



*Senior Dog Haven & Hospice*

 Where grey muzzles are nuzzled.

# Foster Manual for Senior Dog Haven & Hospice

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## **Introduction**

Thank you for agreeing to foster a dog for Senior Dog Haven & Hospice. Foster homes like yours allow us to rescue more dogs, and we appreciate your generosity in opening your home to a rescued senior dog.

By providing a foster home, you're providing a stable, loving environment for a dog that has been neglected or abandoned. You're also providing much-needed socialization, and basic training, that will make our dogs more appealing for adoption and better members of their adoptive families.

Our Intake Committee makes the ultimate determination on which dogs our organization will take in. The dogs we rescue from shelters are generally those that are in their last hours at the shelter and are at great risk of being euthanized. We also accept owner relinquished dogs.

Once you have read this manual and agree to the contents, please sign the acknowledgement page in the appendix.

Thank you!

## General Guidelines

Please read & review the following important guidelines:

1. Prior to fostering, all Foster Homes must complete a Foster Home Application as well as a Foster Home Agreement and have a home inspection. (a copy of this agreement is in the Appendix.) All must also show proof of Home owners insurance and motor vehicle insurance. This is required for our liability insurance.
2. All Foster Homes agree to accept primary responsibility for providing lodging and care of their foster dog until a permanent adopting family is found.
3. Food donated to Senior Dog Haven & Hospice will be made available to all Foster Homes, as it is received. Otherwise, if the Foster Home requires, Senior Dog Haven & Hospice will provide food to the Foster Home. A tax deduction may be available for any food purchased by the Foster Home. Please keep your receipts and an in kind donation letter can be sent to you at the end of the year.
4. Medical care will be provided only via the Senior Dog haven & Hospice veterinarian. If you think your Foster Dog needs any medical care, including vet visits or over-the-counter medications, please contact your SDH&H contact before acting.
5. Foster Homes agree to bring their Foster Dog to adoption events regularly, at least once every 2 months. These events are the primary method of matching up potential adopters with our dogs. Events occur generally on Saturdays, with exact times & locations posted on our website. Foster homes will receive an email telling them the location of the event and asking if they can attend.
6. Foster Homes are asked to keep their SDH&H contact apprised of their foster dogs behavior and if any issues arise. If they are not handling the dog at the adoption event they should give basic information to the adoption event coordinators.
7. Foster Homes are not required to foster any dog that they do not wish to foster. However, there may not be an immediate alternate foster home for your dog. We will work on moving your foster dog out as soon as possible, but ask for your understanding as we work on it. Only those dogs that have received prior approval for fostering and are deemed adoptable by a director of SDH&H can be fostered within SDH&H's Foster Program. Volunteers and/or Foster Homes are not authorized to pull dogs directly from the shelter without prior consent of the Intake Committee.
8. We do not foster-to-adopt. Potential adopters should go through our regular application process rather than become Foster Homes. Foster Homes are asked to commit to fostering for a minimum of 6 months before they consider adopting a dog, whether it is from SDH&H or elsewhere.
9. All applicants for a particular Foster Dog must go through the SDH&H application process (online application, interview by SDH&H Director, home visit). If a friend or family member of the Foster Home wishes to adopt your Foster Dog, that's great! But, the adopter

must go through the same process as other applicants.

10. Your own dogs should be current with their vaccinations. We also recommend that you vaccinate your dogs with a Bordetella vaccination to prevent kennel cough, a common illness with shelter dogs.

11. SDH&H is not responsible for any veterinary bills for resident dogs. The Foster Home assumes responsibility for any veterinary bills that result from resident dogs becoming ill due to exposure with a Foster Dog.

12. If you are planning a vacation, please notify SDH&H as far in advance as you can. We will need at least 2 weeks to arrange for alternative placement for your foster dog. If you want to take your foster dog with you, even for just a weekend, you **MUST** notify SDH&H beforehand. If SDH&H has an applicant interested we may make arrangements to keep your dog locally to be able to show him/her.

13. Do not leave your dog with anyone else without prior approval from SDH&H. Anytime a foster dog is left we **MUST** have a signed release of liability.

14. Each foster home will be provided with a contact person for SDH&H. Any questions or concerns should be directed to that contact.

## **Getting Your Home & Family Ready for Fostering**

Fostering is a commitment that will effect your entire household: your family, your permanent-resident pets, and your house and yard itself! Here are some tips to ensure that fostering will be a positive experience for you and your family.

Discuss your plans with other family members and get their input on how to make it work out best for everyone. Include in the discussion what kind(s) of dogs are appropriate for your household: small/large, young/old, active/not active. Do you thrive on a spunky dog with lots of energy who is a willing playmate for your active dog? Or, do you have an older dog who would appreciate not being pestered? How long are you gone during the day? We'll need to match you with a dog that works with your schedule. You'll need a dog that fits your lifestyle, even if he/she is only a temporary resident. Your SDH&H contact can work with you to ensure that we understand your personal situation and what types of dogs are appropriate for you.

## **Supplies**

You should have the following on hand before your foster dog arrives:

- **Food & water bowls:** it is best to have separate bowls for your foster dog, and, to feed your resident dogs & foster dog separately so that they can eat in a stress-free environment as they are getting to know each other.
- **Food & Treats:** Senior Dog Haven & Hospice can sometimes supply food or treats depending on our receipt of donations. Otherwise, we will advise you as to what kind of food or treats is best for your foster. We do provide reimbursement for dog food.
- **Bed:** Cotton blankets or large beach towels are best as they are washable.
- **Toys:** Kongs are excellent for stuffing—they will keep your foster dog occupied, especially while you are away from the house. Stuffed toys or balls are also great, depending on your dog's temperament and age. Senior Dog Haven & Hospice can sometimes provide these depending on our donations.
- **Collar & leash:** We will provide a collar and leash for your dog. Senior Dog Haven & Hospice ID tag will be on your dog's collar as well. This collar and tag should stay on at all times as it will help ensure the dog is returned to you or Senior Dog Haven & Hospice if the dog ever gets out and is picked up by the shelter or a good samaritan.
- **Flea Treatment:** Senior Dog Haven & Hospice will provide you with Advantage or FrontLine. We ask you to keep track of applications and be sure to apply it monthly.

## **Introducing your Foster Dog to your Home**

Here are some tips for a smooth transition.

### **Everyone needs their space**

If possible, it is best to keep foster dogs & resident dogs separate from each other for the first 2 days. This is a stressful time for both the foster dog (who may have been on the street/in the shelter/in a transition foster home before arriving at your house—a lot of change for an animal that likes to have a “pack” and some stability in his/her life!). Also, there are some common sicknesses that sometimes don't show up for 1-2 weeks that dogs often get at the shelter, so separation can ensure that your dogs don't get sick.

If it is not possible to keep them separate, be aware that your dogs may be exposed to illness. However, also be aware that many of the diseases that shelter dogs get (Kennel Cough, Diarrhea, etc) are stress related. Many have had poor nutrition and a hard life before coming to your home. SDH&H cannot be responsible for resident dog vet bills, we do not have the financial resources to make that commitment. If it is not possible to physically separate the dogs, try to ensure that everyone has their own “personal space” of a bed, a crate, or a special area. This will keep the stress levels lower for your own dogs and the foster dog.

The backyard is not an acceptable place to leave the foster dog alone & unsupervised, however. They may be destructive (digging, trampling plants), they may be escape artists, they may bark incessantly, or they could be snatched. A crate or a room that is enclosed (like a kitchen) are the best choices.

### **Dog Introductions**

Introduce your resident dogs to the foster dog on neutral territory, at a park or down the street from your house, for example. Introduce them on leash, with an adult holding each leash. Allow a quick “hello” sniff or walk-by, and then separate them, even if things seem fine. This gives them a chance to think about things, and often, they will then seek each other out to get a lengthier greeting. Give lots of positive reinforcement so that both dogs feel safe and that the other dog is a friend, not a foe. If one dog gets aggressive, separate them quickly, comfort the dogs, and slow down the pace of the introductions. Don’t force things if they are not immediate best friends, sometimes it takes a few days for dogs to accept each other. Sometimes, dogs just don’t like each other. By giving them each attention separately, and making them feel safe about their bed, toys, and food, you can minimize any tension.

### **Getting Along**

Dogs are pack animals. There is usually one who dominates. Correction of one dog by another (whether it is your resident dog or the foster) is normal. As long as the dogs are responding positively to each other and seem to recognize the “pecking order”, this is fine. So, one dog may growl at another. If the dog reacts by moving away or showing passivity, then usually, the dogs will get along fine. If they are constantly battling for the “alpha” position, then they will have to be separated, and may not be a good fit for each other. Never leave the dogs unsupervised together. They are still getting to know one another, and will need correction on appropriate behavior toward each other, which means supervision. If you are leaving the house, then crate the dogs or otherwise physically separate them.

Again, feed the dogs separately. This reduces stress for everyone. Food aggression between dogs is common.

### **Cat Introductions**

First, make sure that your cat has his/her own sanctuary—preferably a room where the foster dog will not be allowed to go. If you can keep the cat’s food & litter box in this room, and keep the door closed, then the dog & cat can sniff each other under the door for a few days before meeting face to face. This will make things go a lot smoother, as they will most likely feel they have already “met.” Supervise the dog’s behavior even at the door, reinforce playful, curious behavior and correct any aggression or obsession.

When introducing the dog & cat for the first time, put the dog on a leash & just allow the cat to walk by if he/she wants to. Here, you’re looking to evaluate both the dog & the cat. Is the cat fearful or curious? Is the dog happy/playful or chomping at the bit?

After introductions have occurred, keep in mind the following tips:

- Never leave the cat & foster dog unsupervised, even if it looks like they get along great. A playful dog can still unintentionally harm a cat.
- Make sure your cat has places to jump up to in each room or hide under where the dog can't get him/her.
- Playful chasing is normal, but always remind the foster dog to play nice/slow down/not run.
- Don't allow the dog to stare down the cat. The dog should know that he/she is not allowed to obsess on the cat.
- The cat may swipe at the dog or hiss in order to correct. This is usually a great help in ensuring the dog knows his/her place. But, keep an eye on interactions to ensure the cat doesn't injure the dog, as well.

With all your resident pets, allow the animals to accept one another on their own time. Never push them toward each other or force interaction. Many animals become companions and playmates, while others simply tolerate each other.

## **Working With Your Foster Dog**

While your foster dog is living with you, you can provide some basic training along with lots of tender loving care. No formal training regime is needed for most foster dogs, but if you can work on the following, it will make your foster dog much more “adoptable.”

- Socializing is definitely the first priority. This means ensuring that your foster dog is acclimated to meeting new people, dogs, cats, children, as wide a group as possible. If you have a shy dog, this is a big task, and should be approached slowly (but all the more important to address it so that your dog overcomes his/her shyness.) With a more outgoing dog, it's more about curbing enthusiasm so that people aren't overwhelmed upon meeting the dog (or knocked over with love!)
- Food aggression with other dogs is a fairly common trait, however food aggression towards people is not acceptable. If your foster dog is growling when you are near his food, you need to work on correcting this behavior. Hand-feed the dog, so that it's clear the food is yours, and you are the giver of food. Then, when feeding with a bowl, take it away several times during the meal, giving it back after the dog sits & waits politely. With a non-food aggressive dog, these are still good tips, along with taking chewies away & giving them back. If the dog growls a bit, tell them “no”, and then practice taking it until they get the idea. Repeat daily. If your foster dog is showing food aggression with your dog over food or chews, always feed them separately. You can use "their" place as a safe place to give treats, chews, and toys.
- Most senior dogs are already house trained. However there are circumstances where this is not the case, a chained dog for example. House training (potty training) is definitely desirable for both you and the future adopter. The best way to house train is to use a crate or have a designated area for the foster dog to sleep, and to be vigilant about taking the dog outside regularly, including after naps and meals. If a dog is particularly stubborn about house training, keep them

on a leash in the house; this will prevent them from wandering off to hide to go potty. Lots of praise when the job is accomplished.

- Sitting is relatively easy to teach and pays big dividends. A dog that sits for his/her leash and food knows they are subservient to the person commanding them to sit. It also helps to get an overly excited dog under control.
- Jumping up might be a problem with our foster dogs (although for most of our senior dogs their jumping days are over)—they are so happy to have someone to love! But, it's best if they are taught not to do this, since it can knock people over or just be rude. The best prevention is to see it coming and tell them to stop and sit. Once they have this down, they can be invited "up" for a visit, but only with an invitation.
- Leash walking is challenging to teach. Many of our dogs have never been on a leash and have no idea how to behave. If you're ambitious, you can work on "heel", but even "easy" is fine. "Easy" is when the dog isn't necessarily heeling at your side, but they are also not dragging you down the street. This takes time to learn and patience on your part. A nervous dog may not be pulling but reluctant to walk or trying to get away from you and the leash. The goal then is to get the dog to relax and walk confidently with you. We can give you some pointers on either of these cases.

## **Dogs & Children**

Senior dogs and kids do not necessarily go together like peanut butter & jelly as they might with younger dogs. Depending on the dog and their age they are great playmates, guardians, and confidants. Older dogs may be less tolerant of children and older, smaller dogs even less so. We are cautious not to place smaller, older dogs into foster homes with children or adopt out the older, less tolerant dogs to families with children. If you have children, they must learn proper handling and discipline, and dogs must learn self-control so that they do not play too rough.

Children must be supervised and taught that dogs are beings, not dolls or toys to dress-up or handled constantly. Teach children not to tease or rile up the dog unnecessarily. This includes chasing around the house, which can scare a dog, who may snap if cornered or frightened. Make sure your children know that it is not the dog's fault if the dog chews up toys that are left out. Keeping doors shut & toys in toy boxes can help minimize damage. Make sure the dog has his/her own toys, and keep them in the same place all the time (like in a basket, or in the dog's crate.)

Children like the idea of caring for a dog, but the daily work of feeding, bathing, brushing, and cleaning up after the dog is not really suited for them. Recognize that the initial enthusiasm will wane quickly, and the true responsibility of caring for the dog will fall to the adults in the household. Young children should not walk foster dogs, as, even if the dog is easy to walk, the child cannot really handle any encounters with other dogs or cats that are bound to happen.

Children should not play unsupervised with foster dogs. Children often react to a dog's bad behavior by hitting the dog, this is unacceptable.

## **Adoption Procedure**

Senior Dog Haven & Hospice works hard to find the proper match for each of our dogs, to ensure that both the adopting family and the dog will be happy with their decision. All applicants must go through the SDH&H adoption process. Dogs cannot be adopted out to friends or family of the foster home directly, all applicants must be properly screened. It is important for you to understand our adoption procedures, however, since you will get questions about it. The adoption process is as follows:

1. The applicant fills out an application. (a copy of this agreement is in the Appendix.)
2. SDH&H reviews the application and screens the person to see if they are a good fit; asking about where the dog will sleep, how long the dog will be left, what training plans are, how they will exercise, etc. As a foster parent, you will receive a copy of the application for input on whether you think the applicant would be a good match for your foster dog.
3. The adopter and all members of their household must meet the dog.
4. Assuming everything looks good so far, a home visit is conducted to check their home & yard.
5. No dog is "held" for a potential adopter, no matter how much we like them. For example, if one applicant comes without a family member, and another comes with everyone, if both are qualified for the particular dog we will go with the second. We do not hold dogs (or offer to extend fostering) for adopters who are about to go on vacation. We ask that they come back after they have returned.

All dogs are spayed or neutered (unless our veterinarian has deemed this an unwise procedure) and are up to date on their shots and have had a general physical before being placed. If an animal is sick or recovering from injury, we will usually not place the dog until he/she has fully recovered.

Since all adoptions must be handled directly by SDH&H, it is important that you let us know any concerns you have about the requirements for your foster dog's adoption home. This includes how long can the dog be left, how the dog is with cats/children/other dogs, and any other pertinent information. We maintain a requirements list for each of our foster dogs to ensure that the dogs' needs are met.

If you are present at the adoption events and have feedback on potential adopters you speak with, please give this information to an SDH&H Board Member or, as well.

Please keep in mind that you should not make any promises or statements about the adopter's "chances" of getting the dog. This is a topic that can get very emotional, with potential adopters getting very attached to the dogs they are looking at. So, we look to minimize hard feelings and keep emotions from running too high by having the Intake Committee be the only one to let potential adopters know where they are at in the adoption process. This also minimizes miscommunication.

If you don't understand a decision, feel free to ask. We want to keep you informed, but sometimes get caught up in everything that needs to be done. Please periodically review your foster dogs posting on our website and let your SDH&H contact know of any updates or changes. The Bio is intended to be truthful, but we also try to focus on the positive. Read the current bios online to get a sense of the style we use. Of course, we always discuss a dog's behavior (positive & negative) in detail with potential adopters at events—we want to make sure they are fully apprised of the dog's strengths & weaknesses so as to minimize surprises post-adoption.

## **Adoption Events**

Our adoption events are generally held on Saturdays. Exact times and locations are listed on our website. We ask that you commit to bringing your foster dog to at least one event every 2 months, since our main outlet for getting the dogs adopted is getting them seen at adoption events. You may not have to stay at the event, as we may have volunteer dog handler if you are unable to stay. You will receive an email from SDH&H asking if you can bring your dog to the upcoming event, and, if you are staying or just dropping off. We will let you know, usually on Friday, if we have a handler for your foster dog. Unfortunately, we often don't have enough handlers. Also, sometimes we need to limit the number of dogs at an event. We will always base this on what dogs have appointments as they take priority. Otherwise we go on a first come, first serve basis, so please respond to your email as soon as you can.

If your foster dog is ill (kennel cough, etc.) please let us know and do not bring the dog to the event. If your dog is very shy and just settling in, we may ask you to wait a week or two before attending the first event. Your dog should be up-to-date on his/her vaccinations before attending events, as well.

Check with your SDH&H contact to confirm that your dog is ready for adoption events.

Before the event:

Make sure your dog is bathed & brushed and free of fleas, as well.

- If your dog is very energetic, try to take it for a long walk before the adoption event. A calm dog shows much better than a dog that is bouncing off the walls and wants to play.
- Please bring a regular 6 foot nylon leash. Do not bring retractable, nylon, or chain leashes.
- Realize adoption events are stressful on your foster dog -- even dogs who enjoy them are often exhausted afterwards and sleep.

## **Top Ten Things A Dog Handler Should Know:**

1. There must be one handler per dog. (If you need to take a break, please do not tie up a dog or have another person handle two dogs. Ask the Coordinator or a spare volunteer to handle your dog for you.)
2. Keep your dog calm, and use a short but loose lead. The coordinator of the event manages the mobile site and will speak to a handler that is not being attentive to his/her dog.
3. It helps reduce the stress of the dog to pet the dog slowly and talk to the dog in calm tones. When the dog is less stressed, you can get a better sense of who the dog is.
4. If you wish to introduce “your dog” to another SDH&H dog or to a prospective adopter’s dog, introduce them one-on-one away from the other dogs. If you need help, ask the on-site dog trainer or the event coordinator.
5. Handlers must be aware of their dog at all times and should discourage play between animals. (Play gets them excited and then they don’t appear calm for potential adopters.)
6. Handlers must be aware of their surroundings, too, including being alert if a small child or another dog approaches. Do not allow children to put their face into the dog’s face. If someone approaches you with a dog that is showing aggression, control your dog and move out of the way.
7. Dogs that are barking should be corrected by voice or other training. Dogs should not be allowed to jump up on anyone.
8. Do not allow children or frail adults to walk an SDH&H dog without an escort. Do not let children handle the dogs, parents can handle and allow their kids to pet them if the foster feels comfortable that the dog will react in a positive manner.
9. It can be helpful to have some treats in your pocket to reward your dog and to get their attention when a prospective adopter is near (esp. helpful w/ shy dogs.)
10. Dog handlers should acknowledge members of the public with a friendly greeting as soon as possible. By greeting them and introducing your dog to them, (“Hi. This is Sparky” or “Are you looking for a dog today?”), you will increase people’s recognition of and respect for Senior Dog Haven & Hospice Dogs.. Even if they are not there to adopt a dog that day, they may have friends who are interested, may be interested later, or wish to donate. **Important note:** Adoption events are our “public relations” time. Please make every effort to chat with people who stop by, even if they are not looking to adopt. Every person is potentially important to us, as an adopter, a volunteer, a donor, or referrals for other adopters. **Please focus on the public at the event.**

## **Medical Treatment**

SDH&H will cover all medical expenses for the foster animal unless it is determined that the foster parent was negligent in his/her care. If the foster animal should become ill, the foster parent is required to notify the Intake Committee immediately, BEFORE taking the animal to the vet, unless in extreme emergencies where every minute counts. In the latter situation, an immediate call to an Intake Committee member should be made once the animal is at the emergency vet. All vet care must be pre-authorized by the Treasurer and Intake Committee. If such care is not pre-approved, SDH&H is not responsible for reimbursement. After making a trip to the vet, please email a copy of the receipt and any records/notes, and send to the Treasurer and Intake Committee. The foster parent should retain a copy as well. SDH&H may choose to

cover grooming expenses (if pre-authorized) on those dog breeds that require special grooming. Any other grooming (i.e. baths) shall be the foster parent's responsibility unless approved by the Treasurer and Intake Committee in advance.

Make sure that your own pets are protected. We expect that resident pets are all spayed/neutered, and have all their vaccinations. We recommend, in addition to DHLPP and Rabies, that your pets are immunized for Bordetella (kennel cough) since it is a common ailment among shelter dogs. We also expect that your resident pets are being treated for fleas. Senior Dog Haven & Hospice will keep track of your foster dog's immunization records and medical treatment. We ask that you ensure that your foster dog is treated for fleas, brushed, and bathed.

#### Reimbursement Procedure

SDH&H will reimburse you for:

- Pre-approved medical expenses
- Pre-approved flea treatment

Note that if you would like to donate any of the above to Senior Dog Haven & Hospice, your donation will be tax deductible as soon as our not for profit status is approved.

To receive reimbursement (or a receipt for tax purposes), submit an Expense Report (a copy of this agreement is in the Appendix.) with original receipts attached to:

#### **EUTHANASIA POLICY**

Euthanizing an animal is one of the hardest parts of rescue work. It is not a decision to be taken lightly. Working with senior dogs and providing hospice care, it is acknowledged that the decision to euthanize is one that may arise more frequently than with a non-senior focused rescue. All dogs in Senior Dog Haven & Hospice will be treated with dignity and respect in both life and death.

All SDH&H dogs will be provided with the recommended and necessary veterinarian care to ensure they have the highest quality of life possible. Those with a terminal illness or a short life expectancy will be placed in hospice homes and will also receive whatever medical care is deemed appropriate and necessary by our veterinarian to keep them healthy and happy as long as possible.

If the hospice or foster home feels that a dog is suffering or that their quality of life has diminished and with affirmation from the rescue's veterinarian that there is nothing further they can do to relieve the situation, they will contact the Intake Committee to inform them of the situation. Approval is required from the members of the Committee. If the foster/hospice is also a member of the Intake Committee, no further approval is required, however, if a second or third opinion is sought, other members of the Intake Committee can certainly be contacted to discuss. All fosters/hospice homes not a member of the intake committee should make every effort to contact at least one member of the Intake Committee to discuss.

In an emergency situation the hospice or foster is to act immediately in the best interest of the dog by taking them to the rescue's animal hospital. The recommendation for euthanasia is to come from the veterinarian. The foster/hospice volunteer should make every effort to contact the Intake Committee to alert them of the situation. If, however, they are unable to reach them, the foster/hospice volunteer will act in accordance with the veterinarian's recommendation.

If the emergency arises outside the normal working hours of the rescue veterinarian, the dog is to be taken to the nearest emergency clinic for assessment by their veterinarian and determination that euthanasia is the best and only option. Again, the foster/hospice volunteer should make every effort to contact the Intake Committee to alert them of the situation. If, however, they are unable to reach them, the foster/hospice volunteer will act in accordance with the veterinarian's recommendation. The foster/hospice volunteer will be reimbursed for these expenses with the submission of receipts to the treasurer and the approval of the majority of the Board that the volunteer acted in accordance with these policies.

All dogs taken to the veterinarian for humane euthanasia are to be accompanied by the hospice or foster parent or a member of the Board and they are to remain with the dog providing comfort until the procedure is completed. No Senior Dog Haven & Hospice dog is to be "dropped off" for euthanasia.

All Senior Dog Haven & Hospice rescues are to be given private cremation.

Foster Acknowledgement

I/We have read and understood the Senior Dog Haven & Hospice Foster Manual. I/We agree to abide by the policies and guidelines provided therein.

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Name (please print)

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Name 2 (please print)

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Signature 1

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Date

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Signature 2

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Date