

What's a foster home?

Foster parents provide temporary homes for animals before adoption. Foster care is a wonderful and personal way to contribute to saving the lives of homeless animals. Cats are the most common animal needing foster homes, but dogs, rabbits, and even rodents and exotics will sometimes need the extra love and attention that only a foster home can provide.

Why do animals need foster care?

There are several possible reasons:

- Some animals don't do well in the shelter environment because they are frightened or they need a little extra care.
- Newborn animals who need to be nursed or bottle/syringe fed are much more successful physically and socially when raised in a foster home.
- Some animals need time to recover from illness or injury before they are ready for adoption.

Whatever the reason, foster animals need some extra love and care before they are ready to find their forever home. Providing foster care for a few days, weeks, or months can be a lifesaving gift for an animal.

Would I be a good foster parent?

If you are looking for a way to help animals, fostering can be a flexible, fun and rewarding volunteer job. Here's why:

- It's more flexible than volunteer roles that require your presence at the shelter at a scheduled time for a certain number of hours each week.
- It's a great way to enjoy animals in your home if you're not in a position to make that lifelong commitment right now.
- Would you like to add an animal to your household, but you're not sure?
Fostering can be a great way to find out if it's right for you and your family.

Taking animals into your home, loving them, and then letting them go, requires a special kind of person. Your role as a foster parent is to prepare the animal for adoption into a forever home.

How much time will it take?

The specific needs of each animal will determine how much time is involved. Newborn orphaned kittens, for instance, must be fed every few hours. A frightened animal who needs socialization or training will also require some extra time. You can discuss your availability with the foster department to determine what kinds of animals you'll be best suited to foster.

What skills are needed?

It's best to have some knowledge of companion animal behaviour and health. Foster seminars are provided regularly to acquaint foster parents with the basics of fostering, as well as any changes in the program.

Some of the animals most in need of foster care are those that require a little extra help or training. Shy cats often need time to learn to trust and a quiet home environment. Dogs

often benefit from a little obedience training. If you familiarize yourself with some basic training and socialization techniques, you can be a big help in preparing your foster for a new home.

What else is required?

Other than attending fostering seminars, all THS foster parents are asked to make themselves available for a scheduled, informal home visit. This is just to ensure that your home is a suitable and safe environment for fostering, both for you and the animals you wish to foster.

Some animals may have additional specific requirements. For instance, fostering certain dogs may require that you have access to a fenced-in yard.

What about food and medical care?

Foster animals are provided with all the food, supplies and medical attention they need, at the Society, or one of our prescribed outsourced clinic partners. Foster parents are encouraged to purchase their own food and supplies where they can, in order to help the Society keep the cost of the program as low as possible.

What about my own pets?

You will want to consider how any animals in your household will adjust to having a foster pet. Some animals do very well with a temporary friend and can help socialize the foster animal. Other pets have a harder time with new animals being added to or leaving the family. You're the best judge of your pet's personality.

Will I have to find a home for the animal myself?

The Toronto Humane Society takes responsibility for finding a new forever home, though you can help by telling friends, family and co-workers about your foster pet. Anyone who is interested in adopting a foster pet will have to go through the same adoption process as those who adopt animals housed at the shelter. Please remember not to make promises to your friends, as no one is guaranteed an adoption.

What about when it's time to say goodbye?

Giving up an animal you've fostered, even to a wonderful new home, can be difficult emotionally. Parting with animals you've nurtured and loved requires a very special kind of person.

THS tries to update foster homes about the pets they fostered, once they have gone to their new forever homes. Receiving an update is a great way of reminding you that you were an important part of saving a life.

Sometimes a foster home turns into a permanent home. That's why we're always on the lookout for new foster homes!

But is it fair to the animals?

Some people are reluctant to foster animals because they are concerned that it is unfair to take in an animal, establish a bond, and then allow the animal to be adopted into another home. Isn't that a second abandonment?

Not at all! Being in a foster home can be a life-saving bridge for an abandoned or frightened pet. It gives the animal a chance to get used to life in a house, and an opportunity to learn that people can be kind, food is available, and there is a warm, secure place to sleep.

Foster care can help prepare a pet for a new life in a permanent home. There is no shortage of animals who need this preparation time before finding their own family.

How do I give fostering a try?

When you are ready, contact the THS foster department to find out when the next Foster Orientation will occur. At this session, you can ask any questions you may have and fill out the foster volunteer application form.

Foster parents make an enormous difference to the quality of life of hundreds of animals each year. We are very grateful for your interest in this program, and hope we can help to make it as rewarding an experience for you as it is for our animal friends.

Contact Info:

Please contact Shannon at:

scaulfield@torontohumanesociety.com

Thank you for your enthusiasm and support!