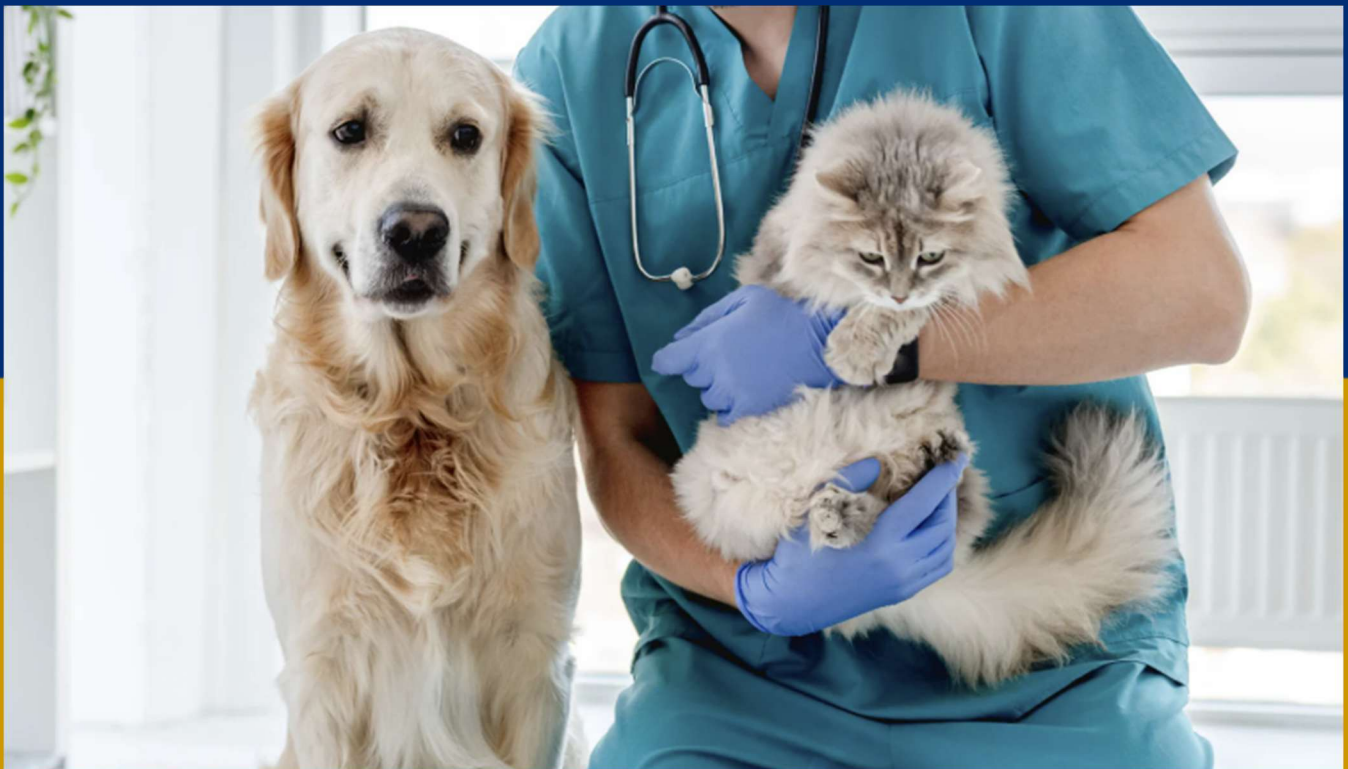




MEDICAL NEEDS FOSTER CARE MANUAL

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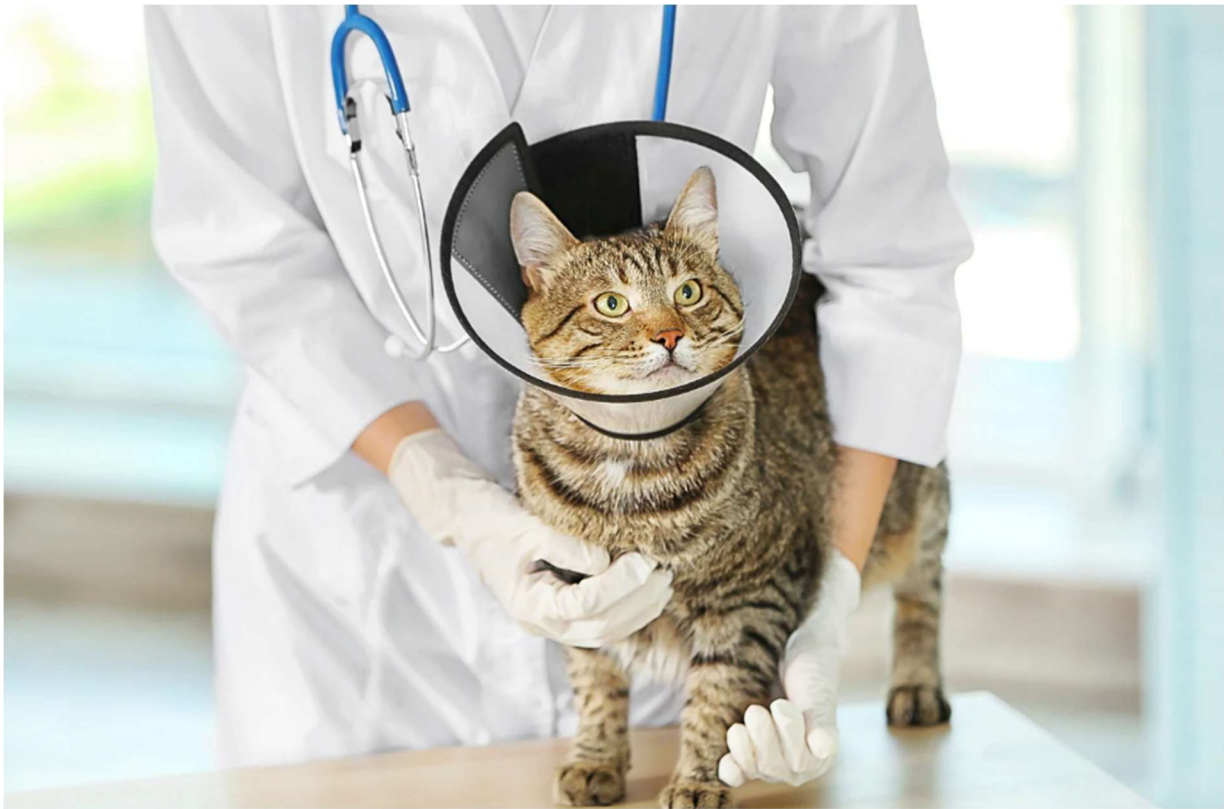
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Medical Needs Foster Program Overview

Purpose

This manual provides direction and guidance to Animal Care (AC) foster parents who are fostering animals with medical needs.

The medical foster program includes pets who are recovering from infectious diseases, undergoing post-operative recovery and/or managing chronic medical conditions requiring ongoing care and attention.

Introduction

Fostering injured, post-surgery, sick or post-partum animals is a highly rewarding experience and challenging responsibility. However, providing care, comfort and medical support will significantly improve the animal's chances of recovery and adoption.

Foster Pets With Medical Needs

Fostering an animal with medical needs requires dedication, patience and compassion. For the entire duration of the foster term, it is essential to commit to the animal's care. This includes providing the foster pet(s) with:

- Medical attention,
 - Emotional support, and
 - A safe environment.
-

Benefits of Fostering

Despite being emotionally and physically demanding, fostering an animal will have a profound effect on the pet's life and can be deeply rewarding to both the foster parent and pet.

Social Media Disclaimer

Due to the nature of certain foster pets' medical issues (e.g. skin lesions, surgery sites, drainage tubes), use your best judgement prior to posting the foster pet on social media.

Caution

Foster parents are advised that AC cannot guarantee that an animal will be housetrained or will not damage furniture and/or personal belongings. The County is not responsible for any damage to furniture or household belongings.

Steps to Begin the Medical Foster Journey

Case Summary

Approved foster parents are provided with a case summary. A case summary is a brief description of the foster pet and its anticipated necessary medical care. It will be the responsibility of the pet foster parent to follow the treatment plan given to them by the medical team.

AC strives to provide foster parents with all information available for each animal participating in the foster program. In some cases, AC may have limited or no prior history on an animal. Due to limited background information, foster pets must always be housed in a secure environment.

Minimum Commitment Period

All foster pets have a minimum commitment period for care. Commitment period timeframes vary on a case-by-case basis. If additional care is needed beyond the minimum commitment period, foster parents may choose to either keep the foster pet for the extended period or return it to the shelter.



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Steps to Begin the Medical Foster Journey, Continued

Interested in Fostering

Potential pet foster parents interested in fostering any animal listed must contact the foster liaison team below to confirm the animal's availability and to schedule a time and date to pick it up. All staff listed below serve as foster liaisons and are happy to assist with this process.

Role	Contact
Program Coordinator	Phone: (909) 386-9820 Email: ACFosterProgram@dph.sbcounty.gov
Registered Veterinary Technician	Phone: (909) 386-9820 Email: ACFosterProgram@dph.sbcounty.gov
Health Education Assistant	Phone: (909) 386-9820 Email: ACFosterProgram@dph.sbcounty.gov

The medical needs program sites include the Devore and Big Bear Animal Shelters. Pet foster parents may be asked to report to either of the shelters listed below.

Site	Address	Phone	Hours
Devore Shelter	19777 Shelter Way Devore, CA 92407	(909) 386-9820	Monday-Friday 10 a.m.- 6:30 p.m. (Wednesday open until 7 p.m.) Saturday and Sunday 10 a.m.- 5 p.m.
Big Bear Shelter	42080 North Shore Rd. Stanfield Cutoff Big Bear Lake, CA 92314	(909) 866-4943	Monday, Tuesday Thursday-Saturday (Closed: 1-2 p.m.) Wednesday Noon-7 p.m. (Closed: 2-3 p.m.)

Medical Needs Foster Parent Role

Treatment Plan

Once an approved foster parent selects a pet that requires medical attention, a treatment plan is provided. Prior to the release of the foster pet, AC staff reviews the treatment plan with the foster parent(s). Refer to the table below for an example of a treatment plan.

Treatment Plan Example	
Monitoring	• Surgery incision along the left hip. • Watch for excessive swelling, pain or discharge.
Activity restrictions	No running, jumping or excessive play until rechecked.
Oral medications	CARPROFEN 25 mg. Give one tablet every 12 hours until finished.
Other treatments	E-Collar. Keep in place until rechecked.
Wellness	Booster DA2PP due on 4/10/25.
Next appointment	4/21/25 for suture removal and necessary vaccines.
Future visits	Return to Shelter (RTS) on 5/21/25.

A resource packet containing valuable information related to the foster pet's medical condition will also be provided and reviewed by AC staff. The RTS date is the final date of the fostering term.



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Medical Needs Foster Parent Role, Continued

Medical Foster Pet Recovery

Once the medical foster pet recovers from the condition that required its placement into the medical foster program, the following options will apply.

If the foster pet is...	Then AC staff will classify the animal as medical foster to...
Selected for adoption by its foster parent,	Adopt.
Returned to the shelter by its foster parent,	Shelter.
Recovered and no longer in need of medical care but due to kennel stress, lack of shelter space or other factors, the pet is now eligible for regular pet fostering,	Foster.



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Foster Wellness Checkup Protocols

Wellness Checkups

After reviewing the treatment plan, the AC medical team schedules wellness check-up appointments for the foster pet.

Pet foster parents are required to take their foster pet(s) to the Devore Animal Shelter for regular wellness checkups with AC's veterinary team.

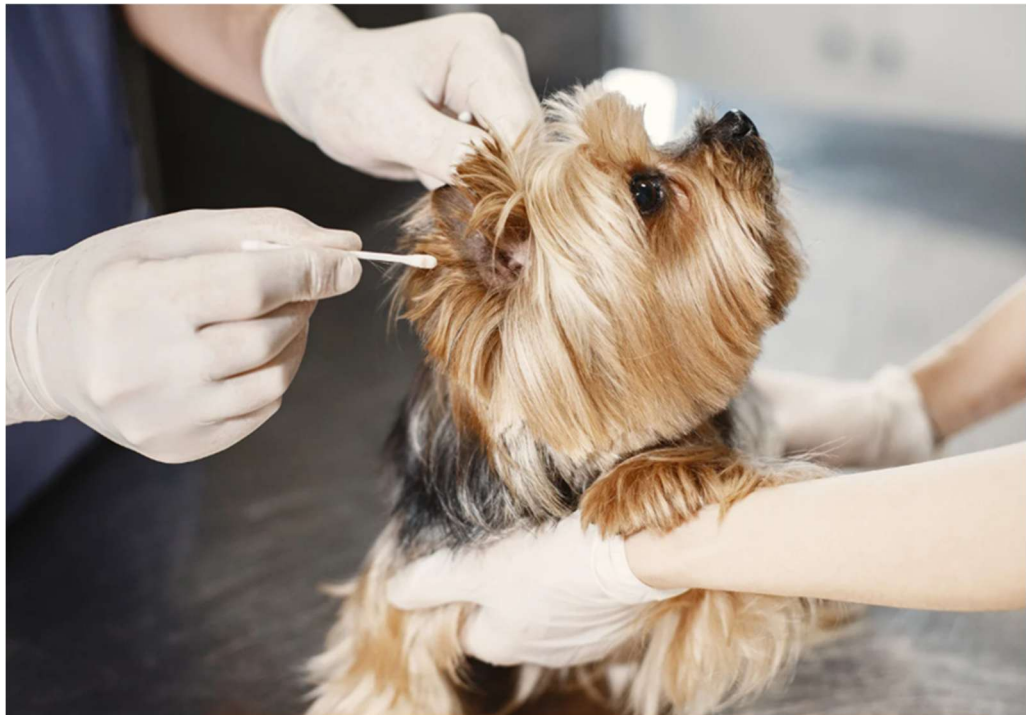
Wellness checkups are essential for the ongoing care of medical foster pets, enabling veterinary staff to:

- Monitor existing conditions,
- Provide preventative care, and
- Detect new or secondary health issues early.

Additionally, wellness checkups offer pet foster parents the opportunity to discuss any treatment adjustments or medical concerns directly with the AC veterinary team.

Appointments and Rescheduling

Be on the lookout for emails from the AC medical team. If you miss or cannot make an appointment, call the foster liaison to reschedule.



Medical Needs Foster Parent Basics

Foster Pet's Living Space

An animal's living space is crucial for its survival. To create an environment for a foster pet to thrive:

- Design a comfortable space in a confined area away from stairs and slippery floors.
 - Consider using a crate, playpen or gated area.
 - Separate the foster pet from other pets in the home **especially** if any pets including the foster have been diagnosed with an illness that is contagious to other animals. Even if they appear healthy, keep foster pets separated from household pets.
 - Maintain a clean-living space and quiet atmosphere. Foster pets require a calm, stress-free environment to recover.
 - Keep food, water and necessary items within reach.
-

Foster Pet Nutrition

Provide the foster pet proper daily nutrition by feeding the applicable specialized diet recommended by AC medical staff. Ensure the foster pet is hydrated by offering fresh water and/or electrolytes solutions, if recommended.

Hygiene

Maintain good hygiene around the foster pet by:

- Keeping bedding and surgical wounds clean and dry.
 - Washing food and water bowls daily.
 - Practicing good hand hygiene to prevent spread of disease.
 - Following all of the AC veterinary care instructions.
-

Proper Handling

Proper handling creates an ideal environment for the foster pet's recovery. When interacting with a foster pet, be sure to minimize stress by:

- Moving slowly,
 - Speaking softly,
 - Avoiding excessive handling, and
 - Keeping activity light, if the foster pet is recovering from surgery.
-

Socialization

Socialization to various sounds and experiences is important to the recovery and development of a foster pet. Use gentle socialization tactics with a foster pet by:

- Providing soothing interactions, and
- Using positive reinforcement such as treats and/or soft petting.

Caution: If a foster pet is sick, immunocompromised or limited physically by a cast or splint, do not take it to public places such as a park or store.

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Medical Needs Foster Parent Basics, Continued

Mental Stimulation

Mental stimulation is just as important as physical exercise, especially while fostering a pet who has spent a great amount of time in a kennel environment. Provide the foster pet with:

- Appropriate enrichment through:
 - Toys to stimulate its brain, and
 - Enrichment treats to keep it occupied (e.g. puzzle feeders).
- Training sessions.

Keeping your foster pet mentally engaged will reduce its stress and anxiety.



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Medical Needs Foster Parent Basics, Continued

Daily Care Routines

Daily care routines are essential for an animal's mental and physical well-being. Create a daily care routine for the foster pet that includes monitoring health signs such as:

- Changes in:
 - Appetite,
 - Behavior, and/or
 - Energy levels.
 - Symptoms including:
 - Vomiting,
 - Diarrhea, and/or
 - Labored breathing.
 - Visible complications.
 - Incision sites in post-surgery pets:
 - Wound dehiscence (opening of the wound due to infection or suture failure),
 - Swelling,
 - Redness, or
 - Discharge.
 - Bandages/splints:
 - ✓ Ensure it stays in place, and
 - ✓ Remains clean and dry at all times.
 - Swelling and/or color changes on the animal's toes or skin.
-

Veterinary Instructions

Understanding the medical needs of the foster pet(s) is essential. Carefully review all of the veterinary instructions, medication guidelines and emergency protocols. If you have any questions or require clarification, [contact the foster liaison](#).

Medications

If applicable, administer all prescribed medications to the foster pet(s). When administering medication to a foster pet, be sure to strictly follow the prescribed medications schedule and dosages.

Note: To ease the administration of prescribed medications, consider using treats.(e.g. peanut butter or cheese).

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Medical Needs Foster Parent Basics, Continued

Foster Pet Supplies

When fostering a pet with medical needs, it is vital to be prepared. Gather the following supplies (some are provided by AC):

- Food,
 - Water bowls,
 - Bedding,
 - Blankets,
 - Medications and supplements (as provided by AC),
 - Cleaning supplies such as:
 - A broom,
 - A vacuum,
 - A mop,
 - Cleaning towels,
 - Spray bottles, and
 - Disinfectants,
 - Extra towels or puppy pads, and
 - Heating supplies (if warmth is needed).
-

Unapproved Expenses

AC provides all of the necessary supplies at no cost to the pet foster parent. Prior to making any purchases, contact your foster liaison team for additional supplies. Unapproved expenses accrued and supplies not provided to the foster parent during an animal's fostering will not be reimbursed to foster parents.



Understanding Behavior from Sick or Injured Animals

Careful Observation

Caring for sick or injured foster pets requires careful observation for changes in normal behavior. Illness and injury can manifest in various ways. Recognizing these shifts are crucial for providing timely and appropriate care.

Behavioral Changes Indicating Illness or Injury

The following are signs of a potential injury or illness in a foster pet(s):

- Lethargy and decreased activity:
 - A normally energetic animal may become unusually tired, weak and reluctant to move or play.
 - The animal may sleep more than usual or seem disinterested in its surroundings.
- Loss of appetite (anorexia) or changes in drinking habits:
 - Refusing to eat or having a significant decrease in food intake.
 - Conversely, some conditions can lead to increased thirst and urination.
- Changes in social interaction:
 - An affectionate animal might become withdrawn and avoid contact, while a more independent one may become clingy and seek more attention.
 - Irritability or aggression can also develop due to pain or discomfort.
- Vocalization:
 - Increased or unusual vocalizations like whimpering, crying, howling or excessive meowing can indicate pain, distress or anxiety.
 - Conversely, a usually vocal animal may become unusually quiet.
- Restlessness or inability to settle, despite being tired. A sick or injured animal may pace, shift positions frequently or have difficulty finding a comfortable position.
- Changes in grooming habits:
 - A normally meticulous groomer may neglect their coat, leading to a dull, matted appearance.
 - Conversely, excessive licking or grooming of a specific area could indicate pain or irritation.
- Hiding behavior: Sick or injured animals often seek out dark, secluded and/or quiet places to either hide, feel safe or to avoid interaction when they are vulnerable.

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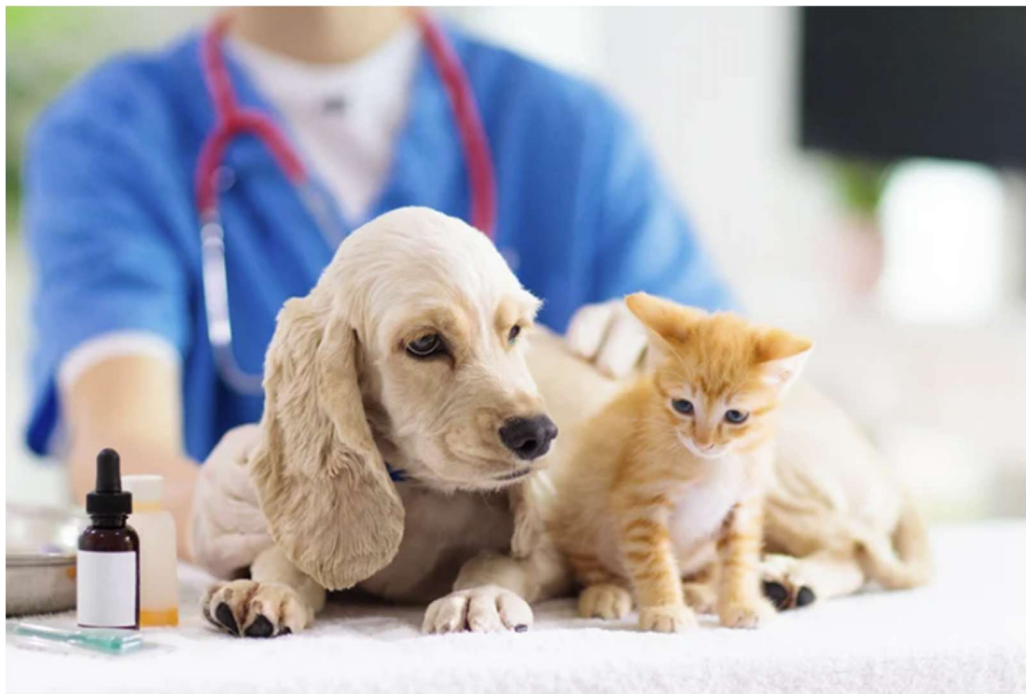
Understanding Behavior from Sick or Injured Animals,

Continued

How to Respond to Behavioral Changes

Take the following key actions when a change in behavior has been recognized:

- Pay close attention to the specific behavioral changes you observe and document when they started and any accompanying signs.
- Avoid self-diagnosis:
 - **Do not** attempt to diagnose the issue yourself or use external sources like Google to make a diagnosis.
 - Behavioral changes can be subtle and may indicate a variety of underlying conditions.
- Contact your foster liaison **immediately**:
 - Describe the changes you have observed in detail.
 - Receive further direction from the liaison, which may include taking the foster pet in for an examination.
- Follow veterinary instructions carefully, and:
 - Administer all of the prescribed medications exactly as directed.
 - Adhere to any specific care instructions.
 - Monitor the foster pet's progress.
 - Continue to observe the foster pet's behavior.
 - Report any changes or lack of improvement to the foster liaison **immediately**.



Recognizing Emergencies

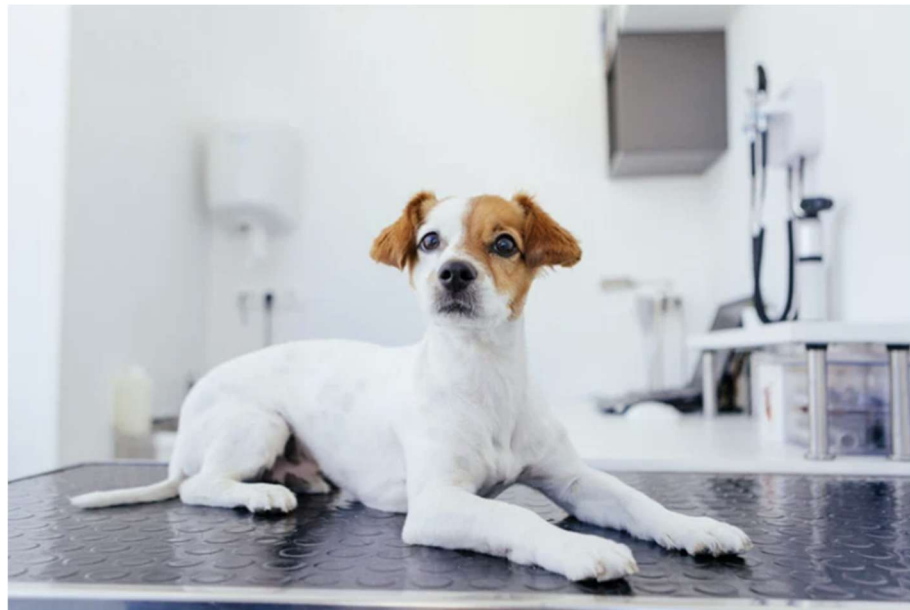
Emergencies Medical foster pets may present unique situations that require close observation.

Early detection of potential issues is crucial to prevent escalation into major emergencies. **Do not** wait for a scenario to turn into an emergency to contact the foster liaison. Email the foster liaison **immediately** if any of the following behaviors or scenarios are observed:

- Seizures,
- Unconsciousness,
- Difficulty breathing,
- Persistent vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours,
- Wound dehiscence (opening of the wound due to infection or suture failure), or other wound complications such as swelling, redness or discharge, or
- Toes showing signs of swelling and/or color change.

If a bandage or splint becomes loose, falls off or becomes wet, keep the foster pet confined to prevent further injury and contact the foster liaison via email or phone call during business hours for further guidance.

After-Hour Emergencies In the event of an after-hours veterinary emergency involving the foster pet, call AC **immediately** at **1(800) 472-5609**. AC staff will assess the situation carefully and will provide direction on how to care for the foster pet. Please remember that after-hour care is limited and humane euthanasia may be the recommended outcome for the foster pet.



End of Foster Responsibilities

Foster Pet Updates

Throughout the fostering term, provide the foster liaison and AC team with updates on the foster pet's progress, behaviors, and necessary medication refills. Foster pet updates can be submitted by email or by responding to received AC survey links.

End of the Foster Term

At the conclusion of the medical needs foster term, an AC Veterinarian will conduct a final wellness exam on the foster pet to decide if it is healthy enough to be adopted or returned to either the shelter or foster home. If adoption requirements are met, the foster parent will be given the option to adopt the foster pet, extend the foster term, or return the pet to the shelter. If the foster pet is returned to the shelter, return any disinfected, unsoiled supplies back to the AC team.

Lastly, saying goodbye can be difficult. Remember, the care you have provided has been life-changing for the foster pet.



Thank You!

To all Pet Foster Parents

Thank you for taking the time to review this manual. Foster parent commitment to fostering plays a vital role in providing a compassionate and healing environment for injured and/or sick animals as they begin their journey toward recovery and ultimately finding a forever home.

This manual is a companion to the [Pet Foster Care Manual](#). For any general foster pet questions or general program questions, refer to the [Pet Foster Care Manual](#).

How to Contact Us

Foster parents will be granted access to the GroupMe app. The GroupMe app allows foster parents to communicate with foster liaisons directly and other foster parents to exchange advice and discuss experiences.

For any questions or required assistance, [contact the foster liaison team at \(909\) 386-9820](#). This team is available during regular business hours and can also be reached via email at ACFosterProgram@dph.sbcounty.gov.

