

# Mesabi Humane Society



2305 Southern Dr  
Virginia MN 55792  
218.741.7425

[www.mesabihumanesociety.org](http://www.mesabihumanesociety.org)

## Foster Care Policies and Procedures

**Thank you for opting to foster an animal in need. Please refer to this packet to guide you throughout the foster process. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Volunteer Foster Care Coordinator for assistance.**

**Deanna Swenson - Volunteer Foster Care Coordinator  
218.404.3888**

[Deanna\\_swenson@yahoo.com](mailto:Deanna_swenson@yahoo.com)

## **PROGRAM INFORMATION**

Thank you for opening your heart and home to one of our shelter's orphaned animals. Your generosity will provide young and old, injured and sick, abused and under socialized animals a chance to grow or heal before finding their forever homes.

### **How the program works**

The Volunteer Foster Care Coordinator (VFCC) works with the Mesabi Humane Society (MHS) to determine which animals are most in need of foster care. As an approved foster parent, you'll receive emails from the VFCC providing a brief description of those animals needing foster homes. When you see an animal that might be a good match for your household and lifestyle, you simply respond to the email. The VFCC or MHS will contact you to provide more information and determine if the animal is a good match. They will also arrange a meeting between you (and your own animal if applicable) and the foster animal. The VFCC and MHS will provide you with all the necessary supplies for fostering, support you throughout the entire process, and be available to address any questions or concerns.

### **Reasons to foster**

Fostering is a wonderful experience for you and your family - you can feel good knowing you have helped save an animal's life. And 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**

- Puppies and kittens too young and/or immature to be adopted.
- Puppies, kittens and young adults that require more socialization than available at the shelter.
- Older or senior animals that will be more comfortable in a home environment.
- Injured animals and/or those recovering from surgery.
- Neglected or abused animals that need tender loving care.
- Animals suffering from "shelter stress" in need of a calming home environment.
- Animals with colds or with special medical needs.
- Abandoned mothers with litters of puppies and kittens.
- Any animal when the shelter becomes overcrowded.

#### **1. How long are animals in foster homes?**

It completely depends on the animal and the situation. The average stay in a foster home is about 2 months. However, animals with great photos and stories on the web may stay only a few weeks. Others, such as those recovering from an injury, certain breeds and senior dogs, may stay much longer.

#### **2. Can I adopt my foster animal?**

YES! As long as foster parents meet the shelter requirements necessary for adoption, foster parents have first choice to adopt their foster animal.

#### **3. How are foster animals promoted?**

Photos and stories of all adoptable animals in foster homes are posted on the MHS website, Petfinder.com, Facebook and at the shelter where the public can view them. Foster animals are also promoted at special events throughout the year. Foster parents may participate in various shelter programs and events to increase the visibility of their foster animal to potential adopters. Foster parents can also help promote their foster animal to their family, friends, colleagues and the general public through a variety of means including flyers, emails and even just by walking your foster dog in local neighborhoods.

#### **4. What is the process for adopting a foster animal?**

The process is very similar to adopting an animal from the shelter. The steps are briefly outlined below:

- Potential adopters are interviewed by the VFCC or MHS staff.
- Once approved, meet and greets with the foster animal and foster parents will be scheduled with qualified applicants.
- After the meet and greet (and if the applicant is still interested in the animal), foster parents will make a recommendation to the VFCC or MHS regarding the adoption. The foster animal stays with the foster parent until they hear from the VFCC or MHS.
- Adoption is approved or rejected by MHS. Final approval of all adoptions is at the sole discretion of the Mesabi Humane Society.
- Once approved, the adopter pays adoption fees to the shelter and makes a spay/neuter appointment, if necessary. Foster animals cannot go to a potential adopter's home until the adoption is official and approved by MHS. Foster animal then goes to its new forever home. Foster parents should stay in contact with the VFCC for assistance with the adoption process. Be sure to review the section on "The Adoption Process" in this manual.

#### **5. If I have my own animals, can I foster?**

Yes, but keep in mind that it's always a health risk to expose your animal to other animals whether it's walking at parks, vet waiting rooms or other common animal areas. The health risk is minimal if your animals are current on their vaccinations, maintain a healthy diet and lifestyle, and are not elderly or very young.

If you or someone in your household is immune-compromised, consult your doctor before fostering since working or living with animals exposes humans to a group of diseases called zoonoses. A zoonotic disease (there are about 200) is defined as a disease transmitted from animals to humans and also from humans to animals. To find out more about zoonoses, talk to your doctor and/or veterinarian. Proper hygiene, preventative measures and an understanding of these illnesses can reduce the risk of disease.

#### **6. What supplies are needed to foster?**

Foster parents provide space, food, water, basic training, exercise and love for the animal. MHS will provide you with dog/cat food, cat litter and all the other supplies and equipment needed throughout your foster experience. MHS receives donated items regularly.

#### **7. Do I have to crate-train my foster dog?**

No, but it is one of the most efficient and effective ways to house train a puppy or re-train an adult dog. Some dogs do not like crates, and most dogs need to be transitioned or “trained” to use a crate, so it’s up to the foster parent to decide whether to crate or not. Putting the dog in a crate while you are gone will give you peace of mind knowing that they are in a safe place, away from harm, and not doing any damage to your belongings or themselves. For many dogs, a crate can also represent a safe and comfortable place to call their own and provides them with a sense of security. Dogs actually like having a “den to cuddle up in.” Crating should never be used as punishment. If you need assistance in learning how to crate train your foster dog, please contact the VFCC.

**8. Do I need to have prior medical knowledge or expertise?**

No, but you may be asked to dispense medicine to your foster animal so you will have to be comfortable following veterinarian’s instructions if fostering a sick or injured animal.

**9. What if my foster animal becomes sick?**

All veterinary costs are paid by the shelter. If a foster animal becomes sick, foster parents must call the VFCC or MHS at 218.741.7425. If the emergency happens after shelter hours, you must contact the VFCC to receive authorized vet care. Once a veterinary visit has been authorized, you can make an appointment with the veterinarian. Whenever possible, foster parents will use Critter Care or Northland Animal Hospital for veterinary care. These veterinarians bill the shelter directly so there is no cost to foster parents. If you visit a vet that is not approved by MHS, you will not be reimbursed for the cost. If you have any general questions regarding the health of your foster animal, contact the VFCC. Be sure to review the section for “Veterinary and Medical Care” in this manual.

**10. How much time each day is needed to foster?**

Commitment and responsibilities depend on the individual animal and situation. It’s essential that foster parents understand that shelter animals may be stressed and moving the animal from the shelter to the foster home is also very stressful and emotional. Foster parents must be willing to be patient and commit to the animal because our goal is to keep them in a stable and consistent environment.

Many of the dogs at the shelter are “adolescent” dogs between the age of 6 months and 2 years. They typically have a lot of energy and require vigorous daily exercise. This means at least a 30-45 minute brisk walk/run in the morning, and again in the afternoon, with plenty of play time in between. Older dogs may only need a morning and evening stroll.

<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Dog Type</b>	<b>Daily Hours</b>
Most common:	Dogs with a cold	2-3 hours
	Anxiety in a kennel	2-3 hours
	Weaned puppies	3-6 hours
	Injured dogs	2-3 hours
	Orphaned puppies	8 hours

Least common:	Behavior cases	2-4 hours
	Mom with puppies	3 hours
	Cruelty victim	3 hours

If additional health problems develop, daily hour commitments may be extended. For example, foster parents may have to transport their foster animals to the vet during regular business hours.

**11. Can I take my foster dog to an off-leash dog park for exercise and socialization?**

No. You are not allowed to take any foster dog from MHS to an off-leash dog park. While these parks can be fun for some dogs, there are far too many unknowns for it to be a safe and healthy experience for a foster dog. Diseases are easily transmitted and the temperaments of visiting dogs are unknown, thus creating a huge liability to MHS. Also, taking a leashed dog to a dog park can create barrier frustration and aggression in dogs.

**12. How can I help my foster animal become more adoptable?**

There are two ways to make a foster animal more adoptable. First and foremost is marketing. If no one knows about your foster animal, or how wonderful it is, then it will be next to impossible to find them a forever home. In addition to supplying great photos and a bio and updating these regularly, giving a foster animal additional exposure by telling friends and family about them will help create a “network effect” and will speed up the process of finding a forever home. Simple steps like taking a foster dog on walks in local parks, outdoor shopping areas and other high traffic areas will help find potential adopters.

Secondly, our orphaned animals benefit greatly from the exercise (with the exception of those with some medical conditions), basic training, special love and attention you give them. While marketing provides you with applicants, it’s **always** the animal that “closes the deal.” Providing a foster animal with basic training and manners will increase their adoptability. Shy animals will benefit from your patience, routine and slowly exposing them to new people to build their confidence. Rambunctious adolescents who learn good manners will help show off their trainability and long term potential. And while puppies and kittens are adorable, they need a lot of love, attention and hand-holding from humans to develop properly and feel secure.

**13. Am I responsible for finding my foster animal its forever home?**

No, but we do need your help. Once a qualified applicant is identified, you will be asked to schedule a meet and greet with your foster animal and the potential adopter. Your quick response and then final input on the potential adopter is critical to finding a great match. Many times a foster parent will find a perfect match through their own network of friends, family and colleagues. The shelter greatly welcomes these referrals! If you think you have found a perfect forever home for your foster animal, remember they still must go through the application process and be approved by MHS.

**14. Can I return my foster animal to the shelter if I am unable to foster any longer?**

We prefer that foster parents continue to foster until we find a permanent home for their foster animal. It’s extremely stressful for an animal to be returned to the shelter environment.

However, we understand that situations change and it may become necessary to discontinue fostering an animal. We request that a foster parent provide as much notice as possible (minimum 3-4 weeks) so that we can find an alternative foster home to transfer the animal to. Of course, in an emergency a foster parent may always bring their animal back to the shelter.

**15. What if I go on vacation or have a business trip?**

If given enough notice, we can usually find volunteers that can foster sit for short durations. We ask that foster parents always keep the VFCC aware of any temporary foster sitting situations.

**16. Are foster animals ever euthanized?**

Much energy, love, time and vet care is devoted to our foster animals, and the shelter is committed to finding homes for ALL the adoptable animals within its care. Some animals are in foster care because they're seriously ill or injured. If, after medical attention, these animals are too young or too weak to heal and are suffering, then MHS will humanely euthanize these animals. Fortunately, most animals in foster care heal beautifully. On rare occasions, an animal in foster care may start to exhibit potentially dangerous behavior that was unknown or suppressed when the animal was at the shelter. The shelter may determine that this animal is too dangerous and will humanely euthanize the animal or seek an alternative facility for its care. Your safety is our #1 priority. You must always inform the VFCC or MHS if your foster animal exhibits any aggressive behavior.

## **REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL FOSTER PARENTS**

In order to become a foster parent, you will need to complete the following:

- Contact the VFCC or MHS to complete an initial interview and screening.
  - Complete a home visit with the VFCC and MHS. Please have all family members available for the home visit.
  - Agree to and sign the Foster Care Policy and Procedures and Foster Care Agreement.
  - MHS approves all foster parent applications and all foster animal/foster parent matches.
- Animal Control may also remove a foster animal from a foster home for any reason they deem necessary.

## **IMPORTANT RULES AND REMINDERS REGARDING YOUR FOSTER ANIMAL**

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

- No off-leash park visits.
- Foster dogs must be on leash at all times when outdoors unless in your own secured fenced yard.
- Any aggressive behavior must be immediately communicated to the VFCC or MHS.
- All vet visits must be pre-approved by the VFCC or MHS.
- You must visit a vet approved by MHS.
- Foster parents must respond within 24 hours to communications from MHS, the VFCC, or potential adopters.

## **VOLUNTEER FOSTER CARE COORDINATOR**

The Volunteer Foster Care Coordinator (VFCC) is an individual assigned to you and your foster animal to support you throughout the entire foster care process. The VFCC screens all incoming foster parents and assists with the adoption process, as well as monitoring and responding to all incoming inquiries about foster animals from potential foster parents. The VFCC is available to assist foster parents with posting your foster animal on the MHS website, Facebook and Petfinder.com, can help you write a great bio for your foster animal and arrange to take photos and videos. The VFCC also sends out all requests for shelter animals needing fostering and sitters.

## **GETTING READY TO FOSTER AN ANIMAL**

After being approved by the VFCC and MHS as a qualified foster home, but before you bring a foster animal home, we suggest you prepare yourself, your family and your home for a new animal companion.

### **Be physically and mentally prepared**

Fostering is a family affair, so please make sure that everyone in your household is ready, willing and able to provide a loving home for an orphaned animal. 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, albeit temporary, addition to your family.

Be realistic about your time commitment to a foster animal. Many people believe that a shelter is a terrible place and an animal is always better off in a home. While the shelter can be a stressful environment for many animals, they do receive excellent care during their stay. In addition to a clean, warm and dry kennel, with plenty of fresh water, food and vet care, most shelter dogs are walked **at least** twice a day.

Don't over-extend yourself when starting out. You may want to begin with foster sitting. And even if you have experience with big adolescent dogs, starting with an older dog, a small dog or even a puppy is a great way to build your foster parenting experience.

### **Where to keep your foster animal**

Planning where you will keep your animal **before** you bring your animal home will make the entire process easier for everyone. When you first bring a foster dog home, you'll want to confine them to a single room, such as a kitchen or family room. 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 dog in one room, you're helping prevent "accidents" that may occur because of stress or adjusting to your routine. (Even a house-trained dog might have an accident or two during this adjustment period.) For dogs 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. MHS recommends you also use a crate in this room for times when you are away from the house. Be sure to review the section for "Exercise, Training and Attention" in this manual.

### **The Do's**

- Do keep your foster animal indoors in a location with a crate available (if applicable).
- Do keep your foster animal in a warm/cool (depending on the season) and dry location.
- Do keep your foster animal on a leash at all times when outdoors unless in your secured fenced yard. When in a secured yard, you must supervise your animal at all times. It is very common for a shelter dog to try and escape so **always** supervise your shelter dog.
- Do keep your puppy indoors in a kitchen, bathroom, mudroom or laundry room (you may want to use baby gates to limit access to other parts of your home). Puppies should be around humans for socialization purposes and should not be isolated.
- Do keep your puppy's crate in your bedroom at night so the puppy can see and smell you; this will inhibit the puppy from crying at night.

### **The Don'ts**

- Do not place your foster animal around other strange animals as we often do not know the animal's past history. Foster animals should not be put in a position of possibly fighting with a strange animal, reducing their chances for adoption and increasing their chances of euthanasia.
- Do not allow your foster animal outdoors unless supervised by an adult.
- Never take your foster dog to an off-leash park. This is a liability to the shelter.



- **Taking a foster dog to an off-leash park will result in the removal of the foster dog and end your role as a foster parent.**

### **How to dog-proof a room**

Walk into the room in which you plan to confine your foster dog, and ask yourself:

- Is there room for the crate (dog's safe place)?
- Is there quick access to the outside for bathroom breaks?
- Is there anything that can be chewed, such as drapes, a couch or rugs?
- Are there exposed electrical wires?
- Is there anywhere the dog can hide? Will you be able to get the dog out if hidden?
- Are there coffee tables with objects that can be knocked off by a wagging tail?
- Are there plants in the room? If so, check the list of toxic plants in this manual.
- Where will I set up the crate once all hazards are removed?
- Is the crate in a quiet, low-traffic area of the room?
- Is there a blanket in the crate to train your foster dog that it's his bed?

### **Items you may need**

MHS often receives donated supplies, so be sure to ask shelter staff when you are picking up your foster dog, or the VFCC when you get home!

- Food and bowls.
- Crate.
- Bedding - a clean, old blanket or towel or a dog bed that is washable.
- Odor neutralizer (like Nature's Miracle); it's the only thing to clean housetraining mistakes. If you clean mistakes with soap and water, your dog will still smell the urine and go to the bathroom in that spot repeatedly.
- Flea comb/brush.
- Toys such as: hard rubber balls, Kongs, fleece toys, rope toys or nylabones. Do **not** give your foster dog hooves, rawhide, pigs' ears or vinyl toys that can cause diarrhea or choke the dog.
- Flat buckle collar with an MHS ID tag which must stay on the dog at all times. Collars and ID tags are available at the shelter.
- Leash.
- Training apparatus such as Martingale collar, Sensation harness or Halti head collar. These should be used only during training periods. If you need assistance with learning how to use these training apparatuses, please contact the VFCC.
- Training treats such as string cheese, squeeze cheese, lunch meat or small dog biscuits.
- Baby gate(s).
- Bitter Apple (to spray on leashes, woodwork, drapery — anything you don't want chewed).

### **Transporting your foster dog**

The safest way to transport your dog from the shelter to your home (or anywhere else), is in a secure crate in the back of an SUV or station wagon. 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. Use either a special harness for your dog that hooks on to a seat belt, or a leash that attaches to the seat belt. Avoid letting your dog ride in the passenger seat next to you. Not only can your view be obstructed, but if you brake suddenly your dog could get injured by hitting the windshield or by the air bag.

You might need a few treats to encourage a dog to jump into a car. If you can get a dog to put his front paws up, then you can lift his back end by supporting his hind quarters (as if he were sitting on your crossed arms). If you need to completely lift your dog, the best way is by putting one arm behind his hind legs and one arm in front of his front legs – essentially a scoop. Another way is to have one arm just behind his front legs, and one hand behind his hind legs. This way the dog's weight is being supported in the same general area of its legs. Keep in mind; most dogs don't really like to be lifted. Remember to always keep a handle on his leash.

### **SELECTING AN APPROPRIATE SHELTER ANIMAL TO FOSTER**

Now that you're ready to foster, it's time to find an appropriate shelter animal to bring home. After being approved by the VFCC and MHS as a qualified foster home, you will start receiving a Foster Request email. This email will describe animals in need of foster homes based on priority. If you see one that looks like a good match, reply to the addresses in the email and the VFCC or MHS will determine if this is a good match for you and your lifestyle.

The VFCC or MHS will contact you directly to schedule a meet and greet with the potential foster animal. The VFCC or MHS may also recommend a different animal based on your lifestyle, experience or situation. After meeting the animal in person, you and the VFCC or MHS will decide if it is a good match. Both you and the VFCC or MHS must feel that it's the right match to proceed! Before you leave the shelter, make sure that MHS staff updates the information about the animal in the shelter computer system. Also, make sure you have all the supplies, including medication if needed.

### **INTRODUCING YOUR ANIMALS TO FOSTER ANIMALS**

The VFCC or MHS will assist you with introducing your animal to a foster animal. You should bring your animal to the shelter for a meet and greet before you bring a foster animal home. Typically dogs of the opposite sex do better together. And even if your animal has many different animal playmates, you should still bring your animal to the shelter to meet a potential foster animal. Animals are like people, and sometimes an animal may not like another animal for no apparent reason.

### **What to do once you are home with your foster animal**

- Do be alert and make the reintroductions gradually and calmly. Even if they got along great at the shelter, your animal may be extremely territorial in the home.
- If possible, go for a walk around your neighborhood with both dogs and two handlers. Walk the dogs side by side on leashes and allow them to sniff one another and become familiar with each other.
- Do give your own animal LOTS of love and praise.

- Do leave leashes on the dogs when you are in the home, so that you can get immediate control if needed. You may only need to do this for a short time.
- Do talk normally. Letting the animals know that you are fine; they are fine; everything is fine!
- Be patient and go slowly with your foster animal as they may have been through a stressful surgery, abusive situation or a lot of recent changes.
- Don't leave your foster animal unattended with your resident animal. Even if they seem to get along well in your presence, you should separate the animals when you leave your house. After a week, you may determine that this is no longer necessary, but be sure to always remove all toys, food, chews and start slowly.

**Some common mistakes:**

- Holding the leash too tensely as dogs may react with defensiveness.
- Leaving toys and chews around the house. This can cause resource guarding which can escalate very quickly. Remove all toys and chews before you arrive home with your foster dog.
- Feeding your foster animal with your resident animal. It's best to separate them initially, and to supervise always.
- Over-stimulating your foster animal with introductions to many people or your neighbors' animals.

**INTRODUCING YOUR CATS TO FOSTER DOGS**

*1996 SF/SPCA. Written by Kristie Bradley, update/rewritten by Laura Harris, additions by Seattle Animal Shelter staff.*

Before you introduce your foster dog to your cat, you may wish to wait a few days until you have confirmed or instilled basic obedience in your foster dog. You will need to have your foster dog under control and know which behaviors are appropriate when interacting with a cat.

Allow your foster dog to settle down and get to know your surroundings first before you start introductions to unfamiliar animals. Introducing a cat to a dog is similar to introducing dogs to one another. Take your time and create a stress-free environment.

Begin by keeping your cat in a different room. Allow the dog to become comfortable in his own room. Once the dog is comfortable, let him explore the rest of the house for short periods each day while the cat is in another room. This will allow them to pick up each other's scent.

After a few days, allow the two to meet but keep the dog on a leash. Observe their interactions - a dog that is showing overt aggression, such as snarling, growling, baring teeth, etc., will probably never accept a cat. The cat and dog should be separated by baby gates or kept in separate rooms.

If all is reasonably calm so far, walk the dog around the room on leash, but don't let go of the leash in case the dog decides to chase the cat. On leash interactions give the cat the opportunity to approach the dog if they choose, or to find a route of escape.

During the first few meetings, the cat and dog will probably not interact face to face. A dog is a predatory animal. It's a natural instinct for a dog to want to chase a cat. Assume the dog will chase the cat so you are prepared. Never allow the dog to intimidate the cat by barking or chasing.

Each time the dog acts inappropriately (barking), let him know these behaviors are unacceptable; try using a quick sharp tone, like “Aah-Aah” to get their attention and redirect their energy. On the other hand, if the cat bops the dog on the nose as a warning, that’s a good sign and should not be discouraged. When they set up boundaries between themselves, they are beginning to establish a working relationship.

Let them interact with the dog on leash for about 30 minutes, then return the cat back to its safe haven and bring the dog to its dog crate or bed. Give the dog a treat and lots of praise.

Increase the amount of time they are together a little each visit. It’s important to be patient and encouraging in their interactions. If you’re relaxed, they will be more at ease. Always praise friendly behavior profusely. Don’t rush the introduction or force them to interact more than either is willing. Pressing them to accept each other will only slow down the adjustment process. When the cat and dog seem to be getting used to each other, let the dog go, but keep his leash attached to his collar. Let him drag it around the house as he wanders, that way you can control him at any time. The cat will probably hide at first. You should use your best judgment as to when they can begin supervised sessions with the dog off-leash.

### **FOSTERING – THE FIRST WEEK**

Now that you’re home with your foster animal, you should start a regular routine so your animal can begin to adjust to your household. During this adjustment period, please keep stimulation to a minimum. Some recommendations include:

- Find a quiet route to walk or run your foster dog (depending on energy level) to familiarize him with his new environment. This also helps start the bonding between you and your foster dog.
- Don’t introduce your foster dog to people you meet on your walk. For the first 7-14 days (could be more or less) your foster dog should lay low while he tries to figure out just what this new situation is. You may not see any unwelcome behavior initially. Eventually all will be revealed.
- Do not introduce your foster animal to other animals (other than your own resident animal). This includes neighborhood animals, and animals belonging to your family or friends. Why? There is no way to tell how your foster animal will behave when introducing him to other animals. If your foster animal bites a person or animal you are required to report it to the VFCC or MHS immediately.
- Don’t throw a party, or have a lot of people over to your home. During the first week you should try to spend quality one-on-one time with your new foster animal.
- The most important thing to do during this initial transition time is to clearly but NONconfrontationally establish the household rules. As well, take care not to “indulge” your foster animal’s timid, tentative or fearful behavior; we understand how tempting this may be as many of our orphans have come from less than ideal situations, but in the long run it does not benefit the animal.

### **Additional information for the first week**

If your animal is available for adoption, take new photos and write a new bio for your foster animal. One of the many benefits of adopting an animal from foster care is that the foster parent

can provide detailed, personal and anecdotal information about their foster animal. Your animal will be adopted more quickly if you update this information as soon as possible. Please check in with the VFCC or MHS to ensure that all is going well. Many times MHS does not record your email address, so please email the VFCC so that we can contact you. If you require assistance with taking photos of your foster animal or writing a bio, please contact the VFCC.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION ON FOSTERING A DOG**

### **Expectations of behavior**

Allow time for adjustment. While it usually takes about 24 hours for a dog to settle in, it will take much longer for their overall adjustment to this new environment. Watch their behavior closely. Remember that it will take up to a month before your foster dog bonds with you, so keep your expectations realistic. On the average, foster parents have their dogs for about 2 months before they're adopted. While this amount of time will not be long enough to fully train your foster dog, it will be enough time to give him a good foundation for his new family. Begin training with some basic commands and crate training. Your foster may have been traumatized before coming to you – you'll be teaching that people are good and can be trusted. You should handle and work with your foster dog every day. If he shows any signs of aggression or fear (growling over food or toys, snapping or hiding), contact the VFCC or MHS for guidance.

## **FEEDING**

### **What to feed your foster dog**

The food you feed your foster dog is important because, as the saying goes, "You are what you eat," and this applies to dogs as well as humans. It especially applies to dogs that have been sick, injured or found as strays. High quality dog food is preferred, rather than grocery store dog food. If you need assistance with dog food, MHS will supply you with Purina Dog Chow (or Purina Puppy Chow). If the foster dog requires a special diet, you will be notified so appropriate accommodations can be made.

### **Diet change**

Some dogs react to a change in diet with diarrhea. If this happens, feed them cooked rice mixed with cottage cheese (two cups rice to one cup cottage cheese) for a day or two. Then reintroduce the dry kibble.

### **Feeding schedule and quantity**

Create a consistent schedule for feeding your foster dog. Feed at the same times every day.

Create a separate space for your foster dog to eat so they will feel comfortable.

If you have other dogs at home, feed your foster in a separate room and close the door - this will help prevent any arguments over food. **Do not feed any "people" food.** You do not know what the adoptive family will want to do, so don't start a habit they will have to break; and by feeding only dog food, you are also discouraging begging.

Feeding will depend on the age and size of your foster dog.

- *Adult dogs*: dry adult dog food twice a day, once in the morning and once at night.
- *Adolescent dogs (4 months to 1 year)*: dry puppy food, twice a day.
- *Weaned puppies (6-8 weeks to 4 months)*: dry puppy food three to four times a day, which can be moistened with water or puppy formula.
- *Nursing mothers with puppies and unweaned puppies (4-8 weeks)*: Be sure to review the section for “Puppy Care” in the appendix of this manual.

The quantity of food you provide your foster dog will vary depending on weight, age and activity level. Please refer to the suggested amounts on the dog food package you are feeding your foster dog as the amounts may change depending on the brand. Remember to reduce this amount to compensate for any treats, including chews. Obesity is an epidemic for pets in the US, and can lead to health problems, exacerbate existing health issues and reduces overall quality of life. Please do not overfeed your foster dog.

### **Food allergies**

If your foster dog is experiencing hot spots (red patches of hairless skin), it may be due to food allergies. We recommend sticking to simple, easy-to-digest diets of dry dog food kibble with chicken as the protein ingredient. If your dog appears to be allergic to chicken, look for dog food made with potatoes and duck, or fish. Some dogs react to food allergies by getting raw sores on the pads of their feet, between their toes. If you suspect your foster animal is experiencing food allergies, please contact the VFCC.

### **Food supplements**

If your foster dog is in need of extra nutrition (very thin, ill or poor coat), we recommend a product like The Missing Link, which is a tasty powder that you sprinkle on food. It provides essential fatty acids and omega-3 oils.

**Always provide plenty of fresh water!**

## **EXERCISE, TRAINING AND ATTENTION**

### **Exercise**

Foster dogs should be exercised every day, rain or shine. The old adage, “A tired dog is a happy dog,” holds true for foster dogs. Most foster dogs will need at least two 30+ minute walks a day to release excess energy. If your foster dog is an adolescent, you may need to step up the activity level to include regular runs/hikes/or brisk walks. A dog that is exercised regularly will tend to sleep when you are not at home - and a sleeping dog cannot do undesirable things, such as bark, chew, etc. Even a 10 week old puppy that plays inside or in a yard needs numerous daily walks as part of the socialization process. The exception to this is if your foster dog is recovering from an illness or injury, then they may need rest.

### **Leash walking and the six foot rule**

MHS requires that all shelter dogs are walked using “the six foot rule.” When walking your foster dog, leave at least six feet between your dog and any other dog you meet. This keeps handlers and dogs safe from possible conflicts and also reduces the transmission of diseases. Foster parents will need to be extra diligent because many dog owners seem to encourage their dogs to “greet” every dog they encounter out on a walk. This nose-to-nose greeting is particularly stressful for many dogs, as dogs typically greet each other from an angle. One simple way to avoid an oncoming dog walker is to just cross the street, or start to walk in a wide semi-circle around them. Most people recognize that this is a sign that you don’t want your dogs to meet. If this isn’t possible, just announce to the oncoming walker that you are walking a shelter dog, and you would prefer that the dogs don’t greet each other. Sometimes you must broadcast this loudly if their dog is off-leash or on a retractable leash. Keeping your dog to your side (rather than at the end of the leash) and creating a “body block” with your own body is also helpful. Sometimes it’s impossible to avoid another dog, so just stay calm, walk between your foster dog and the oncoming dog and move past quickly. Also try talking to your dog, “Fido, keep with me” and giving them treats as you pass an oncoming dog will help keep their attention on you, not on the other dog. Please do not use retractable leashes when walking or running your foster dog. It’s impossible to have control with a retractable leash, and they can easily tangle or break.

### **Training**

Most potential adopters are looking for dogs with basic manners. You might feel it’s appropriate to let your own dog jump on people, sleep on the bed, or beg for food, but please don’t let your foster dog have these same indulgences. Set boundaries for your foster dog, and be consistent. Please read the following for some tips on training your foster dog. If you would like additional assistance with training, please contact the VFCC.

**Training Tip: Building a positive relationship with your foster dog.** *Andrea Kilkenny, for Pit Bull Rescue Central.*

- Establishing leadership: A leader in a dog pack is not the biggest dog, not the meanest dog and not necessarily the oldest dog. It is the one who controls the resources! Within a pack of dogs, strong canine leaders rarely use physical means to control other dogs; this is true in both

wild and domesticated dogs. Humans can apply this concept of hierarchy by controlling all the resources in the home and doling them out contingent upon desirable behavior.

- **Training:** We suggest positive, rewards based training for dogs. Increasing your foster dog's obedience skills has many benefits. Not only will the future adopter appreciate these skills, but your foster dog will "show" better when visiting with potential adopters and you will have a much happier fostering experience. Some basic obedience cues that your foster dog should learn are: sit, down, come, crate/bed, stay, heel, and an attention cue such as "watch me." These are very helpful in managing any dog. If you have a dog that does not like other dogs, these cues will be helpful on walks as well. For example, a dog that can heel nicely and that has been taught to "watch" you has less likelihood of making eye contact with another dog and getting aroused.

Why positive training? Many times, owners ask why one should use positive based methods. Please understand that force-based methods including "alpha rolls," "flooding" techniques (i.e., forced exposure at an uncomfortable distance to the object or being that the dog has an issue with), the use of choke chains, prong collars, electronic shock devices, and "correction" can all be problematic for a number of reasons. First, if a dog has aggression issues, using force can further exacerbate an already potentially dangerous situation. Second, using "correction" only or force does not teach the dog what you WANT him to do; only what you don't want him to do. Third, a foster parent can damage his relationship with the dog if they are always correcting the dog or using aversive methods.

Recently, the public has become enamored with the supposed results of certain high-profile trainers, however, we must keep in mind that what we see on TV is also presented via the magic of editing! In addition, force based methods can often temporarily suppress undesirable behaviors, but under certain stressors, when a dog feels threatened and has no other options, he may resort to aggression to remove the unpleasant stimulus or to escape the situation. Positive training methods, on the other hand, are very unlikely to yield such undesirable and unsafe results. Using positive training methods can in fact, increase the likelihood of your dog wanting to respond correctly, increase your dog's motivation to work, and they are fun for you and the dog! If you would like to find out more about positive training methods, how they work, and why they work, visit [www.pbrc.net/training\\_nfl.html](http://www.pbrc.net/training_nfl.html) for an explanation of this type of non-confrontational leadership program.

#### **Additional training tips:**

- Short 5 minute training sessions 4-6 times a day are more effective than one long session.
- Dogs need and respond to positive rewards when learning new behaviors. Remember, most behaviors that we want are boring to a dog, so it's important to make it more interesting to them. A positive reward is a tasty treat, or a game of fetch, or anything that your foster dog enjoys.
- You provide the guidance and information he needs to succeed and build his confidence. Always praise your foster dog when he is doing something good.
- Be consistent with your terminology and routine. Your foster dog will become confused if you let them steal your socks sometimes, but not others.



- Start small and easy and **slowly** build from there. Most people jump too quickly into advanced environments (outside on a walk, etc.), so make sure you start inside in a safe and quiet location.
- Use Aak-Aak or Ah-Ah instead of the word “no.” The canine mother would use this type of sound to correct her pup. Only use “no” for very serious matters; if it is overused the canine will no longer respond.
- Be patient and calm. Dogs respond to your tone of voice and facial expressions as well as your emotions. Dogs were once predators, and can read your body language quickly. Don’t try to fake your emotions as your foster dog will know.
- Never lose your temper with a foster dog or strike him - EVER. We want to create and support a harmonious canine/human relationship.

### **Housetraining**

Be patient with your foster dog. Even housetrained adult dogs will make mistakes, especially if they’ve been at the shelter for a long time and have been eliminating in their kennel. If there are smells in your house from another dog or cat, some foster dogs may “mark” out their territory. This action should be re-directed immediately with a calm “Ah-Ah” and escort him outside where he can finish. You will then want to use some odor neutralizer (like Nature’s Miracle) on the areas where the foster dog “marked” to insure he will not smell and mark that area again. You can begin to housetrain a puppy at 8 weeks of age. Even if you bring home an adult dog that is housebroken, you will want to follow these guidelines until your foster dog adjusts to his new situation and to your schedule.

- Determine where you want your foster dog to eliminate - it could be the backyard, side yard or an indoor substrate such as a Pup Head, litter system or one you have designed.
- When you have determined where he should do his business, take him to the same place every time, and tell him to “do his business.” Take him out when he wakes up, after he eats or drinks, after a play session, or at least every 2 hours. Puppies should go out every 45 minutes until you learn their pattern. Stand with him for 5 minutes. If he eliminates, reward him (with treats, praise, a favorite game and your own special happy dance). If he doesn’t go in 5 minutes, take him back inside and try every 15 minutes until he goes. Every time he goes, make sure you reward him!
- Supervise the puppy closely while you’re inside. If he starts to sniff the floor, or even squats to go, interrupt with a calm “Ah-Ah”, scoop him up quickly and take him to the approved spot and praise when he finishes.
- If he goes in the house while you’re not paying attention, don’t correct him - it’s not his fault. Clean it up and go back to your schedule. Use an odor neutralizer (like Nature’s Miracle) to get rid of the smell. **Never** put the dog’s face in his mess, or yell at him, he won’t understand you, and you will only be teaching him to fear you. If you would like some assistance with learning how to housetrain your foster dog, please contact the VFCC.

### **Crate training**

Crates provide safe havens and dens for dogs. They calm them and can help prevent destructive chewing, barking and housetraining mistakes. Puppies should not be crated for

more hours than they are months old, plus one. For example, a 4 month old should not be crated longer than 5 hours. How long an adult dog can be crated will depend on many factors. For example, if your foster dog was left outside, it has never been required to hold it for any period of time. It will take time for this dog to learn to hold it and you will need to start slowly. Older dogs and dogs with some medical conditions may only be able to successfully hold it for short periods of time.

Rigorous exercise should be given before and after any long periods in the crate, and good chew toys should be in the crate at all times. You may want to crate your new foster dog for the first few nights in your bedroom - most of them feel more secure in their crate and it protects your house from accidents.

Crates should **never** be used as a means of punishment for your foster dog. If used for punishing, the dog will learn to avoid going in the crate. Crates are not to be used for keeping puppies under 6 months out of mischief all day either. Crates should be thought of as dog play rooms - just like child play rooms, with games and toys. It should be a place dogs like to be and feel safe and secure when they are there.

### **Introducing the crate**

- Place the crate (with a blanket inside) in a central part of your home. Introduce your foster dog to the crate after a good walk, when he's tired and sleepy. Keep all chew toys in the crate so that he can go in and out as he pleases, selecting toys to play with. Feed your dog in the crate with the door open. If the dog hesitates going in, place the bowl inside the door so their head is in and their body is outside.
- If your foster still refuses to go near the crate, put the smelliest, tastiest wet food (or a steak!) in the crate and shut the door. Let the dog hang outside the crate for a while, smelling the food inside. Soon he should beg you to let him in!
- Now that the dog is familiar and willing to go near the crate, throw some of his favorite treats in the crate. Let him go in and get them and come right out again. Do this exercise three or four times. Then, throw more treats in and let him go in and get them. When he is in, shut the door and give him another treat through the door. Then let him out and ignore him for 3 minutes. Then, put some more treats in the crate, let him go in, shut the door and feed him 5 bits of treats through the door, and then let him out and ignore him for 5 minutes.
- Next time, place treats, peanut butter, freeze-dried liver or frozen food and honey in a Kong, so it is time-consuming to get the food out of the ball, and put the Kong in the crate. After your foster has gone in, shut the door and talk to him in a calm voice. If your dog starts to whine or cry, don't talk to him or you will reward the whining/crying/barking behavior. The foster dog must be quiet for a few minutes before you let him out.
- Gradually increase the time in the crate until the dog can spend 3-4 hours there. We recommend leaving a radio (soothing music or talk radio) or TV (mellow stations: educational, art, food) on while the dog is in the crate and alone in the house. Rotate the dog's toys from day to day so he doesn't become bored of them. Don't put papers in the crate - the dog will instinctively not go to the bathroom where he sleeps/lives. Instead, put a blanket in his crate to endorse the fact that this is his cozy home.

- To help your foster get accustomed to the crate, place his favorite bed inside it and place it in your bedroom. If you're fostering a puppy, you can try placing a warm hot water bottle wrapped in a towel next to him. Warmth makes puppies sleepy. Make sure the sides of bedding are tucked in firmly so the puppies don't get lost or suffocated in a fold of the bedding. Be wary of dog crates during hot weather - a dog may want to lie on the cool floor, instead of the crate. Make sure the crate is not in direct sun.

### **Attention and playtime**

Lots of human contact is important for recovering, sick, injured or neglected dogs. Human handling is especially important for the healthy development of puppies. Attention and playtime is a reward for your foster dog. Be sure to give your foster dog several minutes of playtime periodically through the day.

As a general rule, children under 16 years old should NOT be left alone and unsupervised with any dog, but specifically a foster dog. Do not allow children to behave with the foster dog in a manner you would not want the child to behave with a younger sibling. Teach children to leave a dog alone when he is eating, chewing and sleeping. Never allow a child to remove a toy or any other "prized" possession from a dog. A child will not differentiate between a foster dog and a dog they have grown up with, so you must make sure to keep everyone safe.

Do not play tug of war or wrestle with your foster dog. If you have a shy or fearful dog, do not throw the toy toward the dog, because he may think you are throwing things at him and become more fearful. After you have finished playing with a toy, put it away. You are controlling the toy and the playtime. When giving the dog a toy or treat, have him sit before giving it to him. That way he has to work to get the toy or treat - making the toy a reward. After your foster dog has settled in and has acclimated to his new home, it's time to get him out into the world. The more you can do this, the better socialized he will be. Get him used to different people and different environments. Start slowly and don't over stimulate as many foster dogs may not have had exposure to what seems like a "normal" environment. When you are out and about, you should remain calm as this will help your foster dog key off of your behavior. But always be aware of your surroundings. Always keep a good handle on your leash and be extremely careful around busy streets, or in parks where there are squirrels or birds or other distractions. If your dog reacts to someone/something on your walk, interrupt the behavior by crossing the street or walk in a different direction.

If you're a runner/jogger, start off slow and keep an eye on your foster dog and see how they react. Many dogs pull when they are in front of you, and running can intensify this behavior. Keeping them at your side, rather than in front, can help eliminate this pulling behavior. You may need to start and stop many times, but be patient. Remember, these runs should be about the dog, not about your own exercise. Puppies under 6 months old should not run with you and only occasionally, for short distances after 6 months. Also, remember your foster probably is not used to running regularly, and like a person, will have to improve his conditioning and stamina over a period of time to avoid injury.

If you're fostering puppies, make sure they have lots of new experiences, so they are well socialized and will be adaptable as an adult. Since it's best not to take puppies out in public until they are fully vaccinated, bring new experiences to them. Find out from the VFCC if there

are other puppies in foster care and schedule a puppy play date. Expose them to men and children as much as possible. Have friends over and invite children over to play.

Always supervise playtime with children and dogs closely! Take your foster puppy in car rides (crate them for safety) to get used to the car. Keep in mind that puppies need to go to the bathroom frequently so be sure they eliminate before you go on a car ride, and keep the ride brief, since they will have to go again soon.

### **NO off-leash parks - No Exceptions**

All foster dogs are required to be on leash at all times if outside of your secured yard. You are not allowed to bring your foster dog to an off-leash park even if you keep them on a leash as this can create leash aggression. There are no exceptions to this rule. **Do not** bring puppies to any public parks. Puppies are not yet fully vaccinated and can pick up viruses, particularly the Parvo virus, through contact with feces and urine in areas where other dogs congregate.

### **BEHAVIORAL ISSUES**

Some foster dogs will have specific needs regarding behavior, training or socializing. The VFCC or MHS will advise you if your foster dog has a behavior problem that may require your help, such as an abused or fearful dog who needs socializing or confidence-building with other dogs or people. A dominant puppy may benefit from an adult dog in your home to “show them the ropes” and appropriate behavior. A dog with an unknown/questionable history may just need to be observed in someone’s home before being adopted. Many times it is the foster parent that is the first to learn about a foster dog’s specific behavior so constant communication with the VFCC is important. There are many resources that we can provide to help you manage most behavioral issues.

It’s important to recognize that dogs are not humans with fur. Based on DNA evidence, dogs were domesticated from wolves about 15,000 years ago in East Asia. A few basic breed types have evolved gradually during the domesticated dogs’ relationship with humans over the last 10,000 or more years, but all modern breeds are of relatively recent derivation. Many of the behaviors that we find problematic, such as barking, whining, digging, chewing, scavenging and hunting other animals are really just normal dog behaviors and can be explained as “dogs truly being dogs.” In many ways, modern or urban dog training is what we do to decrease normal dog behaviors and increase those behaviors we, as city dwelling humans, prefer. But we should keep in mind that these behavioral “problems” are usually only problems to us. And remember that historically these behaviors were usually bred by humans into a particular breed of dog. For example, Siberian Huskies and others in the Spitz breeds are descendants of sled dogs and typically pull when on a leash. Australian Cattle Dogs drive cattle by nipping at their heels or tails and may do the same to children, bikes and cars. Terriers (everything from the diminutive Yorkshire Terrier to the large Airedale Terrier) were bred to hunt and kill vermin and typically have a high prey drive and like to dig. The easiest way to coexist with our canine companions is to provide more appropriate (aka - human accepted) outlets for these behaviors. Some of the most common behavioral issues include:

- Barking
- Humping
- Digging

- Begging
- Attention seeking
- Garbage hunting
- Leash pulling
- Greeting manners
- Destructive chewing
- Puppy nipping and rough play
- Submissive and/or excitement urination
- Urine marking behavior
- Fearfulness
- Separation anxiety
- Resource guarding
- Prey drive

If your foster dog is exhibiting any behavioral issues, ask yourself the questions below:

- Is my foster dog getting enough exercise?
- Is he being left alone for long periods of time?
- Does he have interesting toys to keep his mind engaged and stimulated?
- Is he getting enough attention and playtime?
- Am I reinforcing bad behavior? Some examples include telling a fearful dog that “It’s ok”, verbally scolding a dog when they are seeking attention, etc.
- Does my foster dog have a safe place that is dog-proofed with appropriate chew toys, or am I leaving my own belongings within reach?
- Am I providing specific outlets based on its breed?

You should also talk with the VFCC or MHS about any behavior issues. We don’t expect foster parents to be miracle workers. If your foster dog requires more attention, exercise or training than you can provide, the best solution for you and your foster dog might be a different foster home or to be returned to the shelter.

Regardless of the issue, we don’t recommend punishment as this is rarely effective in resolving behavior problems. Punishment will not address the cause of the behavior, and in fact it may worsen any behavior that’s motivated by fear or anxiety. Punishment may also cause anxiety in dogs that aren’t currently fearful. Never discipline your dog after the fact. People often believe their dog makes this connection because he runs and hides or “looks guilty.” But dogs display submissive postures like cowering, running away, or hiding when they feel threatened by an angry tone of voice, body posture, or facial expression. Your dog doesn’t know what he’s done wrong; he only knows that you’re upset. Punishment after the fact will not only fail to eliminate the undesirable behavior, but may provoke other undesirable behaviors, too.

## **VETERINARY AND MEDICAL CARE**

**All veterinary care must be pre-authorized by calling the VFCC or MHS.**

Once a visit has been authorized, call to make an appointment at an approved vet office. You must bring your foster animal's case number and current vaccinations with you to the appointment. Please arrange to have your foster animal seen during regular business hours.

Once treatment has begun, you must continue with the same veterinary clinic.

**Please note:** The shelter has a policy that it **will not** reimburse individuals for vet bills for foster animals if you do not receive pre-approval or go to an approved vet office.

Emergency/nighttime clinics are incredibly expensive and should only be used in cases of dire emergencies and only after pre-approval.

### **General guidelines for seeking vet visits**

Puppies and kittens younger than 12 weeks must see a vet for the following:

- Diarrhea that lasts 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 12-24 hours
- Lethargy without fever for more than 12 hours
- Lethargy with fever

Animals older than 12 weeks must see a vet for the following:

- Diarrhea that lasts 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 24 hours
- Lethargy without fever for more than a day
- Lethargy with fever

For all of the above, you still must call the VFCC or MHS.

### **Spay and neuter**

Most foster animals are altered prior to going into foster care. However, puppies, kittens or injured animals may need to be spayed/neutered during foster care or just before going into their new adoptive homes. If you are fostering an unaltered animal that is healthy and old enough for surgery, and it is beneficial to have the procedure done while in foster care for either behavioral or physical reasons, please contact the VFCC or MHS.

If your foster animal is unaltered at the time of adoption, MHS informs the adopter when the animal is scheduled to be altered. The foster parent may drop the animal off at the vet clinic the morning of the scheduled surgery to avoid having the animal spend the night at the shelter prior to the day of surgery. If the foster parent and adopter agree, the foster parent may pick up the animal after the surgery so the dog will see a familiar face after the procedure.

There are rare circumstances where the shelter will allow an adopter to pay a deposit and have the surgery performed at a later date. The clinic may be booked or the animal may still be recovering from an illness, which would interfere with the safety of the procedure. Both male and female pups and kittens can be neutered or spayed as early as 8-10 weeks of age.

## **Illness**

Your foster animal may not display any signs of illness until quite ill. Therefore, it's up to you to observe your animal closely each day. Call the VFCC if you see abnormal behavior; unusual discharges from the eyes, nose or other body openings, abnormal lumps, limping, difficulty getting up or down, loss of appetite or abnormal waste elimination.

## **Diarrhea**

Diarrhea can be caused by several factors, including stress, change of diet, poor diet, eating garbage, parasites and viruses. If your foster dog has diarrhea and has no other symptoms, rule out change of diet by feeding your dog 2 cups of cooked rice mixed with one cup of cottage cheese for a day or two, and then reintroduce dry kibble.

Provide plenty of fresh water since diarrhea can cause dehydration. To check for dehydration, pull the skin up over the shoulder blades. If it snaps back quickly, the dog is not dehydrated. If the skin goes down slowly, then the dog is dehydrated and needs fluids. Dehydration can kill a puppy so call the VFCC or MHC if you suspect your foster is dehydrated.

## **Distemper**

Distemper is an extremely contagious and often fatal viral disease. Over 50% of dogs and 80% of puppies that contract the virus die from it. It is an airborne infection that can be transmitted with or without direct contact with an infected dog through mucous, urine and feces. Some of the symptoms include squinting, congestion of the eyes, puss from the eyes, weight loss, coughing, vomiting, nasal discharge and diarrhea. This disease is another reason why foster puppies shouldn't go to off-leash parks. Call the VFCC or MHC immediately if you suspect Distemper.

## **Fleas**

Puppies and kittens younger than 4 months should NOT be treated with toxic chemicals. Puppies and kittens over 8 weeks of age and adult dogs can be treated with Advantage or Revolution.

Flea treatments contain insecticides that can cause nerve and liver damage, impair the immune system and even cause cancer. Regular flea combing is the best way to control and monitor the fleas. Vacuum all areas of your house that your foster uses at least every 2-3 to three days. Fleas usually are found on animals that are ill and so, as with any illness, you'll want to strengthen the overall health of the animal. As a rule, healthy animals are less likely to get fleas than sick ones. Good food, minimal stress, proper hygiene and TLC will most likely keep the animal from getting fleas or an illness.

To check for fleas, inspect your animal daily - inspecting the rear groin, belly, and tail, under the chin and head, and neck (common places for fleas). Look also for black specks of flea dirt, which is actually digested blood. Before you begin combing, get a bowl of tap water and put a few drops of dish soap in it. You can put any fleas you find in the water and they will drown. If you don't use soap, the fleas may swim to a fluff of fur and jump out of the water. If fleas are

present, treat as soon as possible. Change bedding and vacuum the floors daily. The washing machine will remove fleas, eggs and dirt.

If your foster animal had fleas, watch his stools for short pieces of white rice that are tapeworms, which come from ingesting fleas. Tapeworms can cause diarrhea. If you see tapeworms, call the VFCC or MHS.

### **Injured dogs**

Injured foster animals will have specific needs. They'll most likely be recovering from surgery and will come with veterinary orders. Generally fracture, cast or other surgery patients may need to be confined to a crate or a small room to limit mobility.

This type of foster situation may require you to schedule follow up appointments with the animal's veterinarian. As with all foster animals, watch for signs of illness, since injured foster animals are under additional stress and are more prone to illness. Lots of human contact is important for healing injured animals. Active play should be limited, but cuddling, petting, talking, brushing and massaging are all good social activities for a recovering animal.

### **Kennel cough**

One of the common reason dogs go into foster care is because they have kennel cough, or the equivalent of a human cold. The shelter is much like a child day care - as soon as one dog has a cold; most all the dogs in the shelter get a cold. Just like people who have colds, kennel cough develops when the dog is stressed or when the immune system is compromised. Kennel cough usually goes away as soon as the dog has a warm, quiet and soothing place to sleep, and where they can drink lots of water, eat healthy food and receive lots of TLC!

Kennel cough is typically a dry, hacking cough. There may be some discharge from the nose and a clear liquid that is coughed up. It's generally a mild, self-limiting illness of the trachea and bronchi encountered in all age groups of dogs, but especially in those under unusual stress, crowding or close confinement. Kennel cough exists in shelters, boarding kennels, groomers, veterinary offices, off-leash areas, etc.

Because kennel cough is contagious, infected dogs should NOT be around other dogs until they're over their cough. If you have a dog at home and plan to foster a dog with kennel cough, we have found that if your own dog is healthy and has been vaccinated annually, then your dog will most likely not get sick.

Talk to your vet about giving your own dog the Bordetella nasal vaccination. Immunity to kennel cough is usually established 3-4 days after vaccination. We can compare this situation with humans in an office atmosphere - if you're healthy, well-rested and your immune system is not compromised, and a coworker has a cold, then you will not catch the cold. But if you're worn-down, stressed out and not eating or sleeping well, you probably will catch the cold. So if your own dog is ill or older, we would not recommend fostering a dog with kennel cough.

### **Kennel cough treatment**

Treatment for kennel cough involves bed rest and doggie videos! Make sure your foster dog has plenty of fresh water and healthy food. If your dog is not eating, try cooking up something special and smelly such as eggs, chicken or steak. Take short, leashed walks. If your dog's



energy is good and the cough seems mild, try some Vitamin C (5-10 mg/lb., 2-3 times a day with food), and Vitamin E (3-5 mg/lb., once a day).

If you don't see improvement of the cough or cold after 3 days, OR if the condition worsens, call the VFCC. Dogs rarely develop a fever and lethargy with kennel cough. In fact, it can be difficult to keep them quiet. Strenuous activity can bring on coughing episodes, so limit activity and encourage rest. Even baths can be stressful to the system and should be avoided. However bringing your foster dog into the bathroom while you're taking a shower can be helpful as the steam can help loosen mucus. Incubation of kennel cough is 5-10 days; its course is 10-20 days with symptoms generally more marked the first week. Fever, lack of appetite and a yellow-green-brown nasal discharge can indicate secondary infections. Call the VFCC or MHS if any of these symptoms occur.

### **Parvo**

Parvo attacks the intestinal tract, white blood cells and heart muscle. Signs of infection are depression, loss of appetite, vomiting, severe diarrhea, fever and sometimes kennel cough symptoms. The illness is contracted through contact with the infected feces of another dog. This is why you must NOT take your foster puppy out to public places where other dogs have been until he has completed his vaccine series against the disease.

**This virus can be deadly.** Call the VFCC or MHS immediately if you believe your foster dog may have this illness.

### **Parasites**

Parasites can cause diarrhea, stomach bloating or vomiting. Parasites include tapeworms, round worms, hookworms and mange. Tapeworms will look like pieces of rice coming out of your foster dog's anus or in his stool. Round and hookworms may be vomited, and roundworms look like spaghetti (hookworms are smaller and rarely distinguishable without the aid of a microscope). Mange is an infestation of tiny mites that bite and cause intense scratching, reddened skin and loss of fur. Only rare cases of mange (sarcoptic) are contagious to humans. If you suspect your foster dog has parasites, call the VFCC or MHS to schedule a fecal test. Once diagnosed, parasites are easily medicated and treated.

### **Vaccination and worming**

Your foster animal's vaccination and worming history will be given to you. Your animal has most likely been vaccinated for Distemper, Canine Hepatitis, Leptospirosis, Parainfluenza, Parvo, and Bordetella. Rabies vaccinations are only given if the foster animal has being spayed or neutered and is old enough to receive this vaccination.

Adult animals are vaccinated once a year, while puppies and kittens may be vaccinated starting at 8 weeks of age (if they have been with their mother) and should be given boosters until they are 16 weeks old. If you're fostering a very young orphaned puppy or kitten, we will refer you to a Vet to determine age and vaccination schedule.

If you're fostering a puppy or kitten, you need to return him to the shelter for the following vaccination boosters:

- 8-10 weeks: DHLPP and Bordetella vaccinations.

- 11-13 weeks: DHLPP vaccination.
- 14-16 weeks: DHLPP vaccination.
- Annual boosters are recommended.

### **Worming directions**

Most likely, your foster animal had one dose of wormer upon arrival to the shelter. If you see worms in the animal's stool, return to the shelter for more wormer. You will be instructed on the correct dosage and frequency.

### **How to take a dog's temperature**

A normal temperature for dogs and puppies is 101 to 102.5 degrees. Any temperature below 100 degrees or above 103 is a problem. Call the VFCC or MHS immediately.

If a puppy has a temperature below 100 degrees, place him on a heating pad turned to low and cover him with a towel immediately. If the dog's temperature is 103 degrees or higher, and the puppy has been on a heating pad, remove him from the pad immediately.

You will need:

- Rectal thermometer.
- Vaseline.
- Disinfectant (30:1 water and bleach solution).

Step by step instructions:

1. Sterilize the thermometer by dipping it into the disinfectant solution.
2. Dry with a clean paper towel.
3. Shake the thermometer down to under 80 degrees.
4. Coat the tip of the thermometer with a small amount of Vaseline.
5. Insert the tip of the thermometer ½ inch into the dog's rectum and hold there for 1-2 minutes.
6. Be gentle, as the rectal tissues are fragile, and you don't want to tear the tissue.
7. You may need a second person to help hold the dog to prevent struggling.
8. You should speak softly to the dog, if a second person is helping; sometimes it is helpful to stroke the dog around the head to distract him from what is going on in the other direction.
9. Be sure to sterilize the thermometer again when finished.

### **Poisonous foods and household items**

Many household products can be toxic to dogs. Remove any rat or mouse poisonings, antifreeze and windshield wiper fluid from your home before fostering! And store cleaning products and other items listed below out of reach of pets.

The following common food items are poisonous for dogs:

Chocolate  
 Caffeine  
 Grapes/Raisins  
 Macadamia Nuts  
 Mushrooms  
 Onion and Garlic

The ten most common poisonous plants are:

Azalea/Rhododendron  
Castor Bean  
Cyclamen  
Kalanchoe  
Lilies  
Marijuana  
Oleander  
Sago  
Palm Tulip/Narcissus bulbs  
Yew

## **GETTING YOUR ANIMAL ADOPTED**

Many animals that go into foster care are already available for adoption. If not, and you are unsure if your foster animal is ready to be adopted, ask yourself the questions below:

- Did your foster animal gain or lose enough weight?
- Is your foster animal healthy? (Some dogs can be adopted with kennel cough)
- Has the animal recovered fully from an illness?
- Is your foster puppy or kitten at least 10 weeks old and weaned from its mother?
- Is your foster animal successfully socialized with no major behavioral issues?
- Does your foster animal have good basic manners?

If your foster animal is ready for adoption or is already available, the first step is to create or update his bio and take new photos. Once you have your bio and photos ready, send this information to the VFCC. Make sure that you include the following specific details:

- Name
- Gender
- Breed
- Weight
- Age
- Case Number
- Has your foster animal been spayed or neutered?

Also very helpful – is your foster ok with cats? Ok with other dogs? Ok with children (indicate appropriate ages)? If you are unsure, contact the VFCC for assistance.

If you are fostering an animal that does not have a name, select a happy and positive name rather than one with negative connotations. The VFCC or MHS may edit or expand your bio based on past experience. If you need help writing a bio for your foster animal, please contact the VFCC for assistance.

## **TIPS FOR TAKING GREAT PHOTOS**

**We can't stress this enough...a picture is worth a thousand words.**

The picture is the first thing people see when they visit the shelter's listing on the MHS website, Facebook, Petfinder.com or if they view the bio in the shelter. If the animal has a poor picture, visitors may move on to another animal without clicking or reading your animal's description. If you want to give your animal the best chance possible, take large, clear, good quality (high resolution) pictures of the animal alone. A good picture is often the difference between an animal who generates inquiries and one who doesn't.

- Take a lot of digital pictures. You may have to take 50 pictures to get 1 or 2 really great shots. If you don't have a digital camera, borrow one from a friend or contact the VFCC and we can arrange for a special photo session.
- Pictures taken outside in natural light are usually much better than those taken inside or with a flash. Lighting is very important for accurately capturing an animal's coloring and detail. Have the sun or light source behind you and check to make sure you're not casting a shadow on your subject.
- Use treats and/or a squeaky toy to capture the animal's best expression. Sometimes having two people makes this process easier.

- Try taking pictures using a neutral backdrop. Select a background that contrasts with the animal's coloring. Darker-colored animals will show up better against a lighter backdrop. Most animals look great against a lush green lawn.
- Try different props. If the dog likes to fetch, you might get a picture of the dog with his favorite ball. Wrap a bandana around the dog's neck to add a streak of color (especially good for solid and darker-colored dogs). A bright, cheerful collar is a nice touch. Avoid having chain and prong collars in your pictures.
- The animal is the subject of your picture so the animal should take up the majority of space in your picture. Avoid excessive amounts of background. The animal's eyes should be focused on you. Try to capture at least one "hero" shot, where the focus is on the animal's face. A full body picture is also a great way to show size and scale.
- Exercise the dog before your photo shoot. A calmer dog is easier to photograph, and a panting dog looks like she's smiling! Before snapping the photos, take the time to get the pet as calm and relaxed as possible, so the photos don't show an animal that looks anxious or scared.
- Check out the competition. Visit [Petfinder.com](http://Petfinder.com) and look at the photos of similar animals and see which ones pop out to you. Then try to mimic these shots with your own foster animal.
- If your first attempts fail, don't be discouraged. Just keep trying and have fun. When you are having fun, your foster animal will probably be having fun too and it will show!
- If you would like assistance with taking photos of your foster animal, please contact the VFCC.

### **TIPS FOR WRITING A GREAT BIO**

#### **Accentuate the positive and let potential adopters know why they should consider your animal.**

You will improve your animal's chances of finding a home if you write a thorough description. A good bio is part press release, part story telling. Don't turn it into a lengthy restaurant review, but instead try to pull the reader into the bio so that they can start to imagine a life with this new canine friend. It can be very helpful to read the bios of other similar animals on [Petfinder.com](http://Petfinder.com).

Tell it from the animal's perspective - the most compelling thing you can write on behalf of an animal is what you imagine the animal is thinking, feeling or remembering. Most bios start off with the basics - but the most appealing bios are written so that they are not just a list of facts. One intro paragraph on "who your animal is" can help a potential adopter visualize the animal. Your second paragraph might go into personality traits, and provide information about any training, tricks or cute behavior. Your final paragraph should outline the required forever home environment.

Tell potential adopters what you know about your animal. Be honest and avoid negative statements. Choose wording carefully. A dog that is not potty-trained might instead be, "working on her house manners." An animal that doesn't get along with other dogs or cats merely "wants to be your one and only." A dog that desperately needs obedience training is really "looking forward to attending class with his adopter."

If an animal has special needs, mention them, but don't dwell on them. You can go into these details once you have someone hooked on your animal. The VFCC can also help – either by

providing you with samples of bios written for other foster animals or to create one based on your input. Additional samples and ideas for pictures and bios can be found at: <http://pbrcdogs.bullydogs.info/tips/tips.html>

### **PROMOTING YOUR FOSTER ANIMAL**

Even though many people visit MHS and the MHS website every week, the more you network your foster animal, the more quickly you are able to find it a great forever home. Here are some simple ways to promote your animal:

- Send an email to your family, friends and colleagues. Let them know about your foster animal and ask them to help you spread the word and to tell their friends and colleagues.
- Post a flyer of your foster animal at your workplace or put one on your office door or outside your cube.
- Spread the word at your child's school, your place of worship, or other organization that you belong.
- Record a video of your foster animal or create a slideshow with more photos and have them posted on your foster animal's Facebook and Petfinder.com bio.
- Create business cards for your foster animal and keep them in your pocket or purse. These are great to use when you are on your walks. Include a small picture and link to his Facebook and Petfinder.com bio.
- Post your foster animal on some of the popular free online classified sites and social networking sites. There are even social networking sites specifically for animals!
- Many companies have newsletters, email lists, blogs or intranets where you might be able to post information about your foster animal. See if you can bring your foster animal to work!
- Blog about your foster animal, or find a local community blog and blog about your foster animal there! There is a blog section on the MHS website, please ask the VFCC for assistance in promoting your foster animal.
- Take your dog for a walk around any place that has a lot of foot traffic. Do this with a friend so that someone can be the "spokesperson" while you handle the animal.
- Post a flyer about your dog at local dog parks. Most have a bulletin board for flyers. Even though you can't take them to the park, you can still promote them at the park!
- If you have a purebred, or a close to purebred, find out if you can cross-post your foster dog on the local breed rescue website. Most breeds have their own rescue organizations.
- If you're a runner, enter a local 5K race and bring your dog. Check with the race rules first, but many will let you run with a dog.
- Participate in any shelter events that will help you promote your foster animal.

**Please review any of these activities with the VFCC to ensure that you are consistent with MHS policy.**

## **THE ADOPTION PROCESS**

The process for adopting a foster animal is identical in concept to adopting an animal from the shelter, but is slightly more complicated in practice because of scheduling and screening. As a foster parent, your involvement in the adoption process is both extremely important and essential.

After a potential adopter sees your foster animal's bio on the website or at MHS on the foster board, and is interested in meeting the foster animal, the VFCC or MHS will contact the foster parent and ask them to schedule a meet and greet with the applicant. For safety and convenience, we prefer that meet and greets are scheduled at the shelter. However, meetings can take place at a mutually agreed upon location. Once you have scheduled a meet and greet, please let the VFCC or MHS know the date and time of the meeting. The shelter also requires that all family members of the potential adopter (including family dogs) must be present for the meet and greet, or final adoption. If your foster animal is meeting a resident animal, these meet and greets must take place at MHS with the VFCC or MHS staff present unless otherwise directed. Sometimes a home visit is necessary to ensure the safety and compatibility of the foster animal to a new home. These home visits are scheduled by the VFCC, in conjunction with the foster parent and the potential adopter. For example: to ensure a foster dog's compatibility with a resident cat, or other animals.

After the meet and greet (and if the applicant is still interested in the animal), foster parents should make a recommendation to the VFCC or MHS regarding the adoption. If the foster parent feels that it is a good match, and the meeting took place at the shelter, they should let the VFCC or MHS staff on duty know. If the meet and greet was not at the shelter, the foster parent must contact the VFCC or MHS. The foster animal always stays with the foster parent until they hear from the VFCC or MHS. Please remember that all adoptions must be approved by MHS. Final approval of all adoptions is at the sole discretion of MHS. Please do not make any promises during a meet and greet. You should always let the potential adopter know that final decisions are made by MHS.

Once the adoption is approved by MHS, the adopter pays the adoption fees and makes a spay/neuter appointment, if necessary. Foster animals cannot go to a potential adopter's home until the adoption is finalized by MHS. Many times, the foster animal will stay with the foster parent until the spay/neuter surgery date. In some situations, MHS may agree to a 'spay/neuter deposit', and allow the animal to go with the adopter and the new adopter will bring the animal back for surgery. This is at the discretion of MHS. Foster animals may never have to go back to MHS and can be adopted straight from the foster parent's home once MHS has approved and completed the adoption. You should keep all of the supplies provided to you from MHS and return them at your earliest convenience. This includes collars, leashes, crates, bowls, etc. You should provide the new owner with any medication that your foster animal is taking, along with instructions and a few days' worth of food. You may also want to give them your foster animal's favorite toy, or anything else that will help with transition. If you choose to do so, please instruct the new owners to not wash the blanket or toy for a couple of weeks, unless absolutely necessary, so that it still has the familiar scent of the animal's foster home.

When it's finally time to hand over your foster animal, please be emotionally prepared. Even if you feel sad, the new parents are excited and happy about finding a new companion. Please

remember to rejoice and celebrate that you have helped to find a forever home for your foster animal. Foster parents should stay in contact with the VFCC or MHS for assistance with the adoption process.

### **SCREENING QUESTIONS TO ASK POTENTIAL ADOPTERS**

Foster parents often say their goal is to find a home even better than their own! MHS will screen for qualified applicants, but your input is critical to finding an appropriate forever home for your foster animal. Remember, this can be a very emotional experience, but it's important to stay neutral. Many times it's best to have the VFCC or MHS staff present at the meet and greet. This way you have the opportunity to observe the potential adopter with the foster animal, rather than just answer, or ask questions. Some additional guidelines:

- This should be a two-way dialog, rather than just a one-sided Q&A session. Instead of just answering a question, use this as an opportunity to learn more about the potential adopter and find out if they are a good match. For example, if they ask you how much exercise does he get, turn this around: "he gets a fair amount of exercise... how do you plan on exercising him?" And probe for specifics.
- Don't over-sell or under-sell your foster animal. This should be an open and honest discussion about what the potential adopter is looking for and how this matches the needs of your foster animal.
- Be objective about personality traits. The best way to approach this is to ask about what they are looking for in personality **before** you talk about what type of personality your foster animal has (beyond what is already mentioned in the bio). This way you can find out if they really are a good match, or if they are going on appearances alone.
- Ask a lot about their past experiences with animals. Even if this is their first animal, how do their friends or family approach animal ownership? Most people are greatly influenced by those around them.
- Find out how they would approach training and/or behavior problems. Again, don't tell them what you are doing, but find out how they would handle this. Better yet, find out how they handled this with previous animals! This is where the hypothetical questioning can come in handy. "What would you do if you came home to find out she just chewed your brand new Jimmy Choo sandals?"
- What are the family's expectations of a "rescue" animal? How are they going about finding an animal? Is this a thoughtful process?
- On a final note: Just because the potential adopter might approach something differently than you, this doesn't mean that they won't be a great home for your foster animal. Even if you hate/love clicker training, doesn't mean that everyone must hate/love clicker training. That said, trust your instincts. If you don't feel good about the potential adopters, then let the VFCC or MHS know your concerns. Don't hesitate to contact the VFCC or MHS for assistance or guidance. If the potential adopter isn't suitable for specific reasons (they are couch potatoes and your foster dog needs to run 10 miles every day, etc.) Please let us know and we can change the animal's bio to better reflect its needs.

### **CONGRATULATIONS AND THANK YOU!**



Your foster animal has been adopted! You've found him a permanent home that might even be better than yours - if that's possible! The staff and volunteers at MHS 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. On behalf of all the graduate animals of MHS, we thank you!

## **PUPPY CARE**

### **Nursing mothers with puppies — 0-4 weeks**

A small, quiet, warm, easily cleaned room (laundry room, bathroom, family room, kitchen, or dry and warm basement) is best for a mother and her pups. Clean bedding should be provided with food and water nearby. A child's plastic baby pool, lined with a blanket, makes a wonderful, safe den for mom and pups.

The mother dog should be allowed outside on leash (or supervised in a fenced yard) twice daily to eliminate. The puppies should not go out at all. If the mom's history is unknown, she will not be vaccinated at the shelter. Be aware of other dogs and other dogs' feces when taking the mom out for a walk, since she may not be properly vaccinated.

The mother will spend most of her time early on nursing, cleaning up and caring for her pups. Later, as the pups become more mobile and less demanding on her, she may enjoy more time away from them and play actively with people and chew toys. As pups become more mobile, check their living area for hazards.

### **Feeding nursing mothers and their puppies**

The mother dog requires extra nutrition for adequate milk production. Feed a premium diet three times each day, which will be supplied by MHS. Be sure all the puppies are nursing and steadily gaining weight.

Newborns depend entirely on mom's first milk, receiving valuable antibodies (colostrum).

When the puppies are 3 weeks old, begin offering a low bowl (a pie plate) of water-soaked puppy kibble. Be sure to offer this at a time when the puppies are hungry, and, if necessary, separate the mom so she won't eat it.

By 4 weeks of age they should be eating some mushy meals. (See the next section on Weaning Orphan Puppies.) By 6 weeks of age puppies should no longer need mother's milk and should be eating soaked kibble and starting on dry kibble.

### **Medical care for puppies**

Call the VFCC or MHS if you see any signs of illness in mother or pups. If the mother dog goes off food or is stressed, milk production may drop sharply, and puppies may have to be raised as orphans. Check mother's mammary glands daily for redness, hardness, discharge or streaking color. A hard, red, hot or painful mammary gland may mean mastitis which should be checked by a veterinarian. Call the VFCC or MHS if you believe your nursing mother has this condition. As long as pups all nurse and gain weight, milk production is probably adequate. If milk production or mother's calcium reserves are inadequate, the mother may develop eclampsia, an emergency situation of low blood calcium levels requiring immediate attention. Symptoms include muscle twitching, tremors, anxiousness, progressive or stiffening, or seizure-like tremors. Call the VFCC or MHS if these symptoms develop.

Nursing mothers often "blow their coat" when nursing due to nutrition demands on their body; feeding premium diet in adequate amounts helps avoid this situation. Vitamin supplements can also help. The mother's vaginal discharge (lochia) should taper from dark mucoid green to reddish brown in smaller amounts by 3 weeks postpartum. Routine medical treatments (for the

mother) include Nemex #2 wormer 10 days after the first wormer was given. The mother should be vaccinated as soon as she is finished nursing.

Check the pups' umbilical cords daily until they dry and fall off. Eyes open at 7-10 days – watch for infections/crusting at the lids. If you see fleas, ask the VFCC or MHS for advice on treating the newborns.

Puppies should receive their first dose of deworming medicine (Nemex) at 2-3 weeks of age, followed by a second dose in 10 days. Dewormer will be provided for you. At 8-10 weeks of age the pups should receive their first set of shots. You will need to return the puppies to the shelter to receive their vaccinations.

### **Socializing puppies**

Be aware that mama dog may be protective of her pups, but most mother dogs will allow a calm, gentle approach by adults picking up and handling pups. Puppies need a lot of human contact. Handle them as much as you can. Refer to the chart at the end of this puppy section for more information on how puppies' needs change as they grow.

### **Orphaned puppies — 0-3 weeks**

What you need:

- A/D or baby food
- Baby shampoo
- Bottles and Nipples
- Box or Carrier
- Dishes with low sides, such as pie plates
- Esbilac or similar formula
- Flea comb
- Hot water bottle or heating pad
- Kaopectate
- Kitchen scale in 1 oz increments
- Small syringes
- Timer/ticking clock
- Towels
- Wash cloths

Since the mother is not available, the foster parent must provide all of the mother's functions: feeding, warmth, cleaning and stimulation to urinate/defecate.

### **Safety and confinement for orphan pups**

These pups should be set up in small living quarters (crate or box with bedding) easily kept consistently warm at about 80-90 degrees. They will pile on each other to keep warm, but a hot water bottle and warm bedding are needed. Heating pads can be dangerous. If used, they should be kept on low, with several layers of bedding between the pad and pups, and they should be monitored closely.

### **Feeding orphan pups**

Puppy milk replacer, such as Vet-alac or Esbilac, should be mixed and fed according to package directions. Generally, feeding every 3 hours is needed in the beginning. By 3 weeks of age, feeding every 4-5 hours with a night break of 8 hours should work well.

Milk replacer can be fed by dropper, syringe or bottle as pups accept it and need larger feedings. Some of the pups may be too weak to suck from the bottle and you will need to feed them with syringes. If you need to syringe-feed the puppies, drip the formula slowly into the side of their mouths, and give them time to swallow. Going too fast can cause liquid to go into their lungs and cause pneumonia.

Do not hold pups on their backs, or allow them to suck too fast, as this can lead to aspiration of formula into the lungs. The puppies should be tilted forward and slightly up, as if they were nursing on their mother. Never try to bottle feed an unconscious or semi-conscious puppy. Feed until the puppy's tummy feels tight and full. Sick puppies will not eat eagerly, and you will have to feed them slowly and often to ensure they are getting enough food. After each feeding, you must stimulate bowel and bladder movement. Use a warm, damp cotton ball or later a cloth as volume increases. Mineral oil on a Q-tip at the anus may stimulate defecation. Gently massage their genital areas in a circular motion and do not stop until they have finished eliminating.

Note the color of the urine. If it is light yellow or straw colored, this is normal. If it is a bright canary yellow, the puppy is dehydrated and needs fluids immediately. Cottage cheesy stools or diarrhea are also an indication of illness. Call the VFCC or MHS if you see these symptoms.

### **Weaning orphan pups**

As your pups grow and become more mobile, weaning time approaches. Weaning can be started at 3 weeks by offering formula in a low dish or pie plate with or without canned food mixed in. Be sure to offer when puppies are hungry, so they will make their best effort to lap/lick/eat. Supplement with bottle feedings as needed until pups are lapping consistently from a dish.

By 4-5 weeks no more bottle feedings should be needed. At 4 weeks, offer water soaked kibble with or without canned food mixed in or formula added. Water penetrates kibble better; soaking in formula does not work as well.

Begin offering dry food at 5 weeks when the puppies are hungry near meal time so they will start to try the dry food. Continue feeding soaked kibble until 7 weeks or so. By 8 weeks, the puppies should readily eat dry food only.

### **Medical care for orphan pups**

If signs of illness develop in the pups, notify the VFCC or MHS. Lack of appetite and diarrhea are of special concern. Check umbilical cords daily until the cord dries out and falls off. Eyes open at 7-10 days - watch for infections/crusting at the lids.

Newborns without a mom may also try to nurse on each other causing injury (genitalia are the common site for this false "nipple"). Pups may need to be separated if this occurs.

Deworming should occur at 2-3 weeks of age with Nemex which will be provided to you. A second dose should be administered 10 days later. From birth on, puppies must be kept clean and flea free. Fleas can kill a puppy or cause anemia. Daily flea combing is usually enough, but you should be prepared to bathe them as necessary. If fleas are found, call the VFCC or MHS for

advice in treating newborns. At 8-10 weeks of age, the pups should get their first set of vaccinations.

### **Cleaning orphan pups**

Initially, newborn pups should be kept in a box or crate, and bedding should be changed as needed. The process of stimulating urination/defecation, then cleaning or soaking up urine/feces with cotton or cloth should keep puppies fairly clean.

As pups become more mobile and learn to urinate/defecate on their own, a larger box or small, papered, gated area like a kitchen or bathroom may be used to confine them. Keep area free of feces/urine. The weaning process (low dish of mushy food) can make for messy feet and faces - wash with a warm wet cloth as needed. If you must bathe the puppies, make sure they are thoroughly dried after bathing to avoid chilling, which can lead to illness.

### **Puppy development and socialization**

It's important to start handling and manipulating puppies right from birth to get them comfortable with humans. Although their ears and eyes are still sealed, their sense of smell is already relatively well developed. The wild stress they may experience when being picked up accelerates body growth, reduces emotionality and possibly increases their resistance to certain diseases. Moreover, they become imprinted to human scent.

The growing puppies should be handled every day, and gentle grooming should be started at 4-5 weeks. As they become more aware of their environment, they should be exposed to as many stimuli as possible, including the vacuum cleaner, young children, men, women, other friendly animals, loud noises, etc. However, you must pay attention they do not become too stressed, over-stimulated or tired. Short car trips will get puppies used to traveling. At first, all puppies should experience things by themselves to learn to cope with life later on.

When the mother is not available it's important that puppies come in contact with an older, friendly dog from about 5 weeks of age on. They have to learn how to communicate like a dog and most importantly, how to submit. A puppy that has not learned submission from its mother or another adult dog will be more difficult to train later on. At this age, it's also very important that puppies learn bite inhibition - best from his littermates or an adult dog.

Starting at 8 weeks, the puppy is ready to learn "human" language and the rules of human society. Socialization with other dogs and humans has to be continued. With any introduction, be aware of the possibility of transmission of infectious disease - use good judgment.

Puppy development chart

#### **Age 1-3 weeks**

Needs

- Warmth
- Food
- Sleep
- Dependent on mother

Mental Capability

- Reflex behavior
- Needs stimulation to eliminate

- Cannot regulate body temperature
- Ears/eyes open (eyes 8-10 days, ears 13-17days)

Notes

- Should be handled gently for brief periods of time
- Sense of smell is functioning
- Will imprint on humans
- Littermates important

#### **Age 4-7 weeks**

Needs

- Food
- Sleep
- Mother for discipline

Mental Capability

- All senses functioning
- Aware of environment
- Responding to stimuli
- Eliminate on their own
- Temperature regulation has improved
- Begin weaning

Notes

- Influence of littermates increases
- Interaction with mates necessary to learn bite inhibition
- Regular handling
- Exposure to people, animals and noises
- Begin to form social attachments with other species
- Provide sensory rich environment

#### **Age 8-12 weeks**

Needs

- Continued socialization
- Play

Mental Capability

- Fully weaned
- Mental capacity fully developed
- Can learn basic commands

Notes

- Learns dog language from litter mates/adult dogs
- Learns submission from mother
- Most sensitive period in pup's development - what it experiences now remains for life