



FOSTER CARE MANUAL

**1111 S. Camino del Rio
Durango, CO 81303
Phone: (970) 259-2847**

Welcome

The La Plata County Humane Society Foster Care program was created to provide a temporary home for animals that are sick, injured, pregnant, too young, and in need of socialization that may be preventing them from being adopted in their given state. This program has saved the lives of hundreds of animals over the years, by providing a chance of survival they may not otherwise had in different circumstances.

It is understood that fostering is a huge commitment, that requires a lot of time and energy. However, by choosing to foster, you will be preparing them for a successful future, and making a lasting impact on their physical and mental wellbeing.

This manual is a guide that will provide you with the information that is necessary to care for your foster animal, and will help to clarify any questions or concerns you may have along the way. Any additional questions or concerns should be directed to the Foster Coordinator, listed below.

All of us here at the La Plata County Humane Society can never thank you enough for the time and commitment you have given to our Foster Care Program!

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns that arise while caring for your foster animal, you may call the Foster Coordinator at the shelter anytime, during normal business hours. However, it is advised that you first call your Foster Mentor, especially if it involves a medical concern.

Contact Numbers:

Main number: (970) 259-2847

Laura, Foster Coordinator: (970) 259-2847 x109

LPCHS Hours of Operation

Mon-Sat 10:30-5:30*

Sun 12:00-4:30*

*A receptionist will be available to answer phone calls starting at 7:30am everyday

After Hours

If your Foster Mentor cannot be reached, or it involves a medical concern that needs immediate attention, please call Laura at (970) 769-3572

Foster Care Policies

In order to become a Foster Parent, you must:

- Be 21 years of age or older
- Have the consent of your landlord, if renting
- Have all household pets up to date on vaccinations
- Have appropriate facilities in which to house foster animal(s)
- Have adequate transportation to and from the shelter, while foster animal(s) are in your care
- Agree to allow an agent of LPCHS to inspect the area of the home in which the foster animal(s) will be kept
- Agree to never post anything regarding your foster animal(s) to social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.) without the expressed consent of the Foster Coordinator beforehand.
- Understand that the La Plata County Humane Society remains the legal custodian of your foster animal(s), and must be returned to the shelter on the specified return date
- Understand that all veterinary care will be provided through the La Plata County Humane Society, and any medical care sought outside of LPCHS will NOT be reimbursed
- Agree to abide by the Expectation of Foster Homes

Expectations of the Foster Home

As a foster, you must:

- Provide appropriate and sufficient food, water and shelter at all times
- Have the facilities, (such as a spare bedroom, laundry room, or bathroom,) and the willingness to isolate foster animal(s) from your own animals.
- Keep the area your foster animal(s) will be living in safe, clean and comfortable
- Provide your foster animal(s) plenty of affection and care
- Understand that any decisions made by the LPCHS staff relating to the animals, is made with the animals' best interest at heart. The La Plata County Humane Society does not guarantee that all foster animals will be adoptable, despite our best efforts.
- Understand that all foster animal adoptions are on a first come, first serve basis. Foster animals cannot be put on hold for adoption while in foster care.
- Understand that death is a reality when fostering infant animals. They do not have fully developed immune systems and may not survive despite the best care and medicine.

Preparing Your Home

Before you pick up your foster animal, you will want to prepare your home for their stay.

Pick an area of your home that you would like to dedicate to housing your foster animal. We recommend this area be constructed of water resistant surfaces, can easily be “pet-proofed,” and isolated from household pets. Recommended common areas include spare bedrooms (non-carpeted), laundry rooms, or small bathrooms.

Acceptable water resistant surfaces include:

- Painted or sealed wood surfaces
- Sealed concrete
- Sealed cement blocks
- Stainless steel
- Vinyl flooring
- Glass
- Treated or sealed fiberglass paneling
- Tile

“Pet-proofing” Your Home

As a foster parent, YOU are responsible for protecting your foster animal, yourself and your belongings. Since foster animals are often times adventurous and curious creatures, “pet-proofing” their living area is highly recommended.

Bathroom/Laundry Room/Bedroom:

- Make sure all cabinets are securely shut, to keep prying paws from opening them
- Keep all medications, cleaners, chemicals, and laundry supplies on high shelves or in another room
- Keep trash cans covered, or inside a latched cabinet
- Block any small spaces, nooks, or holes inside cabinetry or behind washer/dryer units
- Keep toilet lids closed at all times
- Place all electrical and phone wires out of reach
- Keep anything that can easily be swallowed (drawstrings, shoelaces, buttons, children’s toys) put away, or out of reach
- Move any house plants, which can be poisonous, in another room
- Remove any porous surfaces or upholstered furniture

Please be mindful that young animals are naturally inclined to chew on any items within reach, so please provide them with the appropriate toys.

Family Pets

Even though the LPCHS medical staff examines all foster animals prior to sending them to foster care, they may still be harboring illnesses or infectious disease that could be contagious to your own pets. In order to prevent transmission of disease between foster animals and your pets, extra precautions must be followed.

- All family pets must be kept up to date on their vaccinations, even if they do not interact with your foster animal
- All foster animals must be isolated from family pets for the first 7-10 days, to prevent transmission of disease to your pets. Often times foster animals are incubating a disease or sickness, and will not show signs of illness until they are in your care. LPCHS will not be held responsible if your pets become sick while foster animals are in your care.
- Foster animals may have compromised immune systems due to age, sickness, or injury. This could put them at a higher risk of contracting disease if allowed in public places. **Please keep foster animals on your property at all times.**
- We do occasionally recommend that you socialize your foster animals with family pets after the isolation period has ended, and everyone is settled and happy. They may be socialized with supervision, but should still be isolated when you are not around.

Supplies

The La Plata County Humane Society will gladly provide the necessary supplies to properly care for your foster animal(s), as available. These include, but are not limited to:

- Dry food
- Wet food
- Formula
- Dishes
- Bedding
- Toys
- Heating Pad
- Puppy Pads
- Cat litter and litter boxes
- Crate or carrier
- Collars and Leashes (for older dogs)

If any of these supplies run low, please call the Foster Coordinator to schedule a pick-up of refills. All items must be returned to LPCHS at the end of the foster period.

Please note: LPCHS will not reimburse you for any food or supplies purchased outside of LPCHS.

Caring for Your Foster Animal

When you first arrive home with your foster animal, please allow them some time and space to adjust to their new environment.

Daily Care

Each day you will need to:

- Clean the food and water dishes
- Put out fresh water (except for bottle feeding infants)
- Feed fresh food (as outlined in the feeding guide below)
- Change any soiled bedding
- Scoop litter boxes
- Make sure your fosters are clean and dry
- Take dogs out for “potty time”
 - Please note that young puppies are not fully vaccinated, and should not be around other dogs. Puppies may be taken outside to do their business, but only in a secured, fenced in yard, or on a leash. Never leave them unattended!
- Older vaccinated dogs are allowed to go for leashed walks around your neighborhood, but please never take them off leash or to the dog park.

Puppy and Kitten Feeding Guide

Newborn-3 weeks old: Needs to be bottle fed. The Foster Coordinator will train you how to bottle feed, if necessary.

4weeks-5weeks: Needs to be eating gruel. This is a mixture of puppy or kitten milk replacer combined with wet food.

5+ weeks: Needs to be weaned from gruel to solid food.

Time table

Age	How Often	Feedings per day
0-2 weeks	Every 2-3 hours, 24 hours a day	8-12
2-3 weeks	Every 4 hours, 24 hours a day	6-8
3-4 weeks	Every 4-5 hours	5-6
4-5 weeks	Every 5-6 hours	3-4
5-6 weeks	Every 6 hours, during the day	3-4
6-8 weeks	Every 8 hours	2-3

- Kittens and puppies that are being bottle fed, should be fed 2 tablespoons of milk replacer per 4 ounces of body weight. The daily feeding amount should be divided into equal portions for each feeding. They need to be fed every 2 hours and stimulated to go to the bathroom after each feeding to relieve themselves.
- If they are eating gruel, please check it several times a day to make sure it isn't hard. Gruel mixture is only good for 24 hours, and must be discarded.
- Once your foster animals are eating gruel, leave a bowl of dry kibble out at all times, so when they become interested, it will be available to them.

Fostering Orphaned Kittens

Often times neonatal or infant kittens are brought to La Plata County Humane Society without their mother. Caring for these orphaned kittens can be both exhausting but rewarding, and is not something everyone can do. It requires feeding every few hours and constant around the clock care. However, the results of watching these infants grow into healthy, active kittens is truly amazing. Please refer to the "Raising Orphaned Kittens" packet for further instructions.

Fading Kitten Syndrome

A "fading" kitten is one that appears healthy, but will otherwise rapidly decline in health, either because of an underlying health issue, congenital defect, or lack of antibodies from the mother. These are just a few of the many reasons for this syndrome.

Symptoms include:

- Low body temperature: the kitten feels cool or cold to the touch
- Extreme lethargy: the kitten is not getting up, unable to stand, or responding to touching/petting
- Gasping for breath

When you see these symptoms, it is vital that you:

1. Notify your Foster Mentor
 - They will be available to come assess the kitten, and provide any further treatment, such as fluids
2. Get them warm
 - Wrap the kitten up in a towel like a burrito, leaving only their face exposed
 - Wrap a heating pad, turned on low, around the burrito, or place the kitten on top of the heating pad
3. Get their blood sugar up
 - Using a syringe or your finger give a dime sized amount of Nutri-cal into the mouth. Do this every 3 hours until their condition improves, or you can get them back to the shelter
4. Notify the Foster Coordinator

- At the shelter, during normal business hours at 970-259-2847 x 109
- Or 970-769-3572 if after hours

Keep in mind that even with love, attention, and treatment, some kittens still won't make it.

****Remember if this happens, it is not your fault!****

Any foster kitten that you have cared for was given a second chance at life **because of you!** The survival rate with your care far surpasses the survival rate in nature.

In the unfortunate event that one of your foster animals passes away....

Please call the Foster Coordinator to schedule a time to bring it back to the shelter, where the animal can be properly cremated. The Foster Coordinator can arrange to return the ashes back to you, if you choose to do so. LPCHS may also request that you bring in the remaining siblings to be checked over by our medical staff, to be sure they are all healthy.

Socialization

Socializing your foster animals is extremely important for their development. Animals are fostered because they need extra attention, beyond what the shelter environment can provide. Human interaction from a young age, helps them become easier to handle when they are older. Every day, you should spend at least one hour socializing your foster animals. This includes

- Playing
- Snuggling
- Petting
- Brushing
- Desensitizing to touch. (Mess with their ears, hold their paws, open their mouths, etc.)

We understand that foster animals are usually not the "easiest" animals to care for. Beyond providing basic care, the most helpful thing you can do is shower them with positive attention. Foster animals that return happy and well socialized, are generally more appealing to adopters.

Health Issues

It is important that any medical concerns get addressed quickly to prevent symptoms from worsening. Infant and young animals, especially orphaned animals, are very fragile, and many medical concerns can turn life threatening rapidly.

Life-threatening emergencies that need medical attention ASAP:

- Seizures or unconsciousness
- Hit by car, or other blunt forced trauma
- Total inability to stand up
- Severe respiratory distress, frantic gasping for air

- Profuse bleeding or large open wound
- Minimal movement with pale white gums

Symptoms that require immediate attention (should be seen same day or within a few hours):

- Vomiting blood
- Vomiting: more than 4 times in 12 hours
- Severe diarrhea, especially in combination with vomiting
- Excessive blood in diarrhea (especially in puppies)
- Severe lethargy or dehydration

If any of your foster animals are showing these symptoms, please call your foster mentor, or the shelter immediately. If the shelter is closed, call your foster mentor or the emergency number on your Foster Agreement. **Please DO NOT wait until it becomes a crisis!**

Other symptoms (Can wait 12-24 hours):

- Vomiting: less than 3 times in 12 hours
- Diarrhea: lasts longer than 24 hours, lasts longer than 12 hours in any animal under 5 weeks.
- Fever or lethargy
- Loss of appetite/no appetite: for more than two feedings in animals under 5 weeks
 - In the meantime, start feeding a dime sized amount of nutria-cal every 3 hours
- Sneezing: with or without nasal discharge for more than 24 hours
- Eye problems: squinting, rubbing, swelling or discharge
- Coughing
- Limping

If your foster animal is showing any of these symptoms, it is not an emergency, but it is crucial you bring it to the attention of your Foster Mentor or Coordinator as soon as possible.

Medications

If medication is to be administered, it will be provided to you as well as instructions on dosage. Please follow the instructions carefully and be diligent about medicating on schedule. If you are having trouble pilling, or if your foster animals condition worsens, please call the Foster Coordinator. During this time, it is imperative that they be kept away from family pets, to prevent the spread of illness and to lessen the stress on your foster animal.

Returning Your Fosters

Please make sure you return your foster animal on the specified date on your foster agreement. Often times they will be scheduled for spay/neuter surgery on the date of their return, so we prefer to have them brought back early in the morning (7:30-8am). Please let the Foster Coordinator know if you are unable to return your foster animal on the scheduled date and time, so we can schedule a more convenient time.

Adoption

I'm worried I might fall in love and will want to keep my foster!

We won't lie, it happens sometimes. We are not opposed to adopting your fosters to you. However, by allowing them to find a new forever home, you can help another animal in need. Our foster families say all the time that despite it being hard to say goodbye, it's rewarding to see them live happily ever after in the end.

Saying goodbye is never easy, but it will get easier with time. While you never stop caring for the foster animals that come into your home, you will soon realize that the sadness is often replaced with the satisfaction of knowing you were instrumental in saving a life.

If a friend or family member is interested in adopting one of your fosters, please **DO NOT** promise them the animal, because unfortunately we cannot put the animal on hold for them. Adoptions are on a first come, first serve basis once the animal is available for adoption. We can certainly let them know the date they will be available, but it is their responsibility to come in at that time.

If you find that you are absolutely smitten with your foster and cannot bear to live without them, we do ask that you make that decision and notify the Foster Coordinator before their scheduled return date.

The La Plata County Humane Society thanks you for participating in our Foster Care Program. We truly appreciate your commitment to our shelter and our community!