

Cat Foster Program Manual



Ventura County Animal Services

600 Aviation Dr.

Camarillo, CA 93010

*****For additional resource, scheduling, and an electronic copy of this manual please visit:**

[VCAS.US/Foster-resources](https://www.vcas.us/foster-resources)

3-4 Is Fostering for the Ventura County Animal Services Right for You?

5-7 Foster Program Policies and Procedures

- Legal Guardianship
- Housing and Care Requirements
- Additional Requirements
- Supplies
- Health and Temperament
- Foster Animal Adoptions

8-11 How it Works

- Getting Started

- Picking Up a New Foster Animal
- Medical Care
- How can I help my foster animal find a forever home?
- My foster animal has an adopter, now what?
- Offsite adoption Events
- Returning Foster Animals to the Shelter
- Deceased Animals
- Recording your Hours

12-13 Contact Information

14-15 Foster Agreement

Is Fostering for VCAS Right for You?

Here are some frequently asked questions that may help you decide.

What is fostering?

Fostering is providing a temporary home for a homeless pet, who for whatever reason, needs to be housed outside of the shelter. Fostering is truly lifesaving.

Why should I foster?

Fostering can be a wonderful experience for you and your family. You can feel good knowing that you have made a positive difference in an animal's life, and each animal fostered in a home opens up a cage or kennel space for us to save another animal! Fostering can also provide individual attention that certain special needs animals require. Foster commitments range from just a couple of days to several months, so you can choose foster options that fit with your lifestyle.

Do I need to have any special training or skills to be foster parent?

Foster families should be compassionate, caring and patient. You will be informed of your foster animal's known history, medical and behavioral health before they are placed in your care. Our foster coordinator will help answer questions and provide guidance to resources and information that you may find helpful.

What are the requirements?

- Be willing to abide by policies and procedures in this manual and Foster Care Agreement
- Be able to access email regularly
- Be able to transport your foster pet to and from VCAS
- Spend time with foster pets and treat them like your own animals while they're in your care
- Have up-to-date rabies vaccinations for all animals in your home

What types of cats need foster care?

- kittens too young to be in the shelter
- Cats recovering from illness or injury
- Cats that need a break from the shelter environment because of stress or behavior
- Cats with special medical challenges
- One of our biggest needs is foster homes for cats with Upper Respiratory Infections caused by stress.

How long do animals need to be in foster care?

Every situation is different! Our foster program is very flexible. Needs range from one week for ill cats, to cats that need foster until they are adopted, which can sometimes take several months. The length of time you keep your foster is up to you.

How much time do foster parents have to devote to the animal(s) in their care?

It depends on the situation. Foster animals need all of the things that owned animals do and may even need more attention if they are recovering from illness/injury or need extra exercise or training. We will do our best to match you with a dog that fits your lifestyle and availability.

What are some of the potential risks of fostering an animal?

Fostering is one of the most rewarding experiences that you can have, but there are some potential risks. While rare, below you will read some of the possible risks.

- Foster animals may destroy personal items
- Owned animals could be injured or killed by a foster animal.
- Foster families, members of the household, or visitors could be injured by a foster animal
- Foster animals could die in foster care or need to return to the shelter to be euthanized
- Owned animals could catch a disease and/or a parasite from a foster animal
- Foster families, members of their household, or visitors could catch a disease and/or parasite from a foster animal (We do not, as a practice, send animals with known diseases transmittable to humans to foster)

What happens if my foster animal needs medical care?

VCAS will provide medical care for the animals in its foster program. (see pg. 8-9)

Can foster parents adopt their foster animals?

Yes. Foster parents can adopt their foster animals and are given first choice.

Foster Program Policies and Procedures

Legal Guardianship

All animals in foster care are the property of Ventura County Animal Services and are subject to all applicable VCAS policies, rules and restrictions.

Ventura County Animal Services reserves the right to perform home checks in order to ensure that foster animals are being adequately and appropriately cared for.

If a foster care provider refuses to return a foster animal upon request by VCAS staff, or has improperly transferred an animal to another individual or entity, the foster care provider will be permanently removed from the foster program and VCAS may initiate appropriate legal action in order to secure the return of the animal.

Housing and Care Requirements

- Foster care providers are expected to follow and abide by all guidelines and protocols regarding proper care of foster animals, including giving them proper food, access to water at all times, daylight, socialization, health care, etc.
- Foster care providers are only allowed to treat foster animals with medications and supplements prescribed by VCAS veterinary staff unless alternative care arrangements have been approved by the Foster Coordinator or VCAS Managing Veterinarian.

Cats & Kittens

- Cats and Kittens should never be let outside, and are only allowed outdoors when being transported in a secure cat carrier.
- Care must be taken to ensure that windows, doors, and other possible escape routes are not left open to foster cats. This includes screens that are easily broken or pushed open.
- Foster cats that do not have a prior history with each other should not be combined in a foster home unless the foster care provider has sought and been given permission by the foster coordinator.
- Foster cats are prohibited from socializing with other animals, except those living in the foster care provider's home.
- It is recommended that foster cats be kept separated from the fosters personal pets until they feel safe. Slow, safe introductions are required. Some foster animals will require separation for longer periods of time, or may never be able to be integrated with other animals.

Additional Requirements

- Children under the age of 18 should not be left unsupervised with any foster animals.
- Foster care providers must notify the shelter immediately if a foster animal bites a person or animal and the bite breaks the skin.
- If injury or illness results from interaction between animals in your home and foster animals, Ventura County Animal Services will only be responsible for the medical care and expenses of the foster animal. In some cases, you may be asked to keep your pet separate from the foster pet for a pre-determined period of time to prevent the spread of illness to your pet.
- If a foster pet gets loose, the foster care provider should contact the foster coordinator or shelter immediately.

Supplies

VCAS will provide foster care providers with certain supplies

- Food for dogs, cats, puppies, and kittens (this includes formula when needed)
- Any medications, supplements or prescription diets that have been prescribed by our veterinary staff
- Crates, beds, blankets, food and water bowls, leashes, collars, and toys
- Other items (based on availability and need)

Health and Temperament

VCAS will be as accurate as possible when providing information about the medical and behavioral health of animals seeking foster placement, but cannot guarantee the medical or behavioral health of any animal.

Foster care providers are required to be as accurate as possible about their foster animal's health and behavior. This will assist the shelter in determining the proper medical treatment, training and/or behavioral rehabilitation for the animal.

Foster Animal Adoptions

- All foster animals must be spayed/neutered, have a current rabies vaccination, and be microchipped before they can go to their forever homes.
- Foster care providers can adopt their foster animals, and are given first choice.
- Foster care providers can process adoptions for their foster animals, or meet adopters at the shelter for processing.

Directions for offsite adoptions (processed by foster provider) are as follows:

Adoption Paperwork is the same for adoption events, adoptions from foster, and adoptions from partner pet stores. Please note that if you conduct your adoption at one of our partner pet stores and let the store manager know, the shelter receives an additional donation from PetCo, PetSmart or Unleashed by Petco.

- The adoption packet is the same no matter where the adoption occurs! The folder has species specific information in it including an information packet, vet list, uri or kennel cough info, discount coupons, pet emergency card and microchip card.
- Animal specific paperwork includes the medical record, free exam, and adoption agreement.
- VCAS supplies two copies of the "Adoption Agreement". One is for the adopter / pet parent, and one is to be returned to VCAS.
 - o Both copies of the Adoption Agreement need to be signed by the adopter / pet parent
 - o One copy is given to the Adopter / Pet Parent
 - o The other copy is returned to VCAS.
- VCAS is including the ASPCA "Meet Your Match" (MYM) form with all adoptions. This is given to every adopter at VCAS as part of the adoption counseling process. This helps the VCAS Front Office staff complete the adoption paperwork after it is returned to VCAS.
 - o Please instruct the adopter to complete (in print) the top section on the front of the form that requests contact information (name, address, phone number, email, alternate phone number, etc.). Then turn form over and sign the signature section on the back side of the form
 - o As a VCAS representative, please print your name as the adoption counselor on the back of the form
- Adopters also receive a voucher for a free vet visit from a Ventura County Vet that participates in this program. The participating veterinarian list is included in the Adoption Package Folder, on back side of the post spay / neuter care instruction document.
 - o You are the acting VCAS representative. Please sign and date the form then give it to the adopter.
 - o Adopters must contact the participating vet within three days of adopting the kitten or cat; but the actual appointment that they make may be at a later date.
- Please always include the kitten or cat's A-number in all paperwork. Numbers are permanent; names not always so.
- 3 things need to be returned to the shelter in order for the adoption to be processed. 1: completed and signed MYM form, 2: signed agreement of adopting animal owner, 3: \$60 payment

How it Works

Getting Started

After your foster application has been received and you have attended a Foster Orientation you will be added to our foster contact list.

Prior to fostering any animals, you will be required to sign the foster agreement (see pages 14-15), which will be kept on file at the shelter. Please note, if at any time you have questions regarding the foster program, potential foster animals, etc., those questions should be directed to the foster coordinator.

Choosing a Foster Animal

If you are interested in fostering a particular animal that you have been notified about via email or the VCAS Foster Families Facebook page, or the VCAS Foster Cats Trello board you will need to schedule a “foster matchmaking appointment” on the foster resources website. All questions regarding an animal’s history, behavior, medical needs, special care instructions, etc. can be answered during this appointment. If you do not have a particular dog in mind, you can STILL schedule a matchmaking appointment. Please be sure to add notes when scheduling the appointment if you have special needs or concerns regarding fostering an animal.

You may also visit the shelter to browse long stay, medical, and behavior animals that are available for foster care, but will still need to schedule a “foster matchmaking appointment” in order to bring them home.

Picking Up

You can choose to take home a foster on the same day as your foster matchmaking appointment, or if you can’t bring them home that day, we can schedule a pickup day after the appointment. When picking up a new foster animal on the scheduled pickup date, please go to the front office. Let the Customer Service staff member know that you are a foster and that you are picking up a foster animal. You will need to have the animal’s ID number (found in the original posting or on the animal’s kennel card) with you. After picking up your foster animal you will receive a “new foster” email with additional details regarding their care and their future medical needs. Please be on the lookout for this email, it will be sent within three days from the day that you pick up.

Medical Care

Flea/Tick and worming medication is given to all foster animals. This medication needs to be given every 1 to 3 months, so depending on the length of time you foster, you may need to schedule them wellness checkups.

Sick or Injured Fosters: If you notice that your foster animal has mild, cold-like symptoms (sneezing or coughing occasionally, clear ocular or nasal discharge), diarrhea or vomiting, but are alert, active, eating and drinking well, please make an appointment with the vets office. Appointments can be made via the foster resources page at [VCAS.US/FOSTER-RESOURCES](https://vcas.us/foster-resources). On this page you will find a 'scheduling' category. Simply click on the 'appointment scheduler' and follow the instructions. If you are unsure whether your foster animal's symptoms warrant a check-up or emergency visit, please contact the foster coordinator or shelter directly.

If your foster animal has more severe symptoms, such as frequent vomiting, extreme lethargy, severe physical injury, etc., please follow the emergency contact protocol found on page 12

Medications and Prescription Diets: If your foster animal is on medication or a veterinary prescribed diet, refill requests must be submitted to the foster coordinator. Please plan ahead as it may take one week or more to fill your request.

In Case of an After-Hours Emergency If your foster animal is having an urgent, life threatening medical issue while the shelter is closed please follow the emergency contact protocol found on page 12

Foster animals taken to the emergency vet clinic for treatment may be kept overnight at the clinic and an Animal Control Officer will be contacted in the morning to transfer the animal back to the shelter for further treatment/care. The foster must receive express permission from the foster coordinator, or after hours Animal Control Officer in order to transport their foster animal to one of our partner emergency clinics.

Any vet care provided during a visit to a veterinarian outside of the VCAS veterinary clinic which is not authorized by the Foster Coordinator or other VCAS staff the foster parent will take full responsibility for any expense incurred.

How can I help my foster animal find a forever home?

When fostering an animal for VCAS, you can be the animal's number one advocate! By acting as an adoption ambassador, you won't just be a foster care provider. You will be a photographer, videographer, biographer, a marketing specialist, and an adoption counselor!

-Take at least one clear, landscape-oriented (horizontal), photo of the foster animal and email it to vcasphotos@ventura.org with the animal's ID number as the ONLY text in the subject line ex: A999999. Each picture you add to your animal's profile will need to be emailed individually.

-Take at least one clear, short video of the foster animal and email it to the foster coordinator at vcar.foster@ventura.org to be added to the shelter's website

-Write a short bio of your foster animal highlighting all their best qualities and email them to the foster coordinator at vcar.foster@ventura.org. Remember, we do not want to focus on any of the negatives in these bios, any conversations regarding those issues can be addressed later during adoption counseling.

-Promote the foster animal on social media websites like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Craigslist, and Nextdoor.

-Create and put up flyers for the foster animal in appropriate locations

-For additional tips on marketing foster animals, please visit the VCAS.US/FOSTER-RESOURCES and view the marketing links!

-Please be aware that animals in our foster program are not on a first come, first served basis. As the foster parent, you may take several applications and/or meet with different potential adopters before deciding which would be the best fit for the animal(s) in your care. However, foster care providers should check their email inbox, and spam folder daily for inquiries from potential adopters about the animal(s) in their care, and respectfully respond to all inquiries within 48 hours.

-For tips on effective adoption counseling, please visit VCAS.US/FOSTER-RESOURCES and view the marketing/adoption links.

-My foster animal has an adopter, now what?

1. All animals MUST be spayed or neutered and microchipped before the adoption can take place. If you have found an adopter for your foster, but the animal has not yet been spayed/neutered you will need to make a surgery appointment online through VCAS.US/Foster-Resources under the 'Surgery Scheduler'.

2. The adopter must meet the animal, complete the MYM Adoption Application, complete the Agreement of Adopting Animal Owner, and pay the foster adoption fee of \$60. The paperwork can be found in the 'adoption packet' which the foster care provider will receive once the animal has been spayed/neutered.

3. After the foster animal has been spayed/neutered and microchipped, and all paperwork has been completed, it may be transferred to the adopter. Upon transferring the animal, the foster care provider should collect the MYM Adoption Application, the Agreement of Adopting Animal Owner, and the adoption fee. The remainder of the Adoption Packet will be given to the adopter.

4. The MYM Adoption Application, the Agreement of Adopting Animal Owner, and the adoption fee should be put into an envelope and returned to the shelter by the foster care provider.

See page 7 for more in depth information about processing adoptions

Adoption events are an opportunity for foster care providers seeking forever homes for the animals in their care. These events are typically held on weekends, at various locations Ventura County. Details about these events are posted to the Foster Families Facebook Page and email notification.

Returning Foster Animals to the Shelter

If you need to return a foster pet to the shelter for any reason, please contact the foster coordinator to let them know the day and time you plan to return the animal. When returning foster pets to the shelter, you will go to the front counter with the animal and their ID# and let Customer Service staff know you are returning a foster pet.

Please provide all relevant pictures and notes you have gathered during the animal's time with you via email to vcar.foster@ventura.org. This information is VERY helpful in finding homes for shelter animals.

The front counter is open daily from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Please try to arrive no later than 6 p.m. If you are not able to come during these hours and would like to make arrangements to come outside of our open hours, please contact the foster coordinator.

Deceased Animals

In some cases, sick or weak pets may die in foster care. If your foster animal passes away, please contact the foster coordinator by phone, and provide written notification through email to vcar.foster@ventura.org. Please include the ID# of the animal in the written email notification. You will be asked to provide detailed information as to what happened at the time of the death so that we can determine if other foster animals in your care may be at risk. You will be asked to bring the body back to VCAS.

Recording your Foster Hours

It is important for our fosters to record their foster/volunteer hours. You can do this by following the 'record foster/volunteer hours' link on the foster resources page at vcas.us/foster-resources. All foster parents receive a flat rate of 3 volunteer hours per day for the length of time you have your foster animal. You can record your hours daily, or you can add them up and record them once a month. Please let the Foster Care Coordinator or Volunteer Program Manager know if you are having any issues recording your foster hours.

Contact Information

- **Foster Care Coordinator cell/text 805-336-5277 – Please respect working hours and only call/text during working hours (8am-6pm) for non-urgent matters. Call ANY TIME for emergencies**
- **Foster Care Coordinator desk - 805-388-4464**
- **Foster Care Coordinator email vcar.foster@ventura.org**
- **Shelter Main Line 805-388-4341**
- **Emergency between 8am and 6pm – Please call and then come to the Camarillo shelter!**
- **Emergency after hours - 805-388-4341 press 4 to leave a message for the on call Animal Control Officer**
- **Behavior concerns - Laura Williams - laura.williams@ventura.org**

Contact Protocol

-For urgent/time sensitive matters: Call the foster coordinator cell phone directly

-For non urgent matters: Text the foster coordinator cell, email the foster coordinator, or leave a message on the foster coordinator desk line.

-For urgent/time sensitive matters (If you cannot get ahold of the foster coordinator): Call the shelter main line (press 4 after hours).

Emergency Medical Contact Protocol

-Call the foster coordinator cell (during regular hours OR after hours)- If you cannot get ahold of the foster coordinator:

- 8am-6pm: Call the shelter main line and describe your foster's medical emergency. Be sure to have your foster animal's A# handy.

- 6pm-8am: Call the shelter main line and 4 to leave a message for the on call Animal Control Officer. You should receive a call back within 5 to 10 minutes. Be sure to have your foster animal's A# handy.

Want to connect with other fosters, volunteers and staff?

Join the VCAS Foster Families Facebook Group! This group is open to current, active fosters and staff members.

What is the purpose of the page?

There are several ways this page can be used:

-Fosters and volunteers are urged to take candid, cute photos and videos of shelter pets. We use these, along with your stories and observations, to construct posts for the shelter's external Facebook page. This helps find homes for more difficult-to-adopt animals. Always include the Animal ID of the pet you are photographing at the end of your post so they can be easily identified at the shelter.

-Have non-urgent medical or behavioral questions about a foster pet? Ask it to the group and you're likely to get immediate responses.

-Want to share a happy story or informative article with the group? Go ahead. We all love to learn and there are so many great resources out there.

The Facebook group is a wonderful tool and is a key part of our Volunteer and Foster program. There are certain things we ask you not to post on the Facebook group page, as they are better addressed with the coordinators. Two of these are:

-Concerns or complaints about a staff member, another volunteer/foster or an issue at the shelter.

-Complaints, suggestions or concerns about shelter policies and procedures.

If you have a Facebook account and would like to be in the group, request to join here (please be sure to answer the three questions which appear as part of your request to join):

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/475516222635437>

To see a list of VCAS cats in the greatest need of foster please visit the VCAS Foster Trello page (this is a list of animals in the greatest need, it does not include all animals available for foster):

<https://trello.com/b/PqEkCvtk/vcas-foster-cats>

Ventura County Animal Services Foster Care Provider Agreement

I, _____, make the following statements and voluntarily enter into this Foster Care Agreement (hereinafter "Agreement") to provide temporary care as a foster caregiver for Ventura County Animal Services (hereinafter "VCAS").

1. _____ I have never been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment. I agree to notify VCAS within two business days if I am arrested for, or convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment in the future.
2. _____ I agree to comply with all federal, state, and local laws that pertain to companion animals and pet ownership in the jurisdiction where I reside.
3. _____ I understand that VCAS reserves the right to check on the welfare of my foster animal, which may include a visit to my foster home. I further understand that VCAS may remove a foster animal from my care for any reason at the sole discretion of VCAS.
4. _____ I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the VCAS Foster Care Manual ("Manual"), and that I have read the Manual. I agree to fully comply with the policies, guidance, and requirements set forth in the Manual as applicable to my foster animal.
5. _____ I agree to not take my foster dog(s) or my foster cat(s) to dog parks, off-leash areas, daycare facilities, crowded public areas, or any similar locations, unless given prior approval by the VCAS Foster Coordinator. I understand and agree that I will be solely responsible for any personal injury, death or property damage caused by my foster animal to any person, property or other animal if I do not comply with this provision.
6. _____ I understand that VCAS recommends that my foster animal(s) is to be kept separate from any other animals currently living in my home. I agree that if I choose to introduce my foster animal(s) to any other animal living in my home, I will be solely responsible for any illness or injury to other animals.
7. _____ I agree that the animal(s) that I foster will reside in my home, will be kept as household pets, and will not be used for breeding.
8. _____ I agree to notify the VCAS Foster Coordinator immediately by phone and in writing at 805-336-5277 and vcar.foster@ventura.org immediately if my foster animal(s) becomes lost or separated from me.
9. _____ I agree to notify the VCAS Foster Coordinator immediately by phone and in writing at 805-336-5277 and vcar.foster@ventura.org immediately if my foster animal demonstrates any aggressive behavior, including but not limited to, biting a person or another animal.
10. _____ I agree to seek any required immediate medical care if I am bitten by my foster animal, or if I receive any other physical injury resulting from interaction with my foster animal. I further agree to seek any required immediate medical care for any member of my household who is bitten or suffers any other physical injury resulting from interaction with my foster animal. I agree to promptly notify the VCAS Foster Coordinator whenever anyone is bitten or otherwise injured by a foster animal in my care, whether or not any immediate medical care is required.
11. _____ I agree to promptly return my foster animal(s) at any time up on the request of the VCAS Foster Coordinator or any VCAS staff member.

12. _____ I agree to receive and respond to calls and emails concerning my foster animal(s), from VCAS shelter staff, veterinary staff, and potential adopters, and to provide the VCAS Foster Coordinator with updated contact information if any of my contact information changes.

13. _____ I agree to transport the animal to VCAS or an approved veterinary clinic to receive medical treatment as requested by the VCAS Foster Coordinator or VCAS staff. If my foster animal experiences a medical emergency, I agree to follow the instructions outlined under “In Case of an After Hours Emergency” in Manual.

14. _____ I understand that VCAS will not reimburse me for any routine or non-emergency care for my foster animal that is not pre-approved in writing by the VCAS Foster Coordinator.

15. _____ I agree to contact the VCAS Foster Coordinator at 805-336-5277 for any other emergency or non-emergency matters.

16. _____ I agree to assume the risks implicit in working with animals who may have been abandoned, neglected, mistreated, or who may suffer from an illness or disease. My participation in the VCAS Foster Program is entirely voluntary and without the promise or expectation of compensation. I have no known physical or mental condition that would impair my ability to participate in the VCAS Foster Program. I understand that while VCAS staff carefully monitors all animals, VCAS may have limited knowledge of their behavioral or medical backgrounds. Therefore, I understand that VCAS makes no warranties or representations regarding my foster animal’s health, behavior, temperament, age, breed or suitability for my household. I further understand that environment changes may affect and change the temperament of my foster animal(s).

17. _____ I understand and agree that the County of Ventura, and its officers, agents, officials, employees and representatives shall have no liability or responsibility of any nature for personal injury, death or property damage to any person, animal, or property which may be caused by my foster animal(s) or my participation in the VCAS Foster Program. I, for myself and my heirs, executors, administrators, and assigns, hereby release, indemnify, and hold harmless, the County of Ventura, and its officers, agents, officials, employees and representatives, and their heirs, administrators, executors, successors, and representatives from all liability for and all risk of personal injury, death, or property damage to me, any animal or property that may occur now or hereafter in connection with my foster animal(s) and my participation in the VCAS Foster Program. I expressly agree that this release, waiver, and indemnity is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the State of California and that if any portion is held invalid, the remainder shall continue in full force and effect.

By my signature below, and by my initials beside each numbered paragraph above, I affirm that all statements and stated agreements contained in this document are truthful. I affirm that I have read and understand this Agreement in its entirety, and I agree to abide by the terms of this Agreement.

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____