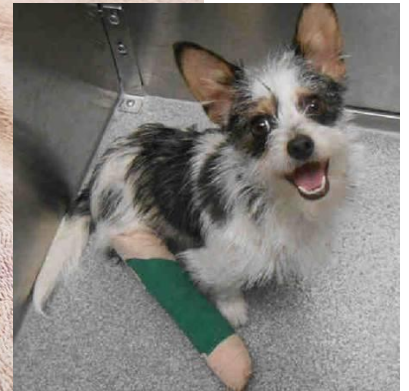


# FOSTER MANUAL



**OC Animal Care**  
*Promoting Life  Promoting Adoption*



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## Contact Information

Email is our **PRIMARY** form of communication during working hours. We are monitoring the email daily, including weekends. Please always remember, to contact the foster email rather than individual staff members. If you email an individual and they are out of the office, the rest of the team will not have access. By emailing the foster email, all COT staff will be able to monitor and respond to time sensitive and emergency emails. *Please know, COT staff are not at the shelter during federal holidays.*

**foster@occr.ocgov.com**

**If you have an AFTER HOURS EMERGENCY, please call:  
714-259-1122 and LEAVE A MESSAGE.  
*A dispatcher will call you back shortly.***

### **Staff Phone/Email Contact information:**

#### **Foster Coordinators**

**Sarah Nawaz:** 714-569-6528

[sarah.nawaz@occr.ocgov.com](mailto:sarah.nawaz@occr.ocgov.com)

**Alexina Estrada:** 714-569-6549

[alexina.estrada@occr.ocgov.com](mailto:alexina.estrada@occr.ocgov.com)

#### **Community Outreach Team Manager**

**Jessica Novillo:** 714-796-6428

[jessica.novillo@occr.ocgov.com](mailto:jessica.novillo@occr.ocgov.com)

#### **Other Phone Numbers**

**Shelter Call Center** (714)935-6848

Daily 8:00am-5:00pm

**After Hour Emergencies** (714)259-1122

## Our Mission

To expand our capacity to care for the shelter pets in our community by giving them more options and a chance to thrive.

## Who Is Eligible To Be a Foster Caretaker

Any animal that is underage or who needs any extra or special attention medically or behaviorally are eligible for foster. However, every animal is a case by case situation. Staff will determine what animals would fit appropriately with which foster to ensure the safety and well being of the animals as well as the foster.

Up to now, most of the animals that go into our foster program are kittens and cats with the exception of the occasional dogs with puppies or who are in need of a medical foster. As mentioned, the foster program is constantly growing. As the program grows, we will send out emails to all of our fosters and will post on our social media platforms as well.

## Fostering for OC Animal Care

OC Animal Care's Foster Program is fairly new and still growing each season. We appreciate all of our foster caretakers and their patience and understanding as we initiate new protocols, changes and continue to grow as a program and community.

Foster animals, even while they are with their foster caretakers, are still OC Animal Care animals. This means that you are not to give away the foster animals, administer your own treatments or decide on the outcome of the animals. Everything must be approved by shelter staff.

Unfortunately, we do not have the funding to always provide supplies to our foster caretakers. Everything that we are able to send with foster caretakers are donated to the shelter. This includes beds, blankets, food, etc. We do our best to keep an eye out and keep a stock of supplies that we can share. It will all depend on the donations that come to our shelter. We do have a list on our website of supplies that we are always in need of as well as our [Amazon Wish List](#).

All foster animals should be kept separated for a **minimum** of two weeks. As animals come in through the shelter, our veterinarian staff takes a look at each animal. However, we cannot always visibly see anything that could be going on with the animals. By keeping them separated for two weeks, it helps to minimize the spread of disease; this includes contagious illnesses. By separating your foster animals for a minimum of two weeks, most symptoms will show in that period and you will know. If the foster animals become ill, our veterinary staff will provide any medical treatment/ prescriptions that are needed. However, we will not be able to do so with your personal pets.

If you are not already on there, we do have a Facebook Group for our fosters. If you would like to be added to this group, please let staff know and provide your email tied to your Facebook so

we can send you an invite. While we do use Facebook as a form of communication, please refrain for using the group as a way to contact staff members. The group is meant for our foster community to share stories, photos and tips. To reach staff please call or send an email.

## *Scheduling Appointments*

In order to reduce confusion and impromptu visits, it is mandatory to set an appointment to bring in fosters for vaccinations, checkups, testing, pick up and return. This allows us to have sufficient time to give your foster the medical assessment they require from our clinic staff and reduce the wait for each appointment. To schedule appointments, please email the foster email.

Appointments are scheduled in 30-minute increments. In the morning appointments are scheduled between 10:00am through 11:30am, and then 1:30pm through 2:30pm.

When scheduling appointments, please keep in mind that they can take as long as an average doctor appointment. Emergency appointments and cases that come through intake will take priority. For this reason, if you walk in for an appointment, you may be turned away. We will do our best to get everyone in and out and quickly as possible, however, this isn't always possible. If you are unable to make it to your appointment, please let staff know and we will reschedule you. Please keep in mind, there are certain seasons when we have constant back to back appointments, but we will do our best to get you scheduled accordingly.

Regular appointments happen every 2-3 weeks. During these appointments, our veterinary staff will check over the animals, provide appropriate vaccinations and deworming, and will provide any prescriptions that the foster animals may need. If you have any questions or concerns, please let staff know so we can bring it to the veterinary staff's attention.

**You do not have to take your foster animals to your own vet. If you would like to, please check in with staff first. You will not be reimbursed for taking foster animals to your own vet and our veterinary staff will require medical notes from your vet stating all services that were done and any notes made on the animal.**

## *Surgery Appointments*

Surgery appointments for foster animals are only on Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays. Foster animals need to be dropped off by 8:00am the latest. If you are unable to bring back your foster animals at that time, or don't have someone who can drop them off by that time, we will schedule your foster animals to return as a regular appointment. They will still be spayed/neutered prior to going to their adoptive home. Depending on each foster animal, staff will let you know when it is time to schedule a surgery appointment.

Typically, surgery can take 1-10 business days to be done, depending on the amount of adopted animals and animals who still need surgery at the shelter. Shelter staff will determine when in

shelter animals will undergo surgery. Unless told otherwise, foster animals will stay at the shelter after surgery appointments to be put up for adoption.

## Preparing Your Home

All other animals in the home should be current on vaccinations before bringing foster animals into your home. If you want to introduce your own pets to foster animals, you want to wait after the two-week period to prevent a spread of disease. You will also want to make sure you properly introduce everyone. You should never leave your pets and foster animals together unsupervised.

Your foster animals should be separated from all other animals in your household and kept in a manageably small area where they have access to food, water and to urinate and defecate. It is a good idea to use an area of your home that is easy to clean (bathroom, a playpen with a shower curtain on the bottom, etc).

Fosters should not be placed anywhere with outdoor access or without temperature control; for example, a garage or porch.

Foster animals are curious so you will want to baby proof your home by hiding all breakable objects, block electrical outlets, and remove toxic plants that your foster might eat. Small toys should be removed as fosters may swallow them. Close toilet lids and block off any areas that small animals could fit in and get stuck or lost in. All food and water should be placed as far away from litter boxes or potty pads as possible.

## *Cleaning Between Fosters*

### *Basic Cleaning Procedures*

You will want to remove all bedding, towels, laundry, soft toys and wash on a cleaning cycle with 1-part bleach to 32 parts water. Soak all hard toys, bowls, litter box in a 1 to 32 bleach solution for 10 minutes then rinse and dry. You can also use the dishwasher for this. Throw away any toy that cannot be sterilized (rope/cardboard/feather toys)

### *Contagious Disease Cleaning Procedures*

It is best to manage infectious disease on a daily basis in the foster home. This will help prevent the spread of disease throughout the home and is especially important for fungal disease like ringworm. Non porous surfaces should be dry mopped (Swiffer) or vacuumed to gather hairs and then disinfected with a bleach solution or with Accel; this includes walls countertops floors etc. Rugs should be vacuumed twice daily vacuum cleaner bags should be replaced frequently. Animal bedding and your protective clothing should be washed separately from other laundry and on high with a quarter cup of bleach per load and dried in a dryer on hot. More information is available upon request from staff if you need any.

## *Recommended Items to Have*

You will want to keep general supplies at home that you can easily clean and disinfect between each litter of fosters. This includes items like:

- ❖ Separate bowls for food and water; these should be ones that are hard to tip over and make a mess
- ❖ All fosters who take smaller kittens or puppies are recommended to have a scale at home to keep an eye on their weight
- ❖ Cleaning supplies– this includes Accel, Bleach, gloves, etc
- ❖ If a secure bathroom area is not available, we recommend a pop-up kennel that can be used for both kittens and puppies
- ❖ Carrier/ kennel– to transport for appointments
- ❖ Heat Source for the neonatal that come in without a mom; neonatal and ill animals have a hard time regulating their body temperature, we recommend an animal safe heating pad/hot water bottle
- ❖ Toys that are easy to sanitize between litters
- ❖ Old towels, blanket or bed that you can bleach or throw out between litters

## **Caring for Foster Animals**

You must monitor all foster animals closely to be sure they are taking in enough food for their age and are staying hydrated. To keep track of their health we recommend keeping a journal documenting their weights, eating habits and overall health.

You will also want to watch out for signs of illness that include frequent crying, restlessness, weakness, cold to the touch, diarrhea, dehydration, shallow or labored breathing, paleness, blueness in gum color, lethargy, lack of appetite or vomiting. If you notice any of these signs, please email the foster email.

Foster animals must be kept indoors unless otherwise notified; most have not received their full round of vaccinations and as such should not be taken out in public.

Do not transport your fosters loose in the car; please use an appropriate animal carrier when transporting any foster animals. At the shelter, there are all types and sizes of animals coming through the doors so all foster animals should be contained in a carrier or on a leash.

## *Establishing Good Habits*

Your job as a foster parent is to ready foster animals for their forever homes; this includes establishing good habits and making sure animals are well socialized before bringing them back to the shelter.

Poor habits like play biting, growling, tussling, scratching or chewing on furniture, jumping on people or other destructive behaviors should not be encouraged.

Positive reinforcement is the only discipline that should be used. Try to redirect the inappropriate behavior into a better behavior, i.e. stop a chewing puppy from chewing the wall by giving it a toy.

## Socializing & Handling

When you are ready to introduce new people or locations in the home to your fosters, please keep these in mind:

- ❖ Introduce new people, men women and children alike
- ❖ Take the animals to new environments within the home, they do not have to live in different areas but get them used to normal house sounds in different rooms
- ❖ Exposure to new noises, letting foster animals hear the sound of the vacuum or radio so they won't be scared in a new home
- ❖ Teach the animals to not be scared of their carrier, use the carrier as their hiding hole or play object so they are not fearful of being in the carrier for transport
- ❖ Touch the ears paws tummy tail and face gently to make the foster animal easier to handle in future clinic visits

## Common Illnesses

Animals do a good job of hiding when they don't feel well so telling if your foster animal is getting ill requires diligent monitoring and measuring of their weight. If you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact staff. Some common symptoms you will want to look out for are the following:

- ❖ **Diarrhea:** A common ailment of kittens and cats, and can be caused by many factors including bacteria, viruses, parasites, toxic substances, food, or psychological upset. If diarrhea persists more than 24 hours, call for instructions. You may be asked to bring in a sample of the diarrhea to help diagnose the problem.
- ❖ **Vomiting:** Occasional vomiting can be considered normal, frequent vomiting is not.
- ❖ **Fleas and ticks:** Should you find fleas or ticks on your foster animal(s), call for instructions. Please do not attempt to treat on your own.
- ❖ **Earmites:** Nearly microscopic, these parasites live in the ear canals of dogs and cats and cause a brown waxy material that looks similar to coffee grounds to form in the ears.
- ❖ **Ringworm:** Ringworm is not a parasite but a fungal infection of the skin. Classic symptoms appear as a scab or irregularly shaped area of skin infection and may include a rapidly enlarging circle of hair loss.
- ❖ **Eye Discharge/ Swelling:** It is normal to have a tiny bit of discharge when an animal wake up but any swelling, yellow or green discharge, or if the animal is having trouble opening its eyes is abnormal.
- ❖ **Sneezing/Nasal Discharge:** Occasional sneezing is normal in animals when they get into dust etc. If the sneezing is frequent and nose discharge is clear they likely have a virus. Congested animals should be monitored closely as it may compromise their ability to eat and drink normally.
- ❖ **Loss of Appetite:** Neonatal animals should never go more than 4 hours without eating as



their blood sugar can drop rapidly. Congested animals can't smell their food and may refuse to eat. We recommend using more potent smelling food or warming it up to make the smell stronger. If your foster animal does not want to eat do not force feed; please contact staff to make an appointment.

- ❖ **Lethargy:** Activity level of fosters does depend on age and if they are recovering from an injury. Sick animals may have low energy and just want to sit and be warm in your lap. If an animal seems hard to wake up or slow to move it may be sick.
- ❖ **Dehydration:** Dehydration is a common problem in neonatal animals. Dehydration occurs rapidly if an animal has diarrhea and it may need to receive sub cutaneous fluids to help it along. You can pinch the skin around the animal's scruff or head and pull gently upwards. If the skin does not flatten out and recover quickly the animal may be dehydrated.
- ❖ **Feline leukemia:** This deadly disease is caused by a virus that inhibits the immune system.
- ❖ **FIP:** Symptoms are the same as distemper but with abdominal bloating and labored breathing.
- ❖ **Kennel Cough:** Kennel cough is the equivalent of a human cold. Just like people who have colds, kennel cough develops when the dog is stressed or when the immune system is compromised.
- ❖ **Parvovirus (dogs):** Parvo attacks the intestinal tract, white blood cells and heart muscle. Signs of infection are depression, loss of appetite, vomiting, severe diarrhea, fever, and sometimes kennel cough symptoms.

## *Zoonotic Diseases*

A zoonotic disease is something that can be transmitted from an animal to a person. This includes fungi, bacteria, viruses, parasites and anthropods. These diseases may be more severe for people with immunocompromised people like people with AIDs, on chemotherapy, being treated for immune mediated disease, with organ or bone marrow transplants, the elderly, the very young and pregnant women. If you are unsure if you or someone who would be in close contact with the foster animals would be more prone, please contact a physician before deciding if you can foster. Please see below for some examples of zoonotic diseases:

- |                      |                 |
|----------------------|-----------------|
| ❖ Campylobacteriosis | ❖ Scabies       |
| ❖ Giardiasis         | ❖ Bartonellosis |
| ❖ Hookworm           | ❖ Bordetellosis |
| ❖ Roundworm          | ❖ Pasteurella   |
| ❖ Salmonellosis      | ❖ Rabies        |
| ❖ Toxoplasmosis      | ❖ Leptospirosis |
| ❖ Ringworm           |                 |

**Most of these diseases are spread from contamination of food or water, undercooked meat, and/ or spread in other common ways than just from contact with animals. If your foster animal needs to be treated, our veterinary staff will provide treatment/ medication. We are not able to provide medication for you, anyone at home or your own pets.**

### *What Can I Do To Prevent Zoonotic Diseases?*

You can prevent the spread of these diseases by washing your hands thoroughly after touching your shelter pets. You want to especially make sure you are not allowing animal waste to build up. When handling any animal waste, use the proper protective equipment (gloves for example), and maintain a clean environment for yourself and the foster animals. By routinely bringing in your foster animals for vaccinations and deworming you will also be taking a step to preventing these. Do not feed foster animals raw or undercooked meat, eat from the garbage can, eat feces, drink from toilet bowl or other unsanitary water containers. Overall great hygiene is important and critical in preventing these and other diseases.

## Medical Emergency

Medical emergencies mean that your animal should be brought to the shelter immediately. Every effort should be made to email and or call a staff member to warn them you are coming so we can prepare our vet staff for the arrival of your foster animal. The best form of communication for this is to contact [foster@occr.ocgov.com](mailto:foster@occr.ocgov.com). All of COT staff has access to this e-mail. If one staff member is not in that day, someone who is in will see your email. Please use the header “EMERGENCY” or something along those lines. You can also call the main line and let them know you are a foster caretaker coming in with an emergency.

Sometimes it is not easy to know if what is happening is a medical emergency or not and we understand. If it was you and not the animal, would you head straight to get medical attentions? If you are unsure, please email or call staff and leave a message letting us know about the situation. If you email, please use the headline “POSSIBLE EMERGENCY”. There are seasons where we have anywhere from 40-60 emails coming in.

Any medical emergency should be addressed the same day that it occurs, do not wait to notify staff that one of your foster animals has a medical emergency! It is better to be safe than sorry so please do not hesitate to call or email us to answer questions!

Some situations that are medical emergencies are the following:

- ❖ Not breathing, labored breathing, breathing with chest sounds
- ❖ Signs of severe dehydration including but not limited to, dry gums, weakness vomited, not urinating, skin tenting (skin won't recover when pulled up at scruff)
- ❖ Abnormal lethargy or an inability to stand up and move on own
- ❖ Unconscious or unable to wake animal
- ❖ Cold to the touch
- ❖ Limping or obviously broken bones
- ❖ Any trauma that has occurred even if animal is acting okay,
  - includes accidentally being hit or bumped, dropped, stepped on, pinched in door,

- ❖ grabbed by another animal or any other injury
- ❖ A large wound or bleeding that won't stop with continued pressure
- ❖ Puss filled wounds
- ❖ Loss of appetite for more than 12 hours

### *What If My Foster Animal Passes Away In My Care?*

Sometimes animals can pass away unexpectedly. When this happens, you will need to notify staff right away and bring the animal in to us. Our veterinary staff may want to run some tests depending on the nature of the death to see what happened. If it was a very unexpected death and the animal has littermates, the veterinary staff may also want to run a check for everyone else to be safe. Please email staff immediately and we will work with you on what to do next.

### **When Are They Ready to Return?**

When foster animals are sent out with a foster parent, staff will discuss a rough estimate of when they animal will need to return. Depending on why they are going out to foster in the first place, the time frame can vary. For most puppies and kittens, it is until they are 8 weeks old and legally old enough for adoption and heavy enough to have their spay/ neuter. If you take home a mom dog or cat, they are able to return once they no longer care for the babies or the babies are no longer nursing. For any foster animal that leaves due to medical conditions, it will depend on how long their treatment last and what our veterinary staff determines. While you are fostering, staff will follow up and remind you as the time gets closer to return your fosters.

If something comes up and you are no longer able to foster, please let staff know and we will schedule an appointment for you to return your fosters. We understand that life happens, and emergencies can come up. All we ask is that you let us know as soon as you know you need to return your foster animals so that we are prepared when you arrive.

### *Promoting Your Foster Animals*

While you are fostering, it would help not only shelter staff but also the animals if you are able to promote them. This can be you sharing them on your social media platforms, talking to your friends and family who are looking to adopt or talking to your coworkers at work. This helps to reduce the number of animals that are at the shelter and helps to create forever families. Plus, if you know the adopters, you could always follow up on your foster animals.

**This does not mean that you can hand over the foster animals to their potential adopters when you are ready to let them go, or that you should be taking them to unapproved events. If you have any questions about how you can promote your fosters, please email staff to ask.**

### *If You Find An Adopter or Would Like to Adopt For Yourself*

Email the foster coordinators to let them know that you would like to adopt/ have an adopter for your foster animals. You will want to email the first and last name and a phone number for the potential adopter along with the animal ID number of who they will be adopting. The foster coordinators will then let you know what the next steps are. Please keep in mind, we are not able

to put a hold on foster animals, so it is important to coordinate with staff as well as your potential adopters.

There is not a special foster adoption fee. You can find the adoption fees on our [website](#). The highest adoption fee is \$225 for puppies up to 6 months of age, \$200 for dogs 7 months or older, and \$175 for kittens up to 4 months old.\* If you have any questions or want to verify the adoption fee, please don't hesitate to ask staff.

\*These adoption fees include up to date vaccinations, spay/ neuter, microchip, and any other veterinary treatment for the animals while they have been part of the shelter and foster care.

### *If You Do Not Find An Adopter*

If you do not have anyone who would like to adopt your foster animals, that is okay! We will schedule an appointment with you so that you can return them when they are ready. If you have names for your foster animals, we would love to hear them so that when they are housed, the public will know their names too. If you have any photos or videos of them as well, we would love if you could share them. Individual and horizontal photos work best so that we can update their photo on the website. Group photos and videos allow us to have extra resources to promote your foster animals on our social media platforms. If you can send us a brief description that would help as well; no more than a paragraph. These descriptions can be about their personality, if they get along with other pets, children, favorite toys or food, etc.

Some fosters will create little flyers to hand on the kennel door so that the public can read a little more about each animal. These flyers should be no bigger than half of regular sheet of printer paper, should include the animal ID for the foster animals and a brief description. (To the right is an example.) Please refrain from putting your personal information on the flyer. If you would like to share your personal information with an adopter, you can let staff know and we will place it in the notes for your foster pets. It will be up to the adopter if they reach out to you or not. If you have multiple foster animals from the same litter, we recommend making each of them their own flyer. This way if some of the litter goes home, the adopter can keep the flyer and those who are still at the shelter will have a flyer. These flyers help foster kittens to get more attention from the public and lets staff know more about their personality once they return.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### *How much time do I need to spend with the animals?*

As much time as you can! The more time you spend with your foster animals the more socialized they will be with people. Depending on the amount of time you are able to spend with your animal will determine what animals in need of fostering would be best suited for you to take.

Please ask staff if you are unsure and we will ask you a few questions to match you as best as we can.

***Can I foster animals if I have a full time job?***

Sometimes! While a person with a full time job can't be a foster for bottle fed puppies or kittens they can still help with animals that do not require constant feeding.

***Will I need to give medicine to the foster animals?***

It is very common for animals that go into foster to require medication at some point during their stay at your home.

***Can I let my foster animals play with my personal pets?***

We do require all animals to be quarantined for two weeks minimum before being allowed to play with personal animals in the home. If for any reason one of your own pets becomes ill while fostering for OC Animal Care we are not able to provide medical treatment for your own pets.

***Who will take care of my foster animals if I have to go out of town?***

We do ask that our fosters not take on any animals unless they have at least 4 weeks clear in their schedule where they will not be travelling. While we can accommodate emergencies OC Animal Care prefers to have animals stay with one foster for their entire stay. If an emergency does come up, please email staff as soon as you know you are unable to foster anymore so we can schedule you to return your foster animals or at least are prepared for your arrival.

***What if I know someone who is interested in adopting my foster?***

Notify the foster program coordinators before bringing the animal in for adoption. They will reach out to you and let you know what next steps need to be taken. The same applies if the foster wishes to adopt their own foster animal.

***Is it hard to say goodbye to my foster animals?***

Saying goodbye can be a difficult part of fostering, but remember that there are always more animals that need to be fostered. If all fosters kept their animals, the program would not be nearly as successful at saving lives.

***Why do I need to schedule an appointment to bring my fosters in?***

Our staff members cover a variety of different responsibilities and duties and generally have many meetings going on as well as volunteer program management etc. We require all fosters to make an appointment before bringing their animals in so that we can be sure to be able to help you. Fosters should not go to other staff members outside of the foster coordinators for help with their foster animals.

***What happens if a foster animal gets too sick?***

Unfortunately, due to the fragility of foster animals there is the chance that they may get sick, die or be humanely euthanized due to illness or irremediable suffering. Our veterinary staff do their absolute best to provide quality care to prevent this from happening.

***What if my fosters are found to have panleuk, parvo or ringworm?***

Because of the nature of these viruses and fungus you may not be able to foster for up to one year to eliminate the chances of the virus or fungus being spread to any other foster animal you may take home. Staff will determine length of quarantine.

***What if my fosters are in poor condition when I return them?***

Foster animals should be returned in excellent health; animals that are flea infested, dirty, have urine scalding or are have deteriorated in condition from when they left the shelter may be grounds for removal from the foster program.