

PETS IN CRISIS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Pets in Crisis?

Pets in Crisis is a temporary foster care program for pets whose owners are in the process of leaving or have recently left a violent relationship.

What kind of pets can enter the program?

We have the resources to take in domestic pets such as dogs, cats, and pocket pets (rabbits, mice etc.) however we are unable to accept larger animals such as horses or livestock.

How much does it cost?

The service is free – it's funded by the WA Government and RSPCA WA so the only cost involved is vet treatment to get pets up-to-date with the minimum requirements needed to be enrolled in the program (sterilisation, vaccinations, microchipping, flea and worm treatments). All vet work is undertaken by Vetwest, who are generously supporting the Pets in Crisis program by offering significantly discounted veterinary services. Payment plans can be put in place to cover these costs.

How long can pets stay in the RSPCA's care?

The maximum foster care placement available under the Pets in Crisis program is 3 months.

I have more than one pet, how many can you take?

Providing your pet meets the enrolment criteria, we should be able to take them all. We will do our best to find a foster home where they can stay together, but if you have many pets, we may need to split them up across several foster homes.

What is the enrolment criteria for Pets in Crisis?

All animals that enter the program must be sterilised, microchipped, vaccinated, and flea and worm treated to protect the foster carer's own pets while your pet is living with them. If they are not already, we will arrange this with Vetwest when your pet comes into the program. This vet treatment is done at a greatly reduced cost, which we pay upfront and then you pay back when your pet is returned to you at the end of its placement. Payment plans can be arranged to cover these costs. For safety reasons we cannot accept aggressive animals.

Why does my pet need to be sterilised to enrol in the program?

Unsterilised animals are a risk because of their potential to breed; and they are the reason why so many unwanted animals end up in shelters. Unsterilised animals are also at greater risk of certain illnesses and diseases, and they generally have more behavioural problems than animals who have been sterilised.

Most of our foster carers are animal lovers with pets of their own, so it's unfair to place an unsterilised animal in their home. By law, all cats in Western Australia over the age of 6 months must be sterilised; and the government is in the process of tightening laws around dog sterilisation.

Why is there such an in-depth questionnaire for dogs over 10kg?

We have a duty of care to our foster carers to ensure the animal we place into their home is not a known risk to their safety and wellbeing.

Because the dogs we take in are not being kept in a controlled environment (a shelter, kennels), we must undertake a thorough assessment to determine their risk potential to the people and pets in the home where they will be staying.

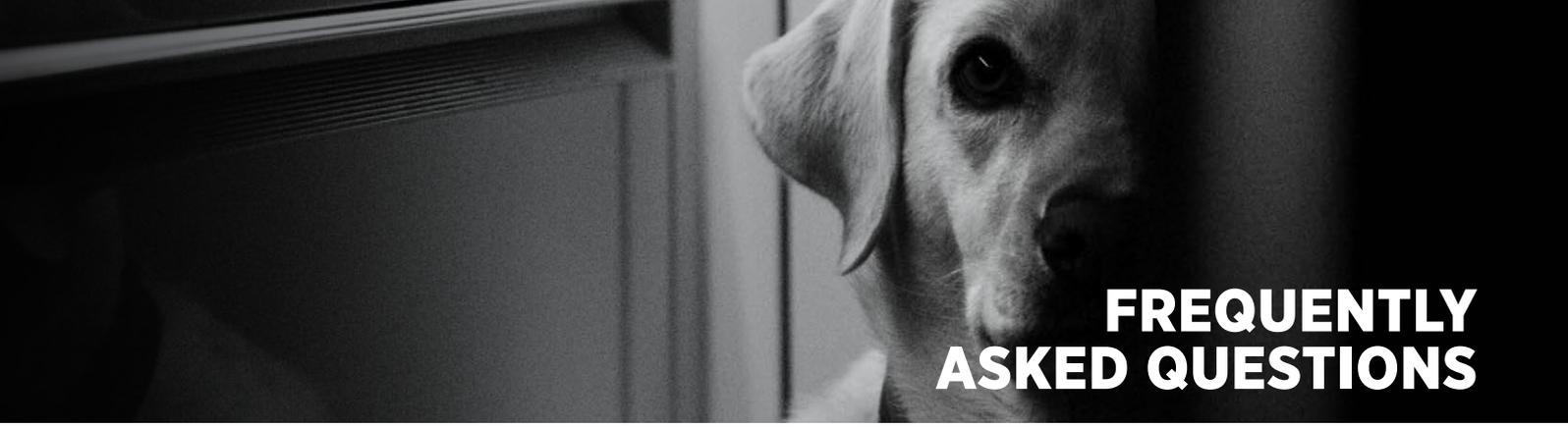
While all dogs are capable of causing harm to people, this capability increases significantly with the size and weight of the dog. As a safety precaution, we need to know more about the bigger dogs to determine whether they are appropriate to go into an unfamiliar home with people they have never met. Aggressive dogs will not be accepted into the program for the safety of the foster carer, their family and pets.

Please answer the questionnaire as truthfully as you can. If your dog is not suitable for the Pets in Crisis program, we may be able to help with some other options.

Can I take my pet to the shelter with me?

We are currently working with some of the shelters in Perth to organise on-site temporary accommodation facilities for animals. Ask your case worker to find out which shelters currently have emergency pet boarding facilities.

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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

If I give you permission to, can you go to my property and collect my pet without me being there?

Animals are classed as property under law so you will need to be present when we collect your pet, even if you have given us verbal permission to take them.

If you are worried about going back to the property we can organise a Police escort to accompany you. Once your pet is out of the house, you can hand your pet over to us and the Police will ensure you get away from the property safely.

My pet is not registered in my name, can I still enrol them into the program?

As pets are classed as property under WA law, we can only take them with the registered owner's consent. Unfortunately, if your pet is registered in someone else's name, we will not be able to take them. If your pet isn't registered or microchipped at all (there is no registered owner), we can get this done in your name on your behalf.

What do I need to give you when you collect my pet for foster care?

Your pet will settle into their foster home more easily if they have some home comforts with them - like their bed, a favourite toy, and their regular food (as switching pet food suddenly is not ideal). If you can't provide any of their belongings, don't worry - we can provide the foster carer with everything your pet will need while in their care.

My pet has been abused by the perpetrator - can the RSPCA prosecute them?

If you have evidence of the abuse then we can support you in lodging a cruelty complaint to the RSPCA's Cruelty Hotline. This will then be assigned to one of our Inspectors to investigate, like the many other reports they respond to daily. Evidence of cruelty (vet reports, video footage, external witnesses etc.) is critical in order to successfully prosecute those who carry out acts of cruelty or neglect towards animals.

I have already left and had to leave my pet behind, how can I get them out of the house and into the program?

Ask your case worker for the forms, complete them, and email them directly to our Pets in Crisis team: petsincrisis@rspcawa.asn.au

If it is safe for them to do so, ask a friend or family member to go to the house to collect your pet. If it is not safe, your case worker can arrange a police escort to accompany you or a friend/family member. When your pet has been collected from the house, they can then be handed over into our care.

Unfortunately our Pets in Crisis team cannot go to the house and take your pet as we have no legal right to do so.

Will I be able to visit my pet while it's in foster care?

For the safety of all involved, pet owners and foster carers will remain anonymous to each other at all times both during and after the program. All contact passes through the Pets in Crisis team - the foster carer will provide us with updates and photos of your pet that we will share with you, and if there is information you would like to share with the foster carer, you can tell us and we will pass the message on for you.

When can I get my pet back?

As soon as you're ready to get your pet back we will organise its return to you. It generally takes a couple of days to coordinate your pet's return from the foster carer, to our Pets in Crisis team, and back to you. This can work out well as it gives you time to settle into your new accommodation and allows you to pet-proof the property before your pet arrives.

You are the legal owner of your pet at all times and can request to get them back whenever you want. We have no authority to keep your pets against your will, even if your circumstances or plans change.

I'm not sure if I can take care of my pet in the future, what should I do?

RSPCA WA offers a surrender service for pet owners who can no longer take care of their animals. If you would like to surrender your pet for rehoming through the RSPCA, you can discuss this with our Pets in Crisis team.