

Foster Care

Category : Volunteer

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Did you know that our foster program cares for almost 1100 animals each year? That's 1100 lives saved that would otherwise not have been ready for a shelter environment. And we can't do it without you.

The Virginia Beach SPCA foster program is a cooperative effort on the part of our shelter and generous volunteers, for the purpose of providing specialized care to animals that are not yet quite prepared for the adoption process or shelter environment. Orphaned kittens and puppies whose immune systems are not yet fully developed or were relinquished before they were fully weaned and animals that require targeted care are primarily placed into foster homes.

Our approved foster homes provide the care and nurturing environment that facilitates the eventual adoption of an animal. Our wonderful foster families have made it possible to find homes for animals that would otherwise have been euthanized. It takes a great deal of dedication to provide such intimate care for an animal that will eventually leave. But those that volunteer find the experience very rewarding.

Fostering Goals:

- >To prevent unnecessary euthanasia of potentially adoptable animals by providing for special needs in temporary foster homes.
- >To provide a less stressful environment in which ill/ injured animals may fully recover.
- >To ensure that all puppies and kittens are completely weaned, old enough to vaccinate and spay/neuter, and have been properly socialized before being placed for adoption
- >To increase the adoptability of animals that have unknown histories or questionable behavioral traits by observing their behavior in a home setting and socializing them to human companionship

The length of the foster period depends on the animal's situation. The most common reasons for fostering animals are:

- >Kittens/puppies are too young or too small to be spayed or neutered.
- >Animals who are being treated for an illness or who are recovering from injury.
- >Orphaned kittens/puppies.
- >The animal needs socialization.
- >Mother dogs and cats with their babies.
- >The shelter is full. As the regions only open-door shelter, we receive thousands of animals every year. Unfortunately, we do not have the space or resources to save all of these animals. Foster homes can provide temporary homes for animals when the shelter is overcrowded.
- >Owner's extended absence. The Virginia Beach SPCA provides temporary care for pets whose owners are living in homeless or battered women's shelters.

How Foster Care Works

The VBSPCA receives an animal that is not ready for adoption or cannot be housed. Foster homes are contacted. People willing to foster animals have filled out an information sheet, indicating what kinds of animals they are willing to foster. If someone is unable to care for an animal at this time, another fosterer is called and this person will be called next time. When appropriate and safe for the animal, they will receive vaccinations, deworming, flea treatments, nail trimming, ear cleaning, and an overall evaluation. We do not routinely screen for Feline Leukemia, FIV, or Panleukopenia unless requested by (and hopefully paid for by) the foster parent or adopter, although in suspect cases we will do this prior to fostering. Isolation is a MUST to protect your own pets. The animal goes to the foster home until the date noted on the fostering contract. Every two weeks, the animal will need to be brought to the shelter for check-ups, weighing and deworming, if necessary. Phone and email updates are always appreciated, but we would like to physically see the foster animals and put our hands on them at least every few weeks. The animal is

returned to the VBSPCA when it is ready for adoption, or on the date specified. If the VBSPCA has any concerns about the animal's health, we may ask for the animal to be returned before the specified date. Please allow us to make these decisions in the best interest of the animal.

Foster Home ResponsibilitiesAll foster pets should be kept inside. This protects the animals from the elements and other dangers outside. Furthermore, the primary responsibility of the foster home is to socialize the animal. The animals should have as much human contact as possible. This will increase their chances for adoption. Foster parents should be prepared to provide cat litter, food, bedding, toys, leashes, etc. The VBSPCA has limited resources and cannot routinely provide these supplies. If medical problems develop, the foster parent should contact the VBSPCA immediately and arrange to bring the animal to us for examination. Any visits to your own vet are your sole financial responsibility. VBSPCA staff MUST clear all medical treatments on VBSPCA animals, even if your personal vet has examined the animal. A home inspection may be required before a new volunteer may foster an animal. This is to protect the animal by insuring adequate standards of care.

Isolation Periodically, outbreaks of serious diseases will spread throughout the country's animal populations. Shelters are often the first to notice increases in animal illness, because we receive so many unvaccinated and stray animals. It is ESSENTIAL for your pet's health and protection that you follow isolation guidelines. Because most of the animals needing foster care have unknown histories, you must keep them isolated from your own pets for at LEAST one week. To control the spread of disease, please keep foster animals confined to a single room or bathroom. Confinement

Many foster families feel guilty about confining their temporary guests to a small area. Please understand that this is in the animal's best interest. Cats in particular will need some time to de-stress after entering their new environment. If you give them the run of the house, they will hide and you may not be able to find them or get them to come out of hiding. This can be serious if you have a nursing mother, who may hide and leave her babies behind. Other mothers may attempt to move their babies and may put them in a dangerous place. The smaller the area, the easier it is to find the animals. It is also easier to clean and pet proof a small area. Potty training is accomplished much faster in a confined space.

Time CommitmentThe shelter environment can be very stressful on animals of all ages. It can be equally, if not more, stressful to be repeatedly moved from one home to another. Please consider the amount of time you have available before fostering. If you cannot commit to an animal for the entire foster period, please wait until you have more time available. Please recognize that the amount of time an animal needs depends on its particular situation. Sickness or poor weight gain may extend fostering by a week or more. Are you interested in becoming a foster parent? Fill out our [Foster Care Information Sheet](#). For more information, contact our Adoption Coordinator at vbspcafoster@gmail.com If you need temporary housing for your animal during a personal crisis, please click [here](#) for more information.