

When a dog arrives at his foster home...

Health care

Unless you are told otherwise by a MAESSR representative, take the dog to the vet for general examination and to bring all standard procedures up-to-date (see “Medical Procedures” below). Unless the dog requires immediate attention, observe him for a couple of days before visiting the vet to identify any medical conditions that may require checking out. While you are petting the dog, run your hands over him to look for lumps, sensitive spots, hidden wounds, etc. Try to get a look at his skin; if it is pink and/or flaky, he could have an infection or allergy. Check his ears and teeth. Watch for excessive scratching, sneezing, coughing, congestion, signs of urinary infection, excessive lethargy, unusual lack of appetite. If the dog shows any unusual symptoms, try to contact a MAESSR officer before going to the vet. If the vet spots any conditions that require treatment, follow the instructions given under “Medical Procedures” below. Although it is most important to check out dogs who have come from shelters, owner relinquishments should also be vet checked and observed.

Get an itemized receipt for all services performed. If the dog received any medications, note on the receipt what they were for. Also briefly describe any symptoms the dog exhibited and the diagnosis. This will serve as the dog’s medical history. Make a copy of the annotated receipt. Send one copy to MAESSR for reimbursement and place the other copy in the dog’s envelope. If your vet bills MAESSR directly, be sure to get a copy of the services performed to take with you

Tell your vet that the patient is a rescue dog in foster care, explain that we are funded completely by donations, and ask if they will give a discount. Some vets give us their “professional” discount. We currently get discounts of 10-50% from some vets.

Standard Procedures – these are required unless noted. MAESSR will always pay for these.

- Spay/neuter
- Heartworm test
- Rabies vaccine
- Combo vaccine (distemper, parvo, etc.)
- Lyme vaccine – optional, based on season and environment
- Bordatella vaccine – optional
- Frontline – try to get a single dose, or keep extra doses for the next foster dog
- Heartworm preventative – try to get a single dose, or keep extras for next dog
- Fecal worm test (optional) and worming if positive

Second Tier Procedures – MAESSR will pay for “normal” treatment of common medical conditions such as those listed below. Pursue these procedures *only* if the dog exhibits symptoms. Contact either Operations VP-Incoming dog/foster care as soon as possible to alert them to incoming bills.

- Ear cleaning and medications
- Skin infections
- Minor respiratory tract infections
- Urinary tract infections
- Minor wounds
- Flea dip

Third Tier Procedures – If a dog requires major, expensive treatment for a serious condition (e.g. major surgery, broken bones, cancer, epilepsy, heartworm...) **DO NOT** proceed until the treatment has been approved by either Operations VP-Incoming dog/foster care. We have limited resources and must use them to the best advantage of all the dogs.

Rescue dogs run the gamut from perfect gentlemen and ladies who could perform proudly in the obedience ring to excitable puppies and adults who have never been taught any rules. Commonly we know very little about a dog's level when it gets to your house. It is your job to evaluate and report on the dog's behavior, and to get a start on improving his behavior and training. If the dog has known bad behaviors (lucky you!), start working on replacing them with good behaviors right away. You do not have to turn the dog into an obedience champion, but we do like to pass on semi-civilized dogs capable of functioning in a house and in public. It is the responsibility of the adopting family to fully train the dog, but they should at least know what to expect. Remember, many behavior problems can be solved by teaching the dog rules and showing him that you expect the rules to be followed. A dog expects to be disciplined for disobeying the rules, but he needs to know that discipline will be fair and does not mean that you don't love him.

Behavior problems to look for:

- Dog aggressiveness
- Food aggressiveness
- Toy aggressiveness
- Submissive urination
- Separation anxiety
- Excessive barking
- Chewing

When you are comfortable with the dog, push him a little in order to identify problems. If you experience any of these problems, notify either Operations VP-Incoming dog/foster care. It is important to have this information for the dog's profile. Work on the problem if you can; ask for advice if you need it.

If the dog shows any aggression toward you, discuss this with either Operations VP-Incoming dog/foster care *immediately*. We will not place a dog that bites. In dealing with an aggressive dog, trust your instincts. If you have a bad feeling, there is probably something wrong. Don't keep these feelings to yourself! Some rescue dogs are broken and need a lot of care and work to fix. Many of them have been abused and may react unexpectedly to your actions. At best, they may be hand-shy; at worst, they may be fear-biters. Approach discipline gently and carefully until you have a good sense of the dog. Be sure that the disciplinary action is appropriate to the dog. Again, the most important thing you can do with these dogs is to establish trust. In parallel with behavior, you must evaluate training. Test the dog to find out if he responds to simple obedience commands. If not, teach the dog to sit. It will improve your life together in ways you never thought possible! Take the dog out on a leash. Does he walk well? If not, leash walk him whenever possible to improve those skills. Work on the dog's house manners if necessary. Teach the dog not to jump on people, countertops, and other dogs. Teach him to release toys and other objects to you, and that your attempts to recover stolen items are not a game. Work on crate training and housebreaking, if necessary. Take the dog out in public. Pace yourself based on the dog's security level, but get them out into different situations and meeting other people as much as possible. Introduce him to visitors at your house. If possible (and under strict supervision), introduce him to young children, cats, other dogs, people, and anything else you can think of. This is a long list of tasks. You may be lucky; very few may apply to your dog! If you are unlucky, take them in stages, first addressing the things that most affect peace in your household. Try to not be scolding the dog all the time. If you are having trouble, post to the MAESSRVols list. You'll undoubtedly get more suggestions than you want. And keep in mind the first rule of owning Springers: a tired dog is a good dog.

Passing on the dog to his new family

The Adoption Coordinator will review the list of potential families for a specific dog, then sends an "offer" email instructing the potential family to contact the foster family.

When you talk to the prospective adopters, give them as much information as you can about the dog. Be honest, answer all their questions, and offer any other information you think they should know. They may ask to meet the dog before they make a decision, or they may just come and get it. If/when they decide to adopt the dog, preferably make arrangements for them to come to your house. It is best for them to meet the dog someplace where there is space and the dog is comfortable. If that is not possible, make arrangements for a suitable meeting place. Remind them to bring a collar with ID, leash, and adoption fee. Prepare two copies of the adoption contract by filling in the three blanks at the top and the information about the dog on the second page. Have the adopter initial all items, fill in their personal information, and sign the contract at the bottom. DO NOT sign the "MAESSR officer" blank yourself. Take back both copies of the contract and collect the fee. Inform the adopters that a signed copy will be mailed back to them. Give the adopters all of the dog's papers and copies of medical records, and wave goodbye to your dog (sigh...). Send the two contracts and the adoption fee to Lisa Roth. She will sign at the bottom as the MAESSR officer and return one copy to the adoptive family.

And remember...

Play with your dog. Love your dog. Fuss over him. Pet him. Snuggle with him. Talk to him. Let him know that whatever his world was like before, it is good now. Have fun!