

Foster Home Program

Animal Welfare Association of Warren County
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Foster Home Responsibilities

Thank you for your interest in helping the abandoned and unwanted dogs and/or cats in Warren County. Our foster homes, both those that have been with us for many years and those that are new to the program, experience great joy and deep satisfaction when they see that through their efforts a neglected dog or cat gets a second chance at life and a new opportunity to share his or her unconditional love with people who care. Not only do foster homes have the joy of seeing their foster dog/cat placed into a new forever home, but also there is the additional joy of seeing the happiness of the new family.

What is Foster Care?

Being a foster home means sharing your home with a rescued dog or cat: providing food, shelter, toys, walks and lots of attention until a permanent home for the dog/cat is approved. We count on our foster homes to evaluate temperament and observe behaviors in a variety of situations, and we welcome those updates so we can utilize this knowledge to assist in placement and enhance the description on the web site. Positive reinforcement training is encouraged. Most foster care situations require 2 weeks to 2 months of residential foster care, and in some cases where the dog/cat is ill or older, several months. In rare cases, you must be able to cope with the possibility that AWA coordinators and our vets may find it necessary to put the dog/cat to sleep – always for reasons we discuss at length (e.g. unwarranted aggression with other dogs and people, unprovoked biting of people and terminal illness).

What You Need to Foster

The most important requirements are time and attention. You must be willing to include the dog in family activities, allow the dog to live as a house dog with much human companionship, and provide some daily one-on-one time with your rescue, such as, cuddles, play, and/or walks on leash. The dog may not be completely house trained, if desired, we will provide a loaner crate.

Our cats must be kept inside and provided with some daily one-on-one time. Often times they are a bit shy initially and may seek a hiding place for a few days.

Your Pets and the Foster Dog/Cat

While some dogs and cats may welcome your new foster, there may be a period of adjustment, for a day or two up to 2 to 3 weeks. As he/she becomes more confident, your foster may change his/her behavior towards resident pets, beginning to play and explore the pecking order. As the resident dog/cat accepts the foster, the bonding is beneficial to both. Unless the dogs/cats get along fabulously from the beginning, feed your pet and the foster separately. Use caution when dispensing treats, rawhides or other 'high value' items. Sometimes what is thought to be food aggression is actually just a territorial imperative that will take care of itself as the pecking order is established and they all relax!

What To Do in a Medical Emergency

We will try to place 'easy' dogs/cats in new foster homes and will not knowingly place a seriously ill dog in a foster home until the family has gained experience. But if you feel you have an emergency and you cannot reach AWA coordinators, you should take the animal to the closest vet listed in your Foster Home packet who can stabilize the animal until an AWA coordinator can be reached. Same applies if an emergency occurs during non-business hours, or on a holiday, refer to your Foster Home packet for the nearest emergency clinic.

How Expenses are Handled

AWA will provide food for foster dogs and food and litter for foster cats. The food and litter will always be of good quality and the brand(s) will be of our choosing. (We frequently have a variety of foods available and will make every effort to match your request for a specific brand, if applicable.) The foster home is responsible for transport for veterinary care and adoption days as well as in-home bathing and grooming. (Adoption days are the 1st, 3rd and 5th Saturdays of the month, unless otherwise noted.)

Most Frequently Asked Questions

"Don't you get attached to the dog/cat?" – Yes, and that is what we want for both you and the dog/cat. It's fun to get to know new dogs/cats and often is educational as well – you'll see how different dogs react to training, how they play with and teach each other.

“How can you give him up?” – This is probably the number one reason why a lot of caring people do not offer their homes for foster care; they are afraid giving the dog/cat up will hurt too much. However, foster homes are a vital ingredient – without them we cannot continue to rescue and save the stray animals – they will die. If it helps, think of your foster dog as your neighbor’s dog that you’re caring for while they’re on vacation. Or maybe ‘aunt’ or ‘uncle’, a loving guardian who is helping until they find their way to their permanent home. When your foster moves on to his/her forever home, that space is open to another rescue that needs your help. There will always be another rescue dog and there will always be those that are extra-special – each one will be a cherished memory.

How long will I have the dog/cat? – We really can’t answer that one – typically it’s from a few days to a couple of months. If you have vacation planned, or need a break, please give us as much notice as possible so we can find another foster home for your foster dog/cat.

“What if I really like the dog/cat and want to keep her?” – It happens! Should this happen, and we all agree that it is best for the foster and the foster family, then the foster home will pay an adoption fee as determined by the Executive Director, complete the adoption agreement and assume ownership of the dog/cat. ***Important Note: If the adoption agreement has not been completed, then the animal will still be expected at adoption days and will be available for adoption.***

Helpful Hints

- Exercise is very important! Too much crate time can cause pent up energy, often resulting in chewing and/or other bad habits.
- Teaching your foster dog basic obedience skills, such as sit, lay down, stay are manners that are important, as well as may increase the adoptability of your foster dog. Using treats is a great encouragement!
 - Remember to be consistent when teaching your foster dog new skills.
 - Crate training puppies is sometimes hard, as they may whine and cry, however they do settle down and begin to learn bladder control – an important step in potty training!
 - Each animal is different, don’t be surprised or discouraged if what worked wonderfully for your last foster, doesn’t work well for your new foster.

Misc.

- If you have a problem or question, please do not hesitate to call or email an AWA coordinator. Despite our screening efforts, occasionally we do have a dog (or cat) that bites someone (actually breaks skin); if this occurs, you must call an AWA coordinator immediately. Though some biting is fear biting and can be corrected, the dog will not be allowed to remain in the program if he/she has become aggressive. If the dog escapes the fence, fights with other dogs, won't leave your cat alone or has other behavioral problems – we need to know that too.
- When your new foster arrives, we will tell you everything we know about the dog/cat and their history. If he/she has not been neutered/ spayed, arrangements will be made to have the surgery done as soon as possible.
- We rely on input from the foster homes for web site descriptions as well as for calls we may receive on your foster. It's helpful to email us at least every couple of weeks and let us know how your foster is doing as well as any other information that may be helpful.
- The Executive Director is the only person who can accept a dog into the program. The majority of our dogs/cats are strays from Warren County. We accept animals from outside of the Warren County on a case by case basis only.
- You must not promise your dog/cat to someone without having the application completed and approved.

We deeply appreciate your concern for our animals and your willingness to become involved with foster care. If you think you would like to do this important work in helping us save and rehabilitate our precious rescues, please complete the foster application. Thank-You!

[Adapted with kind permission from Marie Devaney, English Springer Rescue America, Inc.]