



# Member Handbook

*Updated April 2015*

*Gleaned from the collective wisdom of NorSled Members and Affiliates*

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*Note: this contains notes on lessons NorSled members have learned through the years. Many of us are not trainers or trained experts in dogs. We are not presenting ourselves as experts, but simply sharing what we understand from our experiences.*

## *NorSled Handbook*

(Everything you've Always Wanted to Know about Sled Dog Rescue but Were Afraid to Ask)

Welcome to the world of Sled Dog Rescue. Its challenging, requires a sense of humor, sometimes heartbreaking, and just may be one of the most rewarding things you ever do.

NorSled is an all-volunteer non-profit organization. Our mission is to rescue, rehabilitate and find new homes for unwanted, abused and abandoned Siberian Huskies, Malamutes, Samoyeds, and Northern Breed mixes. We also work to educate the public about these dogs, and about the importance of spaying and neutering all dogs.

As a member, you can help in many ways. These include:

**Adoption Fairs:** We hold adoption fairs several times a month in different areas of Northern California. We need help setting up equipment, transporting and handling dogs, and educating the public.

**Shelter Monitors:** Many of our volunteers think this is the most rewarding work. Shelter monitors evaluate dogs in local shelters, take adoption pictures for our web site, and work at helping place these animals in loving homes. We often help place dogs directly out of the shelters.

**Fund-Raising and Special Events:** NorSled participates in several special events a year, both for fund raising and for educating the public. We always need extra help at these events. We have an Auto Donation program for fundraising that we would like to publicize more. And we are always looking for creative ways to raise funds and awareness.

**Lost and Found:** NorSled works with our sister organizations to match lost dogs with their owners. Volunteers are needed to compare shelter reports with lost and found ads. This is especially important with northern breeds that have a tendency to roam!

Let's start by discussing fostering....

## **Fostering/Adopting**

### ***Essential Ingredients for a Foster Home***

Once you've decided to become a foster parent for one of NorSled's dogs, NorSled will supply you much of what you need to take care of your new foster, including:

Dog	Dog Collar	Food bowls
Dog Crate	Dog Tags	Leashes
Dog Food	Heartgard	Frontline

What you will do with all this stuff:

**Dog** – it gives you something to do with the bowl, crate, collar, leash, and food

**Dog Crate** – Almost all sled dogs respond well to being crated. A dog should view the crate as their den and as a pleasant place to spend their time. This is their safe place in the world. Many of us crate our dogs at night. This keeps the dogs out of mischief while you sleep and keeps you from having to clean up after them in the morning if they are still working out housetraining. Most dogs will not soil their sleeping area. A crate is a great aid to housebreak your pet should this be a problem. See the section on Crate Training for more details.

**Food Bowl and Food** – As we are able, NorSled will supply you with food for your foster. We get occasional donations of food from pet food stores. If food donations are not meeting the demand, NorSled does not have the resources to supply food and we must rely on you to help by obtaining food yourself. High quality foods are a must. Grain free foods are recommended and at the very least foods that contain high quality protein sources and do not contain corn or soy. Some recommended brands include EVO, Taste of the Wild, EaglePak, Canidae, Wellness, Prairie and Innova. When your dog is introduced to a new brand of food, it may go through a period of diarrhea while adjusting to the new food. It is best if possible, to slowly introduce the new brand over a period of time.

**Collar and Tags** – All NorSled dogs are supplied with a collar and tags. The minimal number of tags will include the dog's NorSled number and usually the dog's microchip number. Other tags may include proof of rabies vaccination. The dog should never be without its collar and tags. These tags are how the dog can be traced if it gets out of your yard. The tags should be attached to the collar using separate rings. In the event that one of the tag rings fail, the whole set of tags is not lost. It is also important that the dog have a registered microchip inserted below the skin between its shoulder blades. If the dog is lost and does not have its collar the microchip is a permanent way of determining ownership. This is done by simply scanning the dog at most shelters or veterinarian offices. As long as the microchip has been properly registered, the dog's owner can be found.

**Leash** – This may very well be the most important piece of equipment that you get. Do not underestimate the strength of a sled dog or how determined they might be to take themselves on a run. A good strong leash is essential. **DO NOT EVER LET YOUR DOG OFF THE LEASH WHILE YOU ARE ANYWHERE THAT THE DOG CAN RUN AWAY!!!** Sled

dogs love to run and they rarely look to see where they are going. A husky in particular will run 10 miles before it begins to wonder where it is and by then it is too late. You will not be able to catch most sled dogs if they should decide to take a run. The dog may return to you if you have been fostering them for a while, but most often they are picked up by animal control or, worse, are never found again.

### ***Getting Your Foster up on the Website***

Make notes about your new foster and think of ways to provide NorSled with a good “bio” or description to be posted on the “available” page of the NorSled website. If you have a camera which produces reasonably good quality pictures to submit with the description to the webmaster.

### ***The Home Safety Check (For fosters or new forever homes)***

Before you can foster or adopt, your home must be inspected by a member of NorSled to make sure that your home and yard are suitable. Do not be insulted. Every member of NorSled has had their home inspected. Sled dogs are masters of escape and what may seem to you to be an insignificant pile of wood stacked in the corner of your yard represents an escape route to a determined pup. A member of NorSled will come to your home check for various avenues of escape, for example:

- Strong six-foot fences are a must for most Nordic breeds. Huskies in particular have been known to clear 6 foot fences - although these cases are not the norm.
- Any kind of gap in a fence; loose boards, fences that don't reach all the way to the ground, or have gates that cannot be secured will be noted and you will be asked to repair these deficiencies before being allowed to foster or adopt. These dogs will rattle a gate until the latch opens or dig down well under a fence if the dog believes that it will give them an avenue of escape.
- The corners of a fence are particularly vulnerable and generally give a dog their best route of escape. You may be asked to put a barrier at the corner to eliminate this possible means of escape.
- You will be asked to move anything that is piled next to a fence or would allow the dog access to the top of a fence. Piles of wood, garbage cans, dog houses, and other items will give a sled dog the added height it needs to jump a fence.

If, for some reason, you cannot provide a safe, fenced in yard we may recommend you purchase a Magnum Kennel. These kennels are especially strong and durable, and virtually escape proof. Placing the kennel on a concrete “pad” or lining floor with brick adds to the security of these types of kennels.

In addition to your yard, your home will also be inspected and you will be asked questions about the day to day housing of your sled dog. NorSled expects that the dog to be treated as a member

of your family. When you are at home the dog is to be inside with the family and sleeping inside the house at night. During the day while you are at work it is fine if the dog is kept in a secure area of your yard as long as the dog has access to a dry, protected, area in the event of rain or severe cold, or a cool shady area with plenty of water on days that are warm or hot.

You will also be asked about other pets that may be in your home. Most sled dogs have a strong prey drive and can be deadly to small animals. Cats, birds, rabbits, rodents, and even small dogs can be in danger of harm or death because of this predatory nature. If you have small animals in your home, fostering or adopting will depend on if you are able to safely contain the other animals and the foster dog's level of prey drive. It's important to keep all of the animals in the home safe. We do not want other pets in the home to be in danger.

NorSled makes every effort to match foster dogs to the needs and desires of the individual foster home, just like we do with adoptions. Depending on your particular situation, you may find that dogs with a particular personality, activity level or age may work better in your situation. NorSled will do its best to match these desires to the foster dog you receive.

### **Returning a Foster Dog to NorSled**

If NorSled determines a foster dog is to be returned to NorSled, the foster parent must return the dog within 72 hours, or at a time set by the NorSled board. The foster parent must bring the dog to the location identified by NorSled.

On the rare chance that a dog does not work out in your family, you are under no obligation to keep the dog. Sometimes, what appears to be the perfect match ends up being somewhat less than perfect. NorSled would then ask that if possible, you hold the dog long enough for a new foster home to be found.

### ***Introducing the New Dog into Your Home (foster or permanent)***

When introducing the dogs on leash, it is most important to keep leashes slack and loose. Try to have each dog on a flat collar or preferably a no-pull harness – NorSled provides a limit-slip collar for each foster dog. Any tension or pain caused by a choke or prong collar can readily cause a negative reaction during the introduction as the dog will associate the painful and restraining sensation with the other dog. Also, it's important to know that tension on a leash keeps the dogs from communicating body language clearly. Remember not to make a dog sit for an introduction. Sitting is perceived by other dogs as a refusal to greet.

Using a handler for each dog, walk the dogs at a distance in parallel at first for a block or so, then find a space where you can walk them more closely to one another and eventually allow them to greet. Dogs use a lot of subtle signals in their body language with one another when greeting. Again, keep the leashes loose. Praise the dogs for polite behavior and use a cheerful tone of voice during this process!!! Allow the dogs to progress to sniffing each other. You may allow them to sniff for a minute and then return to walking them together before another sniffing session to ease any tension. There may be a little stiffness at first with a greeting, but when all goes well you may see a play bow and you're likely off to a good start.

If it is clear that the dogs do not get along, simply pull them apart using the leash. Having a harness is of extra value in a case like this because you have the dog by their body and there is less of a chance for a collar to slip off. If there is a fight, do NOT put your hands between the dogs. If you lose hold of the leash or a collar slips off, you can pull the dog's back legs or lift the backend of the dog up in the air like a wheelbarrow or pull the tail to separate them. Remember that not all dogs will get along. We humans don't get on well with everyone we meet either!

Leash reactivity is common with many dogs. Some dogs are simply fantastic off-leash. Then they can become a lunging, growly maniac around other dogs when on leash. This can be caused by frustration of containment and possibly how the dog was treated in the past when in the presence of other dogs. It is important to realize how much we humans can influence the dog's behavior on leash. If we keep a tight grip whenever we see another dog or punish the dog for his exuberance at the site of other dogs, the dog will make the association with other dogs as equaling an angry owner and bad things happening. This will make things worse for you and your dog on leash. If you have this type of issue with your dog or foster dog, contact NorSled. There are some great ways to work with this type of issue to make your dog better on leash.

If your initial introduction went well with the new dog and you want to bring them into the home you should first pick up any food items, food and water bowls, chewies, toys and beds of the resident dog before entering the home. This will reduce the opportunity for a fight over valued items. The dogs will need to build a relationship and you can help them by reducing opportunities for conflict. Feed the dogs separately and give highly valued chewable items separately.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding behavior of your dog or a foster dog, please contact NorSled for a referral to a professional. NorSled has credentialed trainers at their disposal who are more than eager to help you have success with your dog(s).

It is also a good idea to leave a leash on the new dog while in the house for the first day or two. That way if they get into anything, or there is a "discussion" between the dogs, you can use the leash to pull the dog away from the situation. Never reach for a collar if there is a fight between two dogs. If one of the dogs is leashed, grab the leash and pull the dog away.

### ***Collars and Harnesses***

There are many opinions on the right collars or harnesses to use, and even in our group, we have differences of opinions. We do not recommend choke chains, these are dangerous. Some trainers advocate only the use of flat collars, head halters or harnesses. Some of us support use of prong collars – especially when working with larger dogs. We do however, recommend that if you are using a prong collar, you also have your dog on a regular collar and have that attached to the leash also. Prong collars have been known to break. Ask us at a fair and we can show you how to set this up.

## ***Ways to Feed Your Dog***

***If you only have one dog*** - Traditionally dogs have been fed in bowls, which can often take all of 2 minutes! This gives the dog the rest of the day to think up creative ways to pass the time. Northern Breed dogs are known for having an abundant amount of energy, so finding a way to channel some of that energy can be to your advantage. NorSled highly recommends the use puzzle toys or stuffable food dispensing products such as a KONG. You can then fill the KONG loosely with some of your dog's daily food portion and/or favorite treats and seal the end of the KONG with cottage cheese, cream cheese or peanut butter. Once the dog can quickly and easily empty the loosely filled KONG, then you can step up to adding moisture to the kibble or mix kibble with the cottage cheese etc. to make it a little harder to empty. Ultimately you can work up to the point where a moistened kibble or other food in a KONG can be placed in a freezer. This will provide your dog with at least 20 minutes of working for its' food. This is a proven way to reduce nuisance barking, boredom and destructive behaviors, as well as help to reduce the dog's feelings of anxiety, loneliness or boredom when you leave the house. Other wonderful products that will keep your dog busy and keep your home and belongings in tact are Twist and Treat by Premier Products and the Omega Tricky Treat Ball. There are many other similar products you can find at pet stores in addition to the above items that will keep your dogs busy as well. Giving the dog acceptable chewing items keeps the dog busy and keeps him from chewing your possessions. Chewing also relaxes and settles the dog. These products are sold at many pet stores and are also available online.

***If you have more than one dog*** – do not “free feed” – give a set quantity of food with a limited time to eat it. If you are concerned about issues with the dogs, you can feed them in their crates. This is a safe environment for the dogs, and can help prevent fights. Feeding the dog in the crate can also help the dog associate “good vibes” with the crate and make their time in the crate a more positive experience. You can also give the toys mentioned in the paragraph above to each dog in their crate or kennel when you leave the house.

## ***Teaching the Dog Acceptable Behavior in the Home***

Rescue dogs bring with them varying degrees of trauma. As a result, you will often need to help the dog learn good “dog manners.” (That is: what is expected, and what is appropriate and polite behavior). Every interaction you have with your dog is a learning opportunity. An excellent way to think of this is to remember that you have control the resources that the dog wants. Dogs do what pays for them. You can think of this like a human parent who has the checkbook, credit cards and keys to the car. Human children are often expected to clean their room, do the dishes or take care of other home responsibilities before they get to go do the activities they desire. You can teach the dog to behave politely in order to get the things they want. Resources you can control to train polite responses inside and outside the home include food, getting to go for a walk, being allowed to greet another dog, going for a ride in the car, getting to go sniff something interesting and being let outside. If you are someone who allows dogs on the furniture (many of us do, but it's absolutely your personal choice) you should request a behavior before they can get up. You can do things like ask the dog for a sit or a down and to wait quietly before he/she is rewarded by getting the things he wants. If he or she is acting like a bouncing, crazy idiot, then don't let that pay off for him or her. Don't pay the bad behavior. Teach the dog that he/she must stand politely and quietly to get his/her harness or leash on for a walk. Teach him/her to ‘wait’ at an intersection before crossing the street. Getting to go forward

on his/her walk is reward in itself. Teach the dog that he/she must sit politely before someone will come to greet him. The minute you get the behavior you want – REWARD THAT DOG! That way the dog makes the connection that “when I act like this, I get a super great thing!”. Pretty soon you will have a dog that offers great behavior without prompting.

A word on “Dominance”...

In recent years it has been a popular notion that dogs have a desire to “dominate” people and that humans must actively keep the dog in their place for fear that the dog will “take over”.

Relax. This is NOT something you need to worry about with your dog or your foster dog. Your dog is not designing new ways to rule the human world!

Dominance is defined as a relationship between individual animals that is established by force/aggression and submission, to determine who has priority access to food, water, place to sleep and mates (Bernstein 1981; Drews 1993). Dogs may establish hierarchies amongst their own species, but they don’t with humans. The beginning of the popularity of the concept of dominance being used in dog training was based in decades old studies of captive wolves. The original study was flawed and years later declared inaccurate by the author, but the catchy term, “Alpha” made its way into the lexicon of dog training and into the domestic dog world. Since then people have worried that they must act “as wild wolves act” to keep the dog in its place. The truth is that many behaviors we don’t like in our dogs continue because we have inadvertently rewarded them and because we have not trained appropriate behavior, not because of a dominance strategy on the dog’s part. The concept of the “Alpha” has led some to feel they have the license to physically pin a dog or “Alpha Roll” a dog in order to “show it whose boss”. The American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior issued a statement in 2009 declaring that applying dominance theory in behavior modification and the use of physical force in behavior modification is dangerous and creates fear in the animal that can lead to other serious behavioral issues. It is not safe for the person or the dog to apply physical force in training and it damages our relationship with our dogs.

Recent studies have declared that the domestic dog evolved from the wolf some 15,000 to 20,000 years ago. Veterinarian, Animal Behaviorist and Dog Trainer, Dr. Ian Dunbar made a brilliant comment on the subject above; “Learning from wolves to interact with pet dogs makes about as much sense as, ‘I want to improve my parenting—let’s see how the chimps do it!’”

NorSled does not support the practice of “Alpha Rolling” or pinning dogs. Again, if you are ever concerned about behavior in your dog(s) or have a question on the best way to train or modify behavior, contact NorSled with your questions. We can help you.

## ***Guarding***

It is perfectly normal for dogs to guard items and food from one another. It is a behavior that would enable the dog to survive in the wild. We humans however, need to help teach our dogs that it is okay for us to be around their food and objects. If you find that your foster dog is highly protective of food items or other items do not punish the dog for his guarding. Punishing a dog for guarding resources will only make the problem worse and could put you and ultimately the dog in danger. You will need to implement a treatment plan to work with the dog. NorSled can put you in touch with a trainer to help you.

- Be aware of how you interact with your dog. If you are constantly taking food, toys or treats from your dog and not giving the dog anything in return, then the dog may develop behaviors to keep items from you. Be sure the dog gets a chance to win sometimes. If you don't have a serious guarding problem it is an excellent idea to work with your dog on exchanges of items.
- If you have a young dog, they often like to chew on things – that is how they explore their world. When you take an object from the dog, hand them a toy they can have to replace what you are taking away.

For information on how to work with object exchanges, see the article, **GUARDING VALUED OBJECTS** at this weblink;

<http://www.dogstardaily.com/training/guarding-valued-objects>

There is an excellent book on the subject of guarding called, **MINE! A Practical Guide to Resource Guarding in Dogs**, by Jean Donaldson, PhD.

## ***Barking***

One of the most problematic areas for dog owners is barking. Excessive barking results in upset neighbors, visits from animal control and frayed nerves for everyone. It is also one of the main reasons dogs end up in animal shelters.

The first thing to be sure of is that your dog is getting sufficient exercise and mental stimulation. A simple twenty-minute walk once a day is likely not enough. A high energy exertion run and/or having other dog playmates will help immensely.

The other very important thing to assess is your dog's environment. If the barking is due to boredom while you are gone, then it is important that your dog have things to do while you are away. Don't feed your dog's breakfast to him before you leave in the morning. Use the stuffable toys mentioned above for him to work on his meal when you leave. Let your leaving the home be a predictor of a great time foraging for food and finding treats hidden in the yard or in his available space for his discovery while you are gone. You can become very creative this way. Hide treats in bushes or hang treats from trees in your yard.

Also, when you first have the dog in your home, practice doing things in other rooms behind a closed door for brief periods of time. Make brief exits and entries without fanfare. Have chewies available for him to pass his time while practicing this. The dog will learn that your absence predicts yummy stuff

One fantastic alternative for your dog is to create a designated digging space for him. You can use a "kiddie-pool", buy or build a sandbox and fill it with children's play sand. In the sandbox hide treats that are chewable like bully sticks, stuffed KONGs and stuffable toys. Remember you have a Working Dog. They need a job. If he has a fun space to find things, it will keep him occupied and out of trouble! If he has something to do, he isn't barking from boredom. Finding incompatible behaviors to barking and other undesirable behaviors will keep you and your dog happy!

Another thing a dog owner should do is to examine a dog's surroundings and see if there is something that is agitating the dog. This can be as simple as a bird feeder that is being raided by Squirrels. It could also be the dog is barking in response to sirens, children playing or other dogs in the distance. Dogs that bark at people passing by their house, such as the mailman, can be a difficult problem. This is because their barking is what trainers call a 'self-reinforcing behavior'. The dog sees a person passing by, barks at the person, and the person goes away, thus rewarding the dog for the barking.

There are other types of barking behaviors. These include "Request Barking". Request barking is when a dog barks to get attention, to get food, to get to go outside. This type of barking should be ignored and attention only paid when the dog is polite and quiet. This is an easy behavior to extinguish. If the dog needs to signal that he needs to go out to go potty, then you can teach him to ring a bell to go have the door opened for him.

A good article from the San Francisco SPCA on barking is listed below;

<http://www.sfspca.org/resources/library/for-dog-owners/behavioral/barking.pdf>

## ***Housebreaking***

It is unfortunate that many of the dogs we receive are not house broken. Usually this is not the fault of either the previous owner or the dog. We get most of our dogs from shelters where the dogs are forced to use their stall as a bathroom. Whatever training a dog might have had may be lost during their stay at the shelter. It is therefore necessary for dogs to be retrained in where it's appropriate to go potty again once they come into your home. When you first bring your new foster dog home, do not let him/her have free reign of the house. Keep him/her within your sight and take him/her out frequently to go potty. You may want to leave a leash on him/her so you can move him/her outside quickly if he looks like he/she is about to pee in the house.

Reward and praise him/her for eliminating outside. **We are talking major party here – lots of praise – he just won a gold medal! Make sure the dog understands you are thrilled with what he just did.** Give him a nice yummy treat for going outside along with petting, scratches, pats and at least 3 minutes of praise. If he doesn't go potty outside right away, then keep him with you in the house and take him out in the next hour. Providing that the dog is comfortable being in a crate, crate training can be a great tool for housebreaking - see the section on Crate Training. The collective wisdom of NorSled members is a good source of information if you are unsure what to do.

## ***Crate Training***

Crates are a wonderful tool for housebreaking dogs and for making them feel secure. But beware; they can be badly misused if their purpose and function is misunderstood.

A crate is **NOT** for:

- punishing a dog. Never use it as a punishment place or as a "time out" spot.
- keeping the dog locked up for long periods of time - crates are too confining. A dog should be crated for **NO MORE** than 4 hours in a day.

- keeping puppies out of trouble all day. A puppy should have a “long term confinement area” that includes a place to sleep, a place to potty, place to eat, fresh water and chew toys.

What a crate is for:

The crate is a safety zone. This is the den where the dog can go to rest, sleep in safety or hide when scared. It is where he may get biscuits, chewies and KONGS.

If the dog is hesitant to go in, leave the crate in the living room with the door held in an open position where it will not slam shut and scare him/her. When the dog is not looking, make really great things “magically appear” in the crate, like bits of cheese, chew toys stuffed with food. You can also tie things like a pig’s ear or other chewable items to the corner of the inside of the crate so that it gets consumed inside. Work your way to the point where your dog will willingly go into the crate to have a treat or take a break. When your dog is comfortable in the crate continue to give him/her things to chew in the crate to pass the time.

If the first few times you put the dog in the crate - especially at bedtime - the dog gets fussy, try talking to the dog, or reading out loud to him/her. The dog will not care about the subject matter; he/she just wants you to be near the crate and to hear your voice. You can even try singing, if the other members of your household do not object.

Crates are very good for helping with housebreaking, especially an adult dog. Used properly, this can work in a few days. Begin by keeping the dog on a leash tied to you when you are in the house. The minute the dog seems to want to go potty, get him or her outside. In particular, if this is a puppy, take them outside once an hour no matter what. Praise them for doing their business outside; don't punish for doing it inside. Then, when you can't be with the dog, put them in the crate. Dogs will usually not eliminate in their sleeping area.

While housebreaking, use some old towels in the crate, in case of accidents. Once the dog is housebroken, put a nice soft bed in the crate. Then he/she should be comfortable sleeping in there all night, even when you take him visiting to another location.

### ***Finding a Competent Trainer and Finding Good Training Resources***

Training your dog or your foster dog to be a well behaved member of the family should be above all a fun and positive experience. For the foster dog, training him/her polite behaviors will help him to find a good home and help him to be more adoptable. You have an opportunity to really help dogs by fostering. There is a lot of inaccurate information both online and particularly in the media about dog training. Dog Training is an unregulated industry. At this time, anyone can hang out their shingle and say they are a dog trainer. It leaves the consumer - and dogs - at a great disadvantage. A way to find trainers who are up to date with methods on training that are based in how animals learn is to contact the Association of Pet Dog Trainers ([www.apdt.com](http://www.apdt.com)); you can also contact the San Francisco SPCA. The San Francisco SPCA has a Dog Training Academy that is highly respected world-wide and they can refer you to graduates of their academy that live in your area. If a trainer uses fear or pain to train, we recommend you reconsider working with them. Training is usually most effective if your dog and you enjoy the experience!

NorSled can provide you with referrals to trainers and training classes in your area. We can also direct you toward great books and videos on dog behavior and training – we do maintain a library and you can borrow books from us. There are several fantastic websites listed below that can give you information on training and behavior.

[www.dogstardaily.com](http://www.dogstardaily.com)

<http://www.4pawsu.com/articles.htm>

<http://www.sfspca.org/resources/library/for-dog-owners/>

### *Preparing a Dog for Adoption*

When you receive your dog you should also get paperwork that contains whatever medical history is known about the dog as well as a copy of any paperwork given to NorSled when the dog was taken from the shelter. At adoption, you should have the following documentation:

- Proof of how NorSled got ownership of the dog (and therefore has the legal right to transfer ownership of the dog), in the form of shelter receipt (if dog rescued from shelter), or a NorSled's 'Owner Surrender' form (completed and signed by the prior owner), if the dog was surrendered to us.
- Proof of current rabies and DHLPP. All shelter dogs come out with at least rabies, and sometimes also DHLPP and even bordatella. If not, then a receipt from a veterinarian will suffice for the DHLPP. If the dog is surrendered to NorSled with an up-to-date shot record, the veterinarian who gave the shots must be contacted to provide proof of those shots and a rabies certificate (if the surrendering owner doesn't furnish at time of surrender).
- Proof of a heartworm test and results. Proof of heartworm treatment if provided. If the test was done at a shelter and the shelter did not provide proof, write the results of the heartworm test on the adoption application.
- Proof of microchip number. For dogs that come to us already micro chipped, a copy of the registry (i.e., Avid, Home Again) form is sufficient.
- Proof of spay/neuter. The veterinarian who did the work will need to provide this (in the case of owner surrender, already spayed/neutered, or if we had the work done ourselves). If the dog comes out of a shelter already altered, make sure the shelter paperwork clearly states that they've verified that the dog is already altered.

The dog is **NOT** ready for adoption until all of the preceding has been done. Don't ever guess or presume that something has been done for which you have no direct proof (by receipt or certificate). If you do not know, **ASK!**

It is assumed that you will look at the information given to you by the Rescue/Adoption Coordinator or other NorSled member and determine what has, or has not, been done to make the dog ready for adoption. This means that you must make or find the time to take the dog to the vet or the local shelter for shots, micro chipping, testing, or altering if it is required. Feel free to ask any NorSled member where they usually take the dogs for veterinary care. Be sure to read the Reimbursement Policy: save your receipts and, once the dog is adopted submit covered expenses for reimbursement.

All of this information should be placed into a large envelope that will act as the adoption packet for the dog. A copy of the NorSled adoption application should also be included. We recommend you make three photocopies of this information: one for the adoptive family, one for the NorSled Rescue/Adoption Coordinator, and a copy for your own records.

### ***Adoption Fairs***

NorSled holds several adoption fairs a month at different locations throughout the service area. We are usually hosted by pet food stores, but not in stores that sell dogs. Dates and times of these fairs can be found on the "Schedule" page of our web site [www.NorSled.org](http://www.NorSled.org) , or email at [rescue@norsled.org](mailto:rescue@norsled.org). All NorSled members are welcome to attend the fairs and help out - it's a great way to meet the other members and for our members to get to know our dogs.

The Coordinator announces the fair during the week - this is a reminder of location and asking who will attend. The coordinator also arranges for the awnings, crates etc. The President manages the relations with the store - that includes where we set up.

- If you are planning to attend a fair, please tell the fair coordinator by Thursday of that week.
- If you are bringing a foster dog, make sure the coordinator knows what dog you are bringing.
- You are expected to be there to help "wrangle" the dogs.
- If you **cannot** stay and help with your foster dog, let the coordinator know ahead of time.

### ***Adoption Fair Protocol***

- Wear NorSled identification/name tags. If a NorSled ID is not available, volunteer must use tape/sticker to have name on upper body area
- Wear NorSled tee shirts/sweat shirts if available. Both the public and other volunteers need easy volunteer identification

- Do not bring personal dogs to the event. We are counting on you to Support NorSled dogs. We need ALL of your full attention on the event.
- Do not bring friends and family unless they are also NorSled members and are formal event volunteers
- The minimum, age of an adoption volunteer is 12 years old, 18 to handle dogs.
- Dog Monitor/Volunteers are responsible for ensuring that the assigned dog is comfortable, receives adequate water and is not disruptive nor a risk to anyone in attendance
- Sidewalks must be open and accessible at all times
- Responsible for keeping both children and adult a safe distance 12 inches away from crate 24 inches away from dog until in an individual quiet space, where interested parties can safely interact with dog
- Children in the NorSled Adoption Fair area must be supervised. If guardians are not paying attention to their children, NorSled volunteers must ask the guardian to take control of their children or leave the fair. A NorSled volunteer must monitor until the guardians comply. NorSled cannot risk a child connecting with a dog
- All volunteers are responsible for keeping visitors from putting fingers, hands and faces into the crates to pet the dogs. No exceptions!
- All NorSled dogs must be under NorSled control at all times
- Only a NorSled volunteer may remove a dog from a crate
- If a potential adopter wants to walk a dog, a NorSled volunteer must leash the dog, remove the dog from the crate and remain with the potential adopter and dog at all times. The Dog Monitor and interested party should walk the dog away from the crates and fair to a quiet area.
- Dogs must never be left unattended. At least one person must stay with the dogs (even if crated)
- If the NorSled member thinks the potential adopter is mismanaging the dog, the dog must be returned to the sole contact of the NorSled volunteer
- When a dog is taken out of its crate by a NorSled volunteer, the volunteer must notify either the Fair Monitor or the Adoption Coordinator that they are doing so and where they will be going. If possible, a note should be attached to the crate with NorSled volunteer name, activity and time
- If small animals or cats are near the Adoption Fair, the volunteers must be extra vigilant in

keeping the Nor Sled dogs under control. A volunteer may need to cover a crate or move a dog so that shoppers with other animals can easily and safely get to their destination.

- If someone enters the fair area that needs mobility assistance, is using a cane, wheelchair or walker, or seems uncomfortable around the dogs, a NorSled volunteer should escort the person through the group and ensure the person feels safe, secure and respected

## Supplies

- First aid supplies are located at the merchandise table
- Leashes and water bowls are located at the merchandise table
- Adoption Questionnaires are located at the merchandise table
- Please note: The participant at on of any volunteer is at the discretion of any Board Member and can be revoked at any time if the volunteer's behavior is deemed inconsistent with the organization's mission

## *Adopting a Dog*

When someone has expressed an interest in adopting one of our dogs they fill out the adoption application found in the dog's adoption packet or the adoption fair coordinator. The prospective adopter puts their information on the form and the foster parent fills out the rest of the form including all the medical information known about the dog (shots, microchip number, NorSled tag number, dog's name, alter date, etc..) and the adoption fee.

After they complete the application, arrangements should be made to introduce the foster dog to any existing family pets, especially other dogs. See section "Introducing the New Dog into A Home" for specifics.

Before anyone is allowed to take a dog home, the prospective adopter has to go through the same home inspection, as would any member of NorSled; see the section under Home Inspection. An experienced member of NorSled is sent to the prospective home and does the inspection before the dog is released to the family.

If everything at the house passes inspection, the family can take the dog immediately. If the yard or home needs repair of any sort, the dog should be held until the work is done. If, for any reason, you have second thoughts about adopting a dog to a family, make your feelings known to the adoption fair coordinator or, if necessary, call the Rescue/Adoption Coordinator or Board member and ask for advice.

There will be times when you visit a family and you feel like this will be a bad situation for the dog. Go with your feelings and let them be known. We are under no obligation to allow anyone to adopt one of our dogs if we feel that the home is not right for them. If necessary, the Rescue/Adoption Coordinator or Board Member will step in for you and tell the adopters that they cannot have the dog.

In rare instances, distance or previous NorSled adopters, we may use photos of the yard.

### ***Adoption Fee***

The adoption fee usually runs between \$275 and \$600. This fee is not subject to negotiation. We are not used-car salesman and we don't haggle over the fee. If a family cannot afford the adoption fee do not be tempted to drop the fee to match their expectations. A family that cannot afford the adoption fee will not likely be able to afford medical treatment should something happen to the dog. Do not discuss why the fee is a particular price by breaking down the cost with anyone. Realize some of our dogs have cost us hundreds, even thousands of dollars in medical care. We do not set the adoption fees to match the expenses of each dog. Otherwise, some of our dogs would be completely unadoptable due to their significant medical care costs.

### ***Completing the Adoption***

Once the home inspection has been done and everything has proved to be satisfactory, have the new family make a check or money order out to NorSled for the agreed upon adoption amount and put the check into the adoption packet. If they pay in cash, put the cash in the adoption packet.

The new owners should receive a copy of the dog's records and adoption contract. A copy of these records, the check and contract should be sent to the Rescue/Adoption Coordinator. Please retain a copy of the adoption contract for yourself for follow up with the adoption. In addition, if you want to be reimbursed for any out of pocket expenses please send a copy of the expense sheet and a copy of your receipts to the Financial Officer. (see Appendix for a copy of the expense summary sheet).

### ***Puppies***

Puppies will be altered as soon as a vet is willing to spay/neuter. NorSled will alter the dogs before they are adopted, we will not adopt out unaltered dogs. Shots for puppies are as follows: DHLPP at 8 and 12 weeks, and DHLPP and rabies at 16 weeks/4 months, and also started on heartworm preventative medication. If a vet recommends the Bordetella shot, NorSled will provide this also. NorSled will provide the shots for the puppies until they are adopted. If a puppy is adopted prior to being 4 months and fully vaccinated, it is the owner's responsibility to continue the shots until the puppy is fully vaccinated. At four months NorSled will reimburse the adopters the cost for a rabies shot, not to exceed \$15.

### ***Adoption Announcement***

Within 24 hours of placement send an email announcement of placement to the NorSled group list. This announcement should include the following

- Name of fosterer
- Date dog was placed

- Dog name
- Description of dog - color and distinguishing marks
- Neutered/Spayed Male/Female Samoyed/Husky/Malamute/Other
- Age
- Chip number
- Tag number
- Name and address of adopters here
- Phone here (home) phone here (alternate)
- Result of home evaluation (what is the environment in which the dog will live)
- Thanks to anyone who helped with the dog or previous foster families.

### ***Follow up with New Family***

The person who fostered the dog usually follows up with the new family. The fosterer knows the dog best, and can answer many basic questions.

- Call the family that night to make certain everything is OK. Answer any questions; reassure them they can call with questions.
- Call 48 hours later and see how all is going.
  -
- E-mail or call the next weekend to see how they are doing.
  -
- E-mail or call 4 weeks later to see how things are. If all is fine:
  -
- E-mail or call at 6 months for a final check to see how the dog is doing. Encourage them to keep you up with the dog.

### ***Protocol for Rescuing Dogs from Shelters, Homes, Owner Surrenders and Other Situations***

It is preferred that any person we rely on to evaluate a dog for NorSled Rescue should be properly trained in evaluation techniques (temperament testing). We also rely on the shelters staff's evaluations to determine if a dog is appropriate for rescue, and on owners who surrender their dogs to provide honest information about the history of the dog.

Everyone involved will do their best possible to do a fair evaluation of the dog, but we realize most are volunteers who do not have professional training in evaluation.

No dog that has a bite record will be considered for rescue.

After a dog has passed evaluation by a NorSled member or shelter volunteer it will either go to a foster home or a kennel for care. All medical needs will be attended to as swiftly as possible.

If while in the care of a foster home or a kennel a dog exhibits behavior that concerns the foster family or kennel staff, the board will evaluate the situation, and bring in a trainer, veterinarian, or other person with experience with difficult dogs.

It is essential when we are talking to someone trying to place a dog or put it into foster that we ask about aggressive behavior and human bites.

The dog will be evaluated by a trainer or veterinarian, who will make recommendations.

If the trainer's or veterinarian's evaluation shows that a dog can be adopted with limitations and disclosure of the dog's issues, NorSled's board and the foster home will determine if we have the means to adopt the dog out with the issues. An official vote will be taken.

If the veterinarian or trainer recommends that the dog is not adoptable, NorSled will have the dog euthanized.

**Note:** A "dangerous dog" refers to a dog presenting an unacceptable high risk of serious injury to people, or other animals even before causing harm. This includes a dog that has communicated by its actions, intention, habit, tendency or propensity to do something harmful to people and possibly other animals.

If a dog is deemed dangerous by a veterinarian or dog trainer, NorSled will not adopt out that dog. It will be euthanized.

As a rescue organization NorSled has a responsibility to evaluate every dog to the best of our ability. However, unless we see specific behavior that causes concerns, we will base this judgment of the evaluations of shelters, our foster families, and our kennel volunteers.

We may not be able to see a dog in every potential situation, so in some instances we cannot assure adopters' the dog is good in certain situations. We can tell potential adopters' we have not seen problems, but do not know how the dog will react.

We will not adopt a Nordic breed dog to a home with small animals including cats and small dogs due to the breeds high prey drive.

If a family with a baby or small child adopts a dog from us they have to understand that they cannot leave the baby or child alone with the dog ever. No matter how good a disposition the dog has, it is just prudent to avoid any mishaps.

**Additional Note:**

NorSled has a very close working relationship with the owner, manager and staff of the kennel we board many of our dogs at due to a lack of enough foster homes. The folks at the kennel are very proactive in advising us of any behavior or medical issues that they notice.

NorSled has routinely set up standing appointments with a local behaviorist and have rotated dogs that we felt could use a little additional expert training to ensure they are good canine citizens when they go to their new homes.

## ***Care Provided to NorSled Foster Dogs***

The following should be provided to all NorSled foster dogs prior to adoption. The previous owner may have done these or in the shelter, otherwise, as a foster parent, it is your responsibility to make sure they are completed:

- Current Rabies and DHLPP vaccines
- Spayed or Neutered
- Tested for Heartworm. Treated for Heartworm, if test was positive.
- Evaluated by NorSled member(s) for behavior, personality, obedience, and compatibility
- Micro chipped and microchip registration to new owners
- Seen by a vet if ill or there is an indication that medical attention is needed. For costs over \$100 for medical care, prior board approval is needed. The only exception is emergency medical care that, if delayed, could result in serious injury or death to the foster dog - in this case, emergency care should be obtained, and a member of the board notified within 12 hours of the dog entering care.
- If you suspect your foster dog have any parasites, such as Giardia or Worms please contact the foster home coordinator for permission to have dog tested.

For more details on services that can be provided, and how you can be reimbursed for the care, see the Reimbursement Policy in the back of this handbook.

## ***Euthanasia Decision Process***

Unfortunately, while rare, there are times when we find a dog we cannot place due to extreme behavioral or medical issues. In the case of potential euthanasia, the following procedure must be done:

- 1) The foster home must contact at least one board member prior to the euthanasia for approval. (The board member originally contacted is responsible for contacting the other board members and holding the vote)
- 2) There must be a recommendation for the procedure from a veterinarian or trainer, and
- 3) A majority vote for approval from the Board.

**The only exception to the Euthanasia Decision Process is if there is an evaluation from a veterinarian that delaying the procedure would result in undue suffering for the dog.**

NOTE: If a fostered dog enters the care of a temporary foster, that temporary foster has full responsibility and accountability for that dog while in their care. If, because of extenuating circumstances or due to an emergency situation, a put to sleep decision must be made, the temporary foster must follow the above procedure. Every effort must be made to include the original foster in the discussion. However, the final decision will be made based upon the procedure as outlined above.

## ***Reimbursement Policy (for NorSled members only)***

NorSled is an all-volunteer, non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization. No one is paid to work for NorSled. Members and other individual's time, travel, etc., are considered donated to NorSled. These, excluding time, can be written off on the individual's taxes, as long as the individual tracks the expenses and reports them to NorSled. Expenses that an individual plans to write off on his or her personal taxes should be submitted to the NorSled treasurer by January 31 of the following year (e.g. your tax write-offs for 2013 should be submitted by January 31, 2014) in order to for NorSled to provide you the necessary IRS documentation to support your write-offs.

### ***Expenses that are covered***

- Committees can spend up to \$100 on activities without NorSled board approval (Note: throughout this document, board approval means the approval by a majority of the board). This includes per dog costs for shelter fees. If total expenses of a committee will go beyond \$100, the committee must obtain NorSled board approval prior to proceeding.

### ***Foster Homes***

- Shelter fees (if foster home must pay a shelter fee)
- Spay/neuter fees (if applicable)
- Costs for updating vaccinations (if needed)
- Initial examination by a veterinarian
- Prescription medication (if applicable), including treatment for parasites such as giardia
- Heartworm test/Heartworm prevention
- Up to \$40 in grooming expenses
- Flea control medication
- Micro chipping
- Any other expense that the foster home believes should be incurred should be brought to the NorSled board's attention prior to the expenditure, and requires NorSled board pre-approval. The only exception is emergency medical care that, if delayed, could result in serious injury or death to the foster dog - in this case, emergency care should be obtained, and a member of the board notified within 12 hours of the dog entering care.

### ***Non-covered expenses***

- A. Gas, tolls, hotel and meals are not covered.
- B. Dog food and treats are currently donated to NorSled and if you need these items please make arrangements to have them brought to an adoption fair for you to pick up.
- C. Phone bills are not covered. There may be special circumstances where unusual use of telephone calls is necessary. If this need for telephone support occurs, there must be pre-approval by the NorSled board that these specific phone calls will be covered. In the case of any covered phone calls, detailed bills from the phone company must be submitted, with each call for which reimbursement is requested highlighted, and an explanation of the purpose of each specific call. Calls to other NorSled members will not be covered in any situation. The board will review the submission, and determine what might be covered.

- D. Anything not listed under "EXPENSES THAT ARE COVERED" is not covered unless prior approval was obtained from the NorSled board.

***Submission of expenses for coverage***

1. Any expense over \$100 must be pre-approved by the NorSled board, with the exception of certain items listed under the foster home. This pre-approval requirement includes veterinary expenses.

Any expense for which a NorSled member is requesting reimbursement, including those listed above as covered, must be submitted to the treasurer. The submission must include the original receipt with an explanation of what that receipt purchased. The board may also require additional documentation.

2. Timeline for submission of reimbursement requests.
  - Reimbursement for services and materials other than foster home activities must be submitted within 30 days of the expense.
  - If possible, foster homes should contact the Rescue/Adoption coordinator and get a copy of the NorSled credit card number to use to pay any covered vet bills.
  - Foster homes can submit covered expenses at any time. If they chose, the foster home can wait until after the dog is adopted and submit all of the expenses at one time, but this must be within 30 days of when the foster dog is adopted.
3. Members can submit expenses not listed above for consideration for reimbursement. However, the NorSled board will review the expenses and determine if they will be reimbursed.

***Reimbursement***

1. The NorSled board will set the priorities for the order in which reimbursements will occur. There are two exceptions:
  - If a member has arranged for a vehicle donation to the NorSled Auto Donation Program, the monies obtained from the sale of the vehicle will first go to cover any extant NorSled expenses identified by that member as a priority. Notification of the member's prioritization must be given to the board in writing prior to the sale of the vehicle.
  - If there is a donation campaign for a specific dog or group of dogs, or a private donation given for a specific dog or group of dogs, the monies collected will go towards the specified dog(s).

2. All reimbursements will be made by check. The treasurer will cut all checks for reimbursement.
3. NorSled is a non-profit organization, funded by donations. Reimbursements will be made only as funds become available.

### ***NorSled property***

Any durable equipment that is approved for purchase and reimbursed for by the NorSled board becomes NorSled property. Any materials donated to NorSled become NorSled property. If a member should resign from or otherwise leave NorSled, he or she must return any property, or make arrangements for the return of said property, for which they have been reimbursed within 30 days. This holds true also for any property donated to NorSled that may be in the possession of a member; the property must be returned to NorSled within 30 days of their leaving.

