LIFE SAVING CAT AND KITTEN

FOSTER CARE GUIDE



Kentucky Humane Society™

Lifelong Friends

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Welcome New Foster Family!

Thank you for taking the leap into welcoming a foster animal in need into your home! Our foster program was created to give animals that have difficulty in the shelter environment such as puppies and kittens that are too young for adoption, animals working on their manners, or animals that need further socialization, a calm environment where they can grow and heal before being adopted. Foster parents like you make that possible!

While your animal is in foster, KHS supplies all of the food and medical supplies necessary. If your foster animal becomes ill, our veterinarian will examine and treat them. If you choose to take your foster animal to your own vet, please be aware that it will be at your own expense, as KHS does not have funds to cover outside services.

Thousands of animals at KHS have benefitted from the generosity of foster parents that would have otherwise faced severe difficulty in the shelter and adoption process. You make a world of a difference!

In this manual, you'll find a wealth of resources to help make your foster experience as smooth as possible. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you need further guidance.

Sincerely,

Kentucky Humane Society Foster Team



Contact Info

Contact Information
Kayla Saylor - Foster Manager
Foster Assistants - Erin Greenwood, Kelly Ledtje
Aurelia Zilinskas - Cat Coordinator
Email: foster@kyhumane.org
Office: 502-366-3355 ext 4007
After Hours Emergencies: 502-515-3135

Hours of operation

Monday - Friday 10:00 am - 6:00 pm
Saturday/Sunday 10:00 am - 5:00 pm

Please note: Email is the most effective way of communication as we have several staff members monitoring our inbox. We do not communicate via Facebook as this is not a reliable form of communication for our entire team to keep up with. Thank you for your understanding!

Reasons for Foster

Animals that enter the foster program do so because, for any number of reasons, the shelter environment is not ideal for them. Animals can spend anywhere from a few days to a few months in foster depending on their reason for foster placement. Animals that need to be placed in foster typically are:

Too young or underweight: Kittens and puppies, either in a litter, paired with another orphan kitten or puppy, or alone, are fostered until they reach eight weeks old and weigh two pounds. Most kittens and puppies are fostered from 2-6 weeks. These animals do not have a mama that comes with them, and in some instances may need bottle-feeding.

Nursing moms and babies: Litters of kittens and puppies with their moms remain in foster until all of the babies are eight weeks old or weigh two pounds. There are instances when the mom pushes a baby away or a baby will not nurse, so sometimes supplemental bottle-feeding is required. Generally, mom does all of the work until the babies begin to have teeth. She will feed them, stimulate them to go to the bathroom, and clean up after them.

Member of the Safe Haven program: KHS partners with the Center for Women and Families to provide temporary care for those affected by domestic violence while they seek services and housing. It's important not to photograph these animals, share them on social media, and to restrict their time spent out in the greater community. These animals can remain in foster for up to three months.



Ill or recovering from injuries or surgery: Dogs and cats recovering from minor and common health ailments will be sent to foster to recover outside of the shelter in a calm and quiet setting. While these are usually minor issues, it's still recommended that these animals remain separated from resident animals to avoid spreading any illness. We also receive animals that require special surgeries such as amputations that need time in foster to recover.

Members of the Adoption Ambassador Program: Adoption ambassador animals remain in foster care until adoption. These animals are behaviorally sound, but need foster because they've either been in the shelter too long or get skipped over frequently for age or looks. These animals remain in foster for two weeks to two months while foster families actively solicit adopters. Animals are also listed on our website with professional photos.

Preparing for a Foster

Before bringing your foster animal home, it's important to have a suitable place for them to stay that's already prepared, such as a bathroom. The room should:

- ✔ Be temperature controlled (and indoors!)
- ✔ Disinfected with a mild bleach solution (1 part bleach to 32 parts water)
- ✔ Separate from household pets
- ✔ Able to withstand messes such as vomit, feces, urine, spilled water, etc.
- ✔ Free of breakable or fragile items
- ✔ Free of electrical wires with all outlets blocked
- ✔ Free of small items
- ✔ Have secured windows that are closed or screened off
- ✔ Have secured appliances
- ✔ Have toilet seats closed
- ✔ Be cautious of kittens climbing under furniture such as recliners, chairs, etc.



KHS provides all of the supplies you'll need to properly care for your foster free of charge!

All Kentucky Humane Society Foster Cats and Kittens are required to be transported in a cat carrier anytime they travel. Cats and Kittens must leave the shelter in a carrier and be contained in a carrier anytime they come in for a vaccine visit, medical appointment or when returning to the shelter.

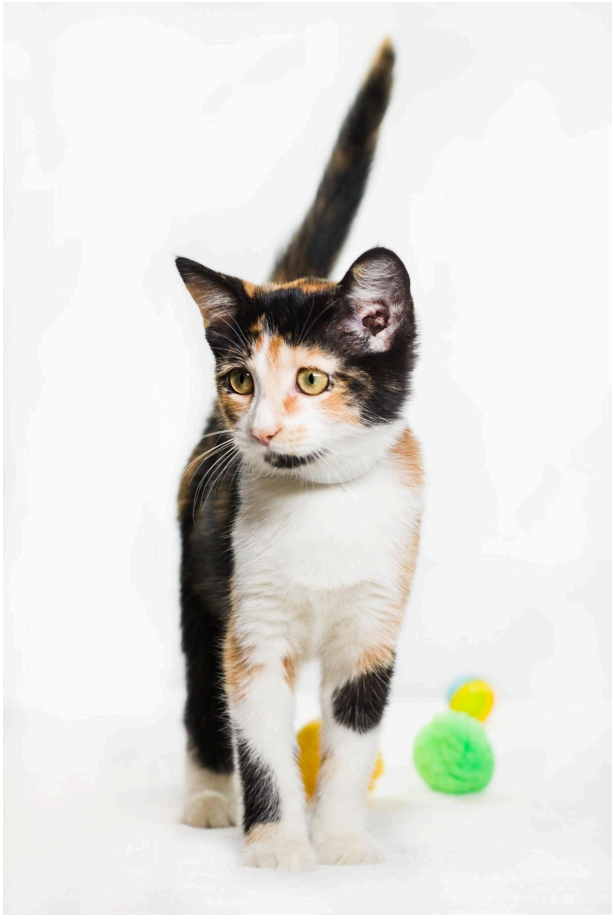
We also ask that all cats and kittens be kept indoors at all times unless traveling via carrier to another indoor location.

When Your Foster Arrives

Congratulations, it's a CAT!

When you welcome your foster animal(s) into your home, here are a few ways you can set them up for success!

- For the first few weeks of their lives, kittens can sleep in a small carrier all day. As they become more mobile, you can set up a small playpen for them that is soft, temperature controlled, able to be sanitized, and separated from other animals.
- **Ill animals:** Animals suffering from illness should be completely isolated from other animals in the home. Wash your hands thoroughly with an antibacterial soap after handling foster animals regardless of whether or not they are known to be sick.
- Foster animals should be isolated from your household pets for the first **7-10 days,** regardless of sickness.
- **Shared items:** Do not allow your animals to share toys, dishes, or litter pans with foster animals.
- Be aware of the ASPCA Toxic and non-Toxic Plants. There are many common plants that are toxic to animals when ingested and must be removed from the animal's reach:
    - Lilies
    - Sago palms
    - Aloe plants
    - Asparagus Ferns



Bottle Feeding

Unweaned kittens need to be fed with a bottle and kitten formula, which will be provided by KHS. **Kittens should never be fed cow's milk or any other dairy products.**

1. Thoroughly mix powdered formula with warm water according to the package's instructions. Test the temperature on the inside of your wrist. It should be comfortably warm, made fresh every 1-2 feedings, and free of clumps.
2. Cut a small hole in the nipple of the bottle to allow the formula to flow out. Formula should barely drip out of the bottle when cut properly.
3. Hold the kitten in a natural position with the belly down on the table. **Do not hold the kitten like a baby with the belly up, as this could lead to aspiration.**
4. Hold the kitten's head and body steady with your non-dominant hand, placing one finger on the throat to allow you to feel for swallowing. Use your dominant hand to gently introduce the tip of the bottle into the kitten's mouth.
5. The kitten should roll its tongue like a taco and latch onto the tip of the nipple. Do not flood the mouth with formula; let the kitten drink at its own pace.

Tips for Tricky Bottle Feeders

- Make sure the flow is correct. If the nipple is too big or small, the kitten may not get a good latch.
- Make sure the formula is a comfortable temperature and has no clumps.
- Try gently holding the head in place or covering one eye. This helps the kitten focus and simulates the feeling of being nuzzled into mama's belly.
- If a kitten is being fussy or spastic, you can gently wrap them in a blanket during feeding.
- Don't be discouraged if it takes a while to become comfortable with bottle feeding. Take it slow and be patient!



Feeding

Kittens

Age (weeks)	Feeding	Amount Per Feeding	Development
0-1	2-6 mL every 2 hours	2-6 mL	○ Pink in color ○ Eyes closed and ears folded ○ Unable to regulate own body temperature
1-2	150-250 g every 2-3 hours	6-10 mL	○ Eyes begin to open and appear blue ○ Wobbly walking begins
2-3	250-350 g every 3-4 hours	10-14 mL	○ Eyes completely open ○ May begin using litter box ○ Ears unfolding
3-4	350-450 g every 4-5 hours	14-18 mL	○ Incisors begin to emerge
4-5	450-550 g every 5-6 hours	18-22 mL	○ Canine teeth and premolars begin to emerge ○ Walking confidently and exploring their surroundings
5-8	550-850 g	Weaning; offer ample wet food	○ Molars emerge ○ Coordinate walking and playing ○ Eyes begin to change to adult color ○ When they reach 2 lbs., kittens are spayed or neutered and placed into their forever homes!

Mama Cats and Kittens

In some cases, moms are fostered together with their litters. Moms require a calm environment with minimal stress. Stress can cause moms to stop caring for their kittens.

For the first few weeks, mama will do everything necessary for her kittens including feeding and grooming. Kittens begin nursing shortly after birth.

Bringing Mom Home

Set up a separate space for mama and her litter. When you first bring them home, leave them alone in their private space. Mom will need at least a few days to adjust to her new space. Be sure to supply fresh water, food, and clean litter for mama.

Socialization

Even adult cats need socialization. However, proceed slowly with mama, and allow her to come to you. Step the session if you notice any negative signs such as a swishing tail, ears laid back, head jerking toward you, tensing, cranky meowing, hissing, or growling.

Possible Issues with Mamas

Maternal Neglect

In about 8% of cases kittens will die from poor maternal care. Some mothers lack maternal instincts, and in other cases mamas stop caring for kittens when they become weak or sick. Environmental stress can also contribute to abandonment of kittens, which is why it's so important to maintain a calm environment. Contact the Foster Team if you notice maternal neglect.

Maternal Aggression

As mom protects her kittens, it is common for her to develop aggression toward humans and other animals. Do not try to introduce household animals to foster moms, as this adds too much stress to the environment. If aggression becomes severe, contact the foster team .



Training

Positive Reinforcement Training: KHS solely endorses the use of positive reinforcement training, free from scolding and harsh correction. Decades of research supports positive reinforcement training as the most humane and effective form of training.

Avoid the use of spray bottles to punish poor behavior. Instead, redirect kittens toward desired behavior. For example, if kittens are scratching furniture, provide ample opportunities for appropriate scratching such as scratching posts.

If kittens begin to play too roughly with you or each other, redirect their attention to a toy or give them a "time-out" in their crate where they can settle down.

Socialization

It's important to socialize kittens so they don't become fearful as adults, especially in the critical 3-7 week old period. Allow your kitten to meet and interact with as many people as you can.

Shy or fearful kittens may take a bit longer to warm up to you or strangers, which is okay. Take socialization slowly, speaking softly to the kitten, allowing the kitten to approach you first, and gently stroking them.

Housetraining

Kittens typically begin using the litter box with little effort as long as it's accessible and clean. Around three weeks of age, introduce a shallow litter pan with fragrance free non-clumping litter. Place the kitten in the box frequently to help them remember to use it.



Troubleshooting

If your kittens are having difficulty learning to use the litter box:

- It may help to stimulate them over the litter pan while they're learning by gently wiping their genitals with a warm, damp towel.
- You can also add additional litter boxes.
- Be patient! Sometimes a kitten requires a little extra time to get the hang of the box.

Maintaining Your Foster's Health

All Kittens should be weighed AT LEAST ONCE DAILY. Any weight loss should be reported immediately.

Medical Concerns

Due to the unknown history of the animals in the shelter, the animals are susceptible to and are potential carriers of many infectious diseases, including intestinal parasites, bacterial infections, and viral infections.

While the shelter thoroughly checks and treats all animals upon arrival to the shelter, most illnesses have an incubation period, meaning they can begin showing signs after arrival to their foster home. Please observe animals carefully and note any changes in their behavior or habits. If you notice any of the following symptoms, contact the foster team immediately:

- Coughing or sneezing
- Watery, goopy, red eyes
- Lack of appetite or refusal to drink water
- Ongoing vomiting
- Ongoing diarrhea lasting more than 12 hours
- Blood or parasites in stool
- Lethargy
- Sudden hair loss
- Itchy dirty ears



Many of the above can either lead to or accompany dehydration, a serious condition marked by diarrhea, vomiting, and/or loss of appetite. To check for dehydration, pinch the animal's skin gently. If the skin springs back slowly, taking more than one second, your animal is dehydrated and you should contact KHS immediately.

Healthy Poop

Healthy poop in bottle fed babies will be brown to yellow in color and will become browner as their weaning progresses. Good kitten poop should be fairly solid. If it looks like a miniature cat poop or soft serve ice cream, it's a good poop!

Poop is a very important indicator of health in a kitten. Monitor the color, form, frequency, and smell to remain aware of any changes that could indicate a health problem. If you suspect illness, collect a stool sample and contact KHS for veterinary support.

Ongoing diarrhea is very serious and requires veterinary support as soon as possible. Diarrhea can be fatal for kittens if it lasts more than 24 hours, so please contact KHS if your kittens have loose and runny stool.

Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)

URIs are common and caused by contagious viruses and bacteria. Look for signs of:

- Sneezing and discharge from eyes/nose
- Congested breathing
- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy (lack of energy)
- Dehydration

Symptoms can be alleviated by placing kittens in a steamy bathroom to break up congestion. Crusty, inflamed eyes should be kept clean with a warm, wet compress, and treated with an ophthalmic antibiotic.

If you notice any of these symptoms, please contact the foster team immediately.

GI Issues

Kittens are highly susceptible to GI issues from stomach parasites to stress-induced diarrhea. While common worms are treated with routine dewormer, some kittens have additional internal parasites such as coccidian or tapeworms. Consult the foster staff for diagnostic testing and medication.

Skin Issues

Kittens have sensitive skin, which can become irritated or infected. Scalding from urine or fecal matter can make the skin near the genitals a raw red color. Irritation should be kept clean with warm water, and protected with a topical cream like Aquaphor. If concerned about other skin complications, contact KHS for veterinary support. Ringworm is also common in kittens, especially during the months of July and August. Ringworm typically appears on the tips of the ears, tail, around the eyes or on the paws, but can show up anywhere on the body. If you see any hair loss on your foster kittens please be sure to let foster staff know.

Fleas

All kittens over four weeks old are treated with Advantage Multi by KHS before they go to a foster home.

Foster kittens should NEVER be flea-dipped, flea-powdered, or flea-collared. These products are toxic, and can even cause adverse reactions in adults. If you notice fleas on your kitten, we can treat them with a mild flea preventative. You can also give them a bath with Dawn dish soap and keep their bedding clean to prevent and eliminate flea infestations.

Tips for Reducing Risks

The spread of disease can be greatly reduced by practicing thorough, frequent hand washing hygiene before and after coming into contact with your foster animal. You should also clean and disinfect items frequently. Soaps and detergents are cleaning agents that suspend dirt and grease and break up organic matter, but do not necessarily disinfect. Disinfectants are chemical solutions that kill germs. Bleach is a common disinfectant. When bleach is diluted to a ratio of one part bleach to 32 parts water, it makes a great solution for disinfecting surfaces.

Some conditions that can spread to humans are:

- **Rabies:** Rabies is transmitted through a virus carried in saliva. Signs of rabies include personality and behavioral changes, loss of coordination, difficulty swallowing, seizures, and death. Rabies is fatal, and there is no cure in humans or animals. All animals over the age of 4 months at KHS are vaccinated for rabies upon intake.
- **Roundworms:** Almost every puppy or kitten is born with roundworms contracted from its mother. These worms can be transmitted to people, especially children. Most infections in people are mild and display little to no symptoms, but cases can be more severe. The animal's feces should be removed and disposed of daily, and everyone who handles the foster should wash their hands frequently, especially children who tend to put their hands in their mouths often.
- **Ringworm:** Ringworm is not a worm at all, but a fungal infection on the skin. It can be difficult to diagnose in animals because the lesions can vary in their presentation. Some animals can carry the fungus in their coat without displaying symptoms. In people, the classic lesion is a raised, red ring.

Fading Kitten Syndrome

Occasionally, an otherwise healthy kitten will suddenly stop thriving. They will stop growing, socializing, begin to lose weight, and may continuously cry. When this happens, they fade quickly. Even with medical intervention they may not survive longer than 48 hours. There is no cure for this condition.

Animals do, sometimes, die in foster care. If this happens, contact the foster team for support and assistance dealing with the deceased animal.

Routine Care

KHS provides all routine veterinary care that your foster animal will need. Our veterinary staff is available at our Steedly location Monday-Friday from 8:30-3. Our veterinary technicians can also provide minor care, administer medications, and administer vaccinations on the weekends and during the evening. Please remember that KHS cannot reimburse you for emergency or routine care provided to your foster animal by an outside veterinarian.

Vaccinations

All cats and dogs over one month old are vaccinated upon arrival to the shelter. Adults receive a round of booster shots two weeks after their initial vaccination while kittens over the age of four weeks receive booster shots every two weeks. Animals will also need to return for their spay and neuter surgery prior to going up for adoption around eight weeks, when they're at least two pounds and eating primarily dry food. The foster team will contact you when your animal is due for their vaccinations. Vaccinations are only done at the main Steedly campus.



Returning Your Foster

Congratulations! You have saved a life!

When it's time to return your foster animal for adoption, the foster team will contact you to arrange the return. Please email any photos you have of the animal for use in their adoption profile. We will provide a link to a form where you can give a description of the kitten's personality and behavior to be shared with potential adopters.

All foster parents are encouraged to promote the animal for adoption on social media and to friends, family, or other potential adopters. If someone is interested in adopting the animal, their information must be provided at or before their surgery drop off to ensure that they're held for adoption. Adoption prices are listed below. Adoption fees include their spay or neuter surgery, micro-chip and all animals will be up to date on their most current round of vaccinations. In addition, adopters also receive a month of free pet insurance and pet product coupons to KHS services or Feeders Supply.

Cats under 5 months - $130

Cats 5 months - 7 years - $75

Cats 7+ years - $30

When your foster animal is adopted, we will let you know! Otherwise, all animals up for adoption can be viewed and monitored on our website on the available animals page.



Adoption Ambassador Program

As an Adoption Ambassador, you will foster a shelter animal in need while they remain available for adoption. Animals that qualify for this program are behaviorally sound, but may have been in the shelter for an extended period of time, are skipped over in the shelter due to looks or age(large, plain dogs), or simply do not show well in the shelter environment (shy, fearful, over stimulated, etc.).

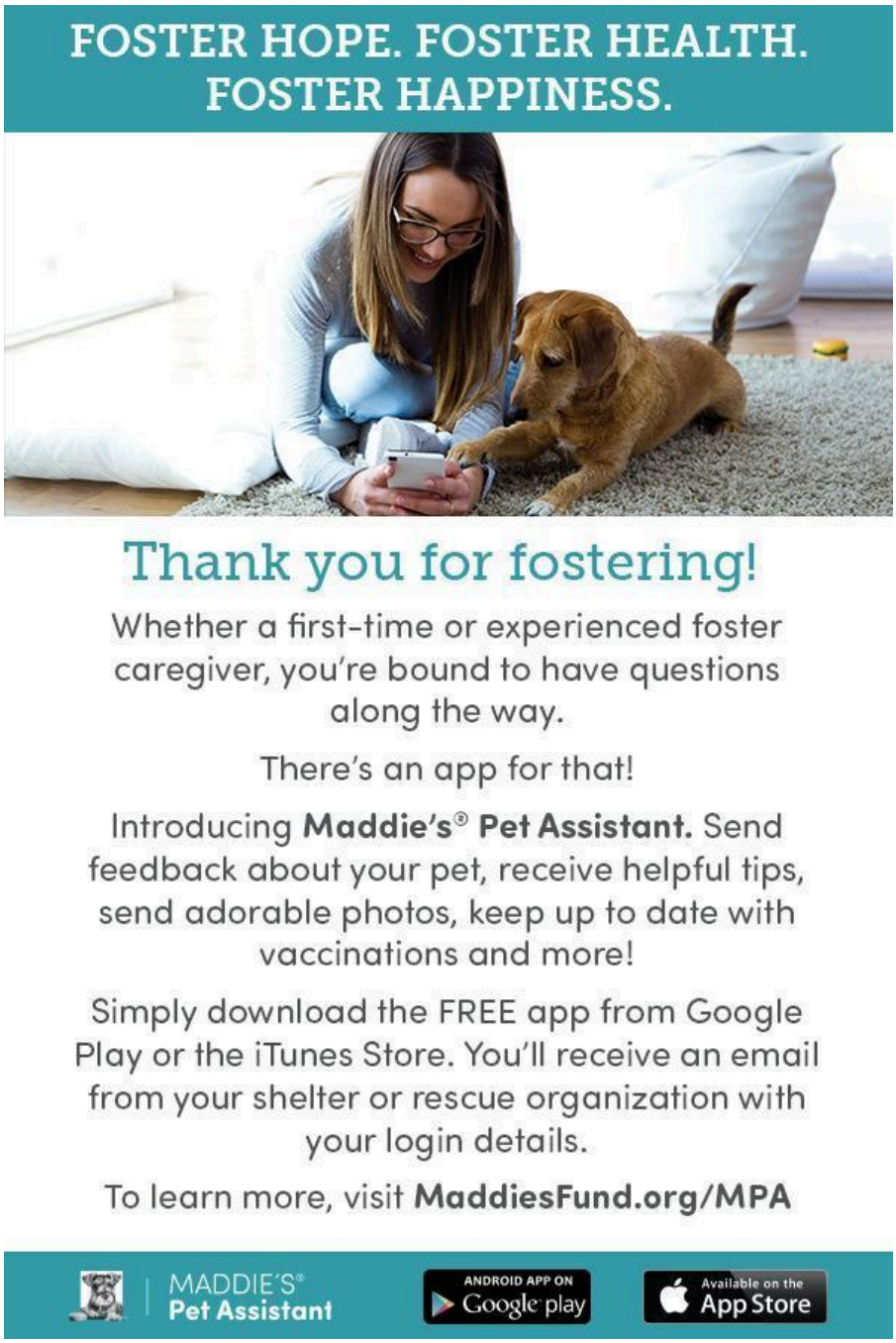
This program is unique because we are not faced with physical limitations of the shelter walls and are therefore given endless opportunities to help pets in need. It helps us to have more space available for new animals entering the shelter, animals adopted out of foster homes are less likely to be returned, and the animal is able to live in a home environment and never has to come back to the shelter!

As an Adoption Ambassador, you are taking your foster commitment to the next level. These fosters will require a lot of participation on your part to help them find a forever home. If you enjoy taking your dogs out and about, would be comfortable speaking with interested adopters and are good at advertising on social media, these fosters will be great for you!

All foster parents are encouraged to promote the adoption of their foster pet to friends, family, and other potential adopters.



Additional Foster Resources – Join us!



Kentucky Humane Society Fosters

After Hour Emergencies

We have a relationship with several veterinary clinics to provide after-hours emergency care. It is important to utilize these resources only in life and death emergency situations as stated below. Many instances can wait until regular business hours; however we are here for you should something arise.

If you suspect that you have an emergency situation after hours, **please call (502) 515-3135 and leave a message.** If you do not receive a return phone call within five minutes, please call again. We will instruct you to the proper veterinarian on call for the evening if we determine your foster needs to be seen immediately.

NON-EMERGENCIES Contact the foster team to be seen by a vet during regular shelter hours	EMERGENCIES Require immediate veterinary attention **Business hours:** Come straight to the shelter **After hours:** Call (502) 515-3135
• Runny discharge from eyes or nose • Lack of appetite for just a few hours • Mild Diarrhea (for less than 12 hours) with no other symptoms present. • Vomiting (for less than 12 hours) with no other symptoms present. • Coughing, sneezing or congestion (unless it's resulting in the foster not eating, drinking or causing lethargy). • Fleas/ticks	• Continuous diarrhea for longer than 12 hours, or any diarrhea that's causing lethargy, dehydration or resulting in the foster not eating/drinking. • Continuous vomiting longer than 12 hours, or any vomiting causing lethargy, dehydration or resulting in the foster not eating/drinking. • Loss of appetite resulting in rapid weight loss (to avoid this emergency situation please weigh fosters daily and notify us of any weight loss resulting from a foster not eating after 24/36 hours). • Any trauma (hit by a car, dropped, limping, etc.) • Bites or fight wounds • Difficult or labored breathing • Seizures lasting 3-5 minutes • Burns, Choking, Drowning, Electric Shock, Poisoning • Severe allergic reaction • Unresponsiveness • Lethargy with or without fever

To avoid the occurrence of emergencies, be aware of your foster pet's behavior and report any significant changes in their wellbeing to the foster team quickly. Please be aware that KHS has a policy in place that makes us unable to reimburse foster parents if they take animals to a personal vet or clinic outside of our veterinary network.