

CCSPCA Foster Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why Foster?

A: Some animals are in need of additional care which can be best provided in a home environment. Not only does foster care allow these animals to get the care they need, but it also provides additional space in the shelters for animals that do not have a forever home.

Fostering an animal is also very beneficial to you as a caregiver. Every animal you foster is equal to animal lives saved. Knowing that you are saving lives is one of the most rewarding feelings possible.

Q: Is there anything that I should consider before taking the next steps to become a Foster Parent?

A: The Central California SPCA has specific needs related to the animals that are in need of foster care. Below is a list of questions you should ask yourself to make sure that fostering for the CCSPCA is the best fit for you:

- Do you have consistent, reliable transportation?
- Do you have the proper housing for taking care of the animal(s)? Because foster care homes must be approved before an animal is placed, the foster parent agrees not to place the animal in any other home.
- Do you have the availability (sometimes once a week or more, as needed) to bring a foster animal in for medical re-check and routine care appointments?
- Do you understand and accept the fact that foster animals may have fleas and/or intestinal parasites? (Note: CCSPCA will make every effort to let you know if the animal you plan to foster has one or more of these parasites and treatment will be administered, but occasionally foster animals carry them without our staff's knowledge.)
- Do you understand and accept the fact that pets in your home (if any) may become ill by exposure to a foster animal? (Note: CCSPCA recommends keeping your animals separate from foster animals; at the very least, you should abide by a 14-day quarantine period prior to any introductions. However, these precautions still cannot guarantee that illness may not still spread.)
- Do you have reliable access to the internet for obtaining information about available foster animals?

If you answered "no" to one or more of these questions, the CCSPCA foster program may not be the best fit for you.

Q: How long is the average foster stay?

A: The majority of cases are two to four weeks, though there is a need for long-term cases, as well averaging about 10-12 weeks. It is important that all animals are able to stay in the foster home during their entire treatment and receive an “all clear” from the veterinarian before being put up for adoption.

We ask that foster caregivers stay active by fostering regularly with a break of no more than 6 months between cases. Some caregivers like to take one right after another, while others prefer to take a few weeks off in between. Each person can decide what is best for their schedule.

Q: What species of animals should I expect to foster?

A: The majority of animals that are in need of foster care are cats, kittens, dogs, and puppies. Each foster parent/family can choose what species they are most comfortable with taking into their home.

Q: Will I need to provide supplies for my foster animals?

A: Yes. Foster caregivers need to supply food, bowls, litter boxes, crates, toys, and medication needed to treat the foster animal.

Q: Can I introduce my foster animals to my pets?

A: CCSPCA recommends keeping all personal animals separate from foster animals so that illnesses are not spread. If you choose to do an introduction you should abide by a 14-day quarantine period.

Q: Do I have to train my foster animal?

A: The vast majority of animals that benefit from foster care will be available for adoption following their stay in your home, so any additional training that can be provided to help teach proper manners while in a home is important. This will help to ensure that the animal stays in the new home, once adopted. Reinforcing good habits and manners with your foster animals is always recommended!

Q: What kind of care should I expect to provide for my foster animal?

A: The majority of animals that are in need of foster will need medications administered and basic animal care. The CCSPCA staff will provide you with the medication that you must pay for and dosing instructions, as well as information on care specific to each species. We do our best to note special circumstances on the animal’s record. If you have any questions about a specific animal’s needs, you can call the Foster Coordinator.

Q: What kind of special needs should I expect when taking in a foster animal?

A: Animals may be placed in foster homes for a variety of reasons, the most common being:

- Upper Respiratory Illnesses (URI): Symptoms include sneezing, coughing, discharge from the nose or eyes, lethargy, loss of appetite and elevated temperature. This is the equivalent to the common cold and is contagious to other animals, especially of the same species. Regular re-check appointments and medications are generally needed.

- Intestinal parasites: Intestinal parasites can be very common in shelter animals. All animals are given a general dewormer (pyrantel). Additionally, they are tested for specific parasites when we are able to get a fresh stool sample. If any parasites are identified the animal is treated accordingly, however some parasites are difficult to see.
- Weight gain: In some cases kittens and puppies do not weigh enough to be spayed or neutered and safely placed up for adoption, so additional time in a home environment is most beneficial for them. Likewise, adult cats and dogs may be significantly underweight and would do well with some extra care. These animals may also be ill, or may come down with an URI from having been in a shelter environment, so it is important to monitor them for signs of illness and to let the Foster Coordinator know if you notice any sneezing, coughing, etc.
- Surgery recuperation: Some animals may need an extensive surgery that requires additional recovery time that can be best provided in the comfort of a home. They may have special requirements such as limited activity, pain medications, or bandage changes.
- Treatable skin conditions: Animals occasionally have demodex mange (a small mite that lives on the skin of dogs) or a flea allergy. Treatment for these can take up to several weeks and may require skin scrapes for testing and specific medications.
- House training/litter box training: Young puppies, small breed dogs, some larger adult dogs, or kittens may require some help with this training. For kittens the process is quite quick and simple; for puppies and dogs it may take longer and require a lot of patience. It is always important to monitor kittens' litter box use, and let the Foster Coordinator know if kittens are consistently not using the box.
- Basic obedience training (dogs): Occasionally a dog will need specific training assistance to help prepare him for his forever home. Folks with dog handling and training experience are always a great fit for these special animals.
- Socialization: Some animals can be a bit shy or fearful and need time and interaction with people (the more the merrier) to become comfortable. This generally requires a good amount of play and snuggle time for these animals. These animals may also be ill, or may come down with an URI from having been in a shelter environment, so it is important to monitor them for signs of illness and to let the Foster Coordinator know if you notice any sneezing, coughing, etc.
- Heartworm Treatment (dogs): Heartworm treatment is a long process and requires 2-3 months in a foster home with extremely limited activity. The dogs will go through one or two rounds of injections and sometimes need additional re-checks and specific medications.
- Short-term (<2 wks) event fostering: In an effort to prepare animals for adoption events, it is helpful for some to go into foster care for the week or two leading up to the event to make sure they do not get a URI. These animals generally just require basic care and will need to be transported either to one of our facilities or directly to the event on a specific day/time.

Special Cruelty/Neglect Case Foster - Through our humane investigation program, sometimes we are responsible for temporarily and confidentially housing animals during the court proceedings. Because this process can take several months, we have a unique foster program set up to house these animals outside of the shelter for this time. This often requires an open ended time commitment because we never know exactly how long the court proceedings will take. Additional requirements and stipulations may be involved in fostering these animals. Our Foster Coordinator will be able to discuss those with you. Thankfully, it is not often that we have this type of foster need, but we are thankful for our community's support when we do.

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