



# Foster Home Information

## Why do we need foster homes?

The shelter is just not big enough to keep certain animals for weeks at a time. Getting the animals into a foster situation is the best way to insure they get individual care and socialization in a lower-stress environment.

## What kinds of animals need fostering?

The situations are varied, but rest assured, you'll never have to foster an animal you aren't comfortable with.

- **Underage kittens and puppies not yet ready for adoption:** Underage animals need a place to fatten up and stay healthy until they are old enough for adoption. They are usually eating on their own and range from a single kitten/puppy to a litter. We do occasionally have foster kittens and puppies who need bottle feeding, but there is no requirement to foster a bottle baby.
- **Mama cats and dogs with a litter:** If the babies are very young and have a mom, you need only make sure mom has plenty of fresh water and food and that the litter box or kennel is clean. More time is required when they are older and moving around - extra food and water and cleaning the box or kennel more frequently. They also need extra time getting "socialized."
- **Dogs needing behavior modification:** We have dogs who are just a little too shy to be made available for adoption right away and need some time in a less stressful home environment where they can be exposed to new people and situations and gain confidence. We also have dogs needing basic obedience training. Socialization or training in foster care will help ensure they make a good companion for a prospective adopter and that their adoption is a permanent one.
- **Animals needing medical recovery:** These can be ill animals, usually cats with URI or dogs with kennel cough. We also take in animals who have injuries requiring recuperation outside the shelter. Fostering sick or injured animals may require foster providers to administer medications, and at times, subcutaneous fluids (it's easy- we'll show you!)
- **Those who have been here for a while and need a break – or we need to free up kennel space:** There are instances when the animal has been here for a while and is getting overlooked by adopters and would benefit from a break from the shelter. This break relieves stress which helps keep them mentally/emotionally sound. There is also a need to get long-timers into foster in order to free up cage space. In these instances, getting an animal out to foster can make the all the difference.
- **Other species:** While most of the animals that we send out to foster are cats and dogs, we do need homes for other types of animals. These can include rabbits, guinea pigs, reptiles, birds or other pets. These animals can need fostering due to health issues, space, behavior or because they have babies.

### **What are the terms of fostering?**

The official foster parent has to be an adult (18+ years old) and reside in our jurisdiction. All foster homes sign an agreement listing the following conditions:

- An Animal Services representative will physically inspect the home where the animals are to be fostered.
- That these animals are the property of Animal Services, and I agree to surrender them to shelter staff at any time when asked to do so.
- To provide a separate room away from all other animals. I understand that mother animals are very protective of their young and can strike out at other animals. I understand they need a low stress environment, free from extreme heat or cold.
- To lower the risk to your own pets, it is advisable to keep your fostered animals separated from your personal pets. If you have concerns about passing a disease from a foster animal to your own animals, please talk to your vet to make sure your pets are up to date on any vaccines recommended before you bring your foster home. Animal Services cannot provide medical care or funding for your personal animals.
- If you foster the same species for another organization/person at the same time, please let us know before they are in your home.
- That the shelter will provide bedding, crate, litter pan, food dishes, or medication (if necessary) for the animals for the duration of their stay. An initial supply of donated food or litter may be made available, if needed. The shelter may be able to continue to supply food and litter if the resources are available.
- I may incur incidental expenses while the animals are in my care (food, toys, litter, etc.). I agree to cover these needs/costs for the animals I am fostering.
- To bring the animals to the shelter for periodic health checks, or to arrange for shelter staff to visit the animals in my home, to ensure proper weight gain and overall health. I agree to maintain close contact with shelter staff while the animals are under my care.
- That liability for damage, illness or injury that may occur to my home, occupants or premises because of the fostered animals, is my responsibility. I understand that I am not liable for illness or injury to the foster animals, unless caused by my neglect.
- That the animals I foster are to remain in my care for the duration of their stay. They may not be “loaned” to potential adopters or anyone else.
- Dogs must be leashed when outside unless they are in a securely fenced yard and cannot go to a dog parks. Cats are required to stay indoors. For other species, ask the Volunteer Coordinator.
- To notify shelter staff immediately, if the foster animals are injured or become ill while in my care. All veterinary treatment must be pre-arranged through the Shelter. Animal Services cannot pay for vet bills that are not cleared in advance by us or that are out of our jurisdiction. I agree to accept the shelter staff decision regarding treatment or further care of the animals.
- To return the animals to the shelter at a predetermined time, so they may be placed for adoption.

### **What type of commitment do you need from me?**

Fostering can last from as little as 1 week to as many as a couple months: 3-4 weeks is average.

### **What type of space do I need at home?**

Generally, a spare bedroom, bathroom, laundry room or even space in a temperature-controlled garage (secure from toxins) will do.

### **How much will it cost to foster?**

The shelter will provide bedding, crate, litter pan, food dishes, or medication (if necessary) for the animals for the duration of their stay. An initial supply of food and/or litter is available, if needed. The shelter may be able to continue to supply food and litter if the resources are available. You cover incidental expenses while the animals are in your care (food, toys, litter, etc.). The amount will depend on the types of animals you foster and the amount of time they spend in your care.

### **What if the animals I foster get sick?**

Should one of your fostered animals get injured or become sick, please notify the Shelter immediately. All veterinary treatment must be pre-arranged through the Shelter. Animal Services cannot pay for vet bills that are not cleared in advance by us or that are out of our jurisdiction. Once you are a foster home, you will have access to the foster manual with the emergency contact numbers.

### **Can my pets get sick from an animal I foster?**

Unfortunately, the answer to this question is yes. The animals we send out for fostering are almost all strays with unknown health histories. Depending on their age and health, they may have received vaccines at the shelter, but it takes a while for the vaccines to kick in. To lower the risk to your own pets, it is advisable to keep your fostered animals separated from your personal pets and talk to your vet about your pets' vaccinations.

### **Fostering can be highly rewarding...**

...and a lot of fun. There are times however, that it can be heartbreaking. No matter how hard we try, the entire litter may come down with an illness. Sadly, we may not be able to pull them through. Other animals may develop behavior issues which make them un-adoptable and may have to be euthanized. It is never easy to prepare yourself for these situations; however, you need to be aware and be able to concede to the decisions of shelter staff.

We try to notify foster homes if behavioral or medical problems arise with one of their fosters after they've been returned to the shelter. There are some emergency situations that prevent us from notifying a foster home, but we do in most cases.

Each foster home chooses if they want to be notified. Selecting that you want to be notified doesn't commit you to having to take back a foster, it just gives you the option of taking him/her back.

### **Option #1:**

"I want to be notified if an animal I've fostered has a medical issue that prevents it from being placed for adoption. I will have the option of fostering or adopting the animal."

Most medical issues are fixable, but it requires time back in your home while the medical issue resolves. Some medical issues are chronic, possibly brought on by the stress of being in the shelter (like URI). Foster animals with a chronic medical issue would be returned to your foster care and we will post the animal's information online and refer potential adopters to you to meet the animal. If it's a good match, the adopter comes back to the shelter to do the adoption.

### **Option #2:**

"I want to be notified if an animal I've fostered has a behavioral issue that prevents it from being placed for adoption. I will have the option of fostering or adopting the animal."

Some of these animals may be fine in your home, but not in the shelter environment. These animals can be returned to your foster care and we will post the animal's information online and refer potential adopters to you to meet the animal. If it's a good match, the adopter comes back to the shelter to do the adoption.

Other animals have behavioral issues that prevent us from adopting them to the general public and your option would be to adopt the animal yourself.

### **Option #3**

"I want to be notified if an animal I've fostered has a behavioral or medical issue that prevents it from being placed for adoption. I will have the option of fostering or adopting the animal."

### **Option #4**

"I do not want to be notified if an animal I've fostered has a medical or behavioral issue that prevents it from being placed for adoption. I will leave the decision to Animal Services Staff."

### **What are the next steps to becoming a foster home?**

- Submit your volunteer application.
- Once your application and background checks are processed (this can take a couple weeks), we will call you to schedule a home visit to see where the foster animals will be staying while in your care.
- Once the home visit is cleared, you will receive an email invitation to join the online foster list(s).

### **How do I find out more about the program?**

- You can preview the foster manual, feline and canine supplements at [www.jointanimalservices.org/forms-information](http://www.jointanimalservices.org/forms-information). Just scroll down to the "Pet Care and Behavior" section. (Once you are an approved foster home, you will have access to the copy of the foster manual with the emergency contact numbers.)
- If you have questions about any part of the foster program, please contact the Volunteer Coordinator at 360-352-2510, ext. 1009 or [foster@jointanimalservices.org](mailto:foster@jointanimalservices.org).