



Canine Foster Care Manual

**1640 Hanshaw Road
Ithaca, NY 14850
(607) 257-1822 (main number)
(607) 257-1874 (answered by staff during business hours)
(607) 592-6773 (after hours)
www.spcaonline.com**

Welcome to the Canine Foster Program of the SPCA of Tompkins County!

Expectations

The goal of the SPCA of Tompkins County is to find homes for as many shelter animals as possible. Some animals require more specialized care before adoption than we can provide at the shelter. These include puppies who are too young for adoption, dogs who require quiet spaces to recover from illness or injury, dogs who are highly stressed in the shelter environment, and dogs who need intensive socialization or training. These pets benefit greatly from our foster parents' love and attention. We are grateful to each and every one of our foster parents for the vital role you play in providing the individual care required by some of our animals.

Foster parents will receive training and full support in order to make fostering the rewarding and wonderful experience it should be.

Fostering animals requires a significant time commitment. We ask that individuals interested in fostering dogs be available several weeks and sometimes even months at a time. We understand that you may have certain months or times of year that you are unavailable. We ask that you provide us with a clear schedule of times during which you are and are not available.

Types of fostering

Un-weaned puppies (“neonates”) need to be fed every two to four hours, including through the night, for the first several weeks of their lives. Caring for neonates is intensive and usually requires foster parents to have schedules that allow frequent breaks and time to care for the puppies.

Weaned puppies are able to eat on their own but are still fragile. They require gentle care and socialization.

Moms with nursing puppies, shy dogs, dogs with behavioral issues, and dogs recovering from illness, injury or surgery require patient daily attention based on their individual needs.

How do I get foster dogs?

Foster parents will be notified when dogs are in need of foster homes by a phone call or e-mail. Please check your email regularly in order to be kept informed of fostering needs and respond promptly as possible. We also have a listserv that foster parents can use to communicate with each other and other volunteers, offer support or advice, and get adoption updates. Full details and instructions on how to join the listserv are included in this manual. Any foster parents who do not wish to join the listserv or who do not have access to email may speak with the foster coordinator to establish an alternative means of communication.

What kind of supplies do I need?

The shelter will provide all the supplies you need to care for the dog: food, blankets, toys, Kongs, crates, harnesses, etc. You will be given a basic set of supplies when you pick up your new foster. If you need replacements (ex. if your puppy shreds his toys) or different tool (ex. the dog hates crates and you want to try a playpen instead) call or e-mail the shelter and we can set up a time for you to pick up the supplies you need to make your foster a success.

Training

There are a number of different reasons why we seek foster care for our animals. Most puppies come into the shelter with insufficient vaccination (and thus immunity) to safely live in the shelter environment. We also seek foster care for injured and sick dogs who require recovery time, and for dogs who require training or socialization before they can adjust to shelter life. Different skill sets are needed for each of these categories and some fostering experiences are quite different depending on individual circumstances.

For this reason, we train foster parents in small groups based upon their interests. We will give foster parents comprehensive instruction before sending you home with a dog. New foster parents will start with less challenging pets and slowly work up to more difficult cases as desired. Experienced foster parents will be asked to help with the more challenging pets (for example, very young neonates) until the newer members of our foster community are able to do so.

Our training sessions will:

- Address the environment in which dogs and puppies should be kept.
- Provide a hands-on demonstration of how to feed and care for them.
- Provide information on what to do in the event of an emergency or should the foster pet(s) fall ill.
- Training sessions will be as thorough as possible so that foster parents will leave with a complete understanding of how to care for their foster animal.

Home Visits

We will visit each foster parent's home before assigning dogs to it. We will provide information on-site about making your home dog- friendly and safe. This will help you to make sure your home is ready for incoming animals. These visits are mandatory to ensure the comfort of our foster parents and the health and welfare of the shelter dogs and puppies in the foster program.

Medical Appointments

Dogs will receive basic medical care (deworming, vaccines, flea treatment) before going into foster care. Medical staff will inform you of any upcoming appointments for additional care (spay/neuter, additional deworming, etc.) that your individual foster pet will need. Dogs in extended foster may need repeat flea/tick treatment or deworming.

All foster puppies (and their mothers) should be scheduled every two weeks for appointments with the medical staff at the shelter. They will be weighed, examined, receive booster shots and be dewormed.

Please see the staff contact info section to schedule your appointment with a member of the med staff. Most often, you will see Karen, Melina or Katie.

Emergency Information

If one of your foster pets becomes seriously ill or injured, contact the shelter immediately.

During business hours (every day of the week and weekend, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00), p.m. please call the shelter at **(607) 257-1874**. A member of the foster program or medical staff will assist you.

Outside of normal business hours, please call **our emergency number at (607) 592-6773**. **This is Tompkins County Animal Control**. This number will allow you to reach a member of the staff at all hours. Based on the information you provide we will assess whether your foster can wait to be seen by a shelter veterinarian at the first opportunity or whether we need to seek emergency care at the Cornell Companion Animal Hospital. Please note that the Cornell Companion Animal Hospital is the only location where medical treatment outside of the shelter is permitted and **only with prior approval** by authorized SPCA staff. The shelter vet on call will be the one to make all of the decisions on the animals care in case of emergency. Foster parents are not allowed to authorize treatment.

If you are uncertain whether your foster dog is in danger or needs medical treatment **please do not hesitate to contact the shelter**. We welcome and encourage all calls and questions about the health and safety of foster pets.

Emotional Support

We are aware of the difficulties foster parents face when returning now-beloved pets to the shelter for adoption. We are also aware of how fragile some dogs are and how, despite your best efforts and excellent care, a foster pet may fail to thrive. We are committed to helping you with your foster experience and are glad to offer emotional support should you need it. Providing foster care is a rewarding but sometimes difficult experience and we will provide as much help to our foster families as possible. Please reach out to other volunteers for support as well. Use the listserv to reach people and to hear call-back updates from your foster's adopters.

Staff Contact Info

Karen Nieves, LVT

(607) 257-1874 ext. 240, medical@spcaonline.com

Melina Stambolis, LVT

Katie Deis, Veterinary Assistant

(607) 257-1874 ext. 240

Lynne Conway, Volunteer Programs Manager or Ashley Fleming, Volunteer Coordinator

(607) 257-1874 ext. 247 or 246, lynne@spcaonline.com or ashley@spcaonline.com

Emme Hones, Dog Behavior

(607) 257-1874 ext. 230

behavior@spcaonline.com

Important Notes and Procedures

The foster program of the SPCA of Tompkins County has evolved over the years. Even if you are a veteran foster parent with us, please review the notes below regarding current foster program policies. Any exceptions to the policies will be made by shelter staff.

1. Foster parents are limited to caring for one litter of puppies at a time. This is for the safety of the puppies to avoid contact with germs and diseases potentially carried by other litters. **If you offer foster services to other shelters, do not allow our puppies to mingle with any other dogs** while they are in your care.
2. **All medical care and support must be sought through the shelter.** In the event of an emergency contact the shelter or the foster emergency line to speak with a member of our staff. Dogs should be taken to the Cornell Companion Animal Hospital only with approval from an authorized member of the shelter staff's foster program.
3. **Do not give your foster dogs any medications or supplements unless they are prescribed or approved by a shelter veterinarian or by a shelter LVT. This includes natural drugs, such as Rescue Remedy.**
4. Foster pets may not be moved between foster homes unless coordinated with foster program staff. If you need help fostering or have unexpected scheduling difficulties, please contact the shelter foster staff for assistance.
5. All foster parents must sign foster contracts for each pet in their care prior to the pet going into the foster home.
6. Foster puppies must be brought back to the shelter **every two weeks** for medical checks and preventative vaccinations, including boosters, deworming and other age appropriate care. Appointments will be made in advance and we will, as staffing time allows, provide appointment reminders. Foster parents who routinely miss appointments will be removed from the foster program.
7. Foster parents will receive a copy of the contract with the dog's information on it. You may also record your own observations of the foster pet (shy, outgoing, dog-friendly, etc.) and add photos to their record if desired.
8. When the shelter requests that your foster pets be returned to the shelter, please do so within 24 hours. If this is not possible, please contact the foster coordinator.
9. When pets have completed foster, shelter staff will place the dogs in appropriate housing in the Pet Adoption Center. **Foster parents should not take pets directly to the adoption floor without approval or move pets between facilities.**
10. Spay/neuter surgeries are scheduled by medical staff at the appropriate time. After surgery, dogs are placed for adoption and are not returned to foster parents unless a specific medical or behavioral need arises.
11. Please be on time for surgery. At the height of kitten season medical staff will schedule a large volume of spays/neuters in a single day and **it is imperative that foster parents bring pets in by 8:30 AM on the day of the surgery.** If this is not possible, they may be brought in the day before the surgery; please coordinate this with the foster program coordinator or other authorized staff. Depending on the Behavior Team's schedule and when behavior testing can be done, we may need to ask foster parents to bring puppies under 4 months in the day before surgery.
12. When returning dogs for surgery or appointments, **please check in at the Rescue Desk**, not the Pet Adoption Center, unless directed to do otherwise. Never take pets directly to the surgical suite yourself.

Time Line for the Care of Foster Dogs and Puppies

Un-weaned Puppies – no mother dog

- Enter foster care immediately
- Bottle-fed in foster care
- Medical check-ups at shelter every 14 days
- Weaned in foster care
- Continue medical check-ups at shelter every 14 days
- At roughly 8 weeks, behavior testing and spay/neuter surgery is scheduled
- After surgery, puppies are placed up for adoption by staff

Un-weaned puppies – with mother dog

- Enter foster care immediately
- Weaned by mother dog in 4-6 weeks
- Medical check-ups at shelter every 14 days
- Mother dog returned to shelter for spay and adoption after weaning
- Continue medical check-ups at shelter every 14 days
- At roughly 8 weeks, behavior testing and spay/neuter surgery is scheduled
- After surgery, puppies are placed up for adoption by staff

Weaned puppies

- Enter foster care after medical assessment
- Medical check-ups at shelter every 14 days
- Remain in foster care until 8 weeks old or until vaccination period is complete
- At roughly 8 weeks, behavior testing and spay/neuter surgery is scheduled
- After surgery, puppies are placed up for adoption by staff

Injured/Recovering Dogs

- Enter foster care upon request of medical staff
- Regular communication between foster parents and medical staff
- Foster provides at-home medical treatment (administering medication, performing physical therapy, etc.) under guidance of the shelter vets
- Regular medical appointments, as needed/scheduled
- Return to shelter when requested by medical staff
- Placed for adoption pending final medical assessment.

Dog with Behavior Issues

- Enter foster upon request of behavior team
- Remain in foster with weekly check-in between foster parents and behavior team
- Foster family communicates progress and works with behavior team to create individualized behavior goals and plans
- Return to shelter when requested by behavior team
- Place for adoption pending behavior evaluation

- Some dogs who do not cope well in the shelter environment will be placed for adoption from their foster family's home. Behavior team will discuss this option with foster parents when appropriate.

For Your Safety

Shelter animals may, on occasion, carry diseases or parasites that may be transmissible to humans. Our animals are medically assessed, treated and vaccinated against common elements (rabies, intestinal parasites, fleas, etc.) before they enter foster care. (Puppies under 12 weeks of age are too young to be vaccinated against rabies.) This eliminates some if not all of the risk posed to humans. However, it is still possible that shelter animals entering your home could potentially carry an illness that could affect your health or the health of your animals.

To reduce this risk, keep shelter pets apart from your own pets, particularly if they are recovering from an illness. Infections or illnesses carried by shelter pets are often common and highly treatable (like upper respiratory infections). Animals can remain contagious for some time after being exposed to these infections. Keeping your pets separate from shelter pets, especially for the first week or two in your home, will help keep your pets healthy.

Washing hands regularly after handling shelter animals is essential. Washing with plenty of soap and water for 30 seconds each time is the recommended method. Hand sanitizer is helpful but does not eliminate all viruses and bacteria. Limit exposure of foster pets to very young children.

After your foster pet has been returned to the shelter, be sure to carefully clean and disinfect the area(s) they have inhabited in your home before bringing in new foster animals.

Bite Holds

If you or anyone else are bitten by your foster dog or puppy, and the bite breaks the skin (bleeds), **you must report the bite to the SPCA immediately!** We will require that the dog come back to the shelter for a health exam, and to stay for a MANDATORY Tompkins County Health Department 10 day bite quarantine to make sure they don't have any illnesses that they might have transmitted by saliva. At that time, we will ask that you fill out a form to be submitted to the health department describing the incident. Bites must be reported even if they are non-aggressive, like an over-excited puppy playing or a dog grabbing a finger alongside her toy. Scratches done with claws, even if they break the skin, do not need to be reported, but you should immediately wash the area well with soap and water. It is the policy of the SPCA to not place dogs with suspected bite wounds into foster care, except with rabies vaccinated staff/rabies vaccinated foster parents.

Volunteer ListServ

We utilize a Yahoo! group for announcements, shift rescheduling, and general discussions. Volunteers are strongly encouraged to join the listserv, as it is our primary means of contacting our volunteers. You will receive an invitation to join the listserv, however, if you do not receive one, you may join by following these steps.

JOINING THE LISTSERV

Point your browser to <http://groups.yahoo.com>.

If you do not already have a Yahoo! ID, you will need to create one before you can access the listserv. All Yahoo! services are free to use. Click on the "Sign In" link at the top of the page and follow the on-screen instructions.

Once you have a Yahoo! ID, click on the "Sign In" link and log in.

Search for TC_SPCA_Volunteers. Click on the result that comes up, then click on the button labeled "Join This Group" and follow the on-screen instructions. You may be asked to resubmit your log-in information.

You will be asked to make a number of decisions, including specifying an email address to receive messages (the default is your Yahoo! email) and choosing a message delivery style. Most people seem to prefer receiving **the Daily Digest** to cut down on emails. Be sure to enter your affiliation with the shelter in the "Comment to Owner" box so that the listserv managers approve you.

Puppy Care

This part of the manual addresses puppy care. Please note that the entire manual is available on our website (www.spcaonline.com, under the Volunteering tab, under Foster Resources). We will update the manual as often as needed, so please check our website often for the most recent manual. Puppy care is not an exact science and if you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact the shelter staff at any time.

The puppy manual contains three sections: neonatal puppies, weaning/weaned puppies, and puppies with nursing mothers. **Please read all three sections.** It is important to remember whenever possible, mother dogs should be kept with nursing puppies because they will always make better parents than we possibly can. The majority of puppies who come to the shelter have been weaned, but are not old enough for spay/neuter or are under-vaccinated and rely on foster care for a safe place to live until they are ready for adoption.

Puppies' immune systems are not fully developed until they are four months old making them much more susceptible to disease. Under-vaccinated puppies should not go anywhere they may come into contact with adult dogs or their germs. There are many mild illnesses that an adult dog's immune system will fight off without showing symptoms, but a puppy's can't. This means puppies should not go to parks, play groups, pet stores or dog-owning friend's houses. This is also a safety measure for owned pets as shelter animals may carry communicable infections.

Please keep neonates (nursing puppies) completely isolated from any other household pets and handle them sparingly, only for feeding and stimulation. We prefer that weaned puppies do not mix with your resident pets. If you choose to do so, it is at your own risk, realizing that your pet could be exposed to parasites, fungal infections or viruses.

Mothers with puppies will most likely object strongly to other animals and display maternal aggression towards them, so please keep them completely isolated.

Wash your hands thoroughly **before and after** you handle shelter animals to avoid exposing them to disease or infecting your resident pets.

Providing your Puppy with an Appropriate Home

Environmental Conditions

As a general rule, puppies must always be kept in an area that is quiet, secluded, and warm. The ambient temperature should be no less than 72° F. (Neonates have very specific needs, and the nests or dens in which they are housed should be significantly warmer, discussed in detail below.) It is acceptable to keep the puppies in their nesting box on the floor, but keep in mind that floor temperatures are often colder than the air temperature, and the heat will need to be raised accordingly. ***Never place nesting boxes, crates or playpens over heating vents or ducts.***

Access to fresh air is essential, so the space should have adequate ventilation. Wherever you choose to keep them, it is important that puppies be housed in a practical space where you can get to them easily and keep their area clean. Adequate lighting is crucial, and natural lighting is preferable.

It is best to keep puppies in an area with surfaces that can be easily cleaned; tile and linoleum flooring are ideal. Should you foster puppies that become seriously ill, or have had an animal that

has fallen ill or died recently in your home, please let us know so that we can assess the potentially infected area and suggest methods of cleaning that will eradicate any lingering pathogens.

Preparing a Space for Puppies

Preparing an area to receive puppies can be challenging. Neonates and very young puppies should be contained at all times, and should only be taken out of their habitats under supervision for feeding, stimulation, and brief socialization. As they get older, the puppies will become increasingly mobile and will begin to explore their surroundings. Keep this in mind and store as little in your puppy space as possible to limit the possibility of them ingesting foreign objects or injuring themselves. When in doubt, remember: puppies will get into **everything**.

Bathrooms make ideal puppy habitats, but toilets should be kept closed at ALL times to avoid fatal accidents. Areas should be free from any kind of string, electrical cords, blinds, rocking chairs, and toxic substances (like some houseplants). Should you have any questions about getting an area ready to receive puppies, contact the shelter. We will be happy to talk you through any concerns you may have, help you figure out a safe set-up and provide you with crates, playpens or baby gates as we have them available. If you have concerns or questions after your initial home visit, we can visit again to help you identify potential hazards.

A House is a Home

Once the designated area is prepared, puppies need to have a space where they can be contained within their room. Large dog crates or playpens can work very well for this purpose; sometimes it is necessary to tape off or pad gaps along the bottom for small dogs. Providing a small crate, hiding box or den can be helpful so that puppies will have a home base. Ideally, these should be made of plastic, so that they can be disinfected and easily cleaned. These boxes should be thoroughly lined with towels and blankets, which the shelter will provide.

For foster parents caring for neonates, we will provide a large plastic bin with a mesh lid, which is an adequate environment for very young bottle-feeders. As the puppies grow and become more mobile, a larger nesting box with lower sides will suffice. Puppies can go in and out of the new nesting box to access food and water. Mothers with puppies should have a private, secluded crate large enough to accommodate her and her puppies with enough space that she can stretch out to nurse them.

Puppies will soil their bedding or it will become damp with humidity. Soiled bedding should be removed and laundered and replaced with fresh bedding regularly. It is very important that the puppies are not left in damp or wet bedding as it may cause them to chill. Try to leave at least one blanket or towel within their den that remains covered in their scent; this is particularly important when the puppies are very young, as they rely almost entirely on their sense of smell. The scents they leave on their bedding provide them with a source of comfort, decreasing stress.

Health

Weight gain: Puppies should be weighed regularly. Weight loss in puppies is very serious and should be brought to the attention of the shelter staff immediately. You can purchase a small, accurate kitchen scale for very little expense.

Cleanliness: When a mother is present, she will keep her puppies clean and well-groomed; in the absence of a mother, it falls upon the foster parent to keep their puppies unsullied. Inevitably, puppies will get food and feces stuck in their fur – gently wash off any filth with a warm, damp washcloth. **NEVER** submerge your puppies in water, and try not to get them too wet during the cleaning process, as they chill quickly. Once they are clean, wrap them in a

warm towel and hold them until they are quite dry. Place them back in their nesting box, or in another warm, dry area; warm the box with the heating disc.

Hydration: Puppies should always be well hydrated. Check their hydration daily by gently pinching the skin on their necks or backs; their skin should snap back quickly. If it remains in a pinched position, they are probably under hydrated, and should receive fluids promptly.

Stool:

- When puppies are newborn, their feces should be bright yellow and quite liquid in consistency.
- As they are introduced to solid food, some diarrhea or constipation often results, as discussed above. If you are concerned, please contact the shelter, and you may be asked to bring in a fecal sample and/or the puppy.

We can also provide a few packets of Fortiflora. In the event of diarrhea, a pinch can be added to each feeding of food or formula in order to help re-establish the natural gut flora.

Urine: Urine should always be yellow, and puppies should not strain when urinating. If a puppy appears to be straining, or if their urine is any other color than yellow – particularly if it appears to contain blood – contact the shelter immediately.

General Health: Should you notice the following symptoms, please monitor the puppies closely, and, should they persist, contact shelter medical staff:

- Sneezing, coughing, discharge from eyes or nose;
- Wheezing;
- Change in behavior or lethargy; loss or decrease of appetite;
- Bleeding from any part of the body;
- Straining to urinate or defecate;
- Diarrhea;
- Abnormal body movement like twitching or spasms;
- Heavy breathing.
- Not eating

Sometimes, puppies will either crawl or fall out of the nesting box, and become chilled. Depending how long they are exposed, they may be very inactive and lethargic when you find them. Hold them closely to your chest, and warm them slowly. Heat the SnuggleSafe, and warm the puppy in blankets with the heating disc. As the puppy begins to warm up, you can take a pea-sized amount of Nutri-cal, and rub it gently onto the roof of the puppy's mouth. Contact the shelter for emergency instruction.

Important benchmarks:

When puppies are **neonates** (one to four weeks old), they are very fragile and highly susceptible to physiologic stress and disease; at this age there is a very high mortality rate. It is also during the neonatal stage that puppies undergo several exciting developments: eyes open and tail wagging starts at around 10 days, and ears open and they begin to stand at two weeks. At three weeks, they start to bark and walk.

Weanlings (four to five weeks old) are, as discussed above, transitioning. During this time they begin to eat, urinate, and defecate on their own. They will become more proficient at walking, and will begin to explore their environment.

Between four and eight weeks of age, they will begin to act like true **puppies**. They will be highly explorative, mobile, and capable of wreaking havoc. It is in this stage that puppies should be actively socialized. Make sure to provide them with toys and stimulation.

Section One: Caring for Neonatal Puppies

Particular Environmental Concerns for Neonatal Puppies

Neonatal puppies should be kept in an enclosed den at all times, which is covered with a mesh lid. We will provide all foster parents with a 'snuggle safe' disc, which, when heated in the microwave will retain heat for up to eight to ten hours, and may be reheated as often as necessary (please do *not* heat the discs beyond the maximum recommendation, they can and will explode). As discs age, they become less and less heat efficient, so make sure to check often at the beginning, to ensure your disc is providing ample warmth.

These are general guidelines for heating 'SnuggleSafe' discs; please be aware that these are not exact times, depending on the microwave and the age of the disc, so use caution when heating the discs, and test them often:

Microwave Power	Time
600-650 watts	8 minutes
700-750 watts	7 minutes
800-850 watts	6 minutes
900-1000 watts	5 minutes
1100-1200 watts	4 minutes
1300-1400 watts	2 ½ minutes

Once warm, wrap the disc (which should be hot to the touch) in a towel, and place it under a section of the puppy's blankets. ***It is essential that there be ample room, so that the puppy can move away from the heat source, if they become too warm.***

Below, find recommendations for den temperatures, according to the age of the puppies. In order to maintain a constant temperature, cover the dens with a towel or blanket. Make sure to check the temperature frequently as it is essential that the puppies neither chill nor overheat.

Age (days)	Nest Box Temperature	Normal Body Temperature
0-7	85-90° F	96-98° F
8-14	80° F	99° F
15-21	80° F	100.5° F
22-28	80° F	Same as adult dogs
29-35	70° F	Same as adult dogs

Single neonatal puppies are most vulnerable to chill. They have no body fat, and therefore have no mechanism to regulate their own temperature. Litters have the advantage of sleeping next to one another, more efficiently retaining body heat. Puppies with nursing mothers are less prone to chill, because they can derive warmth from their mother.

Feeding

Milk Replacement

The shelter will provide a form of milk replacement, which usually comes in powder form which, when mixed with water, provides neonates with ample nutrition. Follow the instructions provided on the container to properly reconstitute the powder and store it in a glass jar in the refrigerator. Most milk replacement will last only 24 hours. Please mix only as much as you will use within that time period to avoid waste.

It is very important to mix milk replacement properly! Over-concentrated milk replacement can give puppies diarrhea and under-concentrated milk replacement will not provide ample nutrition. Only the first few feedings of formula should be purposefully diluted, in order to get the puppies' systems used to feeding.

Feeding Materials

As stated above, carefully mix all milk replacement in appropriate proportion in a lidded, glass jar, which you can then shake vigorously to mix. Foster parents will be provided with bottle sets containing several bottles, funnels, bottle-cleaning brushes, and pre-cut nipples. The nipples have each had small openings made with a hot needle, which should allow a small amount of milk to slowly pass through. Please do not cut large holes; if the openings are too big, puppies can swallow too much formula at once and aspirate.

Keep all feeding materials clean. Wash everything thoroughly with soap and hot water (or in a dishwasher) and store materials in a clean area. When the formula dries, it can become crusted to the inside of the bottles, so we have provided bottle-cleaning brushes small enough to fit inside. ***It is particularly important that feeding materials be very well cleaned if they are being used between litters.***

Feeding

Because puppies can be quite difficult to hold still, it can be helpful to swaddle them in a hand towel while you feed.

- Warm milk to roughly 100°F (maternal body temperature is 101.5°F).
- Hold the puppy gently, lying with its stomach pressed against your hand, so that its feet can push off against you (think of the position in which it would naturally nurse from its mother).
- Hold the nipple at a very slight angle, mimicking the angle at which a nursing puppy would lift its head to suckle. If the puppy does not automatically receive the nipple, gently open its mouth with your fingers; sometimes moving the nipple in and around its mouth will encourage the puppy to latch on.
- The puppy will stop eating when it is full, but generally you can expect them to consume food at the rate below at each feeding:

Week 1: 12 mls of formula / **pound** of body weight

Week 2: 14 mls of formula / **pound** of body weight

Week 3: 17 mls of formula / **pound** of body weight

Week 4: 20 mls of formula / **pound** of body weight

- **Never squeeze the bottle;** let the puppy eat at its own pace.
- Avoid overfeeding, which can lead to diarrhea, vomiting, or aspiration.

- Should puppies refuse to take formula from the bottle, try gently rubbing their heads and faces. Sometimes puppies won't eat if they need to go to the bathroom, so try stimulating to pee or poop. Make sure they are warm enough. Puppies can easily become dehydrated and hypoglycemic; should they repeatedly refuse to feed, contact the shelter immediately. A shelter staff member may be able to tube feed them until they start eating again on their own. Force feeding neonates can cause aspiration, so please call us if they aren't eating on their own.
- Feeding frequency is dependent upon the age of the neonate, the volume consumed at each feeding, and the food quality.
 - Newborns should be fed 5 times daily
 - Once they are two weeks old, puppies should be fed 3-4 times a day.

Stimulation

For roughly the first three weeks, puppies must be stimulated to urinate and defecate. Using a washcloth soaked in warm water and rung out thoroughly, gently rub the lower abdomen, genitals, and rectum. Puppies will probably urinate each time they are stimulated, but may not defecate for 2-3 feedings. They may also defecate a few minutes after stimulation, so be sure to check and clean them if this occurs. Sometimes gently inserting a lubricated rectal thermometer can also help stimulate defecation.

Puppy suckling

All puppies have the natural instinct to want to nurse/suckle. Commonly, especially with bottle fed orphans, they will look to each other to nurse. If you notice that your foster puppies are trying to nurse on each other, they must be immediately separated! If puppies are allowed to nurse on each other (especially the genitalia) it can cause severe damage. If allowed to continue, it could result in life threatening damage. Please separate the puppies and call the shelter for additional advice.

Section Two: Caring for Weaning/Weaned Puppies

Weaning

At roughly four weeks, puppies will begin to wean. Do not be surprised if their first introduction to solid food results in either diarrhea or constipation; this is merely the result of introducing new elements to their digestive systems. This should be expected to clear up within a few days. It is crucial during weaning to offer puppies ample fresh water in order to keep them well hydrated.

Some puppies will take directly to dry or wet food; others will need more coaxing. For those resistant to trying solid food, offer a teaspoon of A/D mixed with hydrated milk replacement (or a pre-mixed milk solution, available at the shelter); the resulting slurry often helps to tempt reticent puppies to begin eating. (Please note that A/D is very rich, and should be used sparingly, as it can often give them diarrhea.) Wet food that is warmed in the microwave for a few seconds can also be more appetizing, as it becomes fragrant when heated. During the weaning process, continue supplemental bottle feeding as necessary.

Once puppies are fully weaned, offer them dry puppy food and water at all times; supplement this with wet food at least twice per day.

Housetraining

If you have a safe outdoor area, we recommend beginning housetraining your puppy to go outdoors. This helps eliminate confusion for the puppy as s/he tries figure out why peeing in the house is allowed in certain spots. The spot you choose for your puppy must be clean, with no access by dogs other than your own, properly-immunized dogs. This is because of your puppy's weak immune system and a puppy's love of putting everything in their mouth.

If you do not have an appropriate area (for example, if loose neighborhood dogs come into your yard), you should use puppy pads or newspaper to housetrain your dog. In this case, make sure that your puppy's bathroom area is far away from their play and eating space. Some puppies are fastidious and won't eliminate near their living space.

Housetraining shouldn't involve punishment. Often the result is a dog who thinks s/he isn't allowed to pee in front of you, without understanding that you meant they shouldn't pee in the house. If you catch your puppy eliminating in the house, say "oops!" in a friendly tone, pick the puppy up and take them to the place where they are supposed to go (pad or outside.) If they finish eliminating there, reward them with play, praise or a small treat.

Socialization

This is an important age for socialization, the process of exposing puppies to the world. Under-socialized dogs are often fearful or timid in new situations or around strange objects for the rest of their life, so foster homes provide a chance to teach your puppy about a normal dog's life. Your puppy should have lots of positive experiences with new objects and people. Let them see you and your family wearing strange hats or noisy shoes, using a cane, or playing sports that involve equipment such as a baseball glove or a bike. Reward them for being calm when you run the dishwasher, sweep or do other household chores that can be alarming. Introduce them to new people of all ages and personalities in a positive, gentle way and have them play. Have them practice getting in the car and going for short drives. Practice doing things their new owner will need to do, like wiping off muddy paws, looking at (or even better, brushing!) their teeth, brushing long-haired dogs, and looking in their ears. Ask your mail carrier or other delivery people to give the puppy a treat. Start teaching some simple training skills, like sit.

Observe your puppy carefully; if s/he seems overwhelmed, **stop!** Socialization only works if the experiences are fun for your puppy. If you would like advice on safe ways to socialize your puppy, contact the behavior team and we'll help you develop a safe, fun socialization that fits your household and lifestyle.

Section Three: Caring for Nursing Mothers

The wonderful thing about fostering a mother with her puppies is that one's role as a foster parent is greatly simplified. If her puppies are very young, she will provide all their nutrition, stimulate them to use the bathroom, take care of the waste, and groom them. At the beginning, the foster parent's role is simply to monitor, provide warm and quiet housing, and to feed and care for the mother.

Nursing mothers and their puppies should be separated from all other pets in the household. Mother dogs are often highly protective of their puppies, and should not be stressed. Ensure their nesting box is spacious, but provide mother dogs with an area to move away from the puppies. (For example, a crate with a nest for her puppies in a spare room of her own. She can get up and walk

around to stretch her legs, then return to the crate when the puppies need care.) A mother dog should be present to feed, groom, and keep her puppies warm; monitor to ensure she is with them most of the time. If she spends more than two consecutive hours away from the puppies, there may be a problem. In such cases, contact the shelter, as we may advise you to provide supplemental feeding and warmth.

Nursing mothers require significantly more calories in their diet than a normal, adult dog: they should be provided with dry puppy food and water at all times, and their diet should be supplemented with wet food regularly (ideally twice per day). Watching her eat may encourage puppies to wean more quickly than they might if bottle fed, so watch to see when they begin trying to eat solid food (as early as three to four weeks).

Please keep in mind that nursing mothers will be vaccinated and treated for fleas and worms before they enter foster care. They will need to be brought in every two weeks, with their puppies, for booster shots, continued deworming, and to have their mammary glands and milk production monitored.

Adult Dogs in Foster Care

Adult dogs are typically placed in foster care when they have medical or behavioral issues that are hard to address in the shelter. On the medical side, this can include things like recovering from surgery, or undergoing a treatment that may take a couple weeks. In behavior, we most commonly see fearful dogs who can't handle the high stress levels of being in a busy, noisy place full of strangers and young, exuberant dogs who require more consistent handling and training than can be provided by an ever-changing group of volunteers.

Because these dogs tend to have very individualized needs, staff will send out details on what kind of household is needed for a particular dog to our foster families. If you think you are a good fit, the behavior and/or medical staff will discuss the details of living with and caring for this dog.

We perform weekly check-ins with our behavior foster families. This lets staff know how the dog is progressing and gives the foster family a chance to look for advice in handling any new issues that may have come up. Behavior staff can also be contacted at any time by foster families who have questions about their foster pet, even if they were not in foster for behavioral reasons. (For example, a mouthy puppy or a dog recovering from surgery who is bored and chewing on furniture.)

Medical fosters will have a schedule of appointments to ensure that they are recovering properly. Please be prompt and reliable about coming to these, as our medical staff are often very busy and it can be vital that a dog gets treatments at the correct time. If you have questions or concerns about your foster's recovery process, please call or e-mail medical staff.

General guidelines for handling adult foster dogs:

- Don't allow interactions with other people's dogs, such as going to a dog park.
- Always walk on a harness or martingale collar with a flat leash, not a Flexi.
- Leave the shelter ID tag on the dog. You can add a tag with your info as well, but we need that ID number to stay with the animal.
- Supervise your foster dog when s/he is in your yard. We often don't know how good at escaping yards s/he may be and shelter dogs may not feel that this is home, giving them no reason not to leave the yard.

- Use any additional equipment the staff provides, such as slings, Elizabethan collars, Gentle Leaders or muzzles. If you aren't familiar with how something works, just ask and we'll happily teach you.
- Know your foster's medical status. Has s/he had all the needed vaccines? When was the last time s/he was dewormed? Has s/he been altered, or will you need to come in for a spay/neuter? Knowing this info can help keep you, your foster and your own pets safe. Dogs who are in foster for longer periods may need flea treatment or de-wormer again.
- Follow the shelter's training cues and policies, unless behavior staff approves another method. This cuts down on confusion for the dog, handlers and adopters.
- Don't change the dog's diet unless approved by medical staff.
- Give the dog some downtime when s/he first arrives. Keep the first few days as calm and stress-free as possible.
- Limit guest interactions. Most foster dogs don't want to be flooded with visitors.
- Try to accustom them to a normal household and typical activities in a positive way. For example, conditioning them to expect treats when you vacuum the carpet.
- Move forward with training/socialization/exercise only as quickly as the dog is comfortable. Remember that they have just gone through the frightening experience of being in a shelter and may not act like a "normal" dog.
- Crate training is great! It would be wonderful if every foster dog was introduced to the crate in a positive way. It makes managing these dogs, whether they need long-term recovery or just a quiet place to hide, much more feasible for adopters.
- You may be asked to show the dog to adopters in your home. Particularly for fearful dogs, coming back to the shelter to meet possible adopters is stressful.
- Help us promote their adoption! When the dog isn't on the adoption floor, it can be harder for adopters to hear about them. Sending staff pictures, videos, silly stories, updates about their new skills and anything else that will help them catch an adopter's eye gives us more information to use when marketing them and talking with them to possible adopters.

Individual dogs may have different rules for safe handling. Please follow personalized instructions and check with behavior and medical staff if you are uncertain about what to do.

Policies/Expectations

The policies in this manual have been developed in coordination with the SPCA of Tompkins County and the Shelter Medicine Program at Cornell University, using both shelter and veterinarian expertise. Please adhere to the guidelines in this manual and follow our rules of conduct. We are unable to assign foster pets to individuals who do not comply with our guidelines.

Thank you!

We are grateful to our foster parents for your time and devotion to our shelter animals. Thank you for being willing to embrace the responsibility that goes with fostering pets.