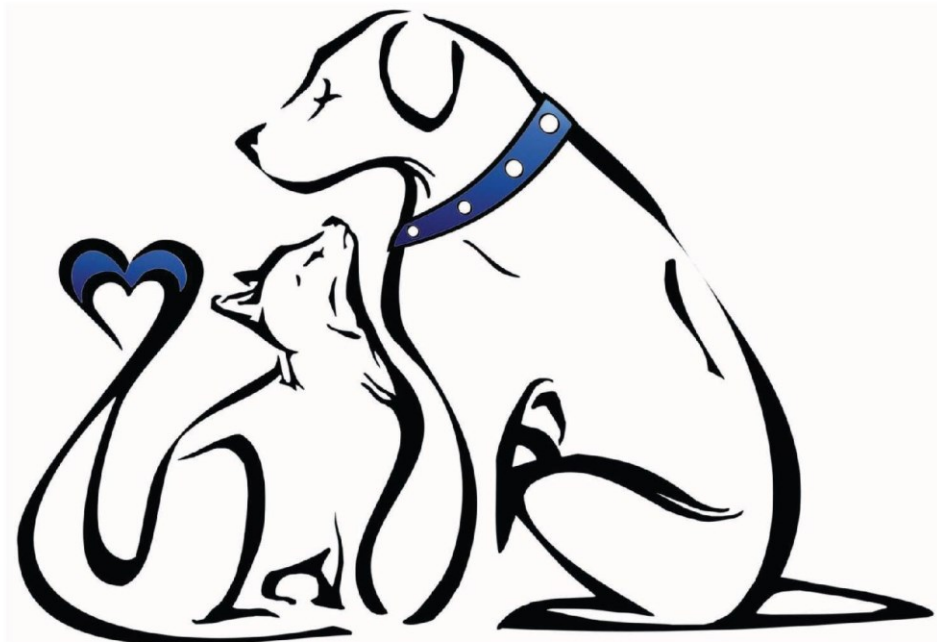


The
HUMANE SOCIETY
of
Loudoun County



Foster Handbook

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OVERVIEW

Mission

We are a foster-based, all-volunteer organization that saves and improves the lives of vulnerable animals by providing care and placing adoptable animals into loving forever homes.

Vision

To ensure the well-being of animals in our community.

Background

The Humane Society of Loudoun County (HSLC) was established as a 501c3 in 1966. We are run solely by our wonderful volunteers who dedicate their time and share their passion for helping animals. We are a foster-based organization that partners with other rescues, shelters, and our community in an effort to save animals.

Why Should You Foster?

Fostering is a very rewarding experience full of feel-good moments. When you open your heart and home to an animal in need, you are giving them a second chance at life. Your love, care, and attention can help an animal flourish. Through your attention and care, you learn about its personality and needs, all which helps HSLC find a home that will be a good fit.

By fostering for us, you're filling a very important role. We do not have a shelter so all of the animals that we rescue need a foster home. The more people we have that are willing to foster, the more animals we're able to help. This feeds into our partnerships with smaller, rural shelters and programs. As we have available fosters, we are able to pull animals from them that are not thriving in the shelter situation.

WHAT IS FOSTERING EXACTLY?

Fostering means you are bringing a companion pet into your home to love and care for until HSLC finds it a permanent home. Some animals that need to be fostered come to you ready for adoption so you're mainly providing love and care until they find their forever home. Others may be scared, timid, or sick so they may need extra socialization and TLC to get them ready for their forever home.

As you are caring for your foster, you're also learning its personality and helping us find it a home by sharing pictures and information. You'll also bring your foster to adoption events so he/she can be seen.

Depending on each foster, you may choose to keep your foster separate from your current pets or you may integrate it into the household.

In general, animals who need fosters come to us as owner surrenders, strays, and transfers from shelters in need. We also bring kittens (and sometimes adult cats) in as a result of TNR.

Fostering Kittens

Kittens generally require the biggest time commitment. The age and socialization level of your foster kittens determine how much time you will need to dedicate to their care. For example, sometimes kittens that come to us through TNR are not as used to people and require a little more attention and handling. But they thrive in a home that has time to dedicate to playing with them and giving them extra TLC.

Kittens also need a set of vaccines to keep them happy and healthy and get them ready for adoption. We cover the costs for vaccination, but you must follow the vaccination schedule you're provided, taking them to the vet we specify.

Until kittens are vaccinated, you'll want to keep them separated from your pets and wash your hands after interacting with the kittens. This protects everyone's health.

Fostering Cats

Adult cats need your love to feel safe and secure as they deal with many changes in their life. We need your help to determine

- Their personalities
- Their temperament
- If there are any behavior issues that they need help with in order to become more adoptable.

Fostering Dogs

Dogs need your love to feel safe and secure as they settle in. We need your help to determine

- Their personalities
- Their temperament

- If there are any behavior issues that they need help with in order to become more adoptable.

Types of Fostering

There are many ways you can help us as a foster. We are always looking for people to fill the following types of fostering.

Regular Fostering

Foster an animal until the animal is adopted.

Although most fosters find their forever homes within a month, some take a little more love, care, and time before they find their home. If at any time you can no longer foster, HSLC will move the animal to another foster home.

Vacation

Foster an animal while the regular foster is out of town.

This is generally a short-term foster situation, often no longer than two weeks.

Emergency

Foster an animal temporarily because of an emergency situation.

There are occasions when an animal needs to be moved out of a dangerous situation immediately. Emergency fosters provide temporary shelter until a regular foster is found.

To be an emergency foster, you need your own transportation. You also need a separate room in your house for the animal, at least until medical intake is completed, which we may not be able to do immediately.

Short-term

Foster an animal for one to two weeks.

Generally, this type of foster is needed until a regular foster is found.

Special-Needs

Foster an animal with a special need.

Sometimes fosters need a little extra TLC or medical attention, such as animals with

- Diabetes, which requires insulin shots
- Asthma, which could require different types of medicine and more attention
- Ringworm
- Certain behavior issues that require some additional work

Depending on the situation, these could be longer foster situations but extremely rewarding as you help your foster prepare for a new home. Similar to other situations, you may be required to keep your foster separate from your own pets.

PROCESS OVERVIEW

Prepping for your Foster

What comes with your foster

HSLC is able to provide a variety of supplies such as carriers, crates, leashes, and more. If there is something you need, please contact the Director of Animal Care to see if we are able to help.

What you need to have at home

Cats

- Carrier
 - It is required that cats and kittens be in a secure carrier anytime that they are being transported
 - If you do not have a carrier, let us know, we may be able to provide one for you to use
- Litter box and scoop
 - Since your foster starts in a separate room, you will need a separate box
 - If you choose to integrate your foster with your pets, make sure you have the same number of litterboxes (or more) as you do cats
- Food and water bowls
- Toys for stimulation and to learn how to play

Dogs

- Leash and collar
 - It is required that your foster dog is always on a leash when outside your home or yard
- Food and water bowls
- Toys

Foster Arrives

Your new foster has been through many changes and will need time to settle in. They may be scared when they come into your home and if given the chance could run out an open door, be it an interior or exterior door. Please be aware of this and take special care around your foster when opening doors.

Cats

To help cats get comfortable, always start them in a separate room (bathroom, spare bedroom, etc). Have the litterbox setup in one area, water and food, in another, and make sure there is something soft for them to sleep on in another. Show them where everything is, and then let them get settled. This gives them time to get comfortable and settle down from the many changes in their life.

Introducing your Foster to your Pets

Depending on the situation, you may decide to integrate your foster with your pets. If you choose to do so, do not rush the situation; let all animals involved determine the pace this occurs. Please see Introducing Pets (in the Reference section in the back) for information on how best to do this.

Cats

Keep your foster cat separated from your cats and dogs for at least a few days. Depending on your pets and your foster, the introduction may be easy, with minimum hissing at each other. Or, it could be more difficult with lots of hissing, barking, and posturing.

There are several ways and steps involved in introducing cats. Some of the common steps include

- Introducing them thru a crack in the door, so they can smell each other but not necessarily really see each other
- Provide food on either side of the door so they are both doing something they enjoy while smelling the other
- After a couple of days put up a pet/baby gate in the door instead of having the door shut; this allows the animals to see each other more and to interact more
- Introduce your foster to another room in the house where your pets usually are while the pets are in the foster's room

No two situations will be the same; it's possible you'll be able to integrate them right away, or it could be a day, a few weeks, or it may not be possible to integrate them at all. Look in the reference section in the back of this handbook for several sites dedicated to introducing pets.

Day-to-Day Care

Care for your foster as if they were your own pet. Always make sure they have proper food and water and keep them stimulated by playing with them. If socialization is required, introduce them to new experiences and noises slowly and gently.

If there is a medical emergency, you will contact the Director of Animal Care, Animal Care Manager, or Medical Liaison (the Animal Care Team) and work with them to find an emergency vet who is able to see your foster. For standard medical issues, reach out to the Director and Manager to coordinate an authorization for medical care with one of our regular vets.

Dogs

Dogs need plenty of outside time. If they are house trained, they will know how to let you know they need out. If not, you will want to work with them on training. You will also want to work with them so they know the basic commands: sit, stay, heel, and how to properly walk on a leash. Unless you know the dog is crate trained, or you are currently training him, please do not leave your foster dog or puppy in a crate for long periods of time.

Sending your Foster to its New Home

When your foster is adopted, you may have mixed emotions. You'll be happy they have their forever home, but you may be sad because you will miss them. This is not unusual because you're treating them like your own pet. The first time will probably be the hardest, but it does get easier. Look at it this way, you've helped your foster find a forever home, and now you can help another one.

When it's time to send your foster to its forever home, there's specific information and items you want to include to make it an easy transition and a good home:

- Information including feeding schedule, specific food(s), litter, toys, behavior quirks, etc.
- Enough food so that the new owner can do a gradual switch (better on their tummies)
- Any special toys or treats that they loved

Prepping for your next Foster

Before bringing in a new foster, you'll want to get your home ready for it. Each time a foster leaves you should

- Clean the room your foster was in
- Clean all food and water dishes your foster used
- Wash blankets, bedding, and toys
- Cats – Clean and disinfect the litterbox

Once you are ready to foster again, email the Animal Care Team to let them know.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Fostering is a commitment with equal responsibilities falling on the foster parent and on HSLC.

HSLC Responsibilities

- All vet expenses
- Publicizing your foster
- Setting up adoption events
- Vetting all potential adopters
- Supporting you as you foster

Your Responsibilities

- Providing adequate food and water
- Providing shelter
- Keeping your foster safe
 - Cats are required to be indoor pets only
 - Dogs must be on a leash at all times when outside of your home or yard
- Bringing your foster to adoption events
- Helping with socialization, if necessary

Providing Support

We are in this together and want to ensure you have a successful foster experience. We require all fosters go thru and orientation and then provide additional support in the form of

- A helpful manual
- Online resources
- A supportive Animal Care Team to walk you through issues big and small

Adoption Events

When you foster, we encourage you to bring your foster to at least one event a month. The more events your foster is at, the better chance he/she has of being adopted. We hold adoption events throughout Loudoun County. Before each event, we send an email letting you know when and where the event is so you can RSVP.

Before taking your foster to the event, make sure that he/she is clean, brushed, and looking good. At the event, you can talk to potential adopters and help keep your foster more at ease. Staying with your foster is optional if you are fostering a cat or kitten but mandatory if you are fostering a dog.

Adoption Prep

Fostering all leads up to adoption. From the time the foster comes into your home to the time it goes to its forever home, you are acting as its advocate. Beyond the standard love and care you provide your foster, there are additional actions you can take to help your foster get adopted.

Week one

- Get your foster settled in its new environment
- Provide the adoption coordinator with pictures, a short positive bio, and short video

Week two-four

- Send updated pictures, videos, and descriptions as you get to know your foster more
- Attend one or more adoption events

Month 2 and on

- Continue to attend adoption events
- Continue to send updated pictures and videos
- Share pictures and videos of your foster via social media. Don't forget to tag us!

All of these help us keep your foster's information up-to-date on Petfinder, social media, and our website.

Socialization and Behavior Issues

When you first get your foster, we may not know anything about its personality, temperament, or mannerisms. We may not know how it will do around men, women, or children, let alone other animals. Any information we do have, we provide you, but you are our eyes and ears when it comes to your foster.

As you're caring for your foster, you may recognize a behavior you don't think is appropriate, such as jumping on the kitchen counters or using furniture as scratching posts. If you do identify something like this, let the Animal Care Team know. They will work with you to come up with ways to address these issues, providing resources as necessary.

You may also find that your foster has some social issues, such as being very shy, afraid of dogs, territorial around other cats, or even uncertain of how to be a cat or dog. In all of these cases, talk to the Animal Care Team to let them know what you've seen. In some instances, there won't be additional work you need to do, while in others you'll come up with a plan on how to help your foster overcome their social issue.

Handling Illness & Emergencies

If you determine your foster is sick, or if you're even worried it is sick, you should contact the Animal Care Team. A foster's health is very important and something we don't take chances with. Once you contact the team, you'll be provided with the information for the vet you need to go to and be given authorization via email to take your foster there. You will call the vet to make the appointment and explain the issue. The Animal Care Team will

contact the vet via email to let them know you have authorization to schedule the appointment and bring your foster in.

It is discouraged to take your foster to your own vet. We work with specific vets in Loudoun County. These vets give us discounts because they support our mission and are familiar with any possible issues that could come up. If you choose to take your foster to your vet, or you go to an approved vet without first getting authorization, HSLC will not cover the costs. In addition, both of these cases could cause a gap in the foster's medical history that is provided to the adopter.

If an emergency situation arises where you need to take your foster to a vet immediately, please contact the Animal Care Team per the Emergency Contact Sheet you are sent when you begin fostering. They will help find an available emergency veterinarian and prepare the necessary authorizations for you to bring your foster.

Additional Ways to Help

There are several additional ways you can support HSLC while you foster. These include

- Helping at adoption events
- Taking pictures of fosters
- Sharing information about fosters on your social network sites
- Ask a friend or family to become a foster

For more information about these opportunities and more, please contact either our Animal Care Team or our volunteer coordinator.

BASIC MEDICAL INFO

As stated earlier, the health of your foster is very important. If you ever think your foster is sick or not acting right, you should contact the Animal Care Team for assistance/permission to go to the vet.

Many common signs of illness in animals are overlooked because we aren't sure what to look for, or we've seen it in our pets but it's cleared up on its own. It's important that you don't wait to contact us when your foster is involved. When working with kittens and puppies, it's even more important to identify warning signs and seek help as early as possible since their immune systems are still developing and they are still in the process of getting vaccinated.

What to look for - Cats

The below table (adapted from Loudoun County Animal Services's (LCAS's) Foster material, 2014) contains signs you should look for to tell if your cat is ill.

	Good Signs	Warning Signs
General Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bright, alert, responsive Balanced and coordinated Interested in surroundings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lethargic, disoriented Uncoordinated Tilts head / repeatedly circles
Eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean & Clear No discharge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visible third eyelid when not sleeping Watery, Red, or dirty discharge Irregular pupil size
Ears	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean, both out ear & canal Pink & clean inner ear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discharge (waxy or other) Crusty Scratching at ear constantly Shaking head repeatedly Red/inflamed ear canal
Nose	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Clean, no discharge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scabbed Discharge (clear, mucus, bloody) Congested or blocked
Mouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eating/swallowing normally Gums are pink, return to color 1-2 second after being pressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problems eating/swallowing Persistent vomiting Drooling Loose teeth Foul odor

	Good Signs	Warning Signs
Skin/Hair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shiny, glossy coat • Oil-free coat • Clean 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bald or thinning spots • Dry or flaky skin • Oily/dirty looking coat • Scabs • Visible fleas, ticks, lice, parasites
Legs/Feet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walking normally • Healthy pads and nails 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limping • Cracked or hard pads • Irregular gait • Pain response when an area is touched
Anal/Genital	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean & free of discharge • Normal stool 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discharge • Abnormal stool • Watery • Bloody • Visible parasites • Constipated

Basic First Aid

If your foster is showing distress, you need to go to the vet immediately and contact the Animal Care Team.

If your foster is injured, regardless of the severity, you need to contact the Animal Care Team. You may be able to handle some minor issues with basic first aid, such as cuts or abrasions, but you still need to notify the Animal Care Team. Improperly performed first aid can cause further injury, so if you have any doubts, call the team and, if you think it's an emergency, go to the vet immediately.

FAQS

1. **Do I get to pick out the animal I want to foster?**

Yes. When we do intake and have animals that need a foster we send out a plea and if you are interested in being their foster you answer yes. If more than one person answers yes, the animal is placed in the home that will fit the animal and the foster the best.

2. **Will you give me information about my foster?**

Yes, you will receive as much information as possible, or the team will work with you to ensure you have the support you need to take care of the animal just like they were your own.

3. **If there are any issues or concerns about my foster will you tell me?**

Yes, we will tell you the issues and give you ideas on how to work on them so that you can help your foster become more adoptable.

4. **How long should I keep my foster separated from my own pets?**

Kittens should stay separated until they have received their first set of vaccinations and a combo test. Cats and dogs should be integrated very slowly to give them time to get used to each other. There are tips in the resource section of this handbook.

5. **Can my foster go outside?**

No, cats and kittens are strictly indoors only. We vaccinate them and do not want them to go outside to chance catching anything. Dogs are allowed outside but only on a leash.

6. **Does HSLC provide the food and bedding?**

No, you are expected to provide the food, shelter, bedding, and TLC needed to care for your foster as if they were your own pet. However, we make donations available to fosters on a first come first served basis.

7. **How do I know what symptoms to look for to make sure my foster is healthy?**

Foster orientation is required for all fosters. There are guidelines in the orientation packet to help walk you through common medical issues. But the medical team is happy to answer any and all questions you may have on the health of your foster and arrange veterinary authorizations as appropriate.

8. **Do I also have to pay for any medical expenses?**

No, HSLC covers all medical expenses including any prescription food.

9. **If my foster gets sick do I have to take it to the vet?**

Yes, as soon as you notice that your foster is not feeling right let the Animal Care Team know and they will authorize a visit to the vet. Once authorized, you will call the vet to schedule an appointment. HSLC covers all medical costs but only if it is pre-authorized (non-emergency visits only).

10. **If it is an emergency what do I do?**

If your foster gets sick or hurt and it is an emergency you are required to immediately contact the Animal Care Team for guidance.

11. **Will my foster be vaccinated when they get to my house?**

It depends on their age and the situation. The Animal Care Team will tell you what vaccines they have had already and what they need.

12. **Do I need to take my foster in when vaccinations are due?**

Yes this is a huge help!

13. **How is my foster going to find their forever home?**

Adoption events, website, social media, ads, and you as their advocate.

14. **When are the adoption events?**

At least one per month

15. **Do I have to go to every adoption event?**

No. You're welcome to go to every adoption event but you're only required to go once a month to get them adopted.

16. **What else can I do to help my foster get adopted?**

Socialize with your foster every day like they were your own pet. Post on social media and tell all of your family and friends.

17. **What if I go on vacation and need someone to care for my foster? And my own pets?**

Please discuss this with the Animal Care Team as we have some vacation fosters that can take your foster. If you have a reliable pet sitter, leaving your foster at your home to be cared for by the pet sitter can also be an option.

18. **What happens when my foster gets an adoption application?**

The adoption coordinator will start the application process. They will review the application for any red flags. They will then respond to the applicant and copy the foster guardian to coordinate the meet and greet. Once the applicant has met the animal and has decided to adopt, they will set up an interview/home check. Once the applicant is approved, they and the guardian will be informed via email. We like to make it simple, but safe for your foster to find their home.

19. **How should I get ready for my next foster?**

Let the team know as soon as you are ready to foster again.

20. **When can I get my next foster?**

As soon as you are ready!

21. **How can I help the foster program grow so we can save more animals?**

Share on social media.

Talk about our foster program to your family, friends, and coworkers.

CONTACTS & RESOURCES

Animal Care Team

Please reach out to the Animal Care Team if you have questions regarding your foster's behavior, your responsibilities, and adoption events.

- **Amy L. Richards, Director**
906-250-8760
foster@humaneloudoun.org
amy@humaneloudoun.org
- **Tracy Mathews, Manager**
571-212-9769
tracy@humaneloudoun.org
- **Gina Addie, Medical Liaison**
703-431-8793
gina@humaneloudoun.org

Medical Coordination Email

This email address is monitored by several people to make sure there is broad coverage. Please reach out if you have any concerns or questions about your foster's health. No question or concern is too small – you're most familiar with your foster so you will recognize things that seem out of character.

- medical@humaneloudoun.org

Presentations

A copy of this handbook and other useful information can be found on our website, <https://humaneloudoun.org/foster-expectations/>

Emergency Vets

Our primary urgent vets are as follows. We have others that we may use depending on availability. Please make sure to contact the Animal Care Team to coordinate.

The Life Center in Leesburg

165 Fort Evans Rd NE
Leesburg, VA 20176
703-777-5755

Blue Ridge Vet

120 East Cornwell LN
Purcellville, VA 20132
540-338-7387

Loudoun Urgent Vet (LUV)

135 Robinson Mill Plaza SE
Leesburg, VA
703-740-1087

Standard Vet Locations

- Purcellville
- Leesburg
- Aldie
- Sterling

Additional Resources

General Pet information

<https://vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet>

<https://catalystcouncil.org/resources/>

<https://resources.bestfriends.org/article/tips-bringing-home-new-pet>

Introducing Pets

<https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/how-introduce-your-new-cat-resident-cats>

<https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/introducing-new-dogs>

<https://anticruelty.org/pet-library/introducing-dogs-and-cats>

General Fostering Info

<https://be.chewy.com/want-to-foster-an-animal-heres-everything-you-need-to-know/>

<https://www.maddiesfund.org/foster-care-resources.htm#resources-for-foster-caregivers>

[Cleaning and Disinfection in Foster Homes Maddie's Fund https://www.maddiesfund.org > external files](https://www.maddiesfund.org/external_files)

Detecting Illness

<https://vcahospitals.com/know-your-pet/recognizing-signs-of-illness-in-cats>

<https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/my-dog-sick-try-home-exam>

FORMS

The following forms are also included with this handbook:

- Emergency Contact Sheet