

Foster Care Handbook



Florida Keys SPCA Contact Information

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Foster Care Handbook

Introductory message

Thank you for your interest in the Florida Keys SPCA (FKSPCA) Foster Care Program! If you have never cared for a foster animal(s) before, you are about to experience the joys of being a pet owner without the lifetime responsibility. Our program allows animal(s) that are too young for adoption, are recovering from surgery or illness, or are in need of other special care to stay in private homes until they are ready for adoption.

About this Handbook

This handbook is designed to provide foster parents with a comprehensive overview of the FKSPCA Foster Program. Attached you will find a variety of information to help you get started. We want to make sure you know how to contact us when you have questions or concerns about the foster animal(s) you are caring for. We ask that you be in regular contact with the FKSPCA Foster Coordinator to let them know the status of your foster animal(s) even when everything is going smoothly.

Foster Care Program

The foster care volunteer plays a crucial role in saving lives at FKSPCA. These volunteers are highly committed people who dedicate a week or, at times, months of their time to homeless animals needing care. From healthy animals needing a bridge to a forever home to animals that come to FKSPCA injured, ill, too young, too small, unsocialized, pregnant, orphaned or in need of behavior training before they can find their forever homes - Foster Parents are partners and heroes in our lifesaving mission!

Overall Responsibility of the Foster Home

Foster homes are responsible for providing a warm, safe place for foster animals. They are responsible for providing socialization for the pets in their care, teaching good behavior to the animals and contacting FKSPCA for any medical problems that may arise. Foster homes are responsible for bringing animals in for administering worming meds and vaccinations. FKSPCA is responsible for providing all medical and emergency care for the foster animal(s). **Foster volunteers should understand that if they seek medical help outside of FKSPCA, they take financial responsibility in doing so.**

Time Commitment

The time commitment for foster care can range from a few days to several months depending on the animal's need for foster care. Common foster situations and durations are as follows:

- Puppies and kittens-with or without their mothers, younger than 8 weeks and/or 2 pounds that are very susceptible to disease in the shelter environment and cannot yet be altered are placed into foster homes until old enough to be adopted. Care can be up to 10 weeks depending on the puppies/kittens age and weight. Some puppies/kittens may require bottle-feeding.
- Animals, youth to adults, who are sick or injured may require a quiet, healthy, and attentive environment to recover. This foster period could last up to several months depending on the illness or injury. Foster parents for special needs animals may require a significant time commitment and experience with caring for medicating sick animals.
- Animals, youth to adults, which may be experiencing behavioral issues and require a behavioral rehabilitation foster environment in order to attain a successful adoption.

In addition to time spent caring for and socializing your foster animal(s) in your home, you must consider the additional time for vet checks and/or emergency care and transporting to and from the appointments.

Adequate housing

We ask that you only foster the number of animal(s) that you can house comfortably, keep adequately clean and fed, and provide adequate socialization for. Always keep the needs of the personal pets in mind when considering fostering. Your pets need to be fully vaccinated before you begin fostering.

Emotional Investment

Bonds will form between you and our foster animals. This is perfectly natural, but does not mean you should adopt the pet. The same considerations for any person adopting a pet should be maintained for the foster parent. The Foster volunteer should analyze whether adopting the foster animal fits with their household or is just an emotional response to caring for this young or sick animal. Please realize that foster homes are always in need and when they “fill up”, fewer animals can be helped.

Foster parents will always become emotionally involved with the animals they are caring for. It is important that foster parents understand that sometimes an animal will not survive, even with the best of care. Each foster parent will handle this differently. Please feel free to discuss your feelings with your Foster Coordinator.

Risk

There is always a risk of bringing disease (or even injury) home to your own pets when taking in a foster animal(s). FKSPCA has done all it can to determine the health of the animal(s) before going into your home. If there are known risks, you will be advised at the time of foster placement and it is your choice to take on the responsibility.

Health Considerations

Protecting Our Animals

Prior to being placed into foster care, all animals old enough will be vaccinated, wormed, and given flea/tick treatment as necessary.

Cats

- Kittens that are 4 weeks of age and no mother will receive a FVRCP, dewormer and be re-vaccinated every 2-3 weeks after that until they have a set of 4 vaccines or they reach 4 months of age.
- Kittens with a mother will receive a FVRCP, dewormer at 6 weeks of age and or weaned from mother and be re-vaccinated every 2-3 weeks until they have a set of 4 vaccines or they reach 4 months of age.
- If the kitten is over the age of 8 weeks the kitten will be tested for FeLV/FIV.

Dogs

- Puppies that are 4 weeks of age and no mother will receive a DAPPv, dewormer and be re-vaccinated every 2-3 weeks until they have a set of 4 vaccines or they reach 4 months of age.
- Puppies with a mother will receive a DAPPv, dewormer at 6 weeks of age and or weaned from mother and be re-vaccinated every 2-3 weeks until they have a set of 4 vaccines or they reach 4 months of age.

All the vaccinations and routine care will be given by the shelter staff.

When you pick up your foster animal(s), you will receive a foster tracking form which includes dates for follow up care and/or vaccinations. Foster parents will agree to transport the animal(s) to the shelter for the care. You must confirm your appointment prior to coming to the shelter to insure the proper staff are available.

Protecting your resident pets

When bringing a new foster animal(s) into your home please keep in mind that they may be carrying an illness that could affect your pet's health. FKSPCA asks that you keep your pets separate from the foster animals for a minimum of **10 days**. The only way to avoid possible exposure of your pets is to keep them separate from your pets for the entire foster period. We highly recommend that your pets be current on all routine vaccinations and that your dogs are also current on the Bordetella vaccination (Kennel Cough).

When your foster animals seems healthy and you do choose to introduce them to your resident pets, it is a good idea to prohibit sharing of food and water bowls, litter boxes, and toys. Any introduction should be made with great care and under constant supervision, especially if you are planning to introduce a protective mother to your resident pets.

After handling foster animals, it is always a good idea to wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water before handling your pets. This will further reduce the likelihood of exposing your pet to illness.

Diseases and Illnesses

- **Feline Distemper-** feline distemper is caused by a virus. No specific conditions are required for it to exist so it attacks unprotected kittens indiscriminately and without warning. It is extremely harmful to cats of all ages and is especially lethal to young kittens. Kittens can fall into a coma and die before a foster parent even realizes a kitten is sick. Symptoms include listlessness, lack of appetite, vomiting and diarrhea and blood in the stool.
- **Canine Distemper-** Distemper is an extremely contagious and often fatal viral disease. Over 50% of dogs and 80% of puppies that contract the virus die from it. It is an airborne infection that can be transmitted with or without direct contact with an infected dog through mucous, urine and feces. Some of the symptoms include squinting, discharge/pus from the eyes, weight loss, coughing, vomiting, nasal discharge and diarrhea.
- **URI-** Upper respiratory infections are a group of viral and bacterial infections of the upper respiratory system with cold-like symptoms. URI's are highly infections and are usually contracted from other animals. URI's can be fatal to kittens. Symptoms of this disease are sneezing, goopy eyes, and heavy breathing.
- **Kennel Cough-** Kennel cough is the equivalent of a human cold. The shelter is much like a child

day care-as soon as one dog has a cold;most all the dogs in the shelter get a cold. Just like people who have colds, kennel cough develops when the dog is stressed or when the immune system is compromised. Kennel cough usually goes away as soon as the dog has a warm, quiet and soothing place to sleep, and where they can drink lots of water, eat healthy food and receive lots of TLC! Kennel cough is typically a dry, hacking cough. There may be some discharge from the nose and a clear liquid that is coughed up. It's generally a mild, self limiting illness of the trachea and bronchi encountered in all age groups of dogs, but especially in those under unusual stress, crowding or close confinement. Kennel cough exists in shelters, boarding kennels, groomers, veterinary offices, off-leash areas, etc. Because kennel cough is contagious, infected dogs should NOT be around other dogs until they're over their cough. If you have a dog at your home and plan to foster a dog with kennel cough, we have found that if your own dog is healthy and has been vaccinated annually, then your dog will most likely not get sick. Talk to your vet about giving your own dog the Bordetella nasal vaccination.

- **Feline Leukemia (Cats)**- This deadly disease is caused by a virus that inhibits the immune system. It is not likely that a foster home would experience this disease as every precaution is taken to avoid placement of cats into homes without first testing for feline leukemia. However, kittens under the age of eight weeks cannot be tested reliably for the disease. If taking in kittens whose mother could be tested, foster parents should be extremely careful in keeping contact between their pets and foster pets from occurring. It is transmitted from cat to cat via saliva, urine and other bodily fluids. Your resident cat must test negative and be kept current on annual testing.
- **FIV "Feline Aids" (Cats)**- This deadly disease is caused by a virus that inhibits the immune system. It is not likely that a foster home would experience this disease as every precaution is taken to avoid placement of cats into homes without first testing for feline leukemia. However, kittens under the age of eight weeks cannot be tested reliably for the disease. If taking in kittens whose mother could be tested, foster parents should be extremely careful in keeping contact between their pets and foster pets from occurring. It is transmitted from cat to cat via saliva into the bloodstream like a bite. Your resident cat must test negative and be kept current on annual testing
- **FIP**-This disease does not occur as commonly as URI. Symptoms are the same as distemper but with abdominal bloating and labored breathing.
- **Diarrhea**- A common ailment of animals and can be caused by many factors including, bacteria, viruses, parasites, toxic substances, food or psychological upset. If diarrhea persists more than 24 hours, call FKSPCA. You will be asked to bring in the animal to diagnose the problem.
- **Parvovirus (Dogs)**- Parvo attacks the intestinal tract, white blood cells and heart muscle. Signs of infection are depression, loss of appetite, vomiting, severe diarrhea, fever and sometimes kennel cough symptoms. The illness is contracted through contact with the infected feces of another dog. This is why you must NOT take your foster puppy out to public places where other dogs have been until they have completed their vaccine series against the disease. This virus can be deadly; **Call FKSPCA immediately if you believe your foster dog may have this illness.** Annual vaccinations protect against this serious and often fatal canine disease. Your own dog must be currently vaccinated against parvo at all times. Be aware that parvovirus is not a disease that affects puppies only.
- **Vomiting**- Occasional vomiting can be considered normal, frequent vomiting is not.
- **Ear Mites**- Nearly microscopic, these parasites live in the ear canals of dogs and cats and cause a brown waxy material that looks similar to coffee grounds to form in the ears. Call for instructions for treating ear mites.

Internal Parasites and Skin Conditions

- **Roundworms**-Roundworms are big worms. Typically they are white, about the diameter of spaghetti and about 4 inches in length. They are particularly common in puppies and may produce no symptoms other than diarrhea. However, it is also common for the worms to be visible in the feces or vomit. The puppy's abdomen can be rounded and "fat". Roundworms are transmitted by ingesting contaminated soil, feces or prey. Cats and dogs can transmit roundworms to their offspring through nursing. They can cause weight loss, weakness, pneumonia and intestinal obstruction. This commonly occurs through shared water and food bowls, bedding material, or even in the yard.
- **Hookworms**- This worm is generally invisible to the unaided human eye. They are about ½ inch long and very, very thin. Puppies and kittens acquire hookworms before birth through the mother or by ingesting hookworm eggs. They cause diarrhea, weakness and anemia as a result of intestinal bleeding caused by the parasite "hooking" itself to the intestinal wall.
- **Whipworms**- Whipworms are another worm found as common in dogs as puppies. They are rarely found in cats. Note:Pyrantel is not effective against whipworms. Panacur is the standard treatment.
- **Coccidiosis**- Microscopic, one-celled organism irritate the intestinal lining, leading to diarrhea and weight loss. Coccidiosis is transmitted through feces.
- **Tapeworms**- Tapeworm is acquired by eating uncooked meat, certain prey and also from fleas. It can be hard to detect until a segment of the tapeworm is found in fresh stool or around the anus. Watch for opaque white, rice-like segments that are capable of movement when fresh.
- **Ringworm**- Ringworm is not a parasite but a fungal infection of the skin. It is more commonly found in kittens than in cats. It is more common in puppies than adult dogs. The infection can come from another animal or from fungus that is found in soil. Classic symptoms appear as a scab or irregularly shaped area of skin infection and may include a rapidly enlarging circle of hair loss. Ringworm can be easily transmitted to humans, especially children, the elderly and immunosuppressed people.
- **Sarcoptic Mange**- The parasite that causes mange is transmitted through physical contact. This animal-to-human form is less serious than the human-to-human form and is usually self-limiting. Infected animals suffer blisters, scabs, and hair loss. Physical contact with the animal, bedding should be avoided.

*****There are two types of mange, Sarcoptic and Demodex. Demodex is not transmitted to other animals or humans and most commonly erupts during periods of stress.

What should I do if my foster animal becomes sick?

There are many symptoms to indicate an animal is not feeling well. Be observant of your foster animals.

Symptoms of illness may include:

Diarrhea	Vomiting
Loss Of Appetite	Lethargy
Weight loss	Runny eyes or nose
Coughing	Sneezing

If a foster animal begins to show symptoms of illness while in your care, please follow these procedures so that your animal receives the care it needs. Contact your Foster Coordinator as soon as you can, please don't wait until nighttime when staff is unavailable.

During business hours:

Call 305-294-4857

Monday-Friday: 10am-6pm

Saturday: 10am-2pm

Sunday: Closed

- **Call FKSPCA and ask for the Foster Coordinator.**
- Be prepared to provide information including the animal's name, age, your name and the symptoms of the illness.
- We strongly recommend that you call the shelter before dropping in so that we can ensure someone can help you.
- If an animal has vomiting or diarrhea, but is still active, alert, eating and drinking, you can probably wait until the next business day to receive help if it is after hours. If the animal is lethargic and shows no interest in food or water, it is wise to seek emergency help as soon as possible. Call the Foster Coordinator cell phone at 305-707-4072

After business hours: Call 305-707-4072

If you find yourself in an after-hours emergency situation, please call the Foster Coordinator cell phone. You may need to take the animal to an emergency clinic, but must first contact the above mentioned person to obtain authorization.

Emergency Situations may include:

- Continuous diarrhea (particularly if it is foul-smelling or liquid)
- Continuous vomiting
- Active bleeding from the nose, mouth, or in the urine or stools
- Any trauma
- Difficulty breathing
- Young kittens or puppies-significant change in behavior, energy level, or appetite.

Word of caution

It is a sad fact that puppies and kittens, through no fault of your own, sometimes die. The mother dog or cat may reject them or even kill them. Your own pet may fatally injure or kill one of them, or one might simply die for an unknown reason.

If an animal in your care should happen to die, please be sure to contact the shelter staff as soon as possible. It is imperative that we have an opportunity to examine the animal to determine a cause of death. Some conditions may be contagious and we want to protect any other foster animal in your care, as well as your own pets. We will handle the disposal of the remains for you.

Catastrophes don't happen often, but depending on how long you have cared for the animal and how attached you have become, you may experience something between distress and devastation. We also

offer the thought that, although we fail to save each and every animal placed in foster care, your participation is vital to our mission, and saves lives of many animals every year.

How do foster animal(s) find permanent adoptive homes?

FKSPCA takes full responsibility for finding permanent adoptive homes for foster animal(s). When asked by the Foster Coordinator the Foster volunteers are encouraged to let people know that their foster animals are available for adoption, but any person interested in adopting an animal needs to contact FKSPCA Foster Coordinator to complete the adoption application process. If a Foster volunteer finds an adoptive home for their foster animal(s), they can have the person meet them at the shelter when the foster is returned to complete the adoption application process. We believe that Foster volunteers will screen potential adopters and use good judgment when placing their foster animals into a permanent home. Any questions are encouraged to be directed to the Foster Care Coordinator.

General Foster Care

Considering where to house your foster animal is a key factor in the overall success of your foster experiences. This section of the handbook will provide some guidelines for housing your foster animal(s) and proper cleaning and disinfecting techniques of the areas you choose to keep them in. Remember fostering is meant to be a fun, fulfilling experience, so please keep in mind that your home life can be greatly enhanced or disrupted based on how you implement our suggestions.

FKSPCA shelter staff can also offer suggestions to assist you in setting up the most appropriate environment for the animals in your care and for your lifestyle. Please feel free to consult with them about housing questions, issues, or ideas you have.

The following are FKSPCA guidelines:

- House the foster animal(s) in an area separate from your household pets
- A spare bedroom, bathroom, or utility room can be ideal if uncluttered and puppy/kitten proof.
- Cat/kitten Foster volunteers should consider noise/activity levels in the area when fostering felines as they are less stressed in a quiet environment.
- All FKSPCA foster animals must be housed **indoors**.

Think smart, safe, and creatively when considering where to house your foster animal(s).

- **Foster cats/kittens are always strictly indoor cats.**
- **Foster dogs/puppies must always be kept indoors.**
- **Adult dogs must always be kept in a secure fenced area or on a leash when outdoors for play or potty breaks. Under supervision of foster parent at all times!!!**
- **Foster dogs may not go to public dog parks.**
- **Must have permission from a staff member prior to taking your foster animal into public.**

Wherever you decide to house your foster animal(s), you must keep in mind that the area must be easy to clean and disinfect. Flooring is a major consideration in your ability to properly disinfect the area where you foster an animal.

Good flooring options are:

- Cement

- Linoleum
- Sealed wood
- Tile

Basic supplies you may need when fostering:FKSPCA will supply you with what you need.

Dog/puppy Supplies:

- Newspaper/puppy pads
- Towels/blankets
- Crates
- Playpens
- Water and food bowls
- Bleach
- Toys
- Brushes
- Nutritious Dry and Wet food
- Formula and Bottles for newborns

Cat/kitten Supplies:

- Litter box
- Cat Litter
- Bedding (towels/blankets)
- Water and food bowls
- Nutritious Dry and Wet food
- Toys
- Formula and Bottles for newborns

General Dog Care

FKSPCA foster dogs must be kept on a leash with a safety collar when out of the home or in a fenced yard. Please discuss the yard and fencing with FKSPCA prior to accepting an animal. FKSPCA requires that healthy dogs receive daily exercise and playtime. **Foster animals shall not be permitted to interact with other animals without permission from FKSPCA.** Prior to bringing your foster animal(s) home, prepare your home and choose foster housing that is easy to clean, safe, fully stocked with supplies and well-ventilated. FKSPCA will provide a crate which will serve as a quiet resting place for the dog(s) who, as a species, naturally gravitate toward a den. The crate shall never be used as punishment. Please keep in regular contact with FKSPCA, even when things are going well!!

While you may want to spoil a dog that has been through a rough time, remember that your job is to heal the dog (if needed) and teach them what they need to know to become a highly adoptable dog and therefore give them the best chance of a loving, forever home. This includes teaching house training, good house manners and obedience. We at FKSPCA value socialization, but mandate that foster dogs

not be allowed at off-leash dog parks. We will discuss socialization with you on a case by case basis.

Puppy/Dog Proofing your Home

Puppies have a lot of energy and natural curiosity. This is what makes them so much fun but could also lead them into harmful situations. You need to take the time to evaluate the environment the foster animals will be staying in. Think of it as childproofing your home, except that a puppy is smaller and more active than a baby and can therefore get into more things. Simply ask yourself when looking around, "If I were a puppy, would this be an interesting place to explore? Would this be fun to shred, chew, carry, or hide?"

The following tips are designed to keep your foster animal(s) safe:

Indoor Hazards

- Know which plants are toxic and move out of the puppy's reach
- Electrical cords, computer cables and wires (tie up loose cords and keep out of sight)
- Drawstrings from draperies or blinds
- Cleaning supplies
- Remote controls, knick-knacks
- Candles, potpourri, and air-fresheners
- Toilet tissue or Kleenex (funny, but can be potentially harmful if ingested)
- Fireplaces, woodstoves
- Be careful of your foster animal(s) around furniture. A rocking chair can harm a leg or tail, and a curious puppy can crawl under a recliner or sofa bed.
- Keep door and windows secure. Keep screens in good repair.
- Many dogs will eat feces from cat litter boxes. Besides being gross, it can be dangerous. Cat litter can cause an intestinal obstruction, not to mention worms the cat may have passed on.
- Do not feed human food (unless specifically given permission by FKSPCA managerial staff), as some may be toxic or harmful to the dog's health.

Outdoor Hazards

- Please do not leave your foster puppy or dog outside unsupervised
- Gasoline, oil, paint, pesticides, auto supplies, etc. should be in secure containers and out of reach
- Be especially careful with antifreeze and rat poison, both taste good to dogs and both can be deadly if ingested
- Pools, ponds, hot tubs, and drainpipes are also dangerous
- Fire rings, barbeques, and other heat/fire sources
- Walk your property and look for other hazards (glass, nails, sharp objects)
- Many outdoor plants, shrubs, and flowers are poisonous

Care of the Pregnant Dog

Particularly in the spring, dogs may arrive at FKSPCA who are either pregnant or nursing. Fostering a pregnant or nursing dog can last anywhere from 4-10 weeks depending on the puppies ages. FKSPCA will always provide you with a rough estimate of how long an animal may require fostering.

Pregnancy

A dog's gestation period, like a domestic cat, is 63 days. The mother dog will take care of her puppies and will need little intervention from you. Mostly, she needs you for a safe environment, food and to assist with clean bedding and supplies. Before placing a pregnant dog in foster care, FKSPCA administers whatever dewormers or vaccines that are approved based on the dog's/puppies situation and ages. It is vital that you keep other animals away from the mother dog and puppies.

Create a nest for the mother dog in a quiet corner of your home. The box should be large enough for the nursing mom to comfortably lie away from her puppies if she chooses, but small enough so the newborns are easy to reach. The sides need to be high enough to prevent the young from wandering, but low enough for the mom to be able to come and go with ease. The box should be lined with newspaper and then pile with clean, dry, soft, removable linens. Some foster homes use a baby pool-which can be cleaned and disinfected easily. Depending on the baby pool, the puppies may grow to climb over.

Keep the nest room warm and stress-free. The mother dog's food should be increased 2-4 times her normal intake. Food and fresh water should always be made available to her. Do not apply any medication, lotions or baths to a nursing mother without the permission of FKSPCA.

Labor

As the gestation period comes to an end, the pregnant dog becomes restless and searches for a suitable den/nest in which to deliver. She will stop eating the 24 hours prior to delivery. FKSPCA will advise you on other signs, including temperature drops, that will alert you to imminent delivery. Please keep in close communication with FKSPCA during this time! Giving birth is a lengthy process and may involve several hours between puppies. Typically it is an hour between each puppy.

As labor proceeds there will be some vaginal discharge, colorless at first but later becoming blood-tinged. If, at any time, she has a foul smelling discharge or is bleeding profusely, this may be a sign of trouble and you will need to call the FKSPCA Foster Coordinator.

The second stage of labor begins when the mother dog experiences contractions of her abdominal muscles and starts to "bear down". The mother dog will repeatedly lick her genital area and may show signs of agitation. You may soothe her by talking to her softly.

Birth

Call the FKSPCA Foster Coordinator to report the birth. Remember, most mothers do not need assistance. Please leave her to birth, clean and stimulate the puppies. She may be very protective, especially if this is her first litter. This is a natural instinct. Within a few days, her protectiveness should wane somewhat and she will allow you a closer inspection of the puppies. She will ingest the excrement as well as stillborn puppies. This may be shocking to the new foster home. This instinct to keep the nest clean prevents disease, illness and the attraction of predators to the nest. It is nature at work.

In most births, there are no complications, and only in a very, very few do serious difficulties arise.

Your first experience fostering a pregnant dog will be a great learning experience. We're here to help. As your experience grows, you'll feel more confident about what represents a problem and what does not.

Potential Problems

Occasionally a new mother does not attempt to remove the sac from the puppy. She may not know what to do or may be too busy with the next delivery. In this case, give her a minute to realize what is needed, but if there is no sign of action, you must act quickly. Gently remove the membrane from the puppy's face and place the puppy in front of mom so she can try again to care for him/her properly.

If she accidentally pushes a puppy outside the nest, put the puppy back in. If she repeatedly pushes the puppy out, there may be something wrong with the puppy. In this case or if you feel that your pregnant foster is in abnormal distress, please call FKSPCA for help.

Immediately after the puppies are born, the mother dog will completely clean the pups and herself and then settle down with her family. Around this time, remove the soiled bedding and replace it with clean, warm bedding. Clean the nest box if necessary.

The first milk produced, called colostrum, is only produced for a few days. It is rich in protein and minerals and contains antibodies that protect the puppies from disease. For this reason it is very important that puppies nurse from their mother.

As with kittens, occasionally a puppy will be pushed out by another puppy when it tries to suckle and will cry lustily. This is normal, BUT if the same puppy is repeatedly kept from the nipple it will fall behind the other puppies in growth. Be sure a puppy is warm before putting it back into the nest.

Puppy Development

At birth a puppy is totally helpless, unable to even regulate its own body temperature. It is important to start handling the puppies early in order to socialize them. This is also a critical time for the puppy to learn dog social behavior from its mother and siblings. During the first two weeks have humans briefly handle the pups several times a day. As the puppies age, the socialization time should increase and they should be exposed to different noises and people.

Watching puppies grow is a daily delight. As a foster parent you can watch for the following milestones:

- Puppies are born with closed eyes and tiny folded-down ears
- Eyes open between seven and ten days
- By about three weeks puppies can stand and weaning begins
- At four to five weeks a puppy can start eating puppy kibble and puppy wet food
- All puppies and kitten should be treated for roundworms every two to three weeks starting at two to three weeks of age until they are twelve to sixteen weeks old. Pregnant and nursing mothers should also be treated to minimize transmission to their offspring.

Vaccinations

- 6 weeks: DAPPv and Bordetella vaccinations plus a dewormer (If puppies are weaned)
- 8 weeks: DAPPv and Bordetella vaccination plus a dewormer
- 10 weeks: DAPPv vaccination plus a dewormer

- 12 weeks: DAPPv and Rabies vaccination plus dewormer

By 8-9 weeks of age, puppies should be ready for adoption. Puppies must be over 2 pounds to have Spay/Neuter performed.

In the first few weeks of life a puppy is completely dependent on the mother dog to stimulate all body functions; her licking prompts the release of bowels and bladder. Just as she tidied the nest at birth, the mother dogs consumes all of the puppies' waste products. This behavior is probably attributable to keeping the nest clean and keeping predators away.

You may begin offering puppy food to your puppy at about three weeks of age. You can mix canned puppy food with a little water to start introducing solid food. The development of the sharp teeth help in the weaning process; sharp teeth become very annoying to the mother dog. By four to five weeks of age you can add dry kibble into the area for them to start eating on. A circular feeding bowl, similar to a poultry feeder is a great way to give each puppy a "place at the table".

Make sure to feed the mother dog a high quality diet throughout her pregnancy and while she is caring for the puppies.

Orphaned Puppies

Foster homes receive orphaned puppies from FKSPCA at all ages, from one day old up to puppies that are very close to being ready for spay/neuter surgeries. Orphaned puppies require the same care that puppies with mothers require, but in this case the foster parent must take on the duties of the mother dog.

Sometimes puppies are abandoned without the mother dog. While this normally happens once the puppies start wandering around and making a mess of excrement, sometimes younger puppies are abandoned.

Feeding

We recommend bottle feeding commercial puppy formula for orphaned infant puppies. The formula comes in liquid and powdered form that is mixed with water. Mix only enough to use within a 24-hour period. Discard any remaining formula after 24 hours. When feeding formula to puppies, it should feel warm when tested on your wrist.

The warm formula will encourage a puppy to nurse. **Puppies should not be laid on their backs to nurse but should nurse with tummies facing down. This will help prevent aspiration of the formula into the lungs, a situation that could easily cause the death of or serious illness in a puppy.** Infant puppies should be fed every three hours. After three weeks of age, they may be fed every 4-5 hours during your awake time; however a feeding every six hours will allow them to get enough nourishment to live and grow. Feedings of more than every eight hours would make it very difficult for a puppy to do well.



Puppies have a strong instinct to suckle and are generally not satisfied when nursing on a bottle. Consequently they will nurse off one another's genitals, sometimes causing real discomfort to one another. Some foster parents separate their puppies into several small boxes to eliminate this problem when they cannot watch them. Because time with one another is so important to their future behavior, do not keep them separated all the time.

Keep them warm!

Infant puppies are unable to regulate their body temperature. They can quickly succumb to hypothermia so it is of the utmost importance that they be kept warm. During the first two weeks of life foster parents should keep the puppies in an area with a temperature of 80-90°F. A constant temperature can be kept by using a heating pad under about one half of the puppies' bedding. It can be just as dangerous for a puppy to be overheated as chilled so make certain that the heating pad is placed in such a manner that the puppies can move off of the heat onto unheated bedding. Monitor heating pads very, very carefully and always keep the setting on low. At two weeks of age the temperature can be dropped to 80°F and at four weeks can be lowered to 75°F.

Elimination

In the first few weeks of life, a puppy is completely dependent on the mother dog to stimulate all body functions; her licking prompts the release of bowels and bladder. Orphaned infant puppies will need your help in this department. Puppies will need to be stimulated to urinate and defecate. This is accomplished by gently massaging the abdomen and genital area with a slightly moistened cotton ball or soft rag. You may need to use several cotton balls on each puppy as you assist them in elimination of feces and urine. Mineral oil on the rag should be used if defecation doesn't occur immediately. Always be gentle! Your help will be needed until the time that puppies begin to be weaned, and sometimes beyond that point.



Weaning

Beginning at approximately three weeks of age, offer the puppies their formulas in a shallow bowl or saucer. When they learn to drink from the bowl add wet puppy food in small amounts to the formula. Gradually increase the amount of puppy food-including puppy kibble-and decrease the amount of formula. When the puppies reach 4-5 weeks of age, bottle feeding will no longer be necessary. Your orphaned puppies must be socialized while in your care. Try to make certain that you are not the only person handling them. If you live alone, invite your adult friends over to play with and handle the puppies(after the second week of age).

Socialization

Make every attempt to provide this socialization daily for you puppies. We ask that no young children handle the puppies without adult supervision. As your puppy becomes more mobile, you should move them around the house to get them used to change. Allow them to play and explore in a new room individually and as a group. When carrying the puppies carry only one per hand. If you have a friendly dog-have the puppies interact with the dog. Exposing them to vaccinated animals in the home will make them more socialized dogs.

The Single Puppy

Littermates are important to the social development of a puppy and if you are raising a single puppy it will be totally dependent on you to socialize it properly. Feed the puppy in several locations, have numerous people handle the puppy, make certain that it explore many locations throughout your house. If you have cats or dogs that would not harm the puppy, you should introduce them, but be aware that there is some risk involved.

If you must bathe a puppy, bathe only one at a time. Do not submerge their heads in water. If you see fleas-contact FKSPCA to determine the appropriate shampoos treatment. While FKSPCA makes every effort to make certain that all animals are flea-free, there will be puppies that sneak a flea or two out of shelter. Many flea products are highly toxic to puppies, even if they say "safe for puppies" on the label.

It is critical that you teach the puppy good manners and house train the puppy. Puppies should only be allowed outside after they are 4 weeks old. Use newspaper or puppy pads in the home.

While puppies are very cute, it is a foster's job to teach them the manners and behaviors they need for adoption into a new home. Spoiling them can do them a disservice and lead to their return to FKSPCA. Teaching obedience is also expected of foster homes, and tip sheets can be provided and we ask foster homes to follow these training protocols. Your job is to raise a well-mannered, well -socialized puppy that has every opportunity at a wonderful, full life.

General Cat Care

FKSPCA foster cats must be kept strictly indoors. When transported to receive vaccinations, surgery or for adoption, the cat must be in a traditional cat carrier. Prepare for your foster by stocking supplies, choosing a safe area of your home that has been "cat-proofed" and is easy to clean and disinfect. Natural sunlight and access to windows is a plus. FKSPCA requires that healthy cats receive daily exercise and playtime. Foster animals shall not be permitted to interact with other animals without permission from FKSPCA.

Care of the pregnant cat

When a pregnant cat comes to FKSPCA and needs to be fostered we generally have very little information about its background. Some cats that look like they are about to give birth may not deliver for weeks, while some that appear average give birth in a few hours. We will give you our best educated guess.

Before placing a pregnant cat in foster care we do a blood test to determine that it is free from Feline AIDS and Feline Leukemia. There are several other diseases that we are unable to test for and conditions that may arise unbeknownst to us when placing a cat in your care. Consequently, there is some risk to you or to your pets from taking in a cat whose background is not known. The cat and/or kittens should be kept in a separate room if at all possible for this reason.

Pregnancy

The domestic cat's gestation is approximately 63 days in length. As the gestation period comes to an end, the pregnant cat becomes restless, searches for a suitable den/nest in which to deliver her kittens. She looks for somewhere private, quiet and dry. Litter sizes vary, but three to six kittens are average.

Usually ravenous, the pregnant cat's desire for food disappears as she goes into labor. Some cats will hate interference at this point, but many seem to really enjoy having company during their labor. Most will gladly stay in a box provided by the foster parent for the birth of the kittens, but others might try to hide in closets or drawers.

If the mother cat tries to go off to some inconvenient place to give birth, gently put her back in the place you have selected. Usually, she will comply but from time to time, a very independent cat will only be happy giving birth in private. The mother cat should be provided with a box that is large enough for her and her kittens, ideally measuring at least 2' by 2', and lined with soft towels, sheets or blankets. Any materials that you choose should be items that you are not attached to, as they will most likely be ruined during the birth of the kittens.

Labor

When the first stage of labor starts, the mother cat's rate of breathing increases and she may begin to breathe through her mouth and purr rhythmically. This stage may last for many hours, and the foster parent should not be overly concerned.

Provided that the mother cat is happy, do not fuss over her. It is important to see that you have all the things you might need and that the room temperature is at least 72*. A cold room can cause hypothermia in the newborn kittens.

A cat may be well into labor without showing noticeable signs. The mother cat often will have her kittens in the middle of the night without the foster parent even being aware that she is in labor.

Birth

Giving birth is a lengthy process for the average cat. With a typical litter of four kittens, and a typical delay between births of ½ hour, the birth of the kittens would last two hours. However, some cats give birth much more quickly, even one birth per minute, but this is rare. A typical ½ hour gives the other cat time to tend to the newly born kitten before the next one arrives. Occasionally a cat will rest between kittens for

up to 24 hours. As long as she is not having contractions there is no need to panic if there is considerable time between kittens.

As labor proceeds there will be some vaginal discharge, colorless at first but later becoming blood-tinged. If, at any time, she has a foul smelling discharge or is bleeding profusely, this may be a sign of trouble and you will need to call for help. Any signs of bright red blood indicates a need to call FKSPCA Foster Coordinator.

The second stage of labor begins when the mother cat experiences contractions of her abdominal muscles and starts to “bear-down”. these will become more frequent, and when they occur about every 30 seconds, delivery is near. The mother cat will repeatedly lick her genital area and may show signs of agitation. You may soothe her by talking to her and gently rubbing her belly.



The first amniotic sac will come into view and in a regular birth the enclosed kitten will be born within 15 to 30 minutes. Very often, the mother’s constant licking will rupture the sac, leaving the kitten without its perfectly lubricated “capsule.” You should remain calm if this happens and resist the temptation to interfere; if the kitten is being born head first, a few more contractions will release it. In about one-third of all births, the hind legs emerge first. This is only slightly more difficult for the mother cat than a head first birth. In a true breech birth (the kitten is arriving hindquarters and tail first) the mother cat may become agitated and turn around repeatedly in attempts to release the wedged kitten. She may find it easier to bear down if she can push with her hind legs against the box or your hand. Even with this help, the birth may take 20 minutes. The mother cat’s persistence will probably bring success, but if she should weaken or become distressed, you should be ready to call for help. In most births, however, there are no complications, and only in a very, very few do serious difficulties arise.

Problems

Occasionally a new mother does not attempt to remove the sac from the kitten. She may not know what to do or may be too busy with the next delivery. In this case, give her a minute to realize what is needed, but if there is no sign of action, act quickly. Gently remove the membrane from the kitten's face and place the kitten in front of mom so she can try again to care for him/her properly. Apart from a mother cat being unable to deliver a breech kitten, there are two other situations when it is vital to call for help. The first situation is one in which the mother has strong contractions for two hours with no sign of a kitten appearing. The cause may be two kittens blocking the birth canal. The second situation is in uterine inertia, when the mother suddenly appears to tire before or after the first kitten is born. This is different than a cat resting between births - she will seem generally exhausted and distressed and help will be needed. Occasionally a mother cat is super-protective of her kittens. Carefully observe your foster cat before trying to handle her kittens or before putting your hands or face near the birthing place. If you feel that your pregnant cat has gone beyond the point when she should have delivered her kittens, please call

FKSPCA for help.

Kitten Development

Directly after the kittens are born the mother cat will completely clean herself and then settle down with her family. Around this time, remove the soiled bedding and replace it with clean, warm bedding. Clean the box if necessary. Place the kittens back with the mother cat and they will settle into a nice long feed. The first milk produced, called colostrum, is only produced for a few days. It is rich in protein and minerals and contains antibodies that protect the kittens from disease. For this reason it is very important that infant kittens nurse from their mother. The kittens will put on weight steadily, gaining as much as 1/2 oz. a day in the initial period of rapid growth. Occasionally a kitten will be pushed out by another kitten when it tries to suckle and will cry lustily. This is normal, But if the same kitten is repeatedly kept from the nipple it will fall behind the other kittens in growth. Careful examination may reveal a defect such as a cleft palate, or it may just be a "runt." A kitten repeatedly pushed away by the mother may have become chilled. If so, re-warm the kitten and then try putting it back with the mother cat. If this does not work, you will need to call for help. You might need to start feeding the kitten yourself.

A kitten will use heat receptors in its nose to find the nipple. Cat milk is high in fat and protein. Kittens compete for the most productive nipple and by two days of age, the kittens know which nipples are most productive. Kittens that latch onto the most productive nipples grow fastest.

At birth a kitten is totally helpless, unable to even regulate its own body temperature. Within four days it is able to find its mother and crawl to her from two feet away. By two weeks old its coordination is sufficiently developed for it to use its front legs, and by three weeks of age, it can stand tentatively. By seven weeks of age a kitten leaps and runs and seems to have developed a near perfect sense of balance.

Watching kittens grow is a daily delight. As a foster parent you can watch for the following milestones:

- Kittens are born with closed eyes and tiny folded-down ears
- The stump of the umbilical cord will dry up and fall off in about five days
- Eyes open between five and thirteen days
- By about eighteen days kittens begin to crawl and their ears begin to straighten
- At a little over two weeks teething begins
- By about three weeks kittens can stand and weaning begins
- At four to five weeks a kitten can stand and eat at a bowl easily
- By five weeks it is becoming mischievous and is playing and grooming itself
- All puppies & kittens should be treated for roundworms every two to three weeks starting at two to three weeks of age until they are twelve to sixteen weeks old. Pregnant and nursing mothers should also be treated to minimize transmission to their offspring
- By four to six weeks it can receive its first combo inoculation
- By eight to nine weeks of age, kittens should be ready for adoption

In the first few weeks of life a kitten is completely dependent on the mother cat to stimulate all body functions; her licking prompts the release of bowels and bladder. Just as she tidied the nest at birth, the mother cat consumes all of the kittens' waste products. This behavior is probably attributable to keeping the nest clean and keeping predators away. Even this cleaning may not be enough for a mother cat and she may attempt to move the kittens from time to time, usually right after birth and then again at about four days post-birth. Once a kitten begins eating solid food, the mother stops providing the service of consuming all waste. A litter box should be provided for the kittens by the time they are 2.5 weeks old. By three weeks of age a kitten's instinct to use a specific place to eliminate is profoundly developed.

While the kittens at this age are still reliant on their mothers for grooming, they will begin to groom themselves and will be able to fully groom themselves by five weeks of age. You may begin offering kitten food to your kitten at about three weeks of age. You can soak kitten kibble in water to make it easier for the kitten to get the idea or if you like, you may spoil the kittens a bit by feeding canned kitten food. By five weeks of age the kittens will have a full set of pin-sharp teeth and should be able to handle kitten food. These teeth play a role in weaning the kittens; sharp teeth become very annoying to the nursing mother. As the kittens mature and try to nurse the mother cat will begin to hiss and bat them away.

Orphaned Kittens

Foster homes receive orphaned kittens from FKSPCA at all ages, from one day old up to kittens that are very close to being ready for spay/neuter surgeries. Orphaned kittens require the same care that kittens with mothers require but in this case the foster parent must take on the duties of the mother cat.

Foster parents that take on this care are much more likely to experience problems and heartache than foster parents who take on the care of kittens with a mother. Kittens become orphans in a number of ways. The death of the mother cat and abandonment by the mother cat are probably the most common reasons that kittens are orphaned. Less common reasons would be maternal aggression towards the kittens or an inability to produce enough milk for her kittens. In these cases it is important for FKSPCA to work with foster families to provide what the mother cat can no longer provide to her kittens. We recommend two types of feeding for orphaned infant kittens: bottle and syringe feeding. Bottle-feeding takes longer but probably provides more satisfaction to the kitten. Syringe feeding is somewhat faster but can be messy at times. The formula comes in a liquid and a powdered form that is mixed with water. Mix only enough to use within a 24-hour period. Discard any remaining formula after 24 hours. Formula should feel quite warm when tested on your wrist. Because a cat's body temperature is 3 to 4 degrees warmer than a human's, milk from a mother cat would be warmer than we might be used to. The warm formula will encourage a kitten to nurse. **Kittens should not be laid on their backs to nurse but should nurse with tummies facing down. This will help prevent aspiration of the formula into the lungs, a situation that could easily cause the death of or serious illness in a kitten.**



Feeding

Kittens that nurse from mother cats will suckle 10 to 20 times a day. A foster parent hand-raising a litter of kittens would find this impractical and really unnecessary. Infant kittens could be fed every few hours during your awake time; however a feeding every six hours will allow them to get enough nourishment to live and grow. Feedings less than every eight hours would make it very difficult for a kitten to do well.

Kittens have a strong instinct to suckle and are generally not satisfied when nursing on a bottle. Consequently they will nurse off one another's genitals, sometimes causing real discomfort to one another. Some foster parents separate their kittens into several small boxes to eliminate this problem. Providing a fleece toy or towel may help. After feeding gently wipe the kitten's face with a warm, damp cloth and then dry, to imitate their mothers grooming, until they can groom themselves.

Keep Them Warm!

Infant kittens are unable to regulate their body temperature. They can quickly succumb to hypothermia so it is of the utmost importance that they be kept warm. During the first two weeks of life foster parents should keep the kittens in an area with a temperature of 85°F. A constant temperature can be kept by using a heating pad under about one half of the kittens' bedding. It can be as dangerous for a kitten to be overheated as chilled so make certain that the heating pad is placed in such a manner that the kittens can move off of the heat onto unheated bedding. At two weeks of age the temperature can be dropped to 80°F and at four weeks can be lowered to 75°F.

Elimination

Elimination In the first few weeks of life, a kitten is completely dependent on the mother cat to stimulate all body functions; her licking prompts the release of bowels and bladder. Just as she tidied the nest at birth, the mother cat consumes all of the kittens' waste products. Orphaned infant kittens will need your help in this department! Kittens will need to be stimulated to urinate and defecate. This is accomplished by gently massaging the abdomen and genital area with a slightly moistened cotton ball. You may need to use several cotton balls on each kitten as you assist them in elimination of feces and urine. Your help will be needed until the time that kittens begin to be weaned, and sometimes beyond that point.



Weaning

Beginning at approximately four weeks of age, offer the kittens their formula in a shallow bowl or saucer. When they learn to drink from the bowl add wet kitten food in small amounts to the formula. Gradually increase the amount of wet kitten food and decrease the amount of formula. Kittens that don't quite get the eating process can be encouraged by you putting a bit of food on a front paw where they will "clean" it off or by placing a bit of food in their mouths. When the kittens reach 4 weeks of age, you will need to return them to FKSPCA for worming medications and a checkup. When the kittens reach 6 weeks of age you will need to return them to FKSPCA for vaccinations and deworming. Call or email the Foster Coordinator first so we will be prepared for you. Your visit to FKSPCA should not take a great deal of time.

Your orphaned kittens will need to be socialized while in your care. Try to make certain that you are not

the only person handling them. Kittens that are not socialized will grow into cats that are not socialized. Experts in cat behavior suggest that kittens should be socialized to a minimum of 5 people. If you live alone, invite your adult friends over to play with and handle the kittens.

Socialization

Make every attempt to provide this socialization daily for your kittens from around 5 weeks on. We ask that children be closely watched when handling the kittens. As your kittens become more mobile, you should move them around the house to get them used to change. Allow them to play and explore in a new room individually and as a group. When carrying the kittens carry only one per hand. With two in a hand, one could easily squeeze the kittens together and do them harm if they began to squirm and you feared dropping them. Mother cats pick up their kittens by scruffing them (lifting them by the extra skin on the back of their neck). Mother cats do this to scold or move kittens. We recommend you get your kittens used to humans doing this because it will help us restrain them when they're older.

The Single Kitten

Littermates are important to the social development of a kitten and if you are raising a single kitten it will be totally dependent on you to socialize it properly. Feed the kitten in several locations, have numerous people handle the kitten, make certain that it explores many locations throughout your house. If you have cats or dogs that would not harm a kitten, you may want to introduce them, but be aware that there is some risk involved. In the case that FKSPCA has fostered a single kitten it is unlikely that we have any information concerning the feline leukemia or feline AIDS status of the kitten. While your cat can be inoculated against feline leukemia, the vaccine is not 100% effective, and there is no vaccine for feline AIDS.

Grooming

It is a great idea to begin the experience of grooming while a kitten is young. You may start when the kittens' eyes open. There is very little to do at this time but you are helping to teach the kitten to offer no resistance when being groomed. As infant kittens you might want to start by just wiping the kitten with a washcloth and gradually as it grows begin using a cat comb or brush to gently go over the kitten's coat. Groom each kitten for about a minute, two or three times a week. Trimming the nails of a kitten can be done with just a pair of regular human nail trimmers. Trim off just the very, very ends of the kittens' nails. Kittens' nails do not grow very fast so you won't want to trim them each time you groom but go through the motions of handling the feet and toes at each grooming session. Trimming nails each week to two weeks is sufficient for kittens. If you must bathe kittens, bathe only one at a time. Do not submerge a kitten's head in the water. Try to clean the kitten with just water - but should you need soap, use only the mildest baby shampoo or Dawn liquid soap (no antibacterial or bleach) you can find. Make certain that the water you are using is warm, and thoroughly dry any wet areas on the kitten, keeping the kitten warm throughout the process. While FKSPCA makes every effort to make certain that all animals leaving the shelter are flea-free, there will be kittens that sneak a flea or two out of the shelter. Remember, the kittens (especially orphaned), often come into the shelter with fleas. Please do not treat the kitten for fleas until you have talked to a FKSPCA staff member. Many flea products are highly toxic to kittens, even if they say "safe for kittens" on the label.

Litter Box Training

Begin to provide a litter box when kittens begin to eliminate on their own. Use a box that the kittens can easily get into (a shoebox lid works well) and use just a small amount of litter to begin with. Keeping the

box clean will encourage the kittens to continue using it. Kittens will not begin to dig and bury their elimination until about six to eight weeks of age. Don't worry if they don't dig and bury while in your care.
DO NOT USE CLUMPING LITTER – NO EXCEPTIONS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Florida Keys SPCA would like to thank the ASPCA, Humane Society of the United States, the Ottawa Humane Society, the Seattle Humane Society and the Liberty Humane Society who provided support and/or documentation in developing this manual.