

PHOTOGRAPHING YOUR FOSTERS

A picture is “worth a thousand words” and, in fact, when many people look at the dogs on our web site, all they see are the pictures; they don’t even READ the words. For that reason, the photos you take of your foster dogs for the web site are really important! They can be the difference between an adopter’s interest, or indifference, or even whether or not they notice the dog at all, or just scroll on by!

What makes a good photo?

Think about the photos that most appeal to you; the kinds of photos you would like to see, if you were looking to adopt a dog. You want to know what the dog looks like, but you also want to see a happy dog, and one that you would like to share your home with. You want the photo to “speak” to you. If it doesn’t, you will pass it up and go on to the next dog.

An appealing photo is particularly important, if you are fostering an adult, or senior dog. People will always apply to adopt a puppy, regardless of the photo, but, the adult and senior dogs usually lack that same level of appeal to adopters, so the photos are much more important.

In short, a good photo is clear (not blurry/grainy) and appealing, with the dog as the main element, not lost in a busy background.

Anyone can do this!

Taking a good photo of your foster dog does not require special talent, or equipment. Anyone with a camera (or phone, or tablet) can do it! Most devices also have some photo editing capabilities. A little cropping can turn a so-so photo into a winner!

It doesn’t take a lot of time, either. Set aside about 5-10 minutes on a day, or in a location with good lighting and snap away! That’s all! It’s a one-time, or maybe a 2-time commitment! To get the dog to engage with the camera and look lively, having treats in your hand helps, or you can have an assistant hold the cookies, while you operate the camera, or vice versa.

Conclusions

- 1) *Don’t underestimate the importance of the photos you submit of your foster dog.* You want your foster dog to find a great home, and these photos are what attract the attention of adopters. If the photo is blurry and ho-hum, with little to engage the viewer, the chances are that potential adopters will not even look at the dog, but will go on to

the next one. So, please, take the time to get a few GOOD photos. Quality is better than quantity; a few good photos on the web site are better than a dozen lousy ones.

- 2) *Do your best to show the dog in the best light*—and I mean that literally, as well as figuratively. Good lighting makes for a clear photo, and a clear photo is easier to edit and still end up with a decent picture.

Remember, too, **a dog with a happy, or engaged expression is likely to attract more attention** than a dog that looks angry, bored, indifferent, sad, or annoyed. You can certainly include a photo of the dog sleeping, but please, don't make that the ONLY photo you submit! Include a photo that shows that your dog has some vitality, particularly if your foster dog is a senior!

- 3) Think about your individual foster dog and his strengths and challenges. As the old song says, "*Accentuate the positive*". In other words, if your dog is old, do your best to capture him/her looking active and alert. If possible, get at least one photo of the dog on its feet, or being active. If your foster dog has particular talents or endearing behaviors, see if you can get them in a photo, or a short (5-10 seconds) video. Videos are a great addition to the bio!
- 4) *Include at least one photo that shows the whole dog*, so people can see his markings and maybe something about his size and build.
- 5) *Take lots of photos*. You want to increase your chances of getting a few good shots. You can pick out the best few to submit and delete the rest. Don't forget, too, even if your dog has been on the web site for a while, if you happen to get a lucky shot, later into your fostering, send it to Sally! She can add photos to the web site at any time, and your good photo could be the one that lands your foster dog a home. Sometimes, a change of photo can help get the dog noticed, particularly if it is a better photo!
- 6) *The dog should occupy most of the frame*. Try to avoid distracting backgrounds. If you can't avoid them in the photo, use your software to crop out as many of the extraneous objects as you can, such as household, or garden clutter, or parts of bystanders, etc. Choose a photo location with a plainer backdrop, or crop those unwanted background items out.

Example

Check out the three photos, below. The first one is not bad of the dog, but is not especially sharp, and has way too much extraneous material in the background—steps, bricks, flower pots, boards, a hose, a water pan...

The second photo is better. It's almost the same photo, but with much of the extraneous items cropped out, or I changed the angle such that the hose was no longer in the picture. The dog occupies more of the frame, but the photo is not particularly sharp. It's probably adequate for the web site, though.

The third photo is best. The photo is sharp and clear, and (almost) all the annoying background items are gone. It's just "handsome Sam". The only thing better would have been if Sam had been smiling. But, at least, he is looking at the camera!

