



HUMANE SOCIETY OF ELMORE COUNTY

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FOSTER CARE MANUAL

1. HOW WE START WITH PETS COMING INTO OUR SHELTER.

A. Preventive Veterinary Care.

- (1) We know that the vast majority of pets coming into our Shelter have either never had any vaccinations, or only received the most minimal of vaccinations meaning that, especially with puppies & kittens, they are at very high risk of either bringing in disease or contracting it if exposed.
- (2) Vaccinating upon intake is the core of modern Shelter Medicine and we vaccinate puppies and kittens on intake to give them the best possible chance of staying healthy.
- (3) No vaccine works immediately but vaccinating on intake gives them their best chance at warding off any disease they may encounter.
- (4) Our puppies & dogs are vaccinated for canine distemper, adenovirus, parainfluenza, parvovirus & bordatella
- (5) Our kittens & cats are vaccinated for panleukopenia (cat distemper), rhinotracheitis, calicivirus & chlamydia
- (6) All incoming animals are also treated for external parasites such as fleas, ticks and mites & de-wormed for internal parasites such as roundworms & hookworms (most common).
- (7) We will work to clear other internal parasites such as tapeworms, coccidia, giardia as necessary.
- (8) Dogs over six-months of age will also be tested for heartworms as part of their evaluation for adoption after any stray hold or immediately after owner surrender.

B. Behavioral Assessments are made after an animal has settled in so we can get a better read and done throughout an animal's stay to ascertain how it gets along with other animals, with people, etc. All of this will help us determine if a pet will be a potential good fit for a foster home and eventually an adoptive home.

2. FOSTER CARE ANIMAL PICK UP AND RETURN

- A. Our fosters must live in the River Region area and it is vital that we can reach you in a timely manner via texting, calling, emailing or Facebook Messengering as fostering requires coordination between you and our Foster Care Manager regarding medical needs, surgery schedules, etc. Fosters have to be able to be returned to us within 48 hours if necessary. We will also provide you with our after-hours contact information so you can reach out in the event of an animal or family emergency. You will never be 'stuck' with an HSEC animal(s) as we will arrange to take them back at any time. Of course, taking foster pets back during our operational hours is preferred, but in the event of an emergency we will coordinate with you for an after-hours link-up.

- B. 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 can only take say, 2, 3 or 4 and not 8, 9 10 – tell us as we sometimes do split litters as fostering large litters is challenging at best. 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.
- C. 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 appropriate food, 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.
- D. Our Foster Care Manager will stay in touch with you to coordinate bringing your fosters in for rechecks and vaccinations, for their spay/neuter surgeries when old enough, and for any meetings with approved applicants if they are still in foster at that time.

3. PRECAUTIONS FOR OTHER 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. This is why all dogs or cats must be over six-months old and fully vaccinated and should be kept separate from your foster animals for at least for the first two weeks.

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. We have learned that using old linens like sheets and then just tossing them instead of washing, can help reduce disease significantly. We received linens from area hotels and will give them to you if we have them.

4. FOOD.

A. 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.

B. Do NOT feed puppies or kittens Cow's Milk. Goat's milk is great but rather costly.

C. Bottle Feeding Homemade Formula Mixture

- (1) 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).
- (2) Mix all of this well and keep refrigerated when not in use. Gently heat the amount you are going to use at each feeding rather than the entire amount.

D. Pedialyte Mixture

- (1) 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.
- (2) Homemade Pedialyte 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!

5. CLEANING.

- A. Soap and bleach will be your friend. Fostering is a messy job to be sure. Bleach (at NO MORE than a 30% mixture), used on solid, non-porous surfaces, will kill virtually all disease organisms. It is important, however that ALL solids (feces, food) is first cleaned up, then the area washed with soap and then use the diluted bleach mixture and let it sit for a few minutes to make sure it is disinfecting.
- B. Be aware the Bleach labeled as NO SPLASH is NOT to be used as it has a lower sodium hypochlorite concentration and states (though not clearly enough) – NOT FOR DISINFECTION.
- C. Do NOT use any cleaning products that contain Pine or Lemon as pine is toxic to cats and lemon generally also causes cats to have respiratory issues.
- D. You cannot disinfect grass or dirt. For this reason, new puppies should NEVER go into your yard. And, when it is safe for them to go outside, you should have a designated area only for the foster puppies that is separate from the yard in general (puppy pen). If, and we hope it never occurs, you foster a puppy or puppies that break with parvovirus and they have peed or pooped around your yard – you will no longer be able to foster puppies. Parvo can stay in the ground for up to a year which endangers any other puppies or perhaps even your own pets if not fully vaccinated or old and debilitated. And, in the event you have not been in your home long, or your yard is not fenced, you may not know that a sick animal has come through leaving behind disease that can infect unprotected puppies.
- E. In the event of an intestinal challenge called Coccidia (diagnosed by looking at a fecal sample under the microscope), then Ammonia will have to be used as bleach is ineffective against Coccidia.
- F. A newer and most used product in the Shelter world is called RESCUE which is oxygenated Peroxide. This is an excellent disinfectant but does have a higher cost challenge.
- G. We all know that puppies and kittens can be stinky little things, but use immense caution in regards to essential oils, diffusers and like products as many of those are extremely toxic to cats.

6. KITTENS & PUPPIES

- A. From birth to 2 weeks old should be bottle fed every 2-3 hours. You can feed a homemade formula (see formula recipe) or a milk replacer (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. From 2-3 weeks of age, should be fed every 4 hours and at 3 weeks, canned food mixed with water and formula can be offered. These babies should be held on your lap and slightly upright when bottle feeding. After they are 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. Baby tummies are tiny so caution must be taken to not force or overfeed which can result in aspiration pneumonia which can be deadly.

- C. Babies should be kept warm and in a small-confined area such as a box, x-pen or crate. Heating pads should be covered with a towel and the temperature of the pad monitored to avoid burning them.
- D. Stools should be formed. If your puppy or 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 babies 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.
- E. Vomiting or lack of appetite in a puppy or kitten is very serious. Babies do not have the fat reserve to sustain themselves like adults do and need steady nutrition as they can become dehydrated very quickly. A baby 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 the staff cell phone you have been given, or message the Shelter's Facebook Messenger or email the Shelter at hselco@bellsouth.net as we monitor all of that often.
- F. If you find missing spots of fur on any puppy or kitten, or they are scratching themselves a lot it is imperative you contact us. While we hope not, a fungal disease called ringworm can be highly contagious to not only those babies but to 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 for treatment.
- G. It is best to keep puppies & kittens in a confined area on a surface that can be easily disinfected. Bleachable surfaces are recommended due to the possibility of incubating viruses. Puppies can be started on potty pad training and kittens to use a litter box. Please do not use carpet covered scratching posts with fosters as those cannot be disinfected and, especially in the case of ringworm, will make it impossible to treat the kittens or get it out of your house.
- H. Babies are like babies anywhere – prone to getting into trouble if allowed too much freedom. They might get into or behind something and get stuck, chew on something unsafe like electrical wires, chew on plants that are toxic, etc. This is why foster animals should be in their own room, space to help protect them from their own mischief.

7. NURSING MOMS w/ LITTERS

- A. We sometimes need homes for adults who are still nursing their litters. Some dog and cat moms will be protective of their babies, some will let you handle them with ease. Provide your nursing mom and her babies a quiet area in your home until they feel comfortable. Limit your contact with the babies and if possible do not handle them at all for the first few days until the mom gets used to you and her new surroundings.

- B. Keep ALL of your own pets AWAY from mom and babies as the sweetest dog/cat can be very different when she is nursing babies .
- C. Nursing moms need to eat as much as possible. Keep fresh food and water available for her at all times.
- D. A mom may ignore a baby in her litter which means you may also need to be prepared to bottle feed. If you observe this, please call the shelter as this could also be a sign the baby is ill. If you do discover a baby that has died (we caution fosters that this can happen), please call the shelter or bring the deceased baby to us.
- E. Puppies & kittens open their eyes between 7-14 days of age. Kittens teeth start to come in at 2-3 weeks of age, while puppies teeth start coming in at 3-4 weeks old.
- F. We start deworming at 2 weeks old as many of these babies have heavy worm loads which can quickly and negatively impact their health and growth. We can deworm here in the Shelter or, if you are comfortable, will show you how to administer at home and give instructions for subsequent dewormings.
- G. When the babies are 3-4 weeks old, you can mix canned food with water and either a evaporated milk mixture (NOT cows milk) or milk replacer, if available, in a shallow bowl. These babies will walk in the food and lick their paws and start eating so be prepared for a lot of baby cleanup after. The transition can take a few days to a week.
- H. As babies are weaned, watch for the mother's mammary glands to make sure she is not getting a condition called mastitis. Her mammarys should be soft to slightly firm but not red, hot, inflamed, or dark in color. If you think the mammary glands don't look normal, please contact the shelter for mom to be checked.
- I. Moms do get tired of nursing babies – some sooner than later. Puppies or kittens can be weaned starting at 6 weeks of age if necessary (four weeks if the mom is not wanting to let her pups nurse), 8 weeks is optimal. If keeping mom, post-weaning, is too challenging, mom can come back to the Shelter while puppies stay in the foster home.
- J. A puppy or kitten that 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.
- K. Please do not give babies any types of toys that they cannot chew apart, choke on or swallow. And just like bedding and food/water dishes, toys must also be washed and disinfected. Advice from seasoned fosters is to generally toss all toys from one foster litter and start with new toys in a new foster litter.
- L. Babies 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. Paper towels are excellent at quickly sopping up moisture to dry them fast. Dawn Dishwashing detergent is very effective at killing fleas and we use often if they come in crawling in them.

8. SENIORS

- A. Many seniors suffer from dental issues and will need soft food only diets.
- B. Like us humans, senior dogs can be a bit set in their ways and sometimes need some TLC to get to eat appropriate food. Cooked chicken and rice can often be a great way to get a senior to eat when they are being a bit stubborn.
- C. On a very temporary basis, canned cat food can often entice a reluctant eater to eat.

9. HEARTWORM TREATMENT DOGS

- A. Dogs with heartworms often end up in the shelter. If their overall health and temperament makes them suitable for adoption we will work with area vets to treat them which takes a minimum of 60 days (30 days of Doxycycline, then the actual Immiticide injections to kill the adult heartworms).
- 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. Dogs undergoing heartworm treatment CANNOT be allowed to run loose in a yard playing with other dogs, chasing squirrels, barking at the neighbors as all of that increases their heart rate which then increases their likelihood of having a catastrophic embolism which can result in their death.
- C. Fosters for dogs undergoing heartworm treatment must be very observant for any signs of panting, coughing or respiratory distress. These symptoms can be precursors to a very serious medical incident so do not delay contacting us to arrange for that pet to get to a Vet immediately.

10. RECOVERY FROM MAJOR SURGERIES/OTHER SEVERE CONDITIONS

- A. These will be individual situations and those pets needs will depend on what type of surgery or condition. Suffice to say that recovery from broken bones or amputation is significant in monitoring activity to allow the injury or surgery to heal, but perhaps also helping that pet relearn how to navigate on three limbs.
- B. Routine bandage changes may be necessary, wearing of a cone so the pet does not damage surgery areas or cats can be taxing to the foster and pet and routine trips back to the Vet may be necessary for rechecks.
- C. Other animals must generally always be kept away from an animal recovering from a major injury or illness to keep their activity in check.

11. MALNOURISHED ANIMALS

- A. Starved animals must be fed very carefully. SMALL but frequent feedings are vital to their recovery as too much food too fast can shock their system and lead to their death.
- B. Many animals that have been starved have also lost lots of their fur that will regrow once they

are on the mend. In the interim, soft bedding is a definite so they do not develop sores from laying on hard or rough surfaces. Keeping them warm by perhaps wearing t-shirts or animal clothing may also help in their recovery.

C. Starved animals will often not have the energy to do much more than eat, eliminate and sleep and sleep is their friend so let them. As they regain strength their desire and ability to interact, go for walks will all improve.

D. Watching the light come back on in the eyes of these pets is one of the most rewarding things you will ever see.

12. POCKET PETS, BIRDS, REPTILES & FARM ANIMALS.

A. These are animals that all have very special needs and, since not as common, far too much to go into in this manual.

B. We will work with individual fosters depending on the species for their special needs and care.

13. Fostering is definitely the most challenging, yet most rewarding way to help our Shelter animals. Remember – for every pet you foster another is also saved when a space is opened up in the Shelter. BUT, if fostering turns out to be not at all what you expected or just too much, don't worry, we understand as it is tough. And many a seasoned foster has decided to 'take a break' as it is demanding work with lots of emotions attached. This is why it is most important, before you start, to evaluate if you truly have the time, if your home is suitable and if your other pets will allow.

14. The Humane Society of Elmore County appreciates all of our Foster Care parents who provide our animals with a loving and nurturing home as they get ready for adoption. THANK YOU for providing this valuable service to our animals!