



VALLEY ANIMAL HAVEN Foster Home Responsibilities and Guidelines

Thank you for your interest in helping the abandoned, unwanted and rescued animals in Kings County. Our foster homes experience great joy and deep satisfaction when they see that through their efforts, a neglected animal gets a second chance at life and a new opportunity to share his or her unconditional love with people who care.

What is Foster Care?

Being a foster home means sharing your home with a rescued animal: providing food, shelter, toys, walks, and lots of attention until the animal is ready to go to his/her forever home. We count on our foster homes to evaluate temperament and observe behaviors in a variety of situations, and we welcome those updates so we can fully assess the animal. Positive reinforcement training is encouraged. Most foster care situations require 2 weeks to a month of residential foster care, and in some cases, where the animal is ill or due to age, several months. In rare cases, you must be able to cope with the possibility that Valley Animal Haven and our veterinarians may find it necessary to humanly euthanize the animal, for reasons that are discussed at length (e.g. unwarranted aggression with other animals and people, unprovoked biting of people and terminal illness)- but never because we couldn't place the animal. Still interested? Here are the details.

A member of the management team of Valley Animal Haven will schedule a home inspection prior to a foster family being allowed to foster any shelter animals. After a foster animal has been placed in the household, periodic visits will be conducted and progress reports will be completed to document the animal's condition in the foster home.

What You Need to Foster Rescued Dogs

The most important requirements are time and attention. You must be willing to include the animal in family activities, allow the dog to live as a house dog with much human companionship, and provide some daily one-on-one time with your foster animal, including playtime and walks on leash (depending on age) always use a secure collar and leash.

A fenced in yard is a must and the fence must be of appropriate height (4-6', as some dogs are jumpers) and in secure condition. If it has a gate, the gate must be locked when the dog is in the yard to prevent someone from opening the gate and letting the dog loose. At no time are our dogs to be chained or tethered in the yard. All items along the fence, that a dog might use to help them jump over the fence, must be cleared away from the fence (ie; wood piles, tables, benches, chairs, etc.).

Apartments can also be excellent foster homes with the proper attention to providing several leash-walks daily for the dog as well as adequate off-leash exercise in a safe area like a dog park.

Crates are an invaluable piece of equipment for foster families. A travel crate is a great aid in transporting and isolating dogs. It is also a cozy den and a place of refuge for most dogs. We prefer that shelter dogs be transported in crates when possible. Whenever possible, we will loan foster homes a crate if requested.

Valley Animal Haven requires that all the resident dogs be vaccinated for kennel cough along with their regular vaccinations, as many rescues coming in from shelters contract this disease and are being treated for it. We cannot stress this enough: the incidence of kennel cough in dogs coming from shelters is increasing. Though kennel cough is treatable with medication and rest, it has become so virulent that dogs can quickly develop pneumonia. Please have your veterinarian include the bordetella as part of the regular vaccination regimen. Finally, Valley Animal Haven requires that all resident dogs in the foster home be neutered or spayed. Talk this over with your own veterinarians if you have any questions or concerns.

What You Need to Foster Rescued Dogs

It is preferred that foster homes have experience with dogs/puppies. Fostered dogs/puppies must be kept in a secured area at all times. A quarantine period of 5 days is recommended in which the foster dog/puppy have no contact with resident dogs. This includes maintaining separate dishes, play areas, and sleeping areas for foster dog/puppy.

Foster caretakers provide the necessary supplies for dogs/puppies, including bedding, wet/dry dog food, pet bowls, and toys.

What You Need to Foster Rescued Cats

It is preferred that foster homes have experience with cats/kittens. Fostered cats/kittens must be kept indoors at all times. A quarantine period of 5 days is recommended in which the foster cats/kittens have no contact with resident cats. This includes maintaining separate dishes, litter boxes, and sleeping areas for foster cats/kittens.

Foster caretakers provide the necessary supplies for cats/kittens, including a litter box, litter, and a litter scoop; wet/dry cat food, a scratching post or other scratching item, and toys.

Kids and Dogs

If you have children, never introduce a new rescued dog to them without assistance. Never leave a rescued dog and a child unsupervised. Sometimes, even though we make every attempt to uncover all available history on each dog, we may not have the full truth about the dog. He or she may be a fear biter or dislike children because of prior abuse from children who had not been taught how to treat animals

kindly. It is preferred that foster homes have experience with dogs, and that children in the foster family are over the age of 5 years. We realize many children under the age of 5 have a special rapport with animals; we will work with the family and dog on a case-by-case basis in these situations.

How Expenses are handled

The foster home is responsible for food, toys, and in-home bathing and grooming; we are happy to provide tax receipts for these expenses. The Valley Animal Haven staff usually transport the dogs for veterinary care, though foster families are encouraged to participate in those transports because the dog is more comfortable with the foster family. Finally, all emergency veterinary care and medications must be pre-approved by the Valley Animal Haven executive director or shelter manager. In case of emergency, if you cannot reach a staff member, you should take the injured or ill dog to the nearest vet who can stabilize the animal until Valley Animal Haven management can authorize further treatment. At no time do foster homes make final medical decisions for our program animals. All decisions for medical treatment will be done by Valley Animal Haven management.

Your Pets and Your Rescued Animal

Valley Animal Haven staff will discuss with you the best methods for introducing the new cat/dog into your household. Though many cats and dogs, especially those used to their owners' rescue work welcome the rescued animal; keep in mind that there may be a period of adjustment for the first few days up to 2-3 weeks depending on the rescued animal's history and personality and the resident animal's willingness to accept the foster animal. During this time, the rescued cat/dog may appear shy or submissive. Your foster may also have been hit, dragged by the collar, or kicked which you'll know immediately from the animal's behavior around you and your family. Take it slow and easy; let the animal learn to regain trust. Give the animal affection as it will tolerate it. The animal may be surprised at first, but will eventually relish the attention and return it. As the animal becomes more confident, it may change its behavior towards resident pets, beginning to play and explore the pecking order. As the resident animal accepts the foster, the bonding becomes beneficial for both. Unless the animals get along famously from the beginning, feed your pets and your rescued animal separately; consider feeding the rescued dog in a crate if you notice any food aggression between dogs. Be careful when dispensing treats or other high-value items like rawhides or favorite toys. Sometimes what is thought to be food aggression is actually just a territorial imperative that will take care of itself as the pecking order is established. Keeping this in mind, always supervise the interactions of your rescued animal with other pets.

Most Frequently Asked Questions

“Don't you get attached to the animal?”—Yes usually, and that's what we want for both you and the animal. It's fun to get to know new animals and for your foster animal and resident animal(s) to make

new friends. Often, your resident cat/dog will be revitalized in the presence of the rescued cat/dog and you will witness amazing developments in both animals. It's educational to see how different dogs react to training, how they play with and teach one another. It's also educational to see when any territorial problems develop and learn to deal with those, usually allowing dogs to work things out between themselves, within reason, and calling for crate time when the problem needs to be dealt with. You will fall in love with your foster animal, which is necessary to his/her rehabilitation and development. This also leads us to the next question.

“How can you give him/her up?”— This is probably the number one reason why a lot of caring people do not offer their homes for foster care: they are afraid giving the animal up will hurt too much. However, it's a hard truth, but without enough foster homes, we cannot rescue and save these animals: they will die in shelters if we don't have space for them in our program. It helps to think of your foster animal as your neighbor's cat/dog that you are keeping during a vacation. Sure you like him/her and will take good care of them, but when your neighbor gets home, you will give the dog/cat back! Some of us think of ourselves as the rescued animal's Aunt/Uncle, a loving guardian for the cat/dog on his or her way to a permanent home. This is an animal who ultimately belongs to someone else, who is in our care for only a short time. When you give him/her up, it will be to a forever home that this cat/dog has been waiting for—and you will be opening a space for the next rescue that needs you so desperately. There is ALWAYS another rescue animal. But also, after many years of fostering, your fellow volunteers can assure you there is nothing quite as moving as seeing your beloved foster animal happy, healthy, loved, and cherished by the forever home that really wanted and needed him/her. It's contagious, and we hope you will be hooked on fostering!

“What if I'm afraid my foster animal who is ill might die?”— We ease foster homes into the work very gradually. To be honest, though, we can tell you that if you foster long enough, you may very well eventually lose a foster even with all our efforts to save him/her. Tragically, most of us who have fostered for a long time have gone through the pain of loss because, after all, most rescues have been neglected, abandoned and abused or not given proper medical care. The illness is not the animal's fault and sometimes the weeks or months he/she is with us are the only medical care, peace and love the rescued animal has ever known. The animals we do lose in our program knew they were loved and we did the very best we could for them; we are humbled by their sweetness, understanding, and ability for unconditional love no matter what they have been through, even as they cross over. It is in fact, a very humbling experience and we are never sorry we tried to help these animals. Most of your fosters are not only going to make it but thrive and become unbelievably gorgeous, go on to a wonderful new life and make you very proud.

“What if I really like the animal and want to keep it?”—This does happen. Sometimes the “perfect” pet comes along and everyone in the family just seems to agree that theirs is the perfect home. Fortunately, qualifying as a foster home usually qualifies you as an adopter as well. Valley Animal Haven strives to place our animals in homes that will best suit their needs and preferences. Sometimes the animal tells us which home is right; and we respect that. Should this happen, and well agree, the foster home will pay the adoption fee, complete the final adoption agreement and assume ownership of the animal.

Other Things You Need to Know

If you have a problem or a question, call Valley Animal Haven. If the dog bites someone, you must call and report this immediately to the shelter. Though some biting is fear biting and can be corrected, no dog will be allowed to remain in the program if he/she becomes aggressive. If the dog escapes the fence, fights with other dogs, won't leave your cat alone or has other behavior problems, we need to know. The same goes with a cat that won't use its litter box, attacks family members or won't get along with other animals. We may be able to help with management or training suggestions and will take these facts into consideration when screening potential adoptive homes for the animal.

When your foster animal arrives, Valley Animal Haven staff will tell you everything they know about the animal and its history. The animal will be vaccinated and neutered or spayed; any health problems will be fully discussed. The coordinators will keep in touch with the foster home through e-mail and by phone as we need occasional updates on the animal's progress. The foster home will need to be available to exchange information with the coordinators at least every couple weeks. Foster homes need to administer any prescription medication needed and follow any and all veterinarian directions. Please alert Valley Animal Haven staff of any medical emergencies. Foster homes also need to observe the animal's behavior and report any concerns, including if the dog seems to be a runner or actually escapes so we can assist in recovery. If the latter happens, the foster family must call us immediately as time is of the essence in recovering our animal. Foster animals are NOT allowed to be transported out of the immediate area of the foster home (ie; vacation, trips out of town or out of state, etc.). Foster animals are to be returned to Valley Animal Haven for alternate housing arrangements if foster family must travel out of town for more than a 24 hour period.

Valley Animal Haven staff are the only persons who can approve a permanent home for your foster dog/cat. If you have a family member or friend interested in adoption, or you meet a potential adopter, by all means encourage them to apply and provide our contact information. Please contact Valley Animal Haven and give us that person's phone number. You must NOT promise or place a cat/dog yourself. The

Valley Animal Haven has the paperwork necessary to finalize all adoptions. Foster homes give our animals the love and renewed trust they need to move on to their new homes with confidence. We appreciate the work our foster homes more than can ever be satisfactory expressed. In return we appreciate our foster homes' trust in us as well: the coordinators are extremely careful in our adoption procedures. Valley animal Haven welcomes suggestions about our animals and any observations you have made that can help us in finding the perfect forever home for our animals.

We are a charitable organization overseen by the IRS and health organizations, the coordinators make the final decisions about the actual adoptions of our animals. Valley Animal Haven staff members are the only persons who can accept an animal into the program. If you learn of an animal in need of rescue, please notify us as soon as possible with the information and we will take steps to work with you to bring the animal into the program.

We deeply appreciate your concern for animals and willingness to become involved with foster care. If you think you would like to do this important work in helping us save and rehabilitate our precious animals, please complete the foster application. Thank You!!!