



NorCal Boxer Rescue SOP

Home Visit Guidelines

Rev 8.0

11/26/23

First and foremost, thank you for giving your time to conduct a home visit for NCBR. Your efforts will help ensure we find safe and loving homes for our very deserving boxers!

The purpose of the home visit is to meet with prospective adopters OR foster homes in their own home; to see the environment that they will provide for their dog; to answer any questions they might have about NCBR, pet ownership or the boxers in our program; and to help our Foster or Adoptions Applications Teams understand what the applicant wants, and even more importantly, NEEDS in a new pet. The home visit is a critical and required part of the application process, and the information gathered during the visit is absolutely vital in determining the best possible placements for our dogs.

NCBR will request the home visit as the last stage of the application process. This means the applicant has already corresponded with NCBR's Foster or Adoption Application Team, has had their references checked, and in the case of an adopter, has also met the dog they are interested in. We generally prefer our home visits to be in-person, as over the years, we have found an in-person meeting with the applicant to be essential in helping NCBR ensure the appropriate dog is adopted or fostered by the applicant. We rely heavily on your observations during the home visit to help us assess the suitability of the applicants as potential boxer adopters or as a foster home. Reports are not shared with the applicant.

In preparing for the home visit please review the Guidelines & Procedures provided below as well as the online [Home Visit Report Form](#). Please do not feel that your conversation should be limited to the topics mentioned, but do make sure that, at a minimum, you cover these topics.

Home Visit Guidelines & Procedures: Prior to the visit.

1. Review the entire application as well as any notes provided by the Foster or Applications Teams. If you have any questions about the application, please contact the application processor prior to contacting the applicant to schedule the visit.
2. Contact the applicant (via phone or email) to schedule a home visit within 24 hours of receiving the applicant's contact information. Once the applicant agrees to it, further communicating via text is fine. Please try to schedule the visit for a time when ALL members of the household can be present, including any existing pets in the home. If the adults in the home work opposite schedules and/or are very difficult to schedule with, contact the application processor to discuss. Once the visit is scheduled, send the date & time details to the application processor so that the applicant's file can be updated.

3. Unless a foster home is doing a home visit to adopt out their own foster dog, if the applicant already has dogs, don't bring your dog inside the home or their property during the visit. Even if the applicant agrees, there is risk to you and your dog when introducing dogs on the applicant's property. If you end up going for a walk with the applicant and have your dog with you, keep your dog on leash and under control.

If the applicant has no other pets and you have a dog who is comfortable meeting adults (and kids, if the applicant has kids), please bring a dog with you to the visit (if possible) so that you can observe how the family interacts with a new dog.

Home Visit Guidelines & Procedures: During the visit.

NOTE: If you are not comfortable with the applicant as a dog owner or if you are uncomfortable in any other way during the visit, simply end the interview on a nice note and leave. While we have reviewed applicants in advance, for your safety, always be sure to bring a cell phone with you and make sure that someone close to you knows exactly where you are going and the approximate timeframe you are expected to be there.

Be friendly and try to relax during the home visit. Try to make sure the home visit is a pleasant experience for everyone involved. It's not an interrogation - think of it as a way to ascertain what type of dog is most suitable for the applicant, not that we're there to deny them the chance to adopt or foster. Ask questions to generate a conversation such as stories about any existing or prior dogs, and why they want a new dog now. Share your own experiences. If the applicant is adding a second dog and has never had a 2nd dog before, feel free to walk them through your own experiences and best practices for a successful transition. If you are asked a question you can't answer, just say you'll have someone get back to them and make sure you send the question to the application processor..

4. There's no need to see every room in the house, but do ask where the dog would have access. Also check the fencing, gates, and yard thoroughly. Feel free to point out things you notice such as a broken fence board, or lower shelves full of items which a dog could knock over. Just do it politely and don't argue.
5. Foster Home visits. For homes with existing dogs, our requirements are that foster homes separate their existing dogs from the foster boxer for a period of time, usually 10-14 days. This is to ensure the foster boxer has a chance to decompress and relax around the existing dogs. Ask the applicant how they plan to separate their dogs, how they would avoid the dogs meeting. See if they have dog gates, x-pens, crates etc. See if they have thought it through. If it seems overwhelming to them, try to be helpful and share your own experiences. In addition, we also need foster homes for temporary situations like vacation help, and in those cases, it's possible to give them a dog who can settle in faster and won't necessarily need to be separated for the duration.
6. **Do not approve/reject** an applicant at the time of the home visit. If asked how the visit went, simply tell the applicant that you wish them well with everything, and that you will submit your formal report and they will hear back soon. Please remind the applicant to direct all additional questions/concerns to the application processor they have been working with, NOT to you. This is for your protection and peace of mind.
7. Complete and submit the online Home Visit Report within 24 hours of the visit. The applicant will not be approved until the report has been submitted and reviewed. Please be as detailed and clear as possible. In addition some volunteers are uncomfortable writing anything which may be deemed negative. Ultimately this just hurts the dog and the applicant long term. While we would ask for the report to be completed as it is part of the requirements for our application process, you can also reach out to the application processor to discuss any serious issues which you noted.

Additional Details:

TOPIC	COMMENTS
Communication	Be Polite, be open and listen well. Share experiences, try to get the applicant to share theirs. If you hear something which you really don't agree with, take a note and avoid confrontations.
Report	Avoid Yes/No answers on the report. All details big or small are very important, even if it's just an impression which you have.
Fence height	Some dogs can scale 6 feet fences. Others can dig under. Many applicants say their fence is higher than it is. Check the true height and don't reply based on what their application says. Look for a bottom shelf which can be used to climb over the fence.
Additional Animals/Creatures	Are there chickens, birds, turtles or guinea pigs, etc. and are their enclosures clean and safe from the dog?
Existing dogs	Free feeding (food left out all day)? For foster homes visits, can they separate the existing dog and do they know how to do this? How do they introduce dogs and do they seem knowledgeable?
Existing cats	Does the cat have access to all rooms, or just stays in certain parts of the house? Is the applicant aware of how to slowly introduce a new dog? We have information available to provide.
Exercise	Walked every day, or how often? Can they train a new dog to walk on leash? Note any discussion on equipment, such as prong collars and electric collars, which are not favored by NCBR.
Garage	Is it used to contain the dogs at any point? Look at where chemicals & paints are stored, or anything which a dog may be attracted to (snail bait, mulch, etc). Is it a warm/hot location in the summer and how do they plan to keep the dog cool? How do they plan to keep the dog warm in the winter?

Condo/Townhouses	We often approve people in condo's/townhouses, as long as exercise is adequate, etc. Is it a dog friendly community? Check for signs around the complex, and areas for potty breaks, etc. People in these locations typically need a very social dog. The application processor is required to check HOA rules on things like the size of the dog for the complex. Exercise is critical. Does the applicant realize the level of exercise a typical boxer needs, and how would potty breaks be handled?
Dog-friendly home	Is the dog welcome in most rooms? Are there ornaments on low shelves which could get broken? Do the applicants seem relaxed with your dog in their home? It's perfectly ok if dogs are not allowed on furniture. Does the applicant have a dog bed? New hardwood floors or carpets? Any concerns about a dog expressed by the applicants? Where do they leave the dog once they go out to dinner or work. Overall, get a sense of the level of tolerance an applicant has and whether they realize many dogs will need time to settle in before being the perfect dog!