



Camano Animal Shelter
160 Can Ku Road
Camano Island, WA 98282
360-387-1902

What is foster care?

Foster care is the temporary guardianship and care provided by a patient, kind, adult volunteer for orphaned or otherwise homeless animals. Foster care volunteers play a major role in saving the lives of these animals. It is important for young animals to learn to live in a home environment and to acclimate to human care. A socialized animal is more likely to get adopted.

What is the usual time commitment for foster care?

The time varies, but usually is between 2 weeks, up to 3 months. A shelter staff member or volunteer experienced in foster care can discuss the approximate length of care expected for an individual animal to be placed with you.

What types of animals are placed in foster care?

The animals in need of care are orphaned, unwanted, cats, puppies and kittens brought to our shelter. Sometimes animals (especially dogs) become stressed in the kennel environment and just need a foster home in the evenings to give them a break. Other animals may be too young to be adopted, may have an illness or injury and need to recover before they can be adopted, or they may need to be socialized and learn to live in a family environment.

Who can become a foster care volunteer (requirements and responsibilities)?

If you are patient, kind, concerned for the welfare of animals and at least 18 years in age, you can be a foster care volunteer. You must be allowed to have animals in your home and you will need to be able to transport the foster animal(s) to and from the shelter for periodic health exams including vaccinations and spaying or neutering. Animals that are healthy and available for adoption will need to be returned to the shelter during its open hours each day for viewing. Children can also help provide the love and care for the foster animal, but adults are responsible for all aspects of the foster care.

If you are physically able to regularly care and monitor the health of the foster animal, including providing a warm safe shelter, food and water, socialization, love and sometimes medications, then you can be a foster care volunteer. You will also need to keep the foster animal's environment clean and disinfected.

You will need to frequently monitor the animals in your care. A reasonable amount of time to be away from adult animals or weaned kittens is no more than eight hours. Young puppies need to be let outside at 4 hour intervals or sometimes more frequently. If medications are being given, they are often done twice daily and can be scheduled around work or other commitments. Foster care for motherless unweaned puppies or kittens requires around the clock feeding and cleaning, and is best done by people who do not work outside the home.

You will need to understand that a foster animal must be returned to the shelter for adoption. Returning an animal to the shelter after you have become attached is often emotionally stressful for the foster family.

How to prepare the home environment for the foster animal

Dogs in foster care should have a place they can go so they are separated from any other animals in the home if needed. Dogs with a contagious disease (i.e. kennel cough) or with a behavioral problem, should always be kept separate from a foster parents own animals.

Indoor enclosures:

Cats and kittens must be kept indoors at all times. You should try to “cat or dog proof” the foster animal room. Ideally, dogs should be placed in an appropriately sized crate while they are alone. Large wire crates are ideal for raising young kittens and portable wire enclosures are ideal for puppies. These enclosures will help keep the foster animals safe while preventing damage to furniture or drapes in the foster animal room. Remember that foster animals, especially young energetic ones, often chew on anything they find regardless of its value to you. They may also scratch furniture, drapes or anything else they can reach. Electric plugs and plants should be removed from the room if crates or portable enclosures are not being used. A bathroom can provide a safe haven and is easy to clean and disinfect for litters of kittens.

A cardboard or wooden box or crate with some soft bedding that can be easily washed and dried will be needed for a quiet place to rest and sleep. A larger box may be necessary if you have a mother and litter of active and growing kittens or puppies.

You will need at least two food dishes, one dish for dry food (if they are old enough); the other dish is for canned food. Each dish should be shallow and large enough to provide sufficient food and easy access for the animal. If you have a litter of puppies or kittens, it may be necessary to provide a very large dish or multiple dishes so each puppy or kitten has enough time to eat a complete meal. Dishes should be either disposable or easily cleaned and disinfected.

The animals will need access to clean fresh water at all times. Young animals can drown in water dishes, so you will need to make sure the water bowl is very shallow if young animals are present.

You will need to provide high quality, balanced pet food that is appropriate for the foster animal in your care. Puppy chow or kitten chow is required to provide a balanced diet for growing animals.

Kittens will need a litter box with litter. Adult cats instinctively will use a litter box and mother cats will teach their kitten to use a litter box. The litter box should be shallow so the kittens can get in and out easily.

The foster care room should be warm and draft free. If you are fostering very young puppies or kittens, supplemental heating such as a warm “hot water” bottle or a “snuggle safe” may be useful. You should never microwave hot water bottles as they can become much too hot and

result in burns. If supplemental heat sources are to be used, you should check with the shelter staff, and the animals should be able to move completely away from the heat source and rest in a cooler area if they desire to do so.

Instructions for caring for kittens that require bottle feeding is listed in the foster care manual.

Outdoor enclosures:

Dogs should be kept indoors most of the time as they are social animals that crave interaction with people. Abundant quality time spent inside the home interacting with the family is expected from you. You will need to ensure that the outdoor environment is safe from poisonous plants and other hazards. An outdoor enclosure used for short periods of time for play and exercise is acceptable provided it is securely fenced with a lockable gate. An outdoor enclosure should also provide a warm dry area to protect against weather conditions, along with soft bedding that can be easily washed and dried. When the foster dog is outside, water should be provided. Dogs should never be left outside unattended or in severe hot or cold weather conditions. Dogs should never be left outside when the foster caregiver is not at home.

Who provides food and medicines?

Food and litter, blankets and toys are available at CASA if needed.

The shelter will provide standard worming, vaccines, fecal examinations, FELV testing and the spay/neuter surgeries. Depending on the needs of an individual foster animal, medications may also be provided.

After the completion of foster care, what happens to the animal?

The animal is returned to the shelter to be adopted.

What happens if the animal becomes sick and needs veterinary care while in foster care?

In the event the animal becomes ill or is injured during regular shelter hours, telephone the shelter to make an appointment with Camano Vet. If after shelter hours and emergency care is required, it is the foster caregiver's responsibility to coordinate and pay for those services. The shelter is not financially able to pay for emergency veterinary care. Hopefully, if proper guidelines are followed regarding the care of the animals, the need for after hours emergency care will not be necessary.

What happens if you or one of your friends wants to adopt your foster animal?

You should check with the shelter staff regarding this procedure.

Is there anyone who should not become a foster care provider?

Pregnant women should not be foster care providers for cats or kittens.

You should not foster if you have a compromised immune system or other serious health problem that would make you susceptible to infections acquired from the environment, other people, or animals.

If you want to provide foster care but are concerned about your health status and your ability to safely interact with dogs or cats, please consult your physician.

What to do in an emergency

1. If the foster animal becomes seriously ill or is injured during shelter hours (9-4) contact the shelter and make arrangements for the Camano Vet to see the animal or to obtain other instructions.
2. If you have a family emergency that will require you to unexpectedly leave the area or that will prevent you from continuing foster care, you should contact the shelter to make arrangements to return the animal(s) to the shelter. In the event your emergency occurs after business hours, please have an adult contact person identified who can care for the foster animal(s) overnight, and then return the animal(s) to the shelter the next day.

Thank you for considering your time to help the most needy of animals. The extra love and attention from foster families truly does make a difference in the adoptability of our animals.