



TALBOT HUMANE

Foster Care Program Manual

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Welcome!

When you become a foster at Talbot Humane you also become an ambassador for the organization and its mission. The following pages explain our policies and procedures for fostering. We aim to provide our fosters with an educational experience, so you are equipped with the information you need to help educate our community, the public, and hopefully encourage more fosters into our program.

This Foster Care Manual is a reference for fosters. If you cannot find the information you are looking for here or have any questions at all, please feel free to contact the foster coordinator.



Hollie (*July 2021*)

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Section One: Introduction

It takes a special person to be a foster.

Talbot Humane has a Foster Care Program for animals needing special attention. This includes kittens and puppies that are too young to be put up for adoption. This also includes animals with injuries or medical needs and animals needing socialization or work with behavioral issues.

The goal for our foster program is to provide opportunities for a larger number of the animals we receive to find permanent, loving homes in the community. You will be taking an animal into your home and providing care with the aim of helping the animal become a new member of a forever home.

You will most likely become quite attached to your foster pet, and it may be difficult to give it back up. But YOU CAN DO IT! Because, after all, there will always be another in need of your help. Once your foster pet is adopted by a new family, you will hopefully be available to foster again. This means you will be able to continue to help countless more. The animals which are chosen for foster care all have special needs and need plenty of extra TLC and patience. They might have been orphaned at a very young age and were unable to be adopted at that time. Perhaps it is an adult who needs that extra one-on-one attention to bring them out of their shell. The special care and time that you provide will enable your foster to eventually find a good home.

When your first foster pet has found that special home, you will realize that without you, it never could have happened. Knowing that you are a huge part of saving a life is the best feeling and makes it all worthwhile!

Successful fostering can be a joyful experience for both you and that animal. We hope that you enjoy caring for your foster pet and that the rewards you experience will outweigh the difficulty of parting. This is what makes being a foster so difficult for many, but it also explains why *it takes a special person to be a foster*. Just remember, there are always more animals who will need your help.

Without your help, these animals would never have had a chance to show their true colors. We appreciate your efforts and recognize that you are providing a very special service. We will do our best to make sure that your experience with us is as positive as can be!

CONTACT INFORMATION

When contacting Talbot Humane about your foster animal, please use the numerical order listed below:

1. Call the shelter directly if it is during business hours and ask for Foster Coordinator, Laura Koeneman.
(410) 822-0107
Monday 9:30 – 5:30
Tuesday 9:30 – 5:30
Wednesday 9:30 – 5:30
Thursday 11:00 – 7:00
Friday 9:30 – 5:30
Saturday 11:00 – 4:00
2. After Hours **Primary Emergency Contact** - Dayniese Hurley (410) 330-5332
3. After Hours **Secondary Emergency Contact** – Ashley Marshall (410) 200-3528
4. After Hours **Third Emergency Contact** – Animal Control (302) 441-9145

Do **NOT** call Animal Control unless it is an absolute emergency and as a last resort.

Section Two: *Talbot Humane Statements*

Mission Statement

Talbot Humane provides a safe and healthy environment for unwanted companion animals in its care; places adoptable companion animals in good homes; protects all animals from cruelty and neglect; and reduces the unwanted companion animal population through spay/neuter and educational services in Talbot County, Maryland.

Vision Statement

Talbot Humane is the standard of excellence in animal sheltering.

Values Statement

We believe in the humane treatment of all animals; that all adoptable companion animals in our care can be placed in a responsible and caring home; that no adoptable animal in our care be euthanized; and that a proper shelter environment fosters positive animal behavior and adoption.

Section Three: Foster Program Policies

Quarantine Period

We have always required a quarantine period for animals going into foster care. This period is mandatory and requires for foster animals to be housed away from other animals in the home, generally for 10 days from the first vaccination. This is for the protection of your pets and the foster animal. Once the initial quarantine period is complete, they can be introduced to the general population of your home. If the animals enter your home with a contagious disease, you must contact the foster coordinator prior to allowing them into the general population.

Litter Pan Training

Kittens are to remain in one room or kennel, excluding short periods of socialization and until you are certain they are always using the litter pan. Once they are allowed out and about, you must provide a litter pan in the areas where they are playing to reinforce this. If you are experiencing chronic litter issues with kittens or adult cats and changing the litter or moving the litter pan is not working, contact the shelter at once. *Once these behaviors are learned, they are very difficult to change.*

Feeding

It is very important that your foster pet eats properly, especially juveniles. Puppies and kittens under 6 weeks need to be supplemented with formula. If they are uninterested in drinking from a bottle or syringe, a shallow bowl with a small amount should be provided several times a day. Please follow the feeding recommendations given to you with your foster animal. Kittens can be finicky while they are weaning. It is not uncommon to try a food different kitten foods before you get it right. *If your foster seems to be losing weight, contact Talbot Humane at once.* Adult animals uninterested in eating may need something very high value to get their appetite going, such as lean meat, wet food, baby food, etc.

Foster Goals

Always remember the reason why the animal was placed in foster care. Does it need socialization with strangers or other animals? Is it recovering from illness or surgery and need quiet time? Is it in need of house training or does it have some behavioral issues? Any behavior the average person would find unacceptable in a pet is an issue to be worked on while in your care. This may range from a dog jumping on people entering your home, to leash manners, to cats on the counter, etc. Foster care is a time for training and positive socialization. Please remember, we tend to be a little more lenient with our own pets than the average new pet owner may be. *Any temperament issues need to be brought to the attention of the foster coordinator.*

Section Four: Common Infections/Symptoms

It is not uncommon for your foster animal to be or become ill during their time in your care. Please review some of the common infections and symptoms to watch out for. One of the most important points to consider when you foster is if you are going to have the time this animal needs while it is in your care. Please do not agree to foster unless you are going to commit the time, patience, and attention that specific animal requires. This will at times include medication and housing of a sick animal.

Ringworm

A fungus which animals or humans pick up from other animals or the environment. It is commonly found in the environment and produces spores which hang around for quite a while if not properly disinfected. Symptoms range from small areas of hair loss to large areas with crusty skin and itching. On most animals it is first noticed around the head, especially eyes, muzzle, and ears. Treatment ranges from topical ointments and Lyme-sulfur dipping the animal to prescription oral antifungal medication. ***We do not knowingly send animals into foster care with this condition due to the contagious nature of this infection.*** If your foster pet develops hair loss of any kind, call the shelter. ***This is not an emergency, but you should call as soon as the shelter is open.*** Clean the inhabited area and bedding with a 10% bleach solution and HEPA filter vacuum. If you have other pets in the home, contact your veterinarian with any concerns. Most animals with a healthy immune system never even break with the disease.

Coccidia

This is a single cell organism found in nature that is very common in shelter animals. It seems to overtake the digestive system in stressed or immune compromised animals. Symptoms are light colored, yucky, smelly diarrhea, along with weight loss. Kittens are more susceptible and weight loss is common. It is treated with a course of meds, generally for 21 days – 1 time a day. We do administer a prophylactic treatment of Marquis Paste upon entering the shelter, but this is not always enough to wipe out the infection. ***This is not an emergency, but you should call as soon as the shelter is open. You may be required to bring a stool sample to the shelter to confirm.***

Internal Parasites

Round, Hook, and Whipworms are all infestations that are commonly seen in shelter animals. Symptoms range from bloated bellies (often in kittens and puppies) to weight loss, diarrhea (sometimes bloody), lethargy, and or anorexia. All are easily treated with a course of medication. ***This is not an emergency, but you should call as soon as the shelter is open.***

Lethargy, Vomiting, Diarrhea

One instance of diarrhea or vomiting is not necessarily a situation to worry about. If you are fostering an adult animal and it is behaving in a manner unlike themselves for a period longer than 24 hours, or puppies/kittens for a 12-hour period, reach out to the shelter immediately. If you are fostering a special needs animal, such as a dog undergoing heartworm treatment, you should contact the shelter immediately. ***This IS an emergency. Please follow the protocols for phone calls on page 4.***

Section Five: Cat and Kitten Specific Infections/Symptoms

General Upper Respiratory Infections (URI)

This infection is very common in shelter cats due to poor vaccination history or stress level. Symptoms can range from mild eye discharge and sneezing to severe congestion, mucus discharge, and fever. Like humans, these symptoms can make cats or kittens lethargic and uninterested in eating. If you are fostering a litter which comes in with these symptoms, shelter staff will send meds and directions home with you, as each situation is different. If a seemingly healthy foster begins to exhibit any of these symptoms, contact the shelter. If they have been vaccinated 10-14 days prior, the symptoms may be vaccine related and staff will make determinations on a case-by-case basis. URI is very contagious, but generally non-life threatening if caught in a timely manner. If you have other cats in your home, proper quarantine procedures and cleaning of your hands should prevent your cats from becoming infected.

Panleukopenia

Mostly seen in kittens, this can be a life-threatening disease. This disease and its symptoms are similar and closely related to Parvovirus. This disease is very serious and is why cats are routinely vaccinated for it. Symptoms include fever, lethargy, loss of appetite, vomiting, and diarrhea. If you notice any of these as repeated occurrences, **contact the shelter at once**. Treatment requires hospitalization for the animal and the prognosis is usually poor.

FeLV/FIV

FeLV stands for Feline Leukemia Virus which is a retrovirus that infects cats. FIV stands for Feline Immunodeficiency Virus which weakens the immune system and makes it more susceptible to life threatening infections, as well as certain types of cancer. All cats and kittens are tested before entering the foster care program. Animals that test positive are not candidates for the foster program currently.

WHAT SYMPTOMS TO LOOK FOR

Sneezing – A few sneezes here and there are okay, but if the sneezing is followed by any other symptoms, please let us know. It could be the onset of a URI.

Discharge from eyes or nose – Eyes should be clear and open. “Winking” is usually the first sign of a problem.

Congestion – In the lungs, breathing will sound raspy/crinkly.

Diarrhea – This is quite common in foster kittens and there are many different causes for diarrhea, such as change of food, overfeeding, coccidia, and parasites. No matter the reason, diarrhea is serious and can cause dehydration.

Vomiting – One instance of vomiting is not a reason for concern, but if vomit occurs more than once, you should reach out to the shelter.

Not eating or drinking – If your kitten does not eat for two feedings, please reach out to the shelter.

Hair Loss – Ringworm usually begins around the head and feet but can occur anywhere and is highly contagious.

Fleas – Fleas are very serious in kittens and can lead to anemia, so if you notice fleas on your kitten, please reach out to the shelter for flea preventative.

Ear mites – Ears appear dirty. These little pests can be quite annoying and if left unattended can lead to ear problems or even loss of hearing. Please reach out to the shelter.

Section Six: Dogs and Puppies Specific Infections/Symptoms

Bordetella (Kennel Cough)

Upper respiratory infection in dogs. All dogs are vaccinated upon arrival for kennel cough. Sometimes a dog may enter the shelter as a carrier, never exhibit symptoms, and infect the shelter population. Bordetella involves a wide variety of bacterium, and the vaccination may only prevent the infection from being as severe in a dog. We do our best to always be looking out for symptoms 24/7 and quarantine any dog who we think may be contagious. The course of treatment is antibiotics. Again, healthy, vaccinated, non-immune compromised animals are generally safe from this infection.

Parvovirus

Mostly seen in puppies, this can be a life-threatening disease. A properly vaccinated mother will give her antibodies to her puppies, which should protect them until vaccination time. Unfortunately, many of the puppies that enter the shelter are the result of generations of poor veterinary care. Symptoms are lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea (bloody or strongly smelling of iron), and dehydration. If you notice any of these as repeated occurrences, **contact the shelter at once**. Treatment requires hospitalization for the animal and the prognosis is usually poor.

Heartworm disease

All dogs over 6 months are tested for heartworm disease and are given preventative. Puppies two to six months are started on prevention upon entering the adoption program. We do treat heartworm infections in those dogs which are candidates for adoption and have a good prognosis for recovery. If you are asked to foster a dog that is undergoing heartworm treatment, we will provide you with specific directions for care at that time, as each situation differs. Anyone wishing to foster these special needs dogs must be able to provide a quiet, low activity lifestyle during treatment. **It is vital that these dogs have NO strenuous activity while undergoing treatment.**

WHAT SYMPTOMS TO LOOK FOR

Coughing – A “croop” hacking type cough may be a sign of kennel cough or other issues.

Congestion – In the lungs, breathing will sound raspy/crinkly.

Diarrhea – There are many different causes for diarrhea such as change of food, overfeeding, coccidia, and parasites. No matter the reason, diarrhea is serious and can cause dehydration.

Vomiting – One instance of vomiting is not a reason for concern, but if vomit occurs more than once, reach out to the shelter.

Not eating or drinking – If your puppy does not eat for 2 feedings, please reach out to the shelter.

Lethargy – This is often the first symptom that something “just isn’t right.” Please reach out to the shelter.

Hair loss – Ringworm usually begins around the head and feet but can occur anywhere and is highly contagious. Please reach out to the shelter.

Fleas – Fleas are very serious in puppies and can cause anemia, so if you notice fleas, please reach out to the shelter for flea preventative.

Ear mites – Ears appear dirty. These little pests can be quite annoying and if left unattended can lead to ear problems or even loss of hearing. Please reach out to the shelter.

Section Seven: *Emergency Situations*

The following are emergency situations for **ANY** animal in foster care. Please follow contact protocols on page 4 if your foster pet has any of these symptoms.

Difficulty breathing/ labored breathing/open mouth breathing.

Appears listless/lethargic.

Has a fever (puppies and kittens are usually around 97 degrees F at birth and rises each week until 4 weeks when it reaches normal adult temperature of 100.5 to 102.5 degrees F)

Any serious open wounds or lesions

Have pale gums (a sign of anemia)

Loses balance/develops walking problems/appears disoriented.

Seizures

Vomiting more than 2 times in a 24-hour period

Diarrhea for more than a day

Not eating for more than two meals

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Do **NOT** call Animal Control unless it is an absolute emergency and as a last resort.

Section Eight: Structure and Procedures

Criteria for Fostering

Not every animal is eligible for foster care. Animals eligible for foster care are only those who qualify for general adoption or special adoption upon completion of fostering. Reasons for fostering include weight gain, socialization, young age, wound healing, minor injuries, minor illness, or behavioral issues.

Animals will not be considered for foster care if any of the following apply:

If the animal represents a threat to public health and/or safety.

If the animal has medical or behavioral problems where the condition, prognosis, or the clinical course is unclear.

If the animal has conditions (medical or behavioral) requiring an unreasonable investment of time and expense by Talbot Humane, the foster home, or the potential adopter.

If the animal has a prognosis of poor quality of life or chronic pain and suffering.

Foster Program Rules and Regulations

The foster care application is to be completed and approved.

The foster contract agreement must be read, understood, and signed prior to animals entering the foster home.

The foster care program manual is to be reviewed and understood by the potential foster prior to the animal entering the foster home.

The length of fostering for any animal varies based on each individual case. Puppies and kittens are to return to the shelter to enter the adoption program as soon as they are scheduled for their spay/neuter appointment. Adult animals in the foster program will be monitored on a case-by-case basis. Once animals are in foster care, they are the responsibility of the foster parents.

Animals are not to leave the custody of the foster parent without direct consent of an authorized Talbot Humane employee. The animals are still property of Talbot Humane.

Dogs should not be off leash once in foster care unless under direct supervision in a securely fenced yard.

Cats are not to be allowed outside once in foster care.

Any health or temperament concerns noticed while in the foster home are to be addressed at once with the appropriate Talbot Humane staff.

Any foster home must be equipped with a room or area in the home which will quarantine the foster pet from other animals in the home. The foster family is to follow the quarantine rules for the protection of the fostered pets, as well as that of their own pets. Talbot Humane is **NOT responsible** for the cost of treating personal pets if they become ill or injured.

In the case that a potential adopter wants to visit with the animals, the foster parent should be available to bring the animal to the shelter with 24-hour notice.

It will be required that all foster parents fill out an after fostering questionnaire with information about your foster animal. This will help us with placing the animal in an appropriate home.

Talbot Humane will provide food if requested for animals in foster care. Formula will be provided as well for nursing animals. If any other supplies are needed, please contact the shelter.

Before Foster Care

Talbot Humane will provide behavior assessments for age-appropriate animals. We will also provide age-appropriate vaccinations, flea and tick control, baths, and nail trims before the animal goes into foster care.

Contagious Diseases

Upon a new diagnosis, certain animals may no longer be candidates for adoption. All foster homes must realize and accept that although every effort will be made, fostering does not guarantee that Talbot Humane can adopt the animal in the community. If an animal in your home does present with a contagious illness, once that foster period is completed, the following quarantine periods are required:

FeLV/FIV/Bordetella – 3 days

URI – 10 days

FIP/Canine Distemper – 3 weeks

Panleukopenia (Feline Distemper)/Parvovirus/Ringworm – at least 30 days

Transfers and the Adoption Program

When foster animals come back to Talbot Humane, it is the decision of the staff where those animals are placed in the building. Talbot Humane works with other shelters who pull animals from us. We also have animals at PetsMart, in our cattery, in our condos, in our barn cat condos, and in our kennels. Some animals are kept in offices. Fosters need to understand that foster animals may go to any of these places and that staff does their best to ensure animals are placed where is best suited for the animal.

Section Nine: Foster Checks-Ins

You will be asked to bring your foster animals in for vaccinations and check-ins. Please be prepared to arrange for the animals to be brought to the shelter for these appointments. You will be given at least 24 hours' notice before appointments.

If you are bringing in your foster animal for vaccinations, to check the age, or to determine if the animal is ready for adoption, please call the foster coordinator to schedule an appointment. If you need to return your animal for any reason, please call the foster coordinator to let them know.

Kittens and puppies receive the initial vaccinations at 4.5 weeks. They will receive a weight, Pyrantel (deworming), and a brief physical exam at each visit (every 2 weeks). Initial vaccinations for cats and kittens include FVRCP (distemper), Trivalent, Pyrantel, and Frontline. Initial vaccinations for dogs and puppies include DA2PPv (distemper), Bordetella, Pyrantel, and Frontline.

Section Ten: What to Expect

While the personality of every foster animal is unique, there are things you can expect from certain animals. Kittens, for example, are highly active, may play rough with littermates, and may even run after you and bite your pant leg. All these behaviors are normal and can vary depending on the litter. Puppies can be just as active and will need to be cleaned up on a regular basis. Puppies also like to bite pant legs and nip fingers. Although their teeth are small, they are sharp. No matter what type of age of animal you are fostering, your endeavor will require substantial time, patience, and work.

Adult Dogs

Adult animals are often easier to accommodate in your home than a litter of puppies or kittens. However, there are several facts that are important to realize. Adult dogs, even if housebroken, may still have accidents in your home. Getting a routine down is highly recommended for the sake of the foster dog and yourself. Crate training is also recommended so that they not only have a “safe space” but also so that they can be taught that being a crate is not a punishment. This will also help the new adopters acclimate the dog to their new home. A baby gate that separates your pets from the foster animals can be very helpful once the quarantine period is complete. Remember that the foster is only a guest at your pets’ home and that they need to be able to take a break from each other any time they need.

Adult Cats

Adult cats should have their own room to provide proper acclimation. It is of the utmost importance to introduce them slowly. Make sure that the cat becomes as social as possible, practice handling the cat for needed routines, such as nail clipping and brushing. Make sure to give your foster cat lots of love and attention, while providing stimulating toys to keep them occupied. Make sure the food, water, and litter box are easily accessible in the same room. Ensure that they cannot get into anything dangerous, such as electrical cords and household cleaners. Please be prepared for your adult cat to hide under the bed or behind furniture for the first few days.

Kittens (with or without a mother)

Kittens have a very curious nature and will explore all areas of your home if left to roam freely. They can climb to high places and crawl into spots you might not expect. They will chew on the strangest things. This is normal behavior for kittens. They are to be confined to a room of their own with a litter box, food, water, and toys until you are certain they will always go to the litter box. Regular cleaning of the litter box is a must, as it will help prevent them from choosing another spot in your home for that function. You can also utilize a play pen or dog crate to keep kittens contained. Kittens should not be loose and free roaming in the house until they are being carefully watched by the foster.

Puppies (with or without a mother)

Puppies can be a big challenge but will provide to be quite rewarding if you have a routine or schedule. Puppies are very energetic and grow up quickly. They require time and patience in order to properly train and work with their needs. There are many ways you can make fostering puppies very rewarding and fun, without becoming a burden.

Providing a “Kong” toy stuffed with peanut butter, treats, and/or kibble can be therapeutic for a growing puppy. It is a great way to positively reinforce what is appropriate to chew. Do not allow them to chew on items other than toys provided.

Feeding 2-3 times a day, at the same time each day, will make elimination time more routine. Crating is critical, especially when you are away and at night. This is helpful for their safety, as well as house training. Having the

appropriate size crate and monitoring the time spent in the crate is important. Puppies soon learn that it is better to have a clean crate, so gradually increasing the time in the crate is helpful.

Chewing or nipping is a common behavior in puppies but can be redirected with toys. A loud, high-pitched “ouch” or “yelp” will get the puppy’s attention so you can quickly give him the proper toy to chew. A tin can filled with stones or dried beans is a good attention getter, too. Follow with positive praise once the puppy begins the appropriate activity.

Praise, praise, praise is the most effective means of training a puppy! They want to please. Do not hesitate to reach out to the foster coordinator for ideas on training your puppy or with questions regarding behavior.

Section Eleven: *Kitten Care*

Items You May Need:

1. Heating pad(s) –
2. Appropriate size pet carrier
3. Warm, quiet area away from other animals
4. Clean, soft towels, blankets, stuffed animals
5. Low sided litter pans
6. Pee pads
7. Infant pet bottles, syringes, and nipples
8. Litter
9. Kitten wet food
10. Kitten dry food
11. Kitten milk replacer
12. Baby shampoo
13. Dog crate, playpen, or baby gate

Talbot Humane is happy to provide the items that you need for fostering. Please contact us before you take kittens home with any items you will need to be successful. You are welcome to purchase your own items for use, however Talbot Humane cannot reimburse you for those. We are happy to provide you with a receipt for your donation of supplies for tax purposes.

Any used items or physical items (crates, carriers, blankets, toys), should be returned to the shelter at the end of the foster period. If you expect to foster throughout the entire season, the items can be returned at the end of the season.

Kitten Care Weeks 1 & 2

Keep the area clean and warm. Towels are to be changed any time the kittens urinate or defecate upon them. Giving them a stuffed toy is a comfort, especially if they are a single kitten.

Keep them in a quiet area of your home, away from other pets currently. This is to protect the kitten(s) and your pets from any contagious conditions. Make sure anyone handling the kittens has properly sanitized their hands prior to handling them, and after.

They are to be kept on a heating pad, set to low temperature. Do not put the pad inside the carrier. Instead, set the carrier on top of the heating pad. This will prevent overheating or burning the kittens. Constant temperature is very important for kittens. Fluctuations may affect interest in eating, defecation, and energy levels.

Kittens should be fed every 4 hours, with a 1:2 solution of Kitten Milk Replacer (KMR). The ratio is 1 scoop of powder to 2 scoops of warm, **not hot**, water. Keep your water source consistent. Changing this may cause diarrhea. Kittens should be eating 2 tbsp (30 mL) per every 4 oz of body weight in a 24 hour period. Kittens should go no longer than 6 hours between feedings.

Formula should feel warm when tested on your wrist. The warm formula will encourage a kitten to nurse. Kittens should not be laid on their backs to nurse but should nurse with their tummies facing down. This will help prevent aspiration of the formula into their lungs, a situation that could easily cause death or serious illness to a kitten.

After each feeding, kittens should be stimulated to urinate and defecate by gently rubbing their genital area with a soft, damp cloth or towel. Dry the area completely once they are through.

If kittens are housed together in one carrier and it appears they are attempting to nurse on one another, they must be separated immediately. Continued irritation of the genitals will cause infection and pain for the kittens.

If the genital area is irritated or appears to be infected, they should be seen by a staff member for treatment.

If your kitten(s) develop diarrhea, it will be important to monitor the consistency and frequency, as well as, make sure they do not become dehydrated. If your kitten has watery diarrhea beyond a 24-hour period, they will need to be examined by a staff member.

Eyes will generally open between days 9-14. Keep the eye area clean of mucus or crust once they begin opening. Any discolored discharge will require medication. Please ask a staff member for medication.



Kitten Care Weeks 3 & 4

Continue the formula feedings. You can start to expand the time frequency to 4 feedings a day.

During this time, you will notice that they are beginning to urinate and defecate on their own. Once this is the case, you can move them to a large space (smaller dog crate, playpen, etc.) and provide a bedding area, and a low sided pan with paper towels or puppy pads inside. Toys are also encouraged at this age.

It is very important to keep the area they are in clean. Clean feces and urine as soon as possible, or they will have it everywhere!

Any sneezing, coughing, or eye discharge are all issues to be addressed by staff.

Really begin to handle them at this stage to ensure proper socialization. Still keeping them away from other pets and making certain that anyone handling them has properly washed their hands prior.



Kitten Care Weeks 5 & 6

Now you can start introducing solids to their diet. They will need to be supplemented with formula at least 2 times daily for the next 2 weeks. If you have multiple kittens, feed them separately.

Using a small spoon (baby spoons work great) feed them canned food specific for kittens. You may have to put this in their mouths to introduce the taste for several feedings. Once they are freely eating when you present them with food, you can feed them as a group. If they seem uninterested in food, try chicken or turkey baby food.

Keep the kittens confined in an area where the litter pan is easily accessible. You can begin with water and dry food.



Kitten Care Weeks 7 & 8

At about the 5-6 week mark, you can leave a bowl of water and dry food out. They will probably play with it more than eat it, but one day they will eat it.

During this time, they are simply gaining weight and being properly socialized. Formula feedings should be ending during this time.

If your pets are ok with other animals, allowing short, supervised visits will help to socialize your kittens to other animals, which will be a plus at adoption time.

Continue confining in an area where the litter pan can be easily found. Litter issues are very difficult to correct if not properly trained. If your kitten is using one area instead of the litter pan provided, place a litter pan in that spot.

Kittens should be completely weaned and eating hard kibble at 8 weeks of age.

Talbot Humane will place healthy kittens in the adoption program at 2 lbs. They will first go to be spayed and neutered. After that appointment, healthy kittens will remain at the shelter until adopted. This will be around the 8-to-9-week age.



Section Twelve: *Puppy Care*

Puppy Proofing

Before bringing your foster dog home make sure you puppy proof your house so they don't get into trouble. A general rule of thumb is if it's below the knee level, pick it up. Anything from shoes and clothes to stuffed animals. Cover or elevate electrical cords, close doors to basements or rooms that you don't want the puppy going into, and secure outdoor areas so they don't run out.

Puppy Food and Supplies

As a Talbot Humane foster, all materials are provided, including: food, toys, puppy pads, leash and collar or harness, food and water bowls, bedding, crate, baby gate, toys, and food.

Talbot Humane is happy to provide the items that you need for fostering. Please contact us before you take puppies home with any items you will need to be successful. You are welcome to purchase your own items for use, however Talbot Humane cannot reimburse you for those. We are happy to provide you with a receipt for your donation of supplies for tax purposes.

Any used items or physical items (crates, carriers, blankets, toys), should be returned to the shelter at the end of the foster period.

Crate Training

Crates seem confining and most people have a misconception of them being a form of punishment. However, dogs like to have a safe, "den-like" space to retreat to for some rest and alone time, away from the activities elsewhere in the house. Using positive reinforcement by feeding them in the crate and giving them lots of praise when they go inside, helps them become accustomed to the crate. Crating is also a great way to secure them when you are not around, particularly when they are unsure about their new surroundings.

Crating will help keep your puppy safe while you are away, as well as your home. An unwatched puppy can find all sorts of things to get into!

This will also prepare your puppy for future experiences in the crate and help them to not be afraid.

Potty Training and Establishing a Routine

Taking them out as much as possible (every couple of hours) helps a lot with early potting training. Getting a schedule established with a routine is very helpful and will help them with needed structure – Eat, poop, play, sleep...repeat! Puppies generally poop after eating (up to 30 minutes after), so that window is important to have them near a pee-pad or take them right outside.

Socialization

There is a quarantine period if the puppy(s) have not gotten their first round of vaccinations. This is for the safety of your own animals and for the puppies. De-wormers tend to kick in after 48 hours of being given. Making sure that the puppy meets other dogs is very important, as long as the other dog is somewhat tolerant of them.

Medical Issues

Any medical concerns or issues should be brought to the attention of Talbot Humane staff. Please do not take the puppy to your own vet without contacting Talbot Humane first. We will make the appointments and cover any fees.

Puppy Care Weeks 1 & 2

Keep the area clean and warm. Towels are to be changed any time the puppies urinate or defecate upon them. Giving them a stuffed toy is a comfort, especially if they are a single puppy.

Keep them in a quiet area of your home, away from other pets currently. This is to protect the puppy(s) and your pets from any contagious conditions. Make sure anyone handling the puppies has properly sanitized their hands prior to handling them, and after.

They are to be kept on a heating pad, set to 85 degrees. Put to heating pad under half their bedding and leave half unheated. This will prevent overheating or burning the puppies. Constant temperature is very important for puppies. Fluctuations may affect interest in eating, defecation, and energy levels.

Puppies should be fed every 3 hours, with a 1:2 solution of puppy formula. The ratio is 1 scoop of powder to 2 scoops of warm, **not hot**, water. Keep your water source consistent. Changing this may cause diarrhea. Puppies should go no longer than 6 hours between feedings.

Formula should feel warm when tested on your wrist. The warm formula will encourage a puppy to nurse. Puppies should not be laid on their backs to nurse but should nurse with their tummies facing down. This will help prevent aspiration of the formula into their lungs, a situation that could easily cause death or serious illness to a puppy.

After each feeding, puppies should be stimulated to urinate and defecate by gently rubbing their genital area with a soft, damp cloth or towel. Dry the area completely once they are through.

If puppies are housed together in one carrier and it appears they are attempting to nurse on one another, they must be separated immediately. Continued irritation of the genitals will cause infection and pain for the puppies.

If the genital area is irritated or appears to be infected, they should be seen by a staff member for treatment.

Puppies are born with closed eyes and tiny, folded-down ears. The stump of the umbilical cord will dry up and fall off in about 5 days.



Puppy Care Weeks 3 & 4

Puppies' eyes will begin to open between 14 and 21 days. They will begin to crawl, and their ears begin to straighten. Teething will also begin at this age.

Bottle feeding will be reduced to every 4 hours at this time. You can begin offering formula in a shallow bowl or saucer. When they learn to drink from the bowl, add puppy wet food in small amounts to make a slurry. Gradually increase the amount of puppy food and decrease the amount of formula over the next few weeks.

At this age, puppies will begin to stand up and weaning will start. You can also reduce the heat of their heating pad to about 80 degrees.

3-4 WEEKS



- Can eat solid foods. Crawls
- and Tries to Stand and Walk.
- Beginning stages of
- curiosity.

Puppy Care Weeks 5, 6, & 7

At 5 weeks the puppies can stand and eat in a bowl easily. Between 5 and 6 weeks, puppies become mischievous and begin playing and running around.

You can reduce the heat of their heating pad to 75 degrees at this time.

You can also start to introduce dry kibble, soaked in the formula slurry to soften. Their sharp teeth are ready for puppy kibble!

They will begin to receive vaccinations at this age and their first deworming.

This is also the perfect time to start socializing with your puppies! Every positive interaction they have with people helps. Please take them around other people, have friends over, and let them interact with children, if possible, during this time.

5-6 WEEKS



- Loves to be held and plays
- with humans. More teeth
- mean eating solid foods is
- easier. Walks, Plays with litter
- mates.

Puppy Care Week 8

Your puppy is going to be going for their spay/neuter appointment soon! Once they return to the shelter for this appointment, they will be ready for their adoptive homes. Healthy puppies will not return to foster care and will stay at the shelter until they are adopted.



7-8 WEEKS

- By 8 weeks, puppies may be ready for their new home.
- First Fear Period.

Section Thirteen: Nursing Moms with Kittens

Getting Set Up

You will need to set up a room for your foster mom and babies before you let any of them out of the carrier. This room should have one or two larger “safe spaces” or nests, boxes on their sides, empty litterbox lined with towels, a travel carrier with the door removed, etc. Mom will want to choose somewhere to keep her kittens. This should be a calm, quiet space that is easy to keep clean, like a bathroom. It should also be away from any other animals in the home.

When you first let mom out, do not pet her or make too many advances. Leave her alone with her kittens to explore her new temporary home. Adult cats can take a while to adjust to new places and mom cats are no exception. They may take a few days to come out of hiding.

Your role is to give the mom cat the type of environment where she can feel comfortable raising her young. Instinct tells mom cats to keep their kittens safe, and to feel safe they need privacy, quiet, and minimal activity, or stress. Stress can cause cats to become aggressive, not take care of their babies properly, and in some instances, even causes extreme behavior, such as cannibalism.

Litterboxes

Ideally, the litterbox would be as far away from the food and water as possible. It should have regular, unscented clay litter in it and be scooped twice a day. It should be dumped out weekly. Once the kittens start to use the litterbox you will need to add a low-sided box for easy access, and you will need to clean more often.

Handling and Socialization

Proceed slowly with an y adult cat you do not know. Let her come to you, pet her only as much as she is comfortable with, and stop petting at the first signs of discomfort. These signs may include: swishing tail, ears laid back or to the sides, head jerk towards your hand or the area where you were petting her, tensing up, cranky overdrawn meow, moving away, hissing, or growling.

Even a mama cat needs play time. Make sure to have solo play toys, as well as interactive sessions of play with mom. After kittens are 2-3 weeks old, she may show more interest in play.

For the first few weeks of life, mom should do everything necessary for the kittens. After that, you can start sharing some of the kitten care duties with her, if she is willing. If a mom is failing in any of the care of her kittens, please let staff know immediately for evaluation.

Nursing

Kittens begin to nurse 1-2 hours after birth. Though born with their eyes closed, they can find their mother by her warmth, and she should make these easier by lying near them on her side.

At first, mom initiates each nursing episode, waking the kittens by licking them and then encircling them with her body. After a little searching, kittens quickly latch on. The second stage occurs after the second or third week, when the kittens’ eyes and ears are functioning and they can interact with mother both inside and outside the nest. At this stage, the kittens also initiate some nursing episodes. The mother generally cooperates by lying down and taking up the nursing position. In the third stage, starting about 5 weeks postpartum, the kittens initiate virtually all nursing. The mother becomes gradually more evasive and uncooperative. Near the end of this stage, the mother begins to wean her kittens by becoming less and less available. You can help in the weaning process by encouraging the babies to eat canned food and later, dry food.

Grooming

Kittens receive a lot of grooming and licking from their mothers during their first 2-4 weeks. This anogenital grooming stimulates elimination, and the fecal matter and urine are consumed by the mom. This is effective in keeping the nest and babies clean. Later, as the young can leave the nest area, the anogenital licking subsides, and the young deposit feces and urine nearby. At this point, providing low-sided litterboxes nearby will teach them to use the litterbox. You generally do not need to intervene at this point.

Maternal Neglect

About 8% of kittens die from inadequate maternal care. The deaths are usually due to hypothermia if the kitten strays away and is not retrieved, or improper/inadequate nursing at birth and after. Maternal neglect has several causes – some cats seem to lack maternal instincts. In some cases, it is nature's way: if the kittens have birth defects or are otherwise weak at birth, the mom may ignore them, or cannibalize them.

In many cases, it seems that environmental stress plays a role, and thus it is very important that the environment be kept quiet, calm, and with few visits. Cats should primarily be left alone the first two weeks postpartum except to feed, clean, and check in on the babies a few brief times a day. You will need to watch them daily for signs that a mother is neglecting her young, especially in the first few weeks. Call us if the mother spends all her time away from the kittens, she does not groom or nurse them frequently, or the kittens cry and she seems to not respond.

Maternal Aggression Toward Other Animals

Aggressive behavior towards cats or dogs is very common in mom cats, as they are trying to protect their young. Please do not try to introduce your foster cat to other animals. This can be very stressful and offers no advantages. Please block any avenues they may have for seeing other cats or dogs, and strictly enforce separation from your resident pets. If, for some reason, the mom cat sees another animal and is upset, quickly remove the source of anxiety (cover up a window, etc) and leave the room. Do not attempt to comfort or reassure the mom cat or babies. Come back in 20 minutes or so to check on them.

Maternal Aggression Toward People

Occasionally, mother cats have strong protective instincts against humans as well. They may hiss, growl, or strike out if you approach the kittens. We try to screen for these behaviors but sometimes they will develop down the line. If faced with this situation, move very slowly around the mom cat and the nest. Wear a long-sleeved sweatshirt to protect yourself as you clean around her. Try to bribe her with tasty treats, such as chicken baby food. Speak in a soft, reassuring voice and try not to react if the mom cat hisses or growls. Do **NOT** correct the cat by spraying her with water or undertaking other types of correction. Remember, she is acting out of instinct to protect her young and if you act in a threatening way, her behavior may escalate. Call the shelter at the first sign of maternal aggression.

Mother Cat Health Check

Mama cat's body will be thinner and bonier than normal, aside from her belly. She will need extra food to get her weight up and keep up with milk production. She will be eating kitten wet and dry food to help increase her calories. Her nipples should be clean and usually erect. There should not be any blood coming from them. The breast tissue should not feel hard or as if there are large lumps within it, nor should it feel hot to the touch. These could be signs of mastitis. The nipples should not be red.

If the mother cat is ill or malnourished when she rears her litter, her illness leaves a lasting deficit, both physically and psychologically on all her kittens. An ill mother cat will most likely be less attentive to her kittens and less able to do her maternal duties, specifically teaching social skills. The early social skills that a mother teaches her kittens

are essential to prepare them for later in life. This can lead to kittens growing into cats with behavioral problems such as being timid, aggression issues, and/or antisocial attitude towards other cats and people.

Limited Milk

If the mother has insufficient milk for her litter, the kittens will end up smaller and weaker than properly nourished kittens. This situation may also result in kittens who lack proper social and physical skills. Kittens who spend an extended amount of time suckling in an attempt to get nourishment from their mother's supply will have less time to learn how to interact with other cats. Food instability will also create an environment in which the kittens will not be able to relax. Please let staff know if you are concerned your foster mom has a limited milk supply.

Expectant Moms

A kittening or nesting box must be provided for the expectant mother. This can usually be a cardboard box without a lid and a hole cut out of the side for the mom cat to enter and exit. Fill it with clean towels or old cloth diapers and let her make her own nest. Change this bedding immediately after the birth and then on a frequent basis, because it will become soiled.

After the birthing is over, remove the towels and replace them with fleece blankets or cloth diapers. Some kittens cannot retract their claws and get caught in the loops of towels, making it difficult for them to crawl around.

After delivery, try to observe the family to make sure the kittens are nursing and that mom is not bleeding excessively from the vagina. If things are not as they should be, call the shelter.

Daily Checks

Handle newborn kittens gently, but make sure to check them at least twice a day. Make sure you count them each time you check on them. Sometimes a mother cat will take a kitten out of the nest and leave it somewhere else in the room. If this happens, put the kitten back and call the shelter right away. Make sure to weigh your kittens in grams each morning at the same time of day. You want to see them gain 10-15 grams per day.

Each newborn kitten should have its umbilical cord swabbed with an iodine tincture. After the mother cat chews through the umbilical cord or you cut the cord, apply some of the tincture to a cotton swab. Dab the swab on the remaining cord stump and the surrounding skin. Repeat the swapping for the next two days post birth. The cord stump should dry up and fall off around day three or four. If you see any signs of swelling, discharge, pain, or redness at the umbilical cord site, please call the shelter at once.

Emergency Situations

If all the kittens and mom seem well, your only obligation to the mom and new kittens for the first week or so is watchful supervision. Mom will always need kitten food and water. Contact the shelter immediately if you observe any of the following in the mother cat - acts lethargic, or as if she is in pain or continues to strain, ignores her kittens, continues bleeding from the vulva for more than two days, or has painful, hard, or swollen mammary glands.

Kittens should be nursing up to 3 times an hour. The mother cat should be grooming each kitten after feeding. Contact the shelter if you observe any of the following in the kittens - constant crying and failure to stay at the nipple, refusal to nurse, feeling cold to the touch, withdrawing from the other kittens, or is rejected or ignored by the mother.



We couldn't do what we do without you. Thank you for all your hard work and dedication to the animals of Talbot County.