

Hello, future foster parent!

Thank you for making a difference! Stepping up to foster a pet can be the spark that begins the positive change in an animal's life. As rewarding as this experience can be, it can present some challenges. The Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources' Division of Animal Health requires all prospective foster care givers to read and acknowledge the following information about the ups and downs of providing foster care for rescued animals.

Many foster animals have an unknown background, and this has the potential to create different problems when bringing them into a new home. Rescued dogs and cats frequently come from situations where little or no veterinary care was provided. In some cases, those animals in greatest need of assistance are the ones chosen to be rescued. As a result, some of those animals may pose the greatest risk for infectious or contagious disease. Additionally, some of these animals have had limited or no socialization time with people or other animals. Animals coming from these situations may pose significant challenges, but providing them with an opportunity to become great pets is a noble and worthwhile effort. Please bear in mind that the following situations could occur with your fostered pet.

Illness

Animals imported from out of state are required to be isolated for 48 hours and be deemed healthy by a veterinarian before being placed in your home. However, there are some issues that may not become evident within that first 48 hours. Additionally, animals rescued locally (from within Massachusetts) are not required to be isolated at all. Illnesses of concern may be caused by bacteria, viruses or even fungal infections. Most of these pathogens are not capable of surviving outside of the host animal for more than a few hours, but some can hang around for significantly longer than that. Prime examples are the viruses that cause Canine Parvovirus and Feline Panleukopenia, which can live in the environment for up to a year. The Division of Animal Health strongly suggests that newly acquired foster pets be kept separate from other animals in the home and remain in a part of the house that can be easily cleaned and disinfected, such as areas with tiled floors and limited upholstered furniture, for the first two weeks. Should any germs wind up on upholstered furniture or in carpeting, it may not be possible to remove it. If you cared for an animal with this type of disease, your home will need to be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected before any other animals could be taken in. Unfortunately, cleaning efforts may include removing carpeting or upholstered furniture that came into contact with the affected animal.

Parasites

Along the same lines of illnesses caused by pathogens are illnesses caused by parasites. Foster animals may be infested with fleas, ticks, intestinal worms or other parasites. Many of these parasites are easily spread from animal to animal, and in some cases, from animals to humans. Some parasites are capable of remaining in your home for long periods of time, even without a host. Always ensure an animal was properly washed and that they are free of external parasites before bringing them into your home. If you notice the presence of internal parasites, notify the organization immediately and be sure the animal is seen by a veterinarian promptly. Keep that animal and its droppings away from other animals in your home.

Unexplained Wounds or Wounds Caused by Other Animals

Foster homes should not accept animals that have wounds that may have been caused by another animal. These animals require a rabies quarantine that must be done by the organization.

Unknown Behaviors

Your foster animal may show signs of aggression, be overly timid, or may not be fully house trained. If you feel that these complications can be safely overcome with your own training abilities, please feel free to work with the animal. However, if the animal becomes overly aggressive and you fear for your own safety or that of other animals, you must immediately notify the organization for which you are providing foster care.

Reporting Concerns

If at any point you are concerned about the animal in your care you should immediately notify the organization. If you have concerns about the organization with which you are working, or any information provided by the organization, you may contact the Division of Animal Health directly by calling (617) 626-1786, or by email to patricia.cabral@mass.gov

By Signing below, you are acknowledging that you have received, read, and understand the above information.

Foster Parent _____