



Welcome To the Tails Foster Program!

This booklet serves as a reference guide for Tails Humane Society foster families. Additional information sheets are available addressing specific topics of concern for foster families.

Thank you for agreeing to take on the rewarding and incredibly helpful task of fostering a homeless animal for Tails. We ask that you carefully review the following guidelines. In addition, if you are interested in also volunteering with Tails, please visit our website at www.TailsHumaneSociety.org/volunteer for more information.

Foster parents and families are essential to the shelter system's ability to find homes for around 3,000 animals each year. Our shelter cannot accommodate all the surrendered, orphaned, sick, and undersocialized animals we receive, so our foster volunteers help care for these animals until space becomes available at our shelter or they are ready to be adopted. Fosters have our undying gratitude and our deepest respect and admiration. There are never enough foster homes to go around, so each is precious to Tails and the animals we are trying to save. Without our Foster Families, we would not be able to save as many lives as we currently are able to!

Feel free to join our Facebook group, **Tails Foster Program**, to meet other fosters and share information and ideas about your fosters!

Remember: Take Only What You Can Handle

For most of us, life is very, very busy. Consider how much time you can devote to a foster animal or animals. In addition to daily upkeep of medicating, cleaning, and socializing the foster animal, the foster will have scheduled and unscheduled trips to the shelter for medical checkups.

Do you have enough comfortable space in your home for this foster animal?

The foster home must keep the foster animal in a comfortable environment to aid in its progress. Stress in animals often causes behaviors not normally seen and can extend illness. We often suggest using a spare room, bathroom, or crate for your foster animal. *Never* house your foster outside. If you have a temperature controlled outside structure, we can discuss the possibility of using this structure for certain animals. (I.E. barn, etc)

Do you have enough room to accommodate the animal you are taking in as a foster?

Many times, we do not know the history of our animals because they were strays or the former owners have provided us with limited information. Therefore, it is important that you have enough room available for the animals you are taking to foster. Kittens and cats who did not come into the shelter together are not allowed to mingle with other cats or kittens. We have this rule to prevent the potential spread of disease, such as upper-respiratory infection (URI), ringworm, and panleukopenia. An adult foster dog can be integrated into your household after having a bath, but any animal under 4 months of age should be kept quarantined for at least 14 days before introducing the dog to your companion pets. For underage animals, under the age of 4 months, they should under no circumstances be allowed outside for the same disease control reasons.

It's important to put your hands on each of your foster pets at least once a day.

This allows you to quickly catch any behavioral or medical concerns. Some animals will require more attention than others.

Tails maintains guardianship of foster animals at all times and reserves the right to reclaim any animal from a foster home at any time. We will inform the foster of the reason the animal needs to be returned and ask the foster to bring the animal back as soon as possible.

How do we decide which animals go to foster?

Not every animal is eligible for the foster program. Animals available for foster care are those we expect to deem adoptable upon completion of a term in foster care. We do not place animals with severe health or behavior problems that would prevent their being adopted in a reasonable period of time even after specialized care.

Here are some reasons an animal might need foster care:

- Very young puppies and kittens, even those with their mothers, are more susceptible to disease that is present in an institutional setting, such as an animal shelter.
- The animal needs to recover from a minor medical issue, such as a wound, minor injury, or URI, or to gain weight.
- The animal has a behavior problem that proper handling can improve, such as fear, inappropriate demand for attention, or poor behavior on a lead. *We do not send aggressive animals to foster care.*
- At certain times of the year, particularly the spring and summer, our shelter becomes overloaded with animals because those are the specific times when mating is likely to occur (commonly referred to as “kitten season”). Our foster families help at those times by taking some animals out of the shelter to ease the crowding until others have been adopted, freeing space for the foster animals to return.

We will *not typically* consider an animal for foster care if any of the following applies:

- The animal represents a threat to public health or safety.
- The animal has a medical or behavioral problem in which the condition, prognosis, or clinical course is unclear.
- The animal has a condition requiring an unreasonable investment of time and expense by Tails, a foster parent, or a potential adopter.
- The animal has a prognosis of poor quality of life or chronic pain and suffering..

Unlike some “*open-door*” shelters, Tails does not have a time policy for keeping adoptable animals and sets no age limits. Tails’s goal is to find permanent, loving homes for as many animals as possible.

How do we place an animal into a foster home?

We follow this process to place an animal into foster care:

1. After the animal has been evaluated for age, health, and behavior status, we assess the need for a foster home. In transport situations, after an animal is selected for the Transport program, we assess if they are in need of a foster or if they are able to come directly into the shelter depending upon space and availability.
2. We then will post and/or email the current active fosters in an attempt to find proper placement for these animals
3. If a foster believes that their home is a good match, they can comment on the picture of the animal that they are able to take this foster or they can reply to the email sent out.
4. Together, the foster and the foster coordinator make arrangements for getting the animal to the foster home.

Picking up your foster pet

Once you agree to care for an animal, the Foster Coordinator prepares the paperwork and arranges a time for pickup. If you have a cat carrier or spare leash, please bring it with you, if you do not we can provide these items for you. Put your name on any equipment to ensure that we can distinguish it from those that the shelters lend out.

NOTE: In normal situations, animals on the adoption floor are not eligible for Fostering. These are adoption ready animals and being in the shelter increases the speed in which a prospective adopter may see them and adopt.

Please also note that, while you might be allowed to choose among several animals, under no circumstances are you to come to the shelter and ask the staff to release an animal to you that the foster coordinator has not specifically designated for foster care.

Other Tails staff are busy and are not required to process foster assignments.

When you come to pick up a foster animal, you may need to sign out specific supplies. You will receive all applicable paperwork for the animal, including kennel card and treatment sheet, and any necessary medication. Donated food and litter will also be available for you to take. Keep in mind that much of the food that we are able to provide for our animals is donated, so if your food is running low, please come and pick up a new bag before you fully run out so that you are able to transition to the new food appropriately. You will be informed of any anticipated veterinary checkups or spay or neuter appointments for your foster pet.

We will tell you the animal's history to the best of our knowledge and discuss any behavioral or medical concerns along with an anticipated return date.

Foster animals *must* stay in the foster's immediate care and residence. Leaving your foster animal in anyone else's care, unless you have made specific arrangements with the approval of the Foster Coordinator, is prohibited. If you cannot care for your foster animal for the entire length of the foster agreement, notify the Foster Coordinator as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements.

Bringing your new foster animal home

- Ideally, set up the area where your foster animal will be staying before you bring your foster home.
- New foster animals should be kept separate from your existing companion animals of the same species unless otherwise specified. Only adult dogs that have been bathed and fully vetted adult cats may not remain separated the whole time. The quarantine period is to protect your own animals as well as Tails' Animals.
- Litters of kittens and adult cats that were not surrendered together must be kept separate from each other to prevent the spread of disease, such as ringworm, URI, and panleukopenia.
- Cats and kittens do very well in a kitty condo, crate, bathroom, or spare bedroom. If you are fostering kittens, please see the document ***"Raising Your Foster Kittens from Birth to Surgery"***.
- Rabbits do very well in large dog crates (no smaller than 30" × 21" × 24), Little critter enclosure or spare bedroom. **You may not house a foster rabbit outside.**
- Dogs and puppies do best with crates or limited by a baby gate. You do not need to crate-train your foster dog, but it is the most efficient way to house train a puppy or retrain an adult dog. This also gives the dog a safe space in your home. **Never crate a dog as punishment.**
- Puppies should be kept contained to an Xpen or a Dog run indoors. Please see the document ***"Raising Your Foster Puppies from Birth to Surgery"***.
- When Fostering adult dogs or cats, Introduce your foster animal to one room of the house at first. Try to have homecoming be a quiet experience for the animal.
- Cats and kittens need a cozy, secure place with a bed to snuggle in. The bed can simply be a low box with a blanket or towel in it.
- Show each cat and kitten where the litter box is. Do not give kittens too much space to roam away from the litter box. A large dog crate (with bars close enough together that the

kittens cannot walk through) is good for containment. Kittens should only be allowed to roam large areas under supervision.

- Provide toys for your foster animal. This can help keep them entertained while you're gone and provide a great bonding activity between you and your foster animal.
- Commit to the appropriate amount of exercise for your foster dog. Many shelter dogs are young (under three years) and need at least 30 to 45 minutes of exercise twice a day. Older dogs might need only a stroll in the morning and evening. Exercise can help more-energetic dogs behave better, but **do not take your foster dog to any off-leash dog park**. Diseases are easily transmitted, and the temperaments of visiting dogs are often unknown.

Introductions with your companion animals

If you must introduce your foster animal to your own animal, please bear these things in mind.

Cats

- Use your discretion in deciding whether to introduce your adult cats to your foster cats and kittens. Some resident cats have difficulty adjusting to fosters and can exhibit inappropriate stress or protest behaviors, such as urine marking.
- If you choose to introduce your adult cat to a foster cat or kitten, make the introductions gradually and after the quarantine period.
- Exchanging towels or blankets between foster and resident cats before introducing them (scent-swapping) can help them get used to each other's scent.
- Remember that some cats will be in foster for infectious diseases and should not be introduced to resident cats.
- If you are introducing your foster cat to more than one resident dogs, do introductions one at a time.
- Remember to speak to the Foster Coordinator prior to introducing foster animals to your resident animals.

Dogs

- Introduce a foster dog and your resident dogs on neutral territory, such as on a walk..

- At home, allow your foster dog to settle down and explore the area, and remove all toys. Feed foster and resident dogs in separate areas until they are fully comfortable with each other. This can take a number of days.
- Keep your new foster and resident dog on a leash initially during any interactions so you can easily break up any altercations.
- If introducing a foster dog to a resident cat, expose them for only small amounts of time at first, and do not force any interactions that could stress out either animal.
- Watch for signs of unusual aggression in your foster animal.
- Baby gates are ideal for gradually introducing animals inside.
- Always supervise your foster's interactions with your companion animals.

Rabbits

- Allow a foster rabbit to exercise in a pen or rabbit-proof room every day.
- Provide a suitable litter box using pine pellets. Do not use clay or clumping litter.
- Provide a diet of pellets, hay, and fresh vegetables (dark leafy greens and root vegetables). Give treats (usually apples, blueberries, strawberries, or papaya) only sparingly.
- If you need to introduce a foster rabbit to resident pets, do so gradually and always with supervision.

Keeping your Personal animals up to date on vaccines

All animals at the shelters receive routine medical care. **It is the foster's responsibility to keep track of your personal pet's vaccine schedule.** Please follow the medical care timeline set by your vet for your personal pets. As covered during your orientation and Foster application, all personal pets must be UTD on vaccines and altered.

If you are picking up puppies or kittens, before you leave, you will be given a schedule of medical needs

Every animal more than 5 weeks old is given vaccines at intake and will require repeated boosters every two to three thereafter. An animal must weigh at least 2.5-3 lb. and be a minimum of 8 weeks old to be altered. Rabies vaccines are given to Tails Animals 16 weeks and older.

Rabbits do not need to receive vaccinations after their initial processing and should come to the clinic only if the Foster Coordinator deems it necessary.

NOTE: Do *not* take a foster animal to your own veterinarian or an emergency clinic. Tails will not reimburse anyone for vet bills for a foster animal without preapproval from the Foster Coordinator or other approved staff. Emergency and nighttime clinics can be incredibly expensive and should be used only in cases of dire emergencies or after obtaining preapproval.

If your foster animal desperately needs immediate medical attention, please Call Loren Jones at 630-777-1275.

For Non-Emergency medical concerns or behavioral concerns, please text Loren Jones at 630-777-1275 or message on Facebook.

Medical Timeline for Foster Cats

Treatment	Age, in Weeks										
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	12-16
Pyrantel (Dewormer)	√		√		√		√		√		
Ponazuril					√		√				
HCP/Distemper Vaccine						√		√		√	√
FIV/FELv/HW Test											√
<p>NOTE: FeLV = feline leukemia virus. FIV = feline immunodeficiency virus. HW = Heartworm.</p> <p>We do NOT test animals under 6 months due to the prevalence of false positives in young animals. Age appropriate flea/tick prevention is given at intake.</p> <p>*Medical Schedule is dependent on date of intake in relationship to animals' age</p>											

Medical Timeline for Foster Dogs

Treatment	Age, in Weeks													
	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	16	26
Pyrantel (Dewormer)	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓					
Fecal Test						✓								
Distemper Vaccine					✓		✓		✓			✓		✓
Bordetella vaccine for kennel cough							✓							
Heartworm Test														✓
Rabies vaccine													✓	

NOTE: Animals are given age appropriate Flea, Tick and Heartworm prevention monthly after intake. Once a fecal test is done, further dewormers and treatment may be needed.

***Medical Schedule is dependent on date of intake in relationship to animals' age.**

Health and Medical Issues

Before we place an animal into an adoption facility or foster home, we evaluate it for age, health, and temperament. We perform some preliminary medical care.

Several diseases are commonly seen in a shelter environment, most of which have incubation periods before symptoms appear. Therefore, your foster animal can be infected before going out into foster care but not show symptoms until after you have brought it home. If symptoms occur once at home, please text or Email Loren at 630-777-1275.

Watch for these symptoms:

- sneezing, coughing, or gagging
- green or yellow discharge from eyes or nose
- breathing heavily or open-mouth breathing
- vomiting
- diarrhea, especially with blood
- loss of appetite
- straining to urinate or defecate
- bleeding from any part of the body
- lethargic or depressed
- twitching
- uneven pupil dilation
- sudden lameness that does not improve with rest within a day
- exhibiting pain when walking or being touched
- ear painful when rubbed or cleaned
- frequent scratching at ear
- frequent head shaking

- any new or abnormal swelling
- hair loss or scabs
- frequent scratching or itchiness, or, after holding the animal, you have bites
- for rabbits:
- decreased appetite and smaller droppings (can signal an intestinal blockage)
- sneezing or coughing
- diarrhea
- labored breathing
- head tilt
- abnormal urine.

It is extremely important to administer *all* medications and finish the *entire* prescription. Sometimes, symptoms will disappear but the hardiest pathogens remain. Stopping medication early allows these strong, hardy pathogens to survive and reproduce. In the future, these pathogens can become much harder to kill and might not respond to normal treatments.

Returning Foster Animals

Whether you are returning kittens or puppies to be fixed or are bringing back a cat that was in the sick room and is now recovered, **please arrange a time with the Foster Coordinator. Do not just bring your foster back to the shelter without this being scheduled.**

To help find an adopter

It is generally not necessary to write up profiles on puppies and kittens for their online posting because they are usually adopted very quickly. However, if you would like to take pictures of your foster animals and write a brief profile, we would greatly appreciate it, particularly for animals that need a little extra care and during kitten season. If you are fostering an adult animal, part of your responsibility as a foster is to take plenty of pictures of your foster and to supply us with a short Bio for your foster animal.

Tips for taking pictures and writing bios for foster pets

- Make sure that you have great photos because those are the first thing someone will see on the website. Remember, these pictures help them imagine your foster in their own home.
- Take a lot of pictures. You might have to take 50 to get two or three good ones.
- Natural light is best. Taking pictures outside for dogs is better than inside. Beside a window is another good spot. Try not to use your flash with any of your foster animals.
- Exercise your foster dog before the photo shoot so it is calmer, and panting looks like smiling!
- The animal should be the subject of the photo, so it should take up most of the space, with a fairly neutral background.
- When writing a bio, accentuate the positive and let potential adopters know why they should consider this animal. - Try to make sure that the bio is written positively, but supply staff at Tails with any negative attributes you've noticed.
- Be honest but avoid negative statements. For example, say "working on house-training" instead of "not house trained," or "wants to be your one and only" instead of "doesn't get along with other pets." Your Bio is marketing your foster pet, it's our job as staff to counsel people about any negative issues.
- If your foster pet has special needs, you can mention them, but do not dwell on them. This is something to go over more once a potential adopter shows interest.

Feel free to promote your foster pet on social media, through email to friends and family, by placing flyers in public or at your workplace (if allowed), and by participating in as many shelter events as possible.

If you are assisting in the adoption process, remember that the fact that a potential adopter approaches some element of pet care differently from how you do things is no indication that they wouldn't provide a great home for your foster pet. However, if you don't feel good about a potential adopter, trust your instincts, and let the adoption staff know.

We encourage the foster parent to fill out a Foster Bio Form, which are available in the File section of the Facebook page. Most potential adopters want to know whether the animal is litter-trained or house-trained and how it gets along with children and other pets.

Often, fosters will find potential adopters among friends and family and have someone lined up to take a kitten or puppy. They *must* wait until after spay or neuter surgery and microchipping and *come* to the shelter to adopt. Do not give them the animal until adoption.

- Contact the foster coordinator to get the Animal ID number of the animal the individual would like to adopt. The potential adopter will need to come in and fill out the adoption survey to place this animal on hold.
- When dropping the pet off, let staff know that there is a potential adopter for that specific animal.
- **Make sure the adopter has the pet's ID number.**
- The adopter should first complete their adoption, then take the animal into their care.

Should you be interested in adopting your foster, you will have first choice to adopt, but you might be required to go through the appropriate adoption process.

If a foster animal becomes ill while in the adoption center and requires fostering again, we will contact the original foster parents first.

Saying Goodbye

Being a foster parent is a rewarding but difficult job. You will undoubtedly become attached to your foster pet, and it can be very difficult to give them up. It might be hard for you to see your foster pet in a kennel environment after having all the comforts of home while living with you. In addition, you might feel anxious about the future home the animal will have. It is important to remember that you have made this animal adoptable and that you must trust the adoption staff to find a good home for your friend. Although you might be sad, the new owners are excited and happy about finding a new companion. Celebrate that your foster has found its forever home.

An animal is fostered because it is not, at present, adoptable. For most of these animals, the special care you provide will be decisive, and they will return to us healthy and adoptable. There are those few who, despite your best efforts, will not become healthy, well-adjusted pets. Our animal care staff might have to make the difficult decision to euthanize such an animal. This is the unfortunate risk involved in fostering animals and can be a very painful experience for the foster. You must be aware of and prepared for this possible, though unlikely, outcome.

A successful fostering can be a joyful experience for the animal. We hope that the rewards you experience will outweigh the difficulty of parting with an animal to whom you have undoubtedly become attached. Without your help, these animals would not have a chance. We appreciate your efforts and recognize that you are providing a very special service.

We also recognize that returning foster animals to the shelter can be very emotional, even under the best of circumstances.

The shelter's staff works diligently to place your foster animals in loving homes. We will try to contact you in a timely manner to inform you when your foster animals are adopted, and when able to we will post Adoption Photos to the **Tails Foster Program** facebook page.

As a volunteer foster parent, you have given a very special gift to the animals you have cared for and loved—a second chance at a full and wonderful life.

If you decide to Adopt

Fosters are given first right to refusal for adoption, meaning that as long as your home qualifies to adopt, you are given the first chance to adopt. This however is still subject to our regulations for adoptions. For example, two puppies from the same litter are **not** eligible to be adopted together due to Littermate Syndrome.

Foster adoption policy – A foster home that fosters animals consistently for at least one year will receive \$75 off of puppy and adult dog adoptions, \$45 off senior dogs and \$50 off cats and kittens. The discount is limited to one adoption every 24 months. The adoption must be finalized within 10 days of the foster home committing to adopting the animal, otherwise or s/he will become available to the public for adoption. **Animals in foster and not available for adoption to the general public do *not* qualify for any active in shelter adoption promotions.** The Director of Operations and/or Executive Director must approve each adoption, and the pet must reside in the foster home.

Commitment

The length of foster care for an animal depends on a variety of factors, including age and health of the animal and space at the shelters. Typically, foster care lasts anywhere from two weeks to two months. During the peak of kitten season in the summer, the shelters often run out of available cages on the adoption floors. This might require the foster to hold onto a healthy, adoptable cat or kitten a couple of weeks after the animal is ready for adoption.

In such situations, we hope that you find fostering a rewarding experience and will continue to help; because it is a volunteer effort, we appreciate any time you can commit to help the animals. When we release an animal to a foster home, we determine an approximate amount of time needed, and we ask that, barring any major problems, you keep the animal for the required time until we deem it adoptable.

Thank you, foster parents!

Tails Humane Society