



THE HUMANE SOCIETY OF ELMORE COUNTY

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WHY FOSTER CARE?

Fostering can be the most challenging and rewarding thing you can do for those who love animals. Fosters give selflessly of their time, their homes & their hearts to help us ensure the best possible future for animals that may have come to us with bleak beginnings. We know that fostered animals generally adopt faster and better as adopters know they have been in actual homes and can often get so much more information as a result.

There are many needs for foster parents:

1. AGE

A. TOO YOUNG BUT EATING ON THEIR OWN.

- (1) The vast majority of our foster needs is for puppies and kittens that are simply too young to be in the Shelter as face it, who wants to grow up in a hard concrete kennel! This can be single pups or kittens or full-blown litters. These youngsters simply need time to grow, to get all of their vaccinations on board (meaning you do have to bring back to the Shelter for quick vaccinations at times) so we can get them ready for adoption.
- (2) Now, puppies, as they grow, are not for the faint of heart (as they grow, their messes get bigger too) so we understand if you say you can do maybe two, three or four puppies but not eight or ten.... Kittens tend to be a lot easier for fosters to manage since cleaning a litter box is relatively easy.
- (3) Your time commitment here will be a minimum of two weeks upward to a month or six weeks.

B. BOTTLE BABIES.

- (1) Bottle feeding can be a round-the-clock challenge for the first couple of weeks as newborns simply require feeding, followed by urine/poop stimulation, every couple of hours. Now some pups & kittens can do a late-night feeding and then wait til early morning while others will need you to wake up and feed at some wee-hour morning time. But these babies grow fast and once they learn how to eat a very wet mush mix, it gets a lot easier (though they require a lot of wet wiping when they first start learning to eat mush). Transitioning to a mush mixture can generally happen at about four weeks old.
- (2) Your time commitment here can be anywhere from 6-10 weeks.

C. MOMS w/ LITTERS

- (1) This can be tough as so much depends on other animals in the home, the mom and how she acts with people and her babies, space needed, etc. The good news is that mom can do all the work for a few weeks where the puppies or kittens are concerned. Once weaned, mom can come back to us (and she is generally happy to do so & find her forever home) so that the puppies can continue growing until old enough for adoption.
- (2) Your time commitment here can be anywhere from 8-10 weeks.

D. SENIORS

- (1) While it is sad that there are so many animals needing our services, it is especially sad to take in a senior dog or cat who, perhaps, had a very happy life with their beloved person and now finds themselves in our noisy and rather chaotic environment. We do our best to keep senior dogs in our office but nothing beats a home. Senior small dogs are the most common foster need and need to be inside only and generally no small children in the home.
- (2) We actually do a pretty good job at finding adoptive homes for our senior cats and change is tough for cats so not often fostered.

2. DOG HEARTWORM TREATMENT

- A. The failure to keep dogs on heartworm prevention year-round, if at all, here in the south, is disheartening. 17% of our dogs over six-months old test positive for heartworms. Fostering heartworm treatment dogs is a minimum of a 60 day commitment and, absolutely critical is that they be kept very controlled, often crated so as to keep their heart rate down. They can go on calm leash walks but CANNOT be let out into the yard to romp with other dogs, chase squirrels or bark at the world.
- B. Heartworm fosters must be able to give oral meds, and be observant to note of any changes in the dog's breathing, activity, etc in the event they are having difficulties and need to get to our Vet ASAP which means you have to live in our local area.

3. RECOVERY FROM MAJOR SURGERIES/OTHER SEVERE CONDITIONS

- A. We receive pets more often than you may think that come to us with acute injuries or have some medical condition necessitating major surgery. Broken bones, severe lacerations, tumors, trauma to eyes, major skin conditions, etc are all things we see. These conditions may result in surgeries to repair breaks, amputations when the injury is too severe, eye removals, tumor/cancer removals which can result in very large wounds needing to heal and trips back to our Vet for checkups, further treatments, etc.
- B. Fosters for these animals may have to help these animals by carrying/lifting them for a time as they re-learn how to navigate, may have to do dressing changes, may have to give medicated baths routinely, etc. Like Mom with litters, your available time to

- help these pets, other pets in the home, & children in the home are major factors to consider if you are able to take on this kind of fostering.
- C. Your time commitment here can be anywhere from 3 weeks – six months depending on the severity of the condition and recovery period.

4. MALNOURISHED ANIMALS

- A. Some animals are so malnourished when they are brought into the shelter that they need to gain weight before adoption. Re-feeding a starved animal is not just a matter of putting food in front of them and many cases require SMALL but frequent feedings throughout the day. Giving a starved pet too much food too fast can actually kill them so adherence to this frequent small amount feeding is critical.
- B. For very small pets or neonates that are crashing, a small amount of Karo Syrup or Honey given orally can help to bring their blood sugar levels up and get them back to eating. This is an emergency procedure but one that can make all the difference.
- C. Depending on the severity recovery can take anywhere from one-four months.

5. BEHAVIORAL REASONS

- A. This is a very challenging category that is generally reserved only for extremely knowledgeable & experienced dog (mostly) fosters. We will not place an unsafe animal into any home, foster or otherwise, but so many are simply scared or have just never known human kindness and need time to decompress and learn that most of us humans are ok.
- B. Your time commitment here can be anywhere from a couple of weeks – few months.

6. POCKET PETS, BIRDS & REPTILES

- A. Smaller pets like Rabbits, Guinea Pigs, Hamster, Gerbils, Rats, Birds and Reptiles are not as common but fosters for those can be most helpful. Knowledge of these pets is most important, especially for birds and reptiles as those require specialized habitats and feeding.
- B. Your time commitment here could be anywhere from one week to 6 months.

7. LIVESTOCK

- A. We do not take in any owner surrendered livestock but, on occasion, have worked with law enforcement for livestock that is running loose or being dealt with for legal reasons like neglect or cruelty.
- B. Having the appropriate and safe pasture, good fencing and shelter type area for livestock, as well as knowledge of caring for and handling the concerned livestock species is paramount.

- C. Your time commitment could be anywhere from days to a year if it is a court case and most important is that during any legal proceedings, these animals are NOT the property of the Shelter as we are only in a caretaking status so make sure you think about this before taking on court case animals.

8. CONSIDERATIONS.

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

- B. Dog Foster Requirements for your own pets:

- (1) All be at least six-months old, fully vaccinated, preferably spayed or neutered. Exceptions to the spay/neuter requirement will be made by the shelter Director.
 - (2) Current on their core, including Bordetella, & rabies vaccines per your veterinarian.
 - (3) Be negative for heartworms & current on monthly, (or Proheart 6 or 12), heartworm prevention medication.

- C. Cat Foster Requirements for your own pets:

- (1) All be at least six-months old, fully vaccinated, preferably spayed or neutered. Exceptions to the spay/neuter requirement will be made by the shelter Director.
 - (2) If your cats are indoor/outdoor that must be tested negative for leukemia and feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) & vaccinated for FeLV.
 - (3) Current on their feline booster vaccines & rabies vaccine.

- D. These health requirements are in the best interest of your own pets!

9. WHAT FOSTERING IS AND IS NOT.

- A. Fostering is a temporary placement to help an animal get to the point of adoption and is not used to 'stash' animals indefinitely.
- B. Our foster program is not for trial adoptions. As we tell all of our adopters – we will ALWAYS take our adopted pets back whether that be two days after adoption or ten years after adoption as we were here for them once and will always be here for them. So, in that sense, every adoption is a trial. This just saves all of us a lot of extra paperwork and you having to make extra trips back to the Shelter. If it does not work out – just bring our pet back to us,
- C. When you foster you save more than the lives of the pets you are fostering. Fostering pets also saves the lives of other animals in our Shelter who can use their 'space' opened up when you foster.
- D. Anything you do to help a foster pet become a better pet makes it more adoptable. Housetraining, leash & crate training, socialization with other animals & children,

willingness to be brushed/groomed/have nails trimmed/ears cleaned/etc are HUGE bonuses and why fostered pets are so desired by adopters.

10. RULES (these are also on our Foster Application you will sign).

- A. The decision as to what animals are in need of, or eligible for, fostering is completely that of the Humane Society of Elmore County.
- B. Foster animals should be kept apart from your own pets for two weeks for observation as the possibility exists that they are incubating a serious disease, minor illness, skin condition, etc that could be contagious to your pets. HSEC will not be responsible for medical treatment of your owned pets for any reason.
- C. I understand that animals I am fostering for the Humane Society of Elmore County are the property of the shelter and are not mine to give away, place for adoption or temporarily place with another person, without the express permission of the shelter Director or Animal Care Manager. Any babies born to a foster pet are also the property of HSEC.
- D. Foster parents will not make 'promises' of animals to any potential adopter as all adoption decisions will be made by the shelter staff. Fosters ARE encouraged to tell responsible pet lovers about your fosters and all the others at our shelter. All adoption approvals are at the Shelter's approval, and all applicants must fill out our Adoption Application found on our website.
- E. All immunizations, de-worming medication, other medications, food, crates and bowls will be provided by the shelter.
- F. Fosters are NOT authorized to take fostered animals to a veterinarian, groomer or boarding facility without pre-authorization from the Shelter Director or Animal Care Manager. Veterinary care will only be through the Veterinarian designated by the shelter. Please understand that if you take a foster pet to a Veterinarian/Groomer/Boarding Facility for treatment/grooming/boarding without our authorization, you will be responsible for payment of those costs.
- G. Foster parents must be able to bring the fostered pet either back to the shelter or to a designated veterinarian at various intervals for necessary vaccinations, treatments or follow-ups. The foster parent must be able to return all fosters within 48 hours if requested by the Shelter.
- H. Falling in love with a fostered animal is an understandable outcome of fostering and something we completely understand. Fosters, however, must pay the same adoption fees as any other member of the public to adopt a pet from our shelter (this policy also applies to our staff).
- I. We work with our fosters in many ways as far as adoptions go – some fosters are ready to bring them back to our Shelter when they are old enough, recovered from a medical treatment or just ready to return. Some will keep the foster(s) in their home

and bring to the Shelter when we have a scheduled adoption appointment with an approved adopter. We will work with the foster for what works best for them and for the fostered pets.

- J. Foster parents will let Shelter staff know of any health or behavioral concerns as soon as possible. HSEC Staff will ensure all fosters have contact information as to how to reach us after hours.
- K. Foster Parents may return foster animals to HSEC for any reason (other animals not liking; family emergency, other pets or fosters illness, or simply too much to handle), at any time during normal Shelter hours of operation. In the event of an emergency, contact the Shelter staff via their personal phone provided to you, our email or the Shelter's Facebook Messenger.

11. SUPPLY NEEDS - We will supply all that you need to successfully foster but, of course, if you already have many of these items it will help all of us:

Cage/crate or playpen	Nail Clippers
Food-based on age, health	Pill Cutter
Newspapers/Shredded Paper	Brushes/Combs
Toys-based on age, health	Litter Box (for cats)
Towels	Potty Pads
Leash (for dogs) and collar	Carrier for transport
Food & water bowl(s)	Baby Gates (optional)
Bottle feeding bottles	Plastic Bags (poop patrol)
Identification Tag(s)	Baby Scale (optional)
Sanitizers (animal safe bleach/detergents)	Sheets, pillowcases, old linens

*****LOTS OF PATIENCE AND LOVE*****