



A BEST FRIENDS® INITIATIVE

FOSTERING FAQS

WHAT EXACTLY DO FOSTER FAMILIES DO?

They provide love, love, love and more love. And, of course, food, water, shelter and exercise. Depending on the individual animal's needs, foster parents may also be asked to administer medication, drive him or her to vet appointments and/or adoption events, or work with the animal on basic things like walking nicely on a leash, easy commands, or improving social skills. In other words, foster families love and treat foster animals as if they were their own. Depending on the individual policies of each rescue organization, one thing you might not be asked to do is incur the cost of caring for a foster. Some groups reimburse foster homes for supplies such as food, litter and toys, and for any veterinary costs incurred in the care of the animal. Others actually provide the necessary supplies. Most foster programs will have you sign a contract that explains what they will cover by way of food and medical care, and they may request that you use a specific veterinary clinic for treatment of your foster animal. Just be sure to ask!

HOW WILL FOSTERING IMPACT MY OWN PETS?

You know your pet best. They may be your best assistant in helping socialize an animal or model good behaviors. Just like you, saying good-bye to their new friend when a permanent home is found could be tough on them. Or they may be thoroughly upset at the new arrival. Pay close attention to how your pet reacts and have their best interests at heart. For the safety of your pets and the foster animal, it's important to keep your pets up-to-date on vaccinations. In many cases, the foster pet will need to be isolated from your own pets, either temporarily or throughout the foster period. Talk with the group you're working with to determine what's best in each situation.

WHY DO PEOPLE VOLUNTEER TO FOSTER?

For starters, fostering is a clear and obvious way to save an animal's life. But that's not the only reason why people foster:

- It's a volunteer job that doesn't require you to show up at a specific time for a certain number of hours.
- For those who can't make a lifetime commitment to a pet right now, like college students or military families, it's a great way to enjoy a pet.
- Fostering is a great "test drive" to see how a permanent pet would fit into your lifestyle.

DO I QUALIFY FOR TAKING IN A FOSTER ANIMAL?

If you have a heart for animals, you probably qualify! It is easier if you've had pets before, but again, most places will help you get started if you need it.

There are some instances when a special-needs animal needs a very particular kind of foster home. He might require a well-fenced yard. Or she may need to be quarantined from other pets. Maybe it's an orphaned kitten or puppy who needs a surrogate mother to feed her. Or maybe he's an extremely shy cat who needs some special patience and care to come out of his shell. Don't worry – rescue organizations make every effort to match animals with appropriate foster homes.

HOW MUCH TIME IS INVOLVED?

That depends on the fostered animal. If you choose to surrogate a newborn, for example, be prepared to provide around-the-clock care until they are at least eight-weeks old. Some high-energy animals, like dogs, may just need plenty of room to run and burn energy. And, of course, animals needing various kinds of medical care fall anywhere in between.

HOW LONG WILL THE FOSTER ANIMAL BE WITH ME?

You could barely get your new foster in the front door before finding out someone's put in an adoption application. Or it could extend out to months. Or you may just fall head over heels in love and decide to adopt! That happens a lot, which is why shelters and rescues are always in desperate need of new foster homes.

IS IT MY JOB TO FIND HIM/HER A PERMANENT HOME?

That depends on the arrangement that you have with group or shelter for which you are providing a foster home. Rescue groups and shelters frequently participate in adoption events and fairs and ask foster families to bring their adoptable animals. You can give firsthand insight into their personality, their likes/dislikes, and all of their fun quirks. Get out there and show off your little buddy! Word of mouth about your wonderful foster is also a great way to help him/her find a home. Let all of your friends, family and anyone else in your social circle know you have an awesome pet for adoption.

AND WHEN IT'S TIME TO SAY GOOD-BYE?

Be brave! You brought this sweet, wonderful animal into your heart and home. You helped him overcome whatever obstacles he faced. And now all of that love will benefit a new, forever family. Some people like to be there when the pet goes home with the new family. Seeing your foster animal ride off into the sunset will help you remember that he has found a lovely new home. Take heart! A lot of foster families get photos and updates of their old charges enjoying their new homes. Knowing you were part of saving a life and that you helped your foster pet find a loving home is tremendously rewarding.

ISN'T THAT EMOTIONALLY HARD ON THE ANIMALS?

Living in a loving home with a warm bed, enjoying toys, quality care and friendship is not hard for an animal. He will surely be sad to say goodbye, as you are, but then he's off to an even brighter future. Remember, *foster homes are a lifesaving bridge* for stray or frightened pets. It gives them a chance to get used to life in a house, and an opportunity to learn that people can be kind, food is available, and there is a warm, secure place to sleep. Then, when a permanent home is found, they will adjust much easier and the odds of them staying in that home are so much higher. There's no shortage of animals who need this preparation time before finding their own family.

HOW DO I GIVE FOSTERING A TRY?

Are you ready to change the life of a homeless animal? Please visit our [Foster information section](#).

It's a sad reality that many healthy, wonderful animals are still euthanized each year in shelters simply because there isn't enough room for them. As a foster parent, you'll be giving one very lucky animal a chance at a bright future full of love. It is important, valuable work and, best of all, it saves lives.