

Foster Care Handbook



1855 SE Inner Loop
Georgetown, TX 78626
512-943-3322

www.wilcopets.com

Introduction

Welcome:

If you have never cared for a foster animal before, you are about to experience the joys of being a pet owner without the lifetime responsibility. The following guidelines will help you with the care of your foster animal(s) and to understand the policies and procedures of the WCRAS.

Foster Care Program Objective:

The WCRAS's Foster Care Program allows animals that are too young for adoption, are recovering from surgery or illness, or are in need of other special care to stay in private homes until they are ready for adoption.

Volunteer foster homes provide a safe place for foster animals to stay, nutritious food, socialization and health care to their animal guests. Fosters are in a unique position to help abused and neglected animals how to learn to love and trust again. By teaching or re-teaching an animal how to live in a home setting, foster homes help increase the odds for a smooth transition into a permanent adoptive home. This important program allows us to save the lives of animals that might otherwise have to be euthanized. Before taking on the responsibility and commitment of being a foster care volunteer, please take the following into consideration:

Do You Have the Time?

The time commitment for foster care can range from a few days to a few months depending on the animals need for foster care. Common foster situations and durations are as follows;

- ✿ Puppies and kittens under 8 weeks of age that are very susceptible to disease in the shelter environment are placed into foster homes until old enough to be adopted. Care can be 3 to 4 weeks depending on the puppy's or kitten's age.
- ✿ Newborn puppies and kittens with or without their mother need quiet foster homes until the puppies/kittens are old enough to be placed for adoption. The foster period could last as much as 8 weeks with newborns and require bottle-feeding.
- ✿ Adult animal, puppy or kitten old enough to be placed that is sick or injured and needs a quiet, healthy environment to recover. Foster period could be as short as a week or two or as long several months depending on the illness or injury. Foster parents for special needs animals may require a significant time commitment and experience with caring and medicating sick animals.
- ✿ Adult animal, puppy or kitten old enough to be placed but has a minor behavioral issue or is unsocialized that needs a socialization and behavioral rehabilitation for a successful adoption.

In addition to time spent caring for and socializing your foster animal(s) in your home, you must consider the possibility of additional time for vet checks and/or emergency care and transporting to and from the appointments.

The need for foster homes varies according to the season of the year, the number of animals currently being fostered, and the number of foster homes available.

Do you have adequate facilities to house foster animals?

We ask that you only take the number of animals that you can house comfortably, keep adequately clean and fed, and provide adequate socialization for. Always keep you're the needs of your personal pets in mind when you consider fostering. Your pets need to be fully vaccinated before you begin fostering.

Are you prepared for the emotional considerations?

Caring for puppies, kittens, and animals requiring medical attention and socialization is fun, but it is also a lot of work. You will also develop an emotional attachment to your fosters, and face the reality that despite your best efforts, not all foster animals will thrive. While we will do as much as possible to assure that foster animals are placed, we cannot guarantee that each and every animal will find a permanent home. We do everything in our power to treat illnesses or other health problems that that may befall foster animals, but you must be prepared that some illnesses, health problems, or injuries may not be treatable because they are life-threatening, cost prohibitive, or not in the best interest of the animal in the long run. The possibility of death or euthanasia of one or more of your fosters, though remote, is a reality that must be considered.

How do foster animals find permanent adoptive homes?

WCRAS takes full responsibility for finding permanent adoptive homes for foster animals. Foster volunteers are encouraged to let people know that their foster animals are available for adoption, but any person interested in adopting an animal needs to contact WCRAS to complete the adoption application process. If a foster volunteer finds an adoptive home for their foster, they can have the person complete an adoption application (found on the website) and have the person meet them at the shelter when the foster is returned. We believe that the foster volunteers will screen potential adopters and use good judgment when placing their foster animals into a permanent home.

Housing Your Foster Animal

Considering where to house your foster animals is a key factor in the overall success of your foster experience. This section will provide some guidelines for housing your foster animals and proper cleaning and disinfecting the areas you choose to keep them in. Remember fostering is meant to be a fun, fulfilling experience, so please keep in mind that your home life can be greatly enhanced or disrupted based on how you implement our suggestions.

Our shelter staff can also offer suggestions to assist you in setting up the most appropriate environment for the animals in your care and for your lifestyle. Please feel free to consult with them about housing questions, issues, or ideas you have.

The following guidelines are just a suggestion:

- We recommend an area that is separate from your household pets
- A spare bedroom, bathroom, or utility room can be ideal if uncluttered and puppy/kitten proof.
- Garages and screened in porches can also transform into a wonderfully, efficient foster areas in good weather and the foster animals are safe and secure.
- Cat/kitten foster volunteers should consider noise/activity levels in the area when fostering felines as they are less stressed in a quiet environment.

Think smart, safe, and creatively when considering where to house your foster animals.

Wherever you decide to house your fosters, you must keep in mind that the area must be easy to clean and disinfect. Flooring is a major consideration in your ability to properly disinfect the area where you foster an animals. Good flooring options are;

- Cement
- Linoleum
- Sealed wood
- Tile

Basic Supplies You Will Need for Fostering:

Dog & Puppy Supplies

Newspaper
Bleach
Crates
Towels, Blankets
Play Pens
Water and Food Bowls
Toys
Brushes
Nutritious Food
Formula and Bottles
Canned Puppy Food

Cat & Kitten Supplies

Newspaper
Bleach
Litter
Litterboxes & Scoops
Cat Condos
Large Wire Crates
Toys
Towels
Food and Water Bowls
Cat Comb
Formula and bottles
Canned Food

Puppy Proofing Your Home

Puppies have a lot of energy and a natural curiosity. This is what makes them so much fun but could also lead them into harmful situations. You need to take the time to evaluate the environment the foster animals will be staying in. Think of it as child-proofing your home, except that a puppy is smaller and more active than a baby and can therefore get into more things. Simply ask yourself when looking around, "If I were a puppy, would this be an interesting place to explore? Would this be fun to shred, chew, carry, or hide?"

The following tips are designed to keep your foster animals safe:

Indoor Hazards

- * Know which plants are toxic and move out of the puppy's reach
- * Electrical cords, computer cables and wires (tie up loose cords and keep out of sight)
- * Draw strings from draperies or blinds
- * Cleaning supplies
- * Remote controls, knick-knacks
- * Candles, potpourri, and air-fresheners
- * Toilet tissue or Kleenex (Funny but can be potentially harmful if ingested, and not much fun to clean up)
- * Fireplaces, woodstoves
- * Be careful of your foster animals around furniture. A rocking chair can harm a leg or tail, and a curious puppy can crawl under a recliner or sofa bed.
- * Keep door and windows secure. Keep screens in good repair.
- * Many dogs will eat feces from cat litter boxes. Besides being gross, it can be dangerous. Cat litter can cause an intestinal obstruction, not to mention worms the cat may have passed on.

Outdoor hazards:

- * Please do not leave your foster puppy outside unsupervised.
- * Gasoline, oil, paint, pesticides, auto supplies, etc. should be in secure containers and out of reach.
- * Be especially careful with antifreeze and rat poison, both taste good to dogs and both can be deadly if ingested.
- * Pools, ponds, hot tubs, and drainpipes are also dangerous.
- * Fire rings, barbeques, and other heat/fire sources
- * Walk your property and look for other hazards (glass, nails, sharp objects)
- * Many outdoor plants, shrubs, and flowers are poisonous.

Kitten Proofing Your Home

Many of the puppy proofing tips can be applied to fostering kittens as well, but felines have the ability to find unique dangers all their own.

- ✿ Kittens and Cats are by their nature VERY curious about their surroundings, so you will need to make sure there are no hidden escape routes that can lead outdoors for your indoor only kitty. If you have young children, or any concerns about the cat getting out, you can make and post small signs at each doorway reminding the family to open and close them carefully and watch for the kitties.
- ✿ Keeping your toilet bowl closed after use is a must for small kittens.
- ✿ Move glass or breakable treasures inside a closed cabinet, or use special anchoring clay to keep them secured from being knocked over by an inquisitive paw.
- ✿ Always keep your washing machine and dryer doors closed, and check carefully before and after use to make sure your kitty hasn't somehow gotten inside.
- ✿ Kittens seem to love to explore under the refrigerator- make sure they cannot get under there by placing barriers around the bottom.
- ✿ Be careful that all cat toys are safe – make sure that sharp objects like pins, safety pins, pieces of glass, string or yarn , etc. are put away. These can be fatal to a cat or kitten if swallowed.
- ✿ Twist ties can perforate the bowels if swallowed.
- ✿ Aluminum foil balls are fun for the cats to play with. Make sure they are large enough and tight enough for the kitty not to swallow any of the foil.
- ✿ Other types of hazards are anything with a loop on them, like plastic bags, litter box liners, etc. Kittens and cats can get them around their neck and twisted up in them and choke or suffocate

Health Considerations

Protecting Our Animals

Prior to being placed into foster care, all animals old enough will be vaccinated, wormed, and given flea/tick treatment as necessary.

Cats:

- ✿ If older than 6 weeks of age and less than 6 months of age, kittens will receive 3 (FVRCP) vaccinations. They will be revaccinated every 2 weeks until they have received three vaccinations.
- ✿ If older than 6 months they will receive one vaccination.
- ✿ If older than 4 weeks of age, they will be wormed with Pyrantal.
- ✿ If under the age of 6 months, kittens will be wormed every two weeks until they have received 3 treatments.
- ✿ Cats and Kittens will be treated for fleas as necessary.
- ✿ If over the age of four months, they will be tested for FIV/FeLV

Dogs:

- ✿ All dogs will receive the DHLPP vaccination. This is for parvo and distemper.
- ✿ If under 6 months of age, puppies will need to be revaccinated every two weeks until they have received 3 vaccinations.
- ✿ If older than 3 weeks of age, will be wormed with Pyrantal.
- ✿ If under the age of 6 months, puppies will need to be re-wormed every two weeks until they have received 3 treatments.
- ✿ Treated for fleas and ticks as necessary.
- ✿ If over the age of 7 months, will be heartworm tested and receive heartworm treatment at age three months and every month thereafter.

All the vaccinations and routine care will be given by shelter staff.

When you pick up your foster animal(s), you will receive instructions on the care of the animal while in your foster home. If it includes dates for follow up care and/or vaccinations, the foster volunteer will agree to transport the animals to the shelter for the care. You should call in advance when coming to the shelter for these treatments to ensure the proper personnel are available.

Protecting Your Resident Pets

When bringing in any new animal, including foster animal(s), into your home, please keep in mind that they may be carrying an illness that could affect your pet's health. We ask that you separate foster animals from your own pets for at least one week. The only way to avoid possible exposure of your pets is to keep them separate from your pets for the entire foster period. We highly recommend that your pets be current on all routine vaccinations and that your dogs are also current on the Bordetella vaccination (Kennel Cough).

When fostering kittens, keep in mind they may be too young (under 6 months of age) to be tested for FIV/FeLV during the foster period. This means that even when no physical symptoms are present, your pet could be exposed to this virus therefore it is extremely important that your pets are fully vaccinated.

If your foster animal seems healthy and you do choose to introduce them to your resident pets, it is a good idea to prohibit sharing of food and water bowls, litterboxes, and toys. Any introduction should be made with great care and under constant supervision, especially if you are planning to introduce a protective mother cat or dog to your resident pets.

After handling foster animals, it is always a good idea to wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before handling your pet. This will further reduce the likelihood of exposing your pet to illness.

Diseases that are transmissible from animal to animal.

- **Distemper/Upper Respiratory Virus (Cats and Dogs)** – These are the basic yearly vaccinations that your pet(s) should be kept current on at all times both for their protection and the protection of the foster.
- **Feline Leukemia (Cats)** – Your resident cat(s) must test negative and be kept current on Feline Leukemia vaccinations at all times. Foster cats and kittens over 4 months of age, will be tested and found negative before being sent into the foster home. Feline leukemia is transmitted between cats via fluids. This normally occurs through licking and shared litterboxes.
- **FIV “Feline Aids” (Cats)** – To prevent infection of your resident cat(s) and foster animals, your resident cat(s) and foster cats or kittens must also be tested and determined to be free of this disease. The test is given in conjunction with the feline leukemia test. Be aware that there is currently no vaccination against FIV in cats. FIV is normally transmitted by deep bite wounds.
- **Parvovirus (Dogs)** - Annual vaccinations protect against this serious and often fatal canine disease. Your own dog(s) must be currently vaccinated against parvo at all times. Be aware that parvovirus is not a disease that affects puppies only.

The following are infestations that there is vaccination to prevent, so identifying them and understanding how they are transmitted is important to avoiding the problem.

- **Roundworms** – Round worms are big worms. Typically they are white, about the diameter of a spaghetti strand and about 4 inches in length. They are particularly common in puppies and may produce no symptoms other than diarrhea. However, it is also common for the worms to be visible in the feces or vomited or coughed up. The puppy’s abdomen can be rounded and “fat.” Cats and dogs can be born with roundworms, get them from their mother’s milk, or through the feces of an infected animal. This commonly occurs through shared water and food bowls, bedding material, or even in the yard.
- **Tapeworms** – This worm looks like rice when they are dead or a short piece of spaghetti noodle when alive. Tapeworms are not as common in puppies as in adult animals. They can be seen in the stool or around the pet’s rear end. Another sign may be diarrhea streaked with mucus. Animals most commonly get this

worm from fleas or specifically from eating the flea or intestines of other animals (mouse, rat, bird, etc.) that has fleas.

- **Hookworms** – This worm is generally invisible to the unaided human eye. They are about ½ inch long and very, very thin. Kittens or puppies may be born with hookworms, get them while nursing, or ingest a Hookworm larva found in the environment (like on a blade of grass, water or food bowl, or toy). Signs of Hookworms vary, but may include non-specific diarrhea; diarrhea that is tarry looking or bloody, vomiting, poor or no appetite, pale mucous membranes, weakness, and poor growth.
- **Ringworm** - Ringworm is a skin infection caused by a fungus, not an actual worm. It is transmitted in a variety of ways, although physical contact with an infected animal is most common. Dry scaly spots will appear after one to two weeks, and are usually confined to the hairier regions of the scalp, forearms, and face. Hair breaks off at the roots causing a bald spot.
- **Sarcoptic Mange** – The parasite that causes mange is transmitted through physical contact. This animal-to-human form is less serious than the human-to-human form and is usually self-limiting. Infected animals suffer blisters, scabs, and hair loss. Physical contact with the animal, bedding should be avoided. There are two types of mange, sarcoptic and demodex. Demodex is not transmitted to other animals or humans and most commonly erupts during periods of stress.

Protecting Yourself Against Disease

Zoonotic diseases are diseases that are transmitted from animals to people. They are always of concern to those who handle or work with animals on a regular basis.

Diseases that may be transmitted from animals to humans:

- **Roundworms** – Children are particularly susceptible to roundworms because they often play in the dirt and sand where larvae reside. Once ingested, the roundworms will migrate to the heart, lungs, liver, brain, and eyes, causing severe damage. To prevent infection, avoid public areas where animals might defecate (such as parks) and wash hands often.
- **Tapeworms** – While generally people don't get tapeworms from animals, on very rare occasions, children have been infected with tapeworms by swallowing a flea accidentally and it generally causes tremendous cramping and discomfort.
- **Giardia** – This intestinal disease occurs throughout the world and is common in cats and dogs. Like many zoonotic disease, Giardia is contracted through the fecal-oral route. Symptoms may include weight loss and chronic diarrhea. Giardia can be prevented through proper and thorough hand-washing.
- **Toxoplasmosis** – Cats are the primary cause of toxoplasmosis in humans. The life cycle of this parasite is very complex, but infection usually occurs when an owner comes into contact with the cat's feces. Human symptom's includes headaches, enlarged lymph nodes, and a flu-like illness. This disease can cause serious birth defects if contracted by an expectant mother during early

pregnancy. Most humans will be unaffected by its presence, however, an expectant mother can avoid exposure by simply forgoing litterbox duties while pregnant.

- **Ringworm** – Dry scaly spots will appear after one to two weeks, and are usually confined to the hairier regions of the scalp, forearms, and face. Hair breaks off at the roots causing a bald spot. Exposure can be greatly reduced by wearing rubber gloves and thoroughly washing after handling an infected animal.
- **Sarcoptic Mange (Scabies)** - The parasite that causes mange is transmitted through physical contact. This animal-to-human form is less serious than the human-to-human form and is usually self-limiting. Infected animals suffer blisters, scabs, and hair loss. Physical contact with the animal, bedding should be avoided.

Information to Keep You Healthy

- ✿ You do not need to come into direct contact with an infected animal to contract a disease. Many zoonotic diseases are transmitted via bodily fluids on hands, shoes, clothes, tools, etc.
- ✿ Make it a habit to always practice good hygiene, including washing your hands thoroughly with hot water and antibacterial soap after handling your foster animal(s).
- ✿ Be aware that an animal can carry a disease without showing symptoms. Use the same precautions with a healthy looking one as you would with a sickly appearing animal.

What Should I do if my Foster Animal Becomes Sick?

There are many symptoms to indicate an animal is not feeling well. Be observant of your foster animals. Symptoms of illness may include:

Diarrhea	Vomiting
Loss of Appetite	Lethargy
Weight Loss	Runny Eyes or Nose
Coughing	Sneezing

If you have a concern during the day that your foster animal may be getting sick, contact the shelter and talk to the staff, please don't wait until night time when staff is unavailable.

If a foster animal begins to show symptoms of illness while in your care, please follow these procedures so that your animal receives the care it needs.

During Business Hours – Monday 8 a.m. -5 p.m.; Tuesday – Friday 7 a.m. -6 p.m.; Saturday and Sunday 11:00 – 4:00

- ✿ Call the Shelter. Ask to speak to the Shelter Manager or a Veterinarian Technician. If they are not available, the Shelter Director can also help you.
- ✿ Be prepared to provide information including the animal's name, ID #, age, your name and the symptoms of the illness.

- ✿ We strongly recommend that you call the shelter before dropping in so that we can ensure someone can help you.
- ✿ If an animal has vomiting or diarrhea, but is still active, alert, eating and drinking, you can probably wait until the next day to receive help if it is after hours. If the animal is lethargic and shows no interest in food or water, it is wise to seek emergency help as soon as possible.

After Business Hours

If you find yourself in an after-hours emergency situation, please take the animal to the Animal Emergency Clinic of Central Texas. It is located at 2000 North Mays Street, Ste. 112 and the phone number is 512.671.6252. Please contact the Kennel Manager, Madelen Powell or the Shelter Director, Cheryl Schneider to get an authorization.

Emergency Situations May Include:

- Continuous Diarrhea (particularly if it is foul-smelling or liquid)
- Continuous Vomiting
- Active Bleeding from the nose, mouth, or in the urine or stools
- Any trauma
- Difficulty breathing
- Young kittens or puppies – significant change in behavior, energy level, or appetite

Reminder: If you choose to take your foster animal to a private Veterinarian, WCRAS will not reimburse any charges you may incur. Due to limited funds, private veterinary care may only be reimbursed under unusual circumstances, and only with prior approval from a WCRAS Kennel Manager, Shelter Director or Veterinarian Technician.

Finally...a word of caution.

It is a sad fact that puppies and kittens, through no fault of your own, sometimes die. The mother dog or cat may reject them or even kill them. Your own pet may fatally injure or kill one of them, or one might simply die for an unknown reason.

If an animal in your care should happen to die, please be sure to contact the shelter staff as soon as possible. It is imperative that we have an opportunity to examine the animal to determine a cause of death. Some conditions may be contagious and we want to protect any other foster animals in your care, as well as your own pets. We will handle the disposal of the remains for you.

Catastrophes don't happen often, but depending on how long you have cared for the animal and how attached you have become, you may experience something between distress and devastation. We also offer the thought that, although we fail to save each and every animal placed in foster care, your participation is vital to our mission, and saves lives of many animals every year.

Getting Started

What You Need:

Transport Carriers, Crates, or Cages

We will provide you an animal transport carrier cage or crate for your foster animal(s) that you will return to the shelter when you are finished fostering the animal(s). If you become a regular foster, you may choose to purchase your own crate or cage. It should be safe, secure and an appropriate size for the animal you are fostering.

Confinement Area

A large box or other enclosure such as a playpen or folding exercise pen might be desirable if you are fostering a litter of puppies or kittens. This type of enclosure will allow you to see in, keep your animals confined, as well as provide plenty of room for a mother and her growing litter. A child's plastic pool is great for a dog with newborn puppies until they start moving around.

Food

WCRAS will provide the food or formula as needed for your foster animal(s) if you cannot. Please provide be quality puppy, kitten, cat, or dog food. You are welcome to talk to the kennel staff about the food you want to feed.

To avoid causing potentially harmful digestive problems, do not feed cow's milk, human formulas, table scraps, more than a small amount of canned food, or generic pet food. Canned food should only be fed to puppies or kittens during 4 – 6 weeks of age, or malnourished, nursing or sick animals to stimulate their appetite. Puppies and kittens should be able to eat dry food by 7 weeks of age, even if it has to be soaked in warm water.

Food and Water Dishes

Feel free to experiment with dishes you have on hand – flat-bottomed cake pans work well for puppies and flat saucers will be adequate for kittens. We recommend heavy flat bottom dishes or pans for water for the puppies and kittens to keep the water from being easily tipped over. Be sure to clean the food and water bowls daily to avoid bacterial growth. You can check with the staff at WCRAS to see if they have any plastic food or water dishes available for you to use.

Cat Litter Boxes and Cat Litter

Litter boxes should be available in any area in which you are housing your cat and/or kittens. The average litter box may be too high for kittens to crawl into so you can try aluminum baking pans or the flat boxes soda comes on. Avoid using the clumping or scoopable litter for kittens as these litters can easily be ingested by kittens and can result in intestinal blockage and death.

Toys and Other Playthings

Part of the fun of sharing your home with young animals is playtime. Toy mice and balls make kittens happy and can be laundered and reused. You are welcome to use any safe toys of your choice.

Safe puppy toys include nylabones and hard rubber toys and balls. Raw carrots are nutritious teething toys for puppies. Be sure all toys you give them are safe, remove the eyes of stuffed animals or any other loose parts. Discard any toys that become worn and are no longer safe.

As with children, puppies and kittens will play with anything they can find. Drapes, lampshades, electrical cords and glass ornaments may look like as much fun as the toys listed above. Take special care to “puppy-proof” or “kitten-proof your home before allowing fosters free run of an area. As your fosters grow, so will their reach, so anything irreplaceable should be kept well out of reach.

Additional Care Suggestions

Cleanliness

Puppies and kittens without a mother can get pretty messy! It is important that you do your best to keep them as clean as possible. One way to accomplish this is to stroke the puppy or kitten with a warm, damp cloth to mimic the mother licking them. This also encourages them to eliminate naturally. A flea comb may be used to remove dried feces or food from the fur. Be sure to dry the puppy or kitten well so they do not chill. Dried feces can become caked on the underside of the tail or between the toes. Dried feces can be softened and removed by dipping the puppies or kittens rear end into a basin of warm water and then carefully combing through the hair with a flea comb. Many puppies and kittens will not even notice they are partially wet, but some will protest and scamper to escape, so beware of sharp little claws.

Nail Trimming

We strongly urge you to trim your foster animals nails on a regular basis. Besides helping to reduce snags and scratches on your furniture, clothes, and yourself, regular nail trimming weekly can also help socialize your foster. The handling they receive during this procedure will help them get used to being gently restrained and worked with. Many animals who grow up without this type of regular maintenance can be difficult to handle as adults. Your efforts in this regard will help your fosters to be well adapted and easier for their future owners to manage.

Common Sense

Caring for puppies and kittens mostly requires common sense and patience. In most cases you can use your good judgment. You can begin teaching your foster animals good manners. Even though you may not mind these behaviors, the animal’s permanent home might.

- ✿ Don’t feed fosters animals from the table
- ✿ Don’t feed foster animals table scraps
- ✿ Discourage mouthing or play biting
- ✿ Discourage kittens from climbing on kitchen countertops, tables, drapes, etc.
Keep a squirt bottle ready.
- ✿ Discourage puppies and dogs from sleeping on beds or getting on furniture.
Designate an area with bedding just for them.
- ✿ Discourage puppies and dogs from jumping on you or visitors.
- ✿ Teach basic obedience such as sit, no, leash walking, etc.

Socialization

One of the most important part of your job as a foster parent is to convince your foster animal(s) that humans are kind and loving. Some puppies and kittens will adjust to you and their new environment without any problems, but to some, you may seem like a strange and frightening giant. To make their transition into your home an easy one, you will need to give your foster animal(s) a day or so to accustom themselves to their new surroundings.

The principles of socializing are the same for all animals, puppies, kittens, cats and dogs – love them and they will respond. An outgoing, friendly kitten or puppy can be cuddled and played with freely. The less social animals need some encouragement and patience. Try sitting on the floor with the puppy or kitten held against your chest, supported underneath and facing outward, so he can't see how big and scary you are. Stroke him and speak gently, telling him how cute and brave and fabulous he is. Continue this until he starts squirming and put him down. You want this to be a pleasant experience. Sometimes holding a pair together helps- they seem to reassure each other. If your puppies or kittens are fearful and run a way from you when you approach, try sitting on the floor near them and let them come to you. Being at their level is a lot less intimidating to them then towering over them.

There is no such thing as a bad puppy or kitten, even if your foster's don't enjoy being cuddled or held. If they will tolerate being stroked and don't cower under the furniture, they will make someone a wonderful pet. Some of the most aloof puppies and kittens grow up to be the most friendly and loving adults.

Some adult animals that need socialization will require even more patience and understanding. Dogs that need socialization often benefit from being around other dogs that are comfortable with people. Even more important to socializing a dog that is scared or timid is exercise. Exercise at the end of a leash is extremely important in creating social standing for your foster dog. Please be certain that in walking your foster dog that they are walking beside or behind you. This position will reinforce that you are leading them and they will be more comfortable following you as a than acting as the leader.

Also, do not reinforce behavior such as fear, nervousness, aggression by touching, talking or cuddling the dog while they are exhibiting these types of behaviors. While it is natural to want to pet or comfort when they are scared or timid, you are encouraging them to continue with this behavior. Rather you should ignore such behavior and act like whatever is causing them to behave in this way is nothing. The more that you demonstrate that it is nothing, the more they will sense this from you and eventually act the same way. Take them for a walk or try to get them engaged in an activity. You should remain relaxed, calm but assertive as you interact with them to give them confidence in you. Eventually this will encourage them to relax. When they relax or show any calmness, give them lots of positive attention and praise, and pet them.

Unfortunately, while these animals need and deserve lots of love, it may not fix behavior problems. However, calm assertive leadership will. So show them lots of calm leadership and then show them lots of love when they respond in a clam, relaxed behavior.

Always use positive reinforcement. Yelling, hitting, kicking, etc is NEVER acceptable.

Ready For a Forever Home

You have survived the past few weeks, and that bittersweet day has arrived. Your foster animal is ready to take that next step towards their forever home. Whether they are being adopted or returned to the shelter, your job as a foster parent for this lucky animal is almost over. But before they leave your care, there are a few last things you can do for your foster animal.

The first is to make sure they are healthy enough to be placed. If you see any signs of illness, be sure and contact the shelter immediately even if it is the morning they are to be returned.

Second, make sure your foster has received all the vaccinations and treatments they were due (by bringing them back to the shelter when scheduled). We want them to be as protected from disease as possible when they are placed in a home or returned to the shelter. Bring all the records you have with you.

Next, it is also helpful for the new owner of your foster animal to benefit from what you have learned about the animal during the stay in your care. Please feel free to share your experiences and insights in a letter to the new owner if they have been adopted. Be sure and include your email address so they may correspond with you about the progress after they go home. Know that in some cases, new owners may choose not to correspond after the fact. However your letter can make the transition to their new home easier if you can share with them all you know as their foster parent. You might also send with them their favorite toy. This can make their new home feel more familiar. If the animal is being returned to the shelter for adoption, you can write your experiences and information about the animal on a card and it can be attached to the animal's kennel card.

Lastly, the final step is to remember to pat yourself on the back for having done such a wonderful thing. Your hard work and loving care has paid off and you've quite literally been a life saver. We sincerely thank you for giving the gift of life to those animals who might not have been so lucky without you. All fosters realize a sadness when one of their animals leave their home for the next, but there is also great fulfillment and happiness in knowing what a difference you make in an animal's life. Remember and share that with other foster's.

The Foster Care Provider Agreement

- Agrees to allow home visits if deemed necessary by shelter staff.
- Agrees that you are in compliance with landlord restriction and allow the shelter staff to perform a landlord check if needed.
- Agrees that all family members are in agreement about opening the home to fostering, and will follow the guidelines for animal care given by the Foster Care Volunteer
- Agrees to foster only one litter or one animal per household unless facilities are available to sufficiently keep animals/litters separate from each other.
- Agrees that a litter is defined as a group of animals born at the same time to the same mother.
- Agrees that no other animal from any other organization is fostered at the same time unless prior approval is given.
- Agrees to complete and sign a Foster Application before acceptance as a Foster Volunteer
- Agrees that dogs or puppies are kept indoors unless otherwise discussed and approved by the Kennel Manager, Veterinarian Technician(s) or the Shelter Director.
- Agrees that cats or kittens will be kept indoors at all times.
- Agrees to meet with shelter staff when requested.
- Agrees to keep all household pets fully vaccinated at all times to avoid contracting diseases from the foster animals.
- Agrees to isolate the foster animal(s) from household pets during the first week of care.
- Agrees that WCRAS will not be responsible for veterinary care of household pets or medical care of humans contracting disease from foster animals.
- Agrees to feed the foster animals a nutritious diet and obtaining permission to feed a brand other than Science Diet.
- Agrees to contact the Shelter Staff immediately at the first sign of illness or an injury.
- Agrees that all decisions made by the medical staff and/or the shelter staff are final.
- Agrees to immediately report any bites and/or aggressive behavior with a foster animal to the shelter staff.
- Agrees that all foster animals are the property on the WCRAS, and must be relinquished to the shelter upon request.
- Agrees to properly care for and socialize the foster animals per the WCRAS guidelines to the best of your ability.

Attachments:

Orphaned Puppies: How to Raise Them
Orphaned Kittens: How to Raise Them
Contact List