

# Steps to Becoming a Foster Parent

Welcome to our Foster Training Class. In order to become a foster parent, you must do the following:

- Complete the foster application.
- Read through this presentation and the foster manual. Then take the quick online quiz.
- Schedule an interview with our Volunteer Dept. (You will be contacted after you send the quiz results.)
- Be able to provide a separate living space for foster animals in your care.
- Be able to transport foster animals to the office or clinic for check-ups and vaccines.



# Our Purpose

The purpose of our foster care program is to increase the number of animals the Arizona Animal Welfare League & SPCA (AAWL & SPCA) can save and to help underage or recovering animals so they can be adopted. Offering your time, hearts, and homes to these animals will allow them every opportunity possible to be adopted into permanent, loving homes. This training presentation provides you with AAWL & SPCA's guidelines along with general and specific information regarding the care and well being of foster animals.



# Why Foster?

This presentation is intended to familiarize new foster parents with the requirements to foster puppies and kittens for AAWL and SPCA. Topics include puppy and kitten development and socialization, feeding and care, and medical issues and care.

## Why do they Need to be in a Foster Home?

- Kittens and puppies that are too young for adoption need to have care until they are old enough to be put up for adoption.
  - Kittens are not big enough for surgery until they are at least 2 lbs and 8 to 9 weeks old.
  - Puppies must be 8 weeks old for sterilization surgery.
- Kittens and puppies need to be socialized and introduced to a variety of people and situations while they are small.



# Personally-Owned Pets

- For health reasons, your pets should be current on vaccines and flea and tick prevention. We require felines to be tested for FELV and FIV. If you have not had your cats tested, AAWL & SPCA will test them for \$14 per cat.
- It is recommended that AAWL & SPCA foster animals be isolated from your pets for at least 2 weeks.
- Always wash your hands before and after handling your foster animals. This small step may help in preventing the spread of illness to your own pets and to foster animals.
- AAWL & SPCA is not responsible or liable for any medical care to personally owned pets resulting from fostering AAWL & SPCA animals. Any and all veterinary expenses for personally owned animals are the sole responsibility of the owner.
- You should have the support of all the individuals living in your home as their lives will most likely be affected by this decision.
- Your dog(s) may be required to come to the shelter to meet other dogs or puppies and be evaluated by staff behaviorists depending of the foster situation.



# Different Types of Fosters

Determine How You Can Help

Our regular foster care program matches volunteers with animals who need special care in a home environment:

- Young puppies and kittens
- Mom dogs with puppies or mom cats with kittens
- Animals needing a quiet place to recover from medical conditions

Last year, more than half of our adopted animals were placed in foster care at some point during their stay at AAWL/SPCA.



# Kittens

## Developmental Stages

- **Neonatal** – Birth to 2 weeks
  - About 1 week – umbilical cord falls off
  - 10 days – eyes begin to open
  - 2 weeks – Eyes and ears fully open
- **Weaning** – 4 to 6 weeks
  - Litter box use can start as early as 3 to 4 weeks.
  - Kittens will try dry food at about 4 weeks.
  - Eyes begin to change color at about 6 weeks.
- **Weaned** – 6 weeks and older
  - Kittens should be eating on their own, but may still nurse.



# Puppies

## Development

**Neonatal** - birth to 12 days – During this time, the puppy is completely dependence on mother for thermoregulation, food, and elimination.

- A puppy is born both blind and deaf, but is capable of whining to attract attention from its mother.
- For the first 3 days their life, they have "flexor dominance." They curl when you pick them up by the head.
- Day 4 to 21 they have "extensor dominance." They stretch when picked up by the head.
- Newborn puppies will move toward the side they are touched on or turn their head toward the side their cheek is touched on.
- They will root against a warm object.
- They will move against the grain of the hair of their mother, which leads them to the udder.



# Kittens and Puppies

Socialization

- **To people**
  - Always pick kittens and puppies up with two hands. Do not pick them up by the head, legs, or tail.
  - Let as many adults and kids handle the puppy or kitten as possible. Children must have adult supervision.
- **To situations**
  - Household noises
  - Every day noises like the vacuum, TV, radio, washer or dryer, etc.
- **To places**
  - Always transport puppies and kittens in a carrier.
  - Take them on short car rides if possible.
  - Going to the vet
    - Kittens and puppies need to come to the shelter every 2 weeks for vaccines and any medical issues that may arise.
    - Appointments should be scheduled with the foster department.





# Kittens and Puppies

## Care and Feeding

- AAWL will provide all supplies, food, litter, and medication that you need.
- Keep the moms with the kittens or puppies. The moms will take care of the babies. Monitor the eating habits and note any sign of illness. There is a possibility that Moms may get sick as well.
- Bottle-fed puppies or kittens need to be fed every 2 hours and need to be stimulated to go to the bathroom until they are 3 weeks old.
- Please call the foster department to schedule an appointment if a kitten or puppy is sick. Most foster animals will get a URI or diarrhea. The medication is usually given orally, 1 to 2 times a day.



# Kittens and Puppies

Medical Concerns and  
How to Get Help

- **Medical Concerns**
  - Discharge from nose or eyes or swollen eyes
  - Sneezing or difficulty breathing – congestion
  - Wounds – infection
  - Hair loss – bald spots
  - Limping
  - Dehydration
  - Not eating or weight loss
  - Listlessness
- **How to Get Help**
  - Call Gaby (office hours).
  - Call AAWL, ext. 102 (clinic).
  - Bring the kitten or puppy into the AAWL clinic.



# Kittens and Puppies

## Foster Care Concerns

- **Foster Failure** – Sometimes foster parents fall in love with their foster puppy or kitten and would like to adopt it, which is perfectly fine. We fondly refer to them as “foster failures”. We hope that you will still foster because there are many more puppies and kittens that need to be rescued.
- **Sick Kittens or Puppies** – Foster animals do get sick due to the difficult start they have. Most of the time we see upper respiratory issues (colds) and diarrhea. These conditions are easily treated and almost all of our foster animals will be on medication at one time or another.
- **Losing Kittens** – Sadly there is always a possibility of losing a foster animal. We send very young animals into foster homes and sometimes their immune system is not strong enough to fight off diseases. Please bring the deceased puppy or kitten back to the shelter.



# Kittens and Puppies

Foster Care Concerns Cont.

- **Going on Vacation** – The puppies or kittens are able to stay at the shelter while you are gone. We can also send them into a different foster home if necessary. Please inform the foster department as soon as possible about your plans so we can make arrangements.
- **Taking a Break** – Fostering can be very emotional and we all need a break every once in a while. Please keep the foster department up-to-date on your availability.



# Adult Cats & Dogs

Cats and dogs are sent into a foster home on a case-by-case basis. They may need to recover from surgery (leg surgery, knee surgery, hip surgery, etc.) They may have behavior issues. Some of them are shy and do not do well in a shelter environment. Others may just need a break from the shelter.

In each situation we will explain what is needed and you can decide if you want to foster that animal. In all foster situations, you have the final say in whether or not you want to take an animal in or not.



“Our task must be to free ourselves...by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty.”

Albert Einstein



Please read the foster manual next  
and then take the quiz.

Thank you!

