



# FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

Effective May 1, 2016

SpokAnimal  
710 North Napa Street  
Spokane, WA 99202

Dear Prospective Foster Care Family,

Thank you for your interest in opening your heart and home to an animal in need and becoming a member of SpokAnimal's foster care team.

We depend on the kindness, love and homes of our foster care team. You help us save hundreds of lives every year by giving animals a second chance. Our foster care program was created with the help of caring individuals in our community as a way of providing the time for animals to recover, gain weight, become more social or otherwise be fit for adoption.

We hope that the foster experience is a "paw-sitive" one. This guide is designed to help answer some basic questions about what you can expect as a foster home, as well as what is expected of you as you care for animals in need. More specific care information for dogs and cats can be found in SpokAnimal's Foster Puppy Handbook and Foster Kitten Handbook.

SpokAnimal greatly values all of our volunteers, including, of course, our foster care volunteers. Foster care team members need to attend a general volunteer orientation before becoming a foster care provider. This can be arranged by contacting our Volunteer Coordinator by phone at 534-8133 ext 218 or by email at [volunteers@spokanimal.org](mailto:volunteers@spokanimal.org). After you have completed your initial volunteer orientation, our volunteer coordinator will contact you for an interview, after which we will schedule a home visit and foster orientation.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact us at any time.

Good luck and happy fostering!!!

Laura Thulean  
Executive Director  
(509) 534-8133 ext 208

Foster Care Coordinator  
(509) 534-8133 ext 215  
[foster@spokanimal.org](mailto:foster@spokanimal.org)



## REASONS TO FOSTER

Fostering is a wonderful experience for you and your family - you can feel good knowing you have helped save a dog or cat's life. Even better, you've created space in the shelter to accommodate other homeless animals. Foster animals provide companionship and purpose - your act of kindness is repaid in rewards that are beyond words.

Animals needing foster homes may be:



- Animals with specific medical needs due to illness, injury, age, weight, recovery from surgery or cruelty.
- Older or senior animals that will be more comfortable in a home environment.
- Animals that require additional behavioral training, observations, and/or socialization before they can be adopted.
- Orphaned kittens or puppies too young to be adopted.
- Orphaned kittens or puppies under four weeks needing bottle baby care.
- Nursing moms with kittens or puppies.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL FOSTER PARENTS

We are happy to welcome foster parents who have completed the following:

- Be an active SpokAnimal volunteer, having completed the Volunteer Application, passed a WSP background check, signed a release of liability and completed general volunteer orientation.
- Complete a Foster Care Application and a Foster Care Contract.
- Be at least 18 years of age.
- Have adequate facilities for animal care.
- Have animal care knowledge, abilities, and skill.
- Be able to bring animals back to SpokAnimal for medical checkups, boosters as needed, and adoption when the fostering period is over (if not acting as an adoption ambassador).
- Interview with our Volunteer Coordinator and read the training materials.
- Allow a home inspection.
- Provide email contact information. The Foster Care Program offers special trainings and opportunities which are shared by email.
- All owned animals must be spayed or neutered, licensed, and current on vaccinations.
- Landlord permission is needed if you are renting.

## HOW TO BECOME AN APPROVED FOSTER PARENT

- Complete the Volunteer Application on-line or at front desk. Check box for "Foster Care".
- Attend Volunteer Orientation.
- You will be contacted by the Volunteer Coordinator for an interview. You will receive a Foster Care Handbook, complete the Foster Care Application and sign the Foster Care Contract at this interview.
- Schedule and pass a home inspection.
- Check your email and voice/text mail regularly for foster requests!
- If you are interested in fostering a specific animal, contact a Foster Care Coordinator by email or phone to determine if the animal is available for fostering and to arrange a pick-up date / time.

## SPOKANIMAL FOSTER CARE CONTRACT

I, \_\_\_\_\_, willingly volunteer to care for specific SpokAnimal animals as described in any and all Foster Care Arrangements.

I understand that other animals in my household could be exposed to medical or behavioral conditions that have been recognized in the foster animals placed with me by SpokAnimal, and that SpokAnimal is not liable for any disease or injury of my own companion animals or other exposed animals.

I understand that I can return foster animals to SpokAnimal at any time if circumstances develop whereby I am unable to give the best possible care.

I understand that I will be responsible for the daily care and feeding of foster animals. Should a foster animal become ill, I will contact a Foster Care Coordinator immediately for further instructions. I understand that all veterinary care will be provided at SpokAnimal. In case of a life threatening emergency I will transport the animal to SpokAnimal. If injury or illness requires further extensive veterinary care, I understand that a decision will be made by SpokAnimal.

I understand fully that foster animals are temporarily in my care that they belong exclusively to SpokAnimal. Any determination about the disposition of foster animals will be made solely by SpokAnimal.

I understand that when foster animals are ready to be placed with a permanent guardian that I must either return the animal to SpokAnimal or find placement myself with guidance and approval by SpokAnimal. I understand that any and all placements will be made through SpokAnimal and are subject to SpokAnimal guidelines.

I acknowledge that SpokAnimal reserves the right to remove any foster animals from my care at any time for any reason whatsoever.

I give SpokAnimal permission to inspect my home or property at any time to determine the condition of the foster animals or the environment in which they are housed.

### PREPARING FOR YOUR FOSTER ANIMAL(S)

Before being approved by a Foster Coordinator as a qualified foster home, we suggest you prepare yourself, your family and your home for a new canine or feline companion.

A. Be physically and mentally prepared. Fostering is a family affair, so make sure that everyone in your household is ready, willing and able to provide a loving home for new pets. Many adults and children have a difficult time adjusting to a new schedule or routine, and also have a difficult time “giving up” an animal to its forever home. Make sure everyone is ready for this new temporary, addition to your family. Be realistic about your time commitment to a foster animal.

B. Transporting your foster cat or dog. The safest way to transport your foster animal from the shelter to your home (or anywhere else), is in a secure crate. The crate should be secured so that it doesn't tip over or move around. Another option is to use a grill between the back of the vehicle and the back seat. If you have a sedan, then you may be able to secure a crate on the back seat. It is always a good idea to put a blanket down under your crate or in the back section of your vehicle, so that if your dog becomes car sick, or has an accident, the blanket will protect your seats and carpet. If you can't fit a crate into your vehicle, your dog is safest in the back seat. For dogs, use either a special harness that hooks on to a seat belt, a leash that attaches to the seat belt or a person to restrain the dog. Avoid letting the dog ride in the passenger seat next to you.



C. Other pets. New foster animals need to be kept separate from your existing companion animals of the same species for a period of seven to ten days. This quarantine period is to protect your own animals and should be strictly observed. No matter how friendly your dog or cat may be, you never know how the new foster will react to your pets. Also, although our shelter animals are examined when they arrive, they may have been exposed to a contagious disease.

- D. Health and Medical Issues. For their protection, your companion animals of the same species need to be current on all vaccines. They also must be spayed or neutered. You may wish to discuss the fact that you are fostering with your veterinarian. For the safety of your pets, your veterinarian might recommend vaccines that are not routinely given.
- E. Safety. For the safety of the foster animals, please take the following steps:
- Remove any potentially toxic items
  - Close toilet bowls
  - Check for exposed electrical cords
  - Remove small, ingestible items such as rubber bands or pieces of string
  - All cleaning supplies and medications should be kept out of the reach of jumping and climbing cats and dogs.
  - Place all small chewable items out of reach.
  - Put all socks, shoes, underwear, etc. away – they are tempting to chew.
  - Block off all small areas and hiding places.
  - Trash cans should be kept covered.
  - Wires and mini blind cords should be placed out of reach.
  - Many house and garden plants are poisonous. Keep household plants out of reach and supervise your animals outside.
  - Safe toys are encouraged. Avoid any toys that have small parts attached to them (i.e., eyes, ribbons, yarn, feathers, etc.). Also avoid soft rubber toys (and squeaky toys) that can be chewed apart.
  - Protect your home by using sheets, tarps and newspaper to protect carpet and floors.
- F. Where to keep your foster animal. Planning where you will keep your cat or dog before you bring the animal home will make the entire process easier for everyone. When you first bring a foster animal home, you'll want to confine it to a single room, such as a kitchen or family room. For dogs, this room should not be an isolated room, but a room where you spend a large part of your day or evening, as dogs are pack animals and want to be with you. This room is especially important when you're at work or away from the house, as it will be a new environment in which they need time to become familiar and comfortable. Use a baby gate to block off the entrances to other rooms. By keeping the animal in one room, you're helping prevent "accidents" that may occur because of stress or adjusting to your routine. (Even a house trained cat or dog might have an accident or two during this adjustment period.) For animals that are not housetrained, keeping them confined to one room will help start this important training as you must be able to monitor their activities. SpokAnimal recommends you also use a crate in this room for dogs for times when you are away from the house.

## SELECTING AN APPROPRIATE DOG OR CAT TO FOSTER

Now that you're ready to foster, it's time to find an appropriate shelter animal to bring home. After being approved as a qualified foster home, you will start receiving foster request emails or phone calls. This email or phone call will describe animals in need of foster homes.

If you see one that looks like a good match, reply by phone or to the email address and a Foster Care Coordinator will determine if this is a good match for the animal. The shelter staff will contact you directly to schedule a meet and greet with the potential foster dog or cat; or may recommend a different dog or cat based on the pet's needs, experiences or situation. After meeting the animal, you and the shelter staff will decide if it is a good match. Both you and a Foster Care Coordinator must feel that it's the right match to proceed!

## PICKING UP A NEW FOSTER ANIMAL

A Foster Care Coordinator will contact a list of potential foster parents when an animal is in need of foster care. The first foster caregiver who responds to the request and accepts the foster assignment will receive the animal. You always have the option to decline a foster assignment for any reason. Foster assignments are generally made for two to eight week intervals, with the option of extending your assignment if needed. Once you agree to foster an animal, pick-up arrangements will be made. We will provide a transport crate for cats and small animals, and a leash for adult dogs.



When entering the SpokAnimal campus, check in with the shelter's front desk staff who will notify a Foster Care Coordinator that you are there to pick up your foster animal. Pick up the paperwork for your records. Make sure you allow adequate time to pick up a foster animal, particularly if there is a meet and greet with your own resident dog.

We will provide necessary supplies, medications, dispensers, and instructions.

## RETURNING YOUR FOSTER ANIMAL

We anticipate that you will keep your foster animals for the duration of their commitment, but we also understand that unforeseen circumstances occur. If at any point, you or your family feels unsafe with a foster animal, contact a Foster Care Coordinator to return the animal.

It is important to recognize that animals in foster care are there for a reason, and returning them unexpectedly to the shelter can be a detriment to their progress, whether it is because of a health or behavioral issue. If you need to bring your foster animal back before they are scheduled (due to a family emergency or something similar), give a Foster Care Coordinator as much notice as possible so we can arrange alternate placement and potentially avoid returning the animal to the shelter at all.

When initially responding to a foster request, please let us know if you will be out of town at all during the foster commitment. A Foster Care Coordinator may approve your personal house / animal sitter to care for the foster animal while you are gone, arrange other temporary placement ahead of time with you, or choose an entirely different volunteer to foster the animal.

About one to two weeks before your foster graduates, you should contact a Foster Care Coordinator to schedule a final drop off date and time. When you bring your foster(s) back, come to a Foster Care Coordinator at the shelter. We have to ensure that we have kennel space and proper staff to care for the animal.

Alternatively, you can act as an Adoption Ambassador and personally assist in the adoption process without the need to return the animal to the shelter. Being an Adoption Ambassador is subject to prior approval by SpokAnimal and its guidelines.

Adopters enjoy information about the animals we have available for adoption, so consider doing a write-up about your foster(s). Include photos and information about your foster animal's daily life! Amusing anecdotes about its quirks, stories about habits, tricks, favorite toys and treats and "action shots" really generate interest amongst prospective adopters.

The Foster Care Coordinators and the shelter's staff work diligently to place all adoptable animals in a loving home. You are always welcome to call a Foster Care Coordinator to find out the adoption status.

## IMPORTANT RULES AND REMINDERS REGARDING YOUR FOSTER ANIMAL

In addition to the requirements and responsibilities outlined in the Foster Care Contract, and throughout this guide, foster parents **MUST** abide by the following rules:

- No off-leash park visits.
- Foster dogs must be on leash at all times and supervised when outdoors unless in your own secured fenced yard.
- No Flexi-leashes. Prong collars, pinch/choke chain collars, electronic collars, spray bottles, physical reprimands including alpha rolls, etc. are not allowed.
- Foster dogs should be attended at all times outside, even in a secured yard. Make sure your foster dog will not jump the fence.
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- Do not leave the dog or cat loose in the house with an accessible doggie door when you are not present
- Any aggressive behavior must be communicated to a Foster Care Coordinator.
- All vet visits must be arranged by a Foster Care Coordinator.
- Foster parents must respond within 24 hours to communications from a Foster Care Coordinator.
- Foster parents are required to have internet access and check their email regularly.

## RECORDING FOSTER VOLUNTEER HOURS

Volunteers and volunteer hours are important to SpokAnimal. SpokAnimal staff will record the number of your donated hours for you.

Volunteer hours are calculated by counting one hour per foster animal, per day. For example, if you are caring for a litter of five kittens, we will count five hours each day for the duration of the kittens' care.

## VETERINARY AND MEDICAL CARE

For puppies and kittens, a vaccination schedule will be provided to you when you pick up the animal(s).

When you have any medical care questions, contact a Foster Care Coordinator at (509) 534-8133 extension 205 or 215, who will either answer your questions or refer you to our in-house veterinarians. **ALL OUTSIDE VETERINARY CARE MUST BE PRE-AUTHORIZED.**

On occasion, foster animals have medical emergencies that happen outside of the normal hours of operation. In the case of an after-hours medical emergency, please contact our Foster Coordinator emergency line at (509) XXX-XXXX. If a Coordinator is unavailable, call the back-up emergency contact at (509) XXX-XXXX. They will assist you in getting the animal the attention it needs.

In the unfortunate event that a foster animal passes away at your home, call and inform us. Death generally occurs because of one of the following: congenital defects, low birth weight, diseases resulting from inadequate



diet fed to the mother, infectious diseases, lack of antibodies from mother, severe intestinal parasites or other causes. Please understand that death is an unfortunate possibility when fostering animals, especially neonatal infants. Usually the circumstances are unavoidable. Remember that it is not your fault! Also remember that you gave the animal a chance it may not have had otherwise.

## THE ADOPTION PROCESS

There are many ways you can help your foster animal get adopted. The first and most important thing you can do is to keep good records about your animal. Keeping track of medical history, behavior, and specific likes and dislikes helps us place your foster animal in the most appropriate forever home. If you could write a story about your foster animals and include photos, what the animal likes to do, and any other helpful information, it really helps to get them adopted.

We would love for you to be involved with community adoption events with your foster animal. These events give the animal the opportunity to get adopted offsite and you the opportunity to meet new adopters. Our Volunteer Coordinator will help with the specifics regarding your participation in these events. Check your email regularly for events where you are available to take your foster animals to help them get adopted.

If a friend, family member, or neighbor wants to adopt your foster animal, contact a Foster Care Coordinator for the next steps. The Coordinator can assist you to complete the paperwork, collect fees and make sure the pet is altered.

You may be asked to have a meet and greet meeting with potential adopters. Due to safety issues, the meet and greet will be at off-site events or at SpokAnimal – not in private homes.

You should notify us when the foster animal is available for adoption. We must approve all adoptions. Final approval of all adoptions is at the sole discretion of SpokAnimal.

## ADOPTING A FOSTER ANIMAL

Learning to bond with a foster animal, see the animal grow and thrive under your care, and then passing the animal on to an adoptive home is immensely rewarding. It is also sad to see a foster animal leave. Give yourself time to adjust to the loss and think about the animal's new life ahead.

If you decide you just can't part with your foster animal and you want to adopt it, please inform a Foster Care Coordinator before your scheduled return date. Your foster animal will still need to be spayed / neutered and all normal adoption fees and processes will apply.

## DAILY ROUTINE FOR CATS / KITTENS

### Feeding

- Kittens should have access to food at all times. Wet food twice daily.
- Pick up dirty wet food dishes.
- Monitor appetites.



### Cleaning Schedule

- Scoop litter box as needed.
- Monitor for diarrhea, contact a Foster Care Coordinator if diarrhea occurs for more than two days.
- Clay litter should be dumped and changed every other day for two kittens, daily for more than two kittens or if kittens have diarrhea.

### Health Check

- Look over your kitten every day for any changes or potential medical problems.
- Check body and fur.
- Look closely at eyes, in mouth and ears.
- Check collars.
- Weigh kittens.
- Check energy levels.

### Playtime & Mental Stimulation

- Kittens should receive one to two play sessions daily with interactive toys (or more!). Outside of kennel play should be twice a day for 15 minutes each time.
- Remember to discourage too much rough play with hands.
- Safe solo toys, such as ping pong balls, should be left out at all times.
- Change up the environment in small ways.
  - Cardboard boxes
  - Move things around in the kittens' room
- Cardboard boxes provide good stimulation and hiding places.
- Move things around in the kittens' room.

### Socialization

- Socialized kittens need a minimum of two to three 20-minute visits daily.
- Under socialized kittens need a minimum of three to four 20-minute visits daily.
- Encourage affectionate behavior.
- Kittens should meet new people a few times weekly if possible.

## Handling & Gentling

- Medium or long-haired kittens especially may benefit from daily exposure to brushing in very small amounts.
- Gently handle paws in preparation for nail trimming. Expose them to being picked up and handled in a variety of ways.

## DAILY ROUTINE FOR DOGS / PUPPIES



### Feeding

- Puppies should be fed wet food at least two times a day. Hard food and water at all times.
- Pick up dirty wet food dishes.
- Monitor appetites.

### Potty Schedule

- Take foster dogs out to potty once every couple of hours until you know their abilities – i.e., that is after waking up, eating, drinking and playing.
- Puppies who have not received their entire series of vaccines should not go out on grass but can be taken out on paved areas as long as they have had their first round of shots.
- Monitor for diarrhea, contact a Foster Care Coordinator if diarrhea occurs for more than two days.

### Health Check

- Look over your puppy every day for any changes or potential medical problems.
- Check body and fur.
- Look closely at eyes, in mouth and ears.
- Check collars.
- Weigh puppies.
- Check energy levels.

### Playtime & Mental Stimulation

- Puppies should receive one to two play sessions daily with interactive toys but more is recommended.
- Remember to discourage too much rough play with hands.
- Safe solo toys, such as ping pong balls, should be left out at all times.
- Change up the environment in small ways.
  - Cardboard boxes
  - Move things around in the puppies' room
- Dogs benefit from having positive based obedience training sessions.

### Socialization

- Socialized puppies need a minimum of two to three 20-minute visits daily.
- Under socialized puppies need a minimum of three to four 20-minute visits daily.
- Encourage affectionate behavior.
- Puppies should meet new people a few times weekly if possible.
- Once fully vaccinated it is a good idea to take your foster dog out into public to not only interact with new stimuli but to be seen by potential adopters.

### Handling & Gentling

- Medium or long-haired dogs especially may benefit from daily exposure to brushing in very small amounts.
- Gently handling paws in preparation for nail trimming.
- Exposure to being picked up and handled in a variety of ways.



## THANK YOU FOSTER VOLUNTEERS!!

As foster volunteers, you will give the animals you care for and love a very special gift- a second chance at a full and wonderful life.

The staff and volunteers at SpokAnimal greatly appreciate your time, energy and dedication.

Please let us know if there's anything we can do to make fostering easier and even more rewarding.

