

48 FOSTERS: MY JOURNEY AS A FOSTER CARER

by *Emily Foster* Coalition for the Protection of Greyhounds

They say that sometimes good things can come out of a tragedy.

I had always wanted to adopt a greyhound, but had been busy being a full-time carer for my parents. After losing them both four months apart due to cancer, I decided that life was too short and adopted my first greyhound.

Little did I know the adventure that awaited me.



Dooffy, Emily's first greyhound led her to fostering



Emily with fosters Dooffy and Midget



Emily with foster Jack



Jack and Midget



PJ with an orphaned lamb

Marney, otherwise known as Dooffy (as when you pat her on the chest it makes a doof, doof sound), arrived three months after my parents died. She was a beautiful, broken soul who had severe anxiety and was terrified of men. This led me to investigate why she exhibited such behaviour. I was shocked and saddened to find how many greyhounds needed help after racing. This led me to my calling, the path that my life would take. Fostering.

I have rescued all types of animals for many years, lambs were a particular focus, and with my medical background (I am a qualified nurse), I was able to nurse many back to their true natures: cheeky, lovable, healthy characters. But fostering greyhounds was indeed a challenge. The majority came with psychological and physical scars, which I found difficult to process. These beautiful, gentle creatures had seen little of the world that awaited them and were certainly not prepared for it. I learned that with time, patience, love and reassurance, the bond of trust could be built and progression into family life could be made.

I am often seen in our local town, crossing at the lights, going up and down stairs, watching trains and planes etc., exposing my foster greys to situations they will encounter in their new lives. Their length of stay is as long as it takes for them to safely adjust to their new life. I have fostered dogs who needed to stay for as little as three weeks and others who need as long as six months. Their potential homes are carefully screened, with 'meet and greets' being an essential part of finding the perfect match.

With foster dog number 47, Dawson, currently being desexed, I can take a moment to reflect. With every

foster dog I match with their new family, a piece of my heart goes with them. Fostering can be heartbreaking, exhausting, emotional and time consuming, but the rewards are colossal. Watching the joy on the new adopter's face when I hand over the lead and receiving the photos of the greys in their new homes, living the life they deserve fills my heart with joy, every single time. Experiencing the journey of each and every dog that comes into my home, and their willingness to form a bond with me, I feel honoured that they learn to trust me enough to face situations they are clearly frightened of. It still amazes me how forgiving and adaptable greyhounds are. Despite the traumas most have suffered, their quirky and fun loving personality will shine through if they are given the love and patience they deserve. I feel incredibly privileged that they come into my life and am so glad that the community is finally now seeing these dogs for the treasures that they are.

I have been lucky enough to have a great team around me on my journey: a fantastic vet, a very forgiving and supportive family, and wonderful mentors from three different greyhound rescue groups that I can always call on for advice. This is something I will always be grateful for. My learning journey has been incredibly rewarding.

My knowledge of the breed, the industry and my own personal journey has been extensive. I have made lifelong friendships from like-minded people all around the world. My foster dogs have taught me much about myself, and who I want to be. By my side is my always faithful Dooffy, who welcomes every new dog into our family with gentle affection. She helped me heal from my own personal pain, and now she heals the lives of others. Good things can come of tragedy, and I have found mine.

