

Foster Caregiver Manual



Animal Care & Control Division
Public Safety Department



Palm Beach County
Board of County Commissioners



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Welcome to Our Foster Care Program

This busy public open admission animal shelter serves as the major hub for lost and surrendered pets, as well as, stray animals. It is the Division's intention to place all animals into "forever homes", which is why the foster care program was created.

Many of the animals we receive are orphaned youngsters that just need love to grow up so they are mature enough to be adopted into a new loving home. Your willingness to help raise the little ones gives them a second chance. Your reward is saving lives.



Thank you for your consideration to provide an invaluable service by committing to this important program. We could not do it with you.

CONTACTS: IMPORTANT PHONE NUMBERS

General Medical Questions	561-233-1223 561-233-1200, ext. 0
Medical Emergency After Hours (8pm or later)	561-712-6428 (Vet tech on call will be paged and call you back)
General Information, Updates & Supply Requests	Holly Yoder, Live Release Coordinator 561-233-1252 or e-mail: hyoder@pbcgov.org
Behavior Questions & Assistance	Stephanie Moore Smooore1@pbcgov.org

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Common Questions

Why do animals need foster care? An animal may need a foster home for a variety of reasons including age, illness, injury and socialization.

How long will the animal be with me? The length of fostering depends on the animal's needs and circumstances. In-home foster care can range from 1 week to 3 months; **the average duration is 2 to 3 weeks**. Long-term foster care can range from 3 to 12 months.

What supplies are provided? All animals will go home in a carrier with dry pet food, cat litter, a collar & a leash and medication (if applicable).



Your Role

- φ Feeding, housing, socializing, grooming and training.
- φ Administering medications, if necessary. Recognizing and reporting health problems. Bringing the foster animal(s) in if they exhibit signs of illness, injury or for periodic health checks if requested by our veterinary staff.
- φ Picking up and returning your foster animal(s) on schedule.
- φ Returning your Animal Care & Control foster animal(s) to the shelter in the event of any scheduling constraints, vacation, or other unforeseen events. If at all possible, please provide a 24-hour notice of an early return.
- φ Communicating with the Foster Coordinator of any concerns about your foster animal(s) or changes to your contact information.



5 Tips for New Volunteers

1. Make sure you watch your foster animal(s) water intake. Dehydration can happen quickly and can have serious health consequences.
2. Young animals especially can crash quickly. Do not hesitate to call if you notice even the slightest change in your foster animal's behavior and eating habits.
3. Wash your hands after handling your foster animal(s) and before handling your own pet(s). This will help prevent the spread of disease in your home.
4. Inform the Foster Coordinator immediately if there are any behavioral concerns seen in the home.
5. To ensure safety for young foster animal(s), crawl on your hands and knees. By taking the same vantage point will enable you to see any dangerous objects you may have not otherwise noticed.



Procedures & Information

- φ Let us know as soon as possible if you are available to foster. The sooner we are able to place the animal, the better it is for the animal's health and well being.
- φ Coordinate with us for pick up/drop off of times. Pick up and return your foster animal(s) at the front counter
- φ Monday to Friday: 11 am – 6 pm , Saturday 10 am- 5pm or Sunday 11am – 4pm. If you cannot make those times call Tammy, the Volunteer Coordinator.
- φ Bring in injured or sick foster animals for evaluation by the veterinary team anytime after 8am daily, except holidays. Please call us ahead of time to let us know you are coming. If it is an emergency (see 'When to See the Veterinarian', below) call us and immediately bring the foster animal(s) to the shelter.



Cleaning Protocols: Keeping Everyone Healthy

Working or living with animals exposes both pets and people to zoonotic diseases; which are infections that can be transmitted between animals and humans. A few simple preventative measures such as proper hygiene and an understanding of these diseases can protect everyone!

- φ If you already have a pet(s), ensure that they are vaccinated and healthy. Consult with your veterinarian before bringing home any foster animal(s).
- φ If you or someone in your household is immune-compromised (on chemotherapy, has HIV, etc.) or pregnant, consult your physician before fostering animal(s).
- φ Do not allow young children to handle the foster animal(s) without adult supervision.
- φ Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water prior to and after handling foster animal(s), fecal waste, or litter boxes.
- φ Regularly clean the foster animal(s)'s quarters and disinfect the entire premise before you bring home your foster pet.
 - Remove all organic material and fecal debris and then soak with a mild bleach solution (1 part bleach to 32 parts water) for at least 30 minutes
 - Be sure to wipe all surfaces with clean water after disinfection.
- φ Foster animal(s) need their own food bowls and litter pans; it is not recommended that they share these with your pet(s).
- φ We advise you to keep your foster animal(s) separate from your resident pet(s) for the first 7 to 10 days.



Illness: When to See the Veterinarian

Many animals come from unknown backgrounds. They may potentially have an illness without symptoms. If the foster animal(s) becomes ill, contact us immediately even if you do not think it is a cause for concern. Keep even healthy foster animals in an isolated area for the first seven to 10 days and watch closely for any changes in normal behavior.

Symptom:	Possible Cause:	What that means:	How to address it:
Bleeding	Cut, internal parasite, serious illness		Call us and come in immediately
Coughing/ Sneezing	Upper Respiratory Infection	Viral Infection**	<u>If more than 3x per day</u> come in that day. <u>If continuous coughing or labored breathing</u> , call us and come in immediately
Dehydration	Vomiting, diarrhea, lack of water	Not enough fluid in the body	Pinch the animal's skin over the shoulders. If the skin snap backs slowly (more than 1 second) call us and come in immediately
Diarrhea	Stress, change in food, intestinal parasites, viral infection	<u>Soft stool</u> - Stress, food changes <u>Bloody Stool</u> - Viral Infection** <u>Watery Stool</u> - Bacterial/ Parasite	<u>If soft</u> : monitor for two days. If there is no improvement come in that day, 12 - 6 pm <u>If watery/ bloody</u> : call us. and come in immediately
Discharge from the eyes or nose	Upper Respiratory Infection	Viral Infection**	Come to the shelter that day during regular hours.
Ear Debris	Ear Mites	Dirt in ear canal that looks typically like coffee grounds	Come in that day during regular hours.
Hair Loss	Ringworm*, external parasite (i.e., scabies*), allergy	<u>Ringworm</u> : fungal skin infection that often appears as a red scaly ring on the skin; hair loss seen initially <u>Scabies</u> : skin infection caused by a mite that appears as small red bumps	Call us and schedule an appointment with the veterinarian that day.
Loss of appetite	Stress, serious sign of illness	Food available but not eating	If not eating for more than 24 hours call us, and come in immediately. If diarrhea and vomiting are present in conjunction with the loss of appetite call us, and come in immediately.
Loss of coordination, limping, paralyzes	Trauma, nerve damage, serious illness	Poor or no movement	Call Admissions and come in immediately
On Medication but is getting worse or not improving after 3 days			Come in that day during veterinary hours (12 - 6 pm)
Seizure	Serious illness, genetic trait	Loss of muscle control	Call us and come in immediately
Sores on the mouth or tongue	Upper Respiratory Infection or allergy	Viral Infection**	Come in that day during regular hours.
Vomiting	Viral Infection**	<u>Note</u> : typically preceded by licking, salivation or dry heaving	<u>If vomiting 2x or more a day</u> , still eating and active come in that day during regular hours. <u>If frequently vomiting</u> , loss of appetite and lower activity level call us, and come in immediately

* Zoonotic Disease (transmittable diseases from human to pet and likewise): separate from your owned animals, clean your house, and always wash your hands

** Viral Infection: separate owned animals, continually monitor sick animals



Quarantine: A Brief Intermission

Some illnesses are more contagious and can survive longer in a home environment than others. This requires us to quarantine the home. Quarantine is necessary if the following illnesses are seen:

Panleukopenia Feline illness that is accompanied by bloody diarrhea, vomiting and lethargy. If a kitten in your home is suspected to have Panleukopenia, there is six-month quarantine before we would place any new cats/kittens into your home. Clean everything with bleach/ water solution (1/32) and throw away what you can.

Parvovirus Canine illness that is accompanied by bloody diarrhea, vomiting and lethargy. If a puppy in your home tests positive for Parvovirus, there is six-month quarantine before we would place any new dogs/puppies into your home. Clean everything with bleach/ water solution (1/32) and throw away what you can.

Ringworm Symptoms include hair loss and lesions on the skin. Ringworm is contagious to other animals as well as to people. It is at your discretion if you would like to treat the ringworm. Treatment for your foster animal(s) generally takes two – three months. If you foster animal(s) test positive for ringworm and you decide to treat the foster animal(s) we will provide a sulphur dip and medicated skin cream.



Medication: How to Keep the Doctor Away

You may be asked to administer medications to your foster pet. Proper administration is essential for the foster animal(s) to receive maximum benefit from the prescribed treatment.

MEDICATIONS SHOULD ALWAYS BE GIVEN ACCORDING TO THE PRESCRIPTION AND FOR THE FULL DURATION OF THE TREATMENT EVEN IF THE FOSTER ANIMAL(S) SEEMS BETTER.

Pills When giving pills, tilt the animal's head back, gently open its mouth and drop the pill to the back of its throat. Gently hold the animal's mouth closed, with its head pointed straight up, and blow on its nose to make it swallow. As an alternative, pills may be given in a small piece of cheese, hot dog or canned food (this does not usually work in cats). Visit www.vet.cornell.edu/fhc to see an instructional video on how to give a cat oral medication.

Pastes For dogs, the easiest way to administer a paste is to place the appropriate amount as a ribbon on your finger, open the dog's mouth and smear the paste on the roof of its mouth. If the paste is pre-measured in a syringe, you can place it on the dog's tongue where it will adhere and be swallowed.

For cats, you may try the same methods as for dogs, or an alternative method is to place the paste on the cat's front leg so the cat will lick it off. Since the dosage is not always accurate this way, only use this method for medications that do not have to be measured exactly.

Liquids For cats, tilt the head back, open the mouth and slowly dribble the liquid from a syringe or dropper onto the back of the cat's tongue. If the cat coughs or sputters, decrease the amount of the head tilt. If the medication is bitter tasting, the cat may foam at the mouth.

For dogs, liquids may be administered in one of two ways. You can tilt the dogs head back, open its mouth and dribble the liquid onto the back of its tongue with a dropper or syringe. If the dog coughs or sputters, decrease the degree of the head tilt. Or, you can tilt the dog's head back slightly, hook the side of its cheek out to form a pouch and slowly dribble the liquid into the pouch with a syringe or dropper, allowing the dog to swallow.

Eye Drops & Ointment To administer drops, tilt the animal's head back slightly, bring the bottle of drops over the eye and drop in the prescribed amount.

To administer ointment, tilt the animal's head back slightly, squeeze a small amount of ointment inside the lower eyelid and close the eye to distribute the ointment evenly over the surface of the eye.

When administering drops or ointment to a cat, it may be necessary to have someone assist you by holding the cat, or you may want to wrap the cat securely in a towel or pillowcase.

Be sure to rest the hand holding the drops or ointment on the head of the animal to prevent injury should the animal jerk or move.

Ear Drops & Ointment Grasp the tip of the ear with one hand and hold the ear flap out. With the other hand, drop in the prescribed number of drops or amount of ointment. Continue to hold the ear firmly to prevent the head from shaking and massage the base of the ear to work the medication down inside the ear canal.



Housing: Create A Safe Place to Call Their Own

A transition to your home from a kennel at our shelter can be stressful for you foster animal(s). You may notice your foster animal(s) hide for the first few days or have some diarrhea and loss of appetite. Be patient and allow them to approach you.

Cats & Kittens Foster cats or kittens should be kept in a separate room such as a bathroom, spare bedroom, laundry room, or walk-in closet. Make sure the food, water and litter box are easily accessible in the same room. If your foster animal(s) is not eating, drinking or using the litter box for the first two days call the veterinary staff.

Dogs & Puppies When your foster dog or puppy first arrives to your home he/she will need to be kept in a single room, especially when you are at work or away from the house. The ideal room is one where you spend a large part of you day. Dogs are pack animals and want to be with you. A kitchen or family room is perfect to help you to monitor the activities of the dog/puppies. Use a baby gate to block off the entrances. By keeping the foster animal(s) in one room, you help to prevent accidents, facilitate house- training and reduce stress often caused by a new environment.

Small Animals Make sure your foster animal(s) are in an area away from cats or dogs. Cages will be provided by the Animal Care & Control, but if you choose to use your own cage please ensure the bottom of the cage you intend to use is solid. Wire-bottomed cages can injure feet.



Supplies: Optional Items Can Make a Difference

- φ Baby gates or play pens to keep foster animal(s) safely enclosed.
- φ Disposable cardboard boxes or large plastic containers for bedding or litter box.
- φ Newspapers to help protect your floors and line the carrier.
- φ Clean blankets/ towels (free of holes or frayed edges) to provide warmth and comfort.
- φ Water bowls. Stainless steel or porcelain/ceramic bowls that will not tip. Plastic bowls are porous making them harder to disinfect, and some animals can develop allergies to plastic.
- φ Food bowls. Have at least two: one for eat-at-will dry kibble and the other for canned food (if needed).
 - TV dinner trays, paper plates or whatever you have; any relatively flat plate or saucer will do, especially at weaning time. The larger the litter the larger the plate should be so no one gets crowded out.
- φ Toys. See section on toys below

- ϕ Odor neutralizers. Recommended to clean and neutralize odors after “accidents.” If you clean only with soap and water the foster animal(s) may smell his urine or feces and repeatedly go to the bathroom in that particular spot. Products like “Anti-Ickey Poo” and “Odorzout” are examples.
- ϕ Grooming supplies. Nail trimmers, brushes, combs, flea combs, etc.



Safety at Home

One of the most important things you can do for your foster animal(s) is to give them a safe environment to love, play and explore in. Think of young cats and dogs much like you think of toddlers: they are not entirely stable on their feet, they will put almost anything in their mouths, and they are curious enough to get into just about everything.

- ϕ Keep toxic and dangerous materials, such as cleaning solutions, antifreeze, and medications, in a locked cabinet or in a room your foster animal(s) does not have access to. Use childproof latches on cabinet doors if you cannot separate the animals.
- ϕ Keep an eye out for small holes or gaps in floorboards, walls, baseboards, heating vents, and anywhere else a small animal can squeeze into and get stuck. Check your furniture for potential hazards. Kittens in particular can squeeze into holes underneath box spring mattresses and upholstered chairs, and they can be trapped in the mechanism underneath a reclining chair.
- ϕ Remove everything in sight that is small enough to be chewed or swallowed, including paper clips, coins, rubber bands, staples, pen caps, thread, dental floss, earrings, etc.
- ϕ Keep children’s toys away.
- ϕ Keep the toilet lid shut. Both dogs and cats tend to think that the toilet is their own private water fountain. Small pets can fall in and injure or drown themselves, and automatic toilet bowl cleaners can be harmful or even fatal if drunk in small amounts by a young foster animal(s).
- ϕ Watch out for heavy or fragile objects placed on unstable bases. A puppy could accidentally knock over a lamp on an end table, for example.
- ϕ Cover electric cords with rugs or plastic cord guards, which are available at hardware stores, to prevent foster animal(s) from chewing them.
- ϕ Indoor/outdoor plants may be poisonous. Keep azalea, daffodil, rhododendron, oleander, mistletoe, hydrangea, morning glory, dieffenbachia, sago palm, Easter lily, and yew plants out of reach.
- ϕ Keep trash cans covered or in a latched cabinet.
- ϕ If you are keeping your foster animal(s) in a laundry room, be sure the washer and dryer door is kept closed and always check to see where your foster animal(s) is before starting the washer or dryer.
- ϕ Young animals need a safe haven to stay in when they cannot be supervised. Please confine them to

a crate or take one room of the house and make it into your foster animal's home for when you are gone. It should include a soft, warm place to sleep, plenty of toys, and be regularly examined for the hazards listed above.

- ϕ The foster animal(s) should be around humans for socialization and should not be totally isolated.



Toys: Play Time Is Quality Time

Cats, dogs and even small animals need and enjoy the stimulation and enrichment that toys provide! Toys fight boredom in dogs left alone and offer cats an appropriate outlet for their instinctive, prey-chase behaviors. When you play with your foster animal(s), it becomes a bonding experience for the both of you.

A FEW PRECAUTIONS CAN KEEP YOU AND YOUR FOSTER ANIMAL(S) SAFE

- ϕ Avoid or alter any toys with ribbons, strings, eyes, or other small parts that could be chewed or ingested.
- ϕ Use toys that are made for pets. Toys designed for children may be a hazard to a young animal. When providing toys it is best to select toys that can be easily disinfected.
- ϕ Never allow your dog, cat, kitten or puppy to mouth or swat your hands or feet when playing. It can teach them that biting and scratching people is OK. Direct them to a toy instead.



Feeding: It's Chow Time!

Feed your foster animal(s) according to the pet food label instructions. Fresh water should be available at all times.

Kittens & Cats

- ϕ Most kittens and cats will eat throughout the day, so keep dry kibble available. Feed wet food, between $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$ of a can, 2 to 3 times a day if needed.
- ϕ Do not give kittens or cats any milk or "people food."

Puppies & Dogs

- ϕ Feed 2 to 4 times a day at consistent times. Older puppies should be fed 2 to 3 times a day.
- ϕ Do not give puppies or dogs any milk or "people food."
- ϕ Create a consistent feeding schedule for your foster pet.



Socialization Makes Personalities Shine

Acquaint the puppies and kittens to different sights, sounds and textures. Provide large cardboard boxes, clean empty plastic bottles, old tennis balls and squeaky rubber toys for puppies. For kittens, provide paper bags, wads of crumpled paper, plastic balls and large bells. Avoid string toys and toys with small pieces that can be chewed off and swallowed. Make sure all toys are safe, appropriate and large enough so that the puppy or kitten cannot choke on them (see Toys, above).

The environment should be mentally stimulating to help the puppies and kittens develop. They should be introduced to normal household sounds including the TV and radio.

In addition, exposing puppies and kittens to a variety of unusual sounds and sights helps them get used to these audio or visual stimulations and will minimize fearful and nervous reactions later in life. Only praise puppies and kittens for positive reactions. Do not punish them by forcing them to approach the object and don't comfort them if they show fear.

From 5 to 7 weeks of age, encourage handling puppies and kittens by a variety of people (men, women, and supervised children). Combine simple play with actions to familiarize your foster animal(s) with having their paws touched (front and back), mouths opened, muzzles held (puppies) and ears touched. Combine this with regular grooming sessions helps to prevent aversion to touch.

A great deal of time and effort is required to properly socialize puppies and kittens between the ages of 4 to 12 weeks. Daily socialization sessions are genuinely important in shaping their personality and emotional growth.



Grooming: Not Just a New 'Do

Starting when your foster animal(s) is young, allow him/her to adjust gradually to the grooming process. To ensure a positive experience, make grooming fun with lots of praise, petting, and treats. Initially keep your sessions short and reward for positive behavior. Gradually increase the duration and frequency of handling and grooming until it becomes routine for your fosterling.

Touch You can start getting your kitten or puppy used to being touched as soon as you bring them home. When the foster animal(s) is calm and relaxed, gently play with his paws, first by gently touching them, then picking them up and massaging the pads.

Try looking into the ears while petting the foster animal(s). If it becomes nervous, stop until it calms down, and then repeat the process.

Get the foster animal(s) used to having his stomach touched, the armpits and groin examined, and his mouth and teeth touched.

Brushing Brushing is the basic ingredient of coat care/general hygiene and should be done daily basis for long-haired foster animal(s) or several times (2-3) a week for short-haired animals. Regular brushing improves appearance and prevents tangles; keeping the skin clean and irritant free.

This is one of the easiest parts of grooming for a young foster animal(s) to get used to. The foster animal(s) may initially be frightened of the brush, so start by simply showing the brush, allowing to sniff the brush, and giving praise and a treat. Next, run the flat side of the brush along the body, so the foster animal(s) can adjust to the rhythm and motion of brushing. Finally, use the bristle side down to gently groom your foster animal(s); praise and treat when you are finished. Never use scissors to remove mats in the fur; it increases the risk of injury to the animal and often does not cut out the source.

Bathing Bathing your foster animal(s) is not required. Since over-bathing removes the natural oils that protect the animal's skin and gives the coat a healthy gloss following some guidelines is essential.

If bathing is necessary, always use a shampoo safe for use on dogs, cats, puppies, and/or kittens. Then follow these steps:

- φ First, give your foster animal(s) a good brushing to remove all dead hair and mats.
- φ Place a rubber mat in a tub or sink to provide secure footing and fill with about 3-4 inches of water.
- φ Use a spray hose, a large plastic pitcher or unbreakable cup and thoroughly wet the foster animal(s) with lukewarm water. Do not place the animal directly under the water spout or shower head.
- φ Gently massage in the shampoo, working from head to tail.
- φ Thoroughly rinse with lukewarm water. Incomplete rinsing leaves soap that not only dulls the coat but also may irritate the skin and cause scratching.
- φ Wipe the eyes with a damp, soft cloth, cotton or tissue working from the corner of the eye out.
- φ Dry your foster pet with a towel or blow dryer, but carefully monitor the heat.
- φ Keep your foster pet out of drafts after his bath.
- φ If you wish to avoid a soap and water bath, one of the commercial foam or dry shampoos, rubbed into the coat and completely brushed out, is also effective.



Development: What to Expect Week by Week

Kittens (2 to 7 weeks)

- φ By week three, smell has developed and they can see well enough to find their mother.
- φ At week four, hearing is developed and they start to interact with their littermates. They begin to walk around, and their teeth start erupting.
- φ By the fifth week, sight is fully developed. They can run, avoid obstacles, stalk and pounce. During this time they will start to groom themselves and others.
- φ By the sixth and seventh week, they begin to develop motor abilities and social interaction.
- φ At four to eight weeks, the deciduous pre-molar erupt.
- φ 7 – 14 Weeks = Most Active Play Period
- φ Most learning is through observation, preferably from their mother.
- φ Social and object play is very important for their physical coordination at this stage. Social play includes: ambushing and licking, object play: pawing, pouncing, tossing, scooping, mouthing and holding.

Puppies (3 to 12 weeks)

- φ It is very important during this period that puppies are meeting other dogs and people; helps build good social skills
- φ Puppies are becoming more aware of their surroundings.
- φ From 4 – 12 weeks puppies are beginning to learn about play, inhibited bite, social structure, ranking and physical coordination.
- φ By 5 – 7 weeks puppies are developing curiosity and exploring new experiences. Positive people interactions are very important during this time.
- φ At 7 – 9 weeks puppies have full use of their senses. Housetraining can begin.
- φ Puppies begin to experience real fear by 8 to 10 weeks. During this time puppies can be alarmed by normal objects and sounds and need positive training.
- φ At 9 – 12 weeks puppies are exploring their environment more, learning about appropriate social interactions, and they begin to focus on people. This is a good time to start obedience training.