Humane Society of West Michigan
Dog Foster Manual
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Preparing for your foster dog

THANK YOU FOR FOSTERING! We are incredibly grateful to you for opening your home and your heart to these dogs in need, and giving them a break from the shelter. Here are some important ways that you can help your fosters feel comfortable and stay safe while staying with you, as well as preparing yourself!

Dogs will need a routine and structured home environment. Establishing a routine will allow the dog to predict what happens to them, and will encourage the proper responses. Be prepared to allow time for your foster to decompress from the shelter environment. It may take a whole week for your foster to begin feeling less anxious, stressed, full of energy, and rested. They may sleep more than you think they should, but that’s okay! They can finally rest in the comforts of a loving home.

Your foster dog may not know any commands, and they may bark, jump, and leash pull. Please be patient! Found in this manual are ways to help correct this behavior and different ways to work with them. Your foster dog may not be able to interact with other dogs, but all will need indoor and outdoor enrichment. Give them something to work on, including chews and food puzzles, though they should eat only the food provided by HSWM, so no “people” food, please! HSWM can provide Kongs, snuffle mats, and other enrichment items.

Also, please be prepared to assist with your foster’s adoption by providing photos and personality information throughout the foster pet’s time with you. Please send these items to the Foster Coordinator, so you can help your fosters find the perfect forever homes! At the end of the manual there will be tips on how to best provide content.

**Above all--enjoy all of the laughter and smiles your foster pet provides!**

**Supplies**

You will be provided the following items at the time you pick up your foster:

- Blankets
- Bed
- Appropriate food
- Food and water bowls
- Appropriate treats
- Collar and clip leash
- Dog crate
- Poop bags
- Toys - various textures
- Medications, if any

*If you decide to buy your own supplies, we will not be able to reimburse your purchase. Rather, it is treated like a donation, which we greatly appreciate!*
Setting Up Space to Foster

Some of these dog fostering tips are from "Doggerel" and Steffen Baldwin (Chief Humane Agent in Union County, Ohio and the Founder and President/CEO of the Animal Cruelty Task Force of Ohio)

Prepare a safe and comforting space for your foster dog. Remove or put away any possible hazards such as cords, plants, garbage cans, household food, medications, etc. Make sure that they have access to plenty of soft and hard toys, soft bedding, and calming elements.

Your foster will need to have a crate available at all times, so why not make a “Safety Den” with your dog's crate! This includes a crate set up with a soft bed or bedding, favorite toys, kong, and partially or fully covered by a blanket to allow for reduced stimuli. This welcoming space allows your dog the choice to hide away for a nap and to begin feeling comfortable around a crate. Allowing them to come and go whenever they please will help ease anxiety around going into the crate when you leave. Add calming elements to the environment too, such as calming music, low lighting and placing the crate in an area with low foot traffic and noise level.

Bringing Your Foster Home

1. **Start slow.** Make introductions to people and your pets with gentleness and caution. Moving is stressful for everyone, and moving into a new home with new people will likely cause even the most social dogs a bit of stress. Go slowly on your first few days, and allow for decompression from the shelter. Please do not introduce your dog to certain groups if you were instructed not to prior to pick up, like children or other animals.

2. **Assume that all dogs are not house trained.** Even if they have lived in a home before, start with the assumption that the dog is not house trained. Again, moving into a new place is stressful, so even dogs who were formerly in a home may have forgotten what that means in a new environment. Establish a potty schedule/routine.

3. **Use crates and baby gates.** Crates and baby gates will be your best friend as a foster parent! Crates are happy, safe places; never use them as a punishment for a dog. Feed meals in their crate if the dog is having a hard time getting adjusted. Treat and praise the dog for entering the crate. Always provide choice for going into the crate to create a safe space.

4. **Decompression time.** Your new foster is going to need quiet time in your house before anything else. Basically, the dog needs to CHILL OUT, which we call “decompression time.” Skipping this step is a sure-fire way to create further stress and problems for your foster dog and yourself. You should have a quiet, crated area for your new foster to decompress in. Make sure the foster dog is provided with lots of ways to be stimulated mentally (Kongs with frozen peanut butter, interactive toy games, etc.). You can have music playing in the room - specifically classical music.
Two weeks is the standard amount of time it takes for a dog to fully decompress from shelter life, and about how long you should plan on letting your dog relax and unwind before moving on to letting your foster dog and your own pets meet through a process of slow introduction. Please ask the Foster Coordinator about introducing your foster dog to your personal pets if it wasn’t priorly noted they cannot meet any other pets and we can provide step-by-step instructions to help to make the best first-impressions possible!

While unsupervised, your dog MUST be crated. Never use the crate as punishment, as it should always be a safe, comfortable space. Always make the crate positive and it be a desirable place to relax and sleep, whether you are home or not. If you need help coaxing your dog into the crate when you leave home, choose a high-value treat that your dog loves and make sure that they exclusively get that treat when going into their crate. If you are having difficulty crating your dog due to them becoming destructive in the crate, trying to break out, or vocalizing, please email the Foster Coordinator for assistance and next steps.
Daily Care

Whether your foster pets are completely adjusted to their new home or not, they need daily care! Their level of comfort will determine what type of enrichment they receive, but all foster pets still need their basic needs met, regardless of their level of socialization.

Feeding

Your foster needs fresh food provided through two meals daily. Please only feed the appropriate diet that was provided to you.

Daily Feeding Guide:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weight of Dog (lbs)</th>
<th>Cups per Day</th>
<th>Weight of Dog (lbs)</th>
<th>Cups per Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5/8</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>3 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>3 2/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>1 2/3</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>4 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>2 1/4</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>4 1/2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>2 3/4</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>5 1/3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>3 1/4</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>6 1/4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dogs can also become food possessive. This is when they will become defensive of their food with other dogs, puppies, or even people. We try our best to inform you of any type of food or toy possessive behaviors, but sometimes we don’t know about them until they are in foster. If you notice food possessive behaviors, don’t take away the food as a punishment! This will only reinforce the behavior and make responses worse. Simply leave them alone and let us know, we’ll help you work through it.

Cleaning and Potty Training

We cannot guarantee that your adult dog won’t have accidents in your home. Not all of our pets are housebroken, and it may require patience and training to teach them to go outside. Please offer multiple potty breaks throughout the day to go outside. Like people, dogs do well with schedules and routines! If you establish a potty break schedule, it can help them learn to hold it until that particular time of day.
Accidents will happen, regardless of how much we try to prevent them. Especially in the first couple days when your foster is getting used to the new environment, accidents are likely. If you need extra cleaning tools, more puppy pads, or poop bags, please email the Foster Coordinator and we can help provide more supplies. We may also be able to provide belly bands for male dogs if they are being stubborn about marking indoors while you train them to go outside.

**Monitoring**
During times of feeding, cleaning, outside time, and any other interactions with your foster pets, you should always be making mental (or physical!) notes about how they’re doing. You need to monitor their wellbeing, if they have any signs of illness, if they are eating enough, and what their general attitude is like.

*If you notice your foster, puppy or dog, start displaying symptoms of Parvo, please email the Foster Vet Tech or submit a medical JotForm immediately.* There is more information on Parvovirus and symptoms on page 26 of this manual.

**Playtime**
Your foster pup will need playtime and enrichment, as well as walks every day! Some adults will have no desire to play, but they still require exercise and enrichment from walks. If they are seniors and just want to lay around and get cuddles and attention, that’s okay! Do try to encourage some walk time, even if it’s just outside to the yard. Some adults may not want to engage in play and only want to snuggle and decompress from shelter life—that’s okay too. Give them what they prefer! Your foster animals need interaction time with people.

**Establish a Routine**
Like people, routine works wonders helping dogs to adjust to something new. Establish a routine as soon as you can and stick to it as much as you can. Dogs will start to learn times to go potty and how long they will need to hold it in once they start recognizing the routine. Knowing when they will be able to burn off some energy, whether it’s playtime inside, out in the yard, or going for walks will make them very excited! Once a routine is established, they will catch on quickly and start to become excited for those upcoming events in their day.
Behavior

Just like the people we know and love, not all shelter dogs are perfect. Below are some common behaviors we see in shelter dogs and the basics on how to work with them. We will let you know in advance if your foster pet has any behavior issues, but there may be something they start doing in the home that they didn’t do in the shelter. For more tips and advice, please email the Foster Coordinator. Regardless of what behavior you’re working through, **ALWAYS make experiences positive** with treats and provide positive reinforcement for wanted behaviors!

**Leash Pulling**

Dogs often get VERY excited when they are on their leash for a walk, and they may have learned that to get what they want, they can pull. It can be tedious to teach them not to pull on the leash, but with patience and consistency, you can make great progress!

While on a leash, if they start to pull, stop walking. Keep planted where you have stopped and wait for them to come back to you. Once they come back to your side, offer a treat, and continue walking. The moment they start to pull again, do the process of stopping, waiting, rewarding when they come back, and then resume. You will stop A LOT as they learn but as time goes on, it will become less and less.

If your dog is a very strong puller or isn’t responding to the above method, we can also send you home with something called a gentle lead. This is a leash that wraps around the dog’s muzzle. Whenever they start to pull, it pulls their own head down. It can work with helping them associate that if they pull, they can’t see and it’s uncomfortable to do so, so they’ll stop.

**Dog or Leash Reactivity**

Many dogs struggle to stay relaxed when they see another dog, a person, or a specific stimuli when out on a walk, and end up reacting with an intense stress or fear response. These responses can be categorized into fight (such as barking, lunging), flight (such as avoiding, hiding), freeze (such as cowering, shutting down), or fool around (such as jumping, mouthing) behaviors.

The Engage-Disengage Game is helpful for dogs that respond with a “flight” or “fool around” response. These dogs often become over-aroused quickly and end up hurling themselves toward the trigger out of fear, anxiety, or frustration. Unlike socially savvy dogs that self-interrupt frequently in order to keep interactions fun and safe, these “fight” or “fool around” dogs have immense difficulty disengaging from the trigger in order to self-interrupt. The Engage-Disengage game decreases a dog’s stress around the trigger and teaches the dog the peaceful coping skills of self-interruption. This ability to disengage and self-interrupt is similar to the practice of mindfulness in people!
The Engage/Disengage Game: Reinforcing new feelings and desired behaviors

Reducing aggression, reactivity, or fear means desensitization and counterconditioning your dog to like the trigger gradually, and teaching them an alternate response behavior. The Engage-Disengage Game uses positive reinforcement methods and provides a structured way to reduce a stress response and train a safe and appropriate behavior instead.

There are two levels to this game. The first level rewards the dog for engaging with the trigger when he is not showing the stress response, which builds positive feelings towards the trigger. The second level rewards the dog for offering the alternative behavior of turning away from the trigger, which is a behavior incompatible with barking at, pulling toward, or biting the trigger. An illustration explaining how to play the game is found here: Engage/Disengage Game

Remember to keep the goals realistic. For example, if the dog is triggered by other dogs, it is important to acknowledge that they may not be destined to be a “dog-park dog”. Some dogs may simply prefer the company of humans more than other dogs, or may not enjoy physically interacting with dogs that have different play styles. Some dogs may have more introverted social personalities, and that’s okay. Instead they may prefer to snuggle up next to you on the couch!

Food or Toy Possessiveness

As stated in the earlier section regarding feeding, dogs can get possessive over items they find valuable, which is most often their food or toys. It can also occur for areas they consider and value as theirs, like their crate. Do not take away the item they are being possessive over as punishment. This will only reinforce the behavior, and they will feel the need to defend their food or toy even more because they will remember you took it away last time. If you notice this behavior in your foster, please email the Foster Coordinator as soon as possible, and we will offer you help and support.

Mouthing and Jumping

Never use your hands for play! If your foster tries to mouth your hands or arms, jumps up on you, or tries biting the leash to play tug, don’t engage with the behavior. Turn your back to them, pull your arms up and tuck them in front of you so they can’t access your arms and hands. If you are on a walk, stop walking. Don’t touch or push the dog away as that rewards them with what they think is play. Instead, ask them to “sit”. It is difficult to both sit and mouth or jump on you. Reward the “sit” with a treat at knee level, as that will keep all four of their paws on the ground when they come to get the treat. If they have a favorite toy, you can also use that as a substitute to keep them from biting the leash or mouthing you. If they have a toy or treat in their mouth, they can’t use their mouth to get into trouble!
Chewing

Chewing is a normal behavior in dogs that helps relieve stress, anxiety, and promotes a sense of wellbeing. Sooner or later, you will find your foster chewing on items they are not supposed to. If you catch them in the act, don’t punish them. Instead, encourage chewing on the correct items by trading the item they are chewing on currently for a fun toy or treat that they can chew on! Praise them when they are chewing on the correct kind of items and they will soon learn that these are okay to chew on. If you find an item they destroyed after they have already destroyed it, again do not punish them. If you were to punish them after the fact they would associate whatever they are doing right in that exact moment with the punishment—which might not even be a bad behavior! Dogs don’t understand the concept of “I chewed this two hours ago and this is why I’m being punished”, they will only understand that what they are doing at that exact moment is what is the undesirable behavior.

Here are other ways to prevent your foster dog from chewing on things they aren’t supposed to:

- Puppy proof your house! Put items out of their reach you don’t want them getting into, like a trash bin or a pair of shoes.
- Give them obviously different chew toys from common household items you don’t want them chewing on. For example, don’t use old children’s stuffed animals if you don’t want them to think all stuffed animals are chew toys!
- You can spray other items that are hard to put out of reach with a “Bitter Apple” spray to make it taste bad if they try chewing on it.
- Keep them entertained! They may be chewing on items they know they aren’t supposed to, just to get your attention and encourage you to play with them. They may be just plain bored too with the toys they have!
- Use Kongs filled with yummy treats, peanut butter, or other dog safe goodies so they can learn that is one toy that they can always chew on.

Crate Training

Never make the crate a negative space, or a place your foster dog goes to for punishment. The crate should be their safe place and a place they feel they can go to if they need to get away or decompress. Make it as inviting as possible! Place toys in the crate, on top of a pile of comfy blankets or beds. Place treats in the crate to encourage them to go in, but also feel free to hide them in the blankets for them to find when they go sniffing around later. This will encourage exploring the crate, as well as associating it with something yummy and positive. Who doesn’t like finding a random treat in their bed when they’re settling down to take a nap? Your foster will love it! You aren’t limited to doing this once either—it’s encouraged to do it multiple times in a day or throughout a week! It’s always fun for your foster dog
to find treats a week later that “magically appeared”, but really you just refilled the kennel when they weren’t looking.

When it comes to shy dogs, providing them with a crate and making it as comfortable and positive as possible is the best way to help them feel safe. The crate is a great tool for helping them adjust and decompress to the environmental change from the shelter to your home. If they feel comfortable in the crate, they will feel comfortable watching their surroundings from it, including you. You can put a large blanket over part of it to make it feel more enclosed and more of a place to hide when they are feeling overwhelmed.
Veterinary and Medical Care

Whether your dog is healthy or sick, there will be routine medical care required. You may need to come back with them for a booster vaccine and then monthly for their flea and tick prevention. The monthly prevention does not require the dog to come in as long as you are comfortable applying a topical prevention at home.

Even with thorough medical screenings and exams prior to the foster time, we CANNOT guarantee your foster won’t break with an illness after you take them home. This is why it is so important to follow the required quarantine protocol! Doing so helps to catch any illness that arises in those 14 days, and will keep any personal pets in the home safe. It is also just as important to notify us immediately when medical concerns arise. Please see the Common Non-Emergency Medical Concerns section for symptoms and illnesses to look for.

NEVER give medication to your shelter foster pet, at any time, that has not been prescribed by the HSWM Veterinarian! This is ILLEGAL to do!

Routine Medical Care

Foster parents are responsible for getting their foster pet scheduled for their vaccine boosters and monthly prevention pick up. At your foster pet’s pick up, you will be alerted if your foster will need a vaccine booster and when they need to come back to get that done. To schedule this, you go to hswestmi.org, foster tab, foster resources and then there is a link to access the vaccine calendar. Pick a time and slot to schedule them for and it will schedule on Foster Vet Tech’s calendar. To schedule a monthly prevention pick up, please email the Foster Vet Tech.

Please be mindful about being on time, as you likely aren’t the only appointment for the day! We try to avoid making appointments back to back, but sometimes it’s unavoidable, especially if the previous appointment runs longer than anticipated due to an unforeseen medical concern that requires more time. To respect everyone’s time and to prevent appointments running into each other, it is best to be early rather than late. If you are early, you may ring the doorbell on the Foster Doors, but please be patient as the Foster Vet Tech may be in another appointment, helping the vet team with a procedure, or preparing for your appointment. Don’t worry, we haven’t forgotten about you! We will be out to see you at your scheduled time.

If you are 15 minutes late to your appointment, we reserve the right to reschedule for a different time.
Medical Timeline
Once a dog has reached 20 weeks old, or 5 months, they are considered an adult in medical terms. They only need 1 follow up booster and then their vaccines are good for the year. Your foster animal may be sent home before that 2 week booster was given at the shelter. You will be notified of this at pick up, and then you are responsible for getting it scheduled to be done. Otherwise, you should only need to come back to pick up a monthly flea and heartworm prevention prevention, as long as your foster dog stays healthy and happy.

Surgery
All animals are altered before they leave our building for adoption.

Surgery Scheduling
If your animal is unaltered prior to going to foster, they will be scheduled for surgery. The Foster Vet Tech schedules these procedures the week following them leaving for foster at the beginning of the week. You as the foster parent are responsible for keeping track of this date. Once they are scheduled, you can find the date on hswestmi.org, foster tab, foster resources, and appointment scheduling. The second half of the page is our surgery section, with a link to the spreadsheet containing their surgery date. You will need to request viewing access the first time. Once you have access, find your name on the appropriate tab. Once you find your foster’s surgery date, please email the Foster Vet Tech that you can or cannot make the surgery date. If you are unable to make the date, a new one will be offered. Once surgery is confirmed, and the follow up confirmation of the animal staying at the shelter for adoption post-surgery or returning back to foster is discussed, their surgery date and time are a-go. You can find all surgery day instructions as well as post-surgical instructions below the surgery spreadsheet link. Please make sure to read these so you know what time to arrive and pick up if you are doing so, as well as what to do the morning of surgery prior to coming in.

Day of Surgery
The following instructions are linked under the surgery spreadsheet link in PDF form.

Please remember if you want to adopt your fosters, you need to let our Adoptions team know by the end of the day the day PRIOR to surgery! Their email is adoptions@hswestmi.org.
If you are running late, please email Sabrina and our Vet Staff at vetstaff@hswestmi.org with your anticipated arrival time.

★ If you have kittens or puppies, you do not need to withhold water or food for surgery.

★ If you have adult cats or dogs, please refrain from giving breakfast the morning of surgery to avoid upset stomach during anesthesia. Water is okay. Administer any prescribed medications as normal.

★

Drop off
1. Arrive between 7:30-8am to our Admitting doors unless a different time was discussed at time of scheduling. Please ring the doorbell labeled “Preop” once you arrive - our admitting doors are locked in the morning and ringing the bell alerts our team you are here. One of our Vet Techs will meet you in the lobby inside these doors to take your animal(s).

2. If your foster is not returning home with you after surgery, please bring back your supplies at this time and place them outside of our Foster doors in the Foster Drop-Off bin. Please don’t place them in the pick up shed!

3. Please be patient as there may be others dropping off at the same time.

Pick up
1. If you are picking up your foster to be adopted from foster via Zoom, or you are adopting them yourself, the pickup time is between 4-4:30pm from the Admitting doors again unless a different pick up time was previously discussed.

2. There should be someone in Admitting at your time of pick up (unless it is Monday). Let them know who you are picking up and a vet staff member will bring out your foster animal(s). You will be given their postoperative pain medications at this time. The post-op medication is given by mouth once daily, starting the day after surgery as they got their first dose already prior to surgery that day. **THIS MUST BE ADMINISTERED AS PRESCRIBED - NO EXCEPTIONS**

3. Please be patient as there may be others picking up at the same time.
**Additional Surgery Notes:**

- If something comes up that complicates your ability to make the surgery date or scheduled time, please email the Foster Veterinary Technician ASAP to discuss rescheduling as needed.

- It is important to keep your animals as mellow and relaxed as possible, especially females, after surgery to avoid post-surgical complications.

*Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns in regards to surgery or post-surgery!*
Post Operative Instructions for Foster Dogs and Puppies

The following is information regarding post-operative care for your foster animal. If you have any questions or concerns about the surgical procedure or recovery, please email the Foster Veterinary Technician, at sanderson@hswestmi.org.

Most dogs will self limit their activity following this abdominal surgery. Some may also be slightly groggy due to the anesthetic/pain medication given for the rest of the day.

You are being sent home with oral pain medication to start the day after surgery.

**Monitor appetite** - some dogs will have little or no appetite following surgery. Some may vomit as well. If either of these symptoms persist past 24 hours, please let us know.

**Keep the incision dry** - no bathing or swimming should be done for 10 days.

**Monitor the incision** - for any pain, heat, redness, drainage or excessive swelling for 7-10 days. If any of these symptoms are observed, please email the Foster Veterinary Technician a picture of the incision.

**Discourage licking at the incision** - If your foster is licking or chewing at the incision, they must be fitted with an E-collar (aka “cone”). This should remain in place at all times when they are not being directly supervised until the incision is completely healed. We can provide a collar, or you can get one at a pet store. For smaller animals, a paper plate can be crafted into a cone (please see next page for instructions).

**Try to discourage running, jumping or strenuous activity** - for 5-7 days post surgery for females, and 3-5 days post surgery for males. Increased activity may cause post-op complications and delayed healing. Keeping your foster pet confined to an area that limits strenuous activity post-op is highly recommended.

**Do not give your dog Aspirin, Tylenol, Advil, or any other over the counter pain medication** - these substances are very toxic to dogs and can be fatal, especially when combined with the pain medication sent home with you. If your foster pet is in excessive pain, please let us know and we can prescribe additional pain relievers.
Common Non-Emergency Medical Concerns

When to let us know
We may not need to do anything right away, but we need to be made aware of these medical issues when they occur. Please email the Foster Veterinary Technician at sanderson@hswestmi.org if any of these things are observed within the respective time frame given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Neonate Puppies and Kittens</th>
<th>Puppies and Kittens under 5 months</th>
<th>Adult cats and dogs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>URI Symptoms - sneezing, congestion, discharge</td>
<td>As soon as it's observed</td>
<td>After 24 hours of showing symptoms</td>
<td>After 48 hours of showing symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctivitis/Eye swelling/redness</td>
<td>As soon as it's observed</td>
<td>After 24 hours</td>
<td>After 24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vomiting</td>
<td>As soon as it's observed</td>
<td>After 24 hours</td>
<td>After 48 hours, or 24 hours if frequent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diarrhea - soft to liquid consistency</td>
<td>As soon as it's observed</td>
<td>After 24 hours - As soon as it's observed if there is blood</td>
<td>After 48 hours - after 24 hours if blood is continually present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constipation - zero stool output</td>
<td>After 24 hours</td>
<td>After 24 hours</td>
<td>After 48 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased Appetite</td>
<td>As soon as it's observed</td>
<td>As soon as it's observed</td>
<td>After 24 hours of decreased appetite OR after 12 hours for zero food intake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight loss or weight plateau (primarily kittens)</td>
<td>As soon as it's observed</td>
<td>After 24 hours</td>
<td>After 72 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following items are less common non-emergency medical concerns:

- Straining to urinate, difficulty eliminating
- Itchy skin or ears.
- Blood in stool
- Frequent and excessive water intake
- Decreased activity – not lethargy

If any of these are noted, please contact the Foster Vet Tech.
Canine Parvovirus, A.K.A. “Parvo”

What is Parvo?
Canine Parvovirus is an extremely hardy virus that is very contagious to unvaccinated or freshly vaccinated dogs and puppies. Without early intervention it can be a devastating, as well as deadly. The virus can enter into the environment from the animal before they even display symptoms. It is hard to kill, lives a long time in the environment, and is easily spread. Thankfully, this virus cannot go between species and affects only canines.

What are the symptoms of Parvo?
If puppies stop eating or become less interested in eating, that is typically the first sign of Parvo. Other symptoms include decreased activity to lethargy, diarrhea, diarrhea with blood, and vomiting. Sometimes symptoms are glaringly obvious, but sometimes they are more subtle. While not common in our adult dogs, they can also be affected by Parvo.

Situational examples of symptoms:
1. **Attitude/Activity change:** They can go from running around your house to just meandering around, or simply just not running around as excitedly.
2. **Appetite loss:** They scarf down a bowl of food that morning or the night prior but their next meal they only eat half the bowl, if at all.
3. **Stool change:** Stool is even becoming softer and darker in texture, or they seem to be uncomfortable while going to the bathroom. Or, their stool suddenly becomes diarrhea with an odd, sweeter smell to it.

   *It's important to monitor your dog’s daily health, note any changes and report them as soon as they are noticed.*

I have dogs at home!
If your dogs get their yearly distemper vaccine on time, which protects them from Parvovirus, and have a good track record of their vaccines throughout their life, they will likely be fine! However, it is highly suggested to avoid having any unvaccinated dogs or puppies in your home, near your Parvo dog, or visiting your home until your foster is cleared and no longer has Parvo. Even then, everything should be cleaned appropriately, including any fabric items, like carpets, couches, or anything else that your foster came in contact with before you have dog visitors.

If your own pet is not vaccinated, or is coming up on being due on their vaccine, please email the Foster Veterinary Technician and we can further discuss what to do
to help your pets stay safe and how we can assist with that. If your animal were to test positive for Parvo, you must seek treatment with your primary veterinarian, as we will not be able to provide treatment.

**Indirect spread of Parvo**
You and your home can be a fomite for Parvo. A fomite is an object or material that can carry infection. This includes clothes you wear and furniture the dog has come in contact with. For example, if a parvo dog is shedding the virus but not showing symptoms, yet gave you a bunch of kisses and slobbered all over your hands and clothes, and you go into another room and touch other items or sit on a couch, the virus can shed from you onto the couch or other items you touched. If that happens, then there is a chance that now the Parvo virus is waiting on your couch or other objects for the next unvaccinated dog or puppy to come around, touch it and get infected with it. This is why we recommend not having any unvaccinated dogs or puppies in your home for at least 6 months. If they were outside or on your deck, you should wait at least a year, as Parvo thrives outdoors.

**Monitoring and Reporting**
It is extremely important to report any symptoms of Parvo you see in your fosters, especially puppies, including any changes in their attitude. We want to intervene as soon as possible! The sooner we are able to intervene, the better the outcome for all of the dogs involved. We would rather check your foster pet and have it turn out to be nothing serious, versus holding off and seeing them when it is too late.

If you have been informed that your foster dog has been exposed to Parvo, be on high alert for symptoms. If you notice the slightest change in attitude, appetite, or appearance in stool, please let the Foster Veterinary Technician know immediately. If the tech is out, please follow the emergency protocol.

If your dog has tested positive for Parvo, they will stay at the shelter if possible (the only exception being neonates who need round-the-clock care) to start treatment until our veterinarian gives them the okay to go back to foster. Sometimes this is within a day, and sometimes it’s a week later. It all depends on the severity of their illness and their response to treatments. The sooner we can catch it, the better and quicker the recovery in most cases. If you are willing to take your Parvo dog back, please know you may need to visit multiple times in a week if they decline different days of the week but are okay during others. They may need to come in for a night stay, or may just need a short visit to get a couple treatments, and then go back home with you.
Diarrhea in Shelter Animals

Diarrhea is one of the most common issues we see at the shelter. It can be uncomfortable for the animals, and possibly for you, but we have the resources to help resolve it!

What causes diarrhea?
The most common causes of diarrhea in shelter animals are stress from their current environment, or from moving locations (i.e. going from the shelter to a foster home). The other primary causes of diarrhea in the shelter are parasites and food change.

Preventing diarrhea
All canines and felines receive dewormer on intake to start killing common parasites. Once you establish a food they enjoy, keep them on that food when at all possible. If you must change food, do a slow transition from old to new food over 7 days.

My foster animal has diarrhea, what should I do?
Let us know! Follow these guidelines for notifying us if your foster has diarrhea:

- Neonates: Immediately if looser than toothpaste consistency, or if blood is present
- Puppies/Kittens older than 1 month: Within 24 hours, or immediately if blood if present
- Adult: within 48 hours, or within 24 hours if blood is present

If you notice severe diarrhea with significant blood, please follow the emergency protocol!

What information is helpful to staff

- Is there blood?
- Are you able to take a picture of the stool?
- When did it start?
- How is their activity level?
- Are they eating and drinking?
- Was there new food or treats introduced?

- What does it look like?
  - Consistency? Is there blood? What color is it?
- Can you bring a fecal sample in?
- Is it possible they got into something that upset their stomach?

I have been asked to bring a stool sample in, how do I do that?
We only need about a spoonful of fecal matter to run tests. If you have received a fecal sample tube in your foster kit, you can scoop the sample directly into the tube to bring in. If not, you can put it in a dog poop bag, sandwich bag, or another container you don’t mind parting with. Litter or grass in the sample is okay! The obtained sample needs to be as “fresh” as possible, less than 24 hours old. Please write the date and the name of the foster animal on whatever contains the stool.
What will happen if I report diarrhea?
After we have asked some questions, a couple of things may happen.
1. We may first prescribe a probiotic and possibly a bland diet for a few days.
2. We will ask for a fecal sample to be brought to us to check for screening
   a. If positive, we will send home appropriate medication(s). Another fecal
      sample will likely need to be taken 24-48 hours after completion of the
      medication to make sure that there are no lingering parasites.
   b. If negative, we may send home medication to help resolve the diarrhea.
   c. We may ask for the pet to come in if the diarrhea is persistent or worsens,
      for a wellness exam by our veterinary staff and appropriate medication.

What do the parasites look like? Do all parasites cause diarrhea?
There are many parasites that can cause diarrhea, but not all are visible to the naked eye
and must be viewed under a microscope. The most common parasites you can see at a
glance are roundworms (which resemble a spaghetti noodle) and tapeworms (which
resemble a grain of rice).

Can the parasites be passed onto me?
Technically, yes, but it is very hard to be passed onto people. As long as you aren't directly
eating the fecal matter and taking the proper cleaning precautions when handling
animal waste, (washing hands, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces the fecal matter
touches, etc.) the risk is minimal.

Can my own animals get infected with parasites from my foster animal?
Yes. Like humans, they have to ingest the eggs of the parasite to become infected, so
proper cleaning helps minimize the risk. Most diarrhea due to parasites will show up
during the 10 day quarantine your foster animal(s) goes through. If your personal animal
becomes infected and starts having diarrhea, you will need to go to your primary
veterinarian for care and treatment.
Upper Respiratory Infections in Shelter Animals

What is an Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)?
Also known as URI, it is a common shelter illness that, while primarily affecting cats, can affect many different species. It is a viral or a bacterial infection that targets the upper airways (nose and throat) and is similar to a common cold. In most cases, a round of medication will address the illness, but in more severe cases your foster pet may need additional treatment. URIs are commonly passed through saliva and nasal discharge via direct contact (grooming, coming nose-to-nose with sick animals, etc) and indirectly (sneezing, eating from the same bowls, touching a surface that has discharge on it, etc).

What are the symptoms of URI?
The most common symptoms of URI are frequent sneezing and coughing, nasal congestion, and colored (yellow or green) nasal discharge. Conjunctivitis (inflammation of the membranes lining the eyelids) can also occur with colored ocular discharge. Depending on the severity of the URI, they may have bloody nasal discharge (though this is less common), drooling, nausea, mouth sores, decreased or total loss of appetite, and decreased activity levels.

My foster is showing signs of URI, what should I do?
The occasional sneeze here and there is perfectly normal and not cause for concern, as animals sneeze like humans do to expel foreign matter from the nasal passage. If you notice persistent or worsening symptoms, please notify us within 24 hours for animals under 5 months, and within 48 hours for adults. In order to avoid the added stress of coming back to the shelter, we may ask you to send us a video of their sneezing and/or breathing, or pictures of the eyes if ocular discharge, swelling, or squinting of the eyes is noted.

How is it treated?
We prescribe an oral antibiotic that is to be given once daily. If they also have conjunctivitis with their URI, we prescribe an eye medication to be put onto the affected eyes every 12 hours for 7 days. If they still are sneezing and congested after their oral meds are finished, we may do another round of medication(s).

If their noses are raw or plugged up with nasal discharge, a warm, wet wash cloth can be used to gently wipe their noses and help them breathe better. You can also take them into a steamy bathroom to help clear up their sinuses.
How can I give the oral medication?
See your “How to Administer Medications” section for more help. You can also email our Foster Veterinary Technician directly at sanderson@hswestmi.org, if you are still struggling with administering the medication.

My foster animal was healthy when I took them home, why are they getting sick now?
The virus can incubate in animals for 2-10 days before they develop symptoms. Stress, such as changes in the environment, the busy shelter, traveling in a car, or surgery, can cause them to be more susceptible to the URI, and we often see them break with illness after these events. If they had a recent visit to the shelter, like a vaccine booster appointment, it’s also possible to be exposed during that appointment as well, despite our efforts to clean thoroughly between each animal.

I have my own animals at home. Are they at risk for getting sick too?
When you bring foster animals home, we ask you to quarantine them in a room away from your personal animals for 10 days. If the foster animal has an underlying illness, chances are they will show symptoms within those 10 days. If your animals are up-to-date on vaccines, it decreases their chances of getting sick, but does not make them completely immune to all strains of the URI illnesses. As long as your animals are kept separate from foster animals and you practice good hygiene, sanitation, and hand washing, the risk of getting your personal animals sick is minimal. If your personal animal(s) get sick, you will need to go to your primary veterinarian for an exam and possible treatment.

Can I catch this illness?
No- it cannot be passed onto humans or between species!
Conjunctivitis in Shelter Animals

What is conjunctivitis?
Conjunctivitis is inflammation of the conjunctiva, the mucous membrane lining an animal’s eye. It commonly occurs along with upper respiratory infections, but can occur by itself as well. It is most common in cats, but can show up in all species.

What are the symptoms of it?
Redness/irritation of the eye(s), squinting, watery eye(s), swelling of the eye(s), colored (yellow/green/cloudy) ocular discharge, cloudy eye(s), and raising of the third eyelid.

What should I do?
Let us know! Email a picture to the Foster Veterinary Technician at sanderson@hswestmi.org to help us evaluate if it is conjunctivitis, or a different eye issue. Providing details of the symptoms you’re seeing will be helpful and expedite the process. If you are unsure if you are also noticing URI symptoms, please refer above to the “Upper Respiratory Infections in Shelter Animals” section.

How is it treated?
Conjunctivitis is treated with an ointment that is applied to the affected eye(s) at least every 12 hours for 7 days. If the eye(s) clear up before the instructed time, it is important that you do not stop the medication. If symptoms persist after treatment, please email us so we may further evaluate your foster pet.

How do I apply the eye medication?
Please see the “How to Administer Medications” section for help. You can also email our Foster Veterinary Technician at sanderson@hswestmi.org if you need further assistance with administering medication.
Ear Mites vs. Ear Infections

What are ear mites?
Ear mites are tiny mites that live in the ear canals of animals. While they can affect a variety of species, we typically see them appear more often in cats in a shelter environment. Ear mite debris appears dry and dirty, similar to a coffee ground consistency. Ear mites are confirmed via microscopic examination.

What are symptoms of ear mites?
The most common signs of ear mites are dirty ears and itching. These are usually accompanied by shaking of their head/ears, redness on their ear pinna/flap, and intense scratching of the ears.

How are ear mites treated?
All cats receive Revolution upon intake, which is a flea and tick prevention that is also effective against ear mites. Occasionally, some cats may need additional care or treatment.

What’s the difference between mites and an ear infection?
An ear infection is the result of the overgrowth of yeast or bacteria in the ear. Similar to ear mites, symptoms of an ear infection include itching, redness, and shaking of the head. They may also have an odor or be painful depending on the type and severity of the infection. The main difference is what is in their ear. Ear infections present with a varying consistency of colored ear debris (light yellow to dark brown) but it usually is a softer, more waxy consistency.
How are they diagnosed?
You will be asked to bring your foster in for an exam, or bring in a swab sample of the ear debris. We will look at the sample under a microscope looking for mites or bacteria. If any are present, they will be prescribed an ear medication for one or both of the ears.

How do I get a sample?
The easiest way to get a sample is to use a Q-tip. It is best to get a sample right before you plan to drop it off to prevent it from drying out. Be gentle while acquiring the sample and don’t be too forceful with the Q-tip in the ear. Animals have an extra turn in their ear canal so it’s harder to hit their eardrum, unlike humans, but you can still hit it if you’re being forceful in their ear.

1. Gently hold their ear flap in your fingers and bend it towards the center of their head to open their ear up for easier access. Locate the ear canal.
2. Take one Q-tip and insert into the ear canal. Move the Q-tip around against the walls of the ear canal to pick up any debris inside the ear. Repeat for the other ear, using a new Q-tip.
3. Take the Q-tip used to acquire the LEFT ear sample and bend it into an L, or mark it another way to signify the sample is the left ear. This will help determine which ear needs medication, if necessary.
4. Put Q-tips in a sealed bag and bring in as directed by the Foster Veterinary Technician.

How are ears treated?
If your foster is diagnosed with an ear infection, they will be prescribed the appropriate ear ointment or drops. Most commonly these are given for 7-10 days, depending on the severity of the infection. Approximately two weeks after the medication is started, another ear sample will need to be brought in to check if the infection is still present.

If you are comfortable doing so, you will be provided ear cleaning supplies to clean out your foster’s ears if deemed necessary by the veterinarian. This process is similar to obtaining a sample (see above) with the addition of a medicated solution.

How do I give ear medications?
Please see the “How to Administer Medications” section for help. You can also email our Foster Veterinary Technician at sanderson@hswestmi.org if you need further assistance with administering medication.
How to Administer Medications

In general, though particularly for cats, it’s best to have two people helping to administer medications. However, you may be by yourself at some point and will need to medicate your foster pet on your own.

*Always read the label of your medication for: method to administer, amount to administer, how often to administer, and for how long*

NEVER give medication to your shelter foster, at any time, that has not been prescribed by the HSWM Veterinarian. IT IS ILLEGAL TO DO SO.

Please do not STOP or WEAN medications without discussion first.

Liquid medications

Luckily for you, medication is much easier to administer to dogs than it is to cats! When giving a dog any medication, it is best to have their butt against something, whether it be your lap, or another object, so they can’t back away.

1. Draw up the directed amount of medication into the supplied syringe.
2. Hold the dog’s head gently and wiggle the syringe in the side of the mouth, between their premolars and canines. Most times they will open their mouths on their own.
3. Push plunger to administer medication into the mouth, being careful not to shoot it directly into their throat.
4. While the above steps are ideal for puppies, if you have an adult dog on liquid medication it is often easiest to mix the medication into a small meatball of canned food. After they eat the whole meatball, you can offer more food without the medication as a reward.

*Some dogs may spit out some amount of medication. This is okay as long as they have swallowed a majority of the medication.*

*Tip: If your medication has a foul taste (like Metronidazole or Doxycycline), you can suck up some extra water, tuna juice, baby food or chicken broth into the syringe.*
Pull the plunger back and forth a few times to mix in the syringe. Doing so helps make it much less offensive and medication time a bit easier.

Pill and capsule medications

With dogs, it’s super easy to hide pills in tasty treats! You can try hiding their pills in:

- Their own wet food shaped into a little meatball
- Peanut butter
- Spray cheese
- Deli cheese
- Canned Fat food
- Deli turkey/ham
- Hot dogs
- Pill pockets

When administering a meatball filled with pills, use the sandwich method; where you give them one meatball without medicine, followed by a meatball with the medicine, followed by another meatball without medicine. Some dogs will become suspicious of foods if they always contain medication, and this method helps minimize that response.

Some dogs can, and will, still chew around the pill and spit it out. If this happens, try hiding them in other foods, as some foods are better at concealing medication. If they continue to chew around their medication, you can crush the pills and hide them again in wet food or peanut butter to make it harder to spit out the pill. **Please ask for approval for this method as some medications cannot be crushed.** Some pills have a bitter taste when crushed and can make it more difficult to mask the taste.

We recommend direct pilling as a last resort as it can be very stressful to the animal, and risks the possibility of a bite. If possible, use a pill pusher as pictured below:

1. Put the pill/capsule in the tip of the pill pusher.
2. Gently place your hand on the top of their head with your fingers by their cheekbones.
3. Lift their head up slightly and wiggle the pill pusher into the molar area. Most dogs will open their mouths as there is a small gap in their molar area.
4. Push the pill pusher all the way to back of mouth, as far as the dog will allow.
5. Push plunger to shoot pill down the dog’s throat.
6. Watch for swallowing. If the dog spits the pill out, repeat the process.
Eye drops and ointment

Having your foster dog’s butt against something like yourself or another object, will make eye drops and ointment easier to apply, as they cannot back away.

1. Place your thumb below the eye and pull down gently to lower the lid
2. Place the hand holding the medication on top of the head. Place a finger (like your pinky) above the eye and pull up slightly to raise the upper lid
3. Squeeze bottle above eye, being careful not to touch the tip to the eye, to administer drops or ointment.

Ear drops and ointment

Having the animal’s butt against something like yourself or another object will make ear drops or ointment easier to apply. If you have a large dog and they are very wiggly, you can back their butt up into a corner and have them between your legs to keep them more stationary.

The goal is to get the medication into the ear canal, not on the surface of the ear flap.

1. Gently hold their ear flap in your fingers and bend it towards the center of their head to open their ear up for easier access.
2. Locate the ear canal.
3. Take your medication and place the tip into the ear canal. Squeeze the bottle to administer the medication.
4. Massage the base of the ear. Repeat for the other ear, if needed.

Tip: The label will tell you how many drops to administer in each ear canal. Prior to administering, you can practice without your foster pet by squeezing the bottle onto a cloth to see how much pressure you need to apply to administer the correct amount.
Additional tips and tricks:

● Make it a positive experience! Always give them treats after getting their medication.

● Be patient! It can be frustrating medicating a difficult animal. If you have to come back to try again a bit later in the day, that’s okay. We want to make the experience as positive as possible for the animal, and safe for you. If you are having difficulty medicating after trying the things suggested in this packet, please email the Foster Vet Tech at sanderson@hswestmi.org for more help and alternatives
Adoption Process,
From Foster to Forever Home

If your animal is healthy, behaviorally assessed, and at least 2 months of age, they can become available for adoption even if they are still waiting on a medical procedure. This can happen within a few days of them being in your foster home!

Building an Adoption Profile

The first step to getting your foster adopted is building their adoption profile! To do this you’ll need pictures, pictures, and more pictures! Gathering photos and “About Me” information for your foster pets is both fun and extremely important in helping your pet find their loving furever home. The combination of quality photos and creative bios are essential to creating an appealing online profile, which in turn will encourage adopters to apply to adopt your foster pet! Nearly everything you send us will eventually be visible on their profile on our website, so the more you give us to work with, the better! Building a great profile for your foster pet could look like one of the examples at the end of this manual. Plus, it is part of your foster agreement to help build this profile.

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<tr>
<th>Photography Provides:</th>
<th>A Good Photo:</th>
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<tr>
<td>● Increased Adoptions</td>
<td>● Is in focus</td>
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<td>● Increased Engagement</td>
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<tr>
<td>● Increased Awareness</td>
<td>● Uncomplicated, uncluttered</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● At the animal's level, ideally with the pet looking straight at you</td>
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<td></td>
<td>● Well lit</td>
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<td>● Dark fur? Use light background</td>
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Writing a bio: A good story can be an invaluable tool for emotional connection. Stories can bring aspects of a pet's personality or their history in vivid detail. Qualities that potential adopters might be looking for, such as great social skills with other pets, or having an easygoing or affectionate purrsonality, are often illustrated in any number of small actions that a pet performs every day. Tell us all about what makes your foster pet special and what you love about them! If the content is funny or sweet and relatable--even better! When your foster pet does something positive that affects you emotionally, make a note of it so we can share that with adopters!

Take Multiple Photos: Some fosters tell us, “I am an awful photographer!”, but no one takes the perfect selfie on the first try! Take lots of rapid-fire photos all at once and odds are you'll snap something you can work with! Whether you're an ace photographer or not, taking multiple photos increases the chances of getting
something really great, and helps show off your adorable foster pet to potential adopters!

**Use Photos to Showcase Personality:** We want potential adopters to get a feel for our foster pet's personalities, so use photos in a way that does just that! Take photos that capture different aspects of your pet's personality. When viewed together, adopters get a much more accurate picture of who they are, and what makes your foster pet unique and loveable!

**The Adoption Process from Home**

Once they are cleared to go up for adoption, your foster pet will be made available in our adoption system, which makes them viewable on the HSWM website. **Since adopters can't view your pets by visiting our shelter, it is ESSENTIAL that we make them an appealing online bio, since it is their only way to get to know them!** This is why it is so important to help the Foster Coordinator build their profile with pictures, bios, and descriptions! These details will become visible on the website for interested adopters to see, along with their gender, age, sex. If they are interested in adopting the animal, they can put in an application for them directly from their online profile.

Once an application has been approved, our Adoptions Department will reach out to both you and the potential adopter to coordinate a meeting. Once an agreed date and time is coordinated, the meeting is set with you and the animal(s), the potential adopter, and the Adoptions Department typically via Zoom. Here, the adopter can meet the animal and ask any questions they may have about your foster pet. At this point, as the foster, you will know more about their personality than anyone!

If they decide to go through with the adoption, a transfer of care is then coordinated at the shelter. Transfer of cares can not happen anywhere but the shelter unless otherwise approved by a HSWM staff member. Once that date and time is set, all that’s left is to wait for that date to arrive! Once that day comes, you will show up at the designated time and place with your adopted foster pet(s). You can either help facilitate the transfer and meet the adopter with a customer service member, or you can simply drop off the animal to the customer service team, and they can handle the transfer from there. If all your fosters have been adopted, your foster supplies can be brought back to us and be dropped off outside the foster doors at this time as well. Please feel free to send any favorite toys, blankets, or beds home with your animals!

*And you are officially done! Congratulations, you have gotten one more animal to their forever home!*
Profile Examples
The bios and profiles provided here are examples only. Included on the last page are some photos of our HSWM foster pets, taken by HSWM foster caregivers!

Bio example: Sir Harley and Connecting with Humor

After some time with Harley in foster he has made it abundantly clear that he is a gentleman, and as such, will henceforth be known as Sir Harley.

Sir Harley has manners! We were worried he had an infection when he didn’t pee during his first 24 hours with us, but as it turns out, he simply prefers not to urinate in the presence of a lady. We also learned he has a bladder of steel.

Sir Harley is grateful. He is so expressive in his gratitude; in fact, he has an injury called “happy tail.” Breakfast? GRATEFUL. Pets? GRATEFUL. Walkies? GRATEFUL. Nap time? GRATEFUL. Eye contact? GRATEFUL.

Sir Harley makes everyone feel welcome! As a one-dog welcoming committee, there is no door greeter as wiggly as Sir Harley. If retail stores had Sir Harley mascots, the American economy would be repaired in a matter of days.

Sir Harley does not beg. He understands that "no means no" and he will not push the issue on that pint of Ben ‘N Jerry’s. Bonus: He won’t shame you for eating it all in one sitting either. He knows you are beautiful at any size!

Sir Harley rolls with the flow. You wanna sleep all day? So does he. You wanna party outside? So does he. You wanna have an existential crisis because life is an illusion? Sir Harley knows you will calm down if you rub his belly, and he will offer it to you gladly. Sir Harley will make some man or woman very lucky when they welcome this class act gentle giant into their home! #adoptsirharley

Bio Example: Snoopy, Telling a Story about Personality

This is Snoopy, but you can call him Velcro Lite, Splooter (his sploots are unparalleled. Truly.) or Snoop Dogg (but that’s kind of a given). I brought Snoopy home for an overnight foster and he instantly took to my boyfriend and me like a baby takes to his parents. His primary objective all day and night was to please, and he did. You could call him from any room in the house and he’d come running with that giant smile on that mammoth head of his to sit at your feet and
look up at you so adoringly you couldn’t help but feel guilty for being loved this much.

Snoopy is the rare dog who wants to be by your side always, but also has a natural understanding of personal space. If you’re on the couch, he is gonna climb right up on there and sploot (lay with his legs back, like a frog) next to you - close enough for scratches, but not so close that you’re strapped in for a 12-hour Netflix marathon.

His two states of being are “overjoyed” and “asleep,” and that goofy smile will follow him into both. He is a natural couch potato but is versatile in his ability to go from “sploot” to 60 and back again depending on what it is you wanna do.

Though people keep letting him down, Snoopy holds onto his spirit with a big, heart-melting grin. This boy loves with his whole body and the person who welcomes him into their family will have a lifelong best friend!

**Bio Example: Ruby, The Gut-Puncher Story**

In the shelter, Ruby can appear stoic due to her shyness and fear; this may be a reason she’s been overlooked for so long. I hope someone takes a chance on her, because they will be greatly rewarded! My prediction is once someone earns her trust, Ruby will love them so completely that it will surprise them both!

On our overnight, I saw sure signs of her emerging trust in so many ways: the way she looked back at me while walking to make sure I was with her, how, by morning, she was so in tune with me that she needed only for me to quietly say, “this way” when walking to ensure she was turning or stopping right next to me. How, when something frightened her, she would walk closely behind me because she knew I would protect her. Initially, she was afraid to walk down the stairs - she stopped, wide-eyed, and after some coaxing she walked down so close to me that she was touching my heels. By the end of the trip she was going up and down the stairs with confidence.

The hardest part of my overnight with Ruby was seeing the stress return when I brought her back to the shelter. The second she heard the dogs barking in their kennels and realized where she was, I could literally see her steeling herself. Like a boxer trying to pump themselves up, she let out a series of huffs, and she began to scan her surroundings for threats. Putting her back in the kennel broke my heart.
Ruby was the perfect overnight guest. She followed directions immediately, was quiet in the room and had no accidents. She ate well, slept right next to me in the bed, and I’m pretty sure she would have slept in if I hadn’t gotten her up early to take a walk and get breakfast. I took her into the kitchen and though I could tell the smells were tempting her, she didn’t jump up on the counter or pull on the leash. She rode in the car like a dream. Someone is going to think they’ve won the lottery when they adopt her!

**Bio Example: Gus, Telling a Story of Growth**

Gus spent the last few months demonstrating for the shelter’s staff what a complete emotional breakdown looks like in a cat who has lived much of his life outside. By all accounts, he was feral, so shelter life was terrifying for him.

When we took him into foster care, both my husband and I expected him to be a challenge. Looking at him the first night, unhappily crouched behind a laundry basket, my husband asked, “Did you ask for the hardest cat in the shelter or something?” We had no idea that less than 30 minutes later, he’d be in my lap, kneading and purring!

Gus clearly just needed a quiet home with a stable environment that we were able to help provide. Shyer cats often need time and patience to adjust to new sounds and smells, and after he had decided our home was safe, and we were here to help him, we saw Gus become a completely different cat! It may seem a bit intimidating at first to adopt a shy or undersocialized cat, but the moment you earn their trust and they open up and love you, it’s one of the most rewarding things you’ll ever experience! Give Gus a chance, and he'll remind you how grateful he is to have a warm, safe home every day of his lif
Here are some examples of great photos taken by our HSWM fosters!
Whether it’s glamor shots, snuggle sessions, a full themed photoshoot, or just your foster(s) being cute, these photos, much like a dating profile, are essential for adopters to fall in love with them!