



# Fostering with P.A.W.S.

Fostering is essential to our success here at P.A.W.S. Foster parents provide temporary care for kittens, puppies, cats and dogs in an environment that is less stressful for the animals. By fostering you help ensure our animals have a chance to grow into well-adjusted, healthy pets. Additionally, by giving these animals temporary homes you help free up valuable space in our shelter which we will use to find forever homes for even more animals.

## **Why Do Animals Need Foster Care?**

There are several reasons an animal might become part of our foster program. Some of them are:

- To give our long-term resident animals a vacation from shelter life
- Kittens and puppies that are too young to be spayed or neutered
- Mothers and nursing animals that require a safe home environment where they can be socialized
- Foster animals that are being treated for certain illnesses and require medicine, care and attention
- Post-operative or heartworm-positive animals that require recovery time in a low-stress environment
- Animals that require socialization before going to their forever homes

## **What are the Benefits to Fostering with PAWS?**

There is an array of positive benefits from fostering with P.A.W.S. First, fostering is incredibly rewarding as you get to be a part of the efforts to help provide life-changing care and a second chance at life to these wonderful animals. By fostering, you are saving a life while freeing up space for even more animals to be rescued. Beyond this sense of accomplishment, you also get to enjoy the experience of being a pet-owner without taking on the long-term commitment of adopting. You can also add to your résumé that you volunteered for a well-known local non-profit organization. Finally, you can develop a network of professional and personal contacts through our foster and volunteer community.

## **How Does the Fostering Process Work?**

1. In the event that your application to become a foster parent is approved, you will be required to either meet with the foster coordinator or attend an orientation where you will be informed about your role and responsibilities as a foster parent.
2. After this orientation, you will be contacted by our foster coordinator when an animal comes into the shelter that requires foster care.

3. The animals in question will stay with you in the foster home until they are ready to be adopted. If we have a potential adopter or if we would like the foster animal to take part in one of our Petsmart adoption events, we will contact you and set up a time and place for you to bring the animal. You will receive a handout containing important dates and information about the animals you will be caring for. You will be expected to bring the animal into the shelter for periodic vaccinations and medications, if needed. It is imperative for the foster animal's well-being that you bring the foster animal in when we ask, particularly when dealing with time-sensitive vaccinations and medications. As such, if you fail to comply with these expectations, **we reserve the right to take the foster animals back.**
4. Additionally, when you begin fostering with us, we will do periodic home visits to make sure the animal is being properly cared for. At our discretion, these home visits will be omitted for repeat foster parents.

### **Learning to Let Go As a Foster Parent**

Letting go of a foster animal we have loved and cared for is always difficult. Amidst the joys of fostering, it can be easy to fall in love with the foster pets in our care. Many foster parents sign up for foster programs only to "foster fail" with the first pet, adopt them, and never foster again. While saving one animal by adopting it out of foster care isn't necessarily a bad thing, it is important to look at the bigger picture. While adopting allows you to help one animal, being an on-going foster parent for animals in our shelter means that you will help save *many* animals. Try to keep this in mind when fostering to help ease the difficulty of letting go of your furry friends.

### **Important Questions to Ask Yourself Before Fostering**

1. Is everyone in the house okay with becoming a foster family?

By bringing a foster animal into your home, you are placing a certain degree of burden upon your family or housemates as well. For fostering to be successful, everyone in the family should be on board and willing to pitch in.

2. If you rent, what is your landlord's policy on fostering?

Some landlords are okay with fostering, while others may require you to pay additional fees or pet deposits. We recommend consulting with your landlord before making the decision to foster.

3. Are you committed to keeping the animals for the full amount of time needed for fostering?

When you agree to foster an animal, you agree to take them on for a certain amount of time. Please remember to honor this commitment, as making animals go from foster home to foster home can be a very stressful experience for the pets involved.

4. Can you keep the foster animals away from your own pets, if necessary?

Although animals are immediately assessed and vaccinated when they come to us at P.A.W.S., there is always a chance that they might be carrying some unaccounted for, contagious illness that could potentially cause your own pets to get sick. As such, if this is not a risk you are comfortable with, it is important to keep your foster animal separate from your personal pets. If your personal pets do become sick, **we will not be responsible for any veterinary care needed.**

5. Are you able to drive to P.A.W.S. frequently, if necessary?

You will be occasionally expected to bring animals in for vaccinations, vet checks, adoption events, weight checks, spay/neuter surgeries, etc.

6. Are you and your household members emotionally prepared for the possibility of a foster animal's death?

Unfortunately, some animals, especially puppies and kittens, may become sick or weak and die, despite your best efforts. Likewise, occasionally puppies and kittens pass away unexpectedly due to Fading Kitten or Fading Puppy Syndrome. Though these instances are infrequent, it is important that you (and members of your household) are prepared to deal with the death of a foster animal.

7. Are you and your household members emotionally prepared to return the foster animal at the end of the foster period?

As mentioned, it can be very hard letting go of your foster animal. It is important that you have a frank conversation with your family, and that they all agree to return the foster animal at the end of the foster period. Remember, you help save one animal by adoption, but you help save many by fostering.

8. Are you prepared to explain to friends interested in your animal that they must go through the regular adoption process at P.A.W.S.?

Keep in mind that P.A.W.S. is the legal owner of the foster animals. We encourage foster parents to help us find owners for their foster animals, and allow their input during the

application process, but keep in mind that these potential adopters still must place an application and adopt through us, just like any other adopter.

### **Duties of a Foster Parent/Family**

Below is a list of the duties you will be responsible for as a foster parent at P.A.W.S.

- Provide food and clean water (we can provide food assistance if necessary, but we ask that the foster family covers this expense)
- Clean bowls
- Clean up area where the animals use the bathroom
- Check animal thoroughly for symptoms of any health problems
- Play with and socialize the foster animal
- Attend all veterinary appointments for vaccination/deworming/spay/neuter/etc.
- Clean bedding when necessary
- Groom animals as needed
- Weigh animals and monitor their growth. Animals must weigh at least 2 lbs in order to be spayed or neutered.
- Provide a loving, caring and nurturing home

### **Suggested Foster Supplies**

Below are the supplies recommended for those fostering. The supplies vary depending on the type of animal you are fostering:

- Food and water bowls
- Litter box and litter
- Toys
- A mild soap for bathing that is pet friendly
- Soft bedding materials
- Baby gate
- Leashes and adjustable collars
- High quality food, dry or canned

### **Getting Ready for Your Foster Animal**

It's a good idea to make sure you prepare your home before you pick up your furry friend. Make sure you have a crate or cage to house the animal for times when you aren't home. If you have a spare bedroom or office where you are comfortable keeping them, that's fine too; just make sure that the space is animal friendly. This means removing items from the room you wouldn't want to be damaged and making sure the room is a comfortable temperature and well ventilated. Also,

you might want to cover the floor with newspaper in the event that the animal has accidents. In general, it's a good idea to put the animal in a room with tile or another type of flooring that makes clean up easier.

As a general rule, make sure to avoid taking the animal to public places unless otherwise approved by the foster coordinator and/or shelter staff. A young puppy or kitten may not yet be vaccinated and taking them in public spaces could result in them getting sick; likewise, not every adult foster animal is comfortable interacting with other animals.

Finally, when you return your foster animal, make sure to clean your dishes, bedding, etc. before picking up your next foster animal. By doing this, you help us avoid the spread of contagious diseases.

## **Health Care**

One of the most important roles of the foster parent is ensuring that the foster animal is healthy. Particularly when fostering young animals, there is always an increased risk of illness as their immune systems are not very strong. Because of this, we ask that foster parents always be vigilant when it comes to the health of your foster animal. Be on the lookout for signs that your foster animal isn't feeling well. If you notice a problem with your foster animal's behavior or appearance, contact the Foster Coordinator. If necessary, she will contact our resident veterinarian and set up an appointment for you to bring the foster animal to the shelter. Please do **not** medicate your foster animal except under the recommendation of our veterinarian.

**Due to budget constraints, we cannot reimburse you if you take the foster animal to your own veterinarian.**

As a foster parent, what should you look for when monitoring the health of your foster pet? Below you will find a list of common health problems experienced by foster animals. Please become familiar with them so that you can recognize any symptoms in your foster animal. Unless otherwise equipped for a sick animal, we will do our best to only provide our foster families with healthy animals, or to disclose potential illness or disease upfront. If you believe your foster pet has any of these conditions, please contact the Foster Coordinator immediately.

## **Common Health Issues in Puppies and Kittens**

### **Fading Kitten/Puppy Syndrome**

This syndrome leads to the often unexplainable, sudden death of a puppy or a kitten. It can be thought of as the Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) for puppies and kittens. Animals are vulnerable between their time of birth and 9 weeks. Sadly, the syndrome often sets in very quickly with little to no symptoms. However, animals with this syndrome do often exhibit lethargy, chills, paleness and a loss of appetite. While this syndrome seems to strike with no

apparent cause, it often occurs because the animal's underdeveloped immune system does not allow it to fight off illness.

## **Common Health Issues in Puppies and Dogs**

### **Bordetella**

This illness, known more commonly as “kennel cough”, is a very contagious bacterial infection that harms the respiratory system. It can be spread through saliva or nasal discharge. The symptoms of kennel cough are runny nose, sneezing and coughing. The treatment for this illness is oral antibiotics provided by our resident veterinarian.

### **Coccidia**

This is an illness which infects the intestinal tract primarily of puppies, though adult dogs can often be carriers of the disease despite not showing symptoms. While many dogs and puppies are able to build up an immunity and withstand the illness, a young puppy who becomes very stressed or generally unwell may experience a “flare up” of the illness. Symptoms of this illness are diarrhea (of a pale gray or white color), vomiting, general lethargy, weight loss and loss of appetite. These symptoms may be mild or more severe. Coccidia can be treated with 5-10 days of an oral antibiotic provided by our resident veterinarian.

### **Mange**

This illness is a parasitic infection of the animal's skin, and it is also known more commonly as “mites”. These parasites embed themselves in the hair follicles or skin of dogs. There are two types of mange: Sarcoptic (which is contagious) and Demodex (which is hereditary, but not contagious). The symptoms of mange are hair loss, itching and inflammation. Treatments for mange include medicated shampoos, antibiotics or parasitocidal agents.

### **Parasitic Worms**

This occurs when parasites are living in the animal's intestine. There are a variety of different types of worms including tapeworms, roundworms, whipworms or hookworms. The symptoms of worms are diarrhea, blood in the stool, weight loss, dry hair, generally unkempt appearance and vomiting. While you can often see the worms in the animals' stool, some animals do not exhibit symptoms. The illness is treated by deworming medication.

### **Heartworms**

This illness is caused by a parasite spread to dogs by mosquitoes. The worms often live inside the animal's heart and nearby blood vessels where they can cause extreme damage. Without intervention, the heartworms can cause permanent damage to the heart. The symptoms of heartworms are coughing, shortness of breath, tiredness, fainting after exercise, weight loss, loss of appetite, lethargy and nervousness. Not all animals exhibit symptoms. The treatment for this

illness is medication that kills the heartworms. Afterwards, the animals are expected to rest for some time, meaning they must have only restricted exercise, to ensure that the body properly absorbs dead heartworms. Failure to rest could result in the traveling of dead worms into the lungs, potentially resulting in respiratory failure and death.

### **Parvovirus:**

Parvo is a very contagious viral disease that infects the lymph nodes, bone marrow and intestines of the animal. In some rare cases, Parvo can also infect the heart resulting in sudden death. This disease spreads through contact with infected feces (directly or indirectly). Symptoms of Parvo include intense lethargy, severe vomiting and diarrhea (may be bloody), loss of appetite and dehydration. Most animals that catch Parvo will need to be returned immediately to the shelter for hospitalization. If your animal becomes ill with Parvo, you will need to clean the areas where the animal stayed with bleach. Additionally, you will have to wait for an agreed upon waiting period to foster again so as to avoid infecting other foster animals.

## **Common Health Issues in Kittens and Cats**

### **Feline Upper Respiratory Infection**

This illness is a contagious virus that can be spread through interaction with another cat carrying the virus. The symptoms of this illness are nasal discharge, sneezing, coughing, runny eyes, fever, and nasal or oral ulcers. As Feline Upper Respiratory Infection is a virus, you usually have to let it run its course. However, some of the symptoms can be treated with antibiotics.

### **Feline Calicivirus Infection**

This illness is a very contagious respiratory disease that infects the respiratory system, the mouth, the intestines and even the musculoskeletal system. Feline Calicivirus Infection spreads through interaction with other infected cats. Symptoms of this illness are ulcers on the tongue or mouth, discharge from eyes, discharge from nose, loss of appetite, difficulty breathing, pneumonia, fever, bleeding and difficulty walking. Animals that exhibit these symptoms will need to be returned to the shelter.

### **Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP)**

This illness is an infectious viral disease that attacks the intestinal walls. FIP is spread through common contact, namely through inhalation or exposure to the feces of an infected cat. The symptoms of this illness are fever, loss of appetite, weight loss, general lethargy, labored breathing, thirst and urination. FIP is spread through common contact. Unfortunately, there is no cure for FIP though in mild cases cats can be provided with care and antibiotics to help extend their life. Animals that exhibit these symptoms will need to be returned to the shelter.

### **Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV)**

FeLV is a retrovirus that attacks cat's immune system and is spread through common contact. The symptoms of FeLV are anemia, lethargy, weight loss, diarrhea, unusual gait, inflammation of nose/eyes/gums. Cats with FeLV will need to be returned to the shelter.

### **Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)**

The feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) infection is a retrovirus that compromises immune system responses in cats. FIV is spread through direct contact with infected cats, in particular, through biting and scratching. The symptoms of FIV are susceptibility to illness, eye inflammation, kidney, skin infections, nose inflammation, fever, behavioral changes and changes in vision or hearing. Cats with FIV will need to be returned to the shelter.

### **Pan Leukopenia**

Pan leukopenia is a highly contagious viral disease that attacks the digestive system, bone marrow, lymph tissue and nervous system. Pan Leukopenia is spread through direct and indirect contact with infected cats. The symptoms of pan leukopenia are fever, lack of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, dehydration and lethargy. Cats with Pan Leukopenia will need to be returned to the shelter immediately.

### **Feline Herpesvirus (FHV)**

Feline Herpesvirus is a virus that typically causes upper respiratory infections in cats. This illness is spread through direct contact and indirect contact (bedding, inhalation, etc.) The symptoms of FHV are conjunctivitis, lethargy, sneezing, fever, coughing, eye-ulcers and skin inflammation. The treatment for FHV is treated by antiviral therapy and antibiotics.

## **Emergencies**

In the case of a veterinary emergency during regular business hours, contact the foster coordinator as soon as possible and she will put you in contact with the resident veterinarian. You may also bring your foster animal to us if you have a concern, but please contact the shelter first.

In the case of a veterinary emergency after hours, contact the foster coordinator and she will coordinate with the veterinarian.

We understand that there are times when foster animals require immediate care and will always try to deal with emergencies as quickly as possible. While we do not discourage taking your foster animal to a nearby emergency veterinarian when necessary, please note that such visits cannot be reimbursed.



## Agreement

**I confirm that I have read the information in this handbook thoroughly and intend to uphold the duties and responsibilities expected of me as a P.A.W.S. foster parent.**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## **P.A.W.S. Foster Care Contact List:**

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