



Shetland Sheepdog Placement Services of New Jersey, Inc.

## What You Need To Know About Fostering For SSPSNJ

**THE BASICS:** As a foster family, you will take a rescued Sheltie into your home and care for him or her as you would your own pet, providing food, shelter, companionship, basic training and exercise, arranging for any required veterinary care, and supplying generous amounts of patience and love. SSPSNJ Foster Care Providers sign a contract for each dog in their care. The fostering period can last anywhere from a few days to a month or more. Some Shelties may not get along well with other dogs, cats, or children and may take longer to place. Your evaluation of the Sheltie's character, temperament and training level are invaluable. The more we know about a dog's habits and behavior (positive and negative), the easier it is to match him or her to the perfect owner.

**ADOPTION...AN OVERVIEW:** People interested in adopting a Sheltie from SSPSNJ will be asked to complete an application and have a home visit from a volunteer. Once the application is approved, and assuming there is a Sheltie in rescue that might be a good match, the applicant is referred directly to the family fostering that particular dog. Arrangements are made between the foster family and the applicant to meet the dog, usually at the foster family's home. It is preferable to have all members of the applicant's family available to meet and interact with the Sheltie. If all are in agreement that the home for the Sheltie is suitable, a "hold" is placed on that dog. We like to ask the family to wait 24 hours to make the decision, but this is flexible. An adoptive family may be given the chance to have a Sheltie in their home for a short trial period before a final decision is made. Upon adoption, the new owner will sign all adoption contracts and SSPSNJ accepts an adoption donation. The SSPSNJ representative will also give the adopters copies of all vaccination and medical records.

**BEFORE FOSTERING BEGINS:** If you have other pets, it is very important they be current on all vaccinations before you begin fostering. This includes vaccinations against rabies, parvovirus, kennel cough, (or bordatella). Your Dog(s) should also be on preventive Heartworm medicine. If you have dogs that have not been "fixed" please be sure we know this, as many rescued Shelties are still intact. The first priority for a Sheltie coming into rescue is to see that all vaccinations are current, a heartworm test is done and the dog is placed on preventive heartworm medicine. The next step is to arrange for the Sheltie to be neutered or spayed, if necessary. SSPSNJ has established favorable pricing with several area veterinary clinics, and you may be asked to help with transport for these visits. In special cases we will make arrangements with the foster home's veterinarian.

**THE SHELTY'S BACKGROUND:** A rescued Sheltie may have come from a shelter, been a stray, or had a very wonderful home. Surprisingly, the dog coming from a previous home may show the most stress, as she or he has been accustomed to a particular environment and routine, and may suffer a loss of security, when thrust into a new situation. A stray dog or one coming from a shelter often adapts to new situations more readily.

**EASING THE STRESS:** Almost every Sheltie has been through some ordeal before being rescued. The dog may have been in a shelter, housed under less-than-ideal conditions in the original home, been tied outside, reprimanded too much or not at all, or have been homeless and subject to many stray dog experiences. Whatever the history, the Sheltie may be unsettled both physically and emotionally upon arriving at your home. Quite often dogs will mirror their environment. It helps to initially limit distractions around the house such as television, loud noises and children's activity levels. Rescued Shelties need large amounts of reassurance, attention and affection every step of the way. Patience is a key attribute of some of the best foster families. Signs of temporary stress include shedding, panting, pacing, general restlessness, increased water consumption, and a more frequent need to urinate. Sometimes the excitement of a new home and surroundings can cause the rescued Sheltie to forget it was previously housebroken. Monitor water intake and give frequent opportunities for potty breaks for the first several days. Until you are sure the dog is housebroken, leave a short leash attached to the collar for quick exits and confine the dog to one or two rooms initially, so you can more easily monitor any accidents.

**SAFETY AND SEPARATION:** One of your most important tasks is to provide a safe environment for the rescued Sheltie. This means always walking the dog on a leash when outdoors or closely monitoring if in a fenced area to be sure he won't try to jump over the fence. Until the dog bonds with you and your home (generally a couple of weeks), there is a greater risk he will try to run away.

Proceed slowly when exposing the Sheltie to its new environment. If there are other animals in your home, introduce them slowly and individually to the Sheltie. The entire first day may be one of separation. This enables the foster dog and your current dog or cat to become aware of each other's scent without having to directly "confront an intruder." The second day may be one of introduction, usually requiring the use of a leash for both dogs while they meet each other nose to nose for the first time. Carefully monitor children's or other pet's interaction with the Sheltie and watch for signs they may be suffering from over-stimulation. Be prepared to initiate "Time Outs" and separate the Sheltie quickly if play becomes too rough. Do not leave the rescued Sheltie alone with children or other animals until you have thoroughly evaluated the dog's temperament. When leaving the house, always separate the Sheltie from your other animals until you have gained complete confidence in their relationship. SSPSNJ encourages the short-term use of crating for many rescue dogs. It helps dogs adapt to their new environment more quickly, can help in monitoring level of housebreaking, protect furniture from younger or more "chewy" dogs, and also give the Sheltie a small place of its own where he knows he is safe.

For health reasons, some Shelties may need to be separated from other animals for several days when they first come into rescue. This can also mean you must carefully monitor and immediately remove feces from your yard to avoid contamination or spreading disease (such as worms) to your own pets.

**TRAINING:** As a foster family, you help "socialize" the Sheltie and make him or her more adoptable. This can include helping the Sheltie learn to trust people again, as many dogs may have been abandoned or abused. You may also teach or reinforce basics like housebreaking, commands such as Sit, Come or Stay. Some Shelties may have been through an obedience course and some may come with absolutely no clue about what is expected. SSPSNJ will place these Shelties to be indoor dogs, but some of them have lived outside all their lives. You must acclimate the dog to indoor living and teach appropriate "house manners." Never use physical punishment. If you're having trouble correcting a behavioral problem, contact SSPSNJ to discuss alternatives. Keep in mind that some adult rescue dogs need more care and attention than a puppy.

**HEALTH CARE:** You are responsible for monitoring and maintaining the health of the Sheltie in your care. This includes feeding a quality dry food such as Nutro, Eukanuba, or Science Diet, sometimes bringing a "skinny" Sheltie back up to proper weight, providing monthly heartworm medicine (the cost of which is reimbursed by SSPSNJ), and watching for any sign of illness or other condition that would require veterinary care (such as vomiting, worms in the stool, coughing, ear infections, etc.).

**EXPENSE REIMBURSEMENTS:** SSPSNJ reimburses all medical expenses, however, veterinary care must first be discussed with SSPSNJ and approved PRIOR to the vet visit. This will be our biggest expense and we have established favorable pricing with several reputable clinics. New fosters should be brought up-to-date on vaccines [rabies, distemper, parvo], have a heartworm snap test, be microchipped and, if medically cleared by the vet, altered. All additional fees such as dentals and bloodwork MUST BE APPROVED BY THE SSPSNJ BOARD. As a general rule we are not able to reimburse other expenses such as food, mileage, phone calls, toys, etc.

**RECORD KEEPING:** You will need to keep accurate records of veterinary care. The original medical records will be given to the new adoptive family; copies will be kept by SSPSNJ.

**SUPPLIES YOU'LL NEED:** Some things you will need on hand include a long leash, dog grooming brush, chew and play toys appropriate for Sheltie size dogs, quality dog food, water and food dishes, and a method of confining and/or separating the dog (either crating, closing doors or putting up gates to certain rooms).

**IF THINGS DON'T WORK OUT:** Support or advice from other experienced foster families is always available. If a Sheltie cannot adapt to a particular situation SSPSNJ will place the dog in a new foster home.

*Thank You*



**info@njsheltierescue.org • njsheltierescue.org**

SSPSNJ is a 501(c)(3) organization

