VE-07 FOSTER PROGRAM

**Purpose**

This is to outline the process of identifying needs and protocol for placing animals into foster homes. Included is recruitment of and communication to Foster Parents

**Staff /Areas Affected**

Foster Coordinator

Foster Veterinary Technician

Director of Animal Logistics

Director of Animal Care

Admitting Coordinator

Admitting Animal Care Staff

Canine Behavior Coordinator

Feline Behavior Coordinator

Customer Service / Adoptions Staff

**Responsibilities**

Director of Animal Care is responsible for any animal care related process. The Foster Coordinator is responsible for the day to day foster activities

**Definitions**

**FC** – Foster Coordinator

**FVT** – Foster Veterinary Technician

**ShelterLuv** – Database used by HSWM for all tracking of customers, animals and associated service

**Policy**

Reasons for foster requests can vary between species.

Foster requests for dogs often are behavior/stress related, and getting the animal out of the shelter significantly improves the situation. Occasionally foster homes are needed for animals who need medical care, need physical therapy, or a reduced stress situation.

Cats generally need foster homes due to illness, and/or stress. Cats frequently get sick in the shelter due to the stress of the environment. Upper Respiratory Infection (URI) occurs due to the stress, which can progress and become more serious and is easily spread in the small confines of the shelter. Placing in a Foster Home often is all that is needed to get them on the road to recovery. Most feline fosters are kittens. Kittens are sent to foster until they are old/big enough (2 lbs) for spay/neuter surgery. Some kittens require being syringe/bottle fed if the mother is not present. More often, kittens can eat pate’ food on their own, and just need to gain weight.

**Preface**

All animals, including neonate kittens, must have been seen and noted by a member of vet staff and noted in ShelterLuv prior to going to a foster home. They must also have a basic behavior assessment and deemed not dangerous by behavior staff or the Director of Animal Care. Kittens do not need a behavior assessment unless an obvious behavior issue has been noted by staff.

**Procedures**

**Foster Parent Qualifications, Recruiting, Training and ongoing Support**

Recruitment of Foster Parents is conducted by various means, including but not limited to: Social Media, flyers, word of mouth, staff, news media, orientations, open houses, etc.

FC should consider the number of foster animals any given Foster Parent has recently taken on, the number of fosters currently in the home before placing additional fosters with them. Depending on the time of year (kitten season, Spring through Fall) some Foster Parents are called upon multiple times or simultaneously for litters of special needs kittens. Serious consideration should be taken into account to minimize ‘burn out’ of highly skilled foster parents. Ongoing recruitment and additional skill training should be utilized to spread out the hard to place animals.

* Potential Foster Parents must complete a Foster Application to be considered.
* All Foster Applications are reviewed by the FC. The FC will contact potential Foster Parents to obtain details on their experience/ skill level for specific species. A welcome email is send specific to the species fostering. A Foster Manual is sent, specific to the animal, age, behaviors and medical situations they are interested in fostering.
* The level of experience and knowledge a particular Foster Parent is evaluated and noted for placement of species/age/medical or behavior issues.
* The New Foster Parents document on the drive is reviewed including skill level is maintained for reference when looking for foster care.
* Every time the foster an animal(s) a new Foster Agreement is signed. The Foster Veterinary Tech will scan if a hard copy is used.
* The FC will only consider placement of animals with specific needs with Foster Parents who have a skill level that is appropriate for the care needed.
* Additional skill training is conducted as needed by the FC and/or vet staff to enhance a Foster Parents’ knowledge base as needed.
* The more advanced skills a Foster Parent has, the higher the level of care they can provide. Examples of hard to place animals may include, but are not limited to:
	+ Neonatal kittens (syringe or bottle fed)
	+ Ringworm cats/kittens
	+ URI cats
	+ Puppies
	+ Behavior dogs (fearful, reactive, (single pet, no kids), separation anxiety, high energy, etc.)
	+ Obese
	+ Stress
	+ Hospice care

These animals may require a bit longer to place in a foster home.

**A - Identifying Foster Animals and Placement**

Need for a foster home for animals can have varying reasons, including but not limited to:

* Young age / underweight (kittens)
* Illness / Medical condition
* Behavior / Stress

The Director of Animal Care or Behavior Coordinator will make the request for foster placement.

Information required by the requester are:

* + Animal name, ShelterLuv ID #, Species, Request Date, Reason, Behavior Notes (optional, unless the reason for foster is Behavior related), Spay/Neuter Status.
* Once the FC reviews the request, they may contact the requester for additional information.
* The FC sends an email request to all fosters who have presences that match those of the animal needing foster.
* If the need is immediate or no Foster Parent is confirmed within 24 hours, the FC will post on the Facebook Foster group page. Feedback on the post is monitored by the FC continuously for a willing Foster Parent.
* If no Foster Parent is confirmed within 24-48 hours, the FC contacts Director of Animal Care to advise. Staff/Staff family member may be considered as a Foster Parent.

If the status is Medically Cleared, or Available animals can go to foster, unless exceptions are made by Director of Animal Logistics or Animal Care. (Kittens may be an exception if they are very small/young, meaning they do not have all needed vaccines, etc.)

FC advises Foster Parent that the FVT will contact them after pick up for any needed revax, weight check, procedures as needed,

ShelterLuv Process

1. Create the Person (Foster Parent) in ShelterLuv
2. Add an Attribute ‘Willing Foster”
3. Under the Person profile, click the ‘Animals’ tab
4. Click on the blue ‘Add Animal’ button, and select “Foster”
5. Find the animal that is going to this Foster Parent, on the green ‘Foster’ button on the right, select if the animal will be ‘Available’ or ‘Unavailable’ while in foster.
	1. Unavailable would include: Foster to Adopt, Medical issues, too young to adopt
	2. Available would include: Behavior, minor health concerns
6. Add the name of the Foster Parent when prompted
7. Go to the Animal profile and edit the name to include ‘In Foster’.

**Foster Placement and Pick up of Animal(s)**

* Once a Foster Parent had been confirmed to have the skill level required and the availability, pick up arrangements are made. Detailed information on the type and specific needs of the animal are communicated.
* The FC schedules a mutually agreeable time for the pick-up. The FC, FVT or designated staff can hand off the animal(s).
* If it is a ‘First Time’ Foster Parent the FC has provides more information via email as to details, including Emergency protocol, Covid-19 protocol, Info sheet for the type of animal, etc. as needed.
* The FC will follow up with all Foster Parents the day after pick up.
* If the FC cannot be available for the pick-up of the animal, Admitting Animal Care Staff or the Director of Animal Care or designate can hand off the animal(s). If Animal Care is available to hand off the animal, the appointment is put on Admitting Coordinator’s Google calendar by the FC.
* The FC collects all the needed supplies. (The location of the supplies is communicated to the designated staff if they are doing the handoff.)
* Supplies include but are not limited to:
	+ food (dry, canned, formula, etc.)
	+ bowls
	+ litter/Litter box/scoop
	+ crates/cages
	+ toys
	+ linens
	+ if needed medicine, formula, medical supplies special items
* When the Foster Parent arrives, the FC (or designate) reviews the details of the animals’ situation, health, care requirements, general foster information and is informed details of next steps, which may include for return for revaccinations, weight checks, follow up by FVT. If not done previously, a Foster Contract must be signed and attached to the Person file in ShelterLuv.
* Feeding amounts and frequency are discussed to aid in weight gain. Health concerns, and ‘what to look for’, as well as what would be considered an ‘emergency’ are discussed.
* Handouts specific to the animal and its health/behavior are provided to the Foster Parent. Topic specific handouts/materials are maintained by the FC and these resources are provided based on the concerns of the animal and the skill level of the Foster Parent. Information provided is logged on the Approved Foster Parent spreadsheet.
* FC Contact information as well as Emergency Contact information is provided.
* Revax/weight checks are scheduled and conducted by the FVT. Communication between the FVT and the fosters is ongoing as needed for these appointments.
* ShelterLuv should be updated to show the location of the animal is now ‘Foster’. The status of the animal should also be reviewed and updated if needed.
* All supply pick up must be scheduled with the FC or FVT. Medical Rx food must be tracked if running low so more can be ordered. The Amazon Foster Wish List and a link to that is on the HSWM website, which is updated by the FC.

**B - Ongoing Care for Animals in Foster Homes**

* The Foster Parent is responsible to attend agreed upon scheduled appointments for follow up vaccines and rechecks for weight.
* If a Foster Parent cannot make a schedule medical appointment, the FVT will work with them to reschedule. Drop in or unscheduled visits by Foster Parents cannot be accommodated by the Admitting Animal Care staff.
* Kittens/Puppies are brought in (approximately every 2-4 weeks, depending on age/weight) for vaccine boosters (revax) and possibly deworming medication. The FVT will weigh, administer the vaccines and any medication given, update ShelterLuv and advise the Foster Parent. Revax dates are via email then confirmed and scheduled with the Foster Parent for follow up.
* Kittens who reach the weight of 2 lbs, will be put on the surgical schedule and the Foster Parent notified of the date and time for return via email.
* The FC is the main point of contact during business hours. The Director of Animal Care is the emergency contact during non-business hours. The Non-Emergency medical contact is the Foster Veterinary Tech. Contac Information is provided in the Foster Manual.

All First Time Foster Parents should be given information, specific to the needs of the animals they may be fostering, prior to taking an animal in their care. The Foster Manual will contain the following types of info:

* Housing and location for your new foster cat/kittens/dog/puppy
* Socialization information
* Stress
* Feeding and water
* Cleaning (linens, replacement, washing, etc.)
* Bottle / syringe feeding (kittens)
* Growth / weight gain (puppies/kittens, sick/medical foster)
* Medical needs
* Return for vaccines, weight checks, additional supplies, medication
* Litter box / housebreak training
* Behavior Information, specific to the issues/type of animal

If a Foster Parent has previous foster experience, but is taking more advanced needs animals, additional handout information and additional resource handouts will be provided, specific to the care of the animal(s).

In the event of any foster births or deaths in the foster home. The FC is responsible for

* Creating new animal records in ShelterLuv (births)
* Updating the SL record as an outcome (born in care/death)
* Making arrangements for newborns in care or DOA remains to be returned and disposed of.

Foster Parents who have completed Foster Level II criteria may process adoptions directly from their home of animals in their care.

**C - Return of Foster Animals to the Shelter**

* Unless extenuating circumstances, kittens should not be in foster care past 3 months of age.
* FC or FVT is responsible for communicating any return of animals to our care. Location of housing will be determined by Director of Animal Care or designate.
* The FC will explain prior to pick up, to the Foster Parent:
	+ HSWM can request the return of any animal in their care at any time
* Once kittens weigh 2 lbs surgery is scheduled. Return to foster or shelter is based on:
	+ available space in the shelter
	+ they are not sick, any behavior concerns
	+ availability of foster home
	+ Animal Care staff/Director of Animal Care and vet staff are notified of intakes for locations
* SOP’s AC-03 and AC-04 are referenced for age based vaccinations and booster/revax requirements
* If not already created in SL, Admitting Animal Care staff will take custody of the animal, create kennel card and folders, once the FVT has administered needed tests, vaccines and microchips.
* The FVT will schedule surgery dates and/or check with the Director of Animal Logistics and confirm a date for surgery. The foster will bring the animal in the day of surgery
* If returning to foster care, the Foster Parent is informed by FVT pick up times and post-surgical care via email prior to the day of surgery.
* Failure to make scheduled appointments or to return the animal(s) upon request may result in termination as a Foster Parent.
* HSWM may go to the home and retrieve the animal(s) if necessary

**Shelter Placement of Returned Foster Animals**

* ShelterLuv is updated to show the current location by the FC or FVT. The FC or FVT updates the status of the animal to ‘Welfare Assessment’*. (In the animal record, click "Edit Record". The location will then display with a dotted black line. Clicking the location will open a pop-up that contains the location fields. Click on these fields and choose the new location.)*
* The FC or FVT will put away any supplies that are returned by the Foster Parent.

**Adoption Directly from Foster Home**

If, when in a foster home, the Foster Parent or a family member/friend wants to adopt the animal:

* The Foster Parent notifies the Customer Service/Adoptions as soon as an adopter is interested in an animal in their care. (As directed in the Foster Manual)
* The FC will be notified by CS when an adoption is imminent from Foster.
* The potential adopter must complete an Adoption Survey (on line or in person) and submit to HSWM Adoptions department.
* The Customer Service team will do the adoption consultation, process the adoption and make arrangements for the transfer of care
* \*Foster Level II – may process and adoption for anyone except themselves. In which case they notify Adoptions to process.

**Reference Documents**

New Foster Parent document – on the drive

SOP AC-03 – Vaccines Dog

SOP AC-04 – Vaccines Cat

Foster Manual

**Revision History**

V1 - Created 1/9/20

V2 – Revised 12/7/20