



P R O V I D E N C E  
ANIMAL RESCUE LEAGUE

# **Foster Care Handbook**

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## Introduction

Welcome to the Providence Animal Rescue League Foster Care Volunteer Program! We are happy to have you as a volunteer and we hope your foster care experience is rewarding.

Please use the handbook as a guide during your foster care experience. We hope it will answer some of the common questions or concerns you may have as a foster parent.

However, we recognize that there are unique situations that come about as a result of taking an animal into your home for. Please feel free to contact us at any time whether it's a simple question or an emergency. We appreciate your feedback and dedication to the program. As a facility that takes in all animals regardless of age or health, foster volunteers are a critical resource in PARL's ability to help animals find new homes.

If there is a medical or health issue, please call **PARL** directly at **401-421-1399**. Please note that the staff can be reached Sunday through Saturday between 8:00 am – 4:30 pm.

**In the event of an afterhours emergency or if you are unable to reach staff at the main number please call the On Call Cell Phone listed.** You will need to leave a message and the On Call Staff member will return your call IF it is truly an emergency. Non-emergency messages left on the On Call Cell Phone will be returned during regular hours the next day.

## Foster Parent Job Description and Responsibilities

### **Objective**

Provide a nurturing environment in your home where animal(s) receive the care they need to grow, heal, and/or socialize in order to improve their chances of adoption into a new, loving home.

PARL will make you aware of any medical diagnoses associated with your foster animal, but cannot guarantee the animal will not begin to show signs of illness while in your care. As a foster parent, you will be responsible for notifying PARL at the first sign of illness, so we may assist you. Foster homes are responsible for transportation to and from all appointments at PARL.

There are circumstances under which an animal may carry zoonotic conditions (transferable from animal to human). Under these circumstances, we will require that extreme care be taken to avoid the spread of the condition. Foster Volunteers must agree to follow specified guidelines of the PARL staff. **PARL is not responsible for your family or pet's health as a result of your foster animal.**

Animals placed in Foster Care may need daily medication, either orally or topically. Foster Parents must be responsible for these treatments. If you feel you are unable to attend to the animal's specific needs, please let us know before you take the animal in foster care. Once in your home, you will be responsible for these treatments for the duration of their prescribed use.

PARL will provide needed supplies, including crates, food, litter, leash, collar and medication. We supply the diet given in the shelter, so the transition from shelter to Foster Home and back to shelter is less stressful. Before making any changes to the animal's diet, the Foster Parent must receive approval from the PARL staff.

PARL strongly recommends that all foster animals **be kept separate from your resident pets**. PARL is not to be held liable for any damage done to your home or resident pets during the foster period.

Under no circumstances should a foster animal be moved from your home to another. We love when our foster homes find adoptive homes for their foster animals. **However, the animal must not leave your care until approved by the PARL staff, and potential adopters must follow standard adoption procedures and policies.**

Foster animals must remain in the care of the approved foster home **only**. In the event of an emergency, PARL staff must be notified immediately of any changes in animal housing status. **PARL retains all legal ownership of the animal while in foster care, and all potential adopters must follow through full PARL adoption procedures, including Foster Parents.**

## Health and Safety

Health and safety in a foster situation is a joint responsibility between you and the shelter staff. Since you may foster for health or temperament reasons, you should think about your family and current pets in relation to having a visiting animal.

Practice safe animal handling. If you are required to medicate a foster animal, learn techniques from the staff to minimize your risk of being bitten.

In the event that a bite does occur, follow these steps:

- Clean and flush the wound immediately with soap and water.
- Report the incident to PARL staff immediately.
- See your doctor for appropriate treatment.

Rhode Island state law requires dogs or cats that bite and break the skin to be quarantined for 10-days in order to observe them for signs of rabies. Infections from bites are more common than rabies. Please seek medical attention if bitten.

The most common foster situation is one in which the animal (usually a cat) is too young for adoption. Kittens need to be 2 months old and 2lbs to be available for adoption. There are some basic things you can do to ensure your health as well as the health of the animals around you and in your home.

- Wash your hands after each time you handle your foster animal(s).
- **Keep your own pets separate from your foster animals and make sure they are up to date with vaccines.**
- Do not share food/water bowls, litter boxes or bedding with the foster animal and your animals.
- Encourage all members of your household to follow these same steps.

## Common Communicable Diseases

The following is a listing of some of the common problems seen in foster animals, but it is in no way a complete list. These diseases can be prevented from spreading by good hand washing and **isolating foster animals away from your own animals**. Please ensure that your animals are up to date on all vaccines.

### **Fleas and Ticks**

Animals are checked for fleas and ticks prior to going into a foster home. We use Advantage Multi which typically works in 12 to 24 hrs to kill all fleas and ticks on the animal.

### **Ear Infections**

Ear infections are not communicable to people or your pets. Bacteria or yeast typically causes ear infections which are most common in dogs, but can occur in cats. Symptoms are head shaking, scratching at ears, head tilt, foul odor in the ears, red or swollen ears and sometimes discharge. Treatment involves cleaning the ears daily with a drying solution and using medicated eardrops.

### **Intestinal Worms, Parasites and Coccidia**

There are a variety that can affect dogs & cats: hookworms, tapeworms, whipworms, & roundworms. Symptoms include: diarrhea, weight loss despite eating, anemia, dehydration and, sometimes, the visible appearance of worms (they look like rice or spaghetti in the stool). We give a general dewormer to all dogs and cats, which should kill roundworms within 24 hr period. This treatment may need to be repeated. Ingestion of roundworms or hookworms may cause serious health problems in people. It is important to wash your hands after handling any feces from a foster animal.

### **Ringworm**

Unlike the name, ringworm is not a worm or parasite, but, rather, a fungus. Symptoms are often identified by hair loss and scaling generally in a small, circular pattern affecting the face and legs first. Treatment is in the form of topical and internal medications. Ringworm is transmissible to people and would show as reddened areas of flaky skin. Most susceptible to ringworm are children and people and animals with weaker immune systems. Report any hair loss to the staff.

### **Mange**

There are two types: demodectic and sarcoptic. Demodectic is transmissible only between animals. Sarcoptic is transmissible between people and animals. The cause is the sarcoptes scabiei, a mite that is present in a variety of species. It is typically benign unless environmental triggers or a weak immune system causes symptoms to emerge. Symptoms include severe, intense itching and hair loss. Treatment of animals includes topical and ingestible medications. As with ringworm, children, people and animals with lower immune functions are susceptible.

### **Urinary Tract Infections (UTI)**

Some animals are more susceptible to urinary tract infections. Symptoms include: not using the litter box, housebreaking problems, blood in the urine, frequent and small urinations, and painful urinations or straining. Urine sediment can cause the urethra in male cats to be plugged, the results can be a very lethargic sick cat – this condition is life threatening. Treatment would involve complete urinalysis and often x-rays, sometimes anesthesia and catheterization, antibiotics and, in some cases, a prescription diet.

## **Common Feline Diseases**

### **Feline Upper Respiratory Infection (URI) – Common Cat Cold**

Several viruses are part of this disease group – feline rhinotracheitis virus, feline calicivirus, chlamydia (feline pneumonitis), mycoplasma and reovirus. All shelter cats are vaccinated against URI; however, the vaccine takes a few days for the full immunity to happen. During this time, they are exposed. Symptoms include: sneezing, nasal or eye discharge, anorexia, fever, dehydration, and mouth sores. Symptoms can be mild to severe so the duration of the illness can range from a few days to a few weeks. General treatment involves good ‘nursing’ care, reduced stress (fostering away from the shelter), and, often, antibiotics to prevent secondary infections.

### **Ear Mites**

Ear Mites are more common in cats than dogs and are common in cats who have been living outside. Symptoms for ear mites include: severe itching of the ears, head shaking, head tilt, and dark red or maroon dry debris in ears. Treatment for mites might include cleaning ears one to two times daily and applying a mite killing medication. This most likely will be done at the time of spay/neuter surgery.

### **Feline Panleukopenia**

Feline Panleukopenia virus is contracted from the secretions of animals infected with the virus. It is highly contagious and easily spreads from direct contact or carried on objects such as bedding, brushes, bowls, clothing and shoes. Symptoms include: vomiting, lethargy, diarrhea, anorexia, dehydration and fever. All unvaccinated cats, as well as young kittens are susceptible. The mortality rate is high. Often, we do not have the resources needed to treat such an animal, and we may make the decision to euthanize. This illness can stay in the environment for up to six months, which may limit your foster ability for some time.

## **Common Canine Diseases**

### **Kennel Cough – Common Dog Cold**

A series of afflictions make up the term “kennel cough” and include: canine adenovirus 2, canine parainfluenza virus, canine distemper virus, bordetella bronchiseptica and other bacteria, mycoplasma. These are airborne viruses and highly contagious. Symptoms include a harsh dry coughing, retching, and gagging. The cough is easily induced by gentle palpation of the trachea or larynx. Symptoms range from mild to bronchopneumonia with fever, nasal discharge and depression. Treatment would include rest, antibiotics, cough suppressants. Symptoms may persist for days to weeks and some dogs recover with no treatment. Most dogs at the shelter are given a bordetella vaccine to reduce the severity of the disease.

### **Canine Distemper**

This is an airborne virus, therefore highly contagious. Symptoms include: fever, lethargy, nasal and eye discharge, anorexia, and (sometimes bloody) diarrhea. Treatment involves supportive care and prevention of secondary infections through antibiotics. No one treatment is specific or successful and there is a high mortality rate. This illness can stay in the environment for up to 6 months, limiting your foster ability for some time.

## Euthanasia

The single greatest gift you can give to your foster animal(s) is your love and affection. In many ways this is more important than all the other things you will do to care for them.

Our primary goal is to place each animal into a new and loving home. Unfortunately, that doesn't always happen and there is a need to euthanize some animals in our care. It is important to recognize that the decision to euthanize an animal is not made lightly. Many factors such as health, age, and temperament, and responsibility to the public are considered when making these tough choices.

As a foster care volunteer, you will not be directly involved in the euthanasia process, but you will be aware of it as it relates to your fostered animal(s). There may be times when an animal that you are fostering for a health reason, does not recover. Some young and newborn animals may die while in foster care. It is also possible that an animal that has been fostered exhibits behavior that is inappropriate such as severe aggression, which would make him/her not suitable for adoption. We always want you to feel free to discuss any issues or decisions with the staff. Please remember, these decisions are complicated and difficult. This is the most heart-breaking aspect of our work. We will always be open and honest with you as to why a decision was made.

We will be looking to you for honest feedback on the personality and health of your fostered animal(s). It is crucial to have accurate information in order for us to place the animal in the right situation for him/her. While this can be difficult if the animal has not adjusted or recuperated as well as you had hoped, it is this information the foster families provide us which is so critical and unique.

Before taking in a foster animal to your home, you should discuss euthanasia with your family. It is hard to prepare for this; however, an open discussion prior to bringing home an animal is a good idea.

### What to Do When an Animal Dies In Your Care

There are times when foster animals are too sick or weak and may die while in your care. This can be very distressing for you and your family. Many foster caregivers feel guilty because they could not save the animal(s).

Please call us right away if this happens. We will coordinate the animal's return to the shelter and do our best to help you and your family cope with your loss.

## How We Contact You for Fostering

1. Once an animal has been evaluated for foster care, we will match the animal to a foster home. Our goal is to get the animal into the foster home as soon as possible. Our primary means of communication is through group e-mails to all foster care providers. The first appropriate match to respond will be given the opportunity.

**Remember that it is ok to say ‘no’.** We would rather have you say ‘no’ to a foster assignment than become overwhelmed. Ask questions prior to saying ‘yes’ if you are not sure such as the number in a litter, the ages, any history, etc. We will provide you with any information we have.

2. Once you agree to take the animal(s) for fostering, a time (**usually within 24 hours**) is set for picking the animal up and any needed equipment or supplies. Supplies such as cat litter, food, litter pans, leashes and collars, etc. will be provided by the shelter. We will write down any medical or feeding instructions, if necessary. Dogs must leave the shelter with collars and leashes or in a carrier; cats must leave with collars and in carriers.
3. You will be informed of any check-up dates and an approximate time for return of the animal will be set. If you cannot fulfill the entire foster term due to scheduling restraint, vacations or unforeseen events, we should be contacted as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made to get the animal back to the shelter. Cats should be returned in a carrier.
4. Foster animals should remain in your home during the entire foster period. In the event that you have to go away for a weekend or cut short your foster assignment for any reason, please call us ASAP.
5. On the scheduled date, you will return the animal to PARL. This date should be established when you leave the shelter with your foster animal. **Please e-mail us a few days prior to your “due back” date to confirm.**

Please let us know if you would like to be removed from the foster list permanently or temporarily. Many long-term foster caregivers desire a break from fostering. There may also be times such as school vacations when it is not convenient for you to have a foster animal. We are happy to accommodate any scheduling requests you have.

## Return and Adoption

Returning an animal to the shelter for adoption is an extremely emotional time, even under the best of circumstances. When asked, most foster parents will tell you that returning an animal is their least favorite part of the foster program. This also affects children in the home. It may help to make them a part of the process by taking pictures of the foster animal, creating a foster care photo album or helping to create a fun cage card.

Here are some suggestions for making the return day as easy as possible:

- Know the date you will return the animal ahead of time.
- Give yourself lots of time at home with your foster animal(s).
- Take home a 'Personality Profile', fill it out and bring it with you when the animal comes back.
- Have any notes for the staff prepared ahead of time.
- Be proud of yourself! You did something wonderful and courageous.

### Adoption

Sometimes foster parents know people who may want to adopt their foster animal. They should let the person know there is an adoption process that needs to be completed at PARL. Arrangements can be made for the potential adopter to visit the shelter, fill out adoption forms and discuss their situation with a PARL staff member. The staff member will then be able to determine whether it is an appropriate match. **Foster parents should never tell people that an adoption is guaranteed without completing the adoption process. Please do not send the animal(s) to their new homes prior to completion of the adoption process.**

If the foster parents, themselves, want to adopt their foster animal, they will also need to go through the adoption process with an adoption counselor and have Manager approval. We know that there are some animals that touch us in a way that makes it impossible to live without their company.

### Relapse

If a fostered animal has a reoccurrence of an illness, such as upper respiratory infection, the original foster parent will be contacted first to see if he or she can foster that animal again.

### Letting Go

Know that every effort will be made to place your animal into the ideal home. Feel free to call the shelter to find out the status of your animal.

## **Fostering Kittens and Newborns with or without a Mother**

**Kittens must be at least eight weeks of age and at least two pounds to be eligible for placement.** Foster homes can provide nursing mothers a safe environment to care for their newborns. Volunteers monitor the progress of the cat(s), providing attention & socialization to the mom and the growing kittens.

**When fostering any cat or kitten with a medical condition or who is recovering from surgery, if he/she does not eat/drink for more than 24 hours, appears lethargic, has vomited or had diarrhea more than once, or has vomiting or diarrhea with blood, call us immediately.**

### **Area Needed**

An easy to clean area separated from your own companion animals. (bathroom, spare bedroom, etc...) Newborns can be kept in a dog crate until they are two weeks of age. All cats need to be kept **indoors** throughout their foster period and in carriers for transportation.

### **Supplies**

There are several supplies you may receive from us when you foster kittens: carrier, litter pan, litter, bowls, toys, brushes/nail clippers, heating pad/hot water bottle, food, nursing bottle with nipple or syringe with or without nipple, feline milk replacer. **Never feed cow's milk.**

### **Daily Responsibilities**

Depending on the age of the kitten you may feed 2 or 3 times per day. **Bottle-fed kittens need to be fed every two to three hours including through the evening.** As they grow, you will be able to wean kittens off any formula; feed wet food first and then switch to dry mixed with wet kitten food. Nursing and pregnant cats should be fed kitten food. Stimulate bottle babies to urinate and defecate after every feeding.

Watch for signs of dehydration. To check this, pinch and lift the skin between the shoulder blades of each kitten, then release. It should immediately return to its original position. If it stays up, then the kitten is dehydrated and you should call us.

During the first 3 weeks of life, kittens cannot sustain their own body temperature. Their temperature should be kept between 96-100 degrees F. Ideally the entire area in which the kittens are kept should be around 85 degrees F during the first week and the temperature lowered 5 degrees until it reaches 70 degrees F. Hot water bottles or heating pads may be used under bedding to accomplish this if the mother is not present. 30 minutes away from their heat source can cause their body temperature to fall dangerously low.

Please stick to feeding the kitten food and formula provided. Sudden switches in foods can cause diarrhea. If either the mother cat or kittens are not eating for more than 24 hours, call us.

Clean food and water bowls daily and provide fresh water daily. Clean bedding as needed. The more you gently handle your foster animal, the more socialized he/she will grow to be. This increases their confidence and trust of people. While handling kittens note signs of development such as eyes opening, earflaps unfolding, teeth erupting.

Check the area where animal urinates and defecates for any problems such as diarrhea, blood in stool or urine, visible worms, etc. **Always confine the kittens when you are not around.** They need constant monitoring. It is much like having an infant!

## Developmental Reference Points for felines

### Body temperature-

- First 2 weeks of life 95 degrees
- 2-4 weeks of life 97-99 degrees
- To maturity 101-102.5 degrees

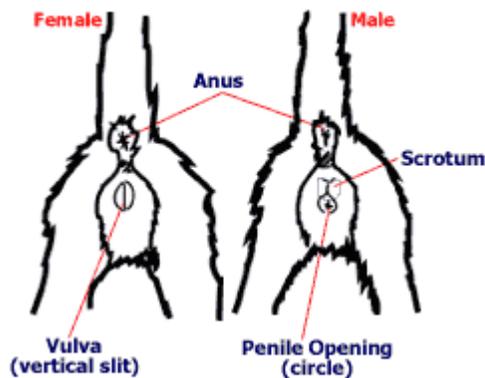
### Weight-

- At birth 90-100 grams
- Growth weight per week 50-100 grams
- Kittens will generally weight 1 lb for every month they are old until approx. 5 months

### Developmental stages-

- Can lift head at birth
- Can maintain upright posture 2-3 weeks after birth
- Eye begin to open 5-14 days after birth
- Ears begin to open 6-17 days after birth
- Startle reflex to noise as early as day 3
- Depth perception by 4 weeks of age
- Forelimb support 1-10 days after birth
- Rearlimb support 14 days after birth
- Start to play/interact 2 weeks after birth
- Can voluntarily eliminate 3 weeks after birth
- Able to graduate to solid food 28-50 days after birth

## How to determine kitten gender



## **Fostering Puppies and Newborns with or without a Mother**

Mothers can be protective of their puppies, so be careful. Young and orphaned puppies will need round the clock care. Puppies should be supervised whenever they are outside.

**When fostering any dog and or puppy with a medical condition or who is recovering from surgery, if he/she does not eat/drink for more than 24 hours, appears lethargic, has vomited or had diarrhea more than once, or has vomiting or diarrhea with blood, call us immediately.**

### **Area Needed**

An easy to clean area separated from your own animals, yet not isolated from normal activities. (bathroom, spare bedroom, or kitchen) Newborns are easily kept in dog crates.

### **Supplies**

There are several things you'll get from us when you foster: crate, bowls, toys, brushes/nail clippers, heating pad/hot water bottle, food, nursing bottle and canine nursing formula (for orphaned puppies) **Never feed cow's milk**

### **Daily Responsibilities**

Depending on the age of the puppy you may feed 2 or 3 times per day. Wean puppies off any formula; feed canned first and then switch to dry mixed with warm water and canned puppy food. Feed nursing mothers (puppy food) and observe their health and behavior. **Bottle-fed puppies need to be fed every two to three hours including through the evening.** Stimulate bottle babies to urinate and defecate after every feeding. Watch for signs of dehydration. To check this, pinch and lift the skin between the shoulder blades of each puppy, then release. It should immediately return to its original position.

During the first 3 weeks of life, puppies cannot sustain their own body temperature. Their temperature should be kept between 96-100 degrees F. Hot water bottles/heating pads may be used under bedding to accomplish this if the mother is not present. They should be kept near the heat source as much as possible. 30 minutes away from their heat source can cause their body temperature to fall dangerously low.

Please stick to feeding the food and formula provided. Sudden switches in foods can cause diarrhea. If either the mother dog or puppies are not eating for more than 24 hours, call us. Clean food and water bowls daily and provide fresh water daily. Clean bedding as needed.

The more you gently handle the puppy, the more socialized it will grow to be. This also increases their confidence and trust of people. While handling puppies look for signs of development such as eyes opening, earflaps unfolding, teeth erupting. Check the area where animal urinates and defecates for any problems such as diarrhea, blood in stool or urine, visible worms, etc.

**Always crate the puppy when you are not around.** They need constant monitoring. It is much like having an infant!

It is also important to play with and socialize young puppies. Puppies as young as 6-8 weeks old can start to learn how to walk on a leash and some commands like 'sit'. We also will ask that you bring them to puppy training classes.

## **Developmental Reference Points**

- 10-16 days – eyes and ears start to open
- 25 days – sight and sound orientation develops
- 15 days – begin to stand
- 21 days – begin to walk
- 3 weeks – begin to control elimination and eat solid food.

### **Formula guidelines for orphaned newborn puppies:**

The following amounts should be divided into a minimum of 4-5 equal feedings per day for the two weeks, then 3-4 feedings per day for two weeks through weaning.

- Week 1- 60 mls formula per lb. of body weight
- Week 2- 70 mls formula per lb. of body weight
- Week 3- 85 mls formula per lb. of body weight
- Week 4- 100 mls formula per lb. of body weight

**Most breeds can begin to wean at 3 weeks, while toy and tiny breeds should begin at 4 weeks. Wean slowly, using canned puppy food mixed with warm water, then slowly begin to mix dry kibble as well.**

### **Important time periods for puppies:**

#### **Transition Period- days 11-21**

During this period, the puppy develops his sense of vision and of hearing. A complex environment should be provided to allow for optimal development of the nervous system.

#### **Socialization Period- weeks 3-12**

This is a pivotal period in a young puppy's life. Exposure to other dogs, to people, and to the world at large are key during this time. Expose your puppy to as many sights and sounds as possible.

# Fostering Adult Cats

**When fostering any cat with a medical condition or who is recovering from surgery, if he/she does not eat/drink for more than 24 hours, appears lethargic, has vomited or had diarrhea more than once, or has vomiting or diarrhea with blood, call us immediately.**

## **Area Needed**

An easy to clean area **separated** from your own companion animals. (bathroom, spare bedroom, heated laundry area, etc...)

## **Supplies**

There are several things we'll give you when you foster a cat: carrier, litter pan, litter bowls, toys, brushes/nail clippers, heating pad/hot water bottle, food. Any specialty diets will also be provided.

## **Daily Responsibilities**

After meeting the basic, daily needs of the cat such as feeding, providing fresh water, cleaning the litter pan and bedding, the responsibilities will vary from case to case.

Remember to feed only what is provided by us. Cats can get diarrhea from switching abruptly to a new type of food. If you are having trouble getting them to eat, call us for assistance.

### **1. Fostering Injured/Surgery Recovering Cats**

The foster care period for an animal recovering from surgery may vary from a few days to weeks, depending on the severity of the injuries and treatment involved. These animals may require daily medications or special diets, as well as regular check up visits to the treating veterinarian. Many animals need complete 'bed rest' in order to fully heal, and others will require some sort of rehabilitation exercise.

Daily responsibilities may include: administering medications/ointments as required; exercise animals as required for therapy; provide 'bed' rest conditions, if required; report on any health or behavioral problems to us; pay particular attention to the area where animal urinates/defecates; check for problems (i.e. blood in stool or urine, diarrhea, etc.); transport animal to any follow-up veterinary appointments, as needed.

### **2. Fostering Cats for Health Reasons**

Some of the shelter cats are fighting diseases that are contagious to the other animals. These illnesses can affect cats of all ages and can include upper respiratory infections, ear mites, or intestinal parasites to name a few. Due to these illnesses, the immune system of the infected cat may be compromised and it's important to place that animal in a secure, safe environment in order to fully recover. While fostering ill cats, it is likely that you will administer daily medication, provide a special diet and ensure that the cat receives regular check-ups.

**\* URI in Cats\*** The majority of our adult cats who need fostering are because of upper respiratory infections (URI). This is a common problem in shelters. URI is like a common cold in a person in that it is air born. Cats with URI are often put on antibiotics to prevent secondary infections such as eye infections and pneumonia from happening.

The foster period for URI can vary from a week or two to a month. It is critical to ensure that the cat is eating and drinking. Monitor the cat for dehydration daily. To test for this, pinch and lift the skin between the shoulder blades, then release. It should immediately return to its original position. You may be administering antibiotics and/or eye medication. Using your shower to steam up a bathroom once or twice a day is a very good way to make the cat feel more comfortable and breathe easier.

### **3. Fostering Cats for Socializing**

Unsocialized, neglected, and frightened cats may be the most challenging to foster as they require specialized care in order to eventually qualify for the adoption program. Requiring a lot of patience and time of their foster parent, these cats may have never been inside a house or car, and may have never before experienced kindness from a human. Unsosocialized cats must be closely monitored to reduce the chance of escape or destructive behavior. They frequently require fostering for at least a month while they acquire the social skills that will make them treasured lifelong companions for a lucky family.

Feral (or unsocialized) cats are housed best in smaller sized rooms with just a few hiding places where they can easily be found. Cats must be kept indoors at all times during their foster stay and in carriers while traveling.

Your responsibilities will include: being around the cat talking, stroking, brushing, lifting paws, checking ears, mouth, and eyes; introducing them to a litter box; socializing, when ready, to other people.

# Fostering Adult Dogs

Adult dogs are typically fostered for post surgical care, temperament, and medical problems.

**When fostering any dog with a medical condition or who is recovering from surgery, if he/she does not eat/drink for more than 24 hours, appears lethargic, has vomited or had diarrhea more than once, or has vomiting or diarrhea with blood, call your foster contact immediately.**

## **Area Needed**

An easy to clean area separated from your own companion animals, yet not isolated from normal activities will be ideal. Examples would be a bathroom, spare bedroom, heated laundry area, or kitchen. Crating dogs can be extremely helpful to both foster parents and potential adopters, so a place for an appropriate size crate is desirable. Dogs must be supervised while outdoors and whenever they meet unfamiliar animals. While out in public, dogs must be on hand-held leashes at all times.

NEVER leave the foster dog alone with your children or pets. It is often hard to predict behavior in a dog with whom you have limited knowledge.

## **Suggested Supplies**

There are a variety of supplies you will receive from us when you foster a dog: Appropriately sized dog crate, bowls, toys, brushes/nail clippers, heating pad or hot water bottle, food. Any specialty diets will also be provided. All dogs will wear a collar with an MSPCA ID tag at all times.

## **Daily Responsibilities**

After meeting the basic, daily needs of the dog such as feeding, fresh water, cleaning bedding as needed, the responsibilities will vary from case to case.

Remember to stick to food provided by us. You should also avoid feeding any table scraps to fostered dogs. If you are having trouble getting them to eat, call us.

## **1. Fostering Injured/Surgery Recovering Dogs**

The foster care period for a dog recovering from surgery may vary from a few days to weeks, depending on the severity of the injuries and treatment involved. These dogs may require daily medications or special diets, as well as regular check up visits to the treating veterinarian. Many dogs need complete 'bed rest' in order to fully heal, and others will require some sort of rehabilitation exercise. Depending on the mobility of the dogs, an easily accessed, easy to clean area, separated from you own companion animals, is ideal. Depending on the recovery needs of the dogs, they may need a quiet place to stay. For others, being right in the middle of things is best. It is most important for injured dogs to be kept on leash when out for walks and supervised when interacting with other pets and people.

Daily responsibilities may include: administering medications/ointments as required; exercise dogs as required for therapy; provide 'bed' rest conditions, pay particular attention to the area where dog urinates/defecates; check for problems (i.e. blood in stool or urine, diarrhea, etc.); transport dog to any follow-up veterinary appointments, as needed.

## 2. Fostering Dogs for Health Reasons

There are some cases where shelter dogs are fighting diseases that can be contagious to the other animals in our care. Examples might include Kennel Cough, ear mites, skin problems or intestinal parasites to name a few. Due to these illnesses, the immune system of the infected dog may be compromised and it's important to place that animal in a secure, safe environment in order to fully recover. While fostering ill dogs, it is likely that a volunteer will administer daily medication, provide a special diet and ensure that the dog receives regular check-ups.

You will want to house your foster dog in an area that is **completely isolated** from your own companion animals, such as a spare bedroom, bathroom, den or heated basement would be ideal. Dogs need to be kept on leash and supervised when outdoors for the duration of the foster period.

## 3. Fostering Dogs for Socializing

Unsocialized, neglected, and frightened shelter dogs may be the most challenging to foster as they require specialized care (and sometimes training) in order to eventually qualify for the adoption program. Requiring a lot of patience and time of their foster parent, these dogs may have never been inside a house or car, may never have been outside a home, may not be housetrained, and may have never before experienced kindness from a human. Unsociabilized dogs must be closely monitored to reduce the chance of escape or destructive behavior. They frequently require fostering for at least a month while they acquire the social skills that will make them treasured lifelong companions for a lucky family.

Unsocialized dogs are housed best in an area of the home separated from your own companion animals, but not from the day-to-day activities of the house. Using a crate for your foster dog will help provide a safe place while allowing him or her to be in an area with lots of activity.

In particular with unsocialized dogs, it is important to be very careful when introducing new people or animals. It is hard for us to know how they will react in a home situation, so use caution.