

LIFE-SAVING

# FOSTER CARE GUIDE



Creating a world where  
pets and people live happy,  
healthy lives together.



# Dear Foster Family,

Thank you for opening your hearts and homes to our animals! Foster families play a vital role in transforming every kitten, puppy, cat, and dog that enters their homes. This program exists to give young animals a chance to grow, to give stressed animals a break from the shelter and the chance to meet adopters out in the community, and to give injured, sick, or under-socialized animals an opportunity to heal. Since the program's inception, foster families like yours have saved thousands of dogs and cats in need of a temporary, loving home.

In this manual, you will find guidance and helpful tips to ensure success for the duration of your foster animal's stay in your home.

## Types of Animals That Need Foster Homes

- Puppies or kittens too young to be spayed/neutered and adopted
- Dogs or cats that need socialization and behavior training and love
- Dogs or cats recovering from surgery or injury
- Sick dogs or cats
- Mother dogs or cats needing a quiet space to raise puppies or kittens
- Animals who are too stressed or nervous to meet adopters in the shelter
- Any animal when the shelter becomes overcrowded
- Animals needing short term care or transportation

We can help you find a foster situation that will work best for you! If you have any questions as you embark on this adventure, we are here to support you!

Sincerely,

Halifax Humane Society  
Foster Team



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# ARE YOU A FOSTER CANDIDATE



## TIME

Are you able to devote the required time daily and weekly to your foster animal (see chart below)? YES NO

Are you able to bring foster animals to the shelter for vaccinations and wellness exams every ~2 weeks? YES NO

Are you able to contact HHS and transport foster animals back to the shelter or to the emergency clinic quickly in an emergency? YES NO

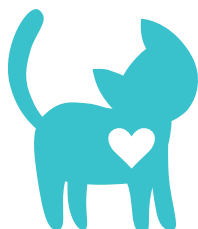


## SPACE

Are you able to separate your foster animals from your household pets for at least two weeks to protect them from illnesses and allow for a proper adjustment period? YES NO

Are you able to follow cleaning procedures such as disinfecting your home between foster animals and cleaning routinely during the foster period? YES NO

Are you able to prevent or handle any potential home damage (carpet, clothing, and/or furniture) associated with animals? YES NO



## CARE

Are you prepared to handle sickness or possible death (rare but happens in some cases) of your foster animal? YES NO

Are all the resident pets in your household up to date on their vaccines and spayed/neutered? YES NO

Are you able to handle the potential of foster animals carrying illness that could affect your household animals / family? YES NO

## Time Commitments & Responsibilities

TYPE OF FOSTER	DURATION OF FOSTER	DAILY COMMITMENT
Sick / Injured Cats	1 week-2 months	1.5-3 hours
Weaned Puppies / Kittens	1-3 weeks	2.5-4 hours
Sick / Injured Dogs	1 week-2 months	1.5-3 hours
Neonate Puppies / Kittens	6-8 weeks	3.5-6 hours
Mom with Puppies / Kittens	2-8 weeks	1.5-3 hours

# PREPARING TO FOSTER



## NIBBLES & BITS

Use glass or metal bowls as plastic bowls are porous and not as easy to clean.

Clean linens and toys daily.

Supervise play time with other animals or children closely.

## Preparing the Room

Before you bring home your foster(s), make sure that you have a suitable place for them to stay. A bathroom or other easy to clean separate space works well (a playpen may be a suitable alternative for bottle babies). The room should meet the following guidelines:

- A space where temperature can be controlled (bottle babies will need additional heat support available).
- The space has been disinfected by using a mild bleach solution (1 part bleach to 32 parts water).
- An area completely separate from other household pets.
- Can withstand messes: spilt water or food, vomit, urine, feces, etc.
- No breakable items or chewing/choking hazards (socks, shoes, children's toys, etc.)
- Electrical outlets and wires are blocked.
- No access to household chemicals, pesticides, or medications.
- Secured windows (closed or with a secure screen).
- Secured appliances (toilet lids closed, gaps under fridge/washing machine or similar blocked off).

## Get Set!

A starter kit of supplies will be provided free of charge to help you care for your new foster. Additional items may be available upon request.

All medical care is provided by Halifax Humane Society. Foster pets cannot be taken to outside veterinary providers and cannot leave Volusia County without permission.

## Dogs

- Dogs should be kept indoors in a crate when unattended or confined to a separate, pet-proofed room.
- Dogs should ALWAYS be on a leash when outdoors unless in a private, secure, fenced in area. Recommended fence height is six feet.
- Foster dog/puppies are NOT permitted to go to dog parks as they can be dangerous environments; there are no lifeguards or professionals at dog parks when conflicts arise, not every dog is safe, your foster dog's behavior around other dogs may not be known, and differing play styles can instigate flights.

## Puppies

- Indoors — a confined, small, easy to clean area such as a kitchen, bathroom, or playpen is best. A baby gate or corral may be available upon request
- Puppies should be kept in a crate or playpen when not supervised, but kept around humans regularly for socialization.
- Outdoors — only if supervised by an adult. Puppies younger than 5 months should NEVER go to off-leash areas because they are not fully vaccinated.
- Puppies should not be exposed to other dogs or places frequented by other dogs due to the risk of diseases such as parvovirus.

## Cats

- Indoors ONLY — do not let your foster cat/kitten outdoors.
- A separate room to start out is best, blocking off inaccessible spaces where they can hide.

### NIBBLES & BITS

Visit [aspca.org/toxicplants](https://www.aspca.org/toxicplants) to check if your houseplants are safe for your foster animals.

Poisonous Plants include Lilies, Aloe, and Green Onion.

Remember, different plants and foods will be toxic to cats and dogs.

Supervise your foster pet closely with children and other animals.

# PREPARING TO FOSTER

## Kittens

- Indoors ONLY – a confined, small, easy to clean area such as a kitchen, bathroom, or playpen is best.
- Kittens under 6 weeks old MUST have constant access to a heat source (hot water bottle, heating pad, snuggle disc etc.) and enough space to move away from the heat if needed.
- Kittens should be contained when unsupervised, but around humans regularly for socialization. Kittens can be left alone for as many hours as there are between their feedings (so kitten being fed every 5 hours can be left alone for about 5 hours).
- Bottle babies should be kept close to the foster caregiver's own bed overnight as they will cry when they are ready to eat.
- Kitten needs differ based on age, so we have 4 age based kitten categories to help you choose the best fit for your availability and interests:
- Bottle Beanlings – At 0-2 weeks old these are our most fragile cuties! They spend most of their time sleeping, but will need round-the-clock care, with feedings every 3 hours including overnight. However, given how important sleep is to kitten development, overnight their feedings can be stretched to 5 hours apart as long as they remain asleep (but should be fed if they wake closer to the 3 hour mark).
- Bottle Blinkers – At 2-4 weeks old, these babies are getting squirmy and sturdier! Eyes are beginning to open! They will still need round-the-clock care, with feedings every 5 hours including overnight. However, overnight their feedings can be stretched to 8 hours apart as long as they remain asleep (but should be fed if they wake closer to the 5 hour mark).
- Weaning Wobblers – at 4-6 weeks old, these babies are beginning to toddle around their environment, use the litterbox, and try solid food. For those reasons this is probably the messiest stage that requires the most patience as they get the hang of life. Their meals may take more time, but can be done every 5 hours during the day (4 times) no overnights (8 hour break).
- Pouncelets – at 6 weeks and older, these babies are little explorers, well on their way to becoming big cats! They are beginning to play with toys and each other – a critical part of their socialization. Meals are exclusively solid food, every 8 hours (3 times) no overnights (8 hour break)



## Tiny Tigers

- These feral or under-socialized kittens require special attention and care to prepare them for life in a home. They will need a quiet space, and someone to take a gentle, slow approach to help them gain comfort and confidence around people. Their behavioral progress will be the determining factor in the length of stay in foster. *See page 19 for further information on Feral Kitten Socialization.*

## Fungal Friends

- Fungal Friends are animals with a contagious fungal skin infection commonly called ringworm. Ringworm can be passed from various animals to each other or to people by direct contact or via objects near or touched by an infected animal. Ringworm is not a life-threatening condition, and it can be resolved with oral anti-fungal medications and baths. Treatment can take many weeks, so these animals really benefit from socialization in a foster home, especially puppies and kittens in their early socialization window. All supplies needed to keep these animals in a foster home, separated from any resident pets in a confined area to prevent transmission (playpen, gloves, etc.) can be supplied upon request. *See page 27 for more information about ringworm.*

## Mite-y Cuties

- Mite-y Cuties are animals with a contagious skin infection caused by mites, commonly called mange. Some forms of mange can be contagious to other animals and people, some are not. It can be resolved with oral and topical medications and baths. Treatment can take many weeks, so these animals really benefit from socialization in a foster home, especially puppies and kittens in their early socialization window. All supplies needed to keep these animals in a foster home, separated from any resident pets in a confined area to prevent transmission (playpen, gloves, etc.) can be supplied upon request. *See page 28 for more information about mange.*

## Fospice Favorites

- Fospice Favorites are special animals who have been diagnosed with a terminal illness or are extremely aged seniors. These sweet souls are simply searching for a loving home to enjoy the sunset of their lives in comfort and fun for as long as they can. Giving them this gift, and getting to spoil them every step of the way, can be one of the most rewarding experiences available in fostering. Ask the Foster Team for more information about these special foster pets.

## NIBBLES & BITS

Bathe your foster with diluted Dawn® Dish Detergent. Be sure to fully dry your puppy or kitten after their bath using a towel or blow dryer.

Puppies and kittens are chewers! Be sure to remove all electrical cords and small objects

## Puppy and Kitten Development

In the first two weeks of life, puppies and kittens are helpless and vulnerable. They are still developing basic reflexes, their hearing and vision are still not fully developed, and they are unable to properly control their body temperatures. They should therefore be confined to a nursery area. Puppies and kittens should not be allowed to mingle with your own pets for at least two weeks.

During the first 3-4 weeks of life puppies and kittens cannot urinate or defecate on their own and require stimulation for elimination. Gently rub a warm cloth or cotton pad on the puppy or kitten's genital area and anus. This should be done after each feeding.

Keeping the puppies and kittens clean from food and feces is vital for their health. At least once a day or if you notice your puppy or kitten has food, urine, or feces on them, gently wipe them down with a warm damp cloth or baby wipe. Be sure to dry the puppy or kitten fully afterwards so they do not become chilled.



## Puppy Expectations & Care by Age

WEEKS	FEEDING	DEVELOPMENT
<b>0-1</b>	<p>Bottle feed 4-5mls of formula every 3 hours, with an overnight break of no more than 5-6 hours (shorter if they wake and cry for formula earlier).</p> <p>If there is a nursing mother, make sure that all babies are nursing and gaining weight daily. Puppies and kittens crying excessively or being ignored may indicate a problem with mama's milk supply</p>	<p>At one week of age, puppies and kittens should be handled minimally and their sleep should never be interrupted. Puppies and kittens will sleep about 90% of the time and eat the other 10%.</p> <p>Bottle babies should be kept in a warm environment with heat support available, as chilling is the number one danger to newborns.</p>
<b>1-2</b>	<p>Bottle feed every 3 hours until their bellies are full but not bloated, with an overnight break of no more than 5-6 hours (shorter if they wake and cry for formula earlier).</p>	<p>Healthy babies should be round and warm. When you pick them up, they should wiggle energetically and seldomly cry (except when stimulated).</p> <p>Ear canals should open between 5 and 8 days. Eyes will open between 8 and 14 days but vision may be poor.</p>
<b>2-3</b>	<p>Bottle feed formula every 5 hours, until their bellies are full but not bloated, with an overnight break of no more than 5-6 hours (shorter if they wake and cry for formula earlier).</p>	<p>Puppies and kittens begin to crawl around and should be almost standing. They will begin to play with each other, biting ears, tails and paws before their teeth come in. They should start teething at this period. Bottle babies should be monitored to make sure they don't bite off any piece of the bottle's rubber nipple once teeth come in.</p>
<b>3-4</b>	<p>Bottle feed formula every 5 hours until their bellies are full but not bloated, with an overnight break of no more than 5-6 hours (shorter if they wake and cry for formula earlier).</p>	<p>Vision is improving at this stage! Puppies and kittens are now entering their primary socialization period. If they have siblings allow them to play at will, and begin introducing them to novel sights and sounds in your home.</p> <p>Bottle babies may begin eliminating on their own at this age, but may need stimulation until they are weaned.</p>
<b>4-5</b>	<p>Offer meals 4 times during the day (every 5 hours) with no overnight meals. Offer EITHER 1 tablespoon of canned food served in a shallow dish followed by bottle formula OR a mix (called gruel) of 1 tablespoon of canned food mixed with formula served in a shallow dish for each meal. Begin to offer dry kibble and water in shallow dishes at all times.</p> <p>This is a messy stage, make sure to clean babies after every feeding! See "Weaning" on page 12 for further information.</p>	<p>Kittens can now be offered a litterbox with kitten safe litter. They may have accidents here and there, but litterbox use is instinctive, and this habit should build over the next couple of weeks.</p> <p>Puppies can begin housebreaking. This can be done by using training pad or taking the puppy to an outside secure fenced in area of your home. After each feeding, place the puppy on the pad/ outside for him or her to go the bathroom. Be patient! He or she may not remember to do this every time.</p>
<b>5-6</b>	<p>Offer meals 4 times during the day (every 5 hours) with no overnight meals. Offer EITHER 1 tablespoon of canned food served in a shallow dish followed by bottle formula OR a mix (called gruel) of 1 tablespoon of canned food mixed with formula served in a shallow dish for each meal. Begin to offer dry kibble and water in shallow dishes at all times.</p> <p>This is a messy stage, make sure to clean babies after every feeding! See "Weaning" on page 12 for further information.</p>	<p>Be sure to allow puppies and kittens to have different types of toys around so they may explore and become familiar with a variety of surfaces and textures. This is a great time to invite friends and family to meet and socialize with puppies or kittens.</p>

(Continued on next page)

## Puppy Expectations & Care by Age (Continued)

WEEKS	FEEDING	DEVELOPMENT
<b>6-7</b>	<p>By this age, puppies and kittens should be fully eating solid food with no more formula. Feed 3 canned food meals (2 tablespoons per meal) a day, every 8 hours. They should be eating at least half of their meals at each feeding. Continue to offer dry kibble and water in shallow dishes at all times.</p>	<p>By this time, you have little explorers on your hands. They are able to run around and play games with each other and you. It's critical that you baby-proof any space before allowing them to play in it to avoid any accidents.</p> <p>As they learn rules of being a big kid, do not use adverse or punishing correction techniques! For tips on managing mouthing and other inappropriate behaviors, see "Basic Training Tips" on page 16 for further information.</p> <p>Make sure kittens are never more than a few feet away from their litterboxes as they explore to reduce the chance of accidents. Be sure to take puppies to their pads or outside after feeding, during play sessions, and after naps. These are the usual time that they'll need to eliminate.</p>
<b>7-8</b>	<p>Continue feeding 3 canned food meals (2 tablespoons per meal) a day, every 8 hours. They should be eating at least half of their meals at each feeding, with supplemental dry kibble available at all times. Continue to offer dry kibble and water in shallow dishes at all times.</p> <p>Do not offer any table scraps or other food outside of the diet recommended by the Foster Team.</p>	<p>Continue playing and socializing with puppies and kittens. Wand toys are excellent for young kittens to engage in exciting play without hands acting as toys. Puppies can even begin training such as sit, down, roll over and come when called.</p>
<b>8+</b>	<p>Continue feeding 3 canned food meals (2 tablespoons per meal) a day, every 8 hours (can move to 2 meals a day at 12 weeks). They should be eating at least half of their meals at each feeding, with supplemental dry kibble available at all times. Continue to offer dry kibble and water in shallow dishes at all times.</p> <p>Do not offer any table scraps or other food outside of the diet recommended by the Foster Team.</p>	<p>By this time, the puppies should be ready for spay/neuter surgery and adoption.</p>

## Type of Food

Puppies and kittens who are less than four weeks old are fed powder formula (Puppy or Kitten Milk Replacer or Breeders Edge) mixed in a ratio of 1 part powder to 2 parts warm water. (No cows' milk/goats' milk or milk treats)

Formula can be prepared every 24 hours, ideally in shaker bottle to eliminate clumps, and stored in the refrigerator to be poured into a clean bottle at each feeding.

Bottle babies are fed on varying schedules based on age:

- 0-2 Weeks Old – every 3 hours including overnight (overnight feedings can be stretched up to 5-6 hours if kittens are asleep at feeding time)
- 2-4 Weeks Old – every 5 hours including overnight (overnight feedings can be stretched up to 8 hours if kittens are asleep at feeding time)
- 4-6 Weeks Old – supplementally as needed during weaning

## Bottle Feeding Etiquette

- Only use clean nipples and bottles. Clean them between uses with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher. Sterilize them between litters by disassembling and letting them sit in boiling water for 5 minutes.
- Be sure to stimulate bottle babies before every feeding with a tissue, wet wipe, wet cotton ball, or warm cloth.
- Feed bottle babies one at a time. Place them on a countertop and allow them to feed with four paws on the counter and with a level head (it is ok if they rest their front paws on the bottle). Keep a blanket under them so they feel warm and secure. Do not feed a bottle baby while they are on their back or up in the air! Additionally, do not squeeze the bottle to force formula into their mouth. These actions can cause formula to enter the lungs!
- Gently open the bottle baby's mouth with your finger and place the nipple on their tongue. Pull lightly on the bottle once they've latched to promote strong sucking.
- Tilt the bottle up slightly so that no air from the inside of the bottle is touching the inside of the nipple. This prevents the bottle baby from inhaling too much air and causing painful gas.

### NIBBLES & BITS

To warm nursing bottles, fill a mug halfway with hot water and place the bottle of formula into mug.

After a minute or two, test formula by sprinkling a few drops on the back of your hand. Formula should be warm to the touch, but not hot.

Fill out the Daily Weight and Feeding Record ([page 13](#))

# PUPPY & KITTEN FEEDING

## Weaning

Weaning can begin at 4 weeks old and should be conducted gradually. Solid food should be introduced EITHER by offering a tablespoon of warmed canned food in a shallow dish, followed by a bottle feeding of formula to supplement, OR offering a mixture of the two called “gruel” by in a shallow dish (do not introduce any solid food into the bottle). Weaning puppies and kittens will get distracted easily and may need to be directed back to their food many times. Use popsicle sticks or a small spoon to introduce a small amount of the food to the roof of their mouth to help them try out the chewing motion. Begin to also offer dry food and water freely. Bottle babies and babies nursing from mom must be closely monitored to ensure they are eating and gaining weight consistently.

## Feeding Amounts and Weight Gain

Bottle babies should be fed 4-5mL of formula for every 100g or 3.5oz or 0.2lbs they weigh. 4-6 week olds should be offered 1 tablespoon of canned food at each feeding. 6 week olds+ should be offered 2 tablespoons of canned food at each feeding. Underfeeding can lead to serious health issues and even death, and overfeeding can cause diarrhea, vomiting, and dehydration so it is critically important to feed bottle babies appropriately and report any issues as they arise.

Bottle kittens should be gaining a minimum of 7-15g of weight per day. Puppies will typically gain more, amount will vary with size. Weight loss is the earliest indicator of health issues and 2-3 days of weight loss or minimal weight gain must be reported immediately.

## Additional Feeding Considerations

The digestive systems of puppies and kittens are fragile. Do not offer treats. Only feed them the food provided by the Foster Team.

Always feed in separate bowls. If babies are fighting over food, feed them in separate spaces as well. If puppies growl when their food is approached, contact the Foster Team for support.



# PUPPY & KITTEN FEEDING

## Example of Neonate Puppy or Kitten Daily Weight and Feeding Record

NAME/ID	PUP/KIT 1	PUP/KIT 2	PUP/KIT 3	PUP/KIT 4	PUP/KIT 5	PUP/KIT 6
Date						
Weight						
Attitude						
<b>FEEDING 1</b>						
Milk volume						
Stool/urine						
<b>FEEDING 2</b>						
Milk volume						
Stool/urine						
<b>FEEDING 3</b>						
Milk volume						
Stool/urine						
<b>FEEDING 4</b>						
Milk volume						
Stool/urine						
<b>FEEDING 5</b>						
Milk volume						
Stool/urine						
<b>FEEDING 6</b>						
Milk volume						
Stool/urine						

**NOTES:**

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# FOSTERING NURSING MOMS

In some cases, moms are fostered together with her litter. There are a few things to keep in mind for this type of foster situation. Moms require a calm setting that has privacy and minimal activity. Stress can cause moms to stop taking care of their babies.

## Bringing Mom Home

You will need a separate space for a mom with her litter. When you first bring them home, leave them alone in their new space. The separate area may be referred to as a whelping box or nesting area. Mom will need some time, up to a few days, to adjust to her new space. Be sure to offer mom fresh food, water and a clean nesting area, and a litterbox for mama cats.

## Socialization

Even adult animals need socialization; however, proceed slowly with any new introductions. Create situations for socialization but let her come to you. Stop the session if you notice any negative signs, such as swishing tail, hissing, ears laid back, head jerk towards you, tensing up, moving away, or growling. It is always best to move slowly and use caution when reaching into the nesting area.

## Mom and Her Babies

For the first few weeks, mom will do everything necessary to take care of her babies. Puppies and kittens start nursing very soon after birth. Mom will also groom her babies. It's best to leave the mom alone for the first two weeks except to weigh babies, feed mama, and to offer potty breaks for mama dogs or litter cleaning for mama cats.





## Possible Issues with Nursing Moms

**Maternal Neglect** – In some rare cases, puppies and kittens can die from poor maternal care. There are a few causes of this. Sometimes moms lack maternal instincts, or sense that their babies are sick or weak and aren't likely to survive even with her care, or are too stressed by their environment to care for their babies or produce milk. It is so important to create a calm, contained environment for moms and their babies. Foster parents should watch for signs of maternal neglect. Call the Foster Team if you notice the mom avoids feeding or grooming her babies, ignores their cries, or babies are not gaining weight.

**Maternal Aggression** – As mom is instinctively driven to protect her babies, it can be common for her to be aggressive towards humans or other animals in this time, even if she might otherwise be friendly and sociable. Do not try to introduce your household pets to your foster mom as this adds too much stress to the environment. If aggression is observed, call the Foster Team immediately.

## Weaning Babies from Mom

If the mother is present, she may assist in weaning her babies by discouraging them from nursing; however, some mothers will allow nursing longer and will need to take weaning breaks from their babies to ensure they are fully weaned by 8 weeks old and to reduce stress when they are separated for spay/neuter and adoption. (See page 12 “Puppy and Kitten Weaning” for more information).

### Daily Weaning Break Length by Age

AGE	DURATION
4 Weeks Old	1-3 hours daily
6 Weeks Old	5-8 hours daily
8 Weeks Old	12-24 hours daily



## Mouthing

- Puppies are born with instincts to bite. One of the most important things they learn, as a puppy, is how to control the strength of their bite.
- Puppies naturally train each other how to bite. When one puppy bites another too hard, the other puppy yelps loudly and stops playing.
- As a foster parent, you can play this role. Any time a puppy mouths with too much force, yelp loudly. If the puppy stops biting, then praise him/her lavishly. If the puppy continues biting, turn your back on the puppy and walk away. After ten seconds or so, resume play happily.
- Remember: Mouthing is important! A puppy who is never allowed to mouth will grow up to have a hard bite.
- Never scold, tap on the nose, or yell no at a puppy who is biting. Bite inhibition is a crucial development for puppies. A puppy who is punished for biting can turn into an adult with unsafe jaws (because they do not know their jaw strength). Simply yell “ouch” when a puppy bites too hard.

## Housetraining

We always want to set our puppies up for success, and doing so in the house training process is essential! Puppies should have frequent breaks and be taken outside to the same spot to relieve themselves every 30 – 60 minutes when active (when waking up from a nap, after drinking or eating, and after a play session). A puppy can hold his/her bladder one hour for each month of age (i.e.: 2 months = 2 hours, 3 months = 3 hours).

Remember these five steps to successful house training:

1. Prevent accidents
2. Reward going to the bathroom
3. Anticipate bathroom needs
4. Interrupt accidents and avoid punishing
5. Clean up accidents with enzyme cleaner



## Pee Pads

For Puppies Five Weeks and under: place puppies on pee pads immediately after waking up, after eating, and about once an hour. Praise the puppy enthusiastically every time he/she urinates or defecates on the pad. Change the pads frequently, as puppies tend to chew on pee pads.

## Crate Training

House training and crate training go hand in hand. A crate can be a great tool to use for your puppy, but it can also be misused. The crate should be big enough for your puppy to stand up, turn around, and stretch out; we will make sure you go home with the correct size, but your puppy may grow. Please let us know if you need a larger crate.

Your foster puppy/dog should have a short term confinement area, such as the crate, and a long term confinement area, such as an x-pen or baby gated section of the house or room.

If you are beginning to crate train, feed your puppy in the crate, provide stuffed chew toys only in the crate, and/or play crate games to build a positive association with the crate. Keep sessions short and fun, and have your puppy in the crate for short periods of time when you are home.

Never use a crate as a form of punishment for your foster puppy or dog.

## NIBBLES & BITS

After your dog eliminates plan an extra few minutes to play with your puppy.

Dogs quickly learn to hold their bladder if they immediately go inside after they relieve themselves.



# FOSTER PET SOCIALIZATION

## NIBBLES & BITS

If your foster escapes or runs away contact the Foster Coordinators immediately. You may also contact animal control for your area.

If your foster dog gets loose while on a walk don't chase, simply lay on the ground and calmly call their name.

If your foster cat escapes the home place a blanket that smells like the cat/home and litter box outside of the home.

Dog's must always wear a collar and tags. Collars on puppies or kittens must be checked weekly to prevent them becoming too tight with growth.

## Toys

Having toys available for your foster pet is vital for their mental health and development. A selection of toys is best to offer variety and greater mental stimulation. For cats and kittens, wand toys, kickers, catnip toys, crinkle balls, and cat springs are great options. For puppies and dogs, plush squeak toys, rope/tug toys, Kongs, and teething toys are ideal.

## Early Socialization

From 3 weeks to 3 months, puppies and kittens are biologically primed to learn that new sights, sounds, smells, objects, environments, and people are fun and safe. This is the most crucial and sensitive period in an animal's life.

Socialization is not simply exposing an animal to a variety of people, places, and things, but using positive proactive socialization training. Each new person the animal meets should be a wonderful experience with treats and toys. Take things slow if your foster pet seems fearful of the new person, place, or thing.

## Positive Reinforcement

As a foster parent, there will be many situations for you to train your foster pet. Halifax Humane Society only promotes training using positive reinforcement. Decades of research and scientific study concludes that Positive Reinforcement training is the most humane and effective method of training.

## Do not scold or punish bad behavior.

- When any unwanted behavior is offered/performed re-direct with a kissy noise or toy. Praise and reward the animal for stopping the undesired behavior and giving you attention.
- Punishment can instill fear, which can lead to aggressive behavior.
- Praise and reward good behavior.
- When a behavior is immediately followed by a positive out- come, that behavior is strengthened.

## Feral & Fearful Kitten Socialization in 8 Easy Steps:

Food is the single most important tool at our disposal when convincing feral kittens to trust us! These steps will outline how to use it most effectively! Remember, progress isn't linear and it's ok to go back a step if the kittens don't take to something right away. It's more important that these socialization sessions end on a high note, rather than measurable progress!

- 1. Acclimate** – allow new kittens a couple of days to decompress in a quiet, contained space that is fully kitten proofed with any hiding places blocked off. Consider creating a “den” with a carrier or a cardboard box to offer them a safe place to feel enclosed. Minimize interactions to just offering meals and scooping litter in these first days.
- 2. Start Slow** – once accustomed to the space, you can begin the association between your presence and food. Remain in the room for the full mealtime and over a few meals or days (going at their pace) bring the food bowl closer and closer to you. If regular canned food is not sufficient to entice them to eat in your presence, offer something yummiier like baby food, churu treats, or tuna in water.
- 3. Hand Feeding** – once the kittens are willing to eat close to you, begin to offer food on the end of a spoon or popsicle stick, with the goal of gradually switching to your finger.
- 4. Leading** – once the kittens are comfortable eating from your hand, use the food to lead them gradually towards your lap. The goal is to eventually get them to settle on your lap, but be patient, this may take some time to achieve!
- 5. First Contact** – once the kittens are comfortable eating either from their bowl or your fingers on your lap, begin introducing occasional pets (head and shoulder only) while they are eating. When you first embark on this step you may consider delaying mealtime by 30 minutes to an hour so the kittens will be extra hungry and therefore extra motivated to tolerate this!
- 6. Desensitizing** – once the kittens are consistently tolerating head and shoulder pets, shift to gently nudging them, or moving your hands under their chest and belly, and briefly holding them (with their paws still on the ground) to desensitize them to the idea of you moving their body, as a first step to eventually picking them up.
- 7. Liftoff** – once the kittens are tolerating nudging or holding, it is time to try picking up! This should be an incredibly slow process building on progress bit-by-bit. Start once they're particularly engrossed with their food (do NOT chase them around to pick them up) and start very slowly, with only a few seconds, and a few inches off the ground.
- 8. Sleepy Snuggles** – socialization can be tiring work for kittens who are already programmed to sleep most of the day. If things have been going well, they will start to feel comfortable enough in your presence to relax or even sleep. This can be an opportunity to offer pets that may still be positively received without a food incentive

## Additional Training and Socialization Resources

### Shy or Fearful Animal Socialization:

[\*“Why Is My Cat Shy Around Strangers? Tips for Anxious Cats”\*](#)

by Best Friends Animal Society

[\*“Building Confidence in Dogs”\*](#)

by Best Friends Animal Society

### Introductions:

[\*“Introducing Cats to Other Cats”\*](#)

by Best Friends Animal Society

[\*“The Do’s and Don’ts of Introducing Cats”\*](#)

by Jackson Galaxy

### Other Cat Resources:

[\*“Common Cat Behavior Issues”\*](#)

by the ASPCA

[\*“Cat Training”\*](#)

by Best Friends Animal Society

*Total Cat Mojo*

by Jackson Galaxy

### Other Dog Resources:

[\*“Common Dog Behavior Issues”\*](#)

by the ASPCA

[\*“Dog Training”\*](#)

by Best Friends Animal Society

*Perfect Puppy in 7 Days: How to Start Your Puppy Off Right*

by Dr. Sophia Yin

## Socialization Checklist

Socializing your foster pet to these items/actions is as easy as touching their paw and giving a treat, having a man with a hat give a treat as he walks by or saying hello and giving affection.

### PEOPLE

MEN — tall, bearded, variety of ethnicities, younger, older, men with canes/walker, men with hats, etc.

WOMEN — tall, younger, variety of ethnicities, older, with purses, with walker/ canes/crutches, etc.

CHILDREN — behaviorally appropriate and fully supervised

### BEHAVIORS

Laughing, talking loudly, walking, jogging, running, etc.

### ITEMS

Vacuums, mops, brooms, bicycles, skateboards, tricycles, lawnmowers (outdoor items for canines only), etc.

### SURFACES

Grass, concrete, stairs, carpet, tile, hardwood, etc.

### HEALTH & GROOMING

Nail clippers (not used), feet being touched, ears being touched, tail being touched



# FOSTER PET SOCIALIZATION

## What is Halifax Humane Society's Open Paw Socialization Initiative?

Our Open Paw initiative teaches shelter pets manners and skills that prepare them for successful adoptions and lasting homes. Open Paw promotes friendly interactions and desensitization to unfamiliar people and environments. This project starts in the shelter environment and continues in our foster homes to ensure that each animal returns for adoption ready for life with a new family.

## What We Teach

Open Paw equips our animals with vital social skills, including how to greet people politely, what items are appropriate to chew or scratch, housetraining, and leash walking. This program also helps us gain valuable insights into each animal's personality and behaviors through their daily handling and training, which helps us match pets with their perfect homes!

## Skill Levels for Dogs

**Level 1 Foundations:** Focus on forming positive associations with new people by tossing or hand feeding kibble without expecting specific behaviors, and offering kongs, puzzle toys, and snuffle mats to encourage appropriate chewing behaviors and provide mental stimulation

**Level 2 Desensitization:** Focus on walking with manners (not pulling), and learning to sit calmly when entering and exiting their crate or other foster space

**Level 3 Basic Obedience:** Introducing basic commands like Watch, Sit, Down, Come, Stay, and Leave It, offering rewards of treats and play, as well as working on desensitization to someone handling their collar, paws, and other areas with positive reinforcement

**Level 4 Real World Skills:** Introducing off leash training (in an enclosed, secure space without strange dogs), loose-leash walking, and practicing polite greetings on walks

## Skill Levels for Cats

**Level 1 Foundations:** Focus on forming positive associations with new people by tossing or hand feeding kibble without expecting specific behaviors, and offering kongs, puzzle toys, and snuffle mats to provide mental stimulation

**Level 2 Desensitization:** Focus on teaching potentially fearful cats to react positively when approached using treats and other positive reinforcement methods

**Level 3 Appropriate Play:** Focus on teaching cats that play-biting, play-scratching, and other overly rough play with human hands or feet are no longer fun, and redirecting to more appropriate toys

**Level 4 Bonus Skills:** Introducing fun bonus skills such as High Five, harness walking (indoors only), Roll Over, etc. to provide extra stimulation and boost their adoptability

## Further Open Paw Resources

Visit the Open Paw Training page on the Halifax Humane Society website to find out more about the incredible things the Open Paw program can accomplish: <https://www.halifaxhumanesociety.org/program/open-paw/>.



Maintaining the safety of our foster caregivers is of the utmost importance to us. It is sometimes the case that animals who may be fearful, nervous, or have an unknown background may react negatively in certain circumstances.

It is vitally important that foster caregivers notify us immediately if they are scratched or bitten by their foster pets and give a full accounting of the circumstances of the incident. This is not to punish the animal or put them at risk, but so that we can better understand their behavior and help prevent it from re-occurring. When reporting an incident, use the terminology below to explain what occurred.

## Scratch Severity Levels:

**Level 1:** Swipe or scratch attempt that does not make contact with skin

**Level 2:** Swipe or scratch that makes contact with skin but does not cause a break or bleed

**Level 3:** Swipe or scratch that makes contact with skin, breaks skin, and causes mild bleeding

**Level 4:** Swipe or scratch that makes contact with skin, breaks skin, and causes substantial bleeding

**Level 5:** Repeated swipes or scratches, more than 1 of which break skin and cause mild/substantial bleeding

## Bite Severity Levels:

**Level 1:** Snap or bite attempt that does not make contact with skin

**Level 2:** Snap or bite that makes contact with skin but does not cause a break or bleed

**Level 3:** Snap or bite that makes contact with skin, breaks skin, and causes mild bleeding

**Level 4:** Snap or bite that makes contact with skin, breaks skin, and causes substantial bleeding

**Level 5:** Repeated snapping or bites, more than 1 of which break skin and cause mild/substantial bleeding

## Other Escalating Behaviors to Report:

Growling, hissing, or other warning vocalizations

Lunging, cowering, sudden changes to behavior, or strong reactions to new stimuli

## Context Questions:

What was going on when the incident occurred?

Was there a pattern of escalating behavior?

Were there any changes or added stressors to the daily routine or environment?

What was their behavior after the incident occurred?

If they had been on any medications, did they take them as scheduled over the last few days?

Have you sought medical care for any injuries?

When reporting incidents with foster pets, it is important to use objective language to describe their behavior so that our team can get an accurate picture (e.g. "The fur along Fluffy's back was raised, and her posture was low to the ground, and she was backing away when I reached for her." vs "Fluffy was nervous, and got scared when I went to pet her.") Below are some body language guides to help you identify behaviors.

# DOGGIE LANGUAGE

starring Boogie the Boston Terrier



**ALERT**



**SUSPICIOUS**



**ANXIOUS**



**THREATENED**



**ANGRY**



**"PEACE!"**  
look away/head turn



**STRESSED**  
yawn



**STRESSED**  
nose lick



**"PEACE!"**  
sniff ground



**"RESPECT!"**  
turn & walk away



**"NEED SPACE"**  
whale eye



**STALKING**



**STRESSED**  
scratching



**STRESS RELEASE**  
shake off



**RELAXED**  
soft ears, blinky eyes



**"RESPECT!"**  
offer his back



**FRIENDLY & POLITE**  
curved body



**FRIENDLY**



**"PRETTY PLEASE"**  
round puppy face



**"I'M YOUR LOVEBUG"**  
belly-rub pose



**"HELLO I LOVE YOU!"**  
greeting stretch



**"I'M FRIENDLY!"**  
play bow



**"READY!"**  
prey bow



**"YOU WILL FEED ME"**



**CURIOUS**  
head tilt



**HAPPY**  
(or hot)



**OVERJOYED**  
wiggly



**"MMMM...."**



**"I LOVE YOU,  
DON'T STOP"**

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*lili*



INTERESTED



FRIENDLY



ATTENTIVE



RELAXED



TRUSTING



FRIENDLY, RELAXED



CONTENT



CONFLICTED, CAUTIOUS



PLAYFUL



EXCITED



"THIS IS MINE"



ANXIOUS



PREDATORY



WORRIED



FRIGHTENED



THREATENED



TERRIFIED



SUPER TERRIFIED



IRRITATED



DISGUSTED

# MAINTAINING FOSTER HEALTH

Unfortunately, not every medical condition will show signs before pets leave to foster homes. We rely on our foster caregivers to remain vigilant and keep us informed of their foster pet's emerging medical concerns so that we can provide the care they need! If your foster pet shows any indicators of illness, let the Foster Team know ASAP!



Normal Stool



Soft Stool



Diarrhea

## Stool Issues

Stool can be an indicator of overall health, but it is important to know how to communicate information about its shape and content. You may see stool graded on a 1-7 scale with 1 being the firmest possible and 7 being the loosest possible. Hard stool has nearly no hydration when picked up or scooped and can appear like small pellets. Normal stool is firm and has a definite shape. Soft stool is not firm but still has some shape. Diarrhea is liquid, with or without color to it. Diarrhea is common and can have many causes: parasites, viruses, bacteria, food changes, stress, overfeeding and other issues.

Diarrhea must be monitored as it can lead to dehydration, whereas extremely hard stool can be an indicator of dehydration. If the foster pet is active, mild diarrhea that occurs for 24 hours is not a concern. Feed the foster less at a time but more often. If the diarrhea is severe, lasts more than 3 days (or 3-4 feedings for neonates) or contains blood/parasites, call the Foster Team to schedule a recheck.

## Parasites

Fosters are dewormed upon intake and at every recheck. Parasites are commonly found in the stool of puppies and kittens. Tapeworms may look like grains of rice. Roundworms look like spaghetti and can be seen in the litter box or in vomit. If you notice worms, call the Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck.

## Vomiting

Vomiting can be serious especially if it happens continuously or accompanied with diarrhea. It can lead to dehydration. If vomiting occurs, call the Foster Team immediately.

## Eye Discharge

It is normal for animals to have little pieces of crust in their eyes after waking up. If you see continuous yellow or green discharge, swollen, squinty or closed eyes call the Foster Team to schedule a recheck. You can use a warm, damp towel to wipe the affected eye(s).

## Ear Mites

Ear mites are parasites that live in the ear canal. You may notice a bald spot behind their ears due to continuous scratching. They may also violently shake their head. The ears may smell bad, and you may see dark discharge that resembles coffee grounds. Ear mites are contagious to other animals and need to be treated. Call the Foster Team if you notice any of these symptoms.



Ear Mites

## Fleas

Animals that have fleas will scratch themselves often. Topical and oral flea prevention are given to fosters over 4 weeks of age. Flea prevention for puppies and kittens under 4 weeks includes daily brushings with the flea comb and daily bedding changes. If you still notice signs of fleas, you can wash the puppy or kitten in a small amount of Dawn® dish soap followed by using a flea comb to remove any remaining fleas. Be sure to thoroughly dry them following a bath as babies this age struggle to regulate their own internal temperatures. To dry the pet use a towel and blow dryer on low setting, from a far distance until thoroughly dried. Link list: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qqxzUan3AP8>

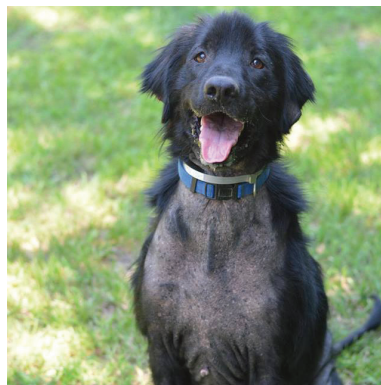
Baths should not be given more than once every 1-2 weeks. If you still notice signs of fleas, call Foster Team to schedule a recheck.



Ring Worm

## Ringworm

Ringworm is a contagious fungal skin infection (similar to athlete's foot) that can spread to other animals and humans. A sign of ringworm is thinning hair or patches of red, scaly hair loss. Ringworm can spread on contacted surfaces and live there until cleaned or washed. To help prevent the spread, maintain cleaning protocols and a good hand-washing routine. Call the Foster Team if you notice any hair loss.



Mange

# MAINTAINING FOSTER HEALTH

## Mange

Mange is caused by mites that infect the skin of animals. Some forms of mange are contagious to other animals and humans. The symptoms include itching, hair loss and sores. If you notice these symptoms, call the Foster Team for treatment.

## Upper Respiratory Tract Infection (URI)

URIs are common and are caused by contagious viruses and bacteria. Signs to look for:

- Sneezing and discharge from eyes/nose
- Congested breathing
- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy (lack of energy)
- Dehydration

## Calicivirus

Calici is a viral infection in cats and kittens. To diagnose a pet with Calicivirus a PCR would need to be done. Signs to look for:

- Sneezing and discharge from eyes/nose
- Congested breathing
- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy (lack of energy)
- Dehydration
- Intermittent Limping or limb swelling
- Fever
- Oral ulcers

## Pneumonia

Pneumonia is an infection in which fluid fills in the lungs. Young animals that have previously suffered an upper respiratory infection or were

bottle fed and may have aspirated milk are particularly at risk, and symptoms can escalate quite quickly. Signs to look for:

- Wheezing/coughing
- Congested or rapid breathing
- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy (lack of energy)

## Parvovirus (Dogs) / Panleukopenia (Cats)

Parvo is a deadly and contagious virus that attacks the gastrointestinal tract. Once parvo is present in an environment it is difficult to remove without thorough disinfection. It is transmitted through direct contact with contaminated feces. Signs to look for:

- Dehydration
- Lethargy
- Loss of appetite
- Abdominal pain or bloating
- Fever or low body temperature
- Vomiting
- Severe diarrhea (with or without blood)

## Distemper

Distemper is a highly contagious and fatal disease that attacks the respiratory, gastrointestinal and nervous systems. It is transmitted through direct contact with contaminated saliva, blood, or urine. Signs to look for:

- Severe Upper Respiratory Infection or Pneumonia
- Lethargy
- Neurological signs such as seizure activity, convulsions, and partial or complete paralysis.

## Fading Puppies and Kittens

Occasionally, a puppy or kitten that appeared healthy will suddenly stop thriving. They will stop growing, socializing and crawling. They will begin to lose weight and may cry continuously. When this happens, they fade quickly and, even with medical intervention, may not survive 48 hours.

- There is not an understood cause for this condition, but subtle warning signs could be notice before hand. Ensure close monitoring is done several times through out the day. Occasionally, puppies or kittens will die in foster care, or may not survive to adoption age. If this should occur unexpectedly, contact the Foster Team for support and next steps.

### NIBBLES & BITS

Since common illnesses can often take 2 weeks before showing signs, we recommend separating your foster pet from any resident pets for a minimum of 2 weeks to reduce the risk of transmission.



## NIBBLES & BITS

Have a medical concern with your foster pet? Call (386) 274-4703, option 2 during normal hours or (386) 340-5311 for overnight emergencies.

Be sure to give the Foster Team a heads-up if you have a medical concern about your foster pet ahead of any wellness appointment.

### Veterinary Care

Routine veterinary care is provided by the veterinary team at Halifax Humane Society during normal business hours. After hours, the foster team is available to take urgent calls via the emergency hotline. In the event of an emergency, the foster team will triage each case and, should after-hours treatment be needed, the foster team will authorize the foster parent to bring the animal to our emergency partner clinic, Veterinary Emergency Center of East Volusia.

Halifax Humane Society does not allow our foster animals to receive care at other clinics or veterinary practices outside of our own in-house Medical Team and our emergency partner clinic. We will not reimburse vet bills for foster animals taken for veterinary care outside of that which is pre-authorized by the Halifax Humane Society.

### Scheduling Rechecks

Foster animals are required to return to the shelter every 2-4 weeks for vaccinations, deworming and general exams. You will receive reminders via automatic email to schedule these with the Foster Team. All non-emergency rechecks require an appointment.

Recheck times are available as follows: Monday-Saturday from 10 am-4 pm. *If for any reason you are unable to keep your scheduled appointment please contact the Foster Team to reschedule ASAP.*

### Vaccines

Kittens and puppies receive vaccinations every 2-4 weeks from the time they are a four weeks of age until they are 18-20 weeks unless otherwise directed by our veterinarians. Animals 12 weeks and older receive a Rabies vaccine. These vaccines are not optional and must be received on a strict schedule so please confirm appointments promptly. Vaccines can never be administered less than 2 weeks apart.

Cats & kittens receive FVRCP Vaccine (feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus and panleukopenia)

Dogs & Puppies receive the DHPP Vaccine (Distemper, Hepatitis, Parvovirus, Parainfluenza) and Bordetella.



## Emergency Protocol During Business Hours (8am – 6pm)

Contact the HHS Foster Team immediately by phone at (386) 274 – 4703 Option 2

1. Have your HHS Foster paperwork available with the animal's name and A# for reference
2. Advise the Foster Team member of your concern(s) and they will direct your next steps
3. If directed to do so by the Foster Team, transport your animal immediately, safely, and securely to HHS (not to any other veterinary clinic as this is not permitted and HHS will not be responsible for the cost of treatment). If you are not able to connect with the Foster Team, proceed to HHS immediately and attempt to call again on the way if safe to do so.

## Emergency Protocol AFTER Business Hours (6pm – 8am)

Contact the HHS After Hours Hotline immediately by phone at (386) 340 – 5311

1. Have your HHS Foster paperwork available with the animal's name and A# for reference
2. Advise the Hotline staff member of your concern(s) and they will direct your next steps
3. If directed to do so by the Hotline staff member, transport your animal immediately, safely, and securely to HHS's approved emergency partner clinic listed below (not to any other veterinary clinic as this is not permitted and HHS will not be responsible for the

cost of treatment). If you are not able to connect with the Hotline, proceed to the partner clinic immediately and attempt to call again on the way if safe to do so:

Veterinary Emergency Center of East Volusia  
2300 S Ridgewood Ave  
South Daytona, FL 32119

4. Once you arrive at the emergency clinic, identify yourself as an HHS Foster Caregiver and not the owner of the pet, and provide the clinic with your HHS Foster paperwork – this will reduce the chance that you will be billed for services.
5. Fosters are not responsible for making treatment decisions for HHS animals. If the emergency clinic has questions about treatment decisions, please contact the Hotline again for further support

## A Note on Emergency Treatments and Outcomes

Though we wish it were not the case, it is an unfortunate reality that not every foster animal's medical emergency will be treatable, and in some cases the most appropriate outcome will be humane euthanasia. HHS and our emergency partner clinic are solely responsible for making a humane euthanasia decision – not foster caregivers. If euthanasia is determined appropriate, it will proceed compassionately without delay to prevent further suffering. We understand that foster medical emergencies can be stressful and upsetting, and the Foster Team is here to provide any support you may need in these difficult moments.

## EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Notify the Foster Team immediately (**day or night**) if any of the following critical symptoms are observed:

- Difficulty breathing, erratic breathing, or gasping for air
- Accidental injury, prolonged limping
- Serious physical trauma or obvious fresh or large wound
- Unable to stand or walk
- Failure to eat or drink for more than 2 days (*or for more than 2 feedings if a neonate*)
- Suspected ingestion of a foreign object or toxin
- Observed pain, straining, or bleeding during urination, and/or minimal-to-no production
- Failure to defecate for more than two days
- Seizures (full or partial body tremors)
- Active bleeding that does not stop with firm pressure applied
- Signs of lethargy or uncharacteristic/abnormal behavior
- Diarrhea or vomiting that happens more than 5 times in less than an hour
- Persistent cough (*neonates only*)
- Repeatedly head pressing against walls

## NON-EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

Notify the Foster Team **during business hours** if the following symptoms are presented or persist over several days, and continue to monitor:

- Diarrhea (this can be common, especially when the animal is first brought home)
- Vomiting (a few intermittent instances)
- Not eating or drinking (this can be common, especially when the animal is first brought home)
- Scratching
- Sneezing or coughing
- Runny discharge from eyes or nose
- No bowel movements for more than 24 hours
- Milk aspiration (neonates inhaling milk while bottle feeding, causing them to sneeze or cough up milk)

## The Day of Surgery

- Adult dogs and cats – no breakfast but may have water
- Kittens/puppies – Feed a small breakfast (1-2 tablespoons of canned food) and offer water
- All pets should always have fresh water available, even the morning of surgery.
- Surgery is performed on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Friday, and animals must be dropped off by 9am.

## Spay/Neuter Surgery

During a scheduled visit, the Foster Team or Medical Team may decide to accept the pet or litter back for adoption. If this is the case, surgery may be scheduled for that same day or scheduled for a later day. If scheduled for a later day, you may be asked to continue foster care and bring the pet in on the morning of the scheduled surgery. Veterinarians use the following guidelines to determine when the foster animal is ready to be returned for surgery:

- Are the puppies/kittens old enough or did they gain enough weight for surgery?
- Are they successfully weaned from their mother?
- Have they been successfully socialized?
- Is your foster healthy and recovered fully from illness or injury?
- Is there room on the adoption floor?



## NIBBLES & BITS

Photo Taking Tips:  
Get on their level

Use the right lighting  
and setting

Minimize  
background  
distractions

Be patient

Have fun and be  
creative!

### What can foster caregivers do to help in the adoption process?

All foster parents are encouraged to promote the adoption of their foster pets to friends, family, and other community members. Foster parents are often best equipped to market their foster animals after weeks spent learning their personalities and caring for their needs, and adoptions facilitated by a foster caregiver tend to be more successful.

If the foster caregiver themselves, or someone in their circle of friends, family, or community would like to adopt, we simply require the foster caregiver to communicate this info to us as soon as possible, along with the interested adopter's information to place an adoption hold. This hold places that interested adopter first in line for that animal once they are cleared for adoption. The information needed to place an Adoption Hold:

- Full Name
- Email and Phone Number
- Home Address
- Relationship to the foster caregiver

### What are Adoption Ambassadors?

Foster caregivers who are interested in taking on even more responsibility in their foster pet's adoption process can become Adoption Ambassadors. The Adoption Ambassadors program gives foster caregivers special tools and training to be their foster pet's advocate for adoption within the community! Halifax Humane Society may provide special resources to homes taking on animals that struggle to showcase their best qualities in a shelter environment, or to those who wish to promote their foster pets to the community so that they never need to return to the shelter. These special foster pets may go to foster homes with:

- An "Adopt Me" vest (for dogs to wear on walks)
- Business cards for the animal
- An overview of the adoption process to share with potential adopters, and any necessary adoption materials

## How do Adoption Ambassadors promote foster pets?

- Create a social media page to promote interest in their foster, and post to other community groups
- Conduct foster photoshoots to contribute to these posts. Check out this foster photo guide for tips! <https://www.aspcapro.org/resource/how-get-great-photos-your-available-animals>
- For foster dogs, ambassadors can bring them to local community spaces and events (if appropriate and safe to do so) such as farmers markets, fairs, restaurants or cafes with dog friendly patios or outdoor spaces, boardwalks, etc.
- Write detailed and catchy biographies highlighting their foster pet's unique personality, positive qualities, and particular needs or preferences they may require in an adoptive home.
- Share foster pet's information with family and friends, and ask them to share that information even wider.
- Arrange in person or virtual meet and greets with interested adopters (at home only for cats and kittens).

## Can foster parents adopt their foster animal?

You bet! Foster parents have first choice to adopt their foster pet, as long as they confirm their intention to do so before the foster pet returns to Halifax Humane Society to be promoted for adoption to the public at the end of their foster period. Adoption fees will still apply to all adoptions either by or through the foster caregiver, as these fees help us continue our lifesaving work.

## What if I can't find anyone to adopt?

If the foster parent is unable to secure an adopter for their foster pet themselves, that's fine! We have adopters every day coming in to meet our animals and choose the one that's right for their family.

At each recheck appointment at Halifax Humane Society during the foster period, the Foster and Medical Teams will evaluate the foster pet's progress and, when fully treated, recovered, or otherwise ready, they will make the decision to accept the foster pet back to HHS for spay/neuter surgery and adoption.

When this return is confirmed, and the foster pet transferred back to the shelter for adoption, we would gladly welcome any information such as written stories or pictures (photographs or children's drawings) that would describe your foster pet to the potential adopters that will be coming in to meet them.

Should you need to discontinue foster care for your foster pet prior to their full recovery or adoption readiness, call the Foster Team to schedule a time to bring the foster pet back to the shelter, and give them as much advanced notice as possible so that a new foster home can be secured before their return, so that your foster pet does not have to spend any unnecessary time in the shelter

## NIBBLES & BITS

Make a social media page or website to promote your foster!

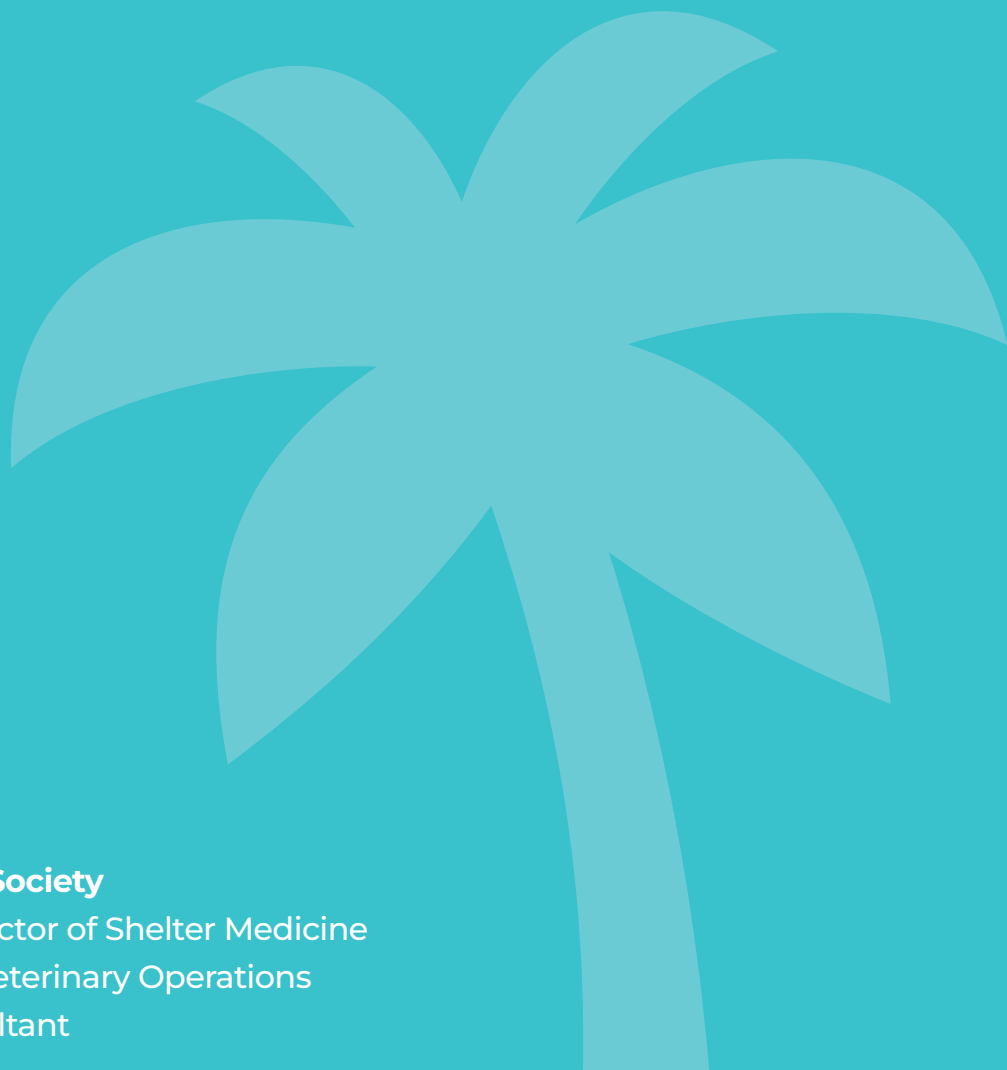
### What happens after my foster pet is returned or adopted?

Once your foster moves on to their adoptive home, or otherwise returns to Halifax Humane Society you can begin to foster as soon as you're ready. You can even request to take home another the same day if you wish! However, we do understand that some foster caregivers will want to take a break in between foster periods. Just let us know if you intend to take a break, and then again when you are ready to foster. If anything changes about your upcoming availability or fostering preferences, please let us know that as well.

In between foster periods, we ask that you thoroughly clean your fostering space, all foster items, and any spaces that your foster pet has had access to, to prevent the spread of disease between fosters. This is especially important if you are fostering puppies or kittens, or adult animals with known contagious illnesses. Some illnesses can live on surfaces in the environment for months, so a thorough cleaning is a must! Some foster turnover tips to remember:

- Use diluted bleach (1:32) or shelter provided rescue to clean all hard surfaces, hard plastic toys, bowls, etc.
- Use a dishwasher or boiling water and soap to clean any other feeding items, such as bottles, kong toys, etc.
- Wash all bedding, blankets, and soft toys thoroughly on a hot cycle.
- Throw away items which cannot be cleaned via the above methods (such as carpeted cat trees) at least 2x that were exposed to any highly contagious illnesses such as ringworm, mange, distemper, or parvovirus.
- Return any HHS loaned supplies unless you are certain they will be used for your next foster pet, AND you plan to take your next foster pet within 1 week of dropping off your most recent one. Please inform the Foster Team if that is your intention.

**THANK  
YOU FOR  
SAVING  
A LIFE!**



**Created by Halifax Humane Society**

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**Foster Team**

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**After Hours Emergency**

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