Dog Foster Care Guide

HUMANE DUBUQUE REGIONAL SOCIETY
COMMUNITY OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE

Mission

The DRHS protects and promotes the well-being of all animals by fostering respect for their inherent dignity.

Vision

The DRHS envisions a community where every pet has a permanent and loving home, companion animals are spayed or neutered, and all animals are treated with respect and compassion.

Visiting Hours

Monday – Closed to public
Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday - 11am-2pm: walk in; 2pm-5pm appointment only
Friday - 11am - 3pm appointment only; 3pm - 7pm walk-in
Saturday - 11am - 5pm walk-in
Sunday - 1pm - 4pm walk-in

4242 Chavenelle Road, Dubuque, IA 52002
563.582.6766

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Welcome Message

Becca Lisanby
FOSTER
COORDINATOR

DEAR FOSTER FAMILY,

Thank you for opening your heart and home to a dog in need. By fostering with the Dubuque Regional Humane Society, you're playing a vital role in giving shelter dogs a second chance at a happy, healthy life.

Some dogs need time to recover from illness or injury, others need help building confidence, and many simply need a break from the stress of the shelter. Whatever the reason, your care provides the stability and compassion they need to thrive while they wait for their forever home.

This handbook is designed to guide you through every step of the fostering process—from preparing your home and managing introductions to understanding behavior and supporting your foster dog's health and well-being. Whether you're fostering for the first time or you're an experienced volunteer, our goal is to ensure you feel supported, informed, and confident.
We couldn't do this without you. Thank you for being part of our lifesaving work!

> ***FOSTERING SAVES LIVES***

Communication

Email *It can Wait!*

Foster@dbqhumane.org
For non-urgent updates or information that can wait. Ex) General questions, updates, pictures etc. You may see foster callout here!

Emergency *Immediate Necessary Action*

563-279-4745
Only for true emergencies outside of working hours. Ex) Severe decline in health of an animal, missing or severely injured animals, personal emergencies that interfere with the care of a foster animal.

Slack *Urgent but not emergent!*

Slack is a communication platform we'll be using frequently. Slack is available as a mobile app or can be accessed online at slack.com. It is to be used for anything urgent, time-sensitive, or short notice during foster coordinator working hours (Wednesday–Sunday, 9 AM – 5:30 PM). Ex) Minor health issues like upper respiratory symptoms and allergies. Scheduling short notice appointments, supply pick ups, urgent questions or concerns.

All active fosters with animals in the home must fill out a weekly check-in form located on the foster portal (www.dbqhumane.org/foster-portal)

Scheduling Appointments

1. Pick up / Return

To pick up and return fosters, simply schedule an appointment using the Coordinator button under Scheduling on the foster portal (www.dbqhumane.org/foster-portal). You may also email or slack the foster coordinator for more flexible time slots or urgent / short notice appointments.

2. Clinic Appointments

When picking up a foster, you will get a copy of their medical summary which will show when you need to schedule boosters. It is the foster's responsibility to schedule their appointment for vaccinations/boosters/preventatives using the Clinic button under Scheduling on the foster portal (www.dbqhumane.org/foster-portal). Appointments may only be scheduled between 12 hours and 2 weeks in advance, unless prior approval is obtained. Please give notice for any cancellations. Please be aware that appointment dates and times may be subject to change depending on the clinic's availability.

4. Spay/Neuter

Adult Dogs should be spayed or neutered prior to going into foster. Some exceptions may occur due to age or medical issues.

Once a puppy reaches 2 months of age and weighs at least 2 pounds, they are eligible to be spayed or neutered. Please provide the foster coordinator with weekly weight updates so surgery can be scheduled when the puppy is ready.

Spay/neuter drop-offs typically occur the afternoon prior to surgery. Fosters are encouraged to pick up their puppies for post-operative recovery before they return to the DRHS adoption floor. Average recovery time is 2–5 days.

Preparation

Choosing the Right Dog

The foster coordinator will work with you to find a dog that fits your lifestyle, experience, and schedule.

Once the match is made, the coordinator will introduce you to the dog and help you decide if it's a good fit. It's important to be honest—if you have any concerns or don't feel comfortable, please speak up before taking the dog home. Our goal is to ensure a positive experience for both you and the dog.

Supplies

All Supplies will be provided for by the DRHS. We will not refund any supplies purchased without prior approval. You may receive an in kind donation sheet for any supplies you purchase in order to care for your fosters.

Dog Proofing

Foster dogs often come from uncertain backgrounds, and even if they've lived in a home before, we can't always predict how they'll behave in a new environment. That's why it's important to thoroughly dog-proof the area where your foster dog will be staying before bringing them home.

Dog Proofing

Start by removing anything unsafe or tempting to chew on, and securely close off access to cupboards, closets, or rooms you don't want your foster dog exploring. Keep in mind that everyday household items—like human food, cleaning supplies, or medications—can be harmful or even toxic to dogs, so always store these securely out of reach. Reminder: Even though some dogs may have come in house trained, a 2 week refresher course is always best for any dog coming from a shelter.

Use the following checklist to help prepare your space:

- Keep all trash cans covered, latched, or stored inside a closet.
- Close toilet lids to prevent dogs from drinking the water.
- Store all human and pet food out of reach and off countertops.
- Move or secure houseplants—some can be toxic, and others may just be too tempting to dig or chew.
- Make sure small animal enclosures (e.g., for hamsters, birds, or fish) are out of reach and secure.
- Clear off surfaces that may have medications, lotions, cosmetics, or other small items that could be ingested.
- Tuck away electrical cords, phone chargers, and wires to prevent chewing or entanglement.
- Pick up clothing items with buttons, zippers, or strings that could pose a choking hazard.
- Relocate breakable or valuable items your foster dog could accidentally knock over.

A little preparation goes a long way in creating a safe, calm environment that sets your foster dog up for success from day one.

Bringing Your Foster Dog Home:

Setting the Stage for Success

When you first bring your foster dog home, keep in mind that he may be feeling scared, anxious, or confused. To help ease this transition, it's important to keep things calm and avoid overwhelming them.

We recommend preparing a quiet, designated area in your home where your foster dog can begin to settle in comfortably. A small room or gated-off space is ideal, especially during the first few days. This space should be large enough to accommodate a crate, along with food and water dishes, toys, and a cozy bed or blanket.

During the initial adjustment period—typically the first two to three weeks—limit interactions to only the people in your household. If you have other pets, it's especially important to give your foster dog a separate space where they can safely acclimate to the new environment without direct contact. This allows them time to adjust to unfamiliar sights, smells, and sounds without feeling overwhelmed.

All foster dogs must be housed indoors at all times while in your care.

For safety reasons, never leave your foster dog unsupervised with your personal pets. Any dog-to-dog introductions must be pre-approved by the foster coordinator and must take place at the shelter with a DRHS staff member or trained volunteer present.

Dog Introductions

Initial Procedure

At DRHS, all dog introductions must be conducted onsite by trained staff or volunteers before your foster dog goes home with you. If you have personal dogs, our team will schedule and facilitate an introduction at the shelter to ensure a safe and appropriate match.

Limitations

Not all foster dogs can be introduced to resident pets. Reasons may include recent surgery, medical recovery, signs of animal aggression, or contagious illnesses. In these cases, introductions will be delayed or denied for everyone's safety. Your foster coordinator will give you specific care instructions if this applies.

Once your foster dog is home, continue to supervise all interactions closely. Even after a successful shelter introduction, it's important to ease into cohabitation slowly. Keep the dogs separated when unsupervised, and limit access to shared spaces during the first few days.

Reducing Risk

- Remove high-value items like food, treats, toys, Kongs, and chews during interactions.
- Stay upright, don't crouch down to pet the dogs in the beginning as that can cause jealousy. Remain positive and moving around.
- Feed your foster and resident dogs in separate rooms to prevent food guarding or stress.
- Monitor body language closely and keep initial play sessions short and positive.

Keep leashes on both your foster dog and resident dog during all supervised interactions for the first two weeks. This gives you better control and allows for safe, quick separation without needing to put your hands near the dogs' mouths.

Cat Introductions

Initial Procedure

At DRHS, all foster dogs can be cat-tested by walking them through our cat hallways, allowing them to see cats through glass. This process helps us identify any major red flags in behavior. However, it is important to understand that this test is not a guarantee of how a dog will behave around cats in a home setting. The cats in our facility are stationary and cannot run, so the test does not reveal chase or prey drive tendencies.

Isolate

If you have resident cats, it's essential to make introductions carefully and safely. Start by keeping the foster dog and your cats completely separated. You can either confine your cats to a room with their food, water, litter boxes, and beds, or keep the foster dog in a separate space.

Swap Smells

Over the course of 1–2 weeks, allow the pets to get used to each other's scent without direct contact. You can exchange blankets or bedding between their spaces to help with scent familiarization. Let them smell each other under the door, if possible, but do not allow any face-to-face interactions during this time.

Saying Hello

When both the dog and cats seem calm and curious, you can begin a slow, controlled introduction. Keep the foster dog on a leash and allow just one cat at a time into the shared space. Do not allow the dog to rush or lunge toward the cat. Your role is to calmly manage the situation—use treats, toys, or voice cues to keep the dog focused and calm. Allow the cat to set the pace, and watch both animals closely for signs of stress or overstimulation. Make sure your cat has access to jump up and away from the dog when introducing.

Important Notes

Keep initial introductions short and positive. If either animal shows signs of fear, aggression, or high arousal, calmly end the session and try again later.

Foster dogs should never be left unsupervised with any cats in your home, regardless of how the introduction has gone.

Children and Foster Dogs

Because we may not know a foster dog's full history or comfort level with children, it's important to teach your kids how to interact respectfully and safely. While we will do our best to match your family with a dog that suits your home environment, adult supervision is essential during all interactions between children and the foster dog. Do not leave young kids unsupervised with your foster dog.

Here are some important guidelines to share with your children:

- Give the dog space while eating, chewing, or sleeping. Some dogs may react defensively if disturbed during these times.
- Avoid taking toys or special items away from the dog. Let the dog feel secure with their belongings.
- Be kind and gentle. Never poke, pull, yell at, or bother the dog in ways that could be upsetting or confusing.
- No chasing or fast running near the dog. Sudden movements can startle a dog and may trigger fear-based reactions.
- Keep toys picked up. Dogs may not know the difference between their toys and yours—and some items can be unsafe if chewed or swallowed.
- Let adults handle walks. Young children may not have the strength or awareness to manage a dog, especially if another dog or small animal appears unexpectedly.

By following these rules, your family can help create a safe, positive environment for your foster dog—and make the experience enjoyable for everyone.

3-3-3 Rule

The 3-Days, 3-Weeks, 3-Months Rule

The 3-3-3 Rule is a general guideline when adopting a rescue dog. Every dog is unique and will adjust differently. Give the dog space and allow them to go at their own pace.

First 3 days:

- Feeling overwhelmed
- May be scared and unsure of what's going on
- Not comfortable enough to be "themselves"
- May not want to eat or drink
- Shut down and want to hide (in crate, under table, etc.)
- Testing the boundaries

After 3 weeks:

- Starting to settle in
- Feeling more comfortable
- Figured out the environment
- Getting into routine
- Lets their guard down and may starting showing their true personality
- Behavior issues may start showing up

After 3 months:

- Finally completely comfortable in the new home
- Building trust and true bond
- Gained a complete sense of security with their new family
- Set in a routine

Daily Care

Feeding Time:

Adult/Older Puppies

All foster dogs should be fed Hill's Science Diet dry food twice daily, unless otherwise instructed by the Foster Coordinator. DRHS provides all food.
Feed amounts are based on your dog's weight. Always ensure fresh, clean water is available.

Fosters must always be fed in separate rooms with closed door between any residential pets.

Never pet, mess with the foster dog, or reach hands near their bowls while eating.

Building Routine

Establishing a consistent daily routine—including regular feeding times, potty breaks, and walks—is important. Dogs feel more secure when they know what to expect.
Pay attention to your foster dog's appetite and energy level each day. A sudden drop in appetite or low energy could be a sign of a medical issue. Keeping simple notes on their behavior can help you catch any changes early.

Exercise and Socialization

Foster dogs should receive a minimum of two 30-minute sessions of exercise or socialization per day. Activity levels vary by dog—some may enjoy long walks or runs, while others prefer play sessions with toys or short training exercises. Mental enrichment is just as important as physical activity; try using KONGs, puzzle feeders, or lick mats to keep your foster dog engaged and stimulated.

Enrichment

Providing enrichment is essential for your foster dog's mental and physical health. Enrichment helps reduce stress, prevents boredom, and decreases unwanted behaviors—especially important for dogs transitioning from shelter environments.
There are five key types of dog enrichment, each with unique benefits. Incorporating a mix of these in your daily routine can improve your foster dog's well-being and overall quality of life.

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1. Social Enrichment

Helps dogs build confidence and adjust to new environments.
Activities:

- Supervised play with resident animals
- Walks in different areas
- Positive interactions with people of all ages

Benefit: Reduces fear and aggression, builds social skills.

2. Nutritional Enrichment

Engages a dog's natural foraging instincts and makes mealtime fun.
Activities:

- Puzzle feeders and snuffle mats
- Hiding treats around the home
- Stuffed Kongs or treat-dispensing toys

Benefit: Stimulates the mind, reduces boredom-related behaviors.

3. Occupational Enrichment

Gives dogs a "job" to do, which is especially helpful for active or working breeds.
Activities:

- Basic training sessions
- Fetch or agility games
- Dig pits or scent work

Benefit: Builds confidence, uses mental and physical energy in healthy ways.

4. Sensory Enrichment

Stimulates the senses—especially smell—for stress relief and curiosity.
Activities:

- Scent games or "sniffaris" on walks
- Safe chew toys
- Calming music or scents (like lavender or vanilla)

Benefit: Calms anxious dogs and encourages exploration.

5. Physical Enrichment

Regular movement is key to a dog's health.
Activities:

- Walks, hikes, or runs
- Tug-of-war or fetch
- Rotating toys to keep things interesting

Benefit: Burns off energy and reduces stress.

Tips for Foster Caregivers:

- Use enrichment to help dogs adjust to home life and build trust.
- Start simple and observe what your foster dog enjoys.
- Mix types of enrichment daily to keep things fun and balanced.

With a little creativity, enrichment can turn a scared or bored dog into a happy, thriving companion—ready for their forever home.

Enrichment Ideas

Bottle Babies

Bottle-feeding newborn puppies requires round-the-clock care and a lot of love. Thank you so much for stepping up to give these fragile little ones the attention they need. Please remember—you're not alone in this! We're always here to support you.

Milk Preparation

You can prepare enough puppy formula to last for 24 hours of feeding, but it must be kept refrigerated at all times. Discard any mixed formula that has been sitting for over 24 hours. Only warm the amount needed for each feeding, and discard any unused warmed formula afterward. Do not reuse heated formula, as bacteria can grow in it and may harm the puppy. You can also choose to mix a fresh portion for each feeding.

Never feed cow's milk, dairy alternatives, human baby formula, or any non-approved products—these can be dangerous or even fatal to puppies.

Latching on

It may take a few tries for a puppy to latch onto the bottle nipple. Be patient and gentle—they may need a little time and encouragement to begin eating.

Make sure the nipple has a proper flow: When the tip is pierced with a sterile needle, it should drip one drop at a time when the bottle is turned upside down (not a steady stream).

If you're having any trouble, don't hesitate to contact the foster department. We're always here to help with feeding advice or support.

Bottle-feeding Tips

It's usually easier to feed puppies when they are gently wrapped in a soft towel or blanket, rather than held in your bare hands. The warmth and snugness help them feel secure, similar to how they'd feel next to their littermates. If the puppy is comfortable, allow their front legs to be free so they can "knead" or paddle. This natural behavior promotes healthy muscle development and supports digestion. Important: Always position puppies so that their bellies are facing down, just like they would nurse from their mother. Never feed a puppy on their back, as this can lead to dangerous aspiration of formula into the lungs.

Aspiration

If formula bubbles out of the puppy's nose or they begin to cough, they may have accidentally inhaled some liquid. Act quickly:

- Gently pat them on the back to help them cough or sneeze.
- You can also hold the puppy upside down (tail over head) briefly to help drain the liquid.

Notify the foster department immediately if this happens. The puppy may need antibiotics or a vet evaluation to prevent infection.

Bottle Babies

Elimination

Young puppies under 4 weeks of age are unable to eliminate on their own and need help to urinate and defecate. After every feeding, gently stimulate the puppy's genital and anal area using a soft tissue, unscented baby wipe, or a warm, damp cotton ball. Continue stimulating until the puppy urinates, and monitor for bowel movements. Puppies should urinate after each meal and should pass stool at least once a day or every other day.

Normal puppy stool is soft, formed, and ranges in color from yellow to light brown depending on their age and formula. When first introduced to formula, it is normal for a puppy not to defecate for up to 48 hours. If a puppy hasn't urinated, hasn't had a bowel movement for more than two days, or if the stool appears abnormal (such as black, green, bloody, or watery), reach out to the foster coordinator immediately.

Signs of Illness

Watch for signs of illness, including frequent crying, restlessness, weakness, coldness (hypothermia), diarrhea, dehydration, shallow or labored breathing, paleness or blueness in color. Notify the foster department immediately if a puppy is losing weight, is cold to the touch, or is having trouble breathing (either shallow or heavy breathing).

Weighing

Weigh the puppies before and after each feeding to monitor their growth. Use a kitchen or digital scale that reads in ounces or grams. If the puppy is wiggly, place them in a small bowl or wrap them in a towel to keep them still, making sure to subtract the weight of the bowl or towel. Once puppies are fully weaned, you can reduce weighing to once a day, but regular tracking is still important. If you notice a puppy is not gaining weight or is losing weight, contact the foster coordinator immediately.

Keeping Warm

Puppies under four weeks old cannot regulate their body temperature and must be kept consistently warm. Use a heating pad underneath their bedding at all times. Be sure the heating pad is always covered with a towel or blanket thick enough to prevent direct contact with the pad itself, as puppies have sensitive skin that is prone to burns. The cover should also prevent the puppy from burrowing underneath it. If a puppy feels cold to the touch, warm them gradually before offering formula. Feeding a cold puppy can be dangerous and may lead to health complications.

Cleaning

In the absence of a mother dog, you are responsible for keeping the puppies clean. After each feeding and elimination, use an unscented pet wipe or damp cloth to gently clean their mouths, paws, and bottoms. Their bedding, toys, bowls, and enclosures should be cleaned daily. For dried feces or stuck-on messes, you can use a warm compress to soften the debris and gently remove it using a flea comb. If needed, you may bathe the puppy or spot clean using warm water and a small amount of Dawn dish soap. Only bathe puppies when they are warm, healthy, and stable, and always dry them thoroughly after any cleaning to prevent chills.

Weaning

Weaning is the process of helping a puppy transition from nursing (or bottle feeding) to eating solid food on their own. Puppies often need extra support during this stage to ensure they're receiving enough nutrition and calories—it can take time and patience. Young puppies are very sensitive to being weaned too early, which can lead to serious health issues. Ideally, weaning should begin around 4 to 5 weeks of age, but every puppy is different. Some may need more time on the bottle depending on their health, weight, development, or preference.

Introducing Food

Start by offering the puppy a small amount of formula on a spoon or in a shallow dish. Once they begin licking it up confidently, you can move to a saucer or low bowl.

Gradually mix in a small amount of puppy-safe canned food with the formula to make a soupy gruel. Over time, increase the ratio of canned food to formula, until the puppy is eating mostly solid food.

Some puppies catch on quickly, while others take longer. During this transition, you may need to continue bottle feeding a few times a day until they are reliably eating enough solid food on their own.

Feed until they are full, but don't overfeed, especially when mixing solids and milk. f they are not showing interest in eating, try heating up the gruel or soaked dry.

Important: Never force a puppy to wean. Some puppies may still enjoy the bottle after 5 weeks, and that's okay—as long as they aren't chewing the nipple. Now that they have teeth, they could ingest part of the nipple, which is a choking hazard.

At 5 to 6 weeks of age, puppies can usually handle 4 small meals of wet food per day.

You can also begin to offer dry puppy food soaked in warm water or formula to soften it. Provide constant access to fresh water and dry food as they grow more independent.

Introducing Water

As solid food is introduced, also begin offering fresh water. Use a shallow, tip-proof bowl (no more than 2 inches high) to avoid spills or accidents.

It's normal for puppies to be unsure about water at first, but most learn to drink within 1 to 3 days of introduction. Give constant access and clean the water dish daily.

Weaning

Monitor

Monitoring is critical during weaning:

- Weigh your puppy daily. A drop or plateau in weight may mean they aren't eating enough.
- Watch their behavior: Are they exploring food? Chewing/swallowing properly? Active and alert?
- If weight drops or progress stalls, supplement with bottle feeding, try different
  food textures, or slow down the weaning timeline.

Once your puppy is:

✓ Eating solid food confidently
✓ Gaining weight consistently
✓ No longer interested in the bottle

...you can fully transition to solid meals and stop bottle feeding.

Continue monitoring your puppy for any concerning changes in weight, appetite, energy level, or stool during and after weaning.

Feeding Weaned Puppies

By the age of 7-8 weeks, most puppies will be fully weaned. Weaned puppies eat independently and are no longer nursing or being bottle fed. This is the big kid club!

What to feed

Puppies require more fat, protein, and calories than adult dogs, so be sure that you're feeding a high quality food formulated specifically for puppies that has been supplied by the DRHS. Our goal is to get these puppies eating solid dry food, but it is a good idea to continue supplementing with wet food periodically.

Free Access

While adult dogs are commonly recommended to have a strict feeding routine, puppies should always have access to food and water. When giving wet food, always replace withing 4-6 hours. Wash bowls daily.

Continue Weighing

Continue weighing once daily at the same time everyday to help routinely monitor puppy health.

Fostering Moms

If you receive a litter of puppies along with their mother, you're in luck! The mother dog will take care of most—if not all—of her puppies' needs. She will nurse them, clean them, and begin teaching them important life skills, such as eating solid food and interacting appropriately with humans.

Bringing Mom Home

It's essential to provide mom and her babies with a warm, quiet, and comfortable space, ideally their own separate room. Nursing mothers can be protective and may become stressed or anxious around other animals. For this reason, always keep them separated from other pets in the home.

You should create a secure nesting or whelping area for the mother to nurse her puppies. The space should be large enough for her to lie down comfortably and nurse all of her puppies at once. It should also have low walls that allow the mother to move in and out freely, while keeping young puppies safely contained. This setup can be a designated whelping box or something simple like a plastic kiddie pool lined with soft blankets.

Caring for Mom

While the mother dog is nursing, it's important to ensure she always has access to fresh water and is being fed two to three times a day. Nursing takes a lot of energy, and nearly all of her calories will go toward producing milk and caring for her puppies.

Because of the physical demands of nursing, mother dogs may seem lethargic at times. This can be normal, but you should still monitor her for signs of illness. Be on the lookout for dehydration, rapid weight loss, refusal to eat, or excessive lethargy. These symptoms may indicate an underlying health issue.

If the mother becomes sick, she may stop producing enough milk or lose interest in caring for her puppies. In such cases, you'll need to step in to supplement feedings with a bottle and provide additional care for the litter.

Even when the mother is doing well and appears attentive, it's still essential to weigh the puppies regularly. This ensures each one is getting enough food and gaining weight at a healthy rate. Don't assume that just because the puppies are nursing, they are all thriving—tracking their growth is key.

Fostering Moms

Mom and Weaning Puppies

Most attentive mother dogs will naturally begin to encourage their puppies to eat on their own between 4 and 6 weeks of age. If the puppies are resisting solid food and continuing to rely on nursing, you may need to separate the mom for short periods during the day to encourage independent eating. Always try offering food and using positive encouragement before allowing the puppies to nurse again. Please consult with the foster team before beginning this process.

Socialization with Moms

Most mother dogs are both attentive to their puppies and comfortable with humans, helping teach their puppies appropriate social behaviors. These moms often make your job easier by setting a good example and encouraging confidence and curiosity in their litter.

However, there are times when a mother dog may be unsocialized, fearful, or display behavioral issues. In these cases, your role as the foster caregiver becomes even more important. As soon as the puppies are old enough to begin handling, they should receive frequent, gentle human interaction to support healthy social development.

If the mother is aggressive, overly protective, or prevents you from safely interacting with the puppies, and the puppies are fully weaned, the foster team may decide to return the mom to the shelter ahead of the puppies. This allows you to continue caring for and socializing the puppies without interruption.

Puppies should generally stay with their mother for as long as possible, ideally through the weaning stage and beyond. However, if early separation is needed due to the mother's behavior, this decision will be made by the Foster Coordinator on a case-by-case basis.

Puppy Behavior / Training

Puppies are naturally playful, mouthy, and jumpy. While their energy is normal and healthy, it's important to gently guide them toward appropriate play.

Early structure sets them up for success in their forever homes.

The Power of Positivity! Positive Reinforcement Training

Use positive reinforcement to teach your foster puppy—reward good behavior with treats, praise, or play so they learn what's right.
If your puppy is doing something they shouldn't, like jumping or chewing furniture, stop engaging, redirect with a toy, and reward the moment they make a better choice.
Keep rewards quick and consistent. The clearer and more positive your responses are, the faster your puppy will learn.

Punishment

Attempting to punish or scold a puppy for an unwanted behavior does not teach them what to do or stop that behavior. In reality, it may be teaching a puppy to fear retaliation, to hide a behavior, or even to respond aggressively when they feel overwhelmed. Using aversive training methods and punishment can harm the relationship between animals and humans, whereas positive reinforcement methods strengthen that relationship and bond.

Puppy Behavior / Training

Common Puppy Behaviors and How to Respond

Chewing

Puppies explore the world with their mouths, which often leads them to chew on things like shoes, carpets, or furniture. This behavior is natural but can quickly become a problem if not addressed early. When you catch your puppy chewing something inappropriate, it's important to calmly and immediately redirect them to an appropriate toy. Make the toy exciting by wiggling it around, engaging in play, and offering lots of praise when they chew on it. Avoid reacting with repeated scolding like "no, no, no," as this can accidentally reinforce the behavior by giving it attention. Instead, give one firm "no," then quickly offer the toy and reward them for making the right choice.

Digging

Digging is a natural behavior for puppies, often driven by curiosity, excess energy, or the need to cool down or hide objects. To discourage digging, make sure your puppy gets plenty of physical and mental exercise, and redirect the behavior by providing appropriate outlets like a designated dig box or burrow toys. Supervise outdoor time and interrupt unwanted digging with a toy or game. Avoid punishment, and instead, reward your puppy for choosing better behaviors.

Jumping Up

When a puppy jumps on you, they want attention. If you push them off or nudge them away, you are inadvertently giving your puppy attention, reinforcing this behavior. When your puppy jumps up, cross your arms, say "off", and turn away from them. Remain with your back to them until all four of their feet are on the ground, then quietly praise and give a treat. When your puppy realizes that they get the attention they crave when they stop jumping on you and sit, they'll stop jumping up. *Tip: pet the dog on the chest when all paws are on the ground. Petting here helps reinforce all paws on the ground.*

Nipping

Nipping and other mouthy behaviors toward people are also a normal part of how puppies explore and seek interaction. Just like with chewing, puppies may use their mouths to get your attention — but it's important not to reward this with engagement. If your puppy starts nipping, calmly withdraw your attention by turning away or taking a few steps back. Wait for them to calm down or redirect their focus, then immediately reward that better choice with lots of affection and praise. Sometimes, constant mouthing can be a sign that your puppy is overstimulated or overtired. Remember, young puppies often need 18–20 hours of sleep a day, and a cranky, tired pup may just need a quiet break to reset.

Keep it Simple

Puppies learn best with clear, consistent cues and positive reinforcement. Ignore unwanted behavior and reward the good ones with treats, praise, and play. If your puppy seems nervous or disengaged, slow down and focus on building trust through calm, gentle interactions. A strong bond makes all training easier.

Puppy Socializing

The first few weeks and months of a puppy's life are crucial for shaping their behavior. Between 3 and 16 weeks old, puppies go through a critical socialization period—a time when they are naturally more curious and less fearful. This is the best window to introduce them to new experiences.

How to Properly Socialize Your Puppy

Not all socialization is good socialization — the goal is to make sure your puppy feels safe and is having fun. Every new experience should be paired with something positive, like tasty treats and gentle encouragement. Let your puppy explore at their own pace. For example, don't place them on a staircase and expect them to go down, or drag them across a new surface. Give them the choice to approach new things when they're ready.

Turn scary or unfamiliar objects into opportunities for reward. Maybe chicken appears on the strange tile floor, or yummy treats show up near a quiet vacuum. Wait until your puppy is comfortable before turning the vacuum on, then offer even more treats to create a positive association.

If your puppy seems nervous, it's perfectly okay to take a step back and give them more space. Go at their pace and keep things low-pressure. With patience and plenty of rewards, most puppies will build confidence over time.
Remember, forcing your puppy into frightening situations can backfire and lead to lasting fear. Instead, use treats, time, and trust to help your puppy grow into a well-socialized and confident adult dog.

Puppy Socializing

Puppy Socialization Chart/Ideas

People	
Men—tall, bearded, variety of ethnicities, young/old, with canes/walkers, wearing hats, etc	☐
Women—tall, variety of ethnicities, young/old, with purses, with canes/walkers, etc	☐
Children—ensure behaviorally appropriate (keep puppies on the ground, gentle touching)	☐
Behaviors	☐
Laughing, talking loudly, walking/running, etc	☐
Items	☐
Vacuums, mops, bikes, pots and pans, garbage cans/bags, etc	☐
Surfaces	☐
Carpet, tile, hardwood, stairs, grass, uneven/unstable surfaces, etc	☐
Health and Grooming	☐
Nail clippers, feet/ears/tail/mouth being touched, being brushed	☐

Socializing Your Dog

...refers to providing him with POSITIVE experiences with NEW THINGS. The best way to make sure your dog has great experiences is to include things he loves (like food or toys)

new people

Let your dog approach **at his own pace**, if and when he wants to.

Associate new people with **wonderful things.**

Make sure puppies are **gently & positively exposed** to different people.

other animals

Always check that the other animal is friendly & tolerant of dogs before you let your dog approach.

Teach your dog how to act politely around other animals by rewarding him for good behavior. Redirect him if he's pushy or overly excited.

If your adult dog doesn't want to play with unfamiliar dogs, that's okay. Adult people don't want to play with every other person we meet either!

new things & environments

To prevent **noise phobia** (eg, fear of thunder), feed your dog a tiny treat every time the noise happens.

Introduce young dogs to lots of **different surfaces.**

Take rides in a boat, train car, or elevator.

Visit the vet & groomer's just for treats and petting.

Teach your dog to **enjoy wearing a muzzle** by making it into a "treat basket"

Avoid truly scary situations, such as fireworks.

Visit parking lots and other busy places just to watch the people, animals, vehicles, etc. and feed your dog treats.

Remember: **EXPOSURE alone isn't socialization!**

If your dog isn't having a great time, you could do more harm than good. Dogs don't just "get over" issues by themselves, so if your dog is shy, worried, or overly excited, leave the situation and work with a professional who can help both of you. If your dog is having a blast and is happy and comfortable, you're doing a great job of socializing him!

Crate Training

Crate training is a useful tool when paired with house training. When introduced properly, a crate becomes a safe, comfortable space for a dog to rest, stay out of trouble, and feel secure when unsupervised. It should never be used as punishment. Keep the door to crates open at all times, giving them access to their safe place even when supervised free-roaming.

Keep the crate in a commonly used area like the living room so the dog feels included, not isolated. The crate should be just large enough for the dog to stand up, turn around, and lie down. If it's too big, the dog may eliminate inside.

Start crate training by tossing treats into the crate to encourage the dog to enter freely. Once they're comfortable, close the door briefly while offering a treat, then open it again. Gradually increase the time the door stays closed. Feed meals in the crate and offer special chew toys only while inside to build positive associations.

Once the dog can stay calm for a few minutes, practice stepping away briefly—leave the room or step outside for a moment—then return and reward calm behavior. This helps the dog learn that the crate is safe and that you will come back.
Keep sessions short and positive. With consistency, most dogs learn to settle in the crate and view it as a secure place to relax.

Potty Training

Puppies must have received at least two rounds of vaccinations before they go outdoors, and even then, they are not fully protected. Until they are fully vaccinated, they should only be taken into safe, fenced-in residential yards. They must be carried to and from the area and should never walk across front lawns near roads, public sidewalks, or be taken into any public places such as parks, stores, or patios.

Housetraining takes time and a lot of patience. Young puppies, especially those under 12 weeks, have very limited bladder control. Most don't even realize they need to go until the moment it happens, so it's unfair to expect them to "tell" you when they need out. The key is to anticipate when they're likely to go and take them outside before accidents occur.

Puppies typically need to relieve themselves right after they wake up (in the morning or after naps), shortly after eating or drinking, after bursts of active play, during or after excitement, and before they go to sleep. After any of these activities, assume your puppy needs to go and take them out immediately.

As you get to know your puppy, you'll begin to recognize signs they're looking for a place to eliminate. They may suddenly start sniffing the floor while walking in circles or wander away from where they were playing. If you catch these signs in time, gently scoop them up and carry them to the designated potty area.
Consistency is everything. Try to take the puppy out on a regular schedule, keep them in a small area when unsupervised, and reward them with calm praise or treats after they go in the right spot. Never punish a puppy after an accident. Instead, clean it up thoroughly to remove the scent, and refocus on your routine.
Remember, accidents are normal and expected. Your goal is simply to help the puppy begin building positive habits in a safe, supportive environment.

Potty Training

AGE	DURATION
Puppies (under 10 weeks)	1 hour
Puppies (10-12 weeks)	2 hours
3 months	3 hours
4 months	4 hours
5 months	5 hours
6 months	6 hours
6-18 months	4-6 hours
Adult Dog (18 months -7 years)	6-8 hours
Elderly Dog (7 years or older)	2-6 hours

Remember these five steps to successful house training:

1. Prevent accidents
2. Reward going to the bathroom
3. Anticipate bathroom needs
4. Interrupt accidents and avoid punishment
5. Clean up accidents with an enzymatic cleaner

Additional Reasons for House Soiling

Medical Problems:
House soiling can often be caused by physical problems, such as a urinary tract infection or a parasite infection. Contact the foster team if you suspect any medical concerns.

Submissive/Excitement Urination:
Some dogs, especially young ones, temporarily lose control of their bladders when they become excited or feel threatened. This usually occurs during greetings, intense play, or in anticipation of punishment.

Territorial Urine-Marking:
Dogs sometimes deposit urine or feces, usually in small amounts, to scent-mark their territory. Both male and female dogs do this, and it most often occurs when they believe their territory has been invaded.

Separation Anxiety:
Dogs that become anxious when left alone may house soil as a result. There are usually other symptoms, such as destructive behavior or vocalization.

Fears or Phobias:
When animals become frightened, they may lose control of their bladder and or bowels. If your puppy is afraid of loud noises, such as thunderstorms or fireworks, they may house soil when they are exposed to these sounds.

Fights, Bites, and Canine Incidents

Fights

If a dog fight occurs, stay calm and do not try to separate the dogs by sticking your hands directly into the fight

Try to separate the dogs by:

- Using the wheelbarrow technique (must have 2 people to perform)
  - Grab underneath the belly in front of hind legs (hips/thighs) (not feet/lower legs)
  - Lift and push forward into one another to separate their latch, then back up to separate completely
- Grabbing a hold of a leash - NOT collar for your own safety
- Using a distraction (such as air horn, whistle, or water) to get the dogs' attention away from one another
- What works for one dog may not work for another dog

****Try not to clap or yell excessively AT the dogs since this may escalate the situation****

- Once dogs have been separate, be prepared to continue restraining and get dogs into separate, secure areas.
- All incidents should be reported to the foster coordinator, even if no bites or injuries occur
- If a dog is injured, it should be immediately reported the foster coordinator who will alert clinic staff and get you in for an appointment

Tip: If safe to do so, bring back the dogs after a fight, even for a 10 seconds. On a leash and not touching each other, this way you can still end on a positive note.

Bites

A bite references any incident in which teeth break skin. Reach out to the foster coordinator asap. Take photographs of the bite. Seek medical care at Medical Associates Urgent Care; if this is closed, proceed to Mercy Emergency Hospital. Upon initial intake, please inform them that the bite occurred while fostering for the DRHS. When it is safe to do so, please stop in person to fill out a bite report at the DRHS and check in with the foster coordinator.

- Any staff or volunteer who experiences a confirmed bite incident may be temporarily suspended from animal handling duties until retraining and reassessment are completed

- Failure to report bites, attempted bites, or mouth-based behaviors is considered a serious safety violation and may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of foster status

- By accurately and objectively reporting an incident (bite or not), we can learn from the situation and help alleviate it from happening again.
- It can also help us learn about each dog and will inform adoption restrictions that can lead to successfully finding the animal the best fit in a future home.

Fights, Bites, and Canine Incidents

When in Doubt, Find STASIS

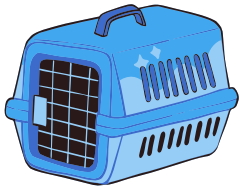
Dog Fight Response Protocol

S **STAY** Calm and Asses

T Look for **TOOLS**

A **ACT** Quickly and Calmly

S **SEPARATE** Animals



I Assess for **INJURY**

S **STATUS** Report

Fights, Bites, and Canine Incidents

S.T.A.S.I.S Breakdown:

S – STAY Calm and Assess

Do not reach in or grab collars. Stay calm.
Quickly assess the situation and your surroundings.

T – TOOLS for Separation

Try safe distractions (air horn, whistle, water).
Look for another person for wheelbarrow technique.
Avoid yelling or clapping excessively— it may escalate aggression.

A – ACT Quickly and Calmly

Once you have a tool or plan, act with control.
Don't hesitate, but stay deliberate and safe.

S – SEPARATE Dogs Securely

Move each dog to a separate, secure area.
Continue to restrain until fully safe.

I – INJURY Check

Check for any injuries on dogs or people.
Report any injuries to the Foster Coordinator immediately.
Vet care will be arranged if needed.

S – STATUS Report

Report all incidents, even without bites or injuries.

Important Reminders

Bite = teeth break skin → Contact Foster Coordinator ASAP. Take photos
Seek medical care if needed (Medical Associates or Mercy ER)
Complete a bite report at DRHS
Fosters may be temporarily paused from handling after a bite for safety review.
⚠️ Reporting is required.
Failure to report bites, attempted bites, or aggressive behavior is a serious safety violation and may result in removal from the foster program.

Canine Health

A healthy puppy has bright eyes, a sleek coat, and a plump belly. Younger puppies are content to sleep between feedings and as they approach 8 weeks, they begin to spend more time playing. Unfortunately, puppies do become ill and sometimes die while in foster, so it is important to prevent disease/illnesses and treat it as soon as it appears.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea is common in dogs and may be caused by parasites, viruses, bacteria, food changes, weaning off formula, stress, overfeeding, or other causes. Be sure to notify your foster team that your dog is having loose stools.

If the diarrhea is mild and the puppy is otherwise alert and playful, we suggest feeding smaller more frequent meals rather than a few bigger meals throughout the day and adding probiotics (provided by DRHS) to the food to help get rid of diarrhea. If loose stools persist past 48 hours, take a stool sample and notify the foster team as severe dehydration can occur quickly in puppies with persistent diarrhea, and medical intervention is required.

Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)

Nasal discharge accompanied by sneezing, ocular discharge, and/or coughing. Your dog is likely to feel “dumpy” and may not be eating its normal amount. Full-blown URI is diagnosed when the puppy has colored nasal discharge. Clear or cloudy nasal discharge, or the absence of nasal discharge but the existence of ocular discharge and/or sneezing, might be diagnosed differently. Contact the foster coordinator if these symptoms appear.

Vomiting

If your dog is vomiting, it is possible that they are eating their meals too quickly. You should watch them when they eat and not allow them to eat too much too quickly – feeding out of a slow feeder or scattering the kibble on the floor can help slow down fast eaters. One episode of vomiting is generally not concerning, but if vomiting persists, notify the foster team as severe dehydration can occur and medical intervention might be required.

Urinary Tract Infection (UTI)

Your dog may be posturing or straining to urinate with minimal urination. Urination may be in small amounts, dark in color, and accompanied by vocalizations by the dog. A urine sample is required to determine the form of infection, which is taken at the shelter.

Canine Health - Parasites

Ear Mites

Ear mites are parasites that live in the ear canal. You may notice a bald spot behind ears due to continuous scratching. They may also violently shake their head. The ears may smell bad and you may see brown discharge that resembles coffee grounds. Ear mites are contagious to other dogs and need to be treated. Slack message the Foster Coordinator if you notice any of these symptoms.

Roundworm

Roundworms are not, in fact, round, though under a microscope their eggs are. Roundworms are often found excreted in stool and described as “spaghetti-like” - yum! They are the most common culprit of the bloated potbelly that many young animals enter the shelter with.

Coccidia

Coccidia is single-celled parasites that love to take up residence in the intestinal wall and cause all kinds of mischief. While you won’t spot wild coccidia with the naked eye, coccidia does generally lead to a very distinct, yellowish, loose, and foul-smelling stool.

Tapeworms

Tapeworms have long, segmented bodies that frequently break off into small sections. Most often, you will find tiny, individual segments that look like white rice in an animal’s feces. You may also find tapeworm segments or eggs that resemble sesame seeds located around the anus.

Fleas

Dogs that have fleas will scratch themselves often. Topical flea prevention is given to puppies over 4 weeks of age. Flea prevention for puppies under 4 weeks includes daily brushing with the flea comb and daily bedding changes. If you still notice signs of fleas, you can wash the puppy in a small amount of Dawn dish soap followed by using a flea comb to remove any remaining fleas. Be sure to thoroughly dry following a bath. Baths should not be given more than once every 1-2 weeks. If you still notice signs of fleas, Slack message the Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck.

Canine Health - Contagious Diseases

Parvovirus

Canine parvovirus, “parvo”, is a virus that attacks the canine intestinal tract and sometimes the heart. It is one of the most resistant viruses and can live in the environment for up to two years withstanding heat, cold, and most common disinfectants. Parvo is transmitted through the feces and vomit of infected dogs and puppies. Because it is so difficult to kill, the virus is easily transmitted by “fomites” - hands, clothing, or the shoes of anyone who encounters it.

Signs and Symptoms

Signs appear 3-12 days after exposure. The initial signs of parvo include loss of appetite, vomiting, dehydration, lethargy, fever, malodorous gray- or yellow-colored feces, or diarrhea streaked with blood. Some dogs infected with the virus exhibit no symptoms and never become ill, while others show a few of these signs and recover quickly. Some others die 24-72 hours after first exhibiting symptoms.

Prevention

The parvo virus is hardy; it can survive in carpets, cracks, and furnishings for up to two years. It is resistant to ordinary household disinfectants but can be destroyed using a fresh 1:32 bleach solution. Most dogs are exposed to parvo sometime during their life, so vaccination is crucial.

Ringworm

Ringworm is not a worm but a fungal infection affecting the skin, hair, and occasionally nails of animals and people. It is in the same family as athlete’s foot and is not a life-threatening condition at all. In many shelter environments, however, it can represent a critical drain on shelter time and resources, as well as an extended stay in isolation for affected animals due to the high risk of transmission.

Signs and Symptoms

The most common finding in pets with ringworm is irregularly shaped areas of fur loss; the skin in these areas will usually appear rough and scaly and often the bald patch is round.

Prevention

Ringworm is most often spread from contact with an infected animal or a contaminated environment. Ringworm is very durable in the environment and if left untreated can persist for months in carriers, furniture, carpets, dust, and so on, and can infect animals housed in a contaminated environment. Keeping your foster in an isolated room, washing your hands, and changing your clothes in between handling can reduce the chance of spreading the fungus

Canine Health

Stool Color

BROWN

Solid, formed brown stool is normal for a weaned puppies and adult dogs. If the poop is well formed and looks like a miniature dogpoop, that's the goal! Woo-hoo!

Loose, smelly brown stool can indicate an internal parasite. Get a fecal exam and obtain a prescription medication if needed.

YELLOW

Mustard-yellow stool is normal for puppies on puppy formula or their mother's milk. Once they're weaning, it will transition to brown.

Super stinky or loose yellow stool can be an indication of a parasite. You'll
want to go to speak to the foster coordinator for a fecal exam and medication.

GREEN

Green stool may indicate a bacterial infection; if so, you'll need to reach out to the foster coordinator for a prescription antibiotic to clear this one up. Don't forget to give a probiotic, too!

Yellow-green stool may also sometimes be a sign of giardia.

BEIGE

Pale poop is often a sign that the dog is failing to absorb nutrients from her food. A probiotic or predigestive enzyme can help support dogs with malabsorption concerns.

Beige poop can also occur with premature weaning. If the puppy has recently been weaned, consider scaling back and giving her a liquid formula diet until her tummy settles.

Overfeeding may also cause this issue.

BLACK

Black, tarry stool typically indicates bleeding in the upper GI tract, which can occur for a number of reasons, from parasites to viruses. You'll want to talk to the foster coordinator immediately to figure out what is causing the bleeding and how to treat it.

The very first poop after a puppy is born will be a dark, tarry stool called meconium. If the puppy is just born, you can expect his feces to look black-green.

RED

Red blood in the stool usually means the dogs is experiencing problems
in the lower GI tract, which could be caused by anything from colitis to bacterial infections. You'll want to let a vet know that something is troubling the dog’s gut.

Canine Health

Stool Textures

MUCOUSY Mucousy, slimy, or oily stool is often a sign of a protozoan parasite such as coccidia or giardia. Make sure the dog is dewormed and receives a fecal exam to determine if any additional parasites are present.

CURDLED Curdled-looking stool can occur when a dog has indigestion due to a parasite, bacterium, or difficulty absorbing the fats and proteins in his food. Ensure that the food is fresh and not spoiled, be sure the dog is being treated for parasites, and consider providing a probiotic or digestive enzyme.

LIQUID Liquid stool indicates severe distress and should be addressed immediately. This often accompanies parvo or an untreated serious parasitic infestation. Reach out to the Foster Coordinator immediately for dogs with liquid diarrhea, and ensure that you are also replacing lost hydration by providing oral or subcutaneous fluids.

SOFT Loose, unformed poop that looks like soft serve is a sign of a moderate GI issue. Ensure that the dogs has been dewormed, and if the issue persists, reach out to the Foster Coordinator.

HARD Hard, dry stool can be a sign that the dog is severely dehydrated or suffering from a motility issue. Make sure that the dog is adequately hydrated, and if chronic constipation occurs, reach out to the Foster Coordinator to determine if there is a systemic cause that can be addressed.

FORMED A healthy dog's poop will be solidly formed. If that's your dog, celebrate!

Emergency Vet Care

NON-EMERGENCY	EMERGENCY
Monitor overnight and Slack the Foster Coordinator . Runny discharge from the eyes or nose . Lack of appetite . Lethargy (lack of energy) . Diarrhea/vomiting . Coughing and sneezing	Require Immediate Veterinary Attention Call the foster coordinator at **563-279-4745** . Difficulty breathing . Severe injury or trauma (hit by a car, opened incision sites ...) .Heat stroke .Unresponsive/unconsious

Emergency Care:

If you have questions about the health of your foster animal or if an emergency situation should arise during regular hours of operation, please Slack the Foster Coordinator and call the Foster Coordinator at 563-279-4745 in the case of an emergency. The Foster Coordinator will contact the Veterinary Team on-staff or the Director of Operations for a treatment plan. Should after-hours treatment be needed, the Foster Coordinator will instruct the foster family on the appropriate steps to take. The Dubuque Regional Humane Society must approve any and all treatments for foster pets.

. If the Dubuque Regional Humane Society has not approved any or all treatments to foster pets, the foster parent will be responsible for ALL costs.
. If the foster parent takes a foster pet to any other veterinary or emergency clinic than the one designated by the Foster Coordinator, the foster parent will be responsible for ALL costs.
. The Dubuque Regional Humane Society has a policy that we will not reimburse individuals for vet bills for foster animals when taken for veterinary care outside of that which is preauthorized by the Dubuque Regional Humane Society Foster/Veterinary Team.

Emergency Vet Care

Outside working hours and not sure if it is an emergency?

CONTACT DOOBERT FOR 24/7 SUPPORT

TEXT/CALL : (239) 201-2924
EMAIL: CONNECT@DOOBERT.COM

DOOBERT CAN OFFER SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE, DETERMINE IF IT IS A TRUE EMERGENCY, AND CONNECT YOU TO LICENSED VETERINARIANS AS NEEDED

If you know it is an emergency, skip Doobert and call the emergency line 563-279-4745. If you are confident it can wait, email or slack the foster coordinator instead.

If it is a true emergency, the Doobert team will contact the foster coordinator immediately. Do not take a foster animal to any outside veterinarian without prior approval from the foster coordinator.

FAQ

Question	Answer
How long do I have to foster?	Time frames can be as short as a single overnight emergency to as long as it takes to get adopted. Speak to the coordinator regarding any time constraints!
What if a foster is too much or does not fit lifestyle needs?	Reach out to the foster coordinator immediately! They will either help problem solve or facilitate the return of foster animals.
Will this automatically deter me from foster in the future?	Not at all! Animal are unpredictable! The coordinator can suggest animals that will be a better fit.
What if I don't have experience?	No worries! The DRHS will provide all necessary training and resource guides to get you started!
Can I Post my Foster on social media?	We highly encourage fosters to take loads of pictures and videos. We will post your pictures and videos on our own page! however; all social media posts from personal accounts need prior approval.
Can I adopt my foster?	Absolutely! Fosters get a 50% off discount for any foster they decide to adopt! (Exceptions may apply and each foster will still need to go through the traditional adoption process!)
What if I'd like supplies the DRHS does not have on hand?	Reach out to the coordinator! The DRHS can often source items and/or purchase out of necessity. If unable to obtain and not deemed necessary by the DRHS, you are welcome to purchase out of pocket on your own!

FAQ

Question	Answer
What if a foster passes away in my care?	Contact the foster coordinator immediately and let them know the circumstances and time of death. Bring the covered remains to the shelter as soon as you can during staff hours.

Guidebook Acknowledgment / Receipt

I understand that the Foster Guidebook contains essential information about the policies, procedures, and expectations of the Dubuque Regional Humane Society (DRHS) related to the handling and care of animals. I understand that it is my responsibility to read this guidebook and to contact the Foster Coordinator with any questions not addressed in these materials. I acknowledge that the DRHS may modify, revoke, suspend, or change any policies or procedures described in this guidebook at any time. I understand that my foster relationship with the DRHS is voluntary and may be terminated by either me or the DRHS at any time, with or without cause. I further understand that this guidebook does not constitute a contract and does not supersede the terms of any signed Foster Agreement. In the event of any inconsistency, the Foster Agreement will control.

Release of Liability, Assumption of Risk, and Confidentiality

I understand that caring for and handling animals may involve risks, including but not limited to scratches, bites, allergic reactions, injuries, or property damage. In consideration of being permitted to participate in the DRHS Foster Program, I knowingly and voluntarily assume all risks associated with these activities. I hereby release, waive, and hold harmless the DRHS, its employees, officers, directors, and volunteers from any and all liability for injuries, damages, or losses I may sustain in connection with my foster activities, including those arising from the ordinary negligence of the DRHS or its representatives. I understand that this waiver does not apply to injuries caused by gross negligence or intentional misconduct, which cannot be waived under Iowa law.

In the event of accident, injury, or illness, I authorize the DRHS to seek emergency medical treatment on my behalf. I understand that I am responsible for any resulting medical expenses unless the DRHS expressly agrees otherwise in writing. I further understand that I must complete the Foster Onboarding process and sign a Foster Agreement before beginning any foster activities.

As a foster for the DRHS, I may have access to confidential or proprietary information that is not generally available to the public. I agree to maintain the confidentiality of this information during and after my time as a foster. I will not copy, disclose, or distribute confidential information without prior written authorization from DRHS management. All confidential information remains the property of the DRHS.

I acknowledge that public relations are an important part of the DRHS mission and hereby grant permission for the DRHS to use photographs or images of me for promotional, educational, fundraising, and public relations purposes in any media now known or later developed.

Foster Signature_____ Date_____

Foster Name (print)_____