

Northeast Ohio SPCA – Fostering Program



Before you decide to foster from the Northeast Ohio SPCA consider the following:

Temporarily opening your home to an animal allows our shelter to take in more animals that need help. In addition, fostering offers the one-on-one attention and loving comfort that only a home setting can offer, which is precisely what some animals need to heal.

As a foster volunteer you may host animals with special medical or behavioral needs, mother animals with nursing litters, or underage animals who need special feeding and socialization, like puppies, bunnies, or kittens. By fostering an animal you are providing rehabilitation in a nurturing home environment, directly preparing them for adoption into a loving home.

Are you able to separate the foster pets from your own?

You should have a place where you can isolate your foster pet from your own companion animals. A separate room or enclosed area with no carpet will work best. After two weeks you can slowly introduce the shelter pet to your pet if you are comfortable doing so.

Are you aware that there is a great deal of clean-up and even possible damage to your home when you take a foster pet home?

Foster pets can ruin drapes, carpeting, clothing, and other valuable items. Preparing your home and the area the animal will stay in can prevent most accidents, but not all of them! Pets are like children and need to be monitored.

Are you able to monitor the health of the foster pet?

You will need to pay attention to signs of illness or worsening of symptoms and call the shelter if you are concerned. Before taking in a foster, ask the foster care coordinator what to look for. If you see troubling signs, the coordinator will help you decide if you should bring the animal in for treatment.

Can you get to the shelter's vet quickly in case of an emergency?

The shelter employs a vet who will treat your foster pet at no charge to you. If the animal you are fostering needs medical attention, you will need to transport him or her to the vet's office or shelter for care. If you transport the pet elsewhere the shelter does not cover the charges.

Are you emotionally prepared to return the pet after the foster period is up?

It can be very difficult to let go once you have become emotionally attached to an animal! Be prepared for tears and heartache when the day comes that you must bring your first foster pet back to the shelter. But remember, he or she is now much more likely to find a loving, permanent home because of YOUR care!

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Can you place your trust in the shelter staff to decide what is the best for the animal?

The Shelter staff will select the adopter of the pet you have fostered after screening the adoption application. Allowing the staff to be in charge of the adoption can be very hard to deal with.

Do you feel comfortable explaining to friends that these pets are not yours to adopt out and that they must go through the regular adoption process at the shelter?

If you are interested in helping to find a home for your foster pet, refer your friends and family to the shelter to complete an adoption application.

Qualifications

To be a successful foster parent, you will need a compassionate nature, the cooperation of your family or roommates, flexibility, and some knowledge of animal behavior. The length of time a foster pet may stay in your home varies with the animal's situation.

You will most likely be asked to fill out a foster application.

Foster Policies and Procedures

The Northeast Ohio SPCA has its own policies and procedures when it comes to fostering.

Most likely, a foster-care coordinator will work with you to identify the type of pet you should foster (puppies, large or small dogs, cats, etc.). The coordinator will contact you when a suitable pet is in need of fostering.

The Northeast Ohio SPCA requires that a foster parent's own pets are up-to-date on all vaccinations before the volunteer can foster.

We will provide the foster parent with food and supplies for the pet's care.

Preparing Your Home

If you are fostering kittens or puppies, remember that they will play or chew anything they can find, including drapes, electrical cords and lampshades. So be sure to kitten-/puppy-proof your home.

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Supplies You May Need:

A "house" for the pet: You can use the carrier in which you took the animal home, a crate or a cardboard box — anything that will provide the pet a familiar-smelling, dark, quiet refuge. A large cardboard box comes in handy if you have a mother with a litter of kittens or puppies. If you do not have one the SPCA will provide one for the pet while you are fostering.

Water: Provide access to water at all times. Remember, young animals can drown, so make sure the bowl is very shallow.

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Food: Speak with the SPCA about what kind of food, the amounts and how often to feed your foster. We will also tell you if the pet you are fostering needs any special foods, supplements or diets.

Litter box and cat litter for foster cats: Cats will instinctively use a litter box and mom will begin teaching her kittens how to use it. You can use a shallow litter box or an old cake pan. Speak to us about whether the cat you are fostering prefers you use clumping or non-clumping litter, as some require non-clumping litter for kittens younger than four months old.

Heating pad or hot water bottle: Depending on how warm your room is, these extras will ensure that everyone is comfy and cozy. If you use any of these items, be sure that there is space for the pet to move away from the heat in case she is too hot, and always place heating pads on the lowest setting.

Toys: Go crazy if you want! Mice and buzz balls make kittens happy and can be reused as long as animals do not have any contagious diseases. Kittens can amuse themselves with empty rolls of toilet paper. Empty cardboard 12-pack soda boxes are good for a number of different games. Clean tennis balls, old socks stuffed with nylons, caps of liter soda bottles, and paper bags make great toys as well. Young kittens don't respond to catnip, but mom will like it.

Other considerations: A bottle of enzymatic cleaner for accidents; a rope or carpet scratching post; and adoption applications to give to people who are interested in your foster care animals.

When to Return a Foster Pet to the Shelter

It is difficult for shelter staff to predict the exact date when the pet will be ready for adoption. Several factors contribute to this decision:

1. Did the puppies/kittens gain enough weight?
2. Are the animals healthy and recovered fully from illness?
3. Are they successfully weaned from their mother?
4. Have they been successfully socialized?
5. Is there room at the shelter?

Because of these variables, the foster pet may not be ready for adoption by the date on your foster home contract. Please call the foster home coordinator to make an appointment to return your pet. If your foster pet checks out okay, you will leave him at the shelter. If not, you will take him back home for a specified number of days and have him rechecked. Your flexibility and patience are always appreciated!

