



FOSTERING MANUAL AND ANIMAL CARE GUIDE



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INTRODUCTION

The Stafford SPCA is a registered Virginia “Not For Profit” animal rescue organization dedicated to saving and improving the lives of area animals. We are committed to caring for animals in need, educating the community, and raising awareness of the importance of putting a stop to animal cruelty and abandonment.

As a volunteer foster caregiver for the Stafford SPCA, you and the other foster volunteers within our organization are the most important part of the system known as the Stafford SPCA Fostering Program. You will be responsible for the every day care of all Stafford SPCA foster animals within your care.

This manual has been developed to help you through common aspects of the fostering process. We encourage you to bring anything not covered here to our attention so we may address it properly. This manual provides basic information, addresses common questions and frequent problems, and relays useful advice and important policies. As always, with any specific questions or concerns about your particular foster animal, get in contact with us immediately.

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GENERAL GUIDELINES

Please read and review the following important guidelines.

1. Prior to fostering, all foster homes must complete a volunteer foster application. Prior to fostering, each foster caregiver must agree to Stafford SPCA's policies regarding care for the animal and foster policies, as outlined in the foster contract.
2. Foster animals remain the property of the Stafford SPCA, even when residing in your home for a long period. Stafford SPCA reserves the right to adopt the animal out to the home its staff deems fit. If concerns about the suitability of your home or the safety/welfare of the foster animal arise, Stafford SPCA reserves the right to remove the animal.
3. All foster caregivers agree to accept primary responsibility for providing lodging and care of their foster dog until a permanent adopting family is found. Foster caregivers may not give the animal away, board the animal, or allow someone else to provide primary care for it without *explicit* written permission from the Stafford SPCA.
4. Medical care will be provided only with the Stafford SPCA's approval. If you think your foster pet needs any medical care, including veterinary visits or over-the-counter medications, you must contact the Stafford SPCA prior to acting.
5. Foster caregivers agree to bring their foster pet to adoption events and meet and greets as they arise. You agree to be reasonably accommodating in scheduling individual meet and greets with potential adopters and your foster pet.
6. Foster caregivers are asked to keep the Stafford SPCA apprised of their foster animal's behavior and if any issues arise. Foster caregivers will check in via email weekly *at minimum* with the Stafford SPCA, in accordance with the day of the week agreed upon in the foster contract. Foster caregivers are encouraged to check in more often as needed, and always immediately in the event of any major health or behavioral concerns.
7. Foster caregivers are not required to foster any animal that they do not wish to foster. However, there may not be an immediate alternate foster home for the animal. We will work on moving your foster pet out as soon as possible, but ask for your understanding as we work on it.
9. All applicants for a particular foster animal must go through the full Stafford SPCA adoption process (full adoption application, phone interview, vet reference check, home visit, etc). If a friend or family member of the foster caregiver wishes to adopt your foster pet, that's great—but that potential adopter must go through the same process as any other applicant would. This applies to foster caregivers as well. The adoption application process is not something that can be skipped.
10. Your own pets should be current with their vaccinations. We also recommend that you vaccinate your dogs with a Bordetella vaccination to prevent kennel cough, a common illness with shelter dogs.

11. The Stafford SPCA is not responsible for any veterinary bills for resident pets. The foster caregiver assumes responsibility for any veterinary bills that result from resident pet becoming ill due to exposure to a foster. We take more than reasonable measures to ensure a foster pet is healthy before placing it in a foster home with other animals—but, as with all living things, no absolute guarantees can be made.

12. If you are planning a vacation, please notify the Stafford SPCA as far in advance as possible. We will need at least two weeks to arrange for alternative placement for your foster pet. If you want to take your foster pet with you, even for just a weekend, you *must* notify the Stafford SPCA beforehand.

13. Training and socializing are an important part of a foster caregiver's obligations. It is your responsibility to make the foster animal (especially if the animal is a dog) as social, well-trained, and friendly as possible. That is your great advantage as a foster caregiver over keeping an animal at the shelter. Remember, you are trying to make your foster pet as adoptable as possible.

14. Crate-training is an important part of your obligation as a foster caregiver if you are fostering a dog. Crate-trained dogs are generally more adoptable than those without crate training.

15. The Stafford SPCA does not foster indoor/outdoor cats. All foster cats are explicitly *indoor* only. Your foster cat should not be let outside for any reason.

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PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR FOSTERING

Fostering is a commitment that will impact your entire household: your family, your permanent pets, and your house and yard itself. It is important to discuss your plans with other family members and get their input on how to make it work out best for everyone. Include in the discussion what kind of pets is appropriate for your household: small/large, young/old, active/not active.

Consider the length of time you gone during the day and your own energy level in addition to other lifestyle concerns. We'll do our best to match you with a pet that works with your schedule and lifestyle. The Stafford SPCA can work with you to ensure that we understand your personal situation to create a well-matched fostering situation.

Supplies

You should have the following on hand *before* your foster pet arrives:

Food bowls and water bowls: It is best to have separate bowls for your foster pet, and to feed your resident pets and foster pet separately so that everyone can eat in a stress-free environment. Food aggression and possessiveness is not uncommon among foster dogs, especially if there are other dogs in the house. Feeding separately is an easy way to avoid unnecessary problems.

Food and treats: The Stafford SPCA will provide you with a feeding plan for your foster pet. Our feeding plan is not a suggestion; it is a requirement. Any changes to the food or feeding plan will be made by the Stafford SPCA only, in consultation with a veterinarian as needed. In your foster contract, you have agreed to feed the brand, type, and amount of food that we dictate.

Toys: They will keep your foster pet occupied, especially while you are away from the house. Try to provide a small variety so that you can find out which kind of toy your foster pet prefers. NEVER leave a foster dog unattended with a plush toy or toys with small parts, as dogs can (and do) ingest parts of the toys, and this can cause major digestive issues and—in extreme circumstances—death.

Bed: Cotton blankets or large beach towels are best, as they are washable and less likely to be chewed up by your foster animal. If you prefer to use a pet bed, that is absolutely fine, as long as your foster pet does not chew up and eat the filling.

Dog crate: We strongly recommend you have a crate for any foster dog. Crate training is a very helpful way to introduce a dog into a new home, and a very helpful way to keep the dog safe and healthy while you are out of the house. Additionally, a crate-trained dog is more attractive to potential adoptive families than a dog without crate training.

We encourage you to get your own supplies, but we can supply you with a crate if you do not have one of appropriate size. See a later chapter of this manual for information on crate training, and ask us any questions you have about the benefits of crate training. We can provide advice and give you some excellent articles if you are unfamiliar.

Collar (and leash for dogs): We will provide a collar and leash for your foster. A Stafford SPCA ID tag will be on the collar. This collar and tag should stay on the dog *at all times* as it will help ensure the animal is returned to the Stafford SPCA if they ever got loose.

In your foster contract, you agreed to keep the Stafford SPCA identification tag on the collar at all times. Some fosters like to attach another identification tag with their own contact information on it as well. That is convenient but not required. Keep in mind that you should never remove the Stafford SPCA identification tag, and that the dog should wear the collar at all times.

Scratching post or pad (for cats): The Stafford SPCA forbids the declawing of its cats. Properly training your foster cat to use a scratching post will protect your property and satisfy the cat's innate need to scratch and stretch. See a later chapter in this manual for tips on encouraging your cat to use a scratching post instead of furniture.

Litter box (for cats): Have a new, clean litter box, filled with litter and ready to go, when your foster cat(s) arrive. The Stafford SPCA recommends high quality clumping clay litter, except in cases of young kittens or very old, sick cats. If we recommend you use anything other than clumping clay litter, it is noted in your foster contract.

Squirt bottle or gun: These are a very effective tool in discouraging animals (both cats and dogs) from inappropriate behavior. Nothing says "NO" quite as definitively and harmlessly in the animal world as a quick squirt of water!

Flea and tick treatment and heartworm preventative: Your foster animal will arrive treated for fleas, ticks, and heartworm. It is required that preventative treatments be administered monthly. If our donations allow, we

may be able to assist with these monthly treatments. Please be prepared to purchase and administer these medications on schedule.

Flea and tick preventatives can be obtained through any pet store, the website 1-800-PET-MEDS, and a host of other sources. They are extremely easy to administer and are entirely non-invasive. Heartworm preventatives are also easy to administer (usually available in a chewable tablet) but do require a prescription from a veterinarian.

Please make every effort to have flea and tick preventatives on hand before your foster pet arrives. The Stafford SPCA generally uses K9 Advantix or Frontline for dogs and recommends Revolution for cats.

Heartworm preventatives, because they require a prescription, will be made available to you from the Stafford SPCA.

Remember that the Stafford SPCA is here to help you in any way we can, and we will provide supplies as needed and as our resources allow. We certainly encourage you to provide your own supplies. If there is something you cannot provide on your own and you borrow from the Stafford SPCA, we ask that you return these items after your service as a foster caregiver is complete. Noted on your foster contract are any supplies that you borrowed from us.

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MAKING INTRODUCTIONS WITH YOUR CURRENT PET(S)

Everyone needs their space

If possible, it is best to keep foster animals and resident pets separate from one another for the first two days. Transitions can be stressful for both foster pets and existing household pets.

If it is not possible to physically separate the animals, try to ensure that everyone has his or her own personal space of a bed, a crate, or a special area. This will keep the stress levels lower for your own animals and the foster.

Dog to dog introductions

If you have your own dog as a pet and are interested in adding a foster animal, the Stafford SPCA will facilitate the initial meet and greet. We need to be sure, when placing a foster pet, that it will be going into a home where it has the opportunity to grow and thrive. Placing a foster dog into a situation where it is unlikely to get along with your established family pet is not ideal. The Stafford SPCA retains the right to deny placement of a foster dog based on a problematic meet and greet with your existing family pet. This is not a statement on the suitability of your care giving skills for a foster dog, merely a concern for the ultimate welfare of the foster dog. Foster dogs can come to us with unknown histories, and we will make the best decision possible based on what we can read of the dog's behavior around other dogs, with our first priority for the dog's health, safety, happiness, and ultimate welfare.

When doing initial meet and greets, Stafford SPCA staff will introduce your resident dogs to the foster dog on neutral territory, at a park or down the street from your house, or in the backyard of the shelter facility itself, for example. Please feel free to ask questions during the initial meet and greet while it is going on; it can be a great learning experience for how to introduce unfamiliar dogs to each other in your own personal interactions.

Introduce them on leash, with an adult holding each leash. Allow a quick “hello” sniff or walk-by, and then put some distance between the two leashed dogs, even if things seem fine. This gives them a chance to think about things, and often, they will then seek each other out to get a lengthier greeting. Give lots of positive reinforcement so that both dogs feel safe and that the other dog is a friend, not a foe. If one dog gets aggressive, separate them quickly, comfort the dogs, and slow down the pace of the introductions. These are the general steps that you have seen/will see Stafford SPCA staff members taking while doing introductions between unfamiliar dogs.

If the initial meet and greet between the potential foster dog and your existing pet is encouraging and we decide to place the foster dog into your home, we will deliver the dog to your home and facilitate another meet and greet there. This introduction is just as important as the first introduction, as this one takes place on your existing pet’s territory, so watching your existing pet’s reaction and interactions with the foster dog is key.

The Stafford SPCA will not leave a foster dog in a home if we have notable concerns about the compatibility of our foster dog with an existing family pet. If we place a foster dog with your existing family dog, we are reasonably confident that things will work out. However, you should still keep an eye on the dogs’ interaction with each other, especially during the first few days with the new foster dog at your home.

Peaceful coexistence between a foster dog and your dog

Don’t force things if they are not immediate best friends. Sometimes it takes a few days for dogs to accept each other. Sometimes, dogs just don’t like each other. By giving them each attention separately, and making them feel safe about their bed, toys, and food, you can minimize any tension.

Dogs are pack animals. There is usually one who dominates. Correction of one dog by another (whether it is your resident dog or the foster) is normal. As long as the dogs are responding positively to each other and seem to recognize the “pecking order,” this is fine.

For example, one dog may growl at another. If the dog reacts by moving away or showing passivity, then usually, the dogs will get along fine. If they are constantly battling for the “alpha” position, then they will have to be separated, and may not be a good fit for each other. Two dogs in a household battling for the alpha position will not provide a stress-free environment for your foster pet to mature, learn, and become more adoptable. If your foster dog and your existing pet continue to show tension toward each other after the first few days, contact us for advice and recommendations. It may be something that we can help work out between the two dogs, or it may be a circumstance where we will have to find another foster home to place the foster dog. Again, we make all decisions based on the ultimate welfare and happiness of our foster animal. This, too, should be your first priority as foster caregiver.

Never leave the dogs unsupervised together. Part of being a good foster caregiver is recognizing the need for crate training, so when you are leaving the house, the foster dog should be crated. Leaving dogs unsupervised together is an unnecessary risk. It is a decision many dog owners make when leaving their own pets at home together, and it’s acceptable and understandable in that context. Remember, however, that your foster pet is a

foster animal, and it is your job to make sure he/she becomes as adoptable as possible. This includes crate training and separating your dog from the foster dog when you cannot be around to supervise.

It is always a good idea to feed dogs separately, especially foster dogs who sometimes have unknown histories. This reduces stress for everyone. Food aggression or resource guarding between dogs is common. Feeding dogs in separate rooms, or at least with a sturdy gate between them, goes a very long way towards avoiding unnecessary incidents.

Dog to cat introductions

Dog to cat introductions are generally not as sensitive as dog to dog introductions, as a cat usually will have an escape route available from an unruly, ill-mannered dog.

First, make sure that your cat has his or her own sanctuary in your home—preferably a room where the dog will not be allowed to go. If you can keep the cat’s food and litter box in this room, and keep the door closed, then the dog and cat can sniff each other under the door for a few days before meeting face to face. This will make things go a lot smoother, as they will most likely feel they have already met. Supervise the dog’s behavior even at the door to the cat’s room, reinforcing playful, curious behavior, and correcting any aggression or obsession.

When introducing the dog and cat for the first time, put the dog on a leash and just allow the cat to walk by if he or she wants to. Here, you’re looking to evaluate both the dog and the cat. Is the cat fearful or curious? Is the dog happy and playful, or chomping at the bit? After introductions have occurred, keep in mind the following tips:

Never leave the cat & dog unsupervised, even if it looks like they get along great. A playful dog can still unintentionally harm a cat.

Make sure the cat has places to jump up to in each room or hide under where the dog can’t get him/her.

Playful chasing is normal, but remind the dog to play nicely, gently, and reasonably slowly. A spray bottle here is often helpful. If the dog gets too worked up and won’t be corrected verbally, a spritz of water will often slow him or her down.

Don’t allow the dog to stare down the cat. The dog should know that he/she is not allowed to obsess on the cat.

The cat may swipe at the dog or hiss in order to correct and demonstrate that the dog has crossed the cat’s boundary or comfort level. This is usually a great help in ensuring the dog knows his or her place. Naturally, keep an eye on interactions to ensure the cat doesn’t injure the dog.

Cat to cat introductions

Cat introductions can be tricky. Research suggests that a single hostile encounter between two unfamiliar cats can set a negative tone for their relationship for a long time to come. It seems that cats will hold a grudge! So, to prevent your foster and resident cats from getting off on the wrong paw, plan to introduce them gradually and remember to spend plenty of quality alone time with your resident cat during the transition to minimize jealousy. Transition rooms are generally invaluable when introducing a new cat to the household, even if it is only a short-term foster cat.

The foster and resident cat should have no face-to-face interaction for the first week. This will give the new cat a chance to get comfortable with his new surroundings and family. Select one transition room for the foster cat and confine her there with her litter pan, bedding, food, and toys. After a day or two, start allowing the cats to catch the other one's scent. This can be done by brushing them with the same brush, feeding them treats on opposite sides of the same door simultaneously, or allowing them to explore one another's space when the other cat has been taken elsewhere.

After introducing smells for a few days, put the foster cat in a carrier and allow the resident cats to come into the foster's safe room. There may be some hissing or posturing. Keep it short and try this several more times over the course of a couple days before allowing for a "no barriers" face-to-face meeting. Do not rush this process. Keep these meetings short and supervised. After a few weeks, the new cat may come out of his safe room and join the household happily. If the interactions become negative, the new kitty may return to the safe room and you may start the process over again even more gradually. The name of the game here is patience!

If necessary, the foster cat may be confined to its transition room for the duration of your fostering experience, or she may choose to confine herself there. This is not ideal, as it does not necessarily give you the chance to get to know your foster pet well. Nonetheless, it may be necessary if your foster cat simply doesn't like other cats, or especially if you are fostering young kittens around established adult cat pets of your own.

Patience is key

With all your resident pets, allow the animals to accept one another on their own time. Never push them toward each other or force interaction. Many animals become companions and playmates, while others simply tolerate each other. Allow the foster pet and your established pet to proceed on their own timeline. Forcing any pets to interact with each other too quickly is a recipe for unnecessary trouble. As always, stay in contact with the Stafford SPCA regarding your fosters and their interactions with you and your other pets.

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THE IMPORTANCE OF BASIC TRAINING AND SOCIALIZATION

Rescue dogs run the gamut from perfect ladies and gentlemen who are able to perform proudly in the obedience ring to excitable puppies and adults who have never been taught any rules.

Generally, we know very little about a dog's level of training when he comes into rescue. It is your job, as foster caregiver, to evaluate and report on the dog's behaviors and to get a start on improving his behavior and training. If your foster dog has known bad behaviors, start working on replacing them with good behaviors right away. You do not have to turn your foster dog into an obedience champion, but we do like to pass on semi-civilized dogs capable of functioning in a house and in public.

It is the responsibility of the adoptive family to train your foster dog, but they should at least know what to expect. Remember, teaching your foster dog basic rules and showing him that you expect the rules to be followed can solve many behavior problems. A dog expects to be disciplined for disobeying the rules, but he needs to know that discipline will be fair and consistent and does not mean that you do not love him.

We want to give our foster dogs every opportunity to succeed. Only by taking a slow, moderate approach to training with all dogs, whether shy or boisterous, can we achieve that goal.

Remember, as a foster caregiver, one of your most important roles is to make your foster dog as adoptable as possible. In most cases, you will find yourself being stricter with your foster dog than with your own dog. We all let our dogs bend a rule here or there, but we cannot give our foster dogs the same luxury. We do not know what their adoptive homes will or will not tolerate. **Our job is to send them out as the best dogs they can become during the time that they are in foster care.** Let their adoptive homes decide which rules they can bend.

As you are getting to know your new foster dog, test him or her to find out if he responds to simple obedience commands. If not, teach your foster dog to SIT. It will improve your life together in ways you never thought possible!

Here is a summary of things you need to do with your foster dog in order to insure proper behavior and training.

1. Watch for aggressiveness and report any behavior problems immediately.
2. Teach how to SIT. This is the foundation of training.
3. Crate train
4. Leash train
5. Establish boundaries regarding jumping on furniture and beds.
6. Teach general house manners
7. Teach to release toys, treats, etc., on command.
7. Socialize with other people and animals (only *after* the dog has been fully vaccinated.)

Anytime you need advice on training, contact us! We have a wealth of knowledge on training and a lot of experience dealing with slow learners.

Socializing your foster pet is almost as important as basic training skills. A friendly animal is an adoptable animal. You will get to know your foster pet well and will know his or her quirks and personality. Introduce your foster pet to visitors in your household as often as possible, as long as you're sure your pet is comfortable.

Take your foster dog out in public when possible, **BUT ONLY AFTER YOUR DOG HAS ALL HIS/HER VACCINATIONS AND HAS A CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH.** Do not attempt to introduce your dog to others or even to take your dog to a pet store until all vaccinations are on board; this is especially relevant if you are fostering puppies, who have untested immune systems. See the chapter on shots and medications in this manual for brief information on the importance of vaccinations before taking your foster dog out in public.

Pace yourself based on your foster dog's security level, but get him out into different situations and meeting other people as much as possible. Introduce him to visitors at your house if possible (under strict supervision). Introduce him to young children, cats, other dogs, people, and anything else you can think of. Of course, all of this is dependent on your foster dog's comfort level. If you suspect that your foster dog may be dog aggressive

or may not like children, do NOT put the dog in a situation where he may be inclined to become frightened and bite. Use your best judgment at all times.

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COMMON BEHAVIORAL PROBLEMS WITH FOSTER ANIMALS

Some rescue dogs are broken and need a lot of care and work to fix them. The most important thing you need to do with a foster dog in this situation is to establish trust. Many dogs have been abused and may react unexpectedly to your actions. At best, they may be hand-shy; at worst, they may be fear-biters. You should approach discipline gently and carefully until you have a good sense of your foster dog. Be sure that the disciplinary action is appropriate to the dog as well as to the deed. Again, the most important thing you can do is to establish trust.

Common undesirable behaviors to look for are as follows:

- Dog aggressiveness
- Food aggressiveness
- Toy aggressiveness
- Submissive urination
- Separation anxiety
- Excessive barking
- Chewing

Dog Aggressiveness

The Stafford SPCA will not place a foster dog with you if we suspect that aggression with your existing pets will be a problem. However, as with all living creatures, there can be no guarantees. See the previous chapter on making introductions with your current pets for tips on what to look for between your foster dog and your established pet.

Not all dogs will be best friends with others. The key is moving slowly in introductions and not pushing your foster dog too quickly. Socializing is an important aspect of your role as foster parent, but if you suspect that your foster dog simply doesn't like other dogs, do not socialize with other dogs!

Contact the Stafford SPCA immediately to report any aggressive behavior. This is required, and is a condition of the foster contract you signed. The Stafford SPCA must be made aware *immediately* of aggressive behavior.

Food aggression

As noted before in this manual, it is good policy to feed your foster dog separate from other animals in the house, to avoid the chance of fights over food. It is also generally good policy to have your foster dog SIT before you give him his meals—assuming, of course, that your foster dog knows the command!

It is not uncommon for foster dogs to practice “resource guarding,” the name for the behavior when dogs become protective over food. This behavior can range from simply running away to hide in a corner with a favorite treat while he’s eating it, to full-blown biting when someone approaches his food bowl while he’s eating. Puppies can be prone to resource guarding because they may have become used to guarding their food from their littermates.

Move slowly with your new foster dog while he’s transitioning into your house, watching closely for signs of food aggression or resource guarding. If you notice behavior that concerns you, contact the Stafford SPCA immediately and we will provide you with advice and resources to help correct the behavior. As always, report any major concerns regarding aggression *immediately*.

Toy aggression

Toy aggression can be similar to food aggression, where a dog behaves possessively over a valued resource. Toy aggression is generally not as serious as food aggression, but do watch for it with your new foster dog.

Teaching your new foster dog to DROP a toy on command can take patience, but can work wonders in dealing with any resource guarding issues. Pay attention to your foster dog’s body language when he has a valued toy and you approach him.

As always, preventing the onset of a bad behavior is better and easier than trying to cure the behavior later. Teaching your foster dog DROP IT, and then rewarding with a tasty treat when the dog relinquishes a valued toy, is an excellent way to discourage toy aggression. Remember that the Stafford SPCA encourages positive reinforcement training techniques at all times, and patience is key.

Submissive urination

Submissive urination is sometimes misdiagnosed. If your foster dog is not yet well house-trained or is a puppy, accidents in the house can and *will* happen and are often not a result of submissive urination. Submissive urination is more common in some breeds than in others, and can often take care of itself as a dog matures and becomes more comfortable in his surroundings.

Dogs with submissive urination problems often will urinate when they are excited or frightened. Some dogs with submissive urination will void their bladders when they are greeting their foster caregiver after you’ve been away from the house for a while, or when meeting new people.

If you suspect your foster dog has submissive urination problems, the most important thing to remember is that scolding the foster dog for it is usually counterproductive and will serve to make the problem worse. Training a dog to SIT before you greet him is often extremely helpful in curbing submissive urination. If your foster dog is submissively urinating, patience is key. Allow the dog to become less excited before you greet him when arriving back home, and pet him under the chin or the chest when first greeting him, rather than on the top of

the head. If you suspect that you are dealing with submissive urination problems, contact the Stafford SPCA and we will provide you with tips and resources for curbing the behavior.

Separation Anxiety

Separation anxiety is frequently over-diagnosed. Not every dog that barks in his crate has separation anxiety. Certain breeds simply do not like to be alone. Springer spaniels, for example, simply like to be near you and with you. The fact that your foster dog follows you from room to room and does not want to be outside alone does not mean that he has separation anxiety.

Things to look for when diagnosing a potential case of real separation anxiety are as follows:

- Excessive drooling or barking when people are preparing to leave the house
- Pacing or following people very closely when preparing to leave the house
- Extreme destructive behavior when no one is home
- Urinating or defecating when no one is home or preparing to leave
- Escape attempts when no one is home or when people are preparing to leave

Many of these symptoms can be present in an untrained dog. If your foster dog is urinating in the house, excessively barking or chewing, pacing excessively, etc., when you are home and not preparing to leave, it is likely not a symptom of separation anxiety, just a symptom of an untrained dog who doesn't understand household rules. Only if these behaviors are present *only* when the dog is alone or people are preparing to leave does it indicate real separation anxiety. If you think your foster dog really has separation anxiety, discuss it with the Stafford SPCA immediately. We will have advice and tips on dealing with the behavior and making your foster dog more comfortable.

Excessive barking

Dogs who compulsively bark are not usually what good potential adoptive families are looking for. If your foster dog enjoys barking compulsively, take steps to curb the behavior as much as possible. Yelling at the dog to SHUT UP is counterproductive; the dog can interpret yelling as you joining into his noise making. Remember that the Stafford SPCA endorses positive training techniques. Behave with patience and tolerance towards your foster dog.

Do not reward the compulsive barking behavior with attention, treats, or anything else. Wait until your foster dog stops barking to give him any attention at all. In time, he will come to associate your attention with his lack of barking. A dog may compulsively bark because he is bored. Keeping your foster dog well stimulated and well exercised may stop the behavior from ever developing. If you find yourself dealing with a foster dog who barks excessively, contact the Stafford SPCA for tips and advice.

Chewing

Many dogs that end up in foster homes never received adequate direction about what items are acceptable to chew on and what items are not. It is often the role of foster caregivers to teach dogs the distinction. An effective way to teach the distinction is to tell your foster dog NO when you see him chewing on a forbidden item, then immediately give him one of his chew toys to replace the item. Be sure to praise him when he changes his chewing attention from the forbidden item to the approved chew toy.

For some dogs, bitter sprays can be effective. These can be purchased at all major pet stores. However, bitter

sprays alone rarely solve chewing problems; you must use the bitter spray along with giving your dog direction and praising him when he makes an appropriate chewing choice.

Do not confuse your foster dog by allowing him to chew on some forbidden items. Many pet owners give their dogs old shoes to chew on and then get frustrated when their dog begins chewing on new shoes as well. Sending mixed signals like this is unfair to the dog and doesn't give clear, appropriate boundaries.

Provide a variety of different chew toys to your foster dog to see what he prefers. Please note that the Stafford SPCA does not endorse giving dogs rawhide chews. These can cause digestive irritation and even intestinal blockages. There are many safer alternatives as chew toys for dogs.

It is also generally helpful to keep the foster dog's toys in the same general area, usually near the dog's crate. This allows the dog a safe place to go and consistently find approved chew toys, minimizing confusion about what is allowed to be chewed on and what is not.

Remember that one of your most important roles as a foster caregiver is making your pet as adoptable as possible. A well-trained dog is an adoptable dog! Once you are comfortable with your foster dog, push him a little in order to identify problems.

If you experience any of these problems, notify the Stafford SPCA. It is important to have this information on record in your dog's file. Work on the problem if you can; ask for advice if you need it. Our foster homes, shelter volunteers, and shelter staff have a great deal of "institutional knowledge" that we will be happy to share with you.

Remember, if your foster dog shows aggression toward you, you must discuss this with the Stafford SPCA right away. WE WILL NOT place a dog that bites. In dealing with an aggressive dog, trust your instincts. If you have a bad feeling or just do not trust your foster dog, there is probably something wrong. Do not keep these feelings to yourself!

Common cat problems

Of course, training cats is quite a different endeavor than training dogs. Nonetheless, it is equally important that foster caregivers for cats understand that part of your role is to make your foster cat as adoptable as possible! Socialize your foster cat as much as possible, once your foster cat is comfortable in your home, and once you understand your foster cat's comfort level with strangers and interaction.

Many cats that end up in foster homes do not understand the distinction between valuable furniture and a cat scratching post or scratching board. It is your job as a foster caregiver to help your foster cat learn the distinction.

The Stafford SPCA absolutely *does not* condone declawing cats. Declawing a cat to protect furniture in a home is NOT an acceptable solution and reveals profoundly misplaced priorities about the role of a pet in an owner's life. For information on why the declawing procedure is so harmful to cats, feel free to ask the Stafford SPCA or to do internet research on your own.

You should already have a scratching post or board when the foster cat comes into your home. Initially, keep the post in the cat's transition room, where the foster cat feels safe and will want to use it. Once the foster cat

is comfortable moving around the house, if you start to notice the cat scratching furniture, put the post beside whatever furniture item the cat has chosen to scratch. When the foster cat chooses to use the post instead of furniture, reward her with a treat or affection. Try sprinkling small amounts of catnip on the post or board to draw the cat's attention to it.

If undesirable scratching behavior persists, covering the furniture that the cat likes to scratch with double-sided tape or aluminum foil is often effective. Cats usually don't like the way this feels on their paws. Lemon-scented sprays or orange-scented sprays on the furniture may be an effective deterrent as well, as cats often dislike citrus scents. Foster caregivers also sometimes find spray bottles (filled with water) to be effective in deterring unwanted scratching behavior.

7

THE IMPORTANCE OF CRATE TRAINING

All Stafford SPCA foster dogs, when not interacting or under the direct supervision of their foster families, will be kept in their crate, cage or other appropriate animal housing container.

The crate to a dog or cat is almost like a bedroom is to a teenager. It's their private sanctuary where they will have bedding and feel safe. Dogs descended from wolves, and a crate to a dog is similar to the den is to a wolf, providing comfort and security. Having a dog crate trained also helps tremendously when holidays come around and family, friends and elderly visitors might be over. If the dog is properly crate trained, he'll feel comfortable and secure, enclosed safely within his crate. He won't be underfoot during meal time with family and also won't be jumping up on elderly visitors. Everyone, including the dog, will then be able to enjoy the holiday safely and with the least amount of stress.

Thus, a crate trained dog is much more adoptable than a dog who has no experience with crates. Remember, it's your role as foster caregiver to make your foster dog as adoptable as possible, and this definitely includes crate training!

There's no secret to successful crate training. It simply requires persistence and patience. Usually within a couple of days, young animals learn to feel safe in their crates. A few simple things to understand will make crate training easy to accomplish:

The crates need to be just a little larger than their body, allowing just enough room for them to turn around and lay down. This is so they understand that the crate is for sleeping and is not to be used as a bathroom.

Soft bedding—not newspaper—should always be used in the crate. Again, this is so the foster animal understands that the crate is their private space, like teenagers feel about their bedrooms, and that it's not a bathroom. Bedding is also more like the fabrics found normally in their home environment.

The crates need to be kept somewhere within your home where it allows the foster dog to interact with their foster family. This also allows you to smell if they've gone potty in their crate so the situation can

be addressed promptly.

During the night the crate also must be kept in a place that allows you to smell any animal “accidents,” which must be removed promptly from the crate and fresh bedding put in. Otherwise, the foster animal will grow up believing it’s acceptable to sleep in its own waste, which is not acceptable. Not many potential adopters would even consider adopting a dog that believes it’s acceptable to sleep in its own waste.

Importantly, crates must never be used as punishment tools. Foster dogs must NEVER be banished to their crate for bad behavior. The crate should be a safe refuge for the foster dog, somewhere the foster dog does not find at all intimidating. A dog who enters his crate freely is most likely a happy, well-adjusted dog, and a happy dog is an adoptable dog. NEVER use the foster dog’s crate as a punishment tool.

The Stafford SPCA encourages foster caregivers to provide as many of your own supplies as possible. However, a properly sized crate is such an important tool for foster dogs that the Stafford SPCA will gladly loan you one if you are in need of it. Please note that we require the crate to be returned once your foster pet is placed in a forever home.

8

PETS AND CHILDREN

Animals and kids can go together like peanut butter and jelly. Pets are great playmates, guardians, and confidants. However, children must learn proper handling and discipline, and animals must learn self-control so that they do not play too rough, especially with children.

If you have children, the Stafford SPCA makes the final decision as to whether to place a particular foster dog in your household, based on the age and maturity level of your children and the age and maturity level of the foster dog.

Children must be supervised and taught that pets are beings, not dolls or toys to dress-up or handle constantly. Teach your children not to tease or rile up the animal unnecessarily. This includes high-spirited games of chase around the house, which can scare an animal. A frightened animal may snap, bite or scratch if cornered or overly stressed.

Make sure your children know that it is not a dog’s fault if the dog chews up toys that are left out. Keeping doors shut and toys in toy boxes can help minimize damage. Make sure the dog has his own toys, and keep them in the same place all the time (like in a basket, or in the dog’s crate.)

Children like the idea of caring for a pet, but the daily work of feeding, bathing, brushing, scooping litter boxes, and cleaning up after the dog is not really suited for them. Recognize that the initial enthusiasm will wane quickly, and the true responsibility of caring for the animal will fall to the adults in the household. As foster caregiver, *you* are agreeing to provide the primary care for your foster animal. Planning to saddle children with this responsibility does not usually end well.

Young children should not walk foster dogs. Even if the dog is easy to walk, the child cannot reliably handle any encounters with other dogs or cats, which happen frequently. Young children should NEVER play unsupervised with foster dogs. For puppies and kittens, teach proper handling and limit interaction. Your role is to make your foster pet as adoptable as possible, and raising a young animal who has learned to be afraid of children because of rough, inattentive treatment is *not* ideal to make an animal adoptable. Do not leave children unsupervised around your foster pet.

9

FEEDING

Both dogs and cats should be fed twice per day, once in the morning and once in the evening. The amount of food to feed a foster animal will be dependent upon the size (weight) of the foster animal and its physical condition.

The Stafford SPCA has provided specific feeding instructions for your particular foster animal, noted in the supplemental page of your foster contract. You agreed to feed that particular brand, type, and amount of food. Foster caregivers may not change their foster pet's food. Feeding instructions and food plan changes will be made by the Stafford SPCA only, in consultation with a veterinarian as needed. If you are fostering an adult dog or cat, it is rare that food plan changes will need to be made.

If you are fostering young kittens or puppies, bottle-feeding may be necessary and food plan changes may need to be made to accommodate growth. The Stafford SPCA will be in consultation with you regarding feeding your foster puppies or kittens.

In all cases a fresh supply of water should be available to your foster animal AT ALL TIMES.

10

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

As a foster caregiver, you agreed in your contract that you will not take your foster pet to a veterinarian without consulting with the Stafford SPCA first. It is the responsibility of the Stafford SPCA to schedule vet appointments as appropriate, and the responsibility of the foster caregiver to deliver your foster animals to these appointments.

However, in the event of a medical emergency, you must act first in the best interest of the foster animal. It is up to you, the foster caregiver, to determine if immediate medical attention is needed for your foster animal. When the condition appears as if it could be life threatening or is causing severe pain to your foster animal, get the foster animal to the nearest emergency veterinarian as soon as possible. While on the way to the emergency veterinarian, call the Stafford SPCA to inform us of the situation.

In the event of a real medical emergency, call any time of the day or night. If the medical concern is not an emergency and is only a concern, please wait to call during regular business hours. Any health concerns should be directed to the Stafford SPCA so that we can consult with you and decide when a vet appointment is necessary.

Again, as foster caregiver, you are not to take your foster animal to a veterinarian without consulting the Stafford SPCA first, *except in cases of a medical emergency.*

It is always better to avoid emergency situations, which is one reason the Stafford SPCA emphasizes supervising your foster dog at all times, and crating your dog when you are not able to provide supervision.

11

SPAYING AND NEUTERING

Depending on the age and previous condition of the foster animal, yours may already be spayed or neutered. However, if your foster animal is not yet spayed or neutered, the Stafford SPCA will make arrangements for the procedure to occur.

Foster Volunteers are responsible for presenting their foster animals at the appropriate spay/neutering facility on the correct date and at the appointed time for spay and neutering procedures. Spay and neutering for foster dogs and cats is scheduled in advance and you will be notified in advance. Part of your fostering responsibilities

are to be reasonably accommodating with your schedule, in delivering foster animals to any scheduled appointments and also in scheduling meet and greets with potential adopters.

In the event you are unable to bring your foster animal to the spay/neuter appointment on the date and time required, you *must* contact the Stafford SPCA at the earliest possible moment prior to the appointment so other transportation arrangements can be made. It is extremely important that we keep veterinary appointments.

The Stafford SPCA—and every other animal rescue organization in the United States—exists due to the fact that there are too many unwanted animals. Approximately 1.2 million dogs are euthanized in the United States per year. Approximately 1.4 million cats are euthanized in the United States per year. (It is nearly impossible to get accurate numbers regarding animal euthanasia in shelters because not all localities are required to keep accurate, reportable statistics. These numbers are estimates from the ASPCA.) For this reason, no SPCA fostered cat or dog will be adopted without first being spayed or neutered, except in the extremely rare circumstance that there is a legitimate medical reason that would not allow spaying or neutering for the animal's health.

As a foster caregiver, at some point a potential adopter may ask you if an animal may be adopted without being spayed or neutered. The best response is simply to tell them that it is the policy of the Stafford SPCA that all animals adopted from the SPCA must first be spayed/neutered *because it is required by Virginia law*.

The Code of Virginia states that all animals adopted from a releasing agency are required to be altered within 30 days if sexually mature, or within 30 days of when they reach six months of age. This requirement is pursuant to subsection B of 3.1-796.126:1 of Virginia State Code, reproduced below for your interest:

State Code:

Any person who violates any provision of this section shall be guilty of a Class 6 felony.

3.1-796.126:1.

Sterilization of adopted dogs and cats; enforcement; civil penalty.

A. Every new owner of a dog or cat adopted from a releasing agency shall cause to be sterilized the dog or cat pursuant to the agreement required by subdivision 2 if subsection B of this section.

B. A dog or cat shall not be released for adoption from a releasing agency unless:

1. The animal has already been sterilized; or
2. The individual adopting the animal signs an agreement to have the animal sterilized by a licensed veterinarian (i) within thirty days of the adoption, if the animal is not sexually mature, or (ii) within thirty days after the animal reaches six months of age, if the animal is not sexually mature at the time of adoption.

C. A releasing agency may extend for thirty days the date by which a dog or cat must be sterilized on presentation of a written report from veterinarian stating that the life or health of the adopted animal may be jeopardized by sterilization. In cases involving extenuating circumstances, the veterinarian and the releasing agency may negotiate the terms of an extension of the date by which the animal must be sterilized.

The policy of the SPCA is to follow the law. There will be no exceptions to this policy.

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SHOTS, MEDICATIONS, AND IMMUNIZATIONS

Generally, those foster caregivers who are fostering adult dogs and cats will not have to provide shots or immunizations to their foster pets. Instead, routine immunizations will be administered at veterinary appointments. Nonetheless, the information presented in this chapter should be helpful and informative. Foster caregivers should be prepared to administer monthly topical treatments that prevent fleas and ticks, and should also be prepared to administer monthly ingestible treatments to prevent heartworms.

Foster caregivers for puppies and kittens are encouraged to learn how to administer immunization shots to their foster pets. Training on the proper method of administering shots will be made available to foster caregivers for puppies and kittens when desired. However, not everyone is comfortable giving or even receiving shots, and every consideration will be given to insure that no one is placed in a position they are uncomfortable with or are unable to emotionally handle.

Some of the medications, conditions, and treatments foster caregivers *may* be responsible for include:

- Worming of cats and dogs
- Treating for fleas and ticks
- Administering heartworm medications
- Administering Bordatella (kennel cough) vaccine
- Administering “combination” shots

All of these treatments are very easy to learn and perform and are vital to the health of the foster animal.

A note on puppies and socializing:

One of the most important ingredients included in the “combination shots” is to prevent a disease called Parvo. Parvo is a disease that devastates the intestinal organs of puppies and young dogs. Untreated, it is always fatal. It literally causes young canines to hemorrhage to death from their intestines, and usually causes death within 24 to 48 hours from the onset of symptoms. Even with treatment, the chances of survival are only about one in four, and the costs of treatment can easily run around \$2,000.

Dogs most often catch Parvo from contact with vomit, urine or fecal matter from an infected animal. They can also get it simply from being licked or cleaned by another infected animal.

For this reason, it is our policy that no SPCA foster puppy should go out into a public space until *after* all shots and vaccinations have been administered. No SPCA foster puppy is permitted to walk—or even sit—in a public place (like a sidewalk, pet store, public or private parking lot, public park, etc.) until shots are complete. It is also not permitted for an SPCA foster puppy to ride in a shopping cart at a pet store until it has had its complete series of shots. The complete series of shots consists of three shots, given at roughly 21 day intervals. **There are absolutely no exceptions to this policy.**

Unlike other diseases, once an infected dog vomits or “does its business” on your property, the Parvo infection will remain on your property and be capable of infecting any dog or puppy that walks on your

property for up to seven years.

Symptoms of Parvo include lethargy, vomiting and almost continuous watery/bloody diarrhea. The stool will also have what is described as “the smell of Parvo.” Parvo is an extremely serious disease and we take it extremely seriously. Socializing your puppy is important, but not as important as keeping your puppy healthy. **You agree not to take any foster puppy in public until after it has been fully inoculated.** The risk is simply too high.

Bordetella vaccine

Bordetella, also known as Kennel Cough, is the same virus that causes Whooping Cough in humans. Kennel cough is a hacking cough that causes dogs to gag as they cough, attempting to clear the phlegm from their airway. Untreated it usually clears up in two to three weeks, but respiratory complications such as pneumonia can develop.

Today, a simple injection of vaccine into the nostrils, in the form of a mist, is available to help prevent Bordetella. It's easy to administer. This is an optional vaccine for most dog owners, as dogs who do not live in shelters or spend much time in boarding environments are at low risk for developing Bordetella. The Stafford SPCA does recommend vaccinating your existing dogs against Bordetella if you are planning on taking in foster dogs, but does not require it. Discuss your options regarding this vaccination for your existing family pets with your personal veterinarian.

13

STAYING IN TOUCH WITH THE STAFFORD SPCA

Staying in touch with the Stafford SPCA regarding your foster pet is extremely important. The more information we have about the personality and habits of each animal, the more compelling its adoption profile can be to potential adopters. This is one of the great benefits of foster homes: you have the opportunity to get to know your foster pet extremely well and to help us decide which kind of permanent home will be ideal for the animal.

Website write-ups and photographs of our dogs are extremely important. We maintain pictures and write-ups of our foster dogs on the web in order to draw people to our site. Even if they are not adopting, many people read the site daily to check the updates on the dogs and are passionate supporters who make donations, especially when a particular dog needs care. Therefore, it is equally important that the web write-ups (hosted on our main website, PetFinder, Adopt-a-Pet, etc.,) provide as much information as possible.

In your foster contract for a particular animal, you agree to report to the Stafford SPCA via email on a certain day every week. Please remember to stay in touch weekly on your assigned day, even if it is just a short email informing us that things are going well. We like to know plenty of details about how the animal is behaving in

your home, the animal's likes and dislikes, and engaging stories about the animal's behavior.

Of course, any time there is any concern or question at all, contact us immediately. You are agreeing to maintain contact with us regarding your foster pet once a week *at minimum*, but you are welcome to contact us much more frequently than that.

Remember that you are also agreeing to be reasonably accommodating in scheduling meetings between your foster dog and potential adopters. When the Stafford SPCA contacts you regarding your foster dog, we expect to hear back from you within 24 hours at maximum. Failure to get back to us is great cause for concern for Stafford SPCA staff, and we do reserve the right to remove the foster animal from your home if you do not stay in contact with us, or if we have concerns about the quality of care the foster animal is receiving.

14

ADOPTION FOR YOUR FOSTER ANIMAL

The Stafford SPCA will be in charge of facilitating adoptions and screening all applicants. You, as the foster caregiver, should not make ANY promises to any potential adopters, even if they are your friends or family. We take our obligation to each of our animals very seriously, and seek to place every single one in a forever home. For this reason, we are particular and thorough in our adoptions screening process. Please do not promise your foster pet to any particular person or family. The Stafford SPCA retains legal ownership of your foster animal and will make all decisions regarding the animal's ultimate disposition.

As the Stafford SPCA continues to grow, we may train our foster caregivers to assist in the adoption process of their foster animal. The foster caregiver has spent the most time with the animal and thus has very useful, helpful, and important information to offer the new adoptive family. The Stafford SPCA staff, working together with the foster caregiver, will ensure the best possible outcome for these animals. The final result of your foster dedication, and working together as a team with the Stafford SPCA, is finding that forever home for these most deserving animals.

The Stafford SPCA will first process initial background checks on any potential adopter and/or adoptive family, and will then conduct a phone interview with potential adopters to make a reasonable determination regarding whether the potential adopter is likely to be a good fit for your foster animal.

If the potential adopter satisfactorily passes these checks, the Stafford SPCA will be in contact with you to schedule a meet and greet between your foster animal and the potential adopter. You are required to be reasonably accommodating in scheduling these meet and greets in a timely manner. Often, when potential adopters are looking for a new pet, they are excited and want to move quickly and meet the pet quickly. We do not expect foster caregivers to completely rearrange their schedules to arrange a timely meet and greet, but we do expect flexibility. Remember that as foster parent, you are a vital part of the process of finding a forever home for your foster pet. Part of that process is facilitating meet and greets reasonably quickly.

Depending on the animal and the situation, the meet and greet may take place at the Stafford SPCA facility, or it may take place at your home where the foster pet resides with you. Stafford SPCA staff will be in charge of facilitating the meet and greet, and will be present for initial introductions regardless of where the meet and greet occurs. It is ideal for the foster parent to be present for the meet and greet to answer questions that the potential adopter may have. You know your foster pet better than anyone and are best equipped to answer questions.

Occasionally the Stafford SPCA holds adoption events in the community. Adoption events are special events during which foster animals are presented for the public to meet. It also gives the public the opportunity to speak directly with the animal's foster caregiver. This allows all potential adopters the opportunity to learn interesting information about particular pets, such as eating habits, how they interact with other animals, their mannerisms and quirks, etc. As a foster caregiver, you are required to participate in adoption events to present your fostered animal to the public. You are an extremely important part of this process, as you know your foster pet better than anyone and can thus answer questions about your pet that potential adopters might have. Adoption events have been shown to be extremely effective in the adoption of these animals.

In the event you are unable to participate in a particular adoption event, you should notify the Stafford SPCA as soon as possible, and at least five days before the event so that other arrangements can be made.

THANK YOU!

Our dedicated foster volunteer caregivers allow us to home and rescue more animals than we could do otherwise. Your dedication to rescuing pets makes a tangible difference in the lives of animals in our community.

Please don't hesitate to contact us with any concerns or questions about your foster pet. We are 100 percent committed to the welfare of our animals and the happiness of our foster caregivers. We will do everything we can to make your foster experience as good as it can be. Thank you for doing everything you can to make your foster pet as well-adjusted and adoptable as possible.

THANK YOU FOR HELPING THOSE THAT CANNOT HELP THEMSELVES!

