

Puppy Foster Program Manual



Ventura County Animal Services

600 Aviation Dr.

Camarillo, CA 93010

*****For additional resource, scheduling, and an electronic copy of this manual please visit:**

[VCAS.US/Foster-resources](https://vcas.us/foster-resources)

Important Resources

VCAS.us/foster-resources: For Scheduling Appointments, Logging Hours, And other Resources

VCAS Foster Families Facebook Page: A community page for out foster families

WHO DO I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?:

GENERAL CONTACT INFORMATION

- **Foster Care Coordinator Cell: (805) 336-5277 - Call/Text 9:30am-6:30pm for any non urgent matter. PLEASE respect working hours for non-urgent calls AND TEXTS ***Call ANY TIME in case of emergency*****
- **Foster Care Coordinator Email: vcar.foster@ventura.org**
- **Foster Care Coordinator Desk Line: (805) 388-4464**
- **Shelter Main Line: (805) 388-4341 - Call this line if you have an emergency and cannot reach the Foster Care Coordinator. Medical concerns- call this line and ask to speak to vet's office. After hours emergency- Call this line and press '4'.**

NON-URGENT MEDICAL: If your puppies start to show any signs of mild-moderate illness – sneezing, mild-moderate diarrhea, not eating, runny nose, goopy eyes, hair loss, moderate weight loss (10 grams or less), fleas, etc – Schedule an appointment with our vets office. This can be done through the foster resources webpage at vcas.us/foster-resources under the scheduling section.

FOR MEDICAL EMERGENCIES:

- 9:30am-6:30pm any day: Call the foster coordinator at 805-336-5277. If you cannot reach the foster coordinator please call 805-388-4341 ask to speak to the vet's office
 - After hours: Call the foster coordinator cell phone at 805-336-5277
 - After hours and you cannot reach the foster coordinator: Call the shelter 805-388-4341, select 4 for an injured animal
- ** For puppies, a medical emergency includes head slumped/ body limp/ unable to rouse (Fading Puppy), diarrhea that is very liquidy, white, bloody, or black, any rapid weight loss, mouth breathing, heavy/labored breathing, red/brown urine, vomiting and diarrhea together or within a short timeframe, seizures. Any injuries sustained while in foster care also warrant a call to the foster coordinator.*****

WELLNESS / VACCINES:

- Puppies need to have regular wellness check-ups at the shelter with our veterinary staff. Appointments can be made online through the foster resources page. Appointments are needed at 2-weeks, 4-weeks, and 6-weeks. At the age of 8 weeks your puppies should be ready for their spay/neuter surgery. When they reach their surgery age you will need to schedule your puppies for surgery through the surgery scheduler on our foster resources webpage. You will need to bring your foster's kennel card or medical history with you to each appointment.

MARKETING / GETTING YOUR PUPPIES ADOPTED!:

At 5 to 6 weeks old you will need to upload photos of your puppies to the VCAS system. Instructions for uploading photos as well as some hints for taking great photos can be found on the foster resources webpage (vcas.us/foster-resources) under the tile 'uploading photos to chameleon'. After you have uploaded photos, contact the foster coordinator by email at vcar.foster@ventura.org to have your puppies posted on the VCAS website to be made eligible for pre-adoption. The email title should start with your puppy's A# and 'ready for adoption'. The email should include a short bio about your puppy to be added to the website. It is your responsibility, as their foster, to market your puppies and to answer emails from potential adopters in a timely manner (within 72 hours)! You will be able to select adopters and process adoptions yourself. Instructions for processing adoptions and pre-adoptions are located on the foster resources webpage.

WHAT IF I CAN'T CONTINUE TO FOSTER MY PUPPIES

We expect our fosters to make a commitment to keeping their foster puppies until they have reached an adoptable age and weight. This is imperative to the lifesaving mission of our foster program. If you are habitually unable to satisfy your commitment to your foster puppies you may be asked to leave the foster program. The timeframe you keep your fosters can range from one to eight weeks depending on the age and health of your puppies. If your puppies get sick, it is expected that you continue to care for them. We will teach you how to administer medication, etc. If something unexpected comes up and you are unable to continue caring for your puppies you are required to attempt to find another foster for them. You can do this by posting a foster plea on the VCAS Foster Families Facebook page. The plea should include ages, health status, eating requirements, and personality information (hissy, friendly, scarred, etc.). Once another foster is found you must contact the foster coordinator with the Animals ID #'s of the puppies and information regarding the transfer of foster homes. Of course, we understand that unexpected emergencies happen. If you have tried to reach out to other fosters unsuccessfully or have an immediate emergency you can bring your puppies back to the shelter. Please **DO NOT** bring them to the shelter unannounced. You are required to contact the foster coordinator by phone to notify us that you can no longer keep your puppies and a time will be scheduled for you to drop them off.

PUPPY MILESTONES:

2 weeks old

- Due for wellness check-up

4 weeks old

- Due for wellness check-up (possible 1st vaccinations)
- Puppies should be ready to start weaning onto gruel

5 weeks old

- Photos and bios due

6 weeks old

- Due for wellness check with 1st or 2nd vaccinations
- Puppies should be eating independently
- Available for pre-adoption on our website

8 weeks old

- Time to schedule spay/neuter surgery if you have not already done so.

*****Remember that you will need to bring your puppy's kennel card or medical history printout with you to ALL appointments, including surgery appointments*****

Feeding chart

Puppy Bottle Feeding and Stomach Capacity Chart

| Puppy Weight (lbs, oz) | Puppy Weight (grams) | Daily Caloric Requirement* | Amount of Formula Per Day (ml)** | Amount Per Feeding (ml)* | Approximate Number of Feedings Per Day*** |
|------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| 2 oz | 57 g | 11 kcal | 13 ml | 2 ml | 6 |
| 4 oz | 113 g | 23 kcal | 25 ml | 5 ml | 6 |
| 6 oz | 170 g | 34 kcal | 38 ml | 7 ml | 6 |
| 8 oz | 227 g | 45 kcal | 50 ml | 9 ml | 6 |
| 10 oz | 284 g | 57 kcal | 63 ml | 11 ml | 6 |
| 12 oz | 340 g | 68 kcal | 76 ml | 14 ml | 6 |
| 14 oz | 397 g | 79 kcal | 88 ml | 16 ml | 6 |
| 16 oz (1 lb) | 454 g | 91 kcal | 101 ml | 18 ml | 6 |
| 2 lb | 907 g | 181 kcal | 202 ml | 36 ml | 6 |
| 3 lb | 1,361 g | 272 kcal | 302 ml | 54 ml | 6 |
| 4 lb | 1,814 g | 363 kcal | 403 ml | 73 ml | 6 |
| 5 lb | 2,268 g | 454 kcal | 504 ml | 91 ml | 6 |
| 6 lb | 2,722 g | 544 kcal | 605 ml | 109 ml | 6 |
| 7 lb | 3,175 g | 635 kcal | 706 ml | 127 ml | 6 |
| 8 lb | 3,629 g | 726 kcal | 806 ml | 145 ml | 6 |

Comprehensive Guide to Care in the Home

Introduction

Puppies under the age of 8 weeks need a mother- either a dog or a human surrogate. They are very vulnerable in a shelter and the chance to get them into a foster home within 24 hours is a chance to save their lives. The following guidelines will help you with the care of your puppies and will help you understand the policies and procedures of the foster care program. Please keep the following items on this list in mind before you agree to bring foster animals into your home.

- A foster animal could potentially carry illness into your home that could affect your resident animals' (or humans') health.
- To protect people, young children should not handle the foster puppies and everyone should wash their hands after handling animals and their fecal waste.
- To protect other dogs, foster animals should be separated from household pets for at least two weeks. This means that you should also prohibit the sharing of food and water bowls and toys.
- Puppies should be de-fleaed before they enter your home and as often as necessary to keep fleas off of them, because fleas can spread disease among your other animals and to people.
- You should **wash your hands** with soap and water before handling your own animals or children and you may also want to change clothes.
- You should routinely disinfect the foster puppies quarters and disinfect the entire premises before new puppies are introduced.
- The best way to disinfect the area is to remove all organic material and fecal debris and then soak with a mild bleach solution (1 part bleach to 32 parts water) for at least 30 minutes. All surfaces, bowls, toys etc need to be disinfected (so you probably want to keep puppies in a room without carpeting, hardwood floors and so forth).
- It is best to have only 1 litter at a time rather than constantly adding new puppies in with others.
- It is possible even with these precautions that resident dogs could be exposed to mild infections such as URI. Ask the foster coordinator for more information if this is a concern.

Supplies you will need before you bring home puppies

- **Box or carrier** You may want to use the carrier in which you took the litter home. It will provide a familiar-smelling, dark, quiet home for your foster puppies. However, a bigger box may be desirable, as it will allow you to see in
- **Newspapers** Keep several layers in the bottom of the box, and they will come in handy when the puppies start to roam around the room.

- **Water bowls** Heavy and impossible to tip. Should be stainless steel or porcelain/ceramic, NOT plastic, as plastic is difficult to disinfect because it is so porous.
- **Food bowls (at least 2)** One is for the eat-at-will dry food, the other for canned food. You can use TV dinner trays, paper plates or whatever you have; any relatively flat plate or saucer will do. The larger the litter, the larger the plate should be so that no one gets crowded out.
- **Food** You should have both dry puppy chow, canned dog food (any brand for adults or puppies), and all-meat baby food (must not contain vegetables or onion powder). Offer several choices to weaned puppies to determine their preferences.
- **Heating pad, hot water bottle, or infrared lamp** Unless the nursery is at least 85° and your puppies are 2 weeks or older, you need to supply extra heat. **BE SURE THAT THE PUPPIES HAVE ROOM TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE HEAT.** For instance, if you are using a heating pad, place it under a towel so that it covers only half of the floor area of their box. The heating pad should be on "low". If you use a hot water bottle, keep it where dog can't destroy it.
- **Clean towels and blankets**
- **Toys** Plastic, disinfectable toys are good to reuse for new litters. Clean tennis balls and old stuffed socks, caps work well.
- **Scale** Although not critical to success, a food or postal scale will be very helpful in monitoring small puppies growth, which can be variable among breeds.

General Neonatal Care

1. No fostered animals should be allowed to mingle with your own pets or outside in your yard for the first two weeks after you bring them home. This is to protect both the foster pets and your own pets from any infectious agents they may bring from the shelter.
2. In the 2 first weeks of life puppies are helpless and vulnerable. They are still developing basic reflexes, their hearing and vision is still not fully developed, and they are unable to properly control their body temperatures. They should therefore be confined to the nursery area.
3. Young puppies should be kept in a large box or kennel lined with a towel for easy cleaning. It is very important to keep the puppies warm, especially during the first 2-3 weeks of life. A heating pad or a warm water bottle can be ideal sources of heating. If you use a heating pad make sure it only covers half or parts of the nursing area so that the neonates can move away from the heat if they need to, and also make sure it is set on "low" and that the electrical cord is out of reach of sharp little puppy teeth. The more puppies in your litter, the better able they will be to keep warm by sleeping together in a heap. Small litters and singletons need more help keeping warm, singletons will also often find comfort in a stuffed fluffy toy to snuggle up to. **Keep neonates away from heaters or cold drafts**
4. During the first 2-3 weeks of life puppies do not urinate and defecate on their own. In nature this is stimulated when the mother is cleaning them, but in the absence of a mom you will need to do the job. Fortunately it's a fairly easy task as it should be done every few hours. Gently rub a warm moist paper towel, cotton ball or a baby tissue on the puppy's anus and genital area; this will stimulate them to urinate and defecate on the paper towel. Doing it just after feeding is an easy way to ensure it gets done regularly.
5. Keep the puppies clean. A mother dog works hard to keep her puppies clean. She will constantly be grooming them thoroughly to remove any sticky messes they may get into, such as food or feces, it also stimulates circulation and the digestive system. A daily grooming

session gives you the chance to closely monitor each puppy and gets them familiarized with being handled. If the neonate is not very dirty you can use a flea comb to get rid of dust and dried feces in the fur. You can also use a warm, damp wash cloth to clean them a bit more thoroughly. Use short strokes to mimic a mother's tongue. Be sure to dry the puppy well when done so that they don't get chilled.

6. As the puppies get older, from 4-5 weeks of age, they can be allowed to roam a larger area of your house, but they should still be closely supervised and kept in a secured area when not confined to their nursing area. Remember these puppies are still very vulnerable to infections, such as canine parvo infection, and should be separated from other pets if possible, and only be allowed to interact with fully vaccinated, healthy dogs.

When and how should I start socialization?

Relinquishment of pets to shelters due to behavioral problems is a significant problem, especially for dogs. Puppies isolated from other puppies until 16 - 18 weeks of age, after receiving all their puppy shots, are more likely to display fearful behavior and be aggressed upon by other pups, and thus has a higher chance of ending up in a shelter later in their life. Part of your job as a foster home is to convince the puppies that humans are kind and loving, and that other pets do not pose any threat.

The primary socialization period of puppies is between 3 and 13 weeks. This means that you need to get the puppies used to people and other animals before finishing their vaccination program. This period in the puppy's life is critical for development of primary social relationships with humans and other animals. Puppies that are confined during this period are significantly more likely to develop behavioral problems such as fear and aggression, than puppies that are provided the opportunity to get socialized with other animals and people.

Even outgoing, friendly puppies should be allowed 24 hours to accustom themselves to their new home a quiet room, but if they seem content and happy after the initial "chill-out period" they can be cuddled and played with freely.

Shy pets will need more encouragement. Try sitting on the floor allowing the puppies to approach you or avoid you as they please, and play freely around you. You can also tempt them with small treats and food to convince them that you are not as scary as you appear. Always praise positive interaction.

Any introductions of puppies to other cats or dogs should be made with great care and under constant supervision.

It can be hard to weigh the positive effects of socialization against the risks of exposure to infectious diseases when dealing with puppies. Do not take them to any dog parks, pet stores, common grassy areas where other dogs eliminate. You can socialize these pups with friends “dog friendly” animals that are fully vaccinated.

There is no such thing as a "bad" puppy and it is useless to punish a "naughty" puppy. Their little minds do not grasp deductive reasoning. Puppies are easily distracted with a toy or a treat when being mischievous rather than punishment and scolding. By providing toys, chews, scratching poles etc. you can get a puppy on its right track to being somebody's well-behaved pet.

Neonatal nutrition

What to feed?

Commercially available puppy formula should be given at the puppy's body temperature (about 100 degrees). Once the can is opened or the powder reconstituted, unused formula should be kept refrigerated and discarded after 24 hours.

It is best to feed the puppies one-by-one, and on a raised surface - this allows them to feed with all four feet on the surface, and their heads level, much as they would if they were nursing from their mom. Some puppies prefer to nurse standing on their hind legs while holding the bottle. They will require a little support from you in this position. Avoid feeding a puppy while he is cradled on his back - if the fluid goes down the wrong way, it may end up in his lungs.

Gently open a puppy's mouth with one finger and place the tip of the nipple on his tongue. If he won't eat, try stroking him. Pull lightly on the bottle to encourage vigorous sucking. Be sure to tilt the bottle up slightly to prevent the puppy from inhaling too much air. Do not force the puppy to nurse, or allow him to nurse too fast.

After each feeding, the puppy should be burped. Hold him against your shoulder and gently massage his back or pat it lightly.

Overfeeding is as dangerous as underfeeding puppies! Keep an eye on your puppies at feeding time and monitor how much each is eating. If you see signs of diarrhea, separate them for a short period until you find out which one is sick. Your puppies will generally regulate their own food intake. If they need more food, they may whine or suck on their litter mates. A good

indication that they are getting enough to eat is the size of their bellies - they should be filled out after a meal, but not bloated.

How can I evaluate healthy growth?

What are the expectations at the different ages?

0-1 Weeks

- **Feeding:** Bottle feed 1/2 tablespoon formula every 2 - 3 hours
- **Environment:** The temperature of the nest box should be nice and warm: 85-90 degrees. Chilling is the number one danger to newborn puppies.
- **Behavior and training:** At one week of age, the puppies should be handled minimally. Puppies will sleep 90% of the time and eat the other 10%.

1-2 weeks

- **Feeding:** Bottle feed formula every 2 - 3 hours, until the puppies' bellies are full but not bloated.
- **Environment:** Floor temperature of the nest box should be 80 to 85 degrees.
- **Behavior and training:** Ear canals open between 5 and 8 days. Eyes will open between 8 and 14 days. They open gradually, usually starting to open from the nose outward. All puppies are born with blue eyes, and initially no pupils can be distinguished from the irises - the eyes will appear solid dark blue.
- Healthy puppies will be round and warm, with pink skin. If you pinch them gently, their skin should spring back. When you pick a puppy up, it should wiggle energetically and when you put it down near the mom it should crawl back to her. Healthy puppies seldom cry.

2-3 weeks

- **Feeding:** Bottle feed formula every 3-4 hours, until the puppies' bellies are full but not bloated.
- **Environment:** The floor temperature of the nest box should be 75 to 80 degrees.
- **Behavior and training:** If there is a bitch, she will begin to spend larger periods of time out of the nest, though she will not go far from it.
- **Locomotion:** Puppies begin to crawl around day 18 and can stand by day 21. They will begin to play with each other, biting ears, tails and paws even before their teeth have come in. Their milk teeth are cut during this period. They learn to sit and touch objects with their paws.

- **Socialization:** Puppies begin their socialization phase - they will be strongly influenced by the behavior of their mother for the next six weeks. To further socialize puppies, increase the amount of handling, and get them accustomed to human contact. It is important not to expose them to anything frightening; children may seem intimidating and should be supervised closely while visiting to ensure gentle handling.

3-4 weeks

- **Feeding:** Bottle feed formula every 4 hours, until puppies are full but not bloated. Puppies may start lapping from a bowl.
- **Environment:** The floor temperature of the nest box should be 70 to 75 degrees from this point onward.
- **Behavior and training:** Adult eye color will begin to appear, but may not reach final shade for another 9 to 12 weeks. Puppies begin to see well and their eyes begin to look and function like adult dogs' eyes. Puppies will start cleaning themselves.

4-5 weeks

- **Feeding:** Bottle feed as needed to keep pups from crying with hunger. Puppies usually can drink and eat from a saucer by 4 weeks. Weaning should be done gradually. Introduce them to solid food by offering warmed canned food, mixed with a little water into gruel, in a shallow saucer. You can begin by placing one puppy by the plate of canned food gruel, and hoping for the best - if she starts eating, great! Her littermates will probably copy her and do the same. But without mom around to show them, many puppies do not have a clue about feeding from a saucer. The puppies will walk in it, slide in it, and track it all. Some puppies may prefer to lick the gruel from your fingers, if this is the case; slowly lower your finger to the plate and hold it to the food. This way the puppies will learn to eat with their heads bent down. Be patient, sometimes it takes two or three meals before they catch on. If they do not seem interested enough to even sniff your finger, try gently opening the puppies' mouth and rub a little bit of the food on their teeth. Hopefully this will result in the puppy starting to lick your finger. If they're still not getting the idea, you can take a syringe (without a needle) and squirt a small amount of gruel directly into their mouths.

Be sure that the puppies always have access to fresh water in a low, stable bowl.

- **Behavior and training:** Begin housebreaking at four weeks of age. This can be done by using a pile of newspapers or training pads in a corner. After each feeding, place the puppy on the papers, or outside, for him to go to the bathroom. Be patient! He may not remember to do this every time, or may forget where to find the papers, but he will learn quickly. Be sure to give the puppies lots of praise when they first start using their papers or cry to go out. It is a good idea to confine the puppies to a relatively small space, because the larger the area the puppies have to play in, the more likely they will forget where the papers are. Keep the papers clean and away from their food.

- **Vaccination:** foster puppies in animal rescue programs or shelters should receive their first vaccination at 4-6 weeks of age. The vaccine should be repeated every 2 weeks until 16 weeks of age, or until adopted to a permanent home. Please see our vaccination information sheet for more detailed information and useful links.

5-6 weeks

- **Feeding:** Feed gruel 4 times a day. Thicken the gruel gradually by reducing the amount of water mixed with it. Introduce dry food and water. For reluctant eaters, try mixing some puppy milk replacer into the gruel or tempt the puppy with some meat-flavored human baby food mixed with a bit of water. The familiar formula taste and smell or the meat flavor of baby food is often more appealing to the picky eaters than dog food. Once the puppy accepts the formula based gruel or baby food gradually mix in dry puppy food until the puppy has been weaned like the other puppies.
- **Behavior and training:** At about five weeks, puppies can start to roam around the room, under supervision. The strongest, most curious puppy will figure out how to get out of the nest. The others will quickly follow.

6-7 weeks

- **Feeding:** By this age the puppies should be eating dry food well. Feed the puppies at least three meals daily. If one puppy appears food-possessive, use a second dish and leave plenty of food out so that everyone can eat at the same time. Although the puppies may not eat much at a single sitting, they usually like to eat at frequent intervals throughout the day.
- **Behavior and training:** By this time, you have "mini-dogs." They will wash themselves, play games with each other, their toys, and you, and many will come when you call them. Be sure to take them to their papers or outside after meals, during play sessions, and after naps. These are the usual times that puppies need to eliminate.

7-8 weeks

- **Feeding:** Offer dry food 3 - 4 times a day. Leave down a bowl of water for them to eat and drink at will. Do not feed the puppies table scraps.
- **Spay / neuter:** puppies can be spayed and neutered from 8 weeks of age, many veterinarians will also have a weight limit, for instance some veterinarians request that the puppy have a minimum bodyweight of 2 lbs before being brought in for a spay / neuter procedure.

8+ weeks

- **Feeding:** Offer dry food 3 times a day. Leave down a bowl of water for them to eat and drink at will.
- **Behavior and training:** By the end of this week, prepare yourself to find them homes or return them to the facility where they came from.

Keeping Puppies Healthy

A healthy puppy has bright eyes, a nice coat, and a plump belly. Younger puppies are content to sleep between feedings. As they approach 8 weeks they begin to spend more time playing. Normal body temperature for a puppy is 100 - 102.5. Unfortunately, puppies do become ill and sometimes die while being fostered, so it is important to take steps to prevent disease and treat it appropriately as soon as it appears.

A note about treating your puppy: In general, if you have consulted with a veterinarian and need to treat a puppy, try to medicate him in an impersonal way. If you hold the puppy in your lap to medicate him, he will associate being picked up with being medicated and in worst case become scared every time you go to cuddle him. It is better to put the puppy up on a countertop, maybe wrapping him in a towel to administer medication. It is also worth while to give extra praise and if appropriate give him a treat before and after medicating him, as this will help ease the stress of the situation and may even result in a positive association to medication time.

Recognizing illness; when to call a veterinarian?

If you have a sick puppy, you should always at least call a veterinarian and discuss the problem. They may advise you to come in with the puppy for examination rather than provide you with general advice over the phone.

One of the first steps you can take to evaluate your puppy's health is to take its temperature. To take the temperature of your puppy, you will need a regular human thermometer and some KY Jelly. Wipe KY on the thermometer and insert just the tip into the puppy's anus. Hold it there for at least a minute and then read. If the puppy's temperature is over 103 or under 99, it is important to call the veterinarian.

Before leaving a veterinary facility, always ask for a copy of the treatment sheet. Information on this sheet is important for future follow-up treatment.

We will provide veterinary care here at the shelter. Outside veterinary care will not be reimbursed.

If a foster puppy should die, you should keep the body cool but not frozen and transport it to the facility where it came from so that a full autopsy can be performed.

Abnormal signs to watch for in a puppy:

- Continuous diarrhea
- Continuous vomiting
- Constant crying
- Reduced nursing
- Reduced activity
- Bleeding of any kind: nose, urine, stool
- Any trauma: hit by car, dropped, limping, stepped on, unconscious

Specific disease conditions in puppies:

- **Diarrhea**

Diarrhea is common in puppies and be caused by parasites, viruses, bacteria, food changes (too concentrated formula, new brand of formula, etc), stress, overfeeding, and other causes. If the diarrhea is mild and the puppy is otherwise alert and playful, you can try giving it less food but more often and monitor closely. Also ensure that the puppy gets a lot of fluid as they are prone dehydration if not. This can be done by diluting the formula with extra water, or providing the puppy with clean water either in a saucer or in a bottle/syringe if the puppy does not yet drink from a saucer. If the diarrhea is severe, lasts more than 3 or 4 feedings, or contains blood or obvious parasites, you should call the shelter veterinarian; if possible you should also bring a sample of its feces in a Ziploc bag.

- **Vomiting**

If your puppy is vomiting, it is possible that the puppy is eating his meals too quickly. You should watch him when he eats and not allow him to eat too much too quickly. If your puppy vomits 2-3

times in a row, it should see the shelter veterinarian as this could be a sign of an infectious disease.

- **Fading puppies**

Once in a while, one or more puppies in a litter that were healthy and vigorous at birth will begin to "fade" after a week or two of life. They will stop growing; lose weight, and stop nursing and crawling. They may cry continuously and lose the ability to stay upright. The mother dog may push them out of the nest, where they often chill and starve to death. Puppies fade very quickly - they will not last 48 hours without veterinary care - and many will not recover even with intensive care.

Often there is no clear cause for this condition - it has been linked to birth defects, environmental stress and infectious disease. Early veterinary treatment is imperative, but even with tube feeding, rehydration and monitoring, many, if not most, fading puppies will die.

- **Fleas**

Fleas are insects that love to feed on puppies. Although each flea only consumes a small drop of blood, fleas commonly attack in large numbers and an infestation can literally lead to anemia and even death in young puppies. It is therefore essential that your home be free of fleas before bringing home a small puppy.

How to Control Fleas:

If your foster puppy already has fleas, it is important to remove them without harming the dog. One safe way to remove fleas from very young puppies (less than 6 - 8 weeks) is daily flea combing. If the puppy is less than 6 weeks old and is heavily infected, a flea bath may be necessary to save its life. The puppy must be kept warm at all times. Use warm water and immediately towel it dry afterwards. Then follow up with a heating lamp or warm hair dryer until the puppy is completely dry, be careful not to burn the puppy. Use a shampoo labeled as safe for puppies. You can also use flea powder mixed in equal amounts of talcum powder, or a 2.5 % carbaryl powder product.

If the puppy is 4 Weeks old **and** 2 lbs or more; Capstar can be given orally up to once a day to kill adult fleas. This product starts to work within 90 minutes and is effective against adult fleas for 4-6 hours. It does **not** have any affect on, eggs, larva, or other adult fleas in the puppies' environment.

If the puppy is older than 6 weeks you can use topical one-time/month applications available from a veterinarian.

All bedding needs to be washed in hot soapy water as soon as fleas are spotted. The most effective way to remove eggs from the house is by using a vacuum cleaner. The vacuum bag should first be treated by placing flea powder, a piece of flea collar, or flea spray inside it. The bag should be emptied immediately after vacuuming. To kill adults and larvae, the house can be treated with flea foggers or sprays, boric acid products, or other commercial products.

- **Kennel cough**

Kennel cough is an extremely contagious respiratory disease that is often seen in animal shelters. Puppies with kennel cough typically cough or sneeze, and have nasal discharge. Kennel cough is often difficult for puppies to overcome, any puppy that is coughing or sneezing repeatedly, or has nasal and/or eye discharge requires veterinary attention.

- **Ringworm**

Ringworm is caused by a fungus, related to athlete's foot. On people and dogs, ringworm is most often shaped in a regular ring. The dog's fur will often fall out, leaving a round bare spot with a visible ring. Ringworm causes little distress and is not an emergency, but it **is contagious to cats, dogs, and people**. If you or your pets contract ringworm, you will need to seek treatment from your doctor and veterinarian. Everything the puppies touched while in your home will need to be disinfected with a bleach solution (at least 1 part bleach to 10 parts water, equivalent to 1+1/2 cup of bleach per gallon of water) or steam cleaned, it is recommended to repeat cleaning as ringworm spores are very hardy and can easily spread among other dogs and re-infect their hosts. If you have fostered a litter with ringworm, you should thoroughly clean and disinfect the area they were kept in and if you decide to foster another litter it is recommended to keep them in a different room than the ringworm infected litter.

Deworming and vaccination schedule

All puppies need to be weighed and given an oral dewormer at 2 weeks of age and every 2 weeks thereafter until 8 weeks of age, then monthly until 4 months of age.

All puppies will receive their first vaccination at 4 weeks of age and then every 4 weeks until 18 weeks of age.

Thank you for everything you do, fosters!

Ventura County Animal Services Foster Care Provider Agreement

I, _____, make the following statements and voluntarily enter into this Foster Care Agreement (hereinafter "Agreement") to provide temporary care as a foster caregiver for Ventura County Animal Services (hereinafter "VCAS").

1. _____ I have never been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment. I agree to notify VCAS within two business days if I am arrested for, or convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment in the future.
2. _____ I agree to comply with all federal, state, and local laws that pertain to companion animals and pet ownership in the jurisdiction where I reside.
3. _____ I understand that VCAS reserves the right to check on the welfare of my foster animal, which may include a visit to my foster home. I further understand that VCAS may remove a foster animal from my care for any reason at the sole discretion of VCAS.
4. _____ I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the VCAS Foster Care Manual ("Manual"), and that I have read the Manual. I agree to fully comply with the policies, guidance, and requirements set forth in the Manual as applicable to my foster animal.
5. _____ I agree to not take my foster dog(s) or my foster cat(s) to dog parks, off-leash areas, daycare facilities, crowded public areas, or any similar locations, unless given prior approval by the VCAS Foster Coordinator. I understand and agree that I will be solely responsible for any personal injury, death or property damage caused by my foster animal to any person, property or other animal if I do not comply with this provision.
6. _____ I understand that VCAS recommends that my foster animal(s) is to be kept separate from any other animals currently living in my home. I agree that if I choose to introduce my foster animal(s) to any other animal living in my home, I will be solely responsible for any illness or injury to other animals.
7. _____ I agree that the animal(s) that I foster will reside in my home, will be kept as household pets, and will not be used for breeding.
8. _____ I agree to notify the VCAS Foster Coordinator immediately by phone and in writing at 805-336-5277 and vcar.foster@ventura.org immediately if my foster animal(s) becomes lost or separated from me.
9. _____ I agree to notify the VCAS Foster Coordinator immediately by phone and in writing at 805-336-5277 and vcar.foster@ventura.org immediately if my foster animal demonstrates any aggressive behavior, including but not limited to, biting a person or another animal.
10. _____ I agree to seek any required immediate medical care if I am bitten by my foster animal, or if I receive any other physical injury resulting from interaction with my foster animal. I further agree to seek any required immediate medical care for any member of my household who is bitten or suffers any other physical injury resulting from interaction with my foster animal. I agree to promptly notify the VCAS Foster Coordinator whenever anyone is bitten or otherwise injured by a foster animal in my care, whether or not any immediate medical care is required.
11. _____ I agree to promptly return my foster animal(s) at any time up on the request of the VCAS Foster Coordinator or any VCAS staff member.

12. _____ I agree to receive and respond to calls and emails concerning my foster animal(s), from VCAS shelter staff, veterinary staff, and potential adopters, and to provide the VCAS Foster Coordinator with updated contact information if any of my contact information changes.
13. _____ I agree to transport the animal to VCAS or an approved veterinary clinic to receive medical treatment as requested by the VCAS Foster Coordinator or VCAS staff. If my foster animal experiences a medical emergency, I agree to follow the instructions outlined under “In Case of an After Hours Emergency” in Manual.
14. _____ I understand that VCAS will not reimburse me for any routine or non-emergency care for my foster animal that is not pre-approved in writing by the VCAS Foster Coordinator.
15. _____ I agree to contact the VCAS Foster Coordinator at 805-336-5277 for any other emergency or non-emergency matters.
16. _____ I agree to assume the risks implicit in working with animals who may have been abandoned, neglected, mistreated, or who may suffer from an illness or disease. My participation in the VCAS Foster Program is entirely voluntary and without the promise or expectation of compensation. I have no known physical or mental condition that would impair my ability to participate in the VCAS Foster Program. I understand that while VCAS staff carefully monitors all animals, VCAS may have limited knowledge of their behavioral or medical backgrounds. Therefore, I understand that VCAS makes no warranties or representations regarding my foster animal’s health, behavior, temperament, age, breed or suitability for my household. I further understand that environment changes may affect and change the temperament of my foster animal(s).
17. _____ I understand and agree that the County of Ventura, and its officers, agents, officials, employees and representatives shall have no liability or responsibility of any nature for personal injury, death or property damage to any person, animal, or property which may be caused by my foster animal(s) or my participation in the VCAS Foster Program. I, for myself and my heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, hereby release, indemnify, and hold harmless, the County of Ventura, and its officers, agents, officials, employees and representatives, and their heirs, administrators, executors, successors, and representatives from all liability for and all risk of personal injury, death, or property damage to me, any animal or property that may occur now or hereafter in connection with my foster animal(s) and my participation in the VCAS Foster Program. I expressly agree that this release, waiver, and indemnity is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the State of California and that if any portion is held invalid, the remainder shall continue in full force and effect.

By my signature below, and by my initials beside each numbered paragraph above, I affirm that all statements and stated agreements contained in this document are truthful. I affirm that I have read and understand this Agreement in its entirety, and I agree to abide by the terms of this Agreement.

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____