



GST's Sun State Greyhound Adoption

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GREYHOUND FOSTER INFORMATION

If you've ever thought about adopting a greyhound, but are nervous about committing to full ownership, or if you'd simply like to volunteer to help out our Adoption Group, fostering may be right for you! GST's Sun State Greyhound Adoption's goal is to place Greyhounds in homes that will benefit the dog and pet owner. Since we don't use a kennel to house our available hounds, foster homes are the backbone of our Adoption Group, and are always needed! By becoming a Foster "Parent", you volunteer to provide a valuable transition from Racing Kennel to Adoptive Home for the Greyhound by providing temporary, loving care until they are adopted and on their way to their "Forever" home with their new family. Without foster homes, our work could not continue.

The rewards of fostering a greyhound cannot be adequately expressed in words and far exceed the effort required. You will become an ambassador for greyhound adoption; everywhere you go with your dog, people will stop you to ask questions about the breed and your experiences with them. Take full advantage of this; it will help us place more dogs in loving homes! The most frequent comment about fostering is, "I'm afraid I'll get too attached." Just remember, "if you adopt, you love one; if you foster, you love many!" It's true, people in our Group have "Failed Fostering", but continue to foster... It is a hard, often emotional trip, in relatively uncharted waters, but there are great compensations. Perhaps the hardest moment comes at adoption time, when the foster family will say goodbye to their houseguest. However, sending them to their permanent homes, to join their forever family, is an amazing reward. Additionally, you can rest assured that whenever you may meet again, you'll be greeted as only old friends can!

In this packet, please find FAQ's about fostering greyhounds. After reading, if you feel fostering is right for you, please fill out a Foster Application to submit to GST Sunstate Greyhound Adoptions. If approved, you will also sign a Foster Agreement before you are placed with your first hound.

From all of us at GST, welcome to the wonderful world of greyhounds!!

Fostering FAQ's

Why place Greyhounds in foster homes?

Greyhounds are raised on rearing farms and then in kennels, during their racing careers. They are accustomed to a very regimented lifestyle and have little or no experience of the day-to-day activities of the family household. The first two or three weeks of a Greyhound's transformation to a pet represent a huge learning curve and may be stressful to the dog unless handled correctly.

The fostering period also allows for an assessment of the Greyhound's personality and behavior traits, which may not be apparent in a kennel environment. It allows the dog to be introduced carefully to a range of new experiences so that when faced with these in their future adoptive home, the dog can cope without apprehension or fear. This is also when spaying or neutering will be arranged.

What are the criteria for foster homes?

Ideally, a foster family is someone who has been around dogs for some time and has some dog handling/training skills and a general knowledge of canine behavior. Experience in handling Greyhounds or other sight hounds would be advantageous, but not essential. A stable home environment with established routines is important.

A foster home must have either a fenced-in yard or someone who is committed to routinely walk the dog. The foster family should be able to spend some time each day introducing the dog to new experiences and building his/her general confidence. The presence of children and/or other pets in the foster home is an advantage, as long as careful supervision of any interactions can be assured. Many of these dogs will eventually be placed in adoptive homes with children, dogs, cats, birds, or other pets. Therefore, it is important to assess each Greyhound's response and prey drive potential, so that good matches can be made between dog and adoptive family.

May I choose which dogs I foster?

You may always decline a dog, and if your foster dog proves too much for you to handle, he/she can be placed elsewhere.

How long is the fostering period?

Each dog will stay in a foster home for a minimum of two weeks. This will provide time to recover from vetting (spay or neuter) and to allow ample time to observe the personality of the hound. If a suitable adoptive home is not available after this time, the dog will stay for a longer period. Although most Greyhounds are remarkable in the ease with which they adapt to their new lifestyle, some may take longer to gain confidence with certain aspects of their new surroundings.

What will I do with my foster dog?

This is the fun part! You will take them on walks so they can become used to new sights, sounds, and to being around people and other animals. You will introduce them to everyday items such as television, sliding glass doors, hardwood or tile floors, toilets, hairdryers, etc. You will give them the praise and attention that will help them to become loving, trusting, well-mannered pets.

What are some of the things I need to teach my foster Greyhound?

Floor surfaces

Often, Greyhounds have never had to walk on slippery floor surfaces like tile, linoleum, or hardwood floors. Time and experience should sort out any difficulties, as long as the dog is introduced slowly and without force. If a new dog is very hesitant, placing squares of carpet pieces or mats across the floor at intervals may help, gradually increasing the distance between the mats, thereby requiring the dog to walk on the floor surface. Treats & encouragement help too!

Glass windows or doors

Some dogs will not recognize glass as being a solid barrier when first brought into a house. Showing the dog around each new room on a leash and gently tapping on windows or glass doors may be all that is required. Temporarily placing a strip or two of masking tape across sliding glass doors may make them more obvious. In cases where strong visual stimuli are present on the other side of the glass (i.e. cats, squirrels, other dogs), and the dog is showing excessive interest, drawing the curtains or removing the dog from that room may be necessary.

Household noises

There are many new sounds in a house that can be frightening to any dog that has never experienced these before. Televisions, hairdryers, food blenders, vacuum cleaners, even the flushing of a toilet can be quite novel. In most cases, short exposure to such noises on repeated occasions (if carried out in a non-threatening manner) is all that is necessary.

House training

Most Greyhounds come house trained, as they are generally very clean dogs. Living in a kennel environment, most dogs do not like to soil their sleeping quarters, and will wait until turned out to relieve themselves. When first brought into the home, the Greyhound should be treated in a similar manner to a puppy being housebroken: take the dog outside every couple of hours for the first day or so, especially after meals, play, and long naps. Praise the dog as soon as it goes in an appropriate place. Gradually, over a few days, increase the intervals between potty breaks until a mutually acceptable routine is established. The majority of Greyhounds will virtually house train themselves and never have an accident inside. Some males may need to learn the difference between indoor (potted) plants and outdoor plants. A belly band can be beneficial in situations such as these.

Car rides

Most Greyhounds are veterans when it comes to rides in the car, and usually love to go on an outing. Motion sickness is rare; however, jumping into and out of a car may need to be taught, as trainers generally lift a dog into and out of the vehicle to avoid injuries. The easiest way to teach your foster to "load" is to lift the front legs of the dog and rest its forefeet on the seat or tailgate. Then, transfer your hands to the rear end of the dog and lift the back legs in. Many dogs, with repeated practice, will learn to hop in themselves, but some will always expect a helping hand. Experience at climbing onto a rear (bench) seat of a car and lying down whilst driving should be gained, as not all adoptive families will own station wagons, mini-vans, or SUVs.

Stairs

Many Greyhounds have never had to walk up or down stairs, and some find them awkward or even frightening at first, especially if the steps are open, slat-like steps or have a slippery surface.

Greyhounds are very long in the body and also have a very high center of gravity - this can sometimes make them a little clumsy as if they are unsure of where their feet are being placed. Gradual introduction to low sets of stairs initially (numbering no more than three or four) to gain the dog's confidence can later be followed by steeper stairs or those with varying surfaces (carpet, cement, wood floors, linoleum etc.). Despite the above, many Greyhounds will have no difficulty with stairs right from the outset. They should not be permitted to race up or down several steps at a time, as injuries could easily occur.

Children

Although not all foster homes will have children, it is necessary to ascertain a dog's reaction to young children. This could be achieved, to some degree, by visiting a local park, especially on weekends. Unlike adults, children tend to move rapidly, not always in a coordinated manner, and may shriek out in high-pitched tones. To a young, excitable Greyhound, this may be an incentive to chase. Such a desire may be exacerbated when roller blades, skateboards, or bicycles are added to the picture. The majority of Greyhounds are excellent with children in the home environment, preferring to walk away if harassed by a persistent child, but close supervision is essential as with any breed. Any tendency for the Greyhound to exhibit dominance posturing towards a child, barking, growling etc., should be noted.

Other pets

Greyhounds are generally used to being around other Greyhounds, but some have little or no experience of different dog breeds, cats, or other pets. Always keep in mind that Greyhounds have been bred for centuries to chase and the prey drive in some individuals means they can never be fully trusted with small animals. Many, however, will learn to accept other pets if introduced slowly and carefully, always with strict supervision. Any introductions should always be carried out on a leash, with the Greyhound properly muzzled, until the dog's reactions can be assessed. If the foster parents have to leave, even for a brief time, the Greyhound should be crated or muzzled. Risks should never be taken with the safety of your own pets.

Being alone

Since most racing Greyhounds are used to having at least one (and often many) other Greyhounds around them all the time, some have trouble adjusting to a more solitary existence. This may not pose an immediate problem if the foster home has other pets, especially dogs. However, the future adoptive home may not have other animals and separation anxiety may develop. When a Greyhound first enters a home it often becomes your second shadow (a "Velcro" dog), following you all over the house, even to the bathroom. Usually after a few days, this behavior will ease as the dog becomes more secure in its new surroundings. It is important to provide the Greyhound with a place of its own to relax (dog bed, crate, etc.) and to regularly ask it to "go lie down" (or similar phrase). When possible, the dog should be placed in an outdoor run or secure yard on its own at least once a day for a short time. It is very important though, that greyhounds never be separated in a room alone, behind a closed door. Baby gates provide an alternative to closed doors, if separating your greyhounds is necessary.

Possessiveness

A Greyhound (or any other dog) may feel possessive about two things: food and its sleeping quarters. During the fostering period, the dog should learn to accept its food and food bowl being

handled in a non-threatening manner. Any foster dog should be allowed a "safe" feeding environment, separate from other pets, especially when first introduced. Rules must be established that other pets will not disturb the foster while eating, nor will the foster be allowed to disturb other feeding pets.

The Greyhound should also permit its bedding to be handled, sat in, etc. Sleep/space startle/aggression is reported in some Greyhounds, usually in response to being woken or disturbed suddenly during a nap. Some Greyhounds do sleep with their eyes open, so it is important to ensure that the dog is awake before touching or petting it. Greyhounds tend to sleep very deeply, and may take a while to arouse. As they are generally housed individually in racing kennels, they are not used to other dogs, children, etc. approaching them in their sleep.

Grooming

Racing Greyhounds are quite used to being bathed, groomed, and massaged. However, it is important to determine that the dog does not have any "sensitive" areas, which may indicate injuries. The dog should accept its feet being handled, nails clipped, ears cleaned, and eyes and mouth inspected, as well as being groomed all over with a soft brush or hound glove.

How strict should the foster home be with a new Greyhound?

Racing Greyhounds are used to a fairly regimented life, with few options or choices to make in its day-to-day activities. The majority of Greyhounds are creatures of habit, and are most relaxed when a set routine is in place. Family life does not always fall into a perfect routine, but establishment of set meal times and regular exercise and potty opportunities will help a new Greyhound to feel at ease and allow them to adjust successfully to your home.

When a Greyhound is suddenly given the freedom of an entire house, and has some choice in how it spends its time, it may revert to a (temporary) second puppyhood. It is important that some basic ground-rules are established for the dog early in the foster period and that all members of the family abide by them. Restricting the dog to certain rooms in the house, at least initially, may make supervision easier. This may be achieved by simply keeping doors closed or by using baby gates or other barriers.

Most Greyhounds will discover soft human beds or lounge chairs within the first few hours (or days) after arrival. Although Greyhounds are the ultimate "couch potatoes", please keep in mind that their future adoptive home may not condone such practices. Therefore, it is suggested that fosters are discouraged from reclining on the furniture. A soft bed of their own, located in a quiet corner, should be provided, and the dog should be encouraged to retreat to that area. The bed should be positioned so that the dog can take in most of the household activities without getting in the way. You may wish to move the dog's bed to just inside your bedroom or close by at night, so that the dog feels secure by your presence, and so you can supervise the dog's nighttime activities. Some Greyhounds are crated at night or if left in the house for short periods during the day.

Since Greyhounds are so tall, reaching high places is quite easy and some Greyhounds newly introduced to the home may "counter surf" if food is left on kitchen counters or tables. The obvious solution is not to leave anything tempting lying within reach. Training may also be beneficial: keep one or more squirt bottles filled with water close by. When the dog is "surfing", firmly give the

command “leave it” and a quick squirt on the back. Eventually, with repeated use, only the command will be needed to discourage this behavior.

In spite of the warnings mentioned above, some Greyhounds will walk into a house for the first time, and act as if they had been there all their lives!! They are generally fairly laid back creatures with tremendous adaptability and understanding.

What support does the foster home receive?

Upon arriving at your home, your foster Greyhound will most likely require a bath. Although some will have already undergone their full range of treatments, including spay/neuter, teeth cleaning, microchip insertion, vaccination, and heartworm testing, most will not. If this is the case, arrangements will be made for the dog to be vetted, at the group’s expense, at a veterinarian approved by the group. An appropriate collar and leash is provided, as well as the dog's muzzle and a temporary ID tag. If required, a crate may be loaned to assist a new dog's transition. Additionally, all food is provided by the Adoption Group.

Extensive follow up and monitoring of the dog in foster care is made, generally by phone and/or e-mail. We realize that foster parents are generously opening up their homes and hearts to these dogs, and all support/advice necessary will be given promptly. We also appreciate that foster homes may not wish to care for dogs continually. Some may only try it once and decide it's not for them. Others may want a break between dogs, or may have holidays or other commitments planned for the near future. We appreciate our foster homes and are willing to work with you; please let us know your concerns so that we may address them and support you as needed!

What if we want to travel?

If you are fostering and want to go away for a weekend or take a vacation, the foster dog can be returned to the coordinator's care while you are away. Please arrange in advance, as soon as you know, and we make arrangements to accommodate you.

What if I want to adopt the greyhound I am fostering?

If you decide to be a foster home, it should be with the understanding that you are working toward helping a deserving Greyhound find a forever home. If you decide to adopt the greyhound you are fostering, contact GST immediately, as hounds are allocated in the order in which applications are received.

How do I get started?

First, you need to fill out a Foster Application and submit it to the group. There is no application fee for fostering. Someone from the group will arrange to visit your home for a home check. They may bring one of their dogs to see how everybody reacts and answer any questions you may have.

If you are interested in becoming a foster family to one of our hounds, please fill out our Foster Application! If you would like more information, please feel free to contact us at:

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