

How to Prevent Losing a Foster Dog

It's an awful feeling to lose a dog, to watch them slip out of their collar and take off, or to go into the backyard and discover they're gone. As foster parents, you can help to prevent such a loss by adhering to these rules:

1. Ensure your foster dog is wearing the equipment they were sent home with: this will always be a Martingale collar and sometimes, in addition, an Easy Walk body harness. Please do not switch the equipment that Toronto Humane Society has provided you with other styles.
2. Use the equipment properly. Martingale, or non-slip, collars work when the leash is attached to the **centre ring** on the chain. If the dog gets panicked and pulls back, or gets over-aroused and twists around, the chain tightens just enough so the collar can't slip off.



Sometimes, if the dog is very environmentally nervous, or what we call a "flight risk," we also put an Easy Walk harness on them, with the leash clipped to the front ring, as well as to the centre ring on the Martingale collar. This way, if the dog pulls out of the collar, you've still got the leash attached to the harness. We may also recommend this combination for a very reactive dog, who can lunge if highly aroused by a trigger, such as another dog.

3. **Never have your dog off leash anywhere outside the home**, including your back yard, even if it is fenced. Do not leave your foster dog alone in the back yard; always supervise.
4. We also may advise that your foster dog wear a leash when **inside** the home. If they're skittish of new people, noises, or sudden movements, they may seek ways to escape, which is safely managed by simply holding their leash.
5. Ensure that exit doors in your home are not left open. This can be an invitation to nervous or reactive dogs to bolt through them. Same goes for car exits; make sure that you have your hand securely on the dog's leash before opening a car door widely.
6. Please do not take your foster dog to dog parks, even if they are fenced.



A dog wearing a Martingale collar and a harness.



7. Please do not tie your foster dog outside stores or other buildings when running errands.
8. Please do not leave your dog unsecured in a car with an open window. The dog should be in a crate, or secured with a proper car harness, or be supervised by another person. (And, of course, do not leave your dog in a car in warm weather at any time.)
9. In addition to all of the above, if a Toronto Humane Society canine trainer has given you a plan for managing and working with your foster dog, it is because we assigned them a “TLC” status, which means they need special care and attention. The plan will include extra information on the dog’s safe management, which might include avoiding high-traffic situations and walking your dog only at quiet times in quiet areas, if they are environmentally nervous or reactive.

By following all these measures, foster parents can greatly reduce the chances of their dog getting lost.

