

Why is foster needed and what are the expectations for the foster?

Pregnant/Nursing Animals:

Due to the number of animals that enter and leave CRHS daily, some of them with unknown vaccination histories, it is best for pregnant animals to be in foster care prior to the delivery of their young or very soon after. This ensures that the kittens/puppies are much less likely to be exposed to things such as Upper Respiratory Infection or Kennel Cough from the time of birth. Kittens/puppies should stay in foster care an average of 8 weeks until they are done weaning and are of weight to receive their first vaccinations. Since kittens/puppies are so vulnerable foster families are required to commit to bringing them in every 7 days for re-weighs and check-ups by staff to ensure that they are developing properly. CRHS is open 7 days a week and fosters are allowed to set the day and time of these appointments.

Behavior:

Sometimes animals that come to CRHS arrive with certain behavior issues or issues are discovered while they are in our care. Each case is unique and we would never knowingly put foster volunteers at risk from a truly dangerous animal. There are many behavior issues that can be resolved with training techniques and time. If it is a dog that is displaying behavior that needs extra time and attention our certified trainer with 20+ years of experience is asked to evaluate and come up with a plan for the dog that the foster family would be required to commit to following. If it is a cat that is displaying behavior that needs extra time and attention our lead cat caregiver and kennel manager will work together to develop a plan for that cat that the foster family would be required to commit to following. Since behavior is an ever evolving process foster families are required to submit weekly reports on the animals' progress and/or speak with the foster coordinator directly via a phone call each week.

Medical:

CRHS is only staffed with animal caregivers for business hours. This means that there are times when an injured/recovering animal will need care at hours that staff would not typically be on duty. There are also cases in which the shelter is simply a bad environment to treat the medical issue in, as the risk of infection to the recovering animal or the risk of the animal that is sick transferring its illness to those in shelter that are healthy is quite high. In any of these cases CRHS would seek foster care. This issues can range widely and have previously included: recovery from surgery, orphaned un-weaned kittens, treatment for Upper Respiratory Infection, treatment for mange, and treatment for ringworm. Foster families would need to be willing and comfortable learning how to give the required course of treatment. A staff member or the foster coordinator would specifically go over the type of medical need, its required treatment, and the tentative treatment timeline.

Shelter Stress:

Most animals that come to CRHS have never had to experience living in a shelter at any other time of their life. Whether that be a friendly stray that is accustomed to living outdoors or an animal that has had the same family for many years; in each case the shelter can be a very scary and stressful environment for that animal. Shelter stress can lead a normally happy dog to become depressed or anxious in its kennel or it can cause a cat to begin displaying fearful aggressive behavior or lack of appetite. Shelter stress is a real danger to an animal's mental and physical wellbeing. If CRHS staff

suspect that an animal has developed shelter stress our goal is to find that animal a foster home that can give that animal time away from the shelter to return to that animal's previously happy, healthy state of mind. Foster families are required to report any changes, especially those that are worsening, to the foster coordinator immediately. This is to hopefully ensure that other interventions can be developed to prevent that animal from continuing to decline mentally.

Foster to Adopt:

Any animal available for adoption at CRHS is a candidate for the foster to adopt program. If a person/family is considering adopting the animal, but would feel more comfortable fostering the animal prior to signing an official adoption contract they can apply to become a foster to adopt. All of the same general requirements outlined on the information sheet titled "CRHS Foster Care Program" would apply and a CRHS adoption application would need to be filled out for the specific animal. If approved the person/family would have 7 days from the date the animal enters their home to make a final decision. During the 7 days the foster to adopt agrees to have regular contact with the foster coordinator to discuss how the animal is adjusting and how the person/family is feeling about a permanent placement. If at or during the 7 days the foster would like to officially adopt the animal they would need to schedule an appointment to sign the adoption contract and pay the adoption fee. During the foster period CRHS is considered the owner and possessor of the animal and maintains all rights to decisions about its care. Failure to abide by the general foster requirements or failure to keep regular contact with the foster coordinator could be a reason to deny permanent placement of the animal in the home.

General Expectations of Behavior and Commitment:

In all cases foster families must agree to following the Requirements detailed on the information sheet titled "CRHS Foster Care Program".

Once you are approved and home checked you remain an "active" foster in our foster care network. While you may not hear from the foster coordinator for long periods of time, know that not every animal in need of foster care may meet **your** specific requirements that you are asked to list on your application. The foster coordinator strives to only contact the most appropriate foster matches so that no foster family feels obligated into taking on an animal or situation they are not comfortable with.

It is expected that if a foster family is no longer able to foster that they contact the foster coordinator as soon as possible. If an animal is simply not working in the home or the foster family has their own urgent issue that prevents them from continuing that foster placement CRHS will either have the animal return to the shelter or attempt to find a replacement foster for the duration of the time the animal is in need of foster care. If a foster family has decided they no longer want to foster for CRHS they must notify the foster coordinator so that they can be removed from the "active" foster file. If a foster family repeatedly misses requirements such as re-weighs or following through with a training program for an animal they can be asked to take a break from fostering at the discretion of the foster coordinator.

If a foster animal ever bites and breaks skin while in foster care CRHS must be notified immediately. It is a La Crosse County law that the animal be quarantined for 10 days. CRHS protocol that complies with that law requires that the animal be returned to CRHS for its quarantine period. Animals that have a bite record are not allowed to enter general foster care. If it is a foster to adopt agreement it will be handled on a case by case basis with the Executive Director having the final decision.