



# **FOSTER CARE MANUAL**

***Thank you for participating in the Foster Care Program at the Connecticut Humane Society. Fostering is a wonderful way to contribute to the Society and its mission by providing love and care to sick or underage animals. By temporarily sheltering these animals in your own home, you allow the Society to vacate cages that otherwise would be occupied by animals that are not yet ready for adoption. This allows the Society to take in more needy animals. The individualized attention you provide for your foster animals is priceless- you are making a lasting impact on their physical and emotional well-being.***

***This manual is a guide to provide you with important information about caring for your fostered animals, and will help to clarify any questions or concerns that you might have along the way. Any additional questions should be directed to the Foster Care contact employees listed below. Feel free to call or e-mail us. Our goal is to make your foster care experience enjoyable.***

***With a little work and a lot of love, you will make a huge difference in the lives of your foster animals. If you have a friend or family member that is interested in becoming a Foster Care Volunteer, please direct them to the foster contact person for your district. Again, thank you for accepting this important responsibility. We truly appreciate your commitment. Good luck and happy Fostering!!!***

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## **Preparing For Your Foster Animal(s)**

Before you pick up your foster animal, you may want to prepare your home for their stay. If you have other pets in your household, you must provide a separate room for your foster animal. This is for the safety of all animals involved. No matter how friendly your dog or cat may be, you never know how they may react to a new animal in their territory. Also, although our shelter animals are examined by our medical staff as soon as they arrive at the Society, they may be harboring an illness that could be contagious to your own animals. So please, keep your foster animals away from your pets!

The room that you keep your fostered animals in should be free from any valuables that may become damaged. Covering the floor with newspaper is a good way to prevent accidents from kittens and puppies. For the safety of the animals, remove any choking or strangulation hazards.

Always provide your fostered animals with access to fresh water (bottle-feeding infants excepted.) Litter pans should be placed away from food and water.

When fostered animals are not being supervised, they may be crated to prevent damage.

The Connecticut Humane Society will provide you with food, litter, a crate, and medicine or formula (if needed) for your foster animals. You must provide your own feed bowls and bedding. An old towel or blanket works great. If you are fostering cats or kittens, you will need to provide your own litter pan.

After returning a foster animal to the Society, please be sure to wash and disinfect all bedding, bowls, and litter pans before picking up your next assignment to prevent the transmission of diseases or illnesses between the fostered animals.

When you pick up your foster animal, a Connecticut Humane Society staff member will go over all the specific needs of that animal, instruct you on how to administer medicine, if needed, give you feeding guidelines, arrange a day for the foster animal to be returned to the shelter, and answer any other questions that you may have about that animal.

## INFANTS

Fostering infant puppies and kittens is challenging, but extremely rewarding. Animals of this age (up to 4 weeks old) are completely dependent on their “surrogate mother” for safety, warmth, and food. By following the guidelines below, you will be able to nurse your infant into a playful adolescent, right before your very eyes.

### **Location:**

Infants should be kept in a quiet, confined space such as a small carrier or box. Always have blankets or towels down and a hot water bottle for warmth. Infants always need to be kept clean and dry. Please wash bedding as needed. A small stuffed animal may be used for the infant to snuggle up with. Infants should never be outside, except when being transferred to and from the Connecticut Humane Society.

### **Warmth:**

Keeping infants warm and free from drafts is very important because infants under 4 weeks of age are not able to regulate their body temperature and are incapable of shivering. The safest method is a hot water bottle, 1 liter bottle filled with hot water, or an IV fluid bag microwaved for 3 minutes. Be sure to cover any surface with a towel in order to prevent overheating or burns. (An old tube sock works well on a 1-liter bottle).

As a last resort, a heating pad or heat lamp may be used. Heating pads should be placed on the lowest setting possible, and covered so that the infant cannot crawl underneath. Only cover half the box or crate with the heating pad so that the infant can escape the heat if needed. When using a heat lamp, provide a warm spot and a cool spot in the box. **Please use extreme caution when using a heating pad or heat lamp! These should only be used in cases of emergency when a hot water bottle is not available.** Use common sense! Infants should feel warm, not hot and not cold to the touch.

### **Handling:**

Infants up to 2 weeks old will still have their eyes shut. They are very confused and unsure of their surroundings, and should be handled as little as possible. They need a lot of rest and quiet. Pick them up only to feed them, and cuddle for about 20 minutes during each feeding. Infants from 2-4 weeks old can be handled more often. Their eyes are open now and they will be very interested in their surroundings and will even begin to play.

## **Feeding:**

When feeding infants, always pay close attention to feeding guidelines. Dilute formula carefully according to the directions, and NEVER give cow's milk to any animal. This can cause severe stomach trauma. Use good hygiene/cleanliness with all food supplies. Avoid overfeeding- make all food changes gradually. The following is a breakdown of everything you need to know in order to feed infants according to their age:

### **Infants 1-2 weeks old**

- Should be fed every 2-4 hours (KMR milk replacement for kittens, or Esbilac formula for puppies)
- Mix formula according to directions, 1 part formula to 2 parts water. Opened formula cans must be stored in the refrigerator.
- Formula should be fed at room temperature. You can mix the formula with warm water or reheat refrigerated formula by placing bottle in a pan or mug of warm water. Test the milk on your wrist for correct temperature. **Do not heat bottle in microwave.** Microwave heating causes nutrient loss in formula and hot spots can develop.
- If there is not an opening in the nipple already, make a small hole with a hot needle or a cross cut with small scissors. Nipple opening should be only large enough for a few drops of milk to drip out when the bottle is held upside down and squeezed gently. Milk should NOT stream out. This is important so that the infant does not aspirate formula and develop pneumonia. Bubbles of milk coming out from the nose indicates that the animal is aspirating. In this case an adjustment must be made in the nipple size or the thickness of the formula.
- The best method of feeding is for the infant to lie on your lap as they would when nursing on mom. Lightly grasp the infant around the head with one hand, then place the tip of the nipple to the infant's mouth and squeeze a little milk into the mouth with your other hand. The infant should latch on. Do not hold the infant too far upright or tip the infant's head or the infant may choke or aspirate.
- Week 1 **KITTENS** should only be eating ½ to 1 teaspoon per feeding. This is a maximum of 5 ML's. Week 1 **PUPPIES** should be eating ½ ounce per feeding (15 ML's). Please note: the infant may seem to want more, but you don't want to overfeed- this can cause diarrhea.
- Week 2 **KITTENS** will start eating 1-2 teaspoons per feeding. This is a maximum of 10 ML's. Week 2 **PUPPIES** should be eating 1 ounce per feeding (30 ML's), but may need more or less depending on the breed.
- **If infant refuses to eat for 2 consecutive feedings, call your Foster Care coordinator.**

### **Infants 3-4 weeks old**

- Should be fed every 4-6 hours.
- Infant **KITTENS** should be eating 2-3 teaspoons of formula. This is 15 ML's (or ½ ounce). Start adding ½ of a teaspoon of mixed in wet food to the bottle at each feeding to introduce food (it will look like gruel). Introducing wet food sometimes gives infants diarrhea.
- At this age, encourage infant to lap from a shallow dish. Put some of the gruel on your finger, put it in the infant's mouth, then lower your finger to the food dish and encourage infant to lap from the dish. Don't be alarmed if the infant is not interested- sometimes it can take a couple of days.
- After infant is eating from a dish, start reducing the amount of formula and increasing the amount of soft food. **The goal is to wean the infant off of formula all together.** Once weaned, dry food should also be made available.

### **Urination and Defecation:**

Infants 1-2 weeks old need to be stimulated in order to encourage urination and defecation before and after every feeding. Gently pat its anal area with a cotton ball or soft toilet paper that has been moistened with warm water. Gently rubbing the infant's belly also encourages movement. Be sure to keep the anal area clean and dry by sponging with warm water and patting with a soft towel. Don't panic if kitten does not defecate every time! Once a day is fine, although they may defecate as frequently as after every meal. Consistency of stool can vary from quite loose to toothpaste consistency, and can range in color from yellow to dark brown.

When infants first begin to eat solids, the time has come to begin potty training.

**Kittens:** Place litter pan in a convenient place where the kitten is familiar. Try to find a quiet area so that the kitten will not be stressed or too distracted. In the general area of the kitten's bedding and food is a good place. Simply place the kitten in the litter pan and pat anal area with a moist cloth. When kitten starts to urinate or defecate, remove the cloth and allow the kitten to use the pan. Instinctively, the kitten should start scratching and burying waste. Repeat these steps until the kitten goes into the litter pan on his own. It usually takes about 1-3 times. Never rub the kitten's nose in their urine or feces when they relieve themselves in the wrong place.

**Puppies:** A few minutes after feeding, puppies should be taken outside to the area you would like them to go potty in. Pat the anal area with a moist cloth to stimulate movement. Take puppies out often. When not being supervised, crate puppies (they don't like to relieve themselves in a confined area where they will have to lie in their own waste), then walk them as soon as you let them out of the crate. If the puppy has an accident inside, do not punish the puppy. Take the fecal matter outside and place it in a spot where you would like the puppy to go potty. They will go where they smell their feces. When puppy goes potty outside, reward with praise and affection. Note: puppies this young should not be walked outside of your yard. They will not be vaccinated yet, and could catch a disease.

## **PREGNANT ANIMALS**

Fostering an expecting animal is a wonderful experience. You will be able to witness the miracle of life right before your eyes. Pregnant mommies need extra care and consideration while they are preparing to give birth. They should be kept in a room or enclosure where they will be kept quiet and comfortable. Food and water should be available at all times. Moms should be eating kitten or puppy food for the extra fat and nutrients. Please provide a space for the mommy to give birth, such as a box with towels in it. They like to hide and have privacy while they are giving birth to their infants. In most cases, infants will be born in the middle of the night, and mom does all the work. Our medical staff will give us an estimate as to when the mommy may give birth. If it seems that the mother is having trouble going into labor, please contact CHS medical staff. We may ask for the foster animal to be returned for a c-section. Once the infants are born, please contact the Foster Care coordinator to report how many offspring were born, and how they are all doing.

## **MOMS WITH LITTERS**

When a mom first comes to your home with her babies, allow her to have some time and space to get used to her surroundings and reduce her stress. Do not touch the babies for the first 2-3 days until the mother is more trusting with you. Have patience. Take some time during the day to sit in the room with mom and babies and let the mother come to you. Soon you will be the best of friends! Mothers with their litters should be kept in a relatively quiet environment so as not to stress out the mom. A large bed should be provided for mom and babies and food and water should be available for mom at all times. The room or enclosure where the litter is kept should be baby-proofed. Even kittens and puppies with their eyes still shut are very mobile and can easily find themselves in harm's way. Please monitor mom's

nursing. If one particular baby is not eating enough, place them right up to mom's nipple. If mom is not doing a good job nursing her infants, please contact the Foster Care coordinator. Infants will continue to nurse up to 6-8 weeks of age, but please follow feeding guidelines in the Infant section to gradually introduce solid food around 4 weeks of age. Occasionally give mom some time away from her infants, but bring her back shortly because she provides the warmth that they need. Always be cautious around moms with their litters. They can sometimes become protective of their babies. Watch for warning signs such as growling or hissing. Nursing mothers must never be outside! A nursing mother is most fertile at this time and will get pregnant if left outside.

### **SELF-SUFFICIENT KITTENS AND PUPPIES**

Once kittens and puppies are eating on their own, around 4 weeks of age, they are considered self-sufficient. At this age, they no longer need to be kept in a confined space, and should be in a room where they can run and play. A bed should be provided along with food and water, and a litter box for kittens. Make sure their space is completely baby-proofed and damage-proofed. They will want to play and be held and cuddled often. Don't be afraid to have fun! Kittens should continue to be kept inside, and puppies should only be walked outside in your yard. These animals are still too young to be vaccinated, so keeping them away from other animals and possible exposure to disease is key.

### **RECOVERING ANIMALS**

Shelter animals that are recovering from an illness or operation may be placed in a foster home until they are completely recovered and able to be adopted. These animals will be handled on a case-by-case basis, and the Foster Care Coordinator will make sure you are aware of all of the specific needs of the animal. If medicine is to be administered, it will be provided for you, and instructions given as to dosage. Please follow instructions carefully and be diligent about medicating. It is important that your foster animal receive medication on schedule. They won't get better if they don't get their medication. It is imperative that these animals be kept away from other animals, both to prevent the spread of illness and disease, and to lessen the stress on the foster animal. If any conditions get worse, please contact CHS medical staff. The animal may need to be brought in for a check-up.

## **BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION/SOCIALIZATION**

Certain shelter animals may need to be placed into foster care for modification of an unwanted behavior, or for general socialization. For example, a dog that is so nervous that he is constantly hiding in the back of his cage with his tail between his legs, refusing to eat, will benefit from individualized love and attention in a foster home. Likewise, a kitten that is just a little bit “feral” will benefit from spending time around humans in a home environment. Volunteers that take in these special assignments must be prepared for a little extra work. These animals will need extra time spent building their trust (sometimes through hand-feeding), and possibly some minor training. These animals will be handled on a case-by-case basis, and any specific handling instructions will be relayed to you when the animal is picked up.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

The Connecticut Humane Society will provide food for your foster animal for the entire length of their stay with you. Please try not to run out of food. If you are getting low, please contact your Foster Care coordinator so that they can arrange a time for you to pick up refill supplies. Do not substitute the food we provide with another brand, as changing an animal’s diet can lead to constipation or diarrhea.

If you think your foster animals may be sick or injured, please call the foster care coordinator or medical staff at the first signs of symptoms. We are open 7 days a week to answer your questions, but are not available at night, so please observe your animals for early signs of illness.

In the unfortunate event that a foster animal passes away at your home, please call and inform us. We require that the body be brought to our shelter for proper disposal. Please understand that unfortunately death is a reality when fostering infants. One out of four kittens dies in the wild as a result of sickness and birth defects. Infants that were abandoned by their mother at a young age may not have received the required immunities from their mother’s milk to ward off illness, and may die despite the best care and medicine.

When the day has come to return your foster animal to the shelter, please call in advance and arrange a drop-off time with the Foster Care coordinator to ensure there will be space available for his/her return.

## **ADOPTION POLICY**

Please refrain from lining up a home for your foster animal with friends or family members. All adoptions must go through the Connecticut Humane Society's interview and application process, and we would not want to have an uncomfortable situation should one of your friends not meet our adoption criteria. If one of your friends is interested in adopting, please let us know. For the best interest of the animals, we cannot put a pet on hold for your friend. Adoptions are on a first come, first serve basis. We can let your friend know when the animal is going up for adoption- it is their responsibility to arrive promptly. If they meet our adoption requirements, they will be able to adopt.

If you are interested in adopting your fostered animal, please let us know on the day you return the pet to the shelter. All returned pets must be vaccinated, health checked, and sometimes spayed or neutered before they can be adopted by you. As a courtesy, we will hold the animal for you and will let you know when you will be able to adopt.

For the application and interview process, you must bring all the members of your household, a valid driver's license, and proof of home ownership or copy of your lease agreement that states that you are able to have pets. We do require that our foster volunteers pay the full adoption fee.

## COMMON HEALTH CONDITIONS

The following information will be very helpful if your foster animal shows signs or symptoms of a health problem. It is very important that you observe your animal daily and get to know their personalities and patterns in order to identify any potential health risks. Please observe the following:

- Change in “normal” appetite (what is *normal* for that particular animal)
- Change in “normal” attitude and energy level
- Decreased or concentrated urine
- Major change in stool consistency, or blood in the stool
- Any nasal/eye secretions
- Any coughing/sneezing
- Any vomiting
- Anything “different”

**If you observe any of the above, immediately contact the Foster Care coordinator or CHS Medical staff.**

### DIARRHEA

If your foster animal develops diarrhea, they can become dehydrated. Please call the Foster Care Coordinator ASAP for instructions and possible antibiotics. Often, the animal will need to be dewormed.

**Infants-** Return the feeding level to a previously well-tolerated level for at least 3-4 days, then begin increasing the level again. A little pedialite from a syringe or bottle can help prevent dehydration. This should not take the place of seeking medical care.

**Self-Sufficient/Adults-** Withhold food for 24 hours, then offer a bland diet (boiled chicken and rice.) Gradually reintroduce normal food once diarrhea subsides. If it persists, Amoxicillian anti-biotic drops can be dosed appropriately. Please contact the Foster Care coordinator for dosing instructions. Medical staff may ask to examine the animal, or for you to bring in a fecal sample for examination.

**Call your Foster Care coordinator if diarrhea does not subside within 24 hours or if the diarrhea is accompanied by blood.**

## **UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION (URI)**

Symptoms of URI include colored discharge from eyes or nose, sneezing excessively, trouble breathing (breathing with mouth open), or a popping sound in their chest. When animals show symptoms of URI they may have a decreased appetite from the congestion in the nose. Monitor closely. URI is highly contagious to other animals. **Call your Foster Care Coordinator at the first signs of symptoms. Antibiotics may be needed.**

## **KENNEL COUGH**

The symptom in dogs is coughing. Kennel cough is highly contagious to other dogs. **Call your Foster Care Coordinator at the first sign of coughing. Antibiotics may be needed.**

## **VOMITING**

If an animal is vomiting, withhold all food for 1 feeding, then resume feeding with small, frequent meals to reintroduce food a little at a time. Vomiting can lead to rapid dehydration in animals and should be watched very closely. **Call your Foster Care Coordinator if vomiting persists for more than a few hours.**

## **EXTERNAL PARASITES**

Fleas can be dangerous to your pet's health. Severe infestation, particularly in very young animals, can lead to anemia and even death. To check for fleas, part the animal's hair, especially on its back near the rump, or its stomach, and look for flea dirt, a gritty, black substance that is the feces of fleas. Topical flea treatments can be used on animals over 6 weeks of age, but can be very toxic to infants. Ignoring a flea infestation can be just as deadly as infants can become anemic to the point of death from just a few fleas. Infants can be washed in warm water with a gentle baby shampoo. Make sure to dry them thoroughly with a towel and a hair dryer set to low. If you find evidence of fleas, call the Foster Care Coordinator for advice. Once treated, you will have to thoroughly wash all bedding and toys.

Ticks carry diseases and must be monitored for. If you notice a tick engorged in your animal (it will feel like a small, soft bump), wrap a piece of tissue or toilet paper around it, pinch it firmly as close to the animal's skin as you can, and slowly pull out the body and head. If the body breaks off, the tick will die. Don't worry if the head is left in the body- the animal's body will push it out on its own eventually. If you are able to pull out the entire body, the tick will still be alive. Dispose of it in the toilet. Do not squeeze it or it will pop and you will risk exposure to disease from the blood. There will be a scab on the animal for a week or two. You can put a little antibiotic ointment on it.

Ear mites burrow into an animal's ears. Though microscopic, they leave behind a chunky brown residue- their fecal matter. The fecal matter must be cleaned out. You can use cotton balls dipped in a small amount of mineral oil to clean out the ears. Then the ears must be treated with ear mite medication, ACarexx. Infants under 3 weeks of age, and pregnant mothers cannot be treated with ACarexx. If you suspect an ear mite infestation, please contact the Foster Care coordinator.

## **INTERNAL PARASITES**

If worms are seen either in the stool or vomit (they often resemble spaghetti or rice) **call your Foster Care Coordinator**. It may be necessary to collect a stool sample for analysis. When bringing in a stool sample, only a small amount is needed, and it doesn't matter if litter is attached to it. All animals that come into the shelter are dewormed immediately if they are over 3 weeks old, however it is common for kittens and puppies to have worms, and they need to be dewormed multiple times.

Coccidia is a protozoal parasite that can cause sudden bouts of vomiting, diarrhea and listlessness- collect a stool sample and **call your Foster Care Coordinator for advice**.

## **CONTAGIOUS DISEASES**

Zoonotic diseases are diseases that are transmissible from animals to humans. The following is a list of common transmissible diseases:

- Roundworms can be transmissible, but infrequently- mostly a problem with children handling feces
- Coccidia/Giardia (Internal parasites) can be transmissible through fecal exposure
- Toxoplasmosis, transmitted through fecal exposure, can be serious to a pregnant woman.
- Ringworm skin lesions transmitted through contact and handling
- Fleas transmitted by proximity
- Sarcoptic Mange (Scabies) is a contagious skin condition transmitted by handling an infected animal
- Rabies

**Note: Chance of transmission of any of these conditions to yourself is remote. If you are bitten or scratched by a foster animal, disinfect the area thoroughly and notify CHS so we may take the proper precautions.**

## **ANIMAL TO ANIMAL DISEASE TRANSMISSION:**

- Feline Leukemia- Highly contagious. Your cat must test negative. Kittens under 3 months of age may test false negative, so keep them isolated from your cats.
- Feline Retro Virus- (Feline Aids)- your cats must test negative. It is transmitted mostly through bite wounds.
- Respiratory Virus/ Kennel Cough- Highly contagious. Vaccinations protect against most of them. Your pets must be currently vaccinated. Sick animals must be kept isolated from other animals.
- Rabies- Your pets must be current on their rabies vaccination
- Parasites- External and Internal
- Fungal infections
- Etc.

**To prevent transmission of these diseases to your pets, always keep fostered pets totally separated from your own pets.**

## **FIRST AID EMERGENCY CARE**

An infant's health can deteriorate rapidly. If you discover your infant is in a very weak, frail condition, here are the things you should immediately do while waiting for medical attention:

1. Check body temperature. Infants should be warm, not hot or cold to the touch. Warm up infant gradually with a hot water bottle, heating pad or heat lamp.
2. Force-feed carefully a small amount (1 to 2 ML's) of a sugary solution such as corn syrup or maple syrup that is warmed up in a little water. Pedialite can also be used. Continue this every 15 minutes or so until kitten is strong enough to nurse regular diet.
3. Seek immediate medical attention. Refer to the front of this manual for the correct phone numbers for assistance. If your Foster Care Coordinator is not available, please ask another staff member for assistance.

**Remember: Do NOT take the animal to your veterinarian!** We will not reimburse you. We have a veterinarian that we work with and will instruct you on what you should do in case of illness or injury.