



## **Animal Rescue Transports coming into MN During COVID-19 Protocol for Ruff Start Rescue**

*This protocol is specifically for Ruff Start Rescue and the measures we have put into place and would like to continue doing.*

Ruff Start Rescue is a foster-based nonprofit animal rescue in MN with around 300 foster homes typically at all times throughout central MN. However, we do have a location in Princeton, a 5,400 sq ft building that houses a veterinary suite, pharmacy, and many pet supplies. *The office is however closed and only 6-8 essential staff members are allowed access inside the building at any given time since Friday March 13th and until further notice. These 6-8 staff members have remained the same people during this time.* We are trying to find ways to ensure that we can continue transporting animals while being safe. Each year in the U.S. around 1 million dogs and cats are euthanized in shelters due to overpopulation. In 14 days, 38,000 dogs and cats are euthanized. If transports are discontinued for 14 days (or longer) that number will be astronomically larger than it already is.

Transport protocol for RSR since COVID-19 started in the US.

- Sending shelter is typically located in a southern state (for us it's mostly TX at this time). Foster homes located in TX remove the animal out of the shelter before they are euthanized. They house them for 2-3 weeks to ensure the animal is healthy and then the week of transport they bring the animal back to the shelter to be seen by a board certified veterinarian to issue a health certificate.
- The foster then hands the dog off to the transporter using a 6ft-8ft leash (or longer leash). The transporter loads them into the van. The transporter wears gloves and sanitizes between each dog.
- Only 2 drivers are present on the van ride up. A driver and passenger. Both have been exposed to one another already (no teaming up drivers who haven't already been exposed to one another, this is typically a husband and wife or 2 people who live together).
- The transport heads to MN and arrives early Saturday morning with 30 dogs.
- Waiting for the dogs in MN are 6 - 8 Ruff Start Rescue staff total to help with the process. (no fosters or external volunteers are allowed to help at transport during this time). The transport room is 1,200 sq. ft. and this is where 5 of the animal care staff members work with the dogs arriving and the veterinary suite is another 1,200 sq. ft. and this is where 3 of the vetting staff work at different stations. These 8 essential staff members have been broken up into teams and have been working together since the start of COVID and stay in their teams. All use social distancing, wash hands, disinfect high touch areas, and "stay in their lane" as we call it. What typically takes 25 people to do, we have been able to do with 6-8 staff members efficiently and effectively. They are highly trained and can perform their duties quickly. These staff members are also low-risk individuals who have also been self-isolating during the outbreak.



- The 2 people who drove the dogs up to MN stay in the van and the RSR staff members go outside (keeping social distance) and grab the animals one at a time from the van without having any exposure to another human.
- The staff members bring the dog into the building and wipe off the animal with an animal safe disinfectant wipe that kills COVID-19 while wearing gloves (even though animals are said not to transmit the virus, we are still taking every extra precaution).
- Fosters (and “foster to adopt families” start arriving to pick up their dogs. **THEY STAY IN THEIR VEHICLES** and a RSR staff member will bring the dog out to their vehicle and load them into their crate for them. Immediately after washing their hands. The foster then leaves and heads back home with their new pet. This is our curbside/drive-thru pick-up.
- During this process, 30+ dogs are saved, sometimes more, and we are doing this with a very limited amount of low risk individuals and very strict precautions in place to ensure safety. We have gotten this process down to a science over the past 2 weeks.
- Ruff Start Rescue has received over 200 foster applications in the past 7 days! This is more than we receive in an entire year! People in MN want to help. They want something to partake in and they are at home bored, scared, and depressed. We want to bring joy to their lives, save animals, and do it all while being safe. Unfortunately, (and fortunately) there is not a strong need to save local animals in MN. We continue to always put local first, but it’s nothing compared to the southern states who desperately need our help. This process is very limited in human to human exposure.

**Basic transport guidelines that most animal rescues (sending and receiving groups) are using during this time.**

- If dogs and cats are going to fosters' or adopters' homes, upon transport arrival, facilitate a “drive-through” style pick-up where people stay in their car and the pet is brought to them.
- Facilitate vet exams and any necessary vaccinations, preventatives etc. either in the transport vehicle or in the foster/adopter’s vehicle, in order to minimize any congregation in the shelter unnecessarily.
- For good measure, dogs can be bathed upon arrival or at the foster/adopter’s home with just regular dog shampoo or soap. Cats do not need to be bathed but can be wet wiped with pet safe wipes or mild soap/water.
- All transporters should follow [CDC Prevention Guidelines](#) and should maintain safe distances from other people, avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Transporters should wash hands frequently following this [CDC Hand washing guide](#) and always wash hands after handling frequently touched surfaces such as gas pumps, steering wheels, door handles etc. If soap and water is not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol should be used until the nearest handwashing station is available.
- Limiting groups of people congregating during transport preparation, departure, and arrival is crucial to prevent the spread of COVID-19. All staff and volunteers that are not necessary in shelter should be working from home.



- Essential staff and volunteers needed for transport should be split into teams and scheduled in groups so the same people are working together. (Ex: Team A, B, C)
- All animals should be relatively clean before going on transport, and after handling animals or cleaning kennels, people should thoroughly handwash as they would normally.
- All transport kennels should be thoroughly disinfected post transport, as should happen after any transport.
- Only the people that are essential to physically unload or load the transport should be present during departure and arrival.
- For lifting heavy kennels into planes or vehicles, no more than 3 people should be near each other during this process. Keep all people 6 feet away from each other at all times.
- Complete intake exams in an open air environment in vehicles or curbside, in assembly line fashion to limit people congregating in indoor spaces.