



PUPPY FOSTER MANUAL





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Section 1: Introduction

Thank you so much for your interest in fostering puppies for Cumberland County Animal Services (CCAS). By opening up your home to foster pets, you're not only helping to save lives, you're providing the individual attention and care these puppies desperately need.

Puppies are some of the most at-risk pets in shelters because they require intensive around-the-clock care, and many shelters don't have the resources or staff to provide that level of care. That's why the focus of our puppy foster program is to rescue puppies up to eight weeks of age from our shelter. Not only does fostering help puppies find forever families, it saves their lives and greatly decreases the number of dogs and puppies who are euthanized.

Foster homes are asked to provide care for the puppies and provide transportation to and from veterinary appointments as needed. Once the puppies are old enough and weigh enough to be spayed or neutered (typically 8 weeks of age), you'll bring them to CCAS to be fixed and then look for homes. Care for foster puppies includes a strict feeding schedule, cleaning, and lots of snuggling and play time.

Although fostering puppies is a lot of work, it is a very rewarding experience. By participating in this program, you are saving lives and helping puppies find families.

Frequently asked questions

What do foster families need to provide?

Foster families need to provide:

- A healthy and safe environment for their foster puppies
- Transportation to and from CCAS and all vet appointments as needed
- Socialization and cuddle time to help teach the puppies about positive family and pet relationships

How much time do I need to spend with the puppies?

As much time as you can. The more time you spend with your foster puppies, the more socialized they will be to people. The amount of time required for feeding will vary depending on the age of the puppies you are fostering. Very young puppies need to be bottle-fed every two to three hours, while older ones may be eating on their own and needing to be fed just 2 or 3 times a day.

Can I foster puppies even if I have a full-time job?

Yes. The foster coordinator will match you with puppies appropriate for your schedule. We will need you to be available to take the puppies to a vet appointment if they are sick.

How many puppies will I be fostering?

We like to have at least two puppies in a foster home so they can socialize with and learn from each other. Sometimes there are special circumstances in which a puppy goes to a foster home alone, but it's usually for a medical or behavioral reason. The decision is made by the foster coordinator.

How long will the puppies need to be in foster care?

Once a puppy is around 8 weeks of age, he/she can be spayed or neutered and then put up for adoption. If you are fostering a litter of puppies, we will try to keep at least two of the puppies together for the surgery, but we want to get everyone spayed or neutered and ready for adoption as early as possible.

What is my role before and after the puppies' spay/neuter surgery?

You'll be contacted by the foster coordinator to schedule spay or neuter surgery for your puppies. You will drop your puppies off at CCAS or a local veterinary hospital the morning of surgery. After the puppies' surgeries, you will pick them up and take them home to recover for a few days.

Will I need to give medicine to the foster puppies?

While we do our best to ensure that we are sending out healthy puppies to foster care, most illnesses have incubation periods, meaning that if the puppies picked up something prior to entering the shelter or at the shelter, symptoms can arise after you take them home. So, some puppies do not require any medicine, while others do. If your

foster puppies need medication, we will supply the medication and show you how to administer it before you take the animals home.

Can I let my foster puppies play with my personal pets?

Puppies are very susceptible to illness and can carry or catch dangerous ailments easily. For this reason, we require that foster parents isolate foster puppies with their own supplies for at least two weeks to try and ensure that the puppies are healthy prior to exposing them to your personal pets. We also advise that you consult with your veterinarian before fostering to ensure that all of your personal pets are healthy and up-to-date on all vaccines. If, for any reason, your personal pet becomes ill while you are fostering a CCAS pet, we cannot provide medical care for your personal pet. Never leave your personal pets unsupervised around the foster puppies.

Will any of my foster puppies die?

Sadly, young puppies are fragile, so it is always possible for them to become ill and pass away while in a foster home. This may be the hardest thing about fostering puppies. If it's something you don't want to encounter, then fostering puppies may not be the best fit for you. But please keep in mind that without foster homes, most of these puppies would not stand a chance of survival in a shelter. You're helping to save lives.

What if a foster puppy bites me?

If any of your foster pets bite you and break skin, causing you to bleed, you need to report the bite to the foster coordinator within 24 hours of when the bite occurred. The law requires that we report all bites. The teeth of the animal, not the nails, must have broken the skin. If you are unsure, then please report the bite anyway.

What if I want to adopt one of my foster puppies?

If you want to adopt a foster puppy, you will need to follow the regular adoption process once the puppy is old enough and spayed/neutered. When you bring your foster puppies back to CCAS they are not always immediately available for adoption. We have to ensure that their medical records are current and give them a brief examination to ensure they are healthy enough to be adopted. With that said, if you decide to adopt after you've returned the puppies to CCAS, please let the foster coordinator know right away because once the puppies are up for adoption, we cannot hold a puppy for anyone, including the foster parent.

What if I know someone who's interested in adopting one of my foster puppies?

If someone you know is interested in adopting one of your foster puppies, please contact the foster coordinator as soon as possible, because once the puppies are up for adoption, we cannot hold them for anyone. However, we do want to accommodate referrals from foster parents if we can.

Will it be difficult for me to say goodbye to my foster puppies?

Saying goodbye can be the most difficult part of fostering but remember that we always have more puppies who need wonderful foster homes. Keep in mind that by fostering these vulnerable pets, you are playing a crucial role in helping to save lives.

Section 2: Preparing for your foster puppies

Your foster puppies should be separated from all other animals in your household and kept in a small area, such as a spare room or bathroom, where they have access to their food, water and litter box. And because puppies under 5 weeks of age cannot fully regulate their body temperature, this area should also be in a warm, draft-free area. It may be a good idea to consider an area that is easy to clean up in terms of spills and potty accidents, which will happen since the puppies are learning. Please don't put the puppies in a garage or place that has outdoor access; those locations are not safe.

Supplies you'll need

CCAS will provide you with most of the supplies that you may need. However, we greatly appreciate any help that you can provide in supplying items for your foster puppies. Here's what you'll need to care for your foster puppies:

- At least one bowl for food per puppy and one for water: If you have a large litter, you will need to provide more than one bowl for water.
- A supply of puppy food (canned or dry, depending on the puppy's needs)
- New bottle for each bottle-fed litter and formula for bottle-feeding
- Heat source: Young puppies can't keep themselves warm, so you have to provide a heat source. The SnuggleSafe microwave heating disc is recommended. (available for \$25 at Chewy.com). Heating pads are OK but must be used with care to avoid burns.
- A soft place to sleep: Old towels or blankets work well.
- A secure sleeping area: A dog carrier with the door removed or a box laid on its side work well.
- Toys: Use puppy-safe toys that are easy to sanitize and clean. Puppies can play with them when you're not home.

Puppy-proofing your home

Foster puppies are small and cute, but just like children, they are also very curious. They will try to get into everything to explore, so you will need to puppy-proof your home. Here are some tips:

- Put away any small items that a puppy can swallow.
- Hide any breakable items, block electrical outlets and remove toxic plants.
- Remove all electrical cords or cover them so that puppies can't access them while unsupervised.
- If your puppies are staying in a bathroom, make sure that the toilet lid is closed at all times.
- Block off any spaces that the puppies could crawl into and become stuck.

Section 3: Scheduling appointments for your foster puppies

During the time that you foster puppies, you'll need to make a number of appointments — to pick up and drop off your puppies, take them in for vaccines and spay/neuter, and pick up supplies. Please note that all appointments, including your pickup and drop-off appointments, should be scheduled at least 24 hours in advance.

Picking up and returning your foster puppies

To pick up and return puppies, simply schedule an appointment with the foster coordinator. When you speak with the foster coordinator about picking up some puppies, he or she will assess what age of puppies will work best with your lifestyle.

Scheduling vaccines for your puppies

When you pick up your foster puppies, you will receive pertinent medical or behavioral information that you need for that group of puppies. You will receive an email when the puppies are due for vaccinations or deworming. Vaccination appointments are scheduled at least 24 hours in advance via a phone call or email to the foster coordinator. All vaccination appointments are at the CCAS shelter.

Scheduling vet appointments for your puppies

For non-emergency situations, please understand that our shelter veterinarian may not be available for same-day appointments. We ask that you schedule basic non-emergency appointments at least 24 hours in advance. You can call the foster coordinator to request a vet appointment Tues through Friday from 9 am to 5 pm. When you call to set up an appointment, the foster coordinator will discuss your availability and then contact the veterinarian to schedule the appointment.

Once the appointment is scheduled, the foster coordinator will call you with the appointment day and time. You will also be able to pick up any needed medications and special food from the foster coordinator during your appointment.

Picking up supplies

Supply pickup times are Mondays through Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm. Supplies are picked up at the CCAS Drop Off lobby.

Scheduling your puppies for spay/neuter

When your foster puppies are at least 8 weeks old, they can be spayed or neutered. The foster coordinator will contact you to schedule the surgery here at CCAS or an outside veterinary hospital.

Contact Information

Foster Coordinator (Brandi Hill) (910) 321-6828 (office)

Shelter Manager (Kristin Otero) (910) 321-6965 (office)

You will be provided an emergency contact number when you take your puppies home.

Section 4: Caring for your foster puppies

Because puppies are fragile, it is important for you to watch the behavior of your foster puppies closely and monitor their health daily. To keep track of their health, keep a journal of the puppies' weight, eating habits and overall health. You should weigh the puppies daily to ensure that they are growing and record the weight in the journal. Watch for signs of illness, including frequent crying, restlessness, weakness, coldness (hypothermia), diarrhea, dehydration, shallow or labored breathing, pale or blue mucous membranes. Notify the foster department immediately if a puppy is losing weight, is cold to the touch, or is having trouble breathing (either shallow or heavy breathing). Puppies are susceptible to illness, so foster puppies should not be exposed to public areas where there are a lot of dogs, such as pet supply stores or dog parks. Also, please do not let your foster puppies ride loose in a car. Use a carrier at all times to transport puppies to and from appointments.

Caring for bottle-fed puppies

Bottle-feeding neonatal puppies requires an around-the-clock commitment. Thank you so much for offering your time and attention to these fragile babies. And please remember that we are here to support you. Here's some general info about bottle-feeding.

Milk preparation. You can pre-mix enough formula to last for 24 hours of feeding, but it must be refrigerated at all times. Discard all unused and mixed formula after 24 hours. Only heat enough formula for each feeding and throw away any uneaten warmed formula after each feeding. Do not re-use warmed formula because harmful bacteria can develop in it.

Bottle-feeding tips. It is easier to feed your puppies when they are gently wrapped in a towel or blanket, instead of just using your hands. The towel or blanket is softer and warmer than your hands and being wrapped up makes the puppies feel safer as they eat. Be careful to position the puppy so that his belly is toward the floor. To decrease the chance of formula being aspirated into the lungs, puppies should not be fed on their backs.

Latching on. It may take a couple tries for a puppy to latch on to the bottle nipple. Just be patient; sometimes puppies need some encouragement to eat. Make sure that the nipple you are using on the bottle has an adequate flow of milk. When the nipple tip is punctured with a sterile needle, formula should drip out (one drop at a time, not a stream) when the bottle is inverted 180 degrees. Do not hesitate to call the foster department if you need any help or assistance with feeding your puppies. We are always here for you, ready to answer any questions that you may have.

Aspiration. If liquid bubbles out through the puppy's nose or he starts coughing, he may have gotten formula in his lungs. Pat the puppy very gently on the back to elicit a cough or sneeze, or hold him in an inverted position, tail towards the ceiling and head

towards the floor, for a moment to remove the formula from his lungs. Please notify the foster department if this happens so we can determine if antibiotics or a vet visit is needed.

Peeing and pooping. Puppies less than 2 weeks of age need help with elimination, so if there isn't a mother to care for them you'll need to stimulate your puppies to pee and poop. After you feed them, wipe each puppy's back end with a baby wipe or warm wet cotton ball. Remember to do this every time you feed them.

Signs of illness. Watch for signs of illness, including frequent crying, restlessness, weakness, coldness (hypothermia), diarrhea, dehydration, shallow or labored breathing, pale or blue mucous membranes. Notify the foster department immediately if a puppy is losing weight, is cold to the touch, or is having trouble breathing (either shallow or heavy breathing).

Keeping puppies warm. When puppies are infants (less than two weeks old), they can be kept in small carriers or playpens that can easily be covered by a blanket to maintain heat and reduce draftiness. As they grow and become more mobile, they will need more space to roam and play. Also, don't forget that puppies less than 5 weeks cannot fully regulate their body temperatures, so please keep a SnuggleSafe disc warm and with them at all times. Because puppies' skin is very sensitive and prone to thermal burns, the warming disc must be covered by a blanket and puppy pad that the puppies cannot burrow under. Be very careful if you use a heating pad, as puppies can easily be burned if it is too hot.

Weighing. Please weigh the puppies before and after each feeding to ensure that they are growing and record the weights for your reference.

How to bottle-feed puppies

Puppies will bottle-feed every two to four hours, depending on their age. Steps for bottle-feeding a puppy:

1. Warm the formula: Place the bottle in a bowl of hot water for a few minutes. Before feeding the puppies, always test the temperature of the formula by placing a few drops on your inner wrist to be sure it is not too hot. It should be slightly warmer than your body temperature.
2. Ensure that your foster puppy is warm before offering food. Do not attempt to feed a puppy who is chilled* because it can have serious health consequences.
3. Wrap the puppy in a towel or blanket and position him so that his belly is toward the floor. Puppies should not be fed on their backs or in an upright position.
4. Turn the bottle upside down and allow a drop of formula to come out. Place the bottle nipple in the puppy's mouth and gently move it back and forth, holding the bottle at a 45-degree angle to keep air from getting into the puppy's stomach. This movement should encourage the puppy to start eating. If at first you don't succeed, wait a few minutes and try again. Usually the puppy will latch on and begin to suckle.

If the bottle appears to be collapsing, gently remove the nipple from the puppy's mouth and let more air return to the bottle.

5. Weigh each puppy before and after feeding and record the weights in your journal.

* A puppy's ideal body temperature is 100 to 102 degrees. If a puppy feels cold to the touch, contact the foster coordinator immediately. A puppy who is cold and unresponsive should be warmed right away. Place the puppy on an approved heating pad safely wrapped in two or three layers of towels. Turn the puppy side to side every 5 minutes. To stimulate blood flow, you may, ever so gently, massage the puppy with hand-rubbing.

Weaning puppies

During the third week, begin offering the puppies a dish of water. The dish should be one that isn't too large and cannot be tipped over, since the pups may attempt to climb into it instead of drinking from it.

Then, introduce the puppies to gruel. Make a gruel by blending a good quality dry puppy food with commercial milk replacer. Put the gruel (warmed up and not too thick) in a low pan. As the puppies discover how to lap up the gruel, you can gradually thicken the mixture. Feed gruel 4 times a day. By week 6, most puppies can eat a diet of dry puppy food. Don't forget to give them a constant supply of fresh water. It is important to continue weighing your foster puppies every day, after each feeding, to ensure that they are always gaining weight.

Caring for independent eaters

By six to seven weeks old, your puppies should be independent eaters. Dry food should be their primary source of food but you may offer wet food as well to encourage eating and maximize growth. Replace the water in their water dish twice a day and wipe out the dish if needed.

During this stage, your daily responsibilities include socializing the puppies and exposing them to new situations and environments. It's important to try and keep all experiences positive for the puppies, so give them lots of treats and toys as they learn about new sounds, smells, places and faces. See [Section 7](#) for more tips on how to successfully socialize your puppies.

As always, watch the behavior of your puppies and monitor their health daily. Continue to keep a record of each foster puppy's weight, appetite, energy level and overall health. Weigh the puppies once a day, preferably around the same time, to minimize the variables when tracking the puppies' growth. Look over each puppy every day for physical changes or potential medical problems.

At this stage, play with the puppies several times a day with interactive toys. Play time provides stimulation, encourages socialization and releases excess energy. Try a variety of toys (balls, squeaky toys, etc.) to see which ones your foster puppies like. Dog toys don't have to be fancy or expensive, but they should be durable and large enough to not be swallowed by the puppy.

Don't leave your foster puppies alone with any toys that could be easily ingested or cause harm to them. Examples are rope toys, or small balls. Also, it may seem cute, but discourage your foster puppies from play-biting your hands and feet. This is something that adopters may not find desirable.

Cleaning up between litters

Once you've returned your group of puppies to CCAS for adoption, you must sanitize your fostering room or area before you can take home a new batch of puppies. Remove anything the puppies touched and clean it with a weak bleach solution, consisting of one-part bleach to 32 parts cold water.

If you have items that can be washed in the dishwasher, please do so since the heat will disinfect those items. Plastic or metal items that need to be sterilized, such as food dishes or plastic toys, should be soaked in the bleach solution for 10 minutes and then rinsed off. Wash all bedding with bleach and hot water and throw away any toys that cannot be sterilized. Being conscientious about sterilization will help ensure that your next foster group will not catch any illnesses from the previous group of puppies.

Section 5: Fostering moms and puppies

Mother dogs need to be in a calm environment so that they can be stress-free and feel like they are keeping their puppies safe. Sometimes, stress can cause a mother dog to become aggressive or to not care for her babies properly. With that in mind, choose a private and quiet room of your home, away from the daily activities of your family, in which to situate the mother dog and her puppies.

It's also important that they be kept away from other pets in the home. Other pets can be perceived as a threat by the mother dog and cause her to act aggressively to protect her young. If you have children and an active home, it may be best to foster when the puppies are four weeks or older. Sometimes mother dogs will behave less defensively if their puppies are older.

Bringing everyone home

Set up your fostering room before you bring the mother dog and her puppies home. You should provide a couple of different safe places where she can care for her puppies. A dark area equipped with a whelping box is ideal.

A whelping box is a box that is large enough for the mother dog to lie on her side slightly away from her puppies with all of the puppies in the box with her. The box should have

sides high enough to prevent the puppies from wandering away, but low enough so it's easy for the mother dog to come and go as she needs to. Lining the bottom of the box with puppy pads topped with newspapers will help absorb moisture. You can place an easy-to-clean blanket on top of the absorbent materials to give the mother dog and puppies a soft place to lie on. Please keep all these materials dry so that the puppies are not chilled by dampness. Do not place straw, hay or shavings in the area where the mother and puppies are kept. Plastic baby pools make great whelping boxes.

When you bring your foster puppies and their mom home, put them all in the fostering room and close the door, allowing the mom to explore on her own. Give her a couple of hours before you enter her room so she can settle in.

Mom's care of her puppies

The momma dog should take care of her puppies by herself for at least three to four weeks before she starts the weaning process for her babies. Each momma dog that you foster will be slightly different in her level of attentiveness, but there are three basic stages of nursing (see below). If for any reason your momma dog is not performing one of the listed functions, please notify the foster coordinator right away to evaluate whether the mom has a medical concern that we need to address.

Puppies are born blind, but they can feel their mother's heat and seek her out to begin nursing within two hours of being born. Mother dogs should be lying on their sides to ensure that their puppies can find the nipples for nursing. Here are three stages of nursing:

- One to two weeks old: The mother dog initiates nursing by licking her puppies to wake them up and curling her body around them. After she wakes all of her babies, the puppies search for a short time period and then quickly latch on.
- Two to four weeks old: The puppies' eyes and ears begin to function, and they start to explore beyond the nesting area. This is when the puppies start interacting with their mother. At this age, the puppies start to initiate some of the nursing and momma should comply by lying in the nursing position.
- Five to seven weeks old: The puppies begin weaning and, in turn, the mother dog no longer initiates any nursing. If the mother dog still allows the puppies to nurse, it will be initiated by the puppies and can be lateral or upright nursing.

Occasionally, mom dogs develop mastitis when their puppies stop nursing and begin to eat on their own. Mastitis occurs when the mammary glands inflame and harden, creating a very painful infection for the mother dog and causing symptoms such as a fever and listlessness. If you think your mother dog may have mastitis, call the foster coordinator on the next business day. This is not an emergency condition.

The mother dog will groom and lick her babies frequently for the first two to four weeks. She will stimulate her puppies to pee and poop and will generally consume the fecal matter and urine. As the babies become more mobile, they will start to leave the nest

and deposit urine and feces nearby. Mom will usually clean up their messes, but some moms are more attentive than others, so be prepared for some clean up!

To ensure that the mother dog has enough to eat, give her access to dry puppy food at all times. Food intake for a nursing mother can be two to four times the amount eaten by a dog who's not nursing.

When fostering a momma dog, it is very important to observe her behavior daily and watch her interactions with her puppies to spot any problems. Unfortunately, puppies can pass away because of inadequate maternal care. This can happen for many different reasons, some of which are beyond our control.

Problem behaviors in momma dogs

Here are some details about problem behaviors in momma dogs and what you can do about them.

Maternal neglect. Sometimes a mother dog stops providing care to one or all of her puppies. The neglect may be because of a birth defect or weakness in the puppy; she may just be trying to follow nature's course, focusing her attention on the stronger puppies. Neglect may also happen because she is inexperienced or she's in a stressful environment. Either way, that's why it's so important to make daily observations to ensure that she is caring for her babies. If she will let you handle the puppies, you should weigh each puppy once a day to ensure that they are gaining weight. If you notice that she is spending all of her time away from the puppies, is not cleaning or nursing them frequently, or doesn't respond to their cries, please call the foster coordinator right away.

Maternal aggression toward other animals. Aggressive behavior directed at other animals is common and expected from mother dogs because they have a maternal instinct to protect their young at all times. With that in mind, please do not try to introduce her to the other animals in your home. As mentioned above, the mom dog and her puppies should have a quiet room of their own away from all other pets so that she and her babies can always feel safe. If she has seen another animal and becomes stressed or aggressive, it is very important to leave her alone and not try to comfort her. Give her 20 minutes or so to calm down and then check on her.

Maternal aggression toward people. Sometimes mother dogs will act aggressively toward people. These behaviors may include growling, lunging or even biting. Again, the mother is merely trying to protect her young. We evaluate mom dogs for these behaviors before sending them into foster homes, but sometimes the behaviors develop later. If you have a mother exhibiting these behaviors, do not try to "correct" the behavior with any type of punishment. She is only acting out of instinct to protect her babies and you could cause her aggressive behavior to escalate.

Contact the foster coordinator at the first sign of any of the above behaviors so we can assess the situation and decide on the safest option for momma and her babies.

Separating puppies and moms

If all of your foster animals, mom included, are healthy and friendly, we have no reason to separate mom from puppies before they are eight weeks old. But there are a few medical or behavioral reasons for separating them earlier than eight weeks:

- As mentioned above, if the mother dog is showing signs of maternal neglect and is no longer caring for her puppies, the foster coordinator may decide to separate her from her puppies.
- If the mother dog is semi-feral or very undersocialized, we may decide to separate the puppies once they are eating on their own consistently and no longer need to nurse (around three to five weeks old). Separating them would prevent the puppies from learning feral behaviors from their mother and help them to become socialized, which increases their chances of finding forever homes.
- If there is a medical concern about the mom or babies, a veterinarian could make the decision to separate the puppies from the mother dog.

The puppies' best chance at survival is to stay with their mom. Please do not separate your foster puppies from their mom for any reason, or attempt to supplement the mother's milk with formula, without consulting the foster coordinator.

Section 6: Medical and emergency protocols

When you pick up your foster puppies, you will receive a medical information sheet that specifies the dates that vaccines are due and any medications that your puppies are taking. You are responsible for scheduling appointments for your puppies' vaccines on or around the due dates indicated. Vaccines and dewormers are given starting at four weeks old and every two weeks afterward until they are adopted. To schedule appointments for vaccines, call or email the foster coordinator.

If you are fostering a group of puppies on medications, please ensure that your puppies get all prescribed doses. Do not end medication early for any reason. If any of your foster puppies have not responded to medications after five days (or in the time instructed by a veterinarian), please contact the foster coordinator.

Veterinary care

CCAS provides all medical care for our foster animals at our shelter or through approved veterinary hospitals. Because we are ultimately responsible for your foster animals' well-being, our staff must authorize any and all treatment for foster animals at our approved veterinary partners.

If your foster puppies need to go to the veterinarian, please notify the foster coordinator by phone. The foster coordinator will schedule the appointment. For non-emergency situations, please understand that our shelter veterinarian may not be available for same-day appointments. We ask that you schedule basic non-emergency appointments at least 24 hours in advance.

Remember, foster parents will be responsible for payment of any medical care if they take their foster animal to a veterinarian without authorization from the foster coordinator or adoptions manager.

Signs of illness and what to do next

Puppies do a good job of masking when they don't feel well, so determining if a foster puppy is under the weather will require diligent observation of the puppies' daily activity and appetite levels. Be aware that puppies act differently at different ages. For example, a healthy two-week-old puppy will sleep often and get up only to nurse, whereas a healthy six-week-old puppy should have a lot of energy. If you have any questions about the health of your foster puppies, please contact the foster coordinator, who will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Eye discharge. It is normal for puppies to have some discharge from their eyes when they wake up. But if a puppy has yellow or green discharge or swelling around the eyes (making it hard for him to open his eyes), or the third eyelid is showing, you need to contact the foster coordinator to schedule an examination by our veterinarian.

Sneezing and nasal discharge. Occasional sneezing is common in puppies. If the sneezing becomes more frequent, examine the discharge coming from the sneeze. If the discharge is clear, the infection is probably viral, and medication may not be necessary. But it is important to monitor the puppies in case the problem becomes worse. If the discharge becomes colored, contact the foster coordinator to schedule a vet appointment because the puppies may have a bacterial infection. Be sure to monitor the puppies' breathing. If they start to breathe with an open mouth or wheeze, call the foster coordinator immediately. Also, once you notice nasal discharge, monitor the puppies' eating habits more closely to ensure that they are still eating. And, of course, continue to weigh them daily.

Loss of appetite. Your foster puppies may be stressed after arriving in your home, and stress can cause lack of appetite. Unwillingness to eat in puppies can be very serious, so pay close attention to whether the puppies are eating. Puppies should eat on a four-to eight-hour schedule, depending on their age. If a puppy under four weeks old misses two meals or a puppy over four weeks of age goes more than 12 hours without eating, the foster coordinator should be called. Also, if a puppy less than eight weeks old does not urinate for over 12 hours, call the coordinator. With a puppy who is not eating, please do not change the puppy's diet without contacting the foster coordinator. An abrupt change in diet can cause diarrhea, which will lead to dehydration.

Lethargy. The activity level of your puppies will vary with each puppy in your litter and with age. Sick puppies may have lower energy levels and just want to sit in your lap or on the floor and not move much or play. If you notice a drop in your foster puppies' energy level, please contact the foster coordinator to make a medical appointment. If a puppy cannot be roused or seems weak and unable to stand, this is an emergency, so you'll need to contact the foster coordinator immediately. Note: Some undersocialized puppies will move less because they are frightened. If you have a fearful group of puppies, it can be more difficult to determine if their energy levels are low. But tracking all behaviors in your journal will help you decide whether you should call the foster coordinator to schedule a vet appointment.

Dehydration. Dehydration is usually associated with diarrhea, vomiting and/or loss of appetite. To test for dehydration, gently pinch the puppy's skin around the scruff area. If the skin stays tented, the puppy is dehydrated. Please call the foster coordinator immediately as dehydration can be fatal in puppies.

Vomiting. If a foster puppy has thrown up two or more times in one day, please notify the foster coordinator. If there is bile or blood in the vomit, please call right away.

Diarrhea. In puppies, it can be tricky to determine if diarrhea is a problem. Soft stool diarrhea, most likely caused by stress, is normal for the first two days after you take puppies home. Puppies who are nursing tend to have loose stool, but if it is watery or very large in volume, that's a concern. By the time puppies are five weeks old and are eating consistently on their own, they should have firm, normal stool. If your foster puppies have liquid stool, please contact the foster coordinator so that a vet appointment can be scheduled; the puppies may need medication. Remember that diarrhea will dehydrate your puppies, so be proactive about contacting the foster department if you notice any diarrhea. If a puppy has bloody or mucoid diarrhea, please contact the foster coordinator immediately.

Hair loss. Please contact the foster department if you notice any hair loss on your foster puppies. It is normal for dogs to have slightly thinner fur around the lips, eyelids and in front of the ears, but clumpy patches of hair loss or thinning hair can indicate ringworm, mange, or dermatitis. It is important to check your foster puppies' coats every day.

Serious puppy ailments

Puppies are susceptible to these illnesses:

- Parvovirus: Symptoms include unwillingness to eat, vomiting, diarrhea and/or dehydration. The diarrhea often is bloody.
- Distemper virus: Symptoms include neurologic signs such as twitching or seizures or respiratory signs such as sneezing and coughing. Puppies become very sick very quickly.
- Hypoglycemia: Low blood sugar. Orphaned puppies are particularly susceptible. Signs are lack of strength, lethargy, muscle twitching (sometimes with

convulsions). If a puppy shows signs of hypoglycemia, place a few drops of corn syrup under his tongue and on the gums

If a puppy is displaying any combination of the symptoms listed above, please contact the foster coordinator immediately. These ailments can be fatal if left untreated.

Criteria for emergencies

What constitutes a medical emergency in a puppy? A good rule of thumb is any situation in which you would call 911 for a person. Here are some specific symptoms that could indicate an emergency:

- Not breathing or labored breathing
- Symptoms of parvo or distemper (see “Serious Puppy Ailments” above)
- Signs of extreme dehydration: dry gums, weakness, vomiting, not urinating, skin tenting (when the skin is pulled up, it stays there)
- Abnormal lethargy or unable to stand
- Unconsciousness or unable to wake up
- Cold to the touch
- Broken bones
- Any trauma: hit by a car, dropped, stepped on
- A large wound or profuse bleeding that doesn’t stop when pressure is applied
- Loss of appetite for more than 12 hours

If a foster puppy displays any of these symptoms, please call the foster coordinator immediately. If the animal is vomiting or has diarrhea, but is still active, eating and drinking, you can probably wait until the next day to get help. However, if the animal is lethargic and shows no interest in food or water, call the foster coordinator.

If you think your foster pet may incur permanent damage or pass away if not seen by a veterinarian immediately, please proceed to the approved emergency clinic and start the emergency phone chain on the way.

Section 7: Socializing and instilling good behaviors in puppies

Your goal as a foster parent is to prepare your foster puppies for forever homes. While a big part of that is helping the puppies to grow and be healthy, another component is helping them develop the good habits that will make them wonderful companions for their adopters.

In your role of dog parent, you will have the challenge of safely socializing the pups to other canines and the rest of the world. They have much to learn – things that mom would normally teach them.

Beginning Housetraining (after puppies are weaned)

Puppies have tiny bladders. You have to make sure you are giving your puppy ample opportunity to do the right thing.

A good guide is that dogs can control their bladders for the number of hours corresponding to their age in months up to about nine months to a year. Never forget that all puppies are individuals and the timing will differ for each.

Monitor daily events and your puppy's individual habits when setting up a schedule. With very young puppies, you should expect to take the puppy out:

- First thing in the morning
- Last thing at night
- After playing
- After spending time in a crate
- Upon waking up from a nap
- After chewing a toy or bone
- After eating
- After drinking

This could have you running for the backyard a dozen times or more in a 24-hour period. If you work, make some kind of arrangement to keep that schedule. The quicker you convey the idea that there is an approved place to potty and places that are off limits, the easier it will be for the puppy to acclimate to a new home.

Discipline

One of your goals as a foster parent is to help prepare your foster puppies for living successfully in a home. So, we ask that you help your foster puppies to develop good habits and skills through the use of positive reinforcement, which builds a bond of trust between you and your foster pets. The basic idea is to reward desirable behaviors and ignore unwanted behaviors.

You must not punish the puppies for behavior that you find undesirable because punishment is ineffective at eliminating the behavior. If a puppy is doing something undesirable, distract him or her before the behavior occurs. It is also important for every human in the foster home to stick to the rules established for your foster pets, which will help them to learn faster.

Play time

Play time is a very important part of puppy development. It is crucial for young puppies to have other puppies to wrestle with in order to develop appropriate play skills and be properly socialized with other puppies. Puppies also need toys to play with so that they can get physical exercise and mental stimulation. There are two types of toys that help with puppy development:

- Solo toys are things the puppies can play with when you aren't there. These toys should be easy to clean and impossible for the puppies to consume. Examples are tennis balls, Nylabone chew toys, etc.
- Interactive toys are things that you use to engage the puppies in play, such as rope toys. Don't leave puppies alone with these toys, since they can easily strangle or be ingested by the puppies.

During play time, it is always important to discourage puppies from biting your hands and feet. It may seem cute, but we want to avoid teaching puppies a habit that adopters may find undesirable.

Socializing and handling

Introducing your foster puppies to new things and new experiences will also help prepare them for living happily in forever homes. Follow these rules to positively expose your puppies to new people, environments and noises:

- **New people:** Introducing your foster animals to new people will help them become well-adjusted adult dogs. Monitor all interactions with new people, though, to ensure that they are positive, not scary, experiences for the puppies. Have new people give gentle pets and treats to the puppies and interact with them using fun toys. If children are visiting, they must always be supervised until they are old enough to understand how to gently interact with a puppy.
- **New environments:** It will help the puppies' adjustment into adopters' homes if you can allow your puppies to experience different parts of your home. Whenever you introduce the puppies to a new space, provide lots of treats and play with interactive toys so that the puppies associate the new space with their favorite things. Keep the exploratory sessions brief so you don't overwhelm your puppies and return them to their living space if they do seem overwhelmed or scared.
- **New noises:** It is beneficial to expose puppies to a variety of normal household noises but, again, try to do it in a positive way. The key is to introduce different noises gradually. For example, start by keeping a radio on low volume and gradually increase the volume over a few days. Another example: Run the vacuum in another room at first, with your puppies at a safe distance. Then, over the course of a few days, move the vacuum noise closer to their room. If another person plays with the puppies while you make the noise, it may help alleviate any stress or fear that they may feel. Some puppies are naturally fearful, so just go even slower with the timid ones.

Another thing you can work on with your foster puppies is getting them comfortable with being in a dog carrier. When you are not using the carrier for transportation, leave the

carrier (with the door removed or securely propped open) in your foster puppies' room. Put toys, treats and a soft blanket in the carrier, to encourage the puppies to go in and spend time there.

Appendix

Guiding your foster puppies' behavior

Puppies need to be socialized to interact appropriately with both humans and other dogs. When you socialize puppies to humans, you're helping to create happy, healthy adult dogs who will make wonderful pets. That's why it's so important to handle, talk to and play with your foster puppies.

Well-socialized mother dogs are more likely to have well-socialized puppies. The puppies will pick up on whether their mother is calm or fearful around people. If there is no mother dog, puppies can still learn from their litter mates. Play helps to increase social, coordination and learning skills.

A healthy mother-puppy relationship

A mother's direct interaction with her puppies includes nuzzling and licking them to awaken them and to stimulate urination and defecation.

Initially, the puppy's activities are restricted to crawling along the mother's body and nuzzling against her to locate a nipple, often in competition with litter mates. The puppies suckle, lie still by the mother, move around near her and call out to her.

A call frequently given by the puppies is the cry associated with distress. It is given when a puppy awakens and is hungry, when a puppy's movement is restricted (e.g., the puppy is trapped under the mother) or he becomes isolated and cold. The mother should answer the call.

The puppies may initially spend about eight hours a day suckling, but this activity decreases as they grow older.

As the puppies become older and more mobile, they become increasingly responsible for approaching the mother and initiating suckling. In the later stages of the weaning period (at about seven weeks old), the puppies become almost wholly responsible for initiating suckling. The mother may actively impede these efforts by blocking access to her nipples or by removing herself from the puppies' proximity.

If you notice that the mother dog is neglecting her puppies inappropriately or showing any other negative behaviors mentioned in this manual, please contact the foster coordinator.

Puppy development and what you can do

Time and effort are required to properly socialize puppies. In fact, when they're between four and twelve weeks old, daily socialization sessions are important in shaping the puppy's personality and emotional growth.

You'll want your foster puppies to become familiar with having their paws touched (front and back), their mouths opened, and their ears touched. Combining this type of handling with regular grooming sessions and body massages helps to prevent skin sensitivity or aversion to touch. And acquainting puppies with a variety of sights, sounds and textures will help them to grow into well-socialized adult dogs. Listed below are some characteristics of puppies at different stages and the steps you can take to help socialize them.

Newborn

Appearance: Newborn puppies should be pink, firm, plump and generally healthy-looking.

Temperature: Normal rectal temperature for newborns is 95- to 99-degrees Fahrenheit. Puppies should be kept in an environment between 85 - 90 degrees F for the first 4 or 5 days of life.

Ears: Ear canals open between 5 and 8 days.

Eyes: Closed, but they can still respond to bright light with a blink reflex.

Newborn puppies can get caught up in soft cloth and can die if they can't breathe. After they are able to lift their heads and move around a bit, you can use a towel, sheet or blanket. Until then, use a flat towel layered over newspaper for bedding.

1 to 2 weeks

Temperature: Normal rectal temperature has gradually increased to 97 -100 degrees F.

Eyes: Open at approximately 11-15 days.

Muscles: Puppies will start to crawl.

What you can do: You can engage in gentle handling and cuddling at this point. These sessions should be very short (one to two minutes), and great care should be taken in the handling process. Rub the hair coat gently with your hands, and gently finger the webbing in between the toes. Rub the ears and muzzle.

2 to 3 weeks

Eyes: Vision is initially poor, even after the eyes have opened, but continues to develop until three to four weeks of age. If the eyes fail to open and the lids look sticky, wipe the lids very gently with dampened cotton lightly smeared with a little petroleum jelly to ease their opening. The eyelids should never be pulled apart. If a puppy's eyelids still haven't opened by 14 days, contact the foster coordinator..

Muscles: Puppies are starting to sit up and stand.

Teeth: Deciduous incisors start to appear, followed by deciduous canines.

What you can do:

- Provide the puppies with a whelping box area for sleeping and another area, away from the sleeping and feeding area.

- Provide five minutes of handling exercises. Gently roll the puppy over on her back for 5-10 seconds, and then draw her close to you, stroking and cuddling her. Never do this while actively feeding the puppy. Be careful not to startle the puppy with sudden movements or loud sounds.
- Start grooming: Softly and gently brush the puppy's coat with a few strokes, touch the ears and mouth, and pretend to clip the nails by adding gentle pressure to the puppy's paws.

3 to 4 weeks

Eyes and ears: Vision and hearing are normal. Blink response disappears with the development of accurate pupil control. The puppy is now able to use visual clues to locate and approach the mother. The eyes should be completely open by 17 days.

Muscles: By 21 days, puppies can walk, but are still clumsy.

Teeth: The front teeth, canines and incisors will come in first, followed by the back teeth.

What you can do:

- At about four weeks old, the puppies will begin to eliminate on their own, and mom will stop cleaning up after them. The puppies will start to explore their immediate environment. Provide safe, simple toys to help stimulate them.
- The puppies can be introduced to other people at this time, but this interaction should be carefully controlled. The interaction should be limited to five minutes of time spent in gentle play and cuddling.
- As the main caregiver, you should continue the grooming and handling exercises: holding, cuddling and stroking each puppy's body, including ears, tail and muzzle.

4 to 5 weeks

Temperature: Puppies are able to maintain their own body temperature within the normal range (100 – 102 degrees F).

Eyes and ears: Vision is markedly improved. Puppies start to bark!

Muscles: Puppies are walking normally and playing with each other.

What you can do: Continue the handling and socialization exercises.

5 to 8 weeks of age

Temperature: Normal range is 100.5 degrees to 102.5 degrees F.

Teeth: Puppies have an entire set of deciduous teeth by five to six weeks of age.

What you can do:

- The puppies are totally dependent on the environment you provide to stimulate and develop them. Play with objects increases around seven to eight weeks of age, so continue to add appropriate toys to the puppies' environment.
- Introduce the puppies to as many different people as possible — people of different shapes, sizes, colors, sexes and ages. Encourage the puppies to allow individual handling by different people: men, women and supervised children. Keep the visits short.

- Expose the puppies to mild sounds, different areas and surfaces, allowing them to investigate.
- As the main caregiver, you should continue the handling and grooming exercises. Start clipping toenails.
- If you choose to, you can introduce the puppies to other animals while their mother is not around. Keep the visits very short and always supervise them. These visits should be calm and pleasant; a traumatic incident at this stage could have a lasting effect on the puppies. Keep in mind that puppies can carry diseases that can be transmitted to other animals, and vice versa.

8 weeks or older

What you can do:

- Protect the puppies from unpleasant or negative experiences. The puppies' environment should be designed to help them develop a sense of security.
- Continue to introduce the puppies to as many different people as possible.
- Continue the handling and grooming exercises.
- At this stage, you can gradually introduce some more intrusive noises, such as whistles blowing, hands clapping, bells jingling and the vacuum cleaner running. Play with the puppies as you introduce the noise in the background.