

Minimizing Health Risks when Fostering

Despite efforts to keep shelter animals healthy, dogs coming from shelters are at high risk of having infectious diseases (Think of a daycare scenario. Once one kid is sick, they all are!). If your foster dog develops a particular disease, further detailed instructions will be given to you.

Parvovirus is a highly contagious, deadly virus that lives a long time in the environment. It is spread dog-to-dog, via the environment or fomites (any object that can transmit disease, ex: crates, people.) Puppies & non-vaccinated dogs are at highest risk. Vaccine prevents disease. Signs to watch for are not eating as much or at all, acting tired, vomiting & diarrhea (sometimes with blood).

Kennel cough complex is highly contagious, caused by a mix of viruses & bacteria (*Bordetella*.) It is spread dog-to-dog, usually. Vaccine reduces the level of sickness. Signs to watch for are hacking cough (goose-honk), maybe acting tired, not eating as much & nose discharge.

Intestinal parasites are a mix of worms & protozoa that are usually spread via fecal-oral route (dog walks in dog poop that has worm eggs, licks feet & becomes infected.) Signs to watch for are diarrhea, staying skinny despite eating a lot, pot-belly & dull hair coat. You rarely see worms in poop. However, there can be no signs or symptoms at all.

Other less common diseases include **ringworm** (fungus that causes hair loss), **sarcoptic mange** (scabies causes hair loss & intense itching) & **heartworm disease**. Rare diseases include Canine Influenza or Distemper. Demodex Mange is *not* contagious.

Minimizing Risk for the Foster Dog



Give your foster dog a bath or wash with a cloth to wash any potential germs off of them.



Ensure you keep your foster dog up-to-date on vaccines, on heartworm, & flea & tick prevention according to PFPO protocols. We deworm & fecal test all dogs.



Avoid high risk areas until vaccines are completed. High risk areas include dog parks, pet stores & high dog-traffic areas. Avoid play with unvaccinated dogs.



If you have a puppy under 5 months old & you must go to high risk areas for an adoption event or appointment, carry your pup or keep it in a carrier. *No paws on the ground.*

Minimizing Risk for Your Dog



Isolate your foster dog from your dog for the first week. Ideally, keep it in an easily disinfected area like a laundry room & watch for health concerns.



Ensure your dog is fully vaccinated, on regular flea & tick prevention & heartworm prevention (including parasite control).



Pick up fecal material from your foster & own dogs promptly. Wash your hands after handling feces.



Perform a gradual introduction of dogs to maximize chance of success!

Minimizing Risks for Humans

There are potential zoonotic risks (or contagions) from some things a dog/cat can bring home from the shelter (parasites, ringworm, sarcoptic mange). Please contact your veterinarian with questions. Washing your hands frequently & keeping the yard tidy will decrease risks.