

# Mile High Weimaraner Rescue

## Foster Care Guidelines



### Mission Statement

The purpose of Mile High Weimaraner Rescue is to find loving, permanent homes for unwanted or abandoned purebred Weimaraners, by preparing prospective families for responsible dog ownership through education and support and by helping companions through training and behavior modification.

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### Introduction

Thank you for becoming a Weimaraner Rescue foster care volunteer. Love of animals and especially the Weimaraner brings us together and unites us in a common mission.

These guidelines are designed to clarify Mile High Weimaraner Rescue (MHWR) philosophy and procedures by which all volunteers operate when providing foster care for a MHWR dog. This manual covers the process from placement in foster care through the follow up of adoption placement.

Each Weim, foster home and adoptive home is unique. There will be new situations where flexibility is necessary. Please read this guide carefully and keep it handy for reference. If you have any questions, please direct them to your foster coordinator or rescue coordinator.

Each stage of the adoption process has guidelines listed in this manual. If any part of this process is not clear, please don't hesitate to ask for assistance. With each adoption, you will gain experience and knowledge. Failures will happen and they provide excellent new learning opportunities - lessons learned and passed on can benefit all of us in MHWR.

### The Purpose Of Foster Care

The purpose of foster care is to provide a safe home for rescue dogs while a permanent home is found. During foster care, the caregiver can observe the dog's temperament in a home environment to determine if the Weim can safely live with a family and to help that dog learn then necessary things to make him a more placeable Weim. That often means brushing up on the dogs basic good citizenship and helping the dog to become the nice-mannered Weim he should be in his new home.

While in foster care, the providers will ensure that all medical requirements for adoption placement are met (veterinary exam, vaccines, heartworm test, microchip, and a spay/neuter), the dog is started on crate training, and has basic training for living in a home. Please ask for assistance if you need help with any training needs.

### Will I Be A Good Foster Home?

Many volunteers say they can't be a foster parent because they will want to keep every Weim that comes through their door. Successful foster parents look at themselves more like a close family members. They have all fun and get to spoil the dog with love and attention, but then when it's time for obedience school or to pay for all their future medical needs, the dogs move on to live with their forever home.

The role of a foster is to bridge the gap for this Weim. If you were to keep every foster dog, you would not be able to save anymore Weims, which is why you volunteered in the first place. In addition, the approved families who adopt our Weims are terrific. You might wish they would adopt you too. Many of our adoptive families are so grateful for the work you did for their new Weim that they will stay in touch for years to come with holiday cards and emails.

### Preparing For The Arrival Of Your Foster Weim

Pick up and put out of reach any chew bones and toys that could be considered food. You need to know more about your foster Weim before you introduce these items.

Crating is essential training and should be started immediately. If you don't have a crate, the foster or rescue coordinator will try to provide one to you or make arrangements for you to get one. These crates are the property of MHWR and should be returned to us when you are not fostering. If you wish to purchase your own crate, that is great. The crates MHWR has in stock are usually donated and aren't always the best crates. We often pick them up at garage sales. If you see any crates for sale that would fit a Weim and they are under \$25, let a coordinator know and we'll see if we can't buy it and add it to our supply.

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If you have an old blanket, you may want to place it in the bottom of the crate. Some dogs like this, some don't. Most Weims like a very nice, cushy bed to lay on. A folded up comforter or a dog bed work well. Costco usually has dog beds for under \$20.00.

Your foster dog will need food and water dishes. MHWR has a few sets of these, but it is easier if you have your own.

We recommend that you keep handy a spray bottle filled with water (a 25/75 solution of vinegar and water can also be used) to use to stop undesirable behavior.

Sometimes the dogs we get in rescue do not have leashes and collars. If your foster dog arrives with neither of these items, let a coordinator know. When possible, if the new owners have bought their own leash and/or collar, please retain the ones you have when the dog is adopted out so that they can be returned to MHWR and reused for another dog.

Baby gates are good tools to help you keep an eye on your new charge. During the first few days, it is wise to keep a very close watch on your foster. Baby gates provide a way to make your house smaller and more manageable.

### Introducing The Foster Weim To Your Family

It is a good idea to plan carefully before introducing the foster Weim to your home and those living there. Many animals are territorial and may respond differently to the introduction of new animals. You know your pets best, so if they need to be introduced to the newest household member on neutral territory, plan to provide it. Meeting on the sidewalk or in a park is a good idea and is generally better than the front or back yard.

Plan to have someone on hand to help you when you introduce your foster dog to its new (temporary) home and family. An adult family member, friend, or neighbor are all good choices.

Talk to family members beforehand about the Weim and what they should expect. Children especially should be made aware that the foster Weim might initially behave differently than their dog. The foster Weim does not know them and may be shy or very boisterous – every dog is different. Children also need to know that they play a part in the fostering experience – what they see and experience are very important. As with any new non-human addition to your family, you should monitor your children's interaction with the foster dog at all times.

### Introducing The Foster Weim To Your Home

- ◆ Have all dogs on leashes and introduce them one at a time.
- ◆ If possible, have someone on hand to help you with the leashes, etc.
- ◆ Introduce the foster Weim to your other pets, such as cats, one at a time. Weims are natural hunters, so cats, rabbits and birds are all prey in the mind of a Weim. If you introduce your new Weim to a 'prey' animal and the Weim goes 'on point' – stops dead in their tracks with a very intense stare at the animal, maybe lifting a paw, you will want to remove both animals from the situation immediately.
- ◆ Observe carefully how the foster Weim responds to your children.
- ◆ Discuss with family members their observations and reactions to the dog.

### Feeding Your Foster Dog

Some fosters come into rescue with a known diet. In those situations, continuing on with that diet and slowly switching to the diet you would like to feed is important. Weims are known to have touchy stomachs, so a slow transition in food is advised to avoid intestinal upset. We recommend a slow transition with  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the original food and  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the new food. Try that combination for up to a week to make sure there are no problems. If no problems are encountered, move to a  $\frac{1}{2}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  combination for a week. Continue with this process until the original food is weaned out.

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Some Weims will come in to rescue overweight, some may come in malnourished. If you have a question about whether your foster is over or under weight, please let the foster coordinator know your concern and advice will be given to provide the appropriate amount of food and exercise for dogs that do not come into rescue at a healthy weight.

While MHWR does not have restrictions on what brand of food must be fed to the foster dogs, we do recommend a few things. The first is that corn-free food and treats be given to the Weims in your foster care. Weims commonly have allergies and corn is probably the worst allergen we see. We also recommend at least two feedings per day. Never free-feed a foster Weim and never feed one large meal per day. Weims are the third highest breed for suffering from bloat and bloat is often fatal.

MHWR has foods that it can recommend. If you are interested in learning more, please let the foster coordinator know and one of the volunteers will discuss options that have worked for other Weims in rescue and in permanent homes.

### What NOT To Do With Your New Foster

- ◆ **Off-Leash Parks** – This is never a good idea until you know how the dog responds to your commands and other people/dogs/situations. It will take time to get to know your new dog and get your dog to listen and respond to you.
- ◆ **Time Off-Leash Outside** – Your new dog may not know your voice or respond to the “come” command. Until you are absolutely certain your dog will respond to your commands, in ANY situation, do not allow the dog to be out of your control or off-leash.
- ◆ **Alone in the Backyard** – Dogs need to feel secure with their new owner and home. Simply leaving the dog unattended in the backyard may make the dog feel abandoned, neglected or he/she may get bored and become destructive. Some dogs feel the need to wander in search of something to do or merely chase the squirrel/cat/bird out of the yard. The dog needs to be familiar with his/her surroundings and this takes time. Walk your dog through the neighborhood to familiarize it with the area.
- ◆ **Roam the House** – Initially, dogs need to be taught where things are in the new home. This means that you need to show the dog where food, water, crate and bathroom areas are and reinforce these areas with words and treats. A dog left to roam the house, whether you are there or not, is never a good idea. The dog is not familiar enough with this new territory and new rules. The dog should be crated when you are not present in the house.
- ◆ **Grooming** – Although you think your new dog needs some grooming, most dogs are not comfortable enough with you to allow this. So, during the first few days, refrain from baths, nail trims and ear cleaning. Just wait until you think the dog trusts you enough. Simple brushing should be approached with caution and positive reinforcement (treats).
- ◆ **PetsMart** – Along the same lines as the off-leash parks, pet supply stores that allow other dogs are never a good idea until you know how the dog responds to your commands and other people/dogs/situations. It will take time to get to know your new dog and get your dog to listen and respond to you.
- ◆ **Free-feeding** – Sometimes rescue dogs have been deprived of food. Do not fall into the temptation to free-feed them. Weimaraners are very susceptible to a condition called bloat or Gastric Dilatation-Volvulus (GDV). This is where the stomach twists on itself and without prompt diagnosis and surgery, the dog will die a very painful death. The best action is to feed your new dog twice or three times a day small portions (1-2 cups per serving, depending on the age/activity level of the dog).
- ◆ **Introducing New Food** – If you know the brand of dog food your new dog was fed, continue to use that food exclusively for at least a few days. The stress of a new home is enough to upset a dog’s stomach, so keep them on what they know. If after a few days, stools are solid and the dog appears to be in good health, slowly introduce the new food. We recommend ¼ of the new with ¾ of the old for a couple of days. Then half and half, and finally ¾ of the old and ¼ of the new. If all is still well, you can cut over to the new food completely.
- ◆ **Crating** – Even if you know for sure your new dog is crate trained, do not start by putting the dog in the crate for the full eight hours you are at work. If you can put the dog in the crate for five minutes while you get the mail, that is a perfect start. Then for 30 minutes while you run to the store, and so on. Make sure that the dog will not harm themselves or can escape from the crate before leaving for an entire day.

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- ◆ **Rule Breaking** – As wonderful as it is to have a new dog that was in need or didn't have the best life, you will not want to start your relationship by breaking the rules you plan to live by in your home. A Weimaraner will take its first experiences and count them as the rules. If you say, just tonight we'll let our new baby sleep on the bed, it will be very difficult to ever have your bed back to being just for humans. If you start out with how you expect the dog to act in your home, it will be a much smoother and more understanding transition for the dog. Within the first two weeks you have a new Weimaraner in your home, they will push all of the rules. It is their nature to see how far they can push and it is bred into them to learn from that experience (that's one of the reasons you wanted a Weimaraner, isn't it???).

### Record Keeping While In Foster Care

Start a file folder for the foster Weim (they may already have one) with all of the paperwork you received.

You should also be aware of what the dog needs medically so you can make plans. If you are not sure of the documentation, ask the foster or rescue coordinator for assistance to interpret it.

Any heartworm preventive given to the Weim should be noted in the file along with all invoices from any vet visit. This will all be given to the adopting family and always stays with the dog. If your foster is in your care for over a month, MHWR has heartworm preventative that it will provide.

If you are going on vacation and have another provider for the Weim, the paperwork goes with the dog until you return.

### The Importance Of Crating

Crating is essential training and should be started immediately. The goal is to have the dog remain happy in a crate for up to eight hours for an adult dog and four hours for a puppy. The Denver Dumb Friends League has some very good articles for how to crate train both puppies and adult dogs. Visit their site for the articles (<http://www.ddfl.org>).

While some Weims have had very difficult backgrounds regarding crate training, it is important to take crate training slowly as to not frustrate you or the dog.

### Obedience Training

MHWR asks foster care providers to walk the dog to evaluate the leash manners and work with them on the leash. Much of your responsibility to evaluate the dog has to do with their response to direction and control. If the dog has the simple skills of sit, down, and a recall, it is very nice for the new adopting family and helps to make them a better citizen. We require that the new adopting family take the Weim to obedience class, so any head start we can give them will make the chances for a successful adoption higher.

MHWR uses only positive reinforcement when training. Most Weims are highly treat motivated, so that is a good starting place. When teaching the basics (sit, down, heel, and come), use short training sessions. When leash walking, if the dog is proving to be too strong, a head halter, no-pull harness, or prong collar may be needed to help teach the dog how to heel and not pull on the lead. MHWR prefers not to use slip chains (aka choke collars). In the hands of someone who is not a professional trainer, these collars can prove devastating to the dogs.

### General Medical Requirements For Adoption Placement

Before Weims are ready for placement in adoption homes, they may need the following veterinary services:

A heartworm test should have been done within the past six months and the Weim should have been on preventive during those six months. The Weim should be on heartworm preventive if in the foster home for more than one month.

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Weims should be current on all vaccines. Bordatella should have been administered within six months of placement. Distemper/Parvo within one year of placement (unless it is an older dog on a three year schedule). Rabies within one or three years of placement (depending up the last vaccine the dog had on record). Lepto is becoming more and more common in the Denver metro area and this vaccine can also be administered if the veterinarian feels that it is necessary.

All MHWR Weims placed for adoption will be micro-chipped and the chip number entered on the adoption contract to identify the Weim.

All MHWR Weims placed for adoption will be spayed or neutered. If the Weim is a puppy younger than six months of age, the placement contract will state the Weim must be spayed/neutered by the time they are six months old and that proof needs to be sent to MHWR. If the Weim is not healthy enough to undergo a spay/neuter surgery, the contract will state a date when a re-check on the dogs condition must be performed.

The ears should be clean, the nails clipped and the dog brushed or washed, if needed.

### MHWR's Responsibility For Medical Care

When a Weim is accepted into the MHWR program, the responsibility for most medical needs is also accepted. MHWR will pay for most procedures the dog requires and will complete what are deemed medically necessary. For example, if a Weim has surgery during foster care and we placed the dog in an adoptive home, MHWR will bring the Weim back to our preferred Vet for the removal of stitches and any follow up care needed until they are medically released.

If the new owner wants to assume responsibility for the follow up care, then the details of what is required becomes a condition of the adoption contract. MHWR is responsible for follow up to ensure it was done. If the adopting family wants to pay for expenses that MHWR is obligated to pay, we are more than happy to accept that.

We ask foster care providers to feed the Weim and care for him in their homes at their expense. MHWR pays for all of the medical expenses and preventive medicines.

If an accident or medical emergency occurs with your Weim while you are fostering, contact a coordinator immediately so that decisions can be made by the MHWR committee on how to proceed.

### MHWR Veterinarians

MHWR has vets that are rescue friendly throughout the front range. Please have the foster coordinator or financial coordinator approve the visit to a veterinarian **prior** to going so the expense is acknowledged. If it is inconvenient for a foster home to go to one of the approved vets in your area and you would prefer taking the foster to your own vet, MHWR asks that you request an estimate for the care needed, ask if they will take a credit card over the phone for payment, as well as asking if the vet if they provide discounts to rescue groups.

### Expense Reimbursements

For veterinary expenses, it is preferred that you contact the financial coordinator while at the vet so that the financial coordinator can pay for the visit over the phone with a credit card. If for some reason this can not be achieved and you wind up paying for medical expenses, send a copy of your itemized invoice and receipt to MHWR, c/o Darci Kunard PO Box 1220, Brighton, CO 80601. You will receive a reimbursement check from MHWR **ONLY IF** you received **PRIOR** authorization for this veterinary expense..

### Expenses Covered During Foster Care

Rescue will pay for veterinary bills and provide heartworm preventative for all fosters. In addition to the basic medical requirements for adoption mentioned above, there may be other medical needs that arise. **If there is something medically going on with your foster, contact the foster or rescue coordinator immediately.** Common medical issues are ear infections, urinary tract infections, worms, and digestive problems. Any medical condition

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outside the scope of these mentioned here will require discussions with the MHWR committee and possibly the Weimaraner Foundation Fund board prior to treatment and payment.

### Naming A Foster Weim

Many times Weims come to MHWR without a known name. Generally, they are named at the point where they are evaluated since we use that name immediately to communicate to the group and on our web sites. If you would like to name a Weim that has already been named by rescue, please consult with the foster coordinator to make sure that the new name isn't the name of another currently available dog. We would like to reduce the changes for the dogs as much as possible and know that many times new owners like to rename their Weims anyway. If you have a list of names you think make great Weim names, please forward those on, we are always in need of new ideas! We would be happy to have your names used if the opportunity arises. When the Weim comes in with a name or is named at a shelter, the name is not changed during the foster care period. The Weim is identified on our web sites, the surrender moneys received, expenses incurred and the final adoption records by that name. MHWR tries to avoid additional confusion for the Weims it rescues; it does not try to give them our personality by re-naming them.

MHWR does not discourage adopting families from changing the Weim's name. If the adopting family changes the name, we support it. The Weim will be known from that time on by the name that the adopting family gives the dog.

### Weims With Behavior Problems

Rescue is a safe environment for assessing and retraining Weims. We have many people to catch a problem and time to verify our assessment with the Weim. If you see any behavior that makes you uncomfortable, please contact the foster or rescue coordinator immediately - even if it is just to discuss behavior and get a second opinion. In some cases, we will move the Weim to another foster home that may be better able to make the assessment. For instance, if the potential adopting family has children and the foster home does not and the Weim has not been exposed to children, we may move the Weim to a foster home with children for assessment. We must be sure, to the best of our ability, that the Weim is tested and that we can make a recommendation based on the response.

As a foster care provider, you should recognize that MHWR cannot save all the Weims and some that we will try to save are likely to be a liability to the welfare of people or animals. We will not place a Weim for adoption if we think there is a possibility of aggressive behavior.

### Reporting Behaviors And Problems

The following are examples of behaviors and problems that must be reported to the foster or rescue coordinator. If you observe other behaviors, problems with the dog health or adjustment to family life, please consult with the foster or rescue coordinator.

- ◆ Growling, snapping, biting and raising hackles (hair on neck and rump) to humans or other animals.
- ◆ Incessant barking, jumping up on people, nervous chewing, urinating or defecating in the house, chasing cats or any problems you believe would be hard for a new adopting family to accept.
- ◆ Any medical problems such as ear infections, skin conditions, kennel cough, lack of appetite, lethargy, excessive thirst, etc.

### Dog Fights

Breaking up dogfights is not something that happens often, but you never know when you might be faced with it and need to know what to do.

Food can antagonize dogs so that is the first place to watch for issues. Feed your foster dog in its crate or in a separate room – this will keep it separate from your dog and help to prevent fighting over food dishes.

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A spray bottle with water can be a first offense when breaking up a fight. Try to spray both dogs in the face with the water bottle – don't get in the way of teeth and avoid being knocked around. If outside, a bucket of water or hose can also be useful.

**Never try to grab either dog's collar.** The dog's adrenaline is going and its first instinct is to stay in control. Your hand can become a threat to that loss of control. Your hand close to a dog's mouth is a very vulnerable target. In these circumstances, dogs are quick and you are likely to get bitten. The dog won't even realize it is biting you – he's just focused on his adversary.

As a last resort, if you need to immobilize a dog that is the aggressor, get behind him and pick up the hind legs and keep lifting until the arch in the back prevents any strength to the head and neck area. Remember that a dog in a fight is not thinking normally. Go for the legs and lift up as quickly as possible. In this position, a dog generally cannot get the head around to you.

### Fostering A Heartworm Positive Dog

First of all, thank you for taking on a medically needy dog. When a dog is heartworm positive and undergoing treatment, you're not likely to see its true energy level or even personality until it starts to feel better.

There are two typical ways to treat heartworm – the normal (quick – four weeks) method and the slow method (eight weeks). Care of the dog during both of these treatment types is the same – keep it crated at all times except for leash walking to do its business. There are some dogs that will not do well in a crate – it's more harmful to crate them than to keep them quiet out of the crate but these are exceptions. The best way to look at this is that it is four or eight weeks out of the rest of the dog's life.

The quick treatment is done over two days – immiticide shots are administered both days and the dog is then crated for four weeks.

- The slow treatment is done the same way except that the first immiticide shot is administered on day one, the dog is crated for four weeks and then the second immiticide shot is administered.
- At the end of both types of treatment, the dog must be given ivermectin to finish his treatment.
- There are stages you can expect to see as the dog recovers from heartworm:
- The first couple of days, the dog will feel great and will generally be bouncy and full of energy if that is what he was like prior to heartworm treatment.
- On day three of the treatment, you'll notice a change in the demeanor of the dog – he'll seem to be in pain and may circle around and not be able to get comfortable. This is normal. This should disappear in three or four days. You may also notice some coughing and lack of appetite. This is normal as well. Please let us know if the dog stops drinking water and starts to become dehydrated.
- If the dog develops a croupy cough and has noticeable trouble breathing, he needs to go to the vet. Please contact either one of the Intake Directors or the President to determine which vet he must go to. This type of coughing and breathing is generally caused by the worms breaking up and if not treated can lead to pneumonia. Proper treatment as determined by one of our vets is essential for the dog's survival.
- This type of cough can also signal kennel cough. Look for a runny, snotty nose to go along with this. Again, the dog should receive medical treatment.
- At the 10-day mark, the dog is past the critical stage of the treatment. However, this does not mean the dog can come out of its crate. He must be crated for the full time of the treatment. If you're sitting quietly, you may have the dog out with you but it should be leashed and kept close to you. Please use your judgment on this.
- Once the dog is over the four or eight-week treatment, he may start exercising. However, it is essential to gradually build up his tolerance for this. His muscles have atrophied from being crated and his heart has been weakened by the heartworms. You can equate it to being bedridden for a month and then someone wanting you to go out and run a marathon. By starting off with an exercise level that is too intensive, you are subjecting the dog to potential muscle/ligament injury and straining the heart. Common sense is the order of the day here. Start off walking the dog for 15 or 20 minutes on a leash and also allow it some playtime with your dog. You can gradually increase this as time goes on.



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- During the heartworm treatment, you will need to give the dog ½ a buffered aspirin twice a day. This may be increased to 1 buffered aspirin twice a day. The aspirin thins the dog's blood and makes it easier for the worms to dissolve and leave the body.

### Fostering A Dog That Just Had Surgery

When you receive your foster dog right after surgery, you'll also receive a list of instructions. Please follow these instructions. If the surgeon advises you to crate the dog for six weeks with only potty breaks (on leash) allowed, then please follow his instructions.

You may notice some lethargy for a couple of days – this is normal. The dog is recovering from the effects of the anesthetic. You may also notice the dog will not have a bowel movement – this is typical as well. As long as the dog is drinking sufficient water, nature will take care of the dog in a couple of days. Please administer the medication you may receive as instructed by the surgeon.

The surgeon will advise if and when a follow up appointment with him is needed (for bandage changes, x-rays, etc.). If you can't take the dog, please let us know and we'll make arrangements to get the dog there.

It's very important to follow the surgeon's instructions even if the dog is not happy in his crate. He could re-injure the surgical site, which would mean more surgery. Not only is this hard on the dog but it also increases the expense to Rescue.

If the dog needs an Elizabethian collar, check with rescue as we may have extras not being used.

### Adoption Day!

In a perfect situation, the adoptive family will come to your home to pick up the dog. This is easier for the dog and easier for the foster. If this is uncomfortable for you or your family, pick a neutral location to meet the new family.

As with any organization, paperwork is essential. We've included an adoption contract template (and other paperwork necessary to complete the adoption) with this care guide. As well, we can email you a copy of it. Please substitute your foster dog's information into the contract.

Our adoption fee varies. For a 1 – 5 year old dog, the adoption fee is currently \$225.00. For a dog under a year of age, the adoption fee is \$250.00. Puppies under 6 months old are \$300. For a dog over five years old, the adoption fee is \$150.00. For a dog over ten years old, the adoption fee is \$100.00. This allows us to ensure all dogs have current vaccinations, are micro-chipped, heartworm free and neutered or spayed. The adopter must provide payment for the dog at the time of adoption and the contract must be signed at that time. Payment can be in the form of a check, a money order, or cash.

The adopting family gets a copy of the Adoption Contract, Medical Records, Post-Placement Guide and the Microchip Registration Form or Registration Change Form. A signed copy of the Adoption Contract and Medical Records, along with the adopter's check, should be sent immediately to MHWR c/o Darci Kunard PO Box 1220, Brighton, CO 80601. It is essential that the money you receive for the adoption reaches the CPA as soon as possible – it funds treatment for other dogs.

Any special instructions for the dog should be noted on the Contact sheet provided in the adoption packet.