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Ashtabula County
APL

Foster Guide



Dear Foster Family,

First and foremost, THANK YOU! You are about to embark on a life-saving journey that you'll never forget. You'll also become a hero to your foster animal and their future fur-ever home. Our foster program exists to give young animals a chance to grow and give injured, sick or undersocialized animals an opportunity to heal. Since the program's inception, our foster families have helped countless dogs and cats.

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

Types of Animals Needing Foster Care

- Puppies or kittens too young to be adopted
- Abused or neglected dogs or cats in need of socialization and love
- Injured dogs or cats recovering from surgery or medical intervention
- Sick dogs or cats
- Abandoned mother with a litter of kittens or puppies
- Animals in need of decompression and time away from the shelter

If the requirements in the following section do not work well with your lifestyle, please let us know. We can help you find a foster situation that will work best for you. Time away from the shelter, even for a few hours or a day can drastically change the outlook of a shelter animal.

Thank you!

Mary Glauser,
Executive Director
Ashtabula County Animal Protective League

Are You a Foster Candidate?

Time

- Are you able to devote the recommended amount of time daily and weekly to your foster animal? (See chart below)
- Are you able to bring your foster to the shelter for vaccinations and wellness exams every two weeks?
- Are you able to contact ACAPL or bring the foster animal to an emergency care facility if immediate treatment is needed?

Space

- Are you able to separate your foster from your household pets for at least two weeks to protect them from illnesses and allow for proper adjustment?
- Are you able to handle cleaning/sanitizing procedures such as washing hands after every interaction and cleaning/disinfecting spaces routinely?
- Are you able to handle potential home damage (carpet, clothing, furniture, etc.) associated with animals?

Care

- Are you prepared for illness, death or possible humane euthanasia of your foster animal?
- Are you able to emotionally handle letting go of the foster animal after becoming attached once their foster period is over?
- Are you able to handle the potential of a foster animal carrying illness that could affect your household animals/family?

Time of Foster Duration and Daily Commitment

Animal	Duration	Daily Care
Sick Injured Cat/Dog	1 week-3 months	2+ hours
Weaned Puppies/Kittens	1-5 weeks	3+ hours
Neonatal Puppies/Kittens	6-8 weeks	6+hours
Mom with Puppies	2-8 weeks	3+hours
Decompressed/Socialized Dog/Cat	2-4 weeks	2+hours

Get Ready!

Preparing the Room

Before you bring home your foster(s), make sure that you have a suitable place for them to stay. A bathroom often works well. The room should adhere to the following guidelines:

- A space where temperature can be controlled.
- The space has been disinfected by using a mild bleach solution (1 part bleach to 32 parts water) or we can provide a bottle of 'Rescue' shelter disinfectant.
- **Separate from other household pets.**
- Can withstand messes: spilt water or food, vomit, urine, feces, etc.
- No breakable items.
- Electrical outlets and wires are blocked.
- No small items; remove all potential poison dangers: plants, chemicals, food, etc.
- Secured windows (closed or with a secure screen).
- Secured appliances (toilet lids closed).

Tips & Tricks

Use non-porous feeding dishes (we will provide) either ceramic or stainless steel so they can be sanitized.

Change linens/blankets daily

Supervise Play Time

Get Set!

Everything you will need to care for your foster will be provided free of charge. You can obtain replenish supplies at any time by stopping into the shelter or during your check-ups.

Cats

- Indoors only (do not let your foster cat/kitten outside)
- A large crate or separate room is best, especially during the first two weeks or if there are other animals in the home.

Dogs

- Dogs should be kept indoors in a crate when unattended or a separate room/office.
- Dogs should be on a leash at all times when outdoors unless in a private secure fenced in area. A six foot fence is recommended.
 - We do not use prong or choke collars, remote collars or retractable leashes. We can provide you with appropriate handling equipment for your foster.
- Foster dogs/puppies are not permitted to go to dog parks
 - Dog parks can be extremely dangerous environments; there are no professionals at dog parks monitoring conflicts/interactions.
 - Not every dog is safe
 - While dogs are social animals, like people, they are individuals who do not like everyone they meet
 - Dogs have a variety of play styles that can conflict or instigate fights.

Puppies

- Indoor-kitchen or bathroom might be best (floors that can be sanitized)
- Puppies should be around humans as much as possible for socialization purposes and not isolated.
- Puppies should be kept in a crate/enclosure at all times when not under supervision. Crates are provided.
- 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.

Puppy Development

- In the first two weeks of life, puppies are helpless and vulnerable.
- They are still developing basic reflexes, their hearing and vision is still not fully developed, and they are unable to properly control their body temperatures. They should therefore be confined to a nursery area. Puppies should not be allowed to mingle with your own pets.
- During the first 1-3 weeks of life puppies do not urinate or defecate on their own and require stimulation for elimination. Gently rub a warm cloth or cotton pad on the puppy's genital area and anus. This should be done before or after feeding.
- Keeping the puppies clean from food and feces is vital for his or her health. If you notice your puppy has food, urine, or feces on him or her gently wipe the puppy down with a warm damp cloth or baby wipe. Be sure to dry the puppy well afterwards so they do not become chilled.

Kitten Development

- In the first two weeks of life, puppies are helpless and vulnerable.
- They are still developing basic reflexes, their hearing and vision is still not fully developed, and they are unable to properly control their body temperatures. They should therefore be confined to a nursery area. Kittens should not be allowed to mingle with your own pets.
- During the first 1-3 weeks of life kittens do not urinate or defecate on their own and require stimulation for elimination. Gently rub a warm cloth or cotton pad on the kitten's genital area and anus. This should be done before or after feeding.
- Keeping the kittens clean from food and feces is vital for his or her health. If you notice your kitten has food, urine, or feces on him or her gently wipe the kitten down with a warm damp cloth or baby wipe. Be sure to dry the kitten well afterwards so they do not become chilled.

Tips & Tricks

Use original formula Dawn dish soap (diluted) for cleaning or unscented baby wipes.

Be aware of changes in color or smell of feces; make notes of changes.

Expectations/Feeding by Age

Weeks	Feeding	Development
0-1	Bottle feed formula every 2-3 hours. If there is a mom, make sure that all babies are nursing. A lot of crying or activity could indicate a problem with mom's milk.	At this age, babies should be held minimally. They should be sleeping 90% of the time and eating the remaining 10%. Babies should be kept in a warm environment; chilling is the number one danger to newborns.
1-2	Bottle feed every 2-3 hours until bellies are full, but not bloated. Overnight feedings can be every 3-4 hours.	Healthy babies should be round and warm. When picked up they should wiggle, but seldom cry. Ears should open between 5 and 8 days, Eyes will open between 8 to 14 days.
2-3	Bottle feed every 3-4 hours until bellies are full but not bloated.	Babies begin to crawl around and should be almost standing. They will begin to play with each other.
3-4	Bottle feed every four hours until full. Babies may start eating from a bowl.	Babies begin to see better and begin to function like adults. Puppies will start to clean themselves, if they are still with mom, mom will do most of the cleaning. At three weeks they will begin to play readily.
4-5	Bottle feed as needed to keep them sustained. They should begin eating mash (see weaning) and eat from a dish.	Puppies: Begin housebreaking by using a training pad or outside secured area. After each feeding place puppy on pad/outside. Praise for any successes. Kittens: Introduce a litter box.
5-6	Feed mash four times a day. Thicken gradually by reducing the amount of liquid. For reluctant eaters continue to add formula to the mash.	Be sure to provide different, safe toys for babies to explore. They will be highly mobile and curious during this stage.
6-7	Babies should be eating dry food well. Feed at least meals a day, they may not eat much at each sitting, but will eat frequently throughout the day.	Continue play and interaction as much as possible. Puppies may begin to be food possessive, you may need to use a second dish. Always provide plenty of food. Do not use adverse or punishing techniques.
7-8	Offer dry food 3-4 times a day. Leave a bowl of water out at all times. Do not feed table scraps.	Continue playing with babies. You can even begin some training with puppies.
8+	Babies should be ready for spay/neuter and forever homes!	

Type of Food

- Never give a neonate anything other than their specified formula! (No cow's milk!)
- Babies who are less than three to four weeks old are fed a combination of liquid or powder formula. After a feeding, unused liquid formula can be stored for up to three days in the refrigerator or frozen for future feedings. Frozen formula will last for 6 months.
- The powder formula must be mixed for feedings. It is important to closely follow mixing directions: one part powder into two parts warm water (as it can cause diarrhea or constipation if not done correctly). When mixing do not use a blender. Any reconstituted powder formula can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours. After that point, it must be discarded. Formula should be warm, but not hot. Microwaving is not recommended as it can heat unevenly and cause burns. You can microwave a larger dish and set the bottle syringe in it to warm.

Feeding Etiquette

- Only use clean nipples and bottles
- Feed 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. This simulates how they would nurse from a mom.
- Do not feed a baby while she is on her back. This can cause formula to go down the wrong way and end up in the lungs.
- Gently open the baby's mouth with your finger and place the nipple on the tongue.
- Stroking baby can help them to eat.
- Pull lightly on the bottle. This promotes strong sucking.
- Tilt the bottle up slightly. This prevents the baby from inhaling too much air.
- Do not squeeze the bottle to force formula into the baby's mouth. This can cause formula to move into the lungs.
- After feeding, burp your baby by gently massaging her back.
- Be sure to stimulate the baby after or before feeding. Stimulate them with a warm cloth if necessary.
- Fill out the Daily Weight and Feeding Record.

Weaning

Weaning can occur at 4 to 5 weeks and should be conducted gradually. Create a gruel by mixing moistened dry food with water or canned food. Introduce them to solid food by offering warmed can food, mixed with a small amount of water into mash, in a shallow dish. Begin by placing the baby to the side of the plate, he or she should start to eat, it may take a few tries for babies to understand. If they are not interested, wait a few hours and then try again. After they have accepted the mash, gradually thicken it by adding less water. Begin to also offer dry food on a free feeding basis.

If the mother is present she will usually begin weaning the puppies by discouraging them from nursing; however, some dogs will allow the nursing until the babies are old enough for spay/neuter surgery. Some nursing activity is the canine equivalent of thumb-sucking, that is, for comfort only. Even if the babies appear to be nursing, they may not be getting all of the nutrition they need from mom. Make sure the babies are eating food and gaining weight.

Amount of Food

Overfeeding is as dangerous as underfeeding. Feed puppies until they are full but not bloated.

Cleaning Equipment

Keeping the nursing bottles and supplies clean is vital as this will prevent diarrhea, vomiting, or infection. Cleaning the bottles and nursing nipples is quite easy. Using hot, soapy water clean the bottle with a bottle brush. If you do not have a bottle brush you may wash the bottle and nursing nipple in the dishwasher. You may place them in the silverware rack or in a dishwasher basket.

Additional Feeding Considerations

The digestive systems of babies are fragile. Do not offer babies treats. Only feed them the food provided by the shelter. If puppies are fighting over food, start to feed them separately. Contact the shelter for support.

Never take food away from a baby that is growling. Simply remove the other babies and wait for the food bowl to be unattended.

Babies with Mom

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.

Socialization

Even adult animals need socialization; however, proceed slowly with any adult that you do not know. Create situations for socialization but let her come to you. Stop the session if you notice any negative signs, such as swishing tail, ears laid back, head jerk towards you, tensing up, moving away, or growling/hissing. It is always best to move slowly and use caution when reaching into the nesting area.

Puppy/Kitten Feeding/Weight Record

Name/ID						
Date						
Weight						
Feeding 1						
Milk Amt						
Bowel Y/N						
Feeding 2						
Milk Amt						
Bowel Y/N						
Feeding 3						
Milk Amt						
Bowel Y/N						
Feeding 4						
Milk Amt						
Bowel Y/N						
Feeding 5						
Milk Amt						
Bowel Y/N						
Feeding 6						
Milk Amt						
Bowel Y/N						

Notes

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 relieve themselves every 30-60 minutes when active (do not wake; but after eating/drinking, naps, and play sessions) A puppy can hold his/her bladder one hour for each month of age (ie 2 months=2 hours, 3 months=3 hours)

Remember these five steps to successful house training:

- 1) Prevent accidents by taking out frequently
- 2) Reward and praise for going to the bathroom outside
- 3) Anticipate bathroom needs (look for cues)
- 4) Interrupt accidents by taking puppy outside; but do not punish/scold
- 5) Clean up accidents with enzyme cleaner

Pee Pads (if used)

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 if used properly. The crate should be big enough for the puppy/dog to stand up, turn around and stretch out; we will make sure you are paired with the correct size when you leave, but make sure you advise of growing puppies needs so we can upsize when needed.

A crate should be considered a short term confinement area, with a longer-term area such as a xpen or baby gated room. If you are beginning to crate train, feed your puppy in the crate, provide stuffed chew toys only in the crate or provide treats that are special only in the crate so they can begin to have a positive association. Keep sessions short and fun, and have your puppy/dog in the crate for short periods of time to start. Never use a crate as a form of punishment.

Toys

Having toys available is vital for their mental health and development. A selection of toys is best such as plush squeak toys, rope toys, stuffed kongs and teething toys. Please supervise all new toys to make sure they are safe. We do not recommend bones, rawhides or other consumables for dogs/puppies. The shelter is happy to provide you with a variety of safe enrichment toys for your foster.

Socialization

From 3 weeks to 3 months of age, puppies are biologically primed to learn that new sights, smells, objects, environments and people are fun and safe. This is a crucial development period for a puppy.

Socialization is not simply exposing a puppy to a variety of new things, but using positive socialization training. Each new person the puppy meets should be associated with treats and toys. Take things slow and do not push if a puppy is wary. It is better to stop an association before it produces fear and try again later.

Training: Positive reinforcement

As a foster, there are many situations for you to train your animal. The ACAPL is a Fear Free trained shelter and only promotes using positive reinforcement.

Do not scold or punish bad behavior. When unwanted behavior is performed redirect with a kissy noise or toy. Praise and reward the puppy/dog for stopping the undesired behavior. Turning your back or

presenting your side are also ways to discourage behaviors without punishing.

Punishment can instill fear, which can lead to aggressive behavior.

Praise and reward good behavior.

When a behavior is immediately followed by a positive outcome, the behavior is strengthened.

Our shelter partner for positive behavior training is Cold Nose Companions in Chardon, Ohio. Their website offers many great, free resources at www.coldnosecompanions.com.

Socialization Checklist

Socializing your puppy/dog to these items/actions is as easy as touching your puppy's 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

All, bearded, variety of ages, younger older, with canes/walker, men with hats, masks, purses, children (of appropriate ages).

Behaviors

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

Surfaces

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

Health & Grooming

Nail clippers (do not use, just present), feet being touched, ears being touched, tails being touched.

Maintaining Foster Health

Diarrhea

There are three types of stool; normal, soft and diarrhea. 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. Diarrhea is common and can be caused by parasites, viruses, bacteria, food changes, stress, overfeeding and other issues.

Diarrhea must be monitored as it can lead to dehydration. If the foster 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 foster(s) are dewormed upon intake and every recheck you may experience diarrhea afterwards. 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 vomit. If you notice worms please contact the shelter to schedule a recheck.

Vomiting

Vomiting is not serious unless it happens continuously or accompanied by diarrhea. It can lead to dehydration. If vomiting occurs 2-3 times in a row, please contact the shelter.

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 or closed eyes please call the shelter to schedule a recheck.

Parasites

Ear Mites

Ear mites are parasites that live in the ear canal. You may notice a bald spot behind their ears due to continual scratching. They may also shake their head. The ears may smell bad or you may see a discharge similar to coffee grounds. Ear mites can be contagious to other animals and should be treated. Please call the shelter to schedule a recheck.

Fleas

Animals that have fleas will scratch themselves. Topical flea prevention is given to fosters over 4 weeks of age. Flea treatment for those under 4 weeks is daily brushing and occasional baths with Dawn dishsoap (Proper

drying is essential for those under 4 weeks of age). Baths should not be given more than once a week.

Illnesses

Upper Respiratory 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

Parvovirus/PanLeuk

Parvovirus is a deadly and highly contagious virus that attacks a dog's gastrointestinal tract. Once parvovirus is present in an environment it is difficult to remove and can last for many, many years. It is transmitted through direct contact with contaminated feces.

Signs to look for:

- Lethargy
- Dehydration
- Loss of appetite
- Abdominal bloating
- Fever
- Low body temperature
- Vomiting
- Severe diarrhea with or without blood

If you notice these signs immediately contact the emergency number for the shelter.

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:

- Lethargy
- Severe Upper Respiratory Infection

- Neurological signs such as seizure activity, convulsions and or partial/complete paralysis.

Fading puppies/kittens

Occasionally, a puppy/kitten that has 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. Although difficult to experience, there is likely nothing a foster could have done differently to achieve a different outcome.

Veterinary Care

Please contact your shelter contract during normal business hours with any concerns. For emergencies, please call the emergency number. We work directly with fosters to coordinate care with our shelter veterinarian. The shelter veterinarian manages the health and well-being of each and every animal in our care. In the event of an emergency, your shelter contact will coordinate outside care for you and advise on the appropriate steps to take. We do have a policy whereas we will not reimburse fosters for outside care that is not pre-authorized by the veterinary staff, unless is severe emergencies.

Scheduling rechecks

Foster animals are required to come back to the shelter every two weeks for vaccinations and rechecks. You will receive a reminder email to confirm your scheduled time.

Vaccines

Kittens and puppies receive vaccinations every two weeks from the time they are 4 weeks of age until they are 15-16 weeks/2 lbs.

Is it an Emergency?

NON-EMERGENCIES

Monitor First

- Runny discharge from the eyes or nose
- Lack of appetite
- Lethargy (lack of energy)
- Diarrhea lasting more than 3 or 4 feedings
- Vomiting
- Weight loss
- Coughing and sneezing
- Lack of bowel movements for more than 24-36 hours or straining to urinate/defecate
- Swollen eyes or eyes held closed

During business hours, contact the shelter immediately for triage instructions at 440.224.1222 or text foster coordinator Kaylee at 440.855.7866.

Require Immediate Shelter Contact

- Continuous diarrhea longer than 24-36 hours
- Continuous vomiting longer than 12 hours
- Loss of appetite
- Bleeding of any kind (from nose or in urine/stool)
- Any trauma (hit by a car, dropped, unconscious, etc)
- Difficult breathing or labored breathing
- Dog or cat that is not responsive
- Lethargy with or without fever

During business hours, contact the shelter immediately for triage instructions at 440.224.1222.

If this is an emergency, after hours please contact the Emergency Line at **(440) 252-2694**

Congratulations You have saved a life!

All foster parents are encouraged to promote adoption of their foster pet to friends, family and potential adopters. All adopters are required to submit a match form and must go through the regular process.