools. We have wormers available.
- Give a NexGard Spectra on day 1 and add it to the tracker. It is the safest way to protect them from fleas, worms and ticks.
- A long walk before going home can help with bonding, potentially with other dogs from the home.

> **The 3-3-3 rule**
>
> A simple way to understand how a rescue dog adjusts to a new home. Expect a decompression process over the first **3 days**, the first **3 weeks** and the first **3 months** in their new home.

5 Common questions

Are they toilet trained?

We don't know. Greyhounds are generally clean, and some trainers give regular toilet breaks from their pens, others don't. Some pens are grassed, so the dog toilets whenever they like, and this can continue in a new environment. Some arrive fully toilet trained, others have a few accidents, and others have a lot. It's the foster carer's role to discuss strategies with our coordinators. We have toilet trained so many greyhounds.

Are they okay on tiles and floorboards?

Some greyhounds have never stepped onto tiles or floorboards and are terrified. We can provide yoga mats or carpet runners. Be prepared to have mats down for a while until they gain confidence.

Can they walk up my stairs?

Some learn fast and others take a while. Your coordinator will guide you, and lots of treats help.

Can I walk them on a lead?

Yes, but in the first week it's best to let them decompress and use the garden a lot. Most greyhounds have never seen another dog before. In the early days keep your distance from other dogs, and in busy areas use a muzzle until they have been properly assessed.

What if they become lead-reactive to a dog across the road?

This is often fear-based. Walk in quiet areas and slowly build up, keeping your distance. Use treats, distraction and positive engagement. They will improve, but it must be done slowly.

Can I take them to dog parks?

Not in the early days. Our experienced carers do this after assessments are done, always with the muzzle on. Your coordinator can organise it, as we know lots of empty, flat surfaces and secure fenced areas, so chat with your coordinator first.

What are the signs of aggression?

Aggression is often mistaken for a growl. A growl in a greyhound can mean many things and is not necessarily aggression. It is a way of communicating and must be respected. Listen, give them space when needed and don't overwhelm them. Remember, greyhounds are a gentle breed.

Can they resource guard food, toys or the sofa or bed?

Yes, especially in the early days. Not all do, but you must tell your coordinator if you see standing over an object, guarding or growling. There's no need to be scared. Stay calm and offer a higher-value treat, toy or squeaker. Once they have stepped away, you can safely remove the item.

- **Food:** leave them be when eating, and feed them separately if there are other dogs. No high-value treats such as bones.
- **Sofa:** use treats to get them down. Train them to stay in their beds, and never share your bed with a greyhound who may guard it.
- **Toys:** pack toys away if they guard them. Slowly teach sharing and play with tug toys. For dogs who don't guard, a toy box is fine.

What is sleep startle?

Wake them gently: call their name, never hover over them, and wait until they are fully awake. Turn the lights on and potter around the room until they wake. How would you like to be knocked out of a deep sleep?

Where should their bed go?

Place the bed in a corner away from foot traffic. When they are sleeping or resting, leave them be. We use screens in the early days.

Should I check their general health when they arrive?

We normally do this, but it's good practice for you too. Keep nails trimmed (by the vet) or use a Dremel. Keep ears and eyes clean. Check skin regularly and look for scratches. Use a balm on paw pads, and check for corns.

What do you provide for feeding?

We provide dry food. Foster carers provide fresh meats and fresh foods, as stated in our guidelines. We do receive fresh meat as a donation, but you need to organise pick-up with your coordinator. Your coordinator can tell you how much to feed based on your dog's weight.

Do I take them to the vet, or do you?

You will need to take them for their first health check, paid in advance by us. At this appointment, collect an M1 form to pass to your coordinator. All vet visits must be authorised unless it is an emergency. We'll tell you which vet to use depending on where you live.

6 What we provide

- As much information as we have on the dog. Please note this is likely limited.
- Muzzle
- Martingale collar
- Lead
- Dry food
- Bed, if needed (second-hand donation)
- Bowls, if needed

- Wormers, flea and tick treatment. If you would like to provide these yourself, we are grateful, as we rely on donations.
- Coats and toys, which we sometimes receive as donations but are not always available.

7 Walking & muzzle requirements

- For the **first 2 weeks** in care, a muzzle must be worn in any public space.
- If your foster has shown no signs of reactivity, the muzzle may then be removed when walking in an **on-lead** area.
- Muzzles must be worn in **off-lead areas at all times**.
- If a dog has shown signs of reactivity, muzzles must continue to be worn in public spaces.
- If there is a resident or visiting dog, we recommend your foster is muzzled in the home during introductions.
- A collar and harness is recommended for walking, for control.

8 Vet care & medical treatment

You agree to:

- Get your coordinator's approval before any non-emergency vet appointment or treatment.
- Tell Hounds in Homes immediately about any illness, injury, behavioural concern or medical emergency.
- Collect and upload all vet invoices, treatment summaries, vaccination certificates and medical documents after appointments or procedures.
- Give prescribed medication strictly as the vet instructs.
- Keep your dog up to date with all required vaccinations and preventative treatments while in your care.

> **Pre-approval and reimbursement**
>
> All vet visits must be pre-approved by your coordinator, except emergency treatment. Depending on the vet, the cost will be invoiced directly to Hounds in Homes, paid over the phone by your coordinator, or reimbursed to you. Appointments made without pre-approval will not be reimbursed, except emergency treatment.

Our vets

Clinic	Contact	Address
Advanced Vet Care (Lane Cove and Eastwood) advancedvetcarelanecove.com.au	(02) 8552 7800	143 Longueville Road, Lane Cove NSW 2066
Eastwood Veterinary Clinic Dr Mirko	(02) 7258 9900 hello@eastwoodveterinaryhospital.com.au	282 North Rd, Eastwood NSW 2122
Greystanes Veterinary Clinic Dr Anna and Dr Anita greystanesvet.com.au	(02) 9609 1500	26 Carnation St, Greystanes NSW 2145
Glebe Veterinary Clinic Dr Alex amsvet.com.au/glebe.html	See website	113 Glebe Point Road, Glebe NSW 2037
SASH All emergencies and pre-approved specialist appointments sashvets.com	(02) 9889 0289	1 Richardson Place, North Ryde NSW 2113

Minor vet visits vs more serious visits

Minor vet visits	More major or serious visits
• Routine health check or annual examination • Vaccinations and boosters • Nail trimming • Dental check-up and cleaning • Ear infection or itchy ears • Mild skin irritation, rash or allergies • Small cuts, scrapes or minor wounds • Mild stomach upset or diarrhoea • Flea, tick or intestinal worm treatment • Weight check or dietary advice • Minor limping or muscle strain • Checking a small lump or bump • Mild kennel cough • Eye irritation or minor conjunctivitis • Medication review or prescription renewal	• Broken bone or significant injury • Deep wound requiring surgery • Severe bloat / GDV • Major dental surgery • Serious infection • Cancer investigation or treatment • Significant heart problems • Emergency surgery • Hospitalisation for severe illness

Standard treatments

Most greyhounds arriving at Hounds in Homes are already desexed, vaccinated and heartworm tested, and their dentals are complete. For those who need desexing and vaccinations, your coordinator will organise a vet appointment on a day to suit, likely at Greystanes or Glebe Veterinary Clinic. Trisha will have forwarded the rehoming assistance scheme form to the vets. It will be reimbursed to the Hounds in Homes bank account once Trisha has emailed it to GRNSW.

Standard treatments are: desexing, heartworm test, C5 / C7 vaccine, and a dental check and clean.

Before surgery

- No food from 9pm the night before.
- Drop your greyhound off at 8:00am on the morning of surgery.
- Collection is usually around 4:30pm, but the vet will confirm a time on the day.

When you collect

- Make sure you have the vaccination certificate, desexing certificate, M1 forms, invoices and anaesthetic notes.
- Upload them to your dog's folder on the Drive.

Getting into the car after surgery

If you are able, lift your dog into the car by wrapping your arm around the back of the dog, so your elbow sits just under the tail. The vets can help, and we have a ramp available if needed. Watch the video.

9 Assessment

During their time in care, it's important to assess your dog's temperament and needs so they can be matched with their ideal family. Before they are put up for adoption, your coordinator will go through the assessment with you. You agree to complete and upload the Greyhound Assessment Form accurately and honestly, and to give regular behavioural observations and updates.

Walks on the lead

Observe freezing, fear triggers (noises and objects), reactivity, prey drive, lameness, stress and excessive pulling. If your dog is fearful, refrain from walks and make their world smaller until they're ready to go out again.

Other dogs

How are they around other dogs, in your home and on walks? Are they reactive? Always muzzle when introducing new dogs.

Cats

Unfortunately we don't test with cats.

Stairs

Introduce stairs early, as some greyhounds adapt right away. If they show fear, stop and reintroduce them later. They all get there in the end, with lots of rewards and treats.

Sleep startle

Also known as sleep aggression, this can happen when a dog is woken abruptly. Greyhounds are deep sleepers and often sleep with their eyes open. Reduce the chance by making sure they hear you approaching before you touch them. When startled they may growl or snarl but quickly snap out of it. It may not appear until they have settled in. If it occurs:

- The greyhound should only ever sleep on their own bed, placed in the corner of a room with two walls as security so nobody can step over them. If that's not possible, keep it out of high-traffic areas.
- They should never be on sofas or human beds. We often hear that after several years in their new home, many greyhounds grow out of their sleep startle.

Food aggression

All our greyhounds should be fed separately from resident dogs in the early days. Later, bowls can be placed at least a metre from other dogs, and feeding is always supervised. Never put your hands in the food bowl to test for aggression, as this is an outdated approach. High-value treats will almost always trigger guarding, so give them away from other dogs and children.

Prey drive

Prey drive is an important part of the assessment and we don't take it lightly. We observe behaviour while the dog wears a muzzle. Signs include stalking, a lowered neck, pawing, salivating, lip licking and, most of all, the “about to pounce” stance: staring and slow, quiet walking. We mark this as showing signs of prey drive and add “No small dogs” to their profile. Dogs with strong prey drive stay longer in foster care, as it can and does improve with time.

Children

We believe training children is a better outcome than testing greyhounds around them. Children should be taught how to be safe around all dogs, which is why we prefer older children for our greyhounds. Most greyhounds are great with children, but if we notice a greyhound is uncomfortable around them, we will reassess their foster home.

Resource guarding

Dogs can guard food, beds, their owner, toys and more. Never approach a dog who is resource guarding and try to take the item. Instead, find a high-value treat your dog loves more than the thing they are guarding, usually a strong-smelling moist food such as chicken. Learn the distance at which your dog begins to guard, as some greyhounds don't get possessive until you're quite close. Exchange the item and reward them. For beds, throw the treat on the ground so they come down off the bed or sofa, then resume training them to stay on their own bed, as with sleep startle.

Suitable for apartment living

How would the greyhound cope living in an apartment? This is generally determined by energy level and size.

More training resources are in the Drive under “Library of resources”.

10 Foster to adopt

Our Foster to Adopt program follows the same guidelines and responsibilities as standard foster care, with one important difference. If you intend to adopt the greyhound you are fostering, tell your coordinator clearly, so the adoption paperwork can be completed and signed over to you as the adopter.

> **Our “4 in, 4 out” system**
>
> We can only take in another greyhound when one of our current foster greyhounds has moved on to adoption or another suitable placement. We can't take in additional greyhounds while one remains in foster care.

This is mainly due to the financial costs of caring for each greyhound, including veterinary care, food, transport, other ongoing expenses and emergency veterinary care. It is therefore important that we know whether a foster placement is meant to become a permanent adoption.

If you are considering adopting your foster greyhound, please discuss it with your coordinator as early as possible, so we can plan properly and keep helping other greyhounds in need. You are still expected to follow all standard foster care responsibilities and guidelines until the adoption has been formally approved and the required paperwork completed.

11 The adoption process

Greyhound ready-for-adoption checklist

These are our goals for each greyhound in our care. There are exceptions to every rule, so please talk to your coordinator if your foster can't meet all of them.

- Desexed, with stitches removed
- At least C5 vaccination level (C7 preferred)
- Known injuries or short-term health issues assessed and, where possible, resolved. Trisha or your coordinator will advise on anything we will try to address before the dog is made available.
- Ongoing health issues understood, with a treatment plan and documents ready to pass to the adopter, such as vet reports, treatment plans for allergies or skin conditions, and dietary requirements
- Housetrained
- Walks well on a lead
- Doesn't freeze when out walking
- Can walk up and down stairs. We should aim to familiarise our dogs with the types of stairs they may meet in a home. They don't need to cope with large flights of steep stairs.
- A diet that suits the dog, with no ongoing tummy troubles
- Sleeps through the night
- Can be left alone for a few hours if necessary
- A good understanding of prey drive, reaction to children, reaction to other dogs, and the amount of exercise that suits the dog
- Any undesirable behaviour observed, such as food aggression, sleep startle, resource guarding or reactivity to other dogs, has been discussed with Trisha or your coordinator

Some dogs will have specific anxieties that can't be overcome and need managing, such as fear when out walking or separation anxiety. These need to be documented and discussed with prospective adopters.

Stage 1: getting them ready to advertise

1. Fill out the dog history template. It will be in your dog's folder once the coordinator has pre-filled some parts.
2. Go through the assessment with your coordinator.
3. Write the profile. There are lots of examples under adopted dogs.
4. Add pictures to your dog's folder.
5. Tick “ready for adoption” in the tracker.

Stage 2: potential matches

The coordinators vet the applications and send suitable ones through to you.

1. **Read the applications and call.** Have a chat with potential adopters about their experience and expectations, and share as much information as you can about your foster.
2. **Arrange a meeting.** If both sides are happy after the call, meet in person, either on a walk in the park or at a home visit, depending on what everyone is comfortable with. All members of the prospective family need to attend, including children and other dogs where possible.
3. **Decide if it's a good fit.** After the meeting, both sides decide whether the placement works. Discuss all aspects with your coordinator.
4. **Paperwork.** If both sides are happy, your coordinator sends out the paperwork: the dog's information, desex and vaccination certificates, adoption forms and change of ownership details.
5. **Pick-up.** Your coordinator confirms once all paperwork is complete and the adoption fee is paid. You can then arrange for your foster to be picked up.

> **Two-week trial**
>
> All dogs are automatically on a 2-week trial period and can be returned for a refund of the adoption fee less $100.

12 Foster carer declaration

I, the undersigned foster carer, declare that the information I have provided is true and correct. I acknowledge and agree to the following:

- I understand I will be required to sign a hard copy of the adoption or foster documentation.
- I have read the relevant fact sheets and understand NSW legislation on greyhound muzzle exemptions.
- I agree to provide valid photo identification, including a driver's licence, if requested.
- I understand the importance of ongoing training, structure and positive reinforcement in supporting the dog's adjustment.
- I accept responsibility for the dog's day-to-day care, welfare and wellbeing while the dog is in my care.
- I acknowledge that Hounds in Homes cannot guarantee the dog's future temperament, behaviour or medical condition.
- I understand the dog is placed solely as a domestic companion animal.
- I agree to comply with all local council regulations and laws on dog ownership, lead use and waste disposal.
- I agree to ensure the dog is registered with the relevant local council where applicable.
- I acknowledge that Hounds in Homes is not liable for injury, loss or damage caused by the dog once placed in foster or adoptive care.
- I acknowledge the recommendation to enrol the dog in an appropriate greyhound behavioural or training program if required.

Foster carer details

Foster carer name _____

Dog's name _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Hounds in Homes representative declaration

I, the undersigned representative of Hounds in Homes, confirm that the following conditions have been met to the best of our knowledge at the time of placement:

- Annual vaccinations have been completed and documentation provided.
- Flea, tick and worming treatments have been given and details disclosed.
- The dog has been desexed and certification provided where applicable.
- Any known medical conditions, medications or ongoing treatment requirements have been disclosed.
- A behavioural assessment has been done and shared honestly and accurately to the best of our ability.
- No false or misleading representations have been made about the dog's age, temperament, behavioural history or medical condition.
- Hounds in Homes will provide the following for the foster or trial period: dry food, muzzle, lead and collar.

Representative name *Trisha Murphy*

Signature _____

Date _____