

FOSTER CARE MANUAL



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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTORY MESSAGE	3
About this manual	3
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	3
Foster Program Policies and Agreement	4
The Foster Care Volunteer	5
Overall Responsibility of the Foster Home	5
Time Commitment	5
Emotional Investment	6
Risks	6
General Cat Care	6
Care of the Pregnant Cat	6
Pregnancy	6
Labor	7
Birth	7
Problems	8
Kitten Development	8
Orphaned Kittens	10
Feeding	11
Keep them warm!	11
Elimination	11

Weaning	11
Socialization	12
The Single Kitten	12
Grooming	12
Litter Box Training	13
General Dog Care	14
Care of the Pregnant Dog	14
Pregnancy	14
Labor	15
Birth	15
Problems	16
Puppy development	16
Vaccinations	17
Orphaned puppies	17
Feeding	17
Keep them warm!	18
Elimination	18
Weaning	18
Socialization	19
The single puppy	19
Adoption Process	20
Health	20

INTRODUCTORY MESSAGE

Thank you for your interest in the Liberty Humane Society's Foster Program!

About this manual

This manual is designed to provide foster parents with a comprehensive overview of the Liberty Humane Society Foster Program. Attached you will find a variety of information to help you get started. We want to make sure you know how to contact us when you have questions or concerns about the dog/puppies and/or cat/kittens you foster. We ask that you be in regular contact with your case manager(s) to let them know the status of your foster even when everything is going smoothly.

Also included is information on care of sick animals, foster kittens & puppies, medical information & when it comes time for a foster animal to find a permanent, adoptive home, there is information explaining the adoption phase of fostering.

The Foster Parent Agreement needs to be read before taking your first foster case. Please read it over and return an acknowledgement of your intent to meet the expectations. Some important points include:

- Foster cats are always strictly indoor cats
- Foster dogs must always be kept in a secure fenced area or on a leash. Foster dogs may not go to public dog parks.
- In order for a vet visit to be paid by Liberty Humane Society you must first contact us and use a vet from our list.
- If you have an interested adopter for your foster, that is great, however, they must always go through the usual adoption procedure at the shelter before taking possession of the animal. Animals are always spayed or neutered before the new owner takes possession.

Fostering literally saves lives. Despite the occasional challenge with a very sick animal or very young animals, most foster cases are fairly routine situations where you give food, housing, and TLC to a needy and deserving pet. This is always a worthy endeavor and it will hopefully be a satisfying, joyful experience for you as well.

Thank you!

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Liberty Humane Society would like to thank the ASPCA, Humane Society of the United States, the Ottawa Humane Society and the Seattle Humane Society who provided support and/or documentation in developing this manual.

Foster Program Policies and Agreement

1. The LHS retains all rights and ownership of any animal in the Foster Program. The LHS has the right to recall any fostered animal at any time.
2. The LHS makes all decisions regarding animals to be placed in foster.
3. Only authorized foster volunteers may care for foster animals. Foster animals must not be left under anyone else's care without authorization from the LHS.
4. The LHS is not liable for any injury, illness or damage to persons or property, including owned animals, while an animal is in the foster home.
5. The LHS may visit a foster home at any time providing that the foster volunteer is given prior notice. Prior notice is not required for the repossession of an animal when a foster volunteer fails to bring the animal back to the LHS as requested.
6. All adoption inquiries about foster animals in your care must be directed to LHS.
7. Animals are matched to foster volunteers by the LHS based on volunteer's experience, ability, and priority needs of animals.
8. Foster volunteers must attend an orientation prior to fostering. In exceptional circumstances, foster volunteers may begin fostering prior to the orientation as long as they are signed up for the next available orientation and have been approved by LHS.
9. All dogs belonging to the foster volunteer must have up-to-date DHLPP and rabies at least 10 days prior to a foster dog entering the foster home.
10. All cats belonging to the foster volunteer must have up-to-date FVRCP and rabies vaccines at least 10 days prior to a foster cat entering the foster home.
11. The foster volunteer must isolate foster animals from existing pets in the household as long as indicated by LHS. Keep foster animals indoors, except when walking dogs. 12. Dogs with kennel cough must be kept away from other dogs in public.
12. Food and litter for foster animals may be provided to foster volunteers. The LHS is not responsible for any other foster expenses not agreed upon in advance.
13. Foster volunteers must contact LHS for all foster animal care needs and questions. Foster animals should not be taken to any veterinarian unless authorized by the LHS. Foster animals must be taken to veterinarians participating with LHS. Emergency protocol provided in the foster manual is to be followed at all times. **No veterinary expenses will be reimbursed unless authorized in advance by the LHS.**
14. Equipment and supplies provided to a foster home must be returned upon request by LHS.
15. Foster homes will respond to inquiries from potential adopters within 48 hours.

I, the undersigned, understand and agree to the above terms and conditions of the foster program.

Foster volunteer: _____ Date: _____

LHS representative: _____ Date: _____

The Foster Care Volunteer

The foster care volunteer plays a crucial role in saving lives at Liberty Humane Society (LHS).

These volunteers are highly committed people who give weeks or months of their time to homeless animals needing care. From healthy animals needing a bridge to a forever home to animals that come to LHS injured, ill, too young, too small, unsocialized, pregnant, orphaned or in need of manners before they can go home, fosters are our lifesavers.

Foster parents will always become emotionally involved with the animal they are caring for. It is important that foster parents understand that sometimes an animal will not survive, even with the best of care. Each foster parent will handle this differently. Please feel free to discuss your feelings with your Coordinator at LHS.



Dogs in foster care



Black cat in a carrier



A well-loved cat

Overall Responsibility of the Foster Home

Foster homes are responsible for providing a warm, safe place for foster animals. They are responsible for providing socialization for the pets in their care, teaching good behavior to the animals and contacting LHS for any medical problems that arise. Foster homes are responsible for bringing animals in for administering worming meds and vaccinations. LHS is responsible for providing all supplies and food to the foster home and for caring for the animals regarding medical and emergency issues. Volunteers are relied upon for updated photos and accurate bios for web posting & to actively contribute to the adoption process. **Volunteers should understand that if they seek medical help outside of LHS, they take financial responsibility in doing so.**

Time Commitment

People who work 9-5 can often be wonderful foster parents. When a mother cat is part of the equation there is little for a foster parent to do but observe her and her kittens for health, play with them, and love them. Kittens, on the other hand, require around the clock care. Other animals, the time commitment can vary based on each animal's individual needs.

Emotional Investment

Bonds will form between you and our foster animals. This is perfectly natural, but does not mean that you should adopt the pet. The same considerations for any person adopting a pet should be maintained for the foster parent. The volunteer should analyze whether adopting the foster animal fits with their household or is just an emotional response to caring for this sick or young animal. Please realize that foster homes are always in need and when they “fill up,” fewer animals can be helped.

Risks

There is always a risk of bringing disease (or even injury) home to your own pets when taking in a foster pet. LHS has done all it can to determine the health of the animal(s) before going into your home. If there are known risks, you will be advised at the time of foster placement and it is your choice whether to take on the responsibility.

General Cat Care

LHS foster cats must be kept strictly indoors. When transported to an adoption event, to receive vaccinations or for surgery or for adoption, a cat must be in a traditional cat carrier. Prepare for your foster by stocking supplies, choosing a safe area of your home that has been “cat-proofed” and is easy to clean and disinfect. Natural sunlight and access to windows is a plus. LHS requires that healthy cats receive daily exercise and play time. Foster animals shall not be permitted to interact with other animals without permission from LHS. Please keep in regular contact with LHS, provide updated photos and descriptions for the website and adoption promotion materials. We ask that you actively participate in adoption events and outreach to contribute toward your foster’s adoption.

Care of the Pregnant Cat

When a pregnant cat comes to LHS and needs to be fostered we generally have very little information about its background. Some cats that look like they are about to give birth may not deliver for weeks, while some that appear average give birth in a few hours. We will give you our best educated guess.

Before placing a pregnant cat in foster care we do a blood test to determine that it is free from feline AIDS and feline leukemia. There are several other diseases that we are unable to test for and conditions that may arise unbeknownst to us when placing a cat in your care. Consequently, there is some risk to you or to your pets from taking in a cat whose background is not known. The cat and/or kittens should be kept in a separate room if at all possible for this reason.

Pregnancy

The domestic cat’s gestation is approximately 63 days in length. As the gestation period comes to an end, the pregnant cat becomes restless, searches for a suitable den/nest in which to deliver her kittens. She looks for somewhere private, quiet and dry. Litter sizes vary, but three to six kittens is average.

Usually ravenous, the pregnant cat's desire for food disappears as she goes into labor. Some cats will hate interference at this point, but many seem to really enjoy having company during their labor. Most will gladly stay in a box provided by the foster parent for the birth of the kittens, but others might try to hide in closets or drawers.

If the mother cat tries to go off to some inconvenient place to give birth, gently put her back in the place you have selected. Usually, she will comply but from time to time, a very independent cat will only be happy giving birth in private. The mother cat should be provided with a box that is large enough for her and her kittens, ideally measuring at least 2' by 2', and lined with soft towels, sheets or blankets. Any materials that you choose should be items that you are not attached to, as they will most likely be ruined during the birth of the kittens.

Labor

When the first stage of labor starts, the mother cat's rate of breathing increases and she may begin to breathe through her mouth and purr rhythmically. This stage may last for many hours, and the foster parent should not be overly concerned.

Provided that the mother cat is happy, do not fuss over her. It is important to see that you have all the things you might need and that the room temperature is at least 72°. A cold room can cause hypothermia in the newborn kittens.

A cat may be well into labor without showing noticeable signs. The mother cat often will have her kittens in the middle of the night without the foster parent even being aware that she is in labor.

Birth

Giving birth is a lengthy process for the average cat. With a typical litter of four kittens, and a typical delay between births of ½-hour, the birth of the kittens would last two hours. However, some cats give birth much more quickly, even one birth per minute, but this is rare. A typical delay of ½-hour gives the mother cat time to tend to the newly born kitten before the next one arrives. Occasionally a cat will rest between kittens for up to 24 hours. As long as she is not having contractions there is no need to panic if there is considerable time between kittens.

As labor proceeds there will be some vaginal discharge, colorless at first but later becoming blood-tinged. If, at any time, she has a foul smelling discharge or is bleeding profusely, this may be a sign of trouble and you will need to call for help. Any sign of bright red blood indicates a need to call for help.

The second stage of labor begins when the mother cat experiences contractions of her abdominal muscles and starts to "bear down." These will become more frequent, and when they occur about every 30 seconds, delivery is near. The mother cat will repeatedly lick her genital area and may show signs of agitation. You may soothe her by talking to her and gently rubbing her belly.

The first amniotic sac will come into view and in a regular birth the enclosed kitten will be born within 15 to 30 minutes. Very often, the mother's constant licking will rupture the sac, leaving the kitten without its perfectly lubricated "capsule." You should remain calm if this happens and resist the temptation to interfere; if the kitten is being born head first, a few more contractions will release it.

In about one-third of all births, the hind legs emerge first. This is only slightly more difficult for the mother cat than a head first birth. In a true breech birth (the kitten is arriving hindquarters and tail first) the mother cat may become

agitated and turn around repeatedly in attempts to release the wedged kitten. She may find it easier to bear down if she can push with her hind legs against the box or your hand. Even with this help, the birth may take 20 minutes. The mother cat's persistence will probably bring success, but if she should weaken or become distressed, you should be ready to call for help. In most births, however, there are no complications, and only in a very, very few do serious difficulties arise.

Problems

Occasionally a new mother does not attempt to remove the sac from the kitten. She may not know what to do or may be too busy with the next delivery. In this case, give her a minute to realize what is needed, but if there is no sign of action, act quickly. Gently remove the membrane from the kitten's face and place the kitten in front of mom so she can try again to care for him/her properly.

Apart from a mother cat being unable to deliver a breech kitten, there are two other situations when it is vital to call for help. The first situation is one in which the mother has strong contractions for two hours with no sign of a kitten appearing. The cause may be two kittens blocking the birth canal. The second situation is in uterine inertia, when the mother suddenly appears to tire before or after the first kitten is born. This is different than a cat resting between births - she will seem generally exhausted and distressed and help will be needed.

Occasionally a mother cat is super-protective of her kittens. Carefully observe your foster cat before trying to handle her kittens or before putting your hands or face near the birthing place.

If you feel that your pregnant cat has gone beyond the point when she should have delivered her kittens, please call LHS for help.

Kitten Development

Directly after the kittens are born the mother cat will completely clean herself and then settle down with her family. Around this time, remove the soiled bedding and replace it with clean, warm bedding. Clean the box if necessary. Place the kittens back with the mother cat and they will settle into a nice long feed.

The first milk produced, called colostrum, is only produced for a few days. It is rich in protein and minerals and contains antibodies that protect the kittens from disease. For this reason it is very important that infant kittens nurse from their mother. The kittens will put on weight steadily, gaining as much as 1/2 oz. a day in the initial period of rapid growth.

Occasionally a kitten will be pushed out by another kitten when it tries to suckle and will cry lustily. This is normal, BUT if the same kitten is repeatedly kept from the nipple it will fall behind the other kittens in growth. Careful examination may reveal a defect such as a cleft palate, or it may just be a "runt." A kitten repeatedly pushed away by the mother may have become chilled. If so, re-warm the kitten and then try putting it back with the mother cat. If this does not work, you will need to call for help. You might need to start feeding the kitten yourself.

A kitten will use heat receptors in its nose to find the nipple. Cat milk is high in fat and protein. Kittens compete for the most productive nipple and by two days of age, the kittens know which nipples are most productive. Kittens that latch onto the most productive nipples grow fastest.

At birth a kitten is totally helpless, unable to even regulate its own body temperature. Within four days it is able to find its mother and crawl to her from two feet away. By two weeks old its coordination is sufficiently developed for it to use its front legs, and by three weeks of age, it can stand tentatively. By seven weeks of age a kitten leaps and runs and seems to have developed a near perfect sense of balance.

Watching kittens grow is a daily delight. As a foster parent you can watch for the following milestones:

- Kittens are born with closed eyes and tiny folded-down ears
- The stump of the umbilical cord will dry up and fall off in about five days
- Eyes open between five and thirteen days
- By about eighteen days kittens begin to crawl and their ears begin to straighten
- At a little over two weeks teething begins
- By about three weeks kittens can stand and weaning begins
- At four to five weeks a kitten can stand and eat at a bowl easily
- By five weeks it is becoming mischievous and is playing and grooming itself
- All puppies & kittens should be treated for roundworms every two to three weeks starting at two to three weeks of age until they are twelve to sixteen weeks old. Pregnant and nursing mothers should also be treated to minimize transmission to their offspring
- By six to eight weeks it can receive its first combo inoculation
- By eight to nine weeks of age, kittens should be ready for adoption



Mother cat with kitten



Hoping for a forever-home



Cat at an adoption event

In the first few weeks of life a kitten is completely dependent on the mother cat to stimulate all body functions; her licking prompts the release of bowels and bladder. Just as she tidied the nest at birth, the mother cat consumes all of the kittens' waste products. This behavior is probably attributable to keeping the nest clean and keeping predators away. Even this cleaning may not be enough for a mother cat and she may attempt to move the kittens from time to time, usually right after birth and then again at about four days post-birth.

Once a kitten begins eating solid food, the mother stops providing the service of consuming all waste. A litter box should be provided for the kittens by the time they are 2.5 weeks old. By three weeks of age a kitten's instinct to use a specific place to eliminate is profoundly developed. While the kittens at this age are still reliant on their mothers for grooming, they will begin to groom themselves and will be able to fully groom themselves by five weeks of age.

You may begin offering kitten food to your kitten at about three weeks of age. You can soak kitten kibble in water to make it easier for the kitten to get the idea or if you like, you may spoil the kittens a bit by feeding canned kitten food. By five weeks of age the kittens will have a full set of pin-sharp teeth and should be able to handle kitten food. These teeth play a role in weaning the kittens; sharp teeth become very annoying to the nursing mother. As the kittens mature and try to nurse the mother cat will begin to hiss and bat them away.

Orphaned Kittens

Foster homes receive orphaned kittens from LHS at all ages, from one day old up to kittens that are very close to being ready for spay/neuter surgeries. Orphaned kittens require the same care that kittens with mothers require but in this case the foster parent must take on the duties of the mother cat.

Foster parents that take on this care are much more likely to experience problems and heartache than foster parents who take on the care of kittens with a mother.

Kittens become orphans in a number of ways. The death of the mother cat and abandonment by the mother cat are probably the most common reasons that kittens are orphaned. Less common reasons would be maternal aggression towards the kittens or an inability to produce enough milk for her kittens. In these cases it is important for LHS to work with foster families to provide what the mother cat can no longer provide to her kittens.

We recommend two types of feeding for orphaned infant kittens: bottle and syringe feeding. Bottle-feeding takes longer but probably provides more satisfaction to the kitten. Syringe feeding is somewhat faster but can be messy at times.

Special commercial kitten formula will be provided to the foster homes by LHS. The formula comes in a liquid and a powdered form that is mixed with water. Mix only enough to use within a 24-hour period. Discard any remaining formula after 24 hours. Formula should feel quite warm when tested on your wrist.

Because a cat's body temperature is 3 to 4 degrees warmer than a human's, milk from a mother cat would be warmer than we might be used to. The warm formula will encourage a kitten to nurse. **Kittens should not be laid on their backs to nurse but should nurse with tummies facing down. This will help prevent aspiration of the formula into the lungs, a situation that could easily cause the death of or serious illness in a kitten.**

Feeding

Kittens that nurse from mother cats will suckle 10 to 20 times a day. A foster parent hand-raising a litter of kittens would find this impractical and really unnecessary. Infant kittens could be fed every few hours during your awake time; however a feeding every six hours will allow them to get enough nourishment to live and grow. Feedings less than every eight hours would make it very difficult for a kitten to do well. If you have a full-time job away from home, you might ask your boss if the kittens could come to work with you during the initial few critical weeks. Many bosses would be sympathetic to the kitten's plight.

Kittens have a strong instinct to suckle and are generally not satisfied when nursing on a bottle. Consequently they will nurse off one another's genitals, sometimes causing real discomfort to one another. Some foster parents separate their kittens into several small boxes to eliminate this problem. Providing a fleece toy or towel may help. After feeding gently wipe the kitten's face with a warm, damp cloth and then dry, to imitate their mother's grooming, until they can groom themselves.

Keep them warm!

Infant kittens are unable to regulate their body temperature. They can quickly succumb to hypothermia so it is of the utmost importance that they be kept warm. During the first two weeks of life foster parents should keep the kittens in an area with a temperature of 85°F. A constant temperature can be kept by using a heating pad under about one half of the kittens' bedding. It can be as dangerous for a kitten to be overheated as chilled so make certain that the heating pad is placed in such a manner that the kittens can move off of the heat onto unheated bedding. At two weeks of age the temperature can be dropped to 80°F and at four weeks can be lowered to 75°F.

Elimination

In the first few weeks of life, a kitten is completely dependent on the mother cat to stimulate all body functions; her licking prompts the release of bowels and bladder. Just as she tidied the nest at birth, the mother cat consumes all of the kittens' waste products. Orphaned infant kittens will need your help in this department! Kittens will need to be stimulated to urinate and defecate. This is accomplished by gently massaging the abdomen and genital area with a slightly moistened cotton ball. You may need to use several cotton balls on each kitten as you assist them in elimination of feces and urine. Your help will be needed until the time that kittens begin to be weaned, and sometimes beyond that point!

Weaning

Beginning at approximately four weeks of age, offer the kittens their formula in a shallow bowl or saucer. When they learn to drink from the bowl add kitten food in small amounts to the formula. Gradually increase the amount of kitten food and decrease the amount of formula. Kittens that don't quite get the eating process can be encouraged by your putting a bit of food on a front paw where they will "clean" it off or by placing a bit of food in their mouths.

When the kittens reach 4 weeks of age, you will need to return them to LHS for worming medications and a check-up. When the kittens reach 6 weeks of age you will need to return them to LHS for vaccinations and deworming. Call first so LHS will be prepared for you. Your visit to LHS should not take a great deal of time.

Your orphaned kittens will need to be socialized while in your care. Try to make certain that you are not the only person handling them. Kittens that are not socialized will grow into cats that are not socialized. Experts in cat behavior suggest that kittens should be socialized to a minimum of 5 people. If you live alone, invite your adult friends over to play with and handle the kittens.

Socialization

Make every attempt to provide this socialization daily for your kittens from around 5 weeks on. We ask that no children handle the kittens. LHS doesn't adopt out kittens to families with children under 5 years of age and we would like to take the same precautions in our foster homes.

As your kittens become more mobile, you should move them around the house to get them used to change. Allow them to play and explore in a new room individually and as a group. When carrying the kittens carry only one per hand. With two in a hand, one could easily squeeze the kittens together and do them harm if they began to squirm and you feared dropping them.

Mother cats pick up their kittens by scruffing them (lifting them by the extra skin on the back of their neck). Mother cats do this to scold or move kittens. We recommend you get your kittens used to humans doing this because it will help us restrain them when they're older.

The Single Kitten

Littermates are important to the social development of a kitten and if you are raising a single kitten it will be totally dependent on you to socialize it properly. Feed the kitten in several locations, have numerous people handle the kitten, make certain that it explores many locations throughout your house. If you have cats or dogs that would not harm a kitten, you may want to introduce them, but be aware that there is some risk involved. In the case that LHS has fostered a single kitten it is unlikely that we have any information concerning the feline leukemia or feline AIDS status of the kitten. While your cat can be inoculated against feline leukemia, the vaccine is not 100% effective, and there is no vaccine for feline AIDS.

Grooming

It is a great idea to begin the experience of grooming while a kitten is young. You may start when the kittens' eyes open. There is very little to do at this time but you are helping to teach the kitten to offer no resistance when being groomed. As infant kittens you might want to start by just wiping the kitten with a washcloth and gradually as it grows begin using a cat comb or brush to gently go over the kitten's coat. Groom each kitten for about a minute, two or three times a week. Trimming the nails of a kitten can be done with just a pair of regular human nail trimmers. Trim off just the very, very ends of the kittens' nails. Kittens' nails do not grow very fast so you won't want to trim them each time you groom but go through the motions of handling the feet and toes at each grooming session. Trimming nails each week to two weeks is sufficient for kittens.

If you must bathe kittens, bathe only one at a time. Do not submerge a kitten's head in the water. Try to clean the kitten with just water - but should you need soap, use only the mildest baby shampoo you can find. Make certain

that the water you are using is warm, and thoroughly dry any wet areas on the kitten, keeping the kitten warm throughout the process.

While LHS makes every effort to make certain that all animals leaving the shelter are flea-free, there will be kittens that sneak a flea or two out of the shelter. Remember, the kittens (especially orphaned), often come into the shelter with fleas. Please do not treat the kitten for fleas until you have talked to a LHS staff member. Many flea products are highly toxic to kittens, even if they say “safe for kittens” on the label.

Litter Box Training

Begin to provide a litter box when kittens begin to eliminate on their own. Use a box that the kittens can easily get into (a shoebox lid works well) and use just a small amount of litter to begin with. Keeping the box clean will encourage the kittens to continue using it. Kittens will not begin to dig and bury their elimination until about six to eight weeks of age. Don't worry if they don't dig and bury while in your care. **DO NOT USE CLUMPING LITTER – NO EXCEPTIONS!**

General Dog Care

LHS foster dogs must be kept on a leash with a safety collar when out the home or fenced yard. Please discuss the yard and fencing with LHS prior to accepting an animal. LHS requires that healthy dogs receive daily exercise and play time. Foster animals shall not be permitted to interact with other animals without permission from LHS. Prior to intake, prepare your home and choose foster housing that is easy to clean, safe, fully stocked with supplies and well-ventilated. LHS will provide a crate for fosters. The crate serves as a quiet resting place for dogs who, as a species, naturally gravitate toward a den. The crate shall never be used as punishment. Please see the handout on crate training and discuss with LHS. And, please keep in regular contact with LHS, even when things are going well!



"Harvard" at an adoption event



A Volunteer hugging a dog



Happy Puppy

While you may want to spoil a dog that has been through a rough time, remember that your job is to heal the dog (if needed) and teach them what they need to know to become a highly adoptable dog and therefore give them the best chance of a loving, forever home. This includes teaching housetraining, good house manners and obedience. Tip sheets are provided in this packet and we expect these protocols to be followed. We at LHS value socialization, but mandate that foster dogs not be allowed at off-leash dog parks. We will discuss socialization with you on a case by case basis.

Care of the Pregnant Dog

Particularly in the spring, dogs may arrive at LHS who are either pregnant or nursing. Fostering a pregnant or nursing dog can last anywhere from 4 to 10 weeks depending on the puppies' ages. LHS will always provide you with a rough estimate of how long an animal may require fostering.

Pregnancy

A dog's gestation period, like a domestic cat, is 63 days. The mother dog will take care of her puppies and will need little intervention from you. Mostly, she needs you for a safe environment, food and to assist with clean bedding and supplies. Before placing a pregnant dog in foster care we administer whatever dewormers or vaccines that are approved based on the dog's/puppies situation & ages. It is vital that you keep other animals away from the mother dog and puppies.

Create a nest for the mother dog in a quiet corner of your home. The box should be large enough for the nursing mom to comfortably lie away from her puppies if she chooses, but small enough so the newborns are easy to reach. The sides need to be high enough to prevent the young from wandering, but low enough for the mom to be able to come and go with ease. The box should be lined with newspaper and then piled with clean, dry, soft, removable linens. Some foster homes use a baby pool – which can be cleaned and disinfected easily. Depending on the baby pool, the puppies may grow to climb over.

Keep the nest room warm and stress-free. The mother dog's food should be increased 2 to 4 times her normal intake. Food and fresh water should always be made available to her. Do not apply any medications, lotions or baths without the express permission of LHS.

Labor

As the gestation period comes to an end, the pregnant dog becomes restless, searches for a suitable den/nest in which to deliver. She will stop eating the day of birth. LHS will advise you on other signs – including temperature drops – that will alert you to imminent delivery. Please keep in close communication with LHS. Giving birth is a lengthy process and may involve several hours between puppies. Typically it is an hour between puppies.

As labor proceeds there will be some vaginal discharge, colorless at first but later becoming blood-tinged. If, at any time, she has a foul smelling discharge or is bleeding profusely, this may be a sign of trouble and you will need to call for help. Any sign of bright red blood indicates a need to call for help.

The second stage of labor begins when the mother dog experiences contractions of her abdominal muscles and starts to "bear down." The mother dog will repeatedly lick her genital area and may show signs of agitation. You may soothe her by talking to her.

Birth

Call LHS to report the birth. Remember – most mothers do not need assistance. Please leave her to birth, clean and stimulate the puppies. She may be very protective – especially if this is her first litter. This is an instinct. Within a few days, her protectiveness should wane somewhat and she will allow you a closer inspection of the puppies. She will ingest the excrement as well as stillborn puppies. This may be shocking to the new foster home. This instinct to keep the nest clean prevents disease, illness and the attraction of predators to the nest. It is nature at work.

In most births, there are no complications, and only in a very, very few do serious difficulties arise.

Your first experience fostering a pregnant dog will be a great learning experience. We're here to help. As your experience grows, you'll feel more confident about what represents a problem and what does not.

Problems

Occasionally a new mother does not attempt to remove the sac from the puppy.

She may not know what to do or may be too busy with the next delivery. In this case, give her a minute to realize what is needed, but if there is no sign of action, act quickly. Gently remove the membrane from the puppy's face and place the puppy in front of mom so she can try again to care for him/her properly.

If she accidentally pushes a puppy outside the nest, put the puppy back in. If she repeatedly pushes the puppy out, there may be something wrong with the puppy. In this case or if you feel that your pregnant foster is in abnormal distress, please call LHS for help.

Directly after the puppies are born the mother dog will completely clean the pups and herself and then settle down with her family. Around this time, remove the soiled bedding and replace it with clean, warm bedding. Clean the nest box if necessary.

The first milk produced, called colostrum, is only produced for a few days. It is rich in protein and minerals and contains antibodies that protect the puppies from disease. For this reason it is very important that puppies nurse from their mother.

As with kittens, occasionally a puppy will be pushed out by another puppy when it tries to suckle and will cry lustily. This is normal, BUT if the same puppy is repeatedly kept from the nipple it will fall behind the other puppies in growth. Be sure a puppy is warm before putting it back into the nest.

Puppy development

At birth a puppy is totally helpless, unable to even regulate its own body temperature. It is important to start handling the puppies early to socialize them. This is also a critical time for the puppy to learn dog social behavior from its mother and siblings. During the first two weeks have humans briefly handle the pups several times a day. As the puppies age, the socialization time should increase and they should be exposed to different noises and people.

Watching puppies grow is a daily delight. As a foster parent you can watch for the following milestones:

- Puppies are born with closed eyes and tiny folded-down ears
- Eyes open between seven and ten days
- By about three weeks puppies can stand and weaning begins
- At four to five weeks a puppy can start eating puppy kibble
- Puppies should not be allowed outside before four weeks.
- All puppies & kittens should be treated for roundworms every two to three weeks starting at two to three weeks of age until they are twelve to sixteen weeks old. Pregnant and nursing mothers should also be treated to minimize transmission to their offspring

Vaccinations

- 8-10 weeks: DHLPP and Bordetella vaccinations.
- 11-13 weeks: DHLPP vaccination.
- 14-16 weeks: DHLPP vaccination.

By 8 to 9 weeks of age, puppies should be ready for adoption.

In the first few weeks of life a puppy is completely dependent on the mother dog to stimulate all body functions; her licking prompts the release of bowels and bladder. Just as she tidied the nest at birth, the mother dog consumes all of the puppies' waste products. This behavior is probably attributable to keeping the nest clean and keeping predators away.

You may begin offering puppy food to your puppy at about three weeks of age. You can soak kitten kibble in water to make it easier for the puppy to get the idea or if you like, you may spoil the puppies a bit by mixing in canned puppy food. The development of the sharp teeth help in the weaning process; sharp teeth become very annoying to the mother dog. By four to five weeks you can add dry kibble. A circular feeding bowl, similar to a poultry feeder is a great way to give each puppy a "place at the table."

Make sure to feed the mother dog a high quality diet throughout her pregnancy and while she is caring for the puppies.

Orphaned puppies

Foster homes receive orphaned puppies from LHS at all ages, from one day old up to puppies that are very close to being ready for spay/neuter surgeries. Orphaned puppies require the same care that puppies with mothers require but in this case the foster parent must take on the duties of the mother dog.

Sometimes puppies are abandoned without the mother dog. While this normally happens once the puppies start wandering around and making a mess of excrement, sometimes younger puppies are abandoned.

Feeding

We recommend bottle feeding for orphaned infant puppies. Special commercial puppy formula will be provided to the foster homes by LHS. The formula comes in a liquid and a powdered form that is mixed with water. Mix only enough to use within a 24-hour period. Discard any remaining formula after 24 hours. Formula should feel quite warm when tested on your wrist.

The warm formula will encourage a puppy to nurse. **Puppies should not be laid on their backs to nurse but should nurse with tummies facing down. This will help prevent aspiration of the formula into the lungs, a situation that could easily cause the death of or serious illness in a puppy.**

Infant puppies could be fed every three hours. After three weeks of age, they may be fed every 4-5 hours during your awake time; however a feeding every six hours will allow them to get enough nourishment to live and grow. Feed-

ings less than every eight hours would make it very difficult for a kitten to do well. If you have a full-time job away from home, you might ask your boss if the kittens could come to work with you during the initial few critical weeks. Many bosses would be sympathetic to the puppy's plight.

Puppies have a strong instinct to suckle and are generally not satisfied when nursing on a bottle. Consequently they will nurse off one another's genitals, sometimes causing real discomfort to one another. Some foster parents separate their puppies into several small boxes to eliminate this problem when they cannot watch them. Because time with one another is so important to their future behavior, do not keep them separated all the time.

Keep them warm!

Infant puppies are unable to regulate their body temperature. They can quickly succumb to hypothermia so it is of the utmost importance that they be kept warm. During the first two weeks of life foster parents should keep the puppies in an area with a temperature of 80–90°F. A constant temperature can be kept by using a heating pad under about one half of the puppies' bedding. It can be as dangerous for a puppy to be overheated as chilled so make certain that the heating pad is placed in such a manner that the puppies can move off of the heat onto unheated bedding. Monitor heating pads very, very carefully and always keep the setting on low. At two weeks of age the temperature can be dropped to 80°F and at four weeks can be lowered to 75°F.

Elimination

In the first few weeks of life, a puppy is completely dependent on the mother dog to stimulate all body functions; her licking prompts the release of bowels and bladder. Just as she tidied the nest at birth, the mother dog consumes all of the puppies' waste products. Orphaned infant puppies will need your help in this department! Puppies will need to be stimulated to urinate and defecate. This is accomplished by gently massaging the abdomen and genital area with a slightly moistened cotton ball or soft rag. You may need to use several cotton balls on each puppy as you assist them in elimination of feces and urine. Mineral oil on the rag should be used if defecation doesn't occur immediately. Always be gentle. Your help will be needed until the time that puppies begin to be weaned, and sometimes beyond that point!

Weaning

Beginning at approximately three weeks of age, offer the puppies their formula in a shallow bowl or saucer. When they learn to drink from the bowl add wet puppy food in small amounts to the formula. Gradually increase the amount of puppy food – including puppy kibble - and decrease the amount of formula.

When the puppies reach 4–5 weeks of age, bottle feeding will no longer be necessary.

Your orphaned puppies must be socialized while in your care. Try to make certain that you are not the only person handling them. If you live alone, invite your adult friends over to play with and handle the puppies (after the second week of age).

Socialization

Make every attempt to provide this socialization daily for your puppies. We ask that no young children handle the puppies. LHS doesn't adopt out puppies to families with children under 5 years of age and we would like to take the same precautions in our foster homes.

As your puppy becomes more mobile, you should move them around the house to get them used to change. Allow them to play and explore in a new room individually and as a group. When carrying the puppies carry only one per hand. If you have a friendly dog – have the puppies interact with the dog. Exposing them to vaccinated animals in the home will make them more socialized dogs.

The single puppy

Littermates are important to the social development of a puppy and if you are raising a single puppy it will be totally dependent on you to socialize it properly. Feed the puppy in several locations, have numerous people handle the puppy, make certain that it explores many locations throughout your house. If you have cats or dogs that would not harm the puppy, you should introduce them, but be aware that there is some risk involved.

If you must bathe a puppy, bathe only one at a time. Do not submerge their heads in water. If you see fleas – contact LHS to determine the appropriate shampoos or treatment. While LHS makes every effort to make certain that all animals are flea-free, there will be puppies that sneak a flea or two out of the shelter. Many flea products are highly toxic to puppies, even if they say “safe for puppies” on the label.

It is critical that you teach the puppy good manners and housetrain the puppy. Attached are guide sheets on preventing chewing, mouthiness and housetraining. Please use these techniques or ask for permission from LHS for other methods before use. Puppies should only be allowed outside after they are 4 weeks old. Use newspaper or puppy pads in the home.

While puppies are very cute, it is a foster's job to teach them the manners and behaviors they need for adoption into a new home. Spoiling them can do them a disservice and lead to their return to LHS. Teaching obedience is also expected of foster homes, and again – tip sheets are provided and we ask foster homes to follow these training protocols. Your job is to raise a well-mannered, well-socialized puppy that has every opportunity at a wonderful, full life.

Adoption Process

All LHS animals will be promoted on Petfinder.com and through partnerships in the community, events and other outlets. Foster parents will be expected to provide up to date photos and information for promotion of animals for adoption. While putting the best paw forward for an animal, always be honest and up front with any health or behavior issues. Foster homes will also be asked to participate in adoption events. Animals are waiting for foster homes and LHS is committed to saving as many lives as possible. LHS values fosters and relies on fosters' contributions to the adoption of foster animals including interaction with potential adopters and helping to promote animals to friends, family, coworkers, neighbors and the community. All interested parties must go through LHS' adoption process, including foster parents. All final decisions on placement will be made strictly by LHS.



Kitten at an adoption event



A girl and her little dog



Adoptable dog at an event

Health

Healthy puppies & kittens are plump and have good skin tone. They feel warm to the touch. If placed on their backs or sides they will quickly right themselves to a crawling position. Healthy puppies & kittens nurse vigorously and seldom cry unless disturbed. They generally nest closely with one another.

Sick puppies & kittens feel cold, thin and limp. They lie scattered in the nest. They may cry incessantly and sound weak and are often too weak to nurse effectively. Kittens & puppies that are failing may have become chilled, they may be starving or they may be dehydrated.

Puppies & kittens can become chilled very quickly. Chilling will increase the animals' susceptibility to bacterial infection of their intestinal and respiratory systems. Starvation and dehydration, which almost always occur together, can kill very quickly. If you have these conditions and need to transport kittens to LHS, make certain they are as warm as possible. Use a warm hot water bottle in a small carrier and cover the carrier with a towel to maintain the heat.

If you have talked to LHS and have been instructed to provide oral fluids, medication or sustenance, remember that weak animals can easily aspirate liquid into their lungs. If they do, they will probably not survive. Take it slow, keep the kittens on their stomachs and do not force any fluids. Amoxicillin, Clavamox and Metronidazole (Flagl) liquids should be refrigerated.

Your kitten's or puppy's eyes should be bright and clear. Any discharge collecting in the corners should be cleaned away with a cotton ball soaked in warm water. The ears should be clean in appearance and free of discharge or odor. Routine cleaning of ears should be accomplished by gently swiping with a moistened cotton ball. The nose should be clean and moist without discharge or sores. Examine kittens' & puppies' mouths regularly. The gums should appear pink and healthy. Legs should be inspected for any swollen joints and look between the toes for tiny objects that could be stuck. Check your foster's anus for possible infection or swelling or intestinal parasites. Tapeworm segments look like rice and may be seen in the stool or around the anus. They will need medicine to get rid of tapeworms.

Feline Distemper: Feline distemper is caused by a virus. No specific conditions are required for it to exist so it attacks unprotected kittens indiscriminately and without warning. It is extremely harmful to cats of all ages and is especially lethal to young kittens. Kittens can fall into a coma and die before a foster parent even realizes a kitten is sick. Symptoms include listlessness, lack of appetite, vomiting and diarrhea and blood in the stool.

Canine Distemper: Distemper is an extremely contagious and often fatal viral disease. Over 50% of dogs and 80% of puppies that contract the virus die from it. It is an airborne infection that can be transmitted with or without direct contact with an infected dog through mucous, urine and feces. Some of the symptoms include squinting, congestion of the eyes, puss from the eyes, weight loss, coughing, vomiting, nasal discharge and diarrhea.

URI: Upper respiratory infections are a group of viral and bacterial infections of the upper respiratory system with cold-like symptoms. URI's are highly infectious and are usually contracted from other cats. URI's can be fatal to kittens. Symptoms of this disease are sneezing, goopy eyes, and heavy breathing.

Kennel Cough: Kennel cough is the equivalent of a human cold. The shelter is much like a child day care - as soon as one dog has a cold; most all the dogs in the shelter get a cold. Just like people who have colds, kennel cough develops when the dog is stressed or when the immune system is compromised. Kennel cough usually goes away as soon as the dog has a warm, quiet and soothing place to sleep, and where they can drink lots of water, eat healthy food and receive lots of TLC! Kennel cough is typically a dry, hacking cough. There may be some discharge from the nose and a clear liquid that is coughed up. It's generally a mild, self limiting illness of the trachea and bronchi encountered in all age groups of dogs, but especially in those under unusual stress, crowding or close confinement. Kennel cough exists in shelters, boarding kennels, groomers, veterinary offices, off-leash areas, etc Because kennel cough is contagious, infected dogs should NOT be around other dogs until they're over their cough. If you have a dog at home and plan to foster a dog with kennel cough, we have found that if your own dog is healthy and has been vaccinated annually, then your dog will most likely not get sick. Talk to your vet about giving your own dog the Bordetella nasal vaccination.

Feline leukemia: This deadly disease is caused by a virus that inhibits the immune system. It is not likely that a foster home would experience this disease as every precaution is taken to avoid placement of cats into homes without first testing for feline leukemia. However, orphaned kittens under the age of eight weeks cannot be tested reliably for the disease. If taking in kittens whose mother could not be tested, foster parents should be extremely careful in keeping contact between their pets and foster pets from occurring. It is transmitted from cat to cat via saliva, urine and other bodily fluids.

FIP: This disease does not occur as commonly as URI. Symptoms are the same as distemper but with abdominal bloating and labored breathing.

Diarrhea: A common ailment of kittens and cats, and can be caused by many factors including bacteria, viruses, parasites, toxic substances, food or psychological upset. If diarrhea persists more than 24 hours, call LHS. You will be asked to bring in a sample of the diarrhea to help diagnose the problem.

Parvovirus (dogs): Parvo attacks the intestinal tract, white blood cells and heart muscle. Signs of infection are depression, loss of appetite, vomiting, severe diarrhea, fever and sometimes kennel cough symptoms. The illness is contracted through contact with the infected feces of another dog. This is why you must NOT take your foster puppy out to public places where other dogs have been until he has completed his vaccine series against the disease. This virus can be deadly. Call LHS immediately if you believe your foster dog may have this illness.

Vomiting : Occasional vomiting can be considered normal, frequent vomiting is not.

Fleas and ticks: LHS tries to make certain that foster animals do not leave the shelter with these types of parasites. Should you find fleas or ticks on your foster animal(s), call for instructions. Please do not attempt to treat on your own.

Earmites: Nearly microscopic, these parasites live in the ear canals of dogs and cats and cause a brown waxy material that looks similar to coffee grounds to form in the ears. Call for instructions for treating earmites.

Ringworm: Ringworm is not a parasite but a fungal infection of the skin. It is more commonly found in kittens than in cats. It is more common in puppies than adult dogs. The infection can come from another animal or from fungus that is found in soil. Classic symptoms appear as a scab or irregularly shaped area of skin infection and may include a rapidly enlarging circle of hair loss. Ringworm can be easily transmitted to humans, especially children, the elderly and immune-suppressed people.

Coccidiosis: Microscopic, one-celled organisms irritate the intestinal lining, leading to diarrhea and weight loss. Coccidiosis is transmitted through feces.

Hookworms: More common in dogs than cats. Puppies acquire hookworm before birth through the mother or by ingesting hookworm eggs. They cause diarrhea, weakness and anemia as a result of intestinal bleeding caused by the parasite "hooking" itself to the intestinal wall.

Roundworms: These are the most common parasite in cats and kittens and a leading parasite in dogs and puppies. They live in the intestine and are occasionally passed in vomit or stool and appear as short, white, spaghetti-like strands when fresh. Roundworms are transmitted by ingesting contaminated soil, feces or prey. Cats and Dogs can transmit roundworms to their offspring through nursing. They can cause weight loss, weakness, pneumonia and intestinal obstruction.

Tapeworms: Tapeworm is acquired by eating uncooked meat, certain prey and also from fleas. It can be hard to detect until a segment of the tapeworm is found in fresh stool or around the anus. Watch the litter box for opaque white, rice-like segments that are capable of movement when fresh.

Whipworms: Whipworms are another worm found as common in dogs as puppies. They are rarely found in cats. Note: Pyrantel is not effective against whipworms. Panacur is the standard treatment.

Puppies and kittens should be treated with a dewormer as early as 2 weeks of age, and again every 2–3 weeks until 8–12 weeks of age. Re-treatment is very important! For deworming of adults, two doses are recommended: one immediately on intake, another 3 weeks later if still in the shelter.

Before you decide whether or not you can commit yourself to fostering, there is one major point you must consider. There will come a time that a cat or kitten becomes ill or it becomes apparent that a kitten or puppy has a congenital issue or an adult animal has a medical or behavioral condition that LHS may decide that euthanasia is in the best interest of the animal. This decision is made by LHS. There will be times that you may not agree with the decision. By fostering shelter animals you are agreeing to accept the decisions of LHS.