



**GREENVILLE COUNTY ANIMAL CARE  
FOSTER CARE GUIDE**

**328 Furman Hall Road  
Greenville, SC 29609**

**Foster Care Phone: (864) 467-3952  
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Shelter Phone: (864) 467-3950**

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## **WELCOME TO THE GREENVILLE COUNTY ANIMAL CARE FOSTER CARE PROGRAM!**

Thank you for opening your home to a shelter companion animal. Animal Care began its foster care program in order to give young, injured or sick, abused animals a chance to grow or heal and eventually find a permanent home. Since its start, our foster care program has saved thousands of dogs and cats that would otherwise have been euthanized if not given a second chance.

## **WHAT IS THE MISSION AND VISION OF GREENVILLE COUNTY ANIMAL CARE?**

Our Mission is to partner with our community to educate and encourage compassionate citizenship, thereby enriching the lives of companion animals and promoting responsible pet guardianship through services designed to reduce pet overpopulation, and increase pet reclamation, retention, and rehoming efforts.

Our Vision is to transform how our community cares for companion pets through affordable, high quality wellness, adoptions, spay-neuter and humane education, resulting in responsible guardianship where animals do not suffer because of human abuse, neglect or ignorance.

## **WHAT KINDS OF ANIMALS NEED FOSTER HOMES**

- Puppies or kittens too young to be adopted
- Abused dog or cat that need socialization and TLC
- A dog or cat with a cold or cough
- A dog or cat recovering from a treatable medical condition
- An abandoned mother with a litter of kittens or puppies
- Any other animals when the shelter becomes overcrowded

## **TIME COMMITMENT & RESPONSIBILITIES**

Commitment and responsibilities depend on the situation and animal. Foster parents must be willing to be patient and commit to these animals because our goal is to keep them in a stable and consistent environment. The sooner they feel secure, the sooner they will be healthy, recovered, and adopted.

## **TYPE OF ANIMAL – AVERAGE WEEKS FOSTERED AND DAILY HOURS TO COMMIT**

Weaned kittens	1-3 weeks	2 hours
Cats with colds	2-3 weeks	1-2 hours
Kittens with moms	2-8 weeks	1-2 hours or more
Injured cats	1 week-2 months	1-2 hours
Orphaned kittens	6-8 weeks	Up to 8 hours
Dogs with colds	1-3 weeks	2-3 hours

Weaned puppies	1-3 weeks	3-6 hours
Injured dogs	1 week-2 months	2-3 hours
Orphaned puppies	6-8 weeks	8 hours
Puppies with moms	2-8 weeks	3 hours
Overcrowded Shelter/Urgent Animals	Undetermined – we recommend you ask about our Foster to the Rescue Program for these animals.	

## **HOW DO FOSTER PETS GET ADOPTED?**

All foster parents are encouraged to promote the adoption of their foster pet to friends, family, and other potential adopters. Foster animals never have to go back to the shelter for long periods of time other than for spay-neuter surgery and final adoption (contract, adoption fee collection, counseling on important new adopter info).

Please feel free to utilize social media sources to promote the adoption of your foster. We also have resources available (experienced, trained foster volunteers) that can work with you one-on-one to help your foster pet get more exposure to the public wanting to adopt a new pet.

If unable to secure an adopter, the foster parent will bring their foster pet back as scheduled. The Foster team will evaluate the pet's progress and accept the pet or litter back for adoption at the appropriate time. When your foster returns to the shelter, we welcome and encourage foster parents to include written stories, pictures, etc. that would describe your foster pet to a potential adopter.

## **CAN FOSTER PARENTS ADOPT THEIR FOSTER COMPANION ANIMAL?**

Yes! Foster parents have first choice to adopt their foster pet unless otherwise instructed at the time the foster agreement is made between the shelter and foster parent.

## **WILL MY OWN DOG OR CAT (OR MY OWN HEALTH) BE JEOPARDIZED BY FOSTERING?**

It is always a health risk to expose your animals to other animals with unknown origins and medical histories. At Animal Care 80% or more of the animals that come in are strays and little is known about them. If the foster parent's own animals are current on their vaccinations, maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle, and are not elderly or very young with compromised immune systems, then the health risk is minimal.

If you or someone in your home are immune compromised, check with your doctor first before fostering. Working with animals exposes humans to a group of diseases called zoonoses—a disease that can be transmitted from animals to human and also from humans to animals. There are about 200 of these diseases. Proper hygiene, preventative measures, and an understanding of zoonotic diseases and how they are transmitted can significantly reduce the risk of disease. (Examples include ringworm, scabies (sarcoptic mange), & some bacteria's)

## **ARE FOSTER PETS EVER EUTHANIZED?**

We know that much love, time and energy is devoted to animals in foster care. We are committed to finding homes for foster animals. At times, though, a foster pet may come back and become seriously ill or at-risk. We encourage foster parents to ask to place their name and phone number on the foster pet's kennel card when it is returned and ask to be called if euthanasia is imminent. This will give the foster parent the final decision on what happens to the pet they fostered. In a few cases, a staff veterinarian may decide a foster pet is suffering and in these situations, shelter staff will humanely euthanize the animal.

## **WHERE DO I KEEP MY FOSTER PET WHILE AT MY HOME?**

Cats/Kittens - Indoors please! A large crate or a separate room (a bathroom or laundry room) is best for kittens. A warm garage or a separated room with time out when you can supervise is best for cats. Unweaned, neonatal kittens are best kept in a smaller crate/carrier with warm towels and a warm rice sock at one end.

Dogs – Indoors is best. A large crate or a warm, dry garage is fine. Dogs should be on a leash at all times when left outdoors, or in a fenced area. Do not take contagious dogs off-leash. You are responsible for the safety and well-being of your foster dog. Foster dogs should not be put in a position of possibly fighting with a strange dog.

Puppies – Indoors please! Kitchen with baby gates, a bathroom, a warm garage with nothing to get into, or a large crate in a separated room is best. Puppies under 5 months should never go into off-leash areas (dog park) because they are not fully vaccinated.

## **HOW DO I KNOW WHEN THEY ARE READY TO RETURN?**

- Are the puppies/kittens old enough or did they gain enough weight for surgery?
- Are they successfully weaned from their mother?
- Is your foster healthy and recovered fully from the illness or injury?
- Is there room on the adoption floor?

## **SCHEDULING RECHECKS FOR YOUR FOSTER ANIMAL:**

When you leave with a foster animal, you will be given a day to return with your foster pet. This return appointment may be a check-up or it may be because we have scheduled the foster pet for spay-neuter surgery.

### **SICK/INJURED FOSTER PET RECHECKS**

**Return to the Foster lobby**

### **SPAY-NEUTER FOSTER PET APPOINTMENTS 8:00-9:00am**

**Drop off at the Clinic between**

At time of this manual update, we are testing a new appointment scheduling software that will help the shelter staff and foster parents keep track of scheduled appointments, send/receive reminders, and provide an opportunity for some appointments to be rescheduled by the foster parent.

## PROVIDING VETERINARY CARE

Routine veterinary care is provided by Animal Care staff and shelter veterinarian during normal business hours. Each new foster pet will receive a vaccination series, deworming as appropriate, a microchip, and any medications prescribed by the shelter veterinarian. Shelter staff cannot issue additional medication without seeing the foster pet. Please do not call for refills or come in without your foster pet if it still needs medication, additional vaccines, etc.

***NOTE: If you are able and prefer to cover the cost of veterinary care for your foster animal with your own veterinarian, please let the Foster Program Coordinator know.***

## AFTER-HOURS EMERGENCY CARE

After hours, the foster coordinator will take calls when emergencies arise. In the event of an emergency, the foster coordinator will instruct the foster parent on the best course of action, such as whether to bring the foster pet to the shelter immediately or to wait until the follow day and come during normal business hours. The emergency phone number is listed on the front page of this guide. Greenville County Animal Care has a policy that ***we will not reimburse individuals for vet bills for foster animals when taken for veterinary care outside of that which is pre-authorized*** by the Animal Care Foster coordinator or shelter veterinarian.

## GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SEEKING VETERINARY CARE

Cats or Dogs younger than 9 months should be returned for examination and veterinary care for:

- Diarrhea that last for more than a day
- Vomiting and diarrhea for more than 6 hours
- Vomiting more than once in an hour
- Not eating for more than 12 hours
- Lethargy without fever for more than 12 hours
- Lethargy with fever

Dogs older than 9 months should be returned for examination and veterinary care for:

- Diarrhea that lasts for more than 1-2 days
- Diarrhea and occasional vomiting for more than a day
- Vomiting more than 2-3 time in an hour
- Not eating for more than 24 hours
- Lethargy without fever for more than a day
- Lethargy with fever

Cats older than 9 months should be returned for examination and veterinary care for:

- Not drinking for more than 24 hours
- Diarrhea that last for more than 1-2 days
- Diarrhea and occasional vomiting for more than a day
- Vomiting more than 2-3 times in an hour
- Not eating for more than 2 days
- Lethargy without fever for more than 2 days
- Lethargy with fever

### **VACCINATION & DE-WORMING IN SHELTER PETS AND FOSTERS**

Shelter animals are vaccinated upon arrival at the shelter in most instances. There are some occasions that a pet cannot be vaccinated (too young, sick on intake, aggressive or unable to handle, etc.). Pets in foster care will get vaccinated every 3 weeks until 4 months of age. We vaccinate for dogs and puppies 3 weeks of age and older with DA2PPV (distemper virus, adenovirus-type 2, Parainfluenza virus, Parvo virus), Bordetella intranasal (kennel cough), and Rabies 1 year (3 months and older). We vaccinate cats and kittens 3 weeks of age and older with FVRCP (herpes virus, calicivirus, and Panleukopenia virus) and Rabies 1 year (3 months and older).

Shelter and foster pets will be de-wormed with Pyrantel (roundworms and hookworms) once and then every 2 weeks until 8-12 weeks of age, and kittens and puppies less than 5 months of age will also receive Marquis Paste (coccidia) once and then again 7-14 days later or as needed.

### **SUGGESTED SUPPLIES**

The number of foster animals GCAC is able to support is limited by the annual resources available to the program. ***Foster caregivers are encouraged to donate supplies for their own foster animals in order to maximize the number of animals fostered by GCAC each year.*** Some supplies, such as crates, newspaper, collars and leashes, are available to give or loan to foster caregivers who require them in order to foster. The following is a list of supplies recommended for the care and maintenance of your foster animals.

- Blankets and towels
- Paper towels and rags
- Newspaper
- Bowls- ceramic or stainless steel are easiest to sanitize
- Crate- a large crate with a divider is useful for different sized dogs and kittens
- Grooming supplies- brushes, combs and flea combs
- Litter boxes and Litter- use unscented, non-clumping clay litter for kittens
- Stain and odor remover- Nature's Miracle works very well
- Toys that can be cleaned and sanitized (rubber, nylon, etc.)
- Bleach/Disinfectant

- Baby gates
- Collars and leashes

### **Common Illnesses and Medical Conditions Seen in Foster Animals:**

- URI- Upper Respiratory Infection can infect dogs and cats. Cats cannot give URI to dogs, nor can dogs give it to cats, but it can be spread within the same species. Symptoms include sneezing, coughing, discharge from the nose or eyes, lethargy, loss of appetite and elevated temperature (see – Respiratory Diseases).
- Diarrhea- Generally, feces should be brown and formed. Diarrhea can be a symptom of many different illnesses and parasites. Diarrhea can also be caused by overfeeding, especially in puppies. If your foster animal develops diarrhea, you will need to bring a sample of the most normal part of the stool into the Animal Care Center so that the necessary diagnostic tests can be run. Feed a bland diet of cooked white rice and boiled chicken (3 parts rice to 1 part meat) until the diarrhea subsides.
- Dehydration- Animals with diarrhea can quickly become dehydrated. To check for dehydration, pull up gently on the skin at the scruff of the neck. If it bounces back quickly when you let go, hydration is fine. If it does not go back or goes back slowly, your foster animal is dehydrated and needs medical attention quickly.
- Fleas- Fleas can affect dogs and cats. A foster animal with fleas will be given a general flea treatment called Capstar or a flea bath depending on the severity of the fleas and the age of the animal. Do not use any over the counter flea treatments at all. If you notice fleas within a week of having the animal in your home, call the Foster Program Coordinator. Although we do try to prevent fleas, we recommend that all of your pets be on a flea preventative such as Frontline or Advantage.
- Worms-. If you detect worms in your foster's stool, contact the Foster coordinator to make arrangements for treatment. Tapeworms resemble a grain of rice, and roundworms resemble spaghetti. The pictures are not pretty, but for more information on worms you can visit [http://www.petmd.com/dog/general-health/evr\\_dg\\_intestinal\\_worms\\_in\\_dogs#.UYqOP-BK8vQ](http://www.petmd.com/dog/general-health/evr_dg_intestinal_worms_in_dogs#.UYqOP-BK8vQ)

## ADMINISTERING MEDICATIONS

Administering Pills to Cats- If the pill can be given with food, try hiding it in a piece of food. A small amount of butter, tuna, cream cheese, liverwurst, canned food or semi-moist food like Pounce is often used. If your cat will not take the pill in food or cannot have food with the medication:

- Have the pill out and in a convenient place.
- Bring the cat to the place you will give the pill, while talking to him or her in a happy, light voice.
- Ask to be shown how to correctly “scruff” a cat.
- Burrito Wrap: Sometimes it is helpful to wrap the cat in a blanket or a large towel so just his or her head is sticking out.
- Place the cat between your knees or at eye level on a table.
- Hold the pill between your thumb and index finger of your dominant hand.
- Using your other hand, gently but firmly grasp the cat’s head from above with your thumb on one side and your finger on the other.
- Tilt the cat’s head back so he or she is looking at the ceiling. The cat’s lower jaw will automatically drop a bit.
- Place one of your free fingers from the hand holding the pill between the lower canine teeth (long front teeth) and push down.
- Quickly place the pill as far back in the cat’s mouth as possible, making sure it is over the hump of the tongue. Do not place your hand too far into the cat’s mouth because it might gag.
- Close the cat’s mouth. Hold it closed, lower his or her head to a normal position and gently rub or blow on the cat’s nose to stimulate swallowing.
- Talk softly to and stroke the cat or give another type of treat.

### Administering Liquid Medication to Cats

- Start with the burrito wrap: wrapping the cat’s body and legs tightly in a towel leaving only its head sticking out. Insert the dropper between the cheek and teeth while tilting the chin upward. Slowly dispense the medication, remembering not to give it faster than the cat can swallow. The quicker you do this, the more cooperative the cat will be.
- Refrigerated medication MUST be kept in the refrigerator.



Administering Pills to Dogs- If the medication can be given with food; the easiest way to give pills is to hide it in a piece of food. A small amount of butter, peanut butter, cream cheese, canned food or liverwurst is often used. If the dog will not take the pill in food or cannot have food with the medication:

- Have the pill out and in a convenient place.
- Call the dog in a happy, calm voice.
- Take the dog to a spot where he or she is backed up against something and cannot get away from you. Sometimes putting the dog on a surface off the floor is best, but this requires assistance.
- Squeeze behind the upper canine teeth and tilt the animal's head back so he or she is looking at the ceiling. His or her jaw will automatically drop a bit.
- Place one of the fingers from the hand holding the pill between the lower canine teeth (long front teeth) and push down.
- Quickly place the pill as far back as possible inside the dog's mouth being sure to get it over the hump in the tongue. Do not place your hand in the dog's mouth too far because it might gag.
- Close the dog's mouth and hold it closed while you gently blow or rub his or her nose. This will stimulate swallowing.

Administering Liquid Medication to Dogs

- Insert the dropper between the upper and lower teeth in the back and tilt the chin upward. Slowly administer the medication while being careful not to go faster than the dog can swallow. Always remember to praise the dog and even offer a treat after the medication. This will make administering medication easier in the future.

Applying Eye Drops and Ointments

- Before administering eye medication, be sure the eye is clear of discharge. You can use warm water on a cotton ball to gently clean around the eyes. Use your thumb and forefinger to open the eyelid. With your other hand, place 1-2 drops (as directed) or a small amount of ointment on the eye or the pink tissue around the eye. The foster animal will blink and the medication will cover the entire eye. When applying medication to the eye, try to avoid the animal's direct line of vision when approaching and avoid touching the eye with the container of medication. Make sure you wash your hands before and after administering the medication.

## **CARE OF PUPPIES & KITTENS**

- Puppies and kittens younger than 4 weeks are usually not fostered without their mother. Most mothers do a very good job of feeding, cleaning and caring for their newborns. However, it is important that you be observant to ensure that no problems arise. A puppy or kitten's condition can change very quickly.
- If you have a litter of puppies or kittens, it is important that you are able to identify them. Make a list of their names, and any distinguishing markings so you can keep a record of

their progress. Remove all paper collars before they become too snug.

- Puppies and kittens fostered for age will have their follow up appointment at about 6 weeks of age, if no problems have arisen. Although in most cases they can be approved to go up for adoption at this time, kittens and puppies must be at least 2 lbs. to be sterilized. If they are less than 2 lbs. at the time of their recheck, you might be asked to continue fostering them until they weigh enough for sterilization. Because it is beneficial for puppies and kittens to remain with their littermates until they are 8 weeks of age, you might be asked to continue fostering the animals for an additional two weeks if foster homes are not in high demand. When the shelter is experiencing problems with diseases such as parvo, puppies should not be returned to the shelter until 2 weeks after their second vaccination.
- The area where you keep your foster puppies and kittens must be clean, dry, warm and free of drafts. Puppies and kittens younger than 2-3 weeks cannot maintain their own body temperature and can die if they become chilled.
- Puppies and kittens with mothers should be kept separate from other animals in the house. The mother may be protective and can attack other animals or people if she feels threatened.
- Use towels or blankets for bedding. Bedding should be changed daily (or more frequently if necessary). The mother will try to keep the area clean, but that can be a difficult chore, especially with a large litter.
- The mother will take care of the babies' elimination needs by frequently cleaning/licking them. Puppies and kittens begin eliminating on their own without stimulation from their mother at about 3 weeks of age.
- Fading puppy or kitten: Rarely, one or more puppies or kittens in a litter will begin to "fade" after a week or two of life. They will stop growing, begin to lose weight, stop nursing and stop crawling. They may cry continuously and lose the ability to stay upright. There is no clear cause for the condition. Puppies and kittens fade very quickly and often do not recover, even with intensive care. Contact the Foster Program Coordinator immediately if you suspect a problem.

#### Feeding:

- Nursing mothers should be fed dry puppy or kitten food mixed with some wet food. They need to be fed more often and in larger quantities than usual.
- Starting at about 3-4 weeks of age, most puppies and kittens will begin trying to eat on their own from their mother's dish. At this time, make sure the dish is large enough for the litter to gather around or use multiple dishes.
- Mix ground dry puppy or kitten food with water and a small amount of canned food to make a semi-solid mixture.
- Some puppies and kittens may need to be introduced to the food. Place a small amount on your finger and allow the puppy or kitten to lick it off or place a small amount on their lips. Slightly warming the food makes it more palatable.
- Feedings should be done at least 2-3 times a day. Several feedings throughout the day

will ensure that your puppies and kittens do not overeat. Overeating can cause vomiting or diarrhea.

- It is important to make sure that each puppy and kitten is eating. If it appears that one or more puppy or kitten is not making its way to the dish or is getting squeezed out, set up another dish away from the first and closely monitor that puppy or kitten's intake.
- Do not feed cow's milk to a puppy or kitten.
- Remove the mother during puppy and kitten feeding times so she will not eat their food. It is also helpful to remove the mother 1-2 hours prior to feeding time to stimulate the puppies and kittens' appetites.
- Puppies and kittens will continue to occasionally nurse during this time.

Litter Box Training - By about 4 weeks of age, kittens are ready to begin using the litter box.

- Make sure you have a low sided litter box for the kittens to get in and out of easily.
- Start them off by putting them in the litter box and scratching the litter with their paw. The kittens will pick this up very quickly. While they are learning to use the litter box, put them in it several times a day for a couple days if necessary.
- Kittens who are unfamiliar with the litter box will taste the litter. Use unscented, non-clumping clay litter for young kittens. Ingested clumping litter will cause illness.
- Several litter boxes may be necessary depending on the size of the litter.
- Litter boxes must be kept clean.
- Make sure the kittens can easily locate their litter box by keeping them in a small room or bathroom.
- Kittens are very messy when first learning to use a litter box. They will step in their excrement and track it through the room. At this time, it is especially important to keep all surfaces clean and covered.

Puppy Housetraining:

- Puppies will start to eliminate on their own at about 3 weeks of age. Puppies need to eliminate when they first wake up, about 20 minutes after eating and after playing vigorously.
- Once puppies have begun to eliminate on their own, outdoor housetraining should begin. If it is necessary to use an indoor elimination location, it should be as small as possible. Keep it consistently covered with something like newspaper or puppy pads. This will help puppies learn to keep elimination in one area and ease housetraining in the new home.

Puppy Behavior:

- Nipping is a common behavior in puppies. A loud shriek will usually get their attention so you can give them a proper toy to chew.
- Try to start your foster puppies off on the right foot by keeping them off of the furniture, not letting them jump, etc. This will make their transition to a new home easier.
- Puppies should never be left unsupervised outside of their crate.

- A single puppy will cry a lot the first couple of nights. Make the crate as comfortable as possible by providing a blanket and stuffed animal.

## **CARE OF CATS**

### Feeding Cats:

- Dry food in an appropriate amount (2/3 of a cup for a cat up to 10 lbs.) should be available at all times.
- A serving of canned food can be given once or twice a day.
- Milk should NEVER be given to cats and fresh water should always be available.
- Cats should be fed away from their litter box.

## **CARE OF DOGS**

### Feeding Dogs:

- Dogs should be fed twice daily at the same time every day.
- The amount of food depends on the dog's age and weight. As a general rule, adult dogs get 1 cup per 20 lbs., and puppies get 3 cups daily (divided throughout the day).
- Give the dog 15-20 minutes to eat the food and then remove it.
- If your foster dog is unwilling to eat plain, dry food, you can mix in some warm water or a SMALL amount of canned food.
- Fresh water should always be available.

## **SANITIZING YOUR HOME BETWEEN FOSTER PETS**

- Wash bedding in hot water, detergent and bleach.
- Discard toys with non-washable surfaces.
- Disinfect all washable surfaces with a mild bleach and water solution (bleach/water ratio of 1:32 or 4oz of bleach per gallon of water is recommended). Bleach solutions should be prepared as needed, because they lose their strength after 4 hours. Bleach is inactive in the presence of organic matter so clean up dirt, hair, feces, etc. before using bleach to disinfect. Bleach solution must stay in contact with the surface being sanitized for at least 10 minutes to be effective.
- Vacuum all carpeted areas.
- Soak toys in bleach water for 20 minutes and scrub and bleach crates, carriers, scoops, food bowls and litter boxes.
- Clean any urine or feces soiled areas with an enzyme cleaner immediately to avoid residual odor (Nature's Miracle Stain and Odor Remover works well).
- Regularly clean up all waste in the yard to decrease the risk of spreading disease.

## **QUARANTINE PERIODS**

Sometimes an animal is sent into a home before evidence of a disease has manifested. Quarantine periods are used to allow infectious diseases to die off in the environment. This protects future foster animals from being infected with the virus or disease. Specific quarantine periods before fostering another pet are as follows:

- Feline Leukemia/FIV 3 days
- Sarcoptic Mange 1 week
- FIP or Canine Distemper 3 weeks
- Ringworm 3 months
- Panleukopenia or Parvovirus 6 months

## **MORE QUESTIONS?**

We hope that you have a wonderful experience fostering a pet for Animal Care. Fostering is not easy and at times it can be overwhelming. Please know that you are not alone! There are experienced foster parents and shelter staff that can help you.

Please email Sue Canniff at [scanniff@greenvillecounty.org](mailto:scanniff@greenvillecounty.org) or call 864-467-3993 for more information. Please understand that our foster program is VERY LARGE. We foster, on average, 300+ animals monthly. For this reason, any emergent issues should be handled by coming into Animal Care during normal business hours. Do not wait on a phone call or email if you feel your foster pet needs to be seen or if you cannot handle a foster pet situation on your own.

## **FEEDBACK IS APPRECIATED!**

Please share your experience fostering with us by emailing [scanniff@greenvillecounty.org](mailto:scanniff@greenvillecounty.org) or contact the Division Manager (Shelly Simmons) by calling 864-467-3953 or emailing her at [misimmons@greenvillecounty.org](mailto:misimmons@greenvillecounty.org).