

FOSTER MANUAL

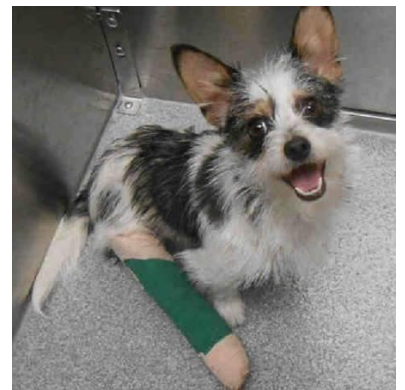


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Contact Information

Email is our **PRIMARY** form of communication during working hours. We are monitoring the email daily, including weekends and holidays. 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.

Intake, Field, and Adoption Services (8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m., 7 days a week):

Shelter Call Center: 714-935-6848

After Hours Emergency (5:00 p.m. - 8:00 a.m., 7 days a week):

714-259-1122 and LEAVE A MESSAGE. A dispatcher will call you back shortly.

Foster Coordinators

foster@occr.ocgov.com

Carrie Bain: 714-796-6471

Rosie Valdez: 714-796-6443

Community Outreach Supervisor

Alexis Lauro: 714-796-6426

Fostering for OC Animal Care

The Foster Program at OC Animal Care is new and growing with each season. We are grateful to all our foster caregivers for their patience and understanding as we implement new protocols and changes as a program and community.

Foster animals are still OC Animal Care animals while they are in the care of their foster caregivers. This means you are not allowed to give away the foster animals, administer your own treatments, or make decisions about the animals' outcomes. Shelter staff must approve everything.

What Animals Are Eligible to Be Fostered?

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 which animals would be a good fit for which foster to ensure the safety and well-being of both the animals and the foster.

Until now, most animals entering our foster program have been kittens and cats, with the exception of the occasional dog with puppies or in need of a medical foster. As previously stated, the foster care program is constantly expanding. As the program expands, we will send emails to all fosters and post on our social media platforms.

Foster Supplies & Group

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

Recommended Items to Have:

- ❖ Several bowls for food and water; these should be ones that are hard to tip over
- ❖ Enclosures, hideaways, scratchers, old towels, blanket, or bed that you can bleach or throw out between litters
- ❖ Heat Source for underage and ill animals that 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
- ❖ A scale to monitor underage animals' weight
- ❖ Cleaning supplies– this includes Accel, Bleach, gloves, etc.
- ❖ Carrier/kennel (we typically provide a cardboard carrier)

If you are not already on there, we do have a Facebook Group for our fosters. If you want to be added to this group, please provide our staff with your email address linked to your Facebook account so that we can send you an invite. While we use Facebook for communication, please do not use the group to contact staff members. Our foster community can use the group to share stories, photos, and tips. To reach staff please call or send an email.

Scheduling Veterinary Appointments

To reduce confusion and impromptu visits, **it is mandatory to set an appointment to bring in fosters for vaccinations, checkups, pick up, and return.** To schedule appointments, please email the foster email. Appointments are scheduled in 30-minute increments. In the morning appointments are scheduled between 10:00 a.m. through 11:30 a.m., and then 1:00 p.m. through 2:30 p.m. Regular appointments happen every 2 - 3 weeks. During these appointments, our veterinary staff will examine the animals, provide appropriate vaccinations and deworming, and will provide any medications 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.

Please keep in mind that appointments can last as long as a typical doctor's appointment. Priority will be given to emergency appointments and cases that come through intake. We will make every effort to get everyone in and out as quickly as possible, but this is not always possible. Please keep in mind that there are times of year when we have a lot of back-to-back appointments, but we will do our best to accommodate you. If you are unable to attend your appointment, please notify the staff and we will reschedule you.

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 on the animal.

Scheduling Surgery Appointments

We **don't** make surgery appointments. Once your fosters are of age and weight, they may be ready for their PUFA (Put Up for Adoption) appointment. **During the PUFA appointment, the cat will then be returned to our care and placed on the surgery list.** Typically, surgery can take 1-10 business days to be done, depending on the number of adopted animals and animals who still need surgery at the shelter. Unless told otherwise, foster animals will stay at the shelter after surgery appointments to be put up for adoption, unless they already have adopters.

We are taking appointments from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM, Sunday through Thursday. That is because we only perform surgery on certain weekdays that vary from week to week. The Foster Team does not have access to the surgery schedule.

Preparing Your Home

Your foster animals should be kept separate from all other animals in your home and in a manageable small area where they can get food, water, and urinate and defecate. It is a good idea to use an easy-to-clean area of your home (bathroom, a playpen with a shower curtain on the bottom, etc.). Fosters should not be placed anywhere that has outdoor access or that lacks temperature control, such as a garage or porch. Because foster animals are inquisitive, you should baby proof your home by hiding all breakable objects, blocking electrical outlets, and removing toxic plants that your foster may eat. Close toilet lids and block off any areas where small animals could get stuck or become lost.

Introducing Your New Fosters to Your Pets or Pre-existing Fosters

All foster animals should be kept separate from your pets or any previous foster animals **for at least two weeks**. This is critical because we do not know the history of the animals before they enter the shelter and can never guarantee that they are disease-free. Our veterinarian staff examines each animal as it enters the shelter; however, we cannot always see anything that may be wrong with the animals. Keeping them apart for two weeks helps to reduce the spread of contagious illnesses since most symptoms appear during that time. If any of the foster animals become ill, our veterinary staff will provide any necessary medical treatment/prescriptions. We will, however, be unable to do so with your personal pets.

Before bringing foster animals into your home, make sure that all other animals in the house are up to date on their vaccinations. If you want to introduce your own pets to foster animals, you should do so after two weeks to avoid disease spread. You should also make certain that everyone is properly introduced and never left alone together.

Contagious Disease Cleaning Procedures & Cleaning Between Fosters

1. Remove and wash all bedding, towels, laundry, and soft toys separately from other laundry and on a cleaning cycle with 1-part bleach to 32 parts water.
2. Soak all hard toys, bowls, and litter boxes in a 1 to 32 bleach solution for 10 minutes. Then rinse and dry. You can also use the dishwasher for this.
3. Nonporous surfaces (such as glass, plastics, metals, and varnished wood) should be dry mopped or vacuumed to gather hairs and then disinfected with a 1 to 32 bleach solution or Accel; this includes walls countertops floors etc.
4. Rugs should be vacuumed twice daily; vacuum cleaner bags should be replaced frequently.
5. Throw away any toy that cannot be sterilized (rope/cardboard/feather toys).
6. More information is available upon request from staff if you need any.

Caring for Foster Animals

As a foster parent, your job is to prepare foster animals for their forever homes, which includes providing love, care, and attention. If you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact staff.

Feeding & Cleaning

Foster animals should have 24-hour access to fresh dry food and water. It is critical to supplement growing animals with wet food and allow them to eat until they are full. While you're getting to know your fosters, we recommend feeding them separately so they can all eat without competing. We recommend keeping a journal of their weights, eating habits, and overall health to keep track of their health.

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

Establishing Good Habits

Play biting, growling, tussling, scratching, or chewing on furniture, jumping on people, and other destructive behaviors should be discouraged. Positive reinforcement is the only discipline that should be used. Try to redirect the inappropriate behavior into a better behavior, such as distracting a puppy from chewing on the wall with a toy.

When you're ready to introduce new concepts to your fosters, keep the following in mind:

- ❖ Introduce new people, men, women, and children alike.
- ❖ Gradually expose them to new noises, objects, and environments within the home, such as allowing foster animals to see rather than hear a vacuum, or explore the house, or exposing them to different types of animals (supervised).
- ❖ Teach the animals not to fear their carrier by using the carrier as a hiding hole or play object so they are not afraid of being in the carrier for transport.
- ❖ Gently touch the ears, paws, tummy, tail, and face to make the foster animal easier to handle in future clinic visits.

Common Symptoms & Illnesses

Animals are good at hiding when they aren't feeling well, so determining if your foster animal is becoming ill requires constant monitoring and weight measurements. Please do not hesitate to contact staff if you have any concerns or questions. The following are some common symptoms to keep an eye out for:

- ❖ **Diarrhea:** Diarrhea is a common illness in kittens and cats that can be caused by a variety of factors such as bacteria, viruses, parasites, toxic substances, food, or psychological stress. If the diarrhea persists more than 24 hours, contact us.
- ❖ **Vomiting:** Occasional vomiting can be considered normal, frequent vomiting is not. Take note if it is bile or undigested food.
- ❖ **Eye Discharge/Swelling:** A small amount of discharge is normal when an animal wakes up, but any swelling, yellow or green discharge, or difficulty opening the animal's eyes is abnormal.
- ❖ **Sneezing/Nasal Discharge:** Animals sneeze on occasion when exposed to dust, for example. If they are sneezing frequently and have clear nasal discharge, they are most likely infected with a virus. Congested animals should be closely monitored because it may impair their ability to eat and drink normally.
- ❖ **Loss of Appetite/Weight loss:** Neonatal animals should never go more than 4 hours without eating because their blood sugar levels can quickly drop. Congested animals are unable to smell their food and may refuse to consume it. We recommend using stronger-smelling foods or warming them up to intensify the aroma. If your foster animal refuses to eat, do not force feed; instead, contact staff to schedule an appointment.
- ❖ **Lethargy:** Fosters' activity level is determined by their age and whether or not they are recovering from an injury. Sick animals may have low energy and prefer to sit in your lap to stay warm. If an animal is difficult to wake up or moves slowly, it could be sick.

Zoonotic Diseases & How to Prevent

A zoonotic disease is one that can be passed from an animal to a human. Fungi, bacteria, viruses, parasites, and arthropods are examples of this. These diseases may be more severe in immunocompromised people, those on chemotherapy, those being treated for immune-mediated disease, those receiving organ or bone marrow transplants, the elderly, the very young, and pregnant women. If you are unsure whether you or someone who will be in close contact with the foster animals is more susceptible, please consult a physician before deciding whether to foster. Please see the following examples of zoonotic diseases:

- | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| ❖ Barteonellosis | ❖ Giardiasis | ❖ Pasteurella | ❖ Salmonellosis |
| ❖ Bordetellosis | ❖ Hook/Roundworms | ❖ Rabies | ❖ Scabies |
| ❖ Campylobacteriosis | ❖ Leptospirosis | ❖ Ringworm | ❖ Toxoplasmosis |

Most of these diseases are spread through contaminated food or water, undercooked meat, and/or other common means other than animal contact. If your foster animal requires medical attention, our veterinary staff will provide it. We are unable to provide medication for your pets.

You can help prevent the spread of these diseases by thoroughly washing your hands after touching your shelter pets. You should especially avoid allowing animal waste to accumulate. When dealing with animal waste, wear appropriate protective equipment (such as gloves) and keep the environment clean for yourself and the foster animals. You can help prevent these by bringing in your foster animals on a regular basis for vaccinations and deworming. Feed foster animals raw or undercooked meat, eat feces, and drink from toilet bowls or other unsanitary water containers. Overall, good hygiene is essential in preventing these and other diseases.

Medical Emergency

In the event of a medical emergency, your animal should be brought to the shelter right away. Make every effort to email or call a staff member to let them know you're coming so we can prepare our vet staff for the arrival of your foster animal. The best way to communicate with us is by email foster@occr.ocgov.com . Please use the header "EMERGENCY".

If you are unsure whether what is happening is a medical emergency or not, please email staff describing the situation and providing Animal Ids. Please use the heading "POTENTIAL EMERGENCY."

Any medical emergency should be addressed the same day it occurs; do not wait to notify staff that one of your foster animals is in need of medical attention! It is always better to be safe than sorry, so please do not hesitate to contact us by phone or email if you have any questions!

The following are some examples of medical emergencies:

- ❖ Any trauma that has occurred, even if the animal is acting normally, includes being hit or bumped, dropped, stepped on, pinched in the
- ❖ A large wound or bleeding that won't stop with continued pressure
- ❖ Abnormal lethargy or difficulty walking/limping or standing
- ❖ Dehydration: symptoms include weakness, vomiting, not urinating, skin tenting
- ❖ Loss of appetite for more than 12 hours
- ❖ Not breathing, labored breathing, difficulty breathing, or breathing with chest sounds
- ❖ Seizure or Unconsciousness

What If My Foster Animal Passes Away in My Care?

Animals can pass away unexpectedly at times. When this occurs, you must immediately notify staff and bring the animal to us. Depending on the nature of the death, our veterinary staff may want to run some tests to determine what happened. If the death was unexpected and the animal had littermates, the veterinary staff may want to run a check to ensure that everyone else is safe. Please email staff right away, and we will work with you to figure out what to do next.

When Are They Placed up for Adoption (PUFA)?

When a foster animal is sent out with a foster parent, staff will discuss a rough timeline for the animal's return. The time frame can vary depending on why they are going out to foster in the first place. Most puppies and kittens are spayed or neutered when they are 8 weeks old and weigh enough. If you foster a mother dog or cat, they will be able to return once they are no longer caring for the babies or the babies are no longer nursing. Any foster animal that must leave due to medical conditions will be determined by our veterinary staff and how long their treatment lasts. While you are fostering, staff will contact you and remind you when it is time to return your fosters.

What To Do to Prepare

Once your fosters of are age and weight, we will schedule your fosters return. If you'd like to write a biography for your kittens, please include the kittens' Name, Animal ID, activity levels, what animals they were raised with (other cats, dogs, etc.), and whether they were raised with children. You are welcome to add any additional interesting facts about the kittens. If it is a big litter, please limit each kitten to half a sheet on a Microsoft/Google document or already created image (template coming soon...). To increase your kitten's chances of adoption, we'd appreciate it if you could email us **recent** pictures displaying your kitten's personality, such as the ones below, to update your kitten's profile. You're welcome to send in the pictures before your appointment. **We ask that the photos be taken horizontally, show all or most of the cat, and show only one cat.** Please no sleeping cats, although they are very adorable. During the PUFA, we do our best to showcase every cat, however, the process can be anxious for some kittens which is why we are relying on you.



Some fosters will create little flyers to hang 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. 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.

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 can 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.

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.

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 must 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 something comes up and you are no longer able to foster, please notify staff so that we can arrange for you to return your fosters. We understand that life happens and that emergencies can arise. All we ask is that you notify us as soon as you know you will be returning your foster animals so that we can prepare for your arrival.

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

Fosters can print the adoption paperwork from our website under “get involved-foster”

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 have deteriorated in condition from when they left the shelter may be grounds for removal from the foster program.