

## **Firstly, thanks for your interest in our Foster Care Program!**

Becoming a foster carer is a highly rewarding experience that enriches the lives of vulnerable animals.

To ensure that this program is right for you, please read the information in this handout prior to submitting your application.

### **What types of animals require fostering?**

- Animals recovering from surgery or illness
- Animals who don't cope well in a shelter environment
- Young orphaned animals requiring special care
- Animals exhibiting minor behavioural issues
- Animals who are part of long term prosecution cases

### **How do the animals benefit?**

While our dedicated shelter staff and volunteers work incredibly hard to provide and maintain a positive environment for all animals at the shelter some animals may find the shelter experience stressful, particularly those that are young, unwell or have been mistreated.

Placing an animal in a foster home provides them with a quiet, comfortable environment to recover from injuries or ailments or learn necessary socialisation skills with one-on-one time with a foster carer. This often facilitates a more accurate display of the animal's normal behaviour and assists with the assessment of their temperament during the adoption process.

### **How do I benefit from the program?**

As a foster carer, you will gain insight into animal welfare and learn about animal handling, training techniques and animal behaviour through hands-on experience. The foster caring experience can be very rewarding as you enrich the lives of these special animals and know that you are truly making a difference with a vital contribution to the work of RSPCA WA. Foster caring can also be a great way of introducing animals into your household, particularly if you have children.

### **How old do I need to be?**

Anyone over the age of 18 may apply to become a foster carer.

### **How much free time do I need?**

This will vary depending on the individual animal's needs and we do endeavour to match you with a foster animal that will suit your lifestyle.

For example it is especially important for puppies and kittens, that you regularly spend time interacting and playing with them. Young animals also need to be fed a minimum of three times each day, and cleaning can often be considerable. So before applying to become a foster carer, please consider what type of animal would suit your lifestyle.

### **What kind of environment do I need to provide for the foster animal?**

Puppies and kittens can be kept in a small, clean and easily disinfected area such as a laundry or kitchen.

If you wish to foster dogs, your yard must be securely fenced, and if they are to stay outside while you are away they must be provided with adequate shelter from the heat and rain. Dogs must remain on a leash at all times when in public.

Cats must be kept indoors at all times (unless you have an outdoor cat run).

### **Do I need to have my own transport?**

Yes, you will need a current driver's license and reliable transport in order to attend regular vet checks, behavioural assessments and to collect supplies at our Animal Care Centre in Malaga.

### **What insurance do we recommend?**

Unfortunately we cannot accept any liability for damages to your home or vehicle (as a result of a foster animal), nor can we compensate for injuries to yourself or family.

We recommend that you have valid motor vehicle insurance, home & contents insurance, and health insurance.

### **What if I am currently renting?**

You must provide RSPCA WA with written permission from your Landlord to have an animal at your premises.

### **What if I have other pets?**

Many of our foster carers have pets of their own. It is very important that all of your pets are sociable and that you have first considered the impact that bringing a new animal into the household could have on them. We make every effort to ensure foster animals do not pose a health risk to your existing animals, but cannot guarantee it.

### **Is it fine to have children and foster?**

While not all foster animals are compatible with children, this doesn't mean we can't find the right animal for you.

Please also consider the safety of any children that regularly visit your home (e.g. Grandchildren).

### **Do I need to pay for food?**

RSPCA WA will provide you with suitable food for your foster animal. Please be aware that most of our animals are on specific diets, and their food should NOT be changed unless under recommendation from the RSPCA WA Veterinary Department.

### **Do I need to pay the veterinary costs?**

All veterinary costs are fully covered by RSPCA WA. If your foster animal becomes ill while in your care, you will be given emergency contact numbers to arrange treatment.

### **How many animals can I foster at one time?**

You can specify the number of animals you wish to foster on your application form. Most foster carers look after two or three young animals, or one older animal at a time but please check with your local council and adhere to their rules.

### **How long will I have the animal for?**

The length of time an animal spends with you will depend on the reason it needs foster care. Puppies and kittens will usually stay in foster care until they reach the appropriate age/weight to be desexed and ready for adoption. However, a seized animal could require care for one year or more while its case is prepared for court.

It is also in the animal's best interest to remain with the same foster carer for the duration of their recovery and until they are ready to be permanently rehomed. Changing foster homes should be avoided where possible. Please ensure you and your family understand the commitment you are making before taking on a foster animal.

### **What support will I receive from RSPCA?**

New foster carers are required to attend an initial induction session at our Animal Care Centre and you must be willing to undertake additional training as required.

You can also contact our Foster Care Coordinator (Monday - Friday during business hours) with any questions you might have.

If for any reason you feel your foster animal is not compatible with your family it can be returned at any time.

### **Will it be difficult to say goodbye?**

Saying goodbye to your foster animal can be difficult and upsetting. However, most foster carers also say that the rewarding feeling of giving animals a warm, happy foster home far outweighs the pain of parting.

And of course, there are always plenty of other kittens puppies, cats and dogs, plus many more animals waiting to take their place!

### **What legal obligations do I have as a foster carer?**

You must understand that any foster animal/s in your care will remain the property of RSPCA WA for the duration of your commitment.

RSPCA WA reserve the right to rehome the animal at their own discretion. It is not the foster carer's right or responsibility to locate a new home for a foster animal.

Depending on your animal's needs, you could be required to attend regular check-ups at our Animal Care Centre.

You may be bound by a confidentiality agreement if you are fostering an animal that is part of a current prosecution case or an animal in the care of our Pets in Crisis domestic violence refuge scheme (Please refer to the application form for more information on this program).

### Important information about euthanasia

Sometimes despite our best efforts, unfortunately not all foster animals can be successfully rehomed. This could be due to untreatable behavioural conditions or medical issues that were not initially identified.

Our foster care program aims to give every animal the best possible chance at recovery and RSPCA WA is fully committed to rehoming as many animals as possible.

### What next?

Now that you have read about and understood the important role and responsibilities of a foster carer, please complete a Foster Care Application Form and return it to us with copies of all relevant supporting documents (e.g. vaccination certificates, written permission from your landlord, etc.).

Successful applicants will then be required to:

- Attend an induction training session
- Consent to a property inspection - to ensure your home is suitable to care for a foster animal

Note: If you have a pet dog in your home and you have applied to foster other dogs, you may also be required to bring your dog into our Animal Care Centre for a dog meet.

### Thank you!

Once again, thank you for your interest in RSPCA WA's Foster Care Program and for supporting the vital work of the RSPCA WA.

If you have decided the Foster Care Program isn't for you, there are many other ways you can support RSPCA WA. Ask us about shelter volunteering and animal enrichment opportunities at our Animal Care Centre.

### Contact us

RSPCA WA Foster Care Coordinator



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