



**Dumb Friends League.**<sup>®</sup>  
COMPASSION ALWAYS ♥

**FOSTER 101**

**TRAINING MANUAL**



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# WELCOME

Thank you for your interest in becoming a foster parent! This manual is a reference guide to help you understand more about the foster program and caring for shelter pets in your home. Please review the information thoroughly so you are prepared to move forward in the program, and keep the manual in a safe place for future reference. Reach out to Volunteer Services if you have questions or concerns at any time. We hope fostering pets for the Dumb Friends League is a very rewarding experience for you.

## TYPICAL FOSTER PETS & HOW TO CARE FOR THEM

<b>CATS &amp; KITTENS: As many as 1,400 kittens come through the foster program each year.</b>	
<b>Kittens under the age of 2 months when entering the shelter</b>	Typically, it is best to foster two or more kittens at a time. Kittens receive a dewormer at 2 weeks and vaccinations at 4 weeks, and then vaccinations every two weeks until they are 4 months old. Kittens should gain at least one ounce every other day. <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Bottle babies (0-4 weeks)—require feeding every two to four hours depending on their age.</li><li>• Transitional kittens (4-8 weeks)—require socialization and proper play.</li></ul>
<b>Mother cats with kittens</b>	Kittens can be weaned from the mother cat at 6 to 8 weeks of age.
<b>Cats/kittens with upper-respiratory infections</b>	Typical fostering period is about two weeks.
<b>Cats/kittens recovering from various surgical procedures</b>	Length of fostering will vary depending on surgery.
<b>Underweight cats or kittens</b>	Typical fostering period is one week to two weeks.
<b>Behavior cats</b>	Various behavior concerns (e.g., fear, overstimulation, etc.). Fostering period varies.
<b>DOGS &amp; PUPPIES</b>	
<b>Puppies under the age of 2 months when entering the shelter</b>	Typically, it is best to foster two or more puppies together. Puppies receive a dewormer at 2 weeks and vaccinations at 4 weeks, and then vaccinations every two weeks until they are 4 months old.
<b>Nursing dogs with puppies</b>	Puppies can be weaned from the mother dog at 6 to 8 weeks of age.
<b>Dogs with kennel cough</b>	Typical fostering period is up to two weeks.
<b>Dogs/puppies recovering from various surgical procedures</b>	Length of foster care depends on type of surgery.
<b>Underweight dogs or puppies</b>	Fostering period varies.
<b>Behavior dogs</b>	Various behavior concerns (e.g., fear, high arousal, etc.). Fostering period varies.
<b>SMALL MAMMALS</b>	
<b>Small mammals under the adoption age</b>	The length of fostering varies with the species—typically 1-3 weeks
<b>Nursing small mammals and infant small mammals</b>	Typical foster period is one month.
<b>Small mammals recovering from injuries</b>	Foster period depends on the extent of the injuries.
<b>Underweight small mammals</b>	Fostering period varies.

## SUPPLIES PROVIDED BY THE DUMB FRIENDS LEAGUE

- Food
- Litter boxes and puppy pads
- Crates, kennels, baby gates\*
- Carefresh bedding/litter and hay
- Litter
- Blankets and towels
- Medical supplies (vaccines and any medication)
- Toys
- Collars and leashes
- Food dishes

\* *Please refer to the handout provided on our website at [ddfl.org/content/crate-training-your-dog](http://ddfl.org/content/crate-training-your-dog) to learn the correct way to begin crate training.*

**Additional supplies:** If there is anything else you feel you need to be successful with your foster animal please let the Foster office know.

## FOSTER-FRIENDLY HOME ENVIRONMENTS

The transition to your home from a kennel at our shelter can be stressful for your foster animal. It is important to go slowly. We recommend confining your foster pet away from resident pets not only for transmission of disease, but also to help with the transition into a new home.

- Start your foster animal in a small area, such as a bathroom or small bedroom.
- Your foster animal may have some diarrhea and a lack of appetite the first couple of days in your home.
- The animal may hide the first couple of days. Be patient with your foster animal and allow them to approach you.
- If the animal is not eating, drinking or eliminating for the first two days, email [foster@ddfl.org](mailto:foster@ddfl.org) or call 303.751.5772 and ask to speak to the Foster office.
- See below for room set-up suggestions and a few helpful hints on how to provide the best environment for your foster pet.

### Keeping a foster journal

We recommend keeping a journal for your foster pets, recording information on what they like, how they are with other pets, etc. This is also helpful information for adopting patrons. We also encourage using this journal to keep track of your check-up appointments.

A printable kitten care sheet is available online at [ddflintranet.org/kitten-care-sheet](http://ddflintranet.org/kitten-care-sheet). It contains a basic feeding chart for tracking when kittens are fed, if they urinate/defecate and what their weight is.

### Report any concerns to the Foster office immediately and do not wait for your scheduled return.

Call immediately if your foster pet experiences a seizure, convulsions, loss of consciousness, a broken bone, labored breathing or is fading. Diarrhea and vomiting without blood and weight loss are not immediate emergencies but should be addressed during business hours.

For more information on behavior, please visit our website at [ddfl.org](http://ddfl.org). Click on services/behaviorhelp/handouts.

## FOSTER ANIMAL PICK-UPS & DROP-OFFS

### Leslie A. Malone Center

When picking up or dropping off your foster pet, please enter through the foster door.

### Buddy Center

When picking up or dropping off your foster pet, please go to the adoption desk in the lobby and notify a staff member.

# CARING FOR FOSTER ANIMALS

CATS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure the food, water and litter box are easily accessible in the same room. If you have more than two kittens, you should have more than two litter boxes available at all times. This will help with litter-box training.</li> <li>• Free-feed cats dry food unless told otherwise. The Dumb Friends League feeds cats Hill's® Science Diet®. Always give them access to clean water, changed daily. Food directions are given at time of pick-up.</li> <li>• Ensure that they cannot get into anything dangerous, such as electrical cords and household cleaners.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide them with toys.</li> <li>• Large litter boxes make a great place for kittens to snuggle (without the litter, of course). Add a blanket or towel.</li> <li>• <b>Never let your foster cat or kittens outside.</b> They can easily be spooked and may run away. They are also great climbers and can scurry up a tree without anyone noticing.</li> <li>• Always keep the toilet seat lid down, with foster kittens in your home, if they will have access to the bathroom.</li> </ul>	
DOGS		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make sure their food, water and puppy pads (if necessary) are accessible. Puppy pads are available at your request, just ask the Foster office. Puppy training handouts are available online.</li> <li>• Ensure that they cannot get into anything dangerous, such as electrical cords and household cleaners.</li> <li>• Clear the room of things they may be able to chew.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide them with plenty of safe toys—avoid toys with plastic eyes and noses.</li> <li>• <b>Do not take dogs or puppies to dog parks or let them off leash in unfenced areas.</b> Dogs without proper training can be easily distracted and run away.</li> <li>• <b>Puppies should never be left outside unattended.</b> They may be able to squeeze under a fence or be stolen.</li> </ul>	
SMALL MAMMALS (SMAMS)		
GUINEA PIGS	MICE & RATS	RABBITS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Line the bottom of the cage with newspaper, Carefresh bedding/litter and hay.</li> <li>• Provide them with a place to hide—igloos make great hideouts.</li> <li>• Provide a hanging water bottle for their water source.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The bottom of the cage should be lined with newspaper and Carefresh bedding/litter.</li> <li>• Provide a hanging water bottle for their water source.</li> <li>• If using an exercise wheel, make sure it is solid—wheels that are made of wire can cause injury.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cages with bottoms work the best.</li> <li>• Line the bottom of the cage with newspaper.</li> <li>• Provide a litter box with hay and Carefresh bedding/litter.</li> <li>• Provide a hanging water bottle or bowl for their water source.</li> </ul>

**ALL SMALL MAMMALS:** Make sure they are in an area away from cats and dogs. Ensure the bottom of the cage is solid. Wire-bottomed cages can injure feet.

*If you'd like additional information about caring for small animals, please ask someone in the Foster office to provide our small mammals training manual.*

*This manual is also available on the Dumb Friends League's intranet site.*

# SOCIALIZATION

CATS & KITTENS	DOGS & PUPPIES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the kitten is comfortable, practice handling toes to mimic nail clipping—a gentle squeeze of their feet. Clip their nails (if needed).</li> <li>• If the cat is comfortable, brush as needed.</li> <li>• When necessary, gently clean feces and/or urine off the kitten’s fur using pet wipes or a damp wash cloth.</li> <li>• Make sure to give your foster cats lots of love and attention.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If the puppy is comfortable, practice checking the puppy’s teeth.</li> <li>• If the puppy is comfortable, pinch their toes—a gentle squeeze of their feet to mimic nail clipping.</li> <li>• Work on leash training—take for walks.</li> <li>• Bathe and brush, if needed.</li> <li>• Give them lots of love and attention.</li> <li>• Teach them basic commands like, "sit."</li> </ul>

# UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES

CATS & KITTENS	
<p><b>0–2 Weeks = Neonatal</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kittens are learning to orient towards sound.</li> <li>• The eyes are open around 2 weeks of age.</li> <li>• The ears will start to open around day five and be completely open by day 17.</li> <li>• Kittens have low blood pressure and a high heart rate.</li> <li>• No teeth.</li> <li>• They will have 15 to 35 breaths per minute until they are around 4 weeks of age.</li> <li>• Competition for rank and territory begin. Separation from their mothers and littermates at this point can lead to poor learning skills and aggression towards people and other pets.</li> </ul>	<p><b>2–7 Weeks = Socialization</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At week four, hearing is developed and they start to interact with their littermates. They begin to walk around, and their teeth start erupting.</li> <li>• By the fifth week, sight is fully developed. They can run, avoid obstacles, stalk and pounce. During this time, they will start to groom themselves and others.</li> <li>• By the sixth and seventh week, they begin to develop motor abilities and social interaction.</li> <li>• At four to eight weeks, the deciduous pre-molars erupt.</li> </ul>
<p><b>7–14 Weeks = Most active play period</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most learning is through observation, preferably from their mother.</li> <li>• Social play and object play is very important for their physical coordination at this stage.</li> <li>• Social play includes ambushing and licking.</li> <li>• Object play includes pawing, tossing, scooping, mouthing and holding.</li> <li>• Social/object play includes tail chasing, pouncing and leaping.</li> </ul>	<p><b>3–6 Months = Social Relationships</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kittens are most influenced by their littermates and playmates during this period (playmates may now include companions of other species).</li> </ul> <p><b>6–18 Months = Adolescence</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginnings of sexual behavior if they are not spayed or neutered.</li> </ul>



## UNDERSTANDING DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES (CONT.)

<b>PUPPIES</b>	
<b>0–2 Weeks = Neonatal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• During this time, puppies are most influenced by their mother.</li> <li>• Puppies are born with taste and touch sensations.</li> </ul>	<b>2–4 Weeks = Transitional</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Puppies are still influenced by their mothers and are starting to be influenced by their littermates as well.</li> <li>• Their eyes are open; sight will be fully developed by 4 to 5 weeks.</li> <li>• Puppies' teeth will begin to erupt.</li> <li>• They will begin to hear and smell.</li> <li>• Puppies will begin to stand, walk a little, bark and wag their tails.</li> </ul>
<b>4–12 Weeks = Socialization</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is very important during this period that puppies are meeting other dogs and people—this helps build good social skills.</li> <li>• Puppies are becoming more aware of their surroundings (dogs and people).</li> <li>• From 4 to 12 weeks, puppies are beginning to learn about play, inhibited bite, social structure and physical coordination.</li> <li>• By 5 to 7 weeks, puppies are developing curiosity and exploring new experiences. Positive people experiences are very important during this time.</li> <li>• At 7 to 9 weeks, puppies have full use of their senses. Housetraining can begin.</li> <li>• Puppies begin to experience real fear by 8 to 10 weeks. During this time, puppies can be alarmed by normal objects and sounds, and need positive training.</li> <li>• At 9 to 12 weeks, puppies are exploring their environment more, learning about appropriate social interactions, and they begin to focus on people. This is a good time to start obedience training.</li> </ul>	<b>3–6 Months = Social Relationships</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Puppies are most influenced by their littermates and playmates (can be of another species).</li> <li>• They are beginning to see social relationships with their littermates and humans.</li> <li>• Teething will begin, along with more chewing.</li> <li>• At 4 months, puppies will experience another fear stage. Positive experiences are very important during this time.</li> </ul>
	<b>6–18 Months = Adolescence</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most influenced by humans and other dogs.</li> <li>• Heightened exploration of assertion; testing limits, challenging human and dog relationships.</li> <li>• Puppies will go through another chew phase at 7 to 9 months—this is part of exploring their territory.</li> <li>• Beginnings of sexual behavior if they are not spayed or neutered.</li> </ul>

## CLEANING PROTOCOLS

### Sanitizing Between Foster Animals

Bleach everything that can safely be bleached using 1 part bleach and 32 parts water. All laundry should be run through the dryer on high heat. Dishwashers and clothing washers work great for sterilizing toys and bedding. Throw away toys that cannot be bleached (i.e., feather toys). Rescue cleaner, which is used in the shelter, is available for you to take home if you request it.

### Cleaning Carriers

We provide carriers for you, but if you would like to use your personal carrier, please make sure that all debris is cleaned out, the carrier is cleaned with a 1:32 dilution bleach/water solution or Rescue cleaner. Allow either to soak for 10 minutes. The carrier can then be rinsed and used for a new animal(s).

## RECOGNIZING COMMON ILLNESSES

Most common illnesses are treated with oral medication. Some animals are already on medication when going to a foster home. Visit [vet.cornell.edu/fhc](http://vet.cornell.edu/fhc) to see an instructional video on how to give a cat oral medication.

**Even if your foster animal has been determined to be healthy, please keep the animal in an isolated area for the first 10 days and watch closely for any changes in normal behavior. Most common illnesses take time to manifest. If the animal shows any of the following symptoms, please call as indicated:**

SYMPTOM	POSSIBLE CAUSE	WHAT TO DO
Sneezing, wheezing, coughing	Upper respiratory infection	If more than three times that day, call that day.
Discharge from the nose (clear colored, bloody)	Upper respiratory infection	Call that day.
Sores on the nose, tongue or mouth	Upper respiratory infection	Call that day.
Watery, goopy or red eyes	Conjunctivitis	Call that day.
Diarrhea	Stress, change of food, intestinal parasites	If stools are soft but not watery, monitor for two days. If no improvement, collect a fecal sample and call that day. If stools are watery and/or bloody, collect fecal sample; call that day.  Collect fecal sample with fecalizer. Refrigerate no longer than 24 hours.
Vomiting	Possible viral infection or foreign body or overeating	If vomiting two or more times, still eating and is active, call that day.  If vomiting frequently, shows loss of appetite or not as active, call immediately.
Loss of appetite	Normal first day adjustment or serious sign of illness	If not eating for more than 24 hours, call that day.
Dehydration	Associated with diarrhea, vomiting or loss of appetite	To test for dehydration, gently pinch the animal's skin over the shoulders. If the skin springs back slowly (takes more than one second) the animal may be dehydrated. Call immediately.
Hair loss	External parasites/ringworm or allergies	Call that day.
Itchy/dirty ears (dirt may appear like coffee grounds)	Ear mites or ear infection	Call that day.
On medication but is getting worse or not improving	Complicating factors, immature immune system, multiple issues present, congenital defect	Call that day.

# KEEPING FOSTER ANIMALS SAFE FROM POISONS

Please help us keep foster animals safe in the home. Below is a list of the MOST common poisonous items. Please visit [aspc.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control](http://aspc.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control) for a more comprehensive list.

FOODS	HOUSEHOLD ITEMS	PLANTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Almonds</li> <li>• Avocado</li> <li>• Chives</li> <li>• Chocolate</li> <li>• Garlic</li> <li>• Grapes</li> <li>• Human Medications</li> <li>• Onion</li> <li>• Raisins</li> <li>• Xylitol (sweetener used in foods like gum, candy and toothpaste)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Antifreeze</li> <li>• Cleaning Products</li> <li>• Fertilizer</li> <li>• Glo-Sticks</li> <li>• Herbicides</li> <li>• Ice Melt</li> <li>• Insecticides</li> <li>• Potpourri</li> <li>• Ribbons and Tinsel</li> <li>• Tobacco &amp; Nicotine Products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Christmas Tree Water</li> <li>• Easter, Calla &amp; Tiger Lilies</li> <li>• Elephant Ear</li> <li>• Flower Bulbs</li> <li>• Holly</li> <li>• Hydrangea</li> <li>• Ivy</li> <li>• Marijuana</li> <li>• Mistletoe</li> <li>• Philodendron</li> <li>• Poinsettia</li> <li>• Sago or Cycad Palms</li> </ul>

## MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

For all medical emergencies that occur during normal operating hours of the Dumb Friends League, please call us at 303.751.5772 and bring the animal directly to the shelter through the foster lobby.

For medical emergencies that occur outside of normal operating hours, please call 720.334.1422. This phone is carried by a staff member at all times. If you get no immediate answer, rest assured your call will be returned as soon as possible. Please call back if your call is not returned immediately. Make the animal as comfortable as possible. The staff member will direct you to an approved emergency clinic or Leslie A. Malone Center if appropriate.

Should your foster animal pass away at your home, please notify the Foster office as soon as possible. If the death occurs overnight, call the Foster office's emergency phone at 720.334.1422.

*The Dumb Friends League cannot provide treatment or reimbursement for your own animal's illness.*

### COMMON ISSUES & CONCERNS

#### Conditions Requiring Immediate Action

**Call or email the Foster office immediately for the following conditions:**

- Foster animal has bloody diarrhea
- Foster animal is lethargic
- Foster animal has repeated vomiting (not associated with eating)
- Foster animal has neurologic signs: dizziness, twitching, loss of consciousness, head tilt, loss of balance.
- Foster animal aspirated during feeding-bottle babies can inhale formula. Formula may come from the nose. They may have an increased respiration rate or have labored breathing.
- Foster animal has difficulty urinating or defecating (not able to express bladder or has not defecated in 48 hours)

## Conditions Requiring Monitoring

Call or email the Foster office as soon as possible for the conditions listed below, and monitor the animal over the next 24 hours:

- Foster animal has sneezing, wheezing, nasal discharge and/or coughing
- Foster animal has ocular discharge
- Foster animal has loose stool at two or more feedings
- Foster animal has occasional vomiting (more than two times in a 24-hour period)
- Foster animal has decreased appetite
- Foster animal is limping
- Foster animal did not eat at all during last two meals, but seems otherwise normal
- Foster animal is dehydrated, but has been eating and drinking normally
- Foster animal has lost weight, but has been eating well

## Quarantines

Some illnesses are more contagious and can survive longer in the home environment than others. This requires us to quarantine the home. Quarantine may last for up to six months. Quarantine is necessary if the following illnesses are seen:

- **Panleukopenia:** Feline viral illness that is accompanied by bloody diarrhea, vomiting and lethargy.
- **Parvovirus:** Canine viral illness that is accompanied by bloody diarrhea, vomiting and lethargy.
- **Ringworm:** Symptoms include hair loss and lesions on the skin. Ringworm is contagious to other animals, as well as to people. We treat ringworm in the shelter for dogs and cats, and you can also choose to treat it in your home. Treatment for your foster animals generally takes two to three months. If your foster pet tests positive for ringworm, it will need to receive three negative cultures before being returned to the League for adoption.

Quarantine periods are determined on a case-by-case basis depending on the level of exposure in the home. Quarantine periods can range from 1-6 months depending on the level of exposure.

If you are placed on quarantine, please clean everything with bleach or Rescue. Throw away anything that cannot be cleaned.

## SCHEDULING APPOINTMENTS

**All pet pick-ups, vaccination and drop-offs MUST be scheduled.** By making an appointment, you will receive our staff's undivided attention when you come in. Our staff cannot ensure they will be able to meet with you if you don't have an appointment. **PLEASE NO DROP-INS except in the case of an emergency.**

- All other appointments can be scheduled by emailing or calling 303.751.5772.ext 7290
- Vaccination, supply pickups and foster drop offs can be scheduled online through the volunteer website—links provided below.

### Buddy Center Appointment Link:

<http://bit.ly/2iO3V3t>

### Leslie A. Malone Center Appointment Link:

<http://bit.ly/2jDcL2K>

NOTE: The Dumb Friends League is closed on Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's Day. **Pick-up or drop-off appointments cannot be made on these days.** For medical emergencies, please call 720.334.1422. This phone is carried by a staff member at all times. If you get no immediate answer, rest assured your call will be returned as soon as possible. Please call again if your call is not returned immediately. Make the animal as comfortable as possible. The staff member will direct you to an approved emergency clinic or Leslie A. Malone Center if appropriate.

## SERVICE HOURS

**It is very important that all volunteer service hours are recorded.** We report volunteer hours every year in our annual report and include combined totals in grant proposals.

Foster parents receive one hour per day, per animal in the home. These hours are added to your volunteer profile once a month. We are unable to sign off on foster hours for community or school service purposes. However, you can reference to and print your own service hours by logging into the volunteer website.

## WHAT IS THE NEXT STEP?

Once you have completed the Foster 101 class, you will be contacted for your home inspection (usually within three to four days following Foster 101). After your home passes inspection, you are an official Homes with Hearts foster parent. Welcome to the Dumb Friends League family!

## READY TO FOSTER?

To view available animals in need of a foster home, please log into your volunteer profile at [ddfl.org/vol-login](http://ddfl.org/vol-login). Look for the box labeled "Foster Parents." Then, click on the link labeled "Find your next fosterling here!"

You may contact the Foster office at 303.751.5772 ext. 7290 or by emailing [foster@ddfl.org](mailto:foster@ddfl.org) to schedule your first foster pet pick-up. Please plan on the appointment taking up to an hour to ensure all of your questions are answered, you receive medical instructions (if applicable) and pet supplies.







**Dumb Friends League®**  
COMPASSION ALWAYS ♥

LOCATIONS

**Leslie A. Malone Center**

2080 S. Quebec St.  
Denver, CO 80231

**Buddy Center**

4556 Castleton Ct.  
Castle Rock, CO 80109

**Harmony Equine Center**

5540 E. Hwy 86  
Franktown, CO 80116

**Solutions – Veterinary Hospital**

191 Yuma St.  
Denver, CO 80223  
303.722.5800

**Solutions – Cat Spay/Neuter Clinic**

191 Yuma St.  
Denver, CO 80223

**Valley Humane League**

6414 County Rd 107 S  
Alamosa, CO 81101  
719.589.3385

CONTACT US

Phone ..... 303.751.5772  
Fax ..... 303.696.0063  
Website ..... [ddfl.org](http://ddfl.org)

*Visit our website at [ddfl.org](http://ddfl.org) for hours of operation at each facility or to schedule an appointment.*