

## **GUIDELINES FOR FOSTERING LABORATORY BEAGLES**

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Nose to the Ground to Help Hounds by Beagle Rescue League.*

**Although this article refers to fostering laboratory beagles, the information is also pertinent to adopted laboratory dogs.**

Fostering a laboratory beagle is rewarding as well as challenging. Each laboratory beagle is unique in his/her temperament, quirks and personality. With your love, compassion, confidence building and socialization, each beagle will grow into a loved family pet. Because each beagle is unique, his or her rate of progress may be different. At first let them get used to you and your routine. They might be overwhelmed with new experiences, sights and smells.

It is only human to coddle or “baby” your foster beagle when he/she is showing fear or shyness. *Please do not do this, as it will only reinforce this kind of behavior.* When your foster beagle shows fear or shyness, ignore the behavior. When your foster does something positive or is calm, praise him softly, pet him or give him a treat. Remaining calm and confident with your interactions with your beagle will in turn transfer to your beagle. If you have a beagle of your own that is confident, partner your foster beagle with that beagle.

In this handout we will discuss some of the possible “typical” behaviors you are going to encounter in fostering a laboratory beagle and how to deal with them.

**Your foster beagle may display none, some or all of the behaviors listed below:**

- I haven't worn a collar before. I may scratch at it a lot. It just takes time for me to get used to it.
- I have never been walked on a leash. I do not understand not being able to go where I want when I want. I will need help learning this. I may chew at my leash.

*Suggestions: Attach a 4-foot nylon puppy leash and let me drag it behind me in the house and in the yard. Always remove the leash when I am left alone. Also if you see me trying to escape or trying to potty, it is less stressful for me for you to pick up the leash and lead me outside and not to grab my collar, which could startle me. You might want to invest in a SENSE-ation Harness or Premier Easy walk Harness. Please make sure my collar is not able to slip over my head and my harness is fitted appropriately.*

- I have no idea what stairs are all about. I may figure out going up fairly quickly, but coming down may be harder for me. I may try to go down, only to stumble or literally fall or roll down the entire flight.

*Suggestions: Please be careful and supervise me around stairs for a few days until I get the hang of them! To work on going up, if I am food-motivated, try placing a piece of popcorn or other small tasty treat on each tread to motivate me! If I am interested but still struggle, you can physically guide me up the stairs by positioning my feet on the stairs and giving me a gentle boost up on the rear which will guide my feet to move up the stairs.*

- Walking through doorways may frighten me, and I may stop and resist going through. Please don't force me, but instead offer a treat and praise me when I am brave and walk through the doorway. I may not understand opening and closing of doors.

*Suggestion: When the door opens or closes, praise me for staying in the room without showing signs of fear.*

- I have never eaten a dog treat. I may not accept treats because I don't know what they are.

*Suggestions: Each day put a couple of treats in my food bowl to get me used to eating them, or reduce my rations of dog food and use my dog food as treats. Other treats you can try are Cheerios, popcorn, cheese, liver treats, and chicken or steak cooked in garlic and cut up in small pieces. Try putting a little peanut butter on the treats. Be creative! You might also try placing the treat in the palm of your hand and letting me take it myself.*

- I have never even seen a car before, never mind ridden in one. Please be understanding if the motion make me sick or if I get scared in my crate.

*Suggestions: Try using a dog harness seatbelt if I am scared riding in a crate. Spend some positive time with me in the car without driving. Just walk me out to the car and have me sit in it for a couple of minutes while giving me several treats. Repeat often! It's probably a good idea not to feed me before a car outing while I am learning to ride in the car, and of course, don't forget to bring towels and cleaning supplies during the learning curve!*

- I am used to the feel of concrete or a grate against my feet. Grass feels funny! I may walk a little silly on it for a while, but I just need time to get used to it.
- Since grass is new to me, please keep in mind that it's not my preferred substance on which to do my "business." I will often prefer to go on concrete when I am outside.
- Despite beliefs to the contrary, I can often still be crate-trained. I just need to be introduced to it as you would introduce crate training to a puppy: start small and work your way up, with frequent outings and reinforcement for successes.
- If I am not yet neutered, I may try to mark excessively in the house. With time and neutering, this will decrease and should subside completely, but supervision and verbal corrections will be needed. Use a belly band temporarily.
- I have never run before. When I first try, I may stumble, trip or fall. It can take me a few weeks to really get the hang of it.
- I may not have used a water bowl before. I may need some help learning where the water is and that it is actually in a bowl. You might want to measure the water in the bowl in the morning and then again at night to see if I am drinking at all.
- I have never eaten anything other than my laboratory food. I will need a gradual change over to Natural Balance. Follow the instructions for switching foods and back off if GI

upset occurs. Also I may not have eaten out of a bowl before. I may scratch all around the bowl, dump the food, and try to eat it off the floor, or just refuse to eat altogether.

*Suggestions: Consider buying a non-slip bowl. If I don't eat within 10 minutes of putting me in the crate with my bowl, remove the dish and then try again at the next meal time and do the same. Once I get hungry, I will eat. I can go as long as a week without eating. If 3 days go by and I haven't eaten, try offering me some of the "rolled" Natural Balance food. Slice off some small, bite-sized pieces to get me to eat something. If I do, add a small portion of dry food with it. Eventually, fade away the "rolled" food completely until I am eating 100% dry food. If I "inhale" my food in minutes and never even chew it, you can help slow me down either by placing a tennis ball in the middle of my dog food bowl so I have to eat around it, or by placing my food on a good-sized pan, which allows the food to be only one layer deep, so I can't grab mouthfuls all at once.*

- I may defend my food bowl around other dogs. It was the only thing that was "mine" in the lab.

*Suggestion: You might want to separate me from your other dogs or feed me in my crate.*

- I have never seen television, mirrors, or windows. I may be very interested in them, especially if I see another beagle looking at me.
- I have never seen a dog bed before. I may prefer to sleep on hard surfaces, but I can be introduced to a dog bed.

*Suggestions: Sometimes taking a 4-foot puppy lead and tethering me to the sofa with the bed next to me will encourage me to lie on the bed. (Never leave me tethered alone in a room.) Also give me a Kong filled with peanut butter so I have something to do while lying there. If I am keeping my crate clean and am not anxious in there, you can try putting some soft blankets or a dog bed in my crate.*

- I have never seen a toy—soft, squeaky, tennis ball, or otherwise. I will not know what to do with them. Leave them out so I can explore. Maybe I'll learn how to use them by watching your own dogs play with them.
- Loud noises like the air conditioner, icemaker, loud voices, sirens, and radio may startle me.

*Suggestions: If I panic, please eliminate the noise if possible. As I get more confident, gradually decrease the distance between the noise and me. Even if you take me for a walk and you see the neighborhood kid bouncing a ball, riding his skateboard or bike, either cross the road or do a half circle and walk back to your home. Remain calm while you are doing this. Watch my body language. If my tail starts tucking under, my ears go back, and I start backing up, then it is time for me to get back into my safe space.*

- Hey, what's this walking down the road? I have only been with beagles, so seeing another breed of dog, horse, livestock, birds, and exotics will be a new experience for me. The same with people; I have not seen kids, postmen, police officers, or people of different races and ages.

- I have not seen most things that people take for granted in their everyday lives. I may try to chew, explore, eat, or carry inappropriate items.

*Suggestions: If the items are inappropriate, a verbal correction, perhaps paired with spraying the item with Bitter Apple, is usually all that is needed. Provide appropriate chew toys (e.g., Nylabones), and when I am corrected, give me/show me what I can chew on instead. When I chew on the correct item, please praise me.*

- Some other quirks I might have include belly-crawling when approached or hiding in the farthest part of the yard or room. Some OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder) behaviors such as pacing, licking, circling or digging into my bedding may occur.

### **House-training and Crate-training**

Patience, consistency, and making sure the experience are positive is the key!

### **Medical Issues**

A veterinarian has seen each of the foster beagles. Here are some of the issues your foster beagle might have, and you will be apprised of the issues and given a treatment plan:

- Lick granulomas—raised, usually ulcerated area on a dog’s wrist or ankle caused by the dog’s incessant licking
- Yeast infections
- Bare patches of skin from lying on a concrete floor or in stainless steel cages
- Something that looks like a large blister between my toes—from walking on a grated surface
- Biting at legs/paws—could be either allergies or OCD
- Involuntary “shaky legs”/muscle trembling—depending on how much exercise the dog is getting, in time this has gone away

### **Conclusion**

All in all, fostering laboratory beagles is probably one of the most rewarding experiences you will have with us. Remember, this beagle has been isolated from the world. Each experience is new, and with your help these beagles will embark on a wonderful new world of becoming a dog who will hopefully chase a butterfly, snuggle up to you on the couch, do agility, greet you at the door, and walk proud with their tail wagging back and forth. It is no fun for a dog to be anxious, stressed or worried, so try to make every new experience fun and positive.

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