

PREPARING YOUR PETS

The first thing you need to do when considering foster care is to protect your personal animals. Shelter animals can come to us from unknown origins, sometimes with underlying medical issues and conditions, so it is important that you protect your family pets as much as you can. If you choose to foster puppies or kittens, you may be exposing your own pets to upper respiratory infections and worms or parasites.

Before bringing home your first foster animal, make sure your animals are up to date with their vaccinations. Talk to your veterinarian about fostering and follow their recommendations about any precautions you need to take. The veterinarian may suggest additional vaccinations/immunizations to protect your animal. **You are responsible for any treatments and costs related to your own animals.**

PREPARING YOUR HOME

Cats and dogs are curious creatures. Many are capable of jumping onto high surfaces or squeezing into the smallest of spaces. To protect foster animals in a new environment and to safeguard your belongings, it is necessary to animal-proof your entire house. NEVER underestimate your foster animal's abilities. Accidents happen!

Once you have chosen an area where you will care for your foster guests, you should "pet-proof" the area. Pay attention to any small or dangerous objects, such as pins, needles, paper clips, nails, staples, thread, string, rubber bands, caustic/toxic chemicals, moth balls, plants and any other items that are potentially dangerous. Animals are also attracted to electrical cords, TV cords, telephone cords and curtains. These items should all be blocked so they can't get at them. A good rule of thumb is "if you don't want to lose it, put it away. Also, to ensure nothing is missed, get down at an animal's eye-level. Look closely for any small holes or dangerous items that may have been missed at your first pass of pet-proofing

PRECAUTIONS TO TAKE BY ROOM

Kitchens/Bathrooms/Utility Rooms

- ❑ Use childproof latches to keep little paws from prying open cabinets.
- ❑ Keep medications, cleaners, chemicals and laundry supplies on high shelves or in childproofed cabinets.
- ❑ Keep trashcans covered or inside a latched cabinet.
- ❑ Check for and block any small spaces, nooks or holes inside cabinetry, furniture, floors, appliances, etc. where your foster pets may hide. Also make certain that spaces behind washer/dryer units are closed off so your foster animals can't get in there either.

- ❑ ALWAYS keep your dryer and washer units closed!!! Make sure your fosters haven't jumped into the dryer or washer before you turn it on! (This does happen.)
- ❑ Keep all foods out of reach and/or in cabinets. Even if the food isn't harmful to the cat, the wrapper could be.
- ❑ KEEP TOILET LIDS CLOSED to prevent drowning. Curious puppies and kittens can easily fall in and drown.

Living/Family Room

- ❑ Place dangling wires from lamps, VCRs, TVs, stereos and phones out of reach. You can place the cords through PVC pipes to prevent the pets chewing on them.
- ❑ Keep children's toys put away.
- ❑ Put away knickknacks that are valuable to you or understand that the foster pets can easily knock things over. If it is important to you, don't leave it out.
- ❑ Block any spaces where your vacuum can't fit but a foster pet could.
- ❑ Remove dangerous items like strings, pins, yarn, etc.
- ❑ Move houseplants--many of which can be poisonous--out of reach. This includes hanging plants that can be jumped onto from other nearby surfaces.
- ❑ Put away all sewing and craft supplies--especially thread and yarn. If ingested, these items can obstruct cat or puppies' bowels, sometimes requiring extensive surgery to reverse.
- ❑ Secure aquariums and cages that house small animals, such as hamsters or fish, to keep them safe from curious paws.

Garage/Basement

- ❑ Most garages contain too many dangerous chemicals and unsafe items to be an acceptable foster site. Foster animals should never be housed in a garage.
- ❑ Move all chemicals to high shelves or behind secure doors.
- ❑ Clean up all antifreeze from the floor and driveway!!! One taste can be lethal to an animal!

Bedrooms

- ❑ **Bedrooms are not ideal situations for foster animals.** If scared of the new environment, animals can hide under beds and are hard to coax out. In worst case scenarios, dogs and cats can burrow into box springs or mattresses where it can be nearly impossible to get them out.
- ❑ Keep laundry and shoes behind closed doors (drawstrings and loose buttons can cause major problems).
- ❑ Keep any medications, lotions or cosmetics off accessible surface (like the bedside table.)
- ❑ Move electrical and phone wires out of reach of chewing.

Other Potentially Dangerous Situations

- ❑ Closet and bedroom doors

- ❑ Open doors to the outside
- ❑ Open dryer doors
- ❑ Open cabinet doors
- ❑ Computer wires
- ❑ Folding chairs
- ❑ Potted plants

Whatever room you choose to make your foster animal's new home, make sure that it is easily cleaned. You should be able to disinfect it between foster groups. Carpet and other soft surfaces can harbor disease hosts from group to group. It is also difficult to clean up accidents on carpet, especially when they seep into the carpet pad. Bathrooms and other areas with tile, hardwood or other impermeable surfaces are ideal places to house your foster animals.

PREPARING YOUR YARD

If you have a fenced in backyard, check that there aren't holes in the fence or any other escape route. Do NOT leave your foster dog in the backyard without your supervision. You will be amazed what little holes a big dog can get out of or what tall fences a dog can jump! Never leave a foster dog unattended or unwatched outside. Keep your foster dog on a leash for his/her first few trips outside as he/she explores the new environment.