

Humane Society of West Michigan Canine Foster Manual



Table of Contents

Contacts and Locations	3
Protocols and Procedures	
A. Foster Agreement	4
B. Emergency Protocol	5
C. Vacation/Going Out Of Town	6
D. Foster Supply Pickup	6
E. Foster Animal Quarantine	7
F. Bites	7
Preparing for your Foster Dog	
A. Supplies	8
B. Setting Up Space to Foster	9
C. Bringing your Foster(s) home	9
Daily Care	
A. Feeding	11
B. Cleaning and Potty Training	11
C. Monitoring	12
D. Playtime and Enrichment	12
Behavior	
A. Leash and Dog Reactivity	13
B. Food or Toy Possessiveness	14
C. Mouthing, Jumping, and Chewing	14
D. Training and Socializing Puppies	15
E. Crate Training	17
Neonatal Care	
A. Supplies	18
B. Set Up	18
C. Bottle Feeding	19
D. Stimulation	22
E. Weight Tracking and Weaning	22
Veterinary and Medical Care	
A. Routine Medical Care	24
B. Surgery Steps	25
C. Post-Operative Care	28
D. Medical Emergency Protocol	29
E. Common Non-Emergency Medical Concerns	30
Medical Informational Sheets	
a. Canine Parvovirus, a.k.a “Parvo”	31
b. Diarrhea in Shelter Animals	33
c. Upper Respiratory Infection in Shelter Animals	35
d. Conjunctivitis in Shelter Animals	37
e. Ear Infections vs Ear Mites	38
f. How to Administer Medications	40
Adoption Process from Foster to Forever Home	43

Contacts

Foster Coordinator

Lindsey Frontjes

lfrontjes@hswestmi.org

Contact for: Foster animal/supply pickups and drop offs, general foster or behavior questions, adoption questions

Foster Veterinary Technician

Sabrina Anderson

sanderson@hswestmi.org

Contact for: Medical questions/concerns, surgery scheduling, vaccine/medical appointment scheduling, medical supplies

Foster Facebook Group

Join our community of fellow fosters for a network of support, as well as a place to share your new foster pet and your fostering experience with other like-minded people!

facebook.com/groups/HSWMFoster

Locations

Foster Doors - When you arrive please pull around to the back of the HSWM facility, the parking lot is to the left. You will see the double set of foster doors (pictured here) with a designated parking space. These doors are to the right of our garage. You will also see our supply pick and return cabinets in front.



When to go here: Medical appointments (vaccines, exams, ect.) with the Foster Veterinary Technician,. Also foster animal pick up/drop off, and foster supply pick up/drop offs.

Admitting Doors - These doors are to the left of our Main Entrance, on the side of the building.

When to go here: Surgery drop off/pick ups, or medical appointments to see Vet Staff (this will be specified at the making of your appointment).

Protocols and Procedures

Foster Agreement

1. I understand that I am the primary caretaker. I will provide adequate food, water, social interaction, potty breaks, litter cleaning, and essential daily needs.
2. I agree that I will not relinquish custody of the foster pet to anyone except HSWM, even temporarily.
3. I understand that my foster pet may cry, whine, be fearful, be shy, be sick, be depressed, have had past trauma or abuse, not know commands, may chew or scratch my belongings, and needs my love and compassion.
4. I understand foster pets are only temporarily in my care and remain the property of HSWM and are subject to relinquishment at any time. Failure to return a Foster Pet will result in termination as a foster and a “do not adopt” status and/or legal action.
5. I agree to follow HSWM Emergency Contact Protocol immediately, when a foster pet is experiencing a medical/health emergency. I understand that my foster pet may need to be brought to HSWM for medical evaluation as soon as possible. I understand a decision will then be made by HSWM if the animal must stay at the shelter or return to the foster home.
6. I understand private veterinary costs incurred by the foster parent WILL NOT be reimbursed by HSWM.
7. I understand that HSWM WILL NOT reimburse me for any expenses related to food, toys, litter, medication, and daily care items associated with my foster pet.
8. If my foster pet escapes my home or becomes lost, I will immediately notify the HSWM Emergency Contact given to me as well as the HSWM Foster Coordinator.
9. I will not take my foster pet to a groomer
10. I will not take my foster dog to a dog park/beach without prior permission from the HSWM Foster Coordinator.
11. I agree to keep my foster dog on a 6ft. non-retractable leash when outside.
12. I agree that I will not allow my foster cat outdoors.
13. I will not give my foster cat or kitten a bath before speaking to the HSWM Foster Coordinator.
14. I will notify the HSWM Foster Coordinator immediately if my foster pet exhibits aggressive behavior.
15. I understand that my foster animal’s health is not guaranteed and may break with illness while in my care.
16. I understand my personal companion animals could be exposed to illness and I understand that it is highly recommended to quarantine my foster animal for at least 10 days to prevent exposure to my household.
17. I understand that I am not allowed to administer ANY medication to my foster animal without permission from the HSWM Foster Veterinary Technician or HSWM Veterinarian.
18. I understand that it may be necessary for HSWM Medical Team to make a decision of euthanasia based on severe illness or behavior.
19. I understand HSWM is not responsible for damage to personal property and I waive my rights to make any claim of liability for any injury or damages.
20. I agree to return my foster kit containing supplies provided by HSWM. If I fail to return my supply kit, I may be charged a fee of \$10. I understand when I return my supply kit, this allows another shelter pet the opportunity for foster care.
21. I understand that I must communicate with the HSWM Foster Coordinator and Foster Veterinary Technician in a timely manner and keep my contact information up to date.
22. I agree to help build my foster’s adoption profile by taking frequent pictures and sending them to the HSWM Foster Coordinator.

Foster Medical Emergencies

During business hours, Monday-Thursday 7am-4pm:

Green section (Monitor) and Yellow section (Urgent):

Email fostervettech@hswestmi.org

Red section (Emergency): Seek immediate medical attention

For after hours, weekends and holidays:

Yellow (Urgent) and Red (Emergency) sections: Submit a request through <https://form.jotform.com/HSWM/foster-emergencies> . Inquiries submitted via JotForm will be monitored throughout the day from 8am-8pm. It may take a couple of hours for you to receive a response. In the meantime, please follow the guidelines below.

Emergency - Submit a JotForm and go to ER immediately

Seek immediate medical attention at:

Animal Emergency Hospital 3260 Plainfield Ave NE, Grand Rapids MI 49525

Blue Pearl Pet Hospital 1425 Michigan St NE, Grand Rapids MI 49503

Animal Emergency and Specialty Hospital 6820 Edgeview Ave SW. Byron Center MI 49315

Unresponsive/unable to wake - Respiratory distress/gasping/open mouth breathing -
Repetitive seizures - Severe laceration/life threatening wound - Toxin ingestion - Hit
by car - Bloating abdomen and vomiting in large breed dog

Urgent - Submit a JotForm

Medical staff will respond to your JotForm request in a timely manner

Persistent or bloody vomiting - Minor wounds - Limping - Severe diarrhea - Decreased
appetite - Male cats straining to urinate - Lost animal - Ingestion of foreign body

Monitor - Email Foster Vet Tech

The Foster Veterinary Technician will respond during regular business hours

Congestion - Nasal/Ocular discharge - Mild diarrhea - Infrequent vomiting - Coughing - Hair
loss - Fleas - Medication refills - Eye injuries/issues - Frequent urination

Vacation/Going Out Of Town

When you have a trip planned or an out of town stay planned, your HSWM foster pet **cannot** be left home alone, travel with you, or be left with a different caregiver without first receiving approval from the Foster Coordinator.

If at any time you are leaving town for an extended period of time, you **MUST** contact the Foster Coordinator. This should not be done last minute. The Foster Coordinator will schedule your foster pets return or coordinate a transfer of foster care to another foster home. The Foster Caregiver, whose signature is on the Foster Agreement is the responsible party and at no time can that responsibility be transferred to another person without prior approval.

If you have an emergency that requires you to leave town suddenly, please contact the Foster Coordinator as soon as possible to make arrangements for your shelter pet.

Short Notice Animal Returns

If you need to return your foster animal(s) sooner than expected due to a personal emergency arising, or things just aren't working out as expected (i.e., dogs not getting along), please fill out the form listed below. Please note that response time will vary, especially during the holidays, but we will accommodate your request to return your foster on short notice the best we can! Please fill out this form at:

<https://form.jotform.com/HSWM/foster-return-request-form---short->

Foster Supply Pickup

All food and supplies will be provided to you when you foster a HSWM shelter pet. If you are running low on food or supplies, please alert the Foster Coordinator and allow for 24-48 hour time for response. All food, supply, and medication pickups are scheduled. Please do not arrive unannounced to the HSWM facility for supplies. This is especially important during high-volume transport times as there are numerous foster animals and foster parents requesting supply pickups. A pickup time and day will be scheduled with the Foster Coordinator. Supply pickups will be left outside of the Foster doors inside the blue box with your name on it.

If you are running low on **medical** supplies (medications, special diet food, etc.) please alert the Foster Veterinary Technician at least a week in advance to let her know you are running out. They may need to place an order for more of the supply or confirm with the doctor whether or not to continue a prescription. **Some medications cannot be stopped abruptly so it is very important to let us know you are running low before it is gone** so we can refill the prescription in time.

If you run out of supplies due to not alerting us soon enough and you buy your own supplies, please understand that we will not be able reimburse you for your purchase and it will be treated like a donation.

Foster Animal Quarantine

We know it is super exciting to have a new animal in your home and we're excited you took them in! However, it is important for both their mental and physical health, as well as any other animals in the home, that they are kept separate from other animals for at least 10 days. We cannot guarantee that the animals going home with you won't become sick. It is not uncommon for the stress of environment change to cause your foster pet to break with an illness like diarrhea or an upper respiratory infection. Keeping them in a quarantine will make cleaning and disinfecting the affected area easier instead of allowing them to free roam in your house. It will also keep your personal pets safe.

Even while they are quarantined, it is recommended that your personal pets of the same species are up to date on vaccines. If your foster animals break with an illness in your home, even with the best cleaning precautions, it does not make it impossible for you to accidentally transmit an illness to your personal animals. Being up to date on vaccines decreases the chances of them contracting that disease or illness, and if they do come down with the same illness, it will not be as severe as if they weren't vaccinated.

Once those 10 days of quarantine are up, please contact the Foster Coordinator for approval to introduce them to the rest of the house and personal pets.

Please understand that if your personal animal becomes sick, we cannot treat them and you will need to go to your primary veterinarian for treatment.

Bites

If you or another person is bitten by your foster animal, you must report it to us. By law, we have to report every bite to Kent County Animal Shelter, no matter how small. If it is severe enough that you need to seek medical care right away, please call the emergency phone number to let the Shelter Manager know about the situation, and where you are seeking medical care.

Out of an abundance of caution, it is recommended to seek medical attention if you are bitten. Have a doctor perform a thorough examination of the bite wound, and take any antibiotics that will be provided. If able, clean your bite thoroughly with warm water and soap, and follow any recommendations for after-care provided by your doctor.

HSWM cannot provide medical coverage or treatment for bites received from foster pets. Please seek medical attention from your personal practitioner.

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 and puppies 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!

Adult dogs will need a routine and structured home environment. Establishing a routine will allow the dog to predict what happens to him or her, and will encourage the proper response. 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 will 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, whether it's a puppy or a dog:

- Blankets
- Bed
- Appropriate food
- Food and water bowls
- Appropriate treats
- Collar and/or clip or slip leash
- Dog crate
- Poop bags
- Pee pads (for puppies)
- 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, and 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 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.
2. **Assume that all dogs are not house trained.** Even if the dog is an adult, even if he has 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 to punish 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. **Chill out/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 24/7 in the room. Specifically, classical music, since the piano tempos slow down the racing heart-beat of a stressed dog.

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 and we can provide step-by-step instructions to help to make the best first-impressions possible!

While unsupervised, your dog or puppies **MUST** be crated, especially puppies. 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 also needs fresh food provided through two meals daily, more if they are puppies or underweight. Please only feed the appropriate diet that was provided to you. If you're fostering multiple puppies, offer multiple different bowls with their food to ensure they all have easy access to food, and aren't fighting over it with each other.

Dogs, even puppies, 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. Offering multiple bowls spread out for puppies also helps them to not develop food possessive habits—as they won't feel the need to defend their food from their siblings. 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

If you have puppies, we should have provided you with puppy pads to help limit the messes puppies can make. If you need help potty training them, or would like some tips and tricks to use the pads, please email the Foster Coordinator for further information.

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 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. You should have been provided a daily monitor chart to help track their behavior, inputs, and outputs. Please make sure to fill this out daily and send a picture weekly to the Foster Veterinary Technician!

If you notice your foster, puppy or dog, start displaying symptoms of Parvo, please email the Foster Vet Tech immediately Monday - Thursday! Otherwise call your emergency contact on the weekend! There is more information on Parvovirus and symptoms on page 31 of this manual.

Playtime

Your foster pup will need playtime and enrichment, as well as walks for adults 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, especially puppies, as they are in their prime socialization stage for people and other animals.

As most of you already know, puppies naturally want to play! They will run and sprint, tumble and wrestle with others, and explore. They can play and entertain each other, but it is still important to provide playtime with people. They should have at least two play sessions a day with you as this is their primary life stage to socialize with people and build positive experiences. If your puppies are more shy with you, they need just a little bit of extra patience and work. This may be the most people interaction they've had!

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 and puppies 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 response. Stress 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, both dogs and puppies can get possessive over items they find valuable, which is most often their food or toys. **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! This is especially important for puppies as they are learning what is and isn’t appropriate 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 will 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 the 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.

Training Puppies

Whether you expect to have your puppies for a week or a month, it is highly encouraged to work on training with them! Puppies are the perfect age to learn socialization, appropriate behaviors, and how to be good dogs in the future. You have the privilege of providing them with the love and guidance they need!

It will make your life (and clean up) much easier if you train your puppies to go potty outside, or on their puppy pads if they can't get outside in time. If you have a fenced in yard, take them out often as weather permits, or go for leashed walks around the yard if it's not fenced in. Reward them with high value treats and praise them when they go potty outside. The more opportunities they have to go outside,

the more opportunities they get to go potty outside and be rewarded for it!

For puppy pad training, set them up near their crate. Once they go to the bathroom on it, leave the output on the pad for a little bit for them to see later. They'll start quickly associating that's where they go to the bathroom when they realize their stool or urine wasn't immediately cleaned up. If you see them actively go to the bathroom on the puppy pad, praise them and give them some treats for doing a good job! If they have an accident in the house, don't punish them. Simply clean it up and give them more opportunities to go potty outside. If they defecate inside, you can put the stool on the puppy pad for them to see and start understanding that is where they go potty if they have to go inside.

Another way to train your puppies is to help them get used to what will happen with vet visits. Always make this a positive experience by having lots of tiny treats on hand that they love. Touch different parts of their body that the vet would for their exam—look in their mouth, touch their teeth and gums, handle their ears and look into them, touch their legs and paws, touch their abdomen. Reward them every time with each touch and “examine”. This will get them used to people looking and touching these areas and understand that it's okay and nothing to be afraid of. You can also practice vaccines and blood draws once they become more comfortable and excited for their exam by tugging small amounts of skin on their legs and poking it with a capped pen. Hold their front paw once they are comfortable with paw touching to get them used to it being held as it may be for front leg blood draws. While we always strive to use the least amount of restraint as possible for each examination, it is still good to practice getting your puppy comfortable with restraint as well. You can do this by gently hugging them while they're standing or sitting, with one arm their neck, and your other arm over their back. Reward them with treats and praise while you or someone else is holding them, and give more treats and praise after you let go too.

Also be sure to work on commands as much as you can! Sit, stay, and lay down are great commands to start with. Once they master those in your care, you could move on to fetch, drop, and shake as well!

Socializing Puppies

Like we stated earlier, now is the prime time for your puppies to learn all about the world, so you should introduced them to as much of it as you can! This includes people and other animals like cats and dogs, once their 10 day quarantine period is completed. You are welcome to have people over to meet them—it's encouraged! Just always make the experience a positive one. If they are shy, give treats to the guest and let the puppy approach them. Once they approach, have the guest give them the treats so they start associating new people with positive experiences. This works with cats and dogs too! Keep in mind, it's always best to only introduce your pets if they are also friendly and open to meeting a possibly rambunctious puppy. Always reward the experience with treats to encourage appropriate behavior when meeting other dogs and cats. For more tips on how to socialize puppies with

people and other animals, please email the Foster Coordinator.

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 and puppies, 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.

Neonatal Care

Neonates are young animals that are under 4 weeks old. This is an animal's most fragile stage of development. If a mother is present, it's going to be much easier for you to care for your foster babies as the mother will do most of the work! You will just need to monitor the puppies closely for any changes in health and keep mom well fed, clean, happy and healthy. Without the mother, we have to provide all the care necessary for raising the puppies ourselves. The following information listed in this section is based on care with no mother present.

There are three stages of a puppy:

- Neonatal - 0-2 weeks old
 - ◆ *They are very vulnerable during this stage and must be kept warm at all times due to inability to regulate their own heat. They also must be bottle fed at this stage.*
- Transitional - 2-4 weeks
 - ◆ *Becoming more mobile, eyes and ears opening, teeth coming in. Still being bottle fed but may start to wean at the end of this period.*
- Socialization - 4 weeks and up
 - ◆ *Learning social skills, learning to play, will begin to wean*

If you are raising your puppies from the neonatal stage and up, you will experience all of these stages, and have the opportunity to watch them grow and teach them how to be social while you care for them!

Supplies

You will be provided with the following items in addition to normal puppy supplies:

- Puppy Replacement Milk
- Bottles and nipples
- Stimulation items
 - *Cotton balls or baby wipes*
- Extra blankets
- Warming device
- Carrier
- Scale

Set Up and Housing

Depending on the size of your litter of puppies, they can stay in the carrier provided up until they are moving and want to explore, typically when their eyes open. A warm, quiet area where you can avoid drafts is the best place to keep the carrier.

Puppies under 4 weeks old cannot regulate their temperature so it is **essential** to keep them warm. Make their space cozy with lots of blankets, but not so many that they can get lost in them! Place their warming devices under the blankets in the area you are keeping them. Having them on the direct heat source risks burns if

they can't move off of it when they get hot. Make sure that they can crawl away from the source of warmth if they get too warm, but can also get back to the warmth when they start to feel cold.

If their mother is present, a shallow, low lipped box or a carrier with the top removed is a good bed for the mother and babies. Mom can leave the babies when she needs a break, but the babies cannot crawl out of the box or carrier and get lost while she is gone.

Bottle Feeding

Bottle feeding is essential to help orphaned neonatal puppies live, grow, and thrive. You will be provided with appropriate puppy replacement milk, also known as KMR or PMR. **Do not use anything else to feed them!** This formula is designed with the nutrients and supplements that puppies need to survive.

How to Prepare a Bottle

KMR comes in a powdered form. You will need to make it with a 2 to 1 ratio—for example, 2 tablespoons of water to 1 tablespoon of formula.

1. Mix appropriate amounts of formula to water and mix vigorously until all clumps are dissolved and gone.
2. Warm the formula and nipple. You can use hot water when making the KMR mixture, or warm up the formula in the bottle. The best way to warm up the formula is to heat up a pot or glass of hot water and set the bottle in the water. Check the formula's temperature every few minutes by dripping the formula on your wrist. It shouldn't be too hot or cold, but should be warm to the touch, slightly above your body temperature.
3. Store extra KMR powder in the fridge as well as any unused portion of the bottle. Remake the bottle every 24 hours if not every 12 hours.

Additional notes:

- *The nipple of your bottle should drip slowly when inverted. If it is not dripping, the hole may need to be pierced or made slightly larger. If it is dripping quickly, discard the nipple and use a different one. If formula comes out too fast, the kittens can aspirate.*
- *Always use clean bottles and nipples, and clean bottles daily!*

Feeding

1. Warm your puppy up first - slowly. They cannot digest properly if they or their formula are not warm. Never feed a cold puppy.

You can burrito them up in a towel or blanket with their front legs sticking out if they don't want to keep their paws in

2. Position them in the prone position, on their stomach, **NOT** on their back!

Positioning them on their back can cause them to aspirate. They aren't human babies!

3. Gently insert the nipple into their mouth. They should latch and suckle it on their own.

The first few times may be difficult to get them to latch onto the nipple as they learn how to drink from it.

4. Watch their little ears wiggle and feel their tummies grow as they eat!

Most puppies will stop eating when they are full. Keep track of how much formula each puppy is eating at every feeding and compare with the recommended amount they should be consuming using the chart below (taken from the "Puppy Bottle Feeding and Stomach Capacity Chart" by Maddie's Fund). Your foster puppies may need to be syringe fed, or even tube fed if they aren't eating enough each day, if they lose weight, or their weight gain plateaus. Please email the Foster Veterinary Technician as soon as you are able if you notice any of these concerns.

Puppy's Weight Grams, Ounces, or Pounds	Amount of Formula to Give Per Feeding (ml)	Number of Feedings Per Day (times)	Puppy's Weight Grams, Ounces, Pounds	Amount of Formula to Give Per Feeding (ml)	Number of Feedings Per Day (times)
57g - 2oz	2ml	6	907g - 2lbs	36ml	6
113g - 4oz	5ml	6	1,361g - 3lbs	54ml	6
170g - 6oz	7ml	6	1,814g - 4lbs	73ml	6
227g - 8oz	9ml	6	2,268g - 5lbs	91ml	6
284g - 10oz	11ml	6	2,722g - 6lbs	109ml	6
284g - 12oz	14ml	6	3,175g - 7lbs	127ml	6
397g - 14oz	16ml	6	3,629g - 8lbs	145ml	6
454g - 16oz - 1 lb	18ml	6			

Troubleshooting Why They May Not Be Eating

Referenced from *The National Kitten Coalition*

Issue	What to try
Formula/bottle/nipple too cold or hot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Test the temperature, it should be warm to the touch - not cold or hot
Formula doesn't taste good	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure the formula is fresh. • Try remaking the bottle • Smell the formula - sweet, not rancid
Nipple opening not the right size	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use scissors, a needle, or blade to cut it slightly bigger
Not comfortable/too cold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give them some support! Place warm towels or rice socks on either side of your puppy • Place fingers gently on cheeks and chin to support their head • Burrito in a warm towel or blanket <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ <i>Remember to warm puppies up slowly</i>
Unable to suckle with enough force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loosen the cap just slightly to let a small amount of air in and give the puppy suckling power
Need to burp or eliminate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stimulate to urinate or defecate and then try again • Gently pat back to help burp
Illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you suspect or notice symptoms of illness, contact the FVT or Emergency Contact ASAP depending on symptoms
Doesn't know how to eat from bottle/nipple or know what it is	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Squeeze the bottle very gently, enough to get a tiny drop of formula on their tongue

Please report ASAP to the Foster Veterinary Technician if:

- ★ Your puppy isn't eating the appropriate amount in 24 hours
- ★ Your puppy has **zero** intake of food in 12 hours.

Please call the emergency line if:

- ★ Above scenarios happens on the weekend (Fri-Sun)
- ★ They are lethargic/unresponsive
- ★ They aspirate their food

Stimulation

Once they have eaten, you have to stimulate them! Puppies do not go to the bathroom on their own until they are about 3-4 weeks old and need to be stimulated until then. This is usually done by the mother licking the genital area. Without a mother, we have to simulate this action ourselves.

Take a slightly damp cotton ball, toilet paper, or baby wipe and gently rub their genital area, wiping front to back a few times. This should be enough to stimulate them to urinate, which should happen after each meal, and they should defecate at least once a day. Their stool should be a toothpaste-like consistency and lighter in color, and their urine should be a pale, light yellow.

Please report ASAP to the Foster Veterinary Technician if:

- ★ They do not urinate in 12 hours (Emergency line if Fri-Sun)
- ★ They do not defecate in 24 hours (Emergency line if Fri-Sun)
- ★ The urine is dark in color
- ★ The stool is looser than a toothpaste consistency
- ★ The stool is discolored (yellow, red-tinged, black, green, ect.)
- ★ Either output has a strong, unpleasant odor to it

Weight Tracking and Daily Observations

A weight loss or plateau in neonate and growing puppies is usually the first indication that something is wrong. They should be constantly gaining weight every day. See chart under “Bottle Feeding” above for how much your puppies should weigh, based on their age. Because of this, it is **essential** that you weigh them every day, preferably around the same time every day as well. You have been provided a puppy weight tracking chart. Please fill this out every day and send it to the Foster Veterinary Technician every week. If you notice a weight loss or plateau, please send the chart to the Foster Veterinary Technician ASAP.

In addition to your daily weight tracking, please use your Daily Wellness Log to track feeding, signs of illness, and any other additional information related to your foster pet’s wellbeing.

Weaning

This is the second most fragile stage in a puppy’s life after being a little neonate baby!

With a mother, she will teach them how to eat normal food and wean them herself. During this time, it’s important to monitor your foster puppy’s weight and general health, because if mom is not letting them eat enough from her and they aren’t ready to completely stop drinking her milk, they will begin to decline. An intervention with supplemental bottle feeding may be necessary. Without a mother, we have to teach our puppies how to eat solid food.

Start with a low, shallow bowl that they can easily get in and out of. Fill it with gruel,

which is a mixture of paté puppy food and prepared puppy formula. Offer the gruel during feeding times. They may not understand what it is at first, so you may have to put a small piece on your finger or directly in their mouth and guide them to eating from the bowl. Offer the gruel frequently, and the fresher the gruel the better! Offer the bottle as needed to make sure they are getting the full amount of nutrients and food that they need to continue to grow and thrive every day.

As they learn to eat the gruel, you can slowly start changing the ratio of formula and wet food by increasing the amount of puppy wet food and decreasing the amount of formula. Eventually, you will wean them onto puppy food entirely, and that will be all they want to eat! No more bottles, yay! While they are weaning, you should always have dry food out and available for them to eat, but they may not show much interest in it at first and that's okay. As long as they are eating enough and continuing to gain weight and thrive, we are happy!

Do not stop their bottle feeding abruptly if they are not ready to stop eating from it! You **must** follow the puppy's lead on how they want to wean. Sometimes it's a quick transition, sometimes others like to stick to the bottle longer. They're in charge here!

Veterinary and Medical Care

Whether your dog or puppy is healthy or sick, there will be routine medical care required. If you are fostering healthy puppies, you should expect to return every 2-3 weeks with your puppies for their booster vaccines and general wellness exams until they are fixed and adopted. If you are fostering a healthy adult dog, 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.

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, at any time, that has not been prescribed by the HSWM Veterinarian!

Routine Medical Care

You will be contacted by the Foster Veterinary Technician when your foster animal(s) are to be due for routine medical care. We will try our best to limit trips to the shelter in the same or following week, but cannot guarantee you won't need to visit the shelter more than once in a week, depending on the needs of your pet.

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. 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, 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 the appropriate doors at your scheduled time.

Puppy Medical Care Timeline

Puppies can receive their first vaccines when they reach 1 pound. It is then expected that they come back every 2-3 weeks for their booster vaccines until they have reached 20 weeks old.

Puppy Medical Timeline

- 0-3 weeks - Deworming, weight check, physical exam
- 4-5 weeks - DHPP and Bordetella vaccine booster, deworming, flea prevention, heartworm prevention, weight check, physical exam
- 6-8 weeks - DHPP vaccine booster, Canine Influenza Vaccine (CIV), deworming, weight check, physical exam.
- 8-11 weeks - DHPP vaccine booster, CIV booster, flea prevention (if due), heartworm prevention (if due), weight check, physical exam.
 - *Starting at 8 weeks, if they are healthy and at least 2 pounds, the Foster Vet Tech will schedule them for surgery.*
- 12-20 weeks - DHPP vaccine booster, Rabies vaccine, Lepto vaccine, flea prevention (if due), heartworm prevention (if due), weight check, physical exam

Adult Dog 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. If they turn 6 months in your care, they will be due for a heartworm snap test. Your adult foster animal may be sent home before that 2 week booster was given at the shelter. The Foster Veterinary Technician will reach out to schedule that vaccine if it needs to be boosted. Otherwise, you should only need to come back to pick up a monthly flea prevention, as long as your foster dog stays healthy and happy.

Surgery Steps for Dogs and Puppies

Every animal must be spayed or neutered before they can become available for adoption. All adult animals are altered before they leave our building for either foster or adoption, unless they are too sick for surgery and need to recover in foster first.

Scheduling

Puppies can be fixed starting at 8 weeks of age and once they reach a healthy 2 pounds. Once they have reached that goal weight, or are anticipated to reach that goal within a given timeframe, the Foster Veterinary Technician will reach out with available dates for scheduling. Once a date is confirmed, the Foster Vet Tech will send you day-of instructions for surgery drop-off, as well as discussing what will be happening with your puppies afterwards--whether they will be staying at HSWM for adoption, or if they can go back with you after surgery. If they are returning to foster with you after surgery, you will be sent post-operative instructions as well.

Day of Surgery

The following instructions are what will be sent to you via email once a surgery date is confirmed. They are subject to change as we adjust protocols with COVID-19 to keep you and our staff safe. Please carefully read what is sent to you directly, as that will be the most current instructions.

Puppies: No food/water restrictions are needed prior to surgery. You may offer food and water to your animals that morning.

Dogs: Please refrain from feeding breakfast the morning of surgery. Water is okay.

If you have any questions or concerns please email the Foster Coordinator, Lindsey, anytime at lfrontjest@hswestmi.org or our Foster Veterinarian Technician, Sabrina at sanderson@hswestmi.org.

If you are running late, please email Sabrina and our Vet Staff at vetstaff@hswestmi.org.

Drop off:

1. Arrive between 8am - 8:15am at the **Admitting** doors. One of our Vet Techs will meet you at these doors to take your foster pet(s) for surgery.
2. If your foster is not returning home with you after surgery, you can bring back your supplies at this time and place them outside of our **Foster** doors. We will bring the supplies inside once everyone has been able to drop off their foster pets and supplies.
3. Please be patient as there may be others dropping off animals at the same time. **Please wear a mask** while at HSWM, for the safety of you and others, and allow for social distancing by taking turns while dropping off pets and talking to our staff.

Pick up:

1. If you are picking up your foster to be adopted from foster, or if you are adopting them yourself, the pickup time is between 4-4:30pm from the **Admitting** doors, unless a different pick up time was previously discussed. There should be someone in Admitting at your time of pick up. Let them know who you are picking up, and they or a vet staff member will bring out your foster animal(s). They will give you their post-operative pain medications at

this time. The post-op medication is given once daily, starting the day after surgery as they already got their first dose prior to surgery that day.

2. Please be patient as there may be others picking up pets at the same time. **Please wear a mask** while at HSWM, for your safety and others, and allow for social distancing by taking turns while dropping off animals and talking to our staff.

Day After surgery

If your puppies are returning to foster with you after surgery, the Foster Coordinator will reach out the following day to check in on how your foster(s) are recovering. If they are doing well (eating and drinking well, and back to normal activity levels), they will be made available for adoption. Please see the next section for Post-Operative instructions.

Additional Notes:

- If the animal(s) are scheduled for surgery and have not yet reached their goal weight or become ill, they will return to foster until they are big and healthy enough to be scheduled for surgery again later.
- 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. Puppies are sent home with Trazodone, in addition to their post-op pain medications, to help keep them calm for the week.

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.

Medical Emergency Protocol

During business hours, Monday-Thursday 7am-4pm:

Green section (Monitor) and Yellow section (Urgent):

Email fostervettech@hswestmi.org

Red section (Emergency): Seek immediate medical attention

For after hours, weekends and holidays:

Yellow (Urgent) and Red (Emergency) sections: Submit a request through <https://form.jotform.com/HSWM/foster-emergencies> . Inquiries submitted via JotForm will be monitored throughout the day from 8am-8pm. It may take a couple of hours for you to receive a response. In the meantime, please follow the guidelines below.

Emergency

Fill out JotForm and seek immediate medical attention at:

Animal Emergency Hospital 3260 Plainfield Ave NE, Grand Rapids MI 49525

Blue Pearl Pet Hospital 1425 Michigan St NE, Grand Rapids MI 49503

Unresponsive/unable to wake - Respiratory distress/gasping/open mouth breathing - Repetitive seizures - Severe laceration/life threatening wound - Toxin ingestion - Hit by car - Bloated abdomen and vomiting in large breed dog - Male cats straining to urinate and have NO urine output

Urgent

Medical staff will respond to your JotForm request in a timely manner

Persistent or bloody vomiting - Minor wounds - Limping - Severe diarrhea - Decreased appetite - Male cats straining to urinate but are producing urine - Lost animal - Ingestion of foreign body

Monitor

Medical staff will respond to your JotForm or the foster veterinary technician will respond during regular business hours

Congestion - Nasal/Ocular discharge - Mild diarrhea - Infrequent vomiting - Coughing - Hair loss - Fleas - Medication refills - Eye injuries/issues - Frequent urination

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.

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

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

- Frequent trips to the litter box, 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.

If you are experiencing an emergency with your foster pet, please follow the emergency protocol listed above!

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 virus as it enters 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.

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 puppy'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 puppies, or visiting your home until your foster puppies are cleared and no longer have Parvo. Even then, everything should be cleaned appropriately, including any fabric items, like carpets, couches, or anything else that your puppies 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 puppies have come in contact with. For example, if a parvo puppy 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 another puppy in the same litter as your puppy tested positive, 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 it is the weekend, please follow the emergency protocol.

If your puppies have 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 puppies 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! It is important to report when your foster animals are having diarrhea as, like with human babies, it can be dangerous in young animals. The younger the animal, the more at risk they are to have bodily complications and it can be fatal to neonate animals if treatment and support isn't started as soon as possible.

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 dogs and cats receive dewormer on intake to start killing common parasites. Cats also receive an injection of Penicillin on intake to help combat diarrhea.

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 is 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?
- What does it look like?
 - Consistency? Is there blood? What color is it?
- Can you bring a fecal sample in?
- It is 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, 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 to assist our staff!

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 float to be brought to us to check for parasites
 - a. If positive, we will send home medications to kill the parasites. Another fecal sample will 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 will 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).



Roundworms



Tapeworm segment

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, ect.) 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, ect) and indirectly (sneezing, eating from the same bowls, touching a surface that has discharge on it, ect).

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 ointment 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 will 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” hand-out 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 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?

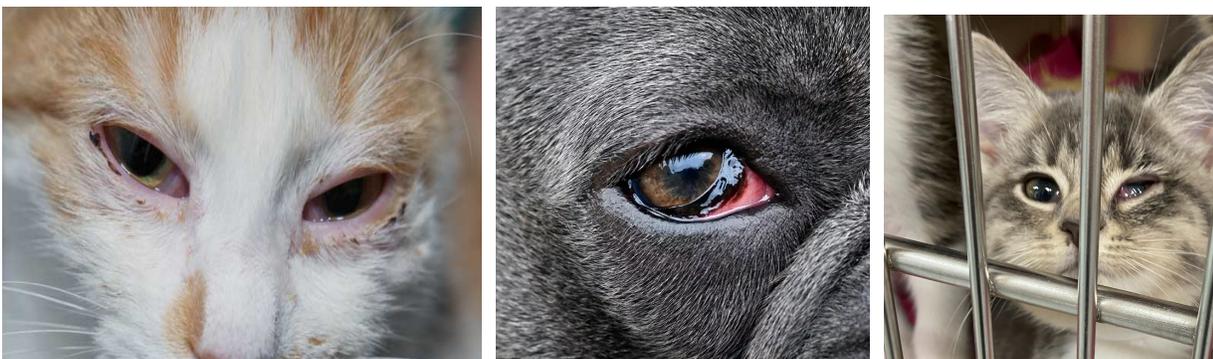
Let us know! Email a picture to the Foster Veterinary Technician at sanderson@hswestmi.org to help us evaluate if it is conjunctivitis, or a different eye issue. Providing details of the symptoms you're seeing will be helpful and expedite the process. If you are unsure if you are also noticing URI symptoms, please refer to your "Upper Respiratory Infections in Shelter Animals" hand-out.

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 your "How to Administer Medications" hand-out 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?

Though it is uncommon for dogs to get ear mites, we will treat them with a simple ear medication called Tresaderm that is applied directly into the ear canal.

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.



Ear mites



Ear Infection

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, bacteria,

or yeast. 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.

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 dropper. 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 your "How to Administer Medications" hand-out for help. You can also email our Foster Veterinary Technician directly at sanderson@hswestmi.org, if you have additional questions or concerns regarding administering the medication.

How to Administer Medications

In general, 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.

Please do not STOP or WEAN medications.

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 tip of the syringe into the cheek towards the back of the mouth.
3. Get the tip in between their back teeth by the pouch in their cheek.
4. Gently push the plunger to administer medication into their mouth.
5. 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.

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
- Cheese
- 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 and pull up slightly to open the eye.
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.

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 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

***Your animal is fixed, healthy, and ready to find their forever home!
CONGRATULATIONS!***

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 forever 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.

<p>Photography Provides:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increased Adoptions ● Increased Engagement ● Increased Awareness 	<p>A Good Photo:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Is in focus ● Uncomplicated, uncluttered ● At the animal's level, ideally with the pet looking straight at you ● Well lit ● Dark fur, use light background
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Apps and Additional Resources

- Adoptimize – FREE app that fosters can use to edit & "transform" photos.
<https://foster.adoptimize.co/>
 - PhotoGrid – Free app on your phone
 - Snapseed – Free app on your phone

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 into 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, the Foster Coordinator will reach out to both you and the potential adopter to coordinate a meeting via Zoom. Once an agreed date and time is coordinated, the meeting is set with you and the animal(s), the potential adopter, and the Foster Coordinator. 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 this is a success, then the next steps would be to schedule an in person adoption meeting here at the HSWM facility.

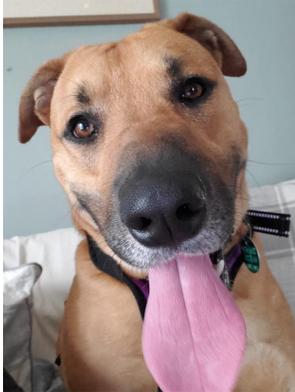
If they decide to go through with the adoption, a transfer of care is then coordinated at the shelter. Transfer of cares will not happen anywhere but the shelter. Once that date and time is set, all that's left is to wait for that date to arrive! Once that day comes, you will show up at the designated 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.

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 life!

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!

