



# Humane Society of Elmore County

## Foster Care Manual

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## **WELCOME TO THE FOSTER CARE PROGRAM!**

Every week, hundreds of animals are left in our care. Some are stray animals found wandering the streets with no identification. Some have collars with no tags. Others are surrendered by their owners for a variety of reasons. Many are ill. We screen each animal for good health and temperament, and those who are placed up for adoption are vaccinated and de-wormed and are either spayed or neutered prior to adoption or as a condition of the adoption. If dogs are over 5 months old, we also test them for heartworm disease and some needing treatment are candidates for heartworm treatment in foster care.

### **1. THERE ARE MANY REASONS WE NEED FOSTER HOMES:**

a. Many of the puppies and kittens we receive are too young to put up for adoption. Your foster care home will provide a safe environment where these babies are not exposed to infectious diseases and can grow until they are old enough to come back to the shelter for adoption. Options here fostering ‘bottle babies’ which can be very labor intensive to those little ones that may be eating on their own and a bit more independent. You tell us what type(s) of animals you want to foster. We will help you determine your capabilities and limitations, how many you are capable of fostering at one time and do our best to set you up for success. When you are new to the program, we recommend starting with a small number of animals, such as two or three.

b. Special needs animals – these may be adult animals recovering from illness or injury and each case will be evaluated to determine its needs and your capabilities. The most common foster pet in this category is a dog undergoing heartworm treatment or a cat or dog recovering from surgery to repair a severe injury.

### **2. VETERINARY CARE**

a. The Humane Society of Elmore County does not have a veterinarian on staff, but works with area veterinarians on a routine basis. Any veterinary care for a foster animal must first be approved by the Director or Animal Care Manager.

b. We receive hundreds of animals a week and want to help the highest number of animals we can. For this reason, we need to try and save those with the highest likelihood for adoption but rest assured it is a decision based on the individual animal’s situation and the shelter’s capabilities and limitations.

c. If a foster animal becomes ill while in your care you can call our shelter anytime between 8 am - 4 pm, Mon - Fri and 8 am – 3 pm, Sat or call the cell phone numbers noted on the cover after hours. Our shelter is closed on Sundays. For after hours emergencies, contact one of our three key personnel noted above via cell phone for guidance. Please know that if you choose to take a foster pet to an emergency animal hospital or your own vet without prior approval of our personnel, you may be responsible for any costs incurred.

### 3. FOSTER OUTCOMES

a. The shelter staff is the final approval on all dispositions on foster animals. The majority of all foster pets find wonderfully loving homes but please understand that there are times when a pet that has been in foster may have to be euthanized for health or behavioral reasons. We will inform a foster of the ultimate outcome which is an adoption 95%+ of the time!

b. We appreciate the challenges of getting attached to foster pets but it is imperative that you trust the judgment of the Humane Society and understand we do the best we can for all the animals in our care. Returning a foster pet for adoption, or losing a foster to a serious illness can be very a very emotional event and our staff is here to help foster's work through this. We know that once you become a foster with us you will often cry tears of happiness knowing your foster is now in a loving and lifetime home.

### 4. YOUR PERSONAL PETS

a. It is a requirement of the foster care program that your own pets be current on their core vaccines or that your veterinarian. If you have a pet that cannot be vaccinated for any health reason then we need to be very careful in determining if fostering shelter pets is safe for your pet.

#### Cat requirements:

1. All be at least six-months old and spayed or neutered. Exceptions to the spay/neuter requirement will be made by the shelter Director.
2. Tested negative for leukemia and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV).
3. Current on their booster vaccines.
4. Current on their leukemia vaccine. (If they are indoor/outdoor cats.)
5. Current on their rabies vaccine.

#### Dog requirements:

1. All be at least six-months old and spayed or neutered. Exceptions to the spay/neuter requirement will be made by the shelter Director.
  2. Current on their vaccines per your veterinarian.
  3. Current on their rabies vaccine.
  4. Current on their Bordatella vaccine.
  5. Be negative for heartworms.
1. Receive monthly heartworm prevention medication.

**Remember, these health requirements are in the best interest of your own pets!**

**5. PREVENTIVE VETERINARY CARE.** When an animal comes to the shelter in need of foster care, the animals are examined and the following is done:

Kittens

1. Dewormed.
2. Treated for fleas.

Cats

1. Same as above.
2. Vaccinated with a booster if not nursing and with rabies if over 3 months of age.

Puppies

1. Dewormed.
2. Have been bathed and treated for fleas and ticks.
3. Sent home with de-wormer if necessary.

Dogs

1. Same as above.
2. Given a booster vaccine if not nursing and a rabies vaccine.
3. Tested for heartworm disease.

## **6. FOSTER CARE ANIMAL PICK UP AND RETURN**

a. Once the animal has been given its preventive care, the Shelter will contact you to see if you are currently available to foster. You are under no obligation to say yes and don't feel guilty if you are unable to take a litter or animal! If you do get a message from the Shelter but are unable to foster at that time, please let the Shelter know so they can contact another foster care parent. Our goal is to have the animals go to their foster homes as quickly as possible so they are not exposed to Shelter diseases and to remain in that home until they are ready to be adopted out.

b. If you are available to foster the animal(s), the Shelter will arrange with you the best time to pick up your new babies. You will receive dry food (if the animals are old enough), an information sheet about your foster babies and information regarding when their next vaccination/de-worming is due. You will also receive any necessary medications, crates, bowls and instructions at that time.

c. When your foster care animals are 8 weeks of age call the Shelter to schedule their return. They will arrange with you the best time to return your foster babies. When returning your foster babies, please bring in their information sheet.

## **7. IF YOU HAVE PETS IN THE HOME**

a. Certain viral diseases, such as parvovirus in puppies or upper respiratory infections in kittens, have incubation periods of up to 10 days. Also, intestinal parasites can be shed intermittently in the stool. If your pet ingests the stool, he can be infected with the parasites. For these reasons, it is highly recommended that you **keep your pets separate from your foster animals for at least for the first 10 days.**

b. It is also important to sanitize the areas where the animals have defecated, preferably with bleach and to also wear shoes around these areas as a precaution against parasites.

**8. FEEDING.** We provide food for your foster animals at no cost. Instructions for feeding will be provided at the time you pick up your foster animal. If the animals are very young, we will provide you with milk replacement formula.

## **9. KITTENS**

a. Foster kittens must be at least eight weeks old to be put up for adoption. They can be fed dry food separately, or mixed in with canned food or water. Kittens should **never be given milk**.

b. Stools should be formed. If your kitten develops diarrhea contact us for instructions, possible medication and/or special food. In the case of diarrhea, Gerber's rice cereal from the grocery store can be added to the food to increase the fiber content. Mix one teaspoon of cereal per kitten, per meal in with the food 3 times daily. Diarrhea can cause weight loss, dehydration and malnutrition in kittens very quickly. It is very important to address any medical issues immediately with the shelter. Intestinal parasites can be contagious to animals (and sometimes people) if the stool is ingested or makes skin contact.

c. Vomiting or lack of appetite in a kitten is very serious. Kittens do not have the fat reserve to sustain themselves like adults do. They can become dehydrated very quickly. A kitten which is sick for one day is like an adult being sick for a week. Call the shelter immediately if you notice any of these medical problems. If the shelter is closed call a listed staff member at home.

d. It is best to keep kittens in a confined area on a surface that can be easily disinfected. Bleachable surfaces are recommended due to the possibility of incubating viruses. Kittens are usually very good about using the litter box. However, when first introduced to your house and a large unfamiliar area, they may not remember where the litter box is!

e. If you find missing spots of fur on any kittens, the kittens seem to scratch themselves a lot it is imperative you contact us. While we hope not, a fungal disease called ringworm can be highly contagious to not on the kittens, but your pets AND yourself and your family and we do not want that to happen. At the first potential sign of ringworm call us or bring the kitten(s) back to the shelter.

e. Kittens are not picky about toys. They enjoy sneakers, a piece of paper, ping pong balls, cardboard boxes and pretty much anything else you can think of! Unfortunately, these things may include speaker wire, plants, etc. that could be dangerous to kittens. Make sure to kitten proof the area where you will keep the kittens. Some kittens are very afraid or skittish when we get them in. Handling them as much as possible, without restraining them, will help them get used to people and make them more adoptable.

## 10. BOTTLE FEEDING KITTENS

a. Kittens **from birth to 2 weeks old** should be bottle fed every 2-3 hours. You can feed these kittens a homemade formula (see formula recipe) or Kitten milk replacer (KMR - powder or liquid) if available. The formula should be room temperature or slightly warmer. A teaspoon of Gerber's Rice Cereal from the grocery store can be added to the bottle starting **at 2 weeks of age**.

b. If kittens are found and are very cold, their temperatures should be brought up to normal before feeding. If a warm formula mixture is given when the kitten is cold, the milk will curdle in the kitten's stomach and cause vomiting.

c. **From 2-3 weeks of age**, the kittens should be fed every 4 hours and **at 3 weeks**, canned food mixed with water and formula can be offered. Kittens should be held on your lap and slightly upright when bottle feeding. Each time the kitten is fed, a warm, soft, wet cloth should be rubbed over their private parts to simulate their mother's licking them. This will make them urinate and defecate. The stomach capacity of a kitten is 5 cc's or 5 ml per pound. This amount should not be exceeded.

d. Kittens should be kept warm and in a small confined area such as a box. Heating pads should be covered with a towel and the temperature of the pad monitored to avoid burning the animal.

## 11. NURSING CATS

a. We sometimes need homes for adult cats who are still nursing their litters. Some cats will be protective of their kittens. Provide your nursing mom and her kittens a quiet area in your home until they feel comfortable. Limit your contact with the kittens and if possible do not handle them at all for the first few days or until the mom gets used to you and her new surroundings.

b. Nursing cats need to eat as much as possible. Keep fresh food and water available for her at all times.

c. The mother cat may ignore a kitten in her litter. If you observe this, please call the shelter as this may be a sign the kitten is ill. Regardless of your efforts, these kittens often don't survive. If you do discover a kitten that has died, please call the shelter or bring the animal in.

d. Kittens' eyes open at 10 days of age and their teeth start to come in at about 3 weeks of age. When the kittens are **2 weeks old, they should be dewormed** at the shelter.

e. When the kittens are **3 weeks old**, you can mix canned food with water and either a evaporated milk mixture or kitten milk replacer (KMR) if available in a shallow bowl. The kittens walk in the food and lick their paws and start eating. The transition can take a few days to a week. The mother cat's mammary glands should be soft to slightly firm but not red, inflamed, or dark in color. If

you think the mammary glands don't look normal, please contact the shelter for the cat to be checked.

## 12. PUPPIES

a. Puppies can be placed for adoption at 8 weeks of age. Puppies should be fed canned food, with dry food mixed in. They should only be given water to drink, **never milk**.

b. Puppies gain weight at different rates, depending on their breed. Stools should be formed. If your puppy develops diarrhea, we need to recheck the stool and the puppy. In the case of diarrhea, Gerber's rice cereal from the grocery store can be added to the food to increase the fiber content. Mix one teaspoon of cereal per puppy, per meal in with the food 3 times daily.

c. Since puppies can shed parasites intermittently in their stools, **we routinely deworm them at the shelter every 2 weeks**.

d. Just as with kittens, a puppy which is sick for a day can become seriously ill within 24 hours. Any episodes of vomiting should be addressed immediately with the shelter. The most common cause of vomiting and diarrhea in puppies is intestinal parasites but viral infections such as parvovirus can also cause vomiting and diarrhea and is very contagious between puppies.

e. Puppies can be given any types of toys that they cannot chew apart and swallow. They can be shampooed with a mild baby shampoo or shampoo formulated for puppies. You can towel dry them or, being careful not to burn them, blow dry them on the cool setting of your blow dryer afterwards.

## 13. BOTTLE FEEDING PUPPIES.

a. All information about bottle feeding kittens applies to puppies as well.

b. Puppies should be fed either the homemade formula or Esbilac puppy milk replacer which comes in a powder or liquid form.

## 14. NURSING DOGS

a. All information about nursing cats applies to nursing dogs as well.

b. When puppies are **3 weeks of age**, Esbilac (puppy milk replacer) can be mixed in with canned food and water. As the puppies walk through the food, they lick their paws and begin eating.

## 14. PEDIALYTE MIXTURE

a. If you are advised by shelter staff to provide a Pedialyte mixture of water to your animal instead of plain water, there is no need to go purchase commercial Pedialyte.

b. You can make a mixture of Pedialyte using the following recipe: 1 Quart Water + 3 Tablespoons Sugar + 1 Teaspoon Salt. Mix this well and use for no more than two days before making a new batch!

## **15. BOTTLE FEEDING HOMEMADE FORMULA MIXTURE**

- a. If a commercial formula mixture is not available the following can be made at home:

One can of evaporated milk; one Tablespoon of Plain Yogurt (helps keep the digestive tract healthy); one Tablespoon of light Karo Syrup (for the carbohydrates); one Egg Yolk (for protein).

- b. Mix all of this well and keep refrigerated when not in use. Try to only heat the amount you are going to use at each feeding rather than the entire amount.

**16. SPECIAL NEEDS.** Special needs animals are those who need medication or special care in the short term. They may have been injured or abused or have a medical condition. The length of time needed in foster care depends on the individual situation. The shelter will provide all medications and necessary medical care for these animals.

## **17. HEARTWORM TREATMENT DOGS**

- a. Dogs with heartworms often end up in the shelter. If their overall health and temperament makes them suitable for adoption they may receive treatment.

b. The treatment for heartworms is very serious and aftercare is critical for the dog's survival. Care must be taken to keep the animal quiet for at least a month, sometimes two, after the treatment. This means that the dog must be kept up in the house, a crate or kennel run and walked slowly when taken out to go to the bathroom. Foster care for these dogs provides them with needed attention and less stimulation than the shelter environment, and provides the shelter with much needed space for animals coming in and ready for adoption.

## **18. ADOPTION POLICY**

- a. While in your care, the foster animals are not officially available for adoption. They still must pass a health check once they are old enough to be adopted.

b. And, prior to being placed in their permanent home, every animal must be spayed or neutered. Foster parents are not authorized to adopt an animal out nor can foster parents assure a potential adopter they have first 'dibs' on a fostered pet. If you know someone interested in adopting an animal you are fostering you must have them contact the shelter and follow the normal adoption process. In ALL cases the shelter staff is the final approval on all adoptions.

The Humane Society of Elmore County appreciates your being a Foster Care parent and providing our animals with a loving and nurturing home as they get ready for adoption.

***THANK YOU for providing this valuable service to our animals!***