



II. Fostering Dogs

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Dogs and Puppies

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Town Lake Animal Center

1156 W. Cesar Chavez St.

Hours: 11:30 a.m. – 7 p.m. Everyday

Closed City Holidays

Receiving Office Open 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Everyday

Puppies!

- Intro
- Supplies
- Getting Started
- Feeding
- Eliminating
- Socialization
- Growth and Development



Intro

Very often, underage puppies (under 8 weeks of age) are brought to shelters without their mothers and need to be properly cared for in order to survive and then they can be adopted into permanent homes when they come of age at about 8 weeks old. Puppies picked for the foster program will be able to eat at least canned food on their own. Bottle feeding and puppy formula should not be needed, but can supplement their diets and give picky eaters or slow growers added nutrition.

Supplies

- **Large box, carrier or crate:** You may want to use the carrier in which you took the litter home. It will provide a familiar-smelling, dark, quiet home for your foster puppies. However, a bigger box may be desirable, as it will allow you to see in, as well as provide plenty of room for growing litter of puppies.
- **Newspapers:** Keep several layers in the bottom of the box, and they will come in handy when the puppies start to roam around the room.
- **Water bowls:** Heavy and impossible to tip. Should be stainless steel or porcelain/ceramic, NOT plastic, as plastic is difficult to disinfect because it is so porous.
- **Food bowls (at least 2):** One is for the eat-at-will dry food, the other for canned food. You can use TV dinner trays, paper plates or whatever you have; any relatively flat plate or saucer will do. The larger the litter, the larger the plate should be so that no one gets crowded out.
- **Food:** The shelter will provide both hard and canned food (if needed) for your foster puppies.
- **Plenty of clean towels and blankets**
- **Toys:** Plastic, disinfect-able toys are good to reuse for new litters. Clean tennis balls and old stuffed socks. Beware of stuffed toys with small plastic parts that could break off and be swallowed causing digestive emergencies.
- **Baby gates and exercise pens:** For confining the puppies as needed.

Getting Started

Eat, sleep, play and poo – not necessarily in that order! Make sure your foster pups have everything they need and are kept in an indoor only environment in an area that is easy to clean like a bathroom, laundry room, or kitchen. Puppies need a warm, dry safe place to sleep. A crate is recommended as it is never too early to begin housetraining. If you are using a crate to confine the puppies, be sure to never leave them in the crate too long – their age in months is the number of hours they should be confined to a crate. The puppies should always have access to clean water and hard food. Soft food can be offered at scheduled feeding times. Plenty of appropriate toys to chew on and play with should be available and rotated in and out of the puppies' area. Puppies will put anything in their mouths so puppy-proof the area! Baby gates are a good way to keep the puppies where you want them and exercise pens are good for outside playtime. Puppies need to be kept clean. This means lots of baths (remember the mom would have licked the pups all the time to keep them clean). Use a gentle, non-medicated puppy or baby shampoo. Don't get water in the ears or soap in the eyes. Use warm water. Dry well and warm the pups up very quickly. Don't be surprised if you are washing the pups more than once daily. Even outgoing, friendly puppies should be allowed 24 hours to accustom themselves to their new home a quiet room, but if they seem content and happy after the initial “chill-out period” they can be cuddled and played with freely.

Shy pets will need more encouragement. Try sitting on the floor allowing the puppies to approach you or avoid you as they please, and play freely around you. You can also tempt them with small treats and food to convince them that you are not as scary as you appear. Always praise positive interaction. Any introductions of puppies to other cats or dogs should be made with great care and under constant supervision.



No fostered animals should be allowed to mingle with your own pets or outside in your yard for the first two weeks after you bring them home. This is to protect both the foster pets and your own pets from any infectious agents they may bring from the shelter.

Feeding

A well-fed, healthy puppy has a round stomach (not bloated), and seems content. At 4-5 weeks, offer warmed canned puppy food mixed with formula or human baby food (chicken or beef) mixed with formula four times a day. Without mom around to show them, many puppies do not have a clue about feeding from a saucer. The puppies will walk in it, slide in it, and track it all over. Some puppies may prefer to lick the gruel from your fingers, if this is the case; slowly lower your finger to the plate and hold it to the food. This way the puppies will learn to eat with their heads bent down. Be patient, sometimes it takes two or three meals before they catch on. If they do not seem interested enough to even sniff your finger, try gently opening the puppies' mouth and rub a little bit of the food on their teeth. Hopefully this will result in the puppy starting to lick your finger. First-time eaters are messy eaters, so have the warm water and towel handy for afterward. The puppy will need it, and so will the floor. Puppies should have hard food left out all the time as well as fresh water. Constant crying is usually a sign of trouble and should be reported to the foster coordinator immediately. Make sure the puppies are eating food and gaining weight

Age 3-5 weeks: Feed gruel 4 times a day. Thicken the gruel gradually by reducing the amount of water mixed with it. Introduce dry food and water. For reluctant eaters, try mixing some puppy milk replacer into the gruel or tempt the puppy with some meat-flavored human baby food mixed with a bit of water. The familiar formula taste and smell or the meat flavor of baby food is often more appealing to the picky eaters than dog food. Once the puppy accepts the formula based gruel or baby food gradually mix in dry puppy food until the puppy has been weaned like the other puppies.

Age 5-7 weeks: By this age the puppies should be eating dry food well. Feed the puppies at least three meals daily. If one puppy appears food-possessive, use a second dish and leave plenty of food out so that everyone can eat at the same time. Although the puppies may not eat much at a single sitting, they usually like to eat at frequent intervals throughout the day.

Age 7-8 weeks: Offer dry food 3 - 4 times a day. Leave down a bowl of water for them to eat and drink at will. Do not feed the puppies table scraps!



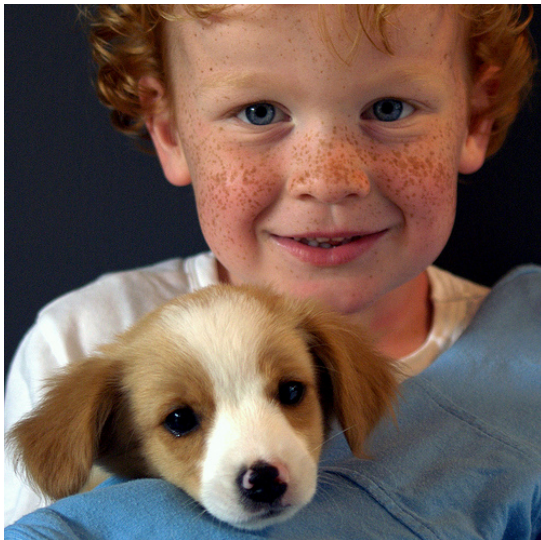
Eliminating

Don't have unrealistic expectations. At this age, your puppy can probably start the basics of housetraining, but cannot be expected to master the art of always eliminating outside. Take him out after every nap and meal and praise him if he does "go" in the yard, but expect more accidents than successes. A supply of old newspapers will come in very handy at this stage. Encourage them to go potty on the papers if someone is not available to take them out of doors.

Socialization

A huge part of your job as a foster home is to convince the puppies that humans are kind and loving, and that other pets do not pose any threat. The primary socialization period of puppies is between 3 and 13 weeks. This means that you need to get the puppies used to people and other animals before finishing their vaccination program. This period in the puppy's life is critical for development of primary social relationships with humans and other animals. Puppies that are isolated from humans and other animals during this period are significantly more likely to develop behavioral problems (such as fear and aggression), than puppies that are provided the opportunity to get socialized with other animals and people.

You should not endanger your foster puppies to dangerous germs and bacteria. They should remain in your home and yard only and never go to a dog park, pet store or other areas where there have been lots of other animals.



If you have friends, family or neighbors who would like their pets to meet your foster pet, you should be certain those pets are vaccinated and not showing any signs of illness and they should come to your home for play dates.

It is important for your foster puppies to have interaction with all members of the household as soon as possible. Remember, they are still babies and must be handled with care. Start to introduce the pup(s) to household noises, grooming procedures, new people, and pets. [Early socialization](#) and enabling the puppy to feel secure in its own environment will help prevent many problems from arising in the future.

Think about all of the things that would be scary or confusing to you if you were a puppy - children, stairs, things with wheels (strollers and bicycles especially), vacuum cleaners, hair dryers, etc. In a gentle and calm way, try to introduce your fosters to as many things as you can possibly think of – it will result in a confident, easy going, well socialized and HIGHLY adoptable dog!

There is no such thing as a "bad" puppy and it is useless to punish a "naughty" puppy. Their little minds do not grasp deductive reasoning. Puppies are easily distracted with a toy or a treat when being mischievous rather than punishment and scolding. By providing toys, chews, scratching poles etc. you can get a puppy on its right track to being somebody's well-behaved pet.

Growth and Development



Age 3-5 Weeks: Begin housebreaking at four weeks of age. This can be done by using a pile of newspapers or training pads in a corner. After each feeding, place the puppy on the papers, or outside, for him to go to the bathroom. Be patient! He may not remember to do this every time, or may forget where to find the papers, but he will learn quickly. Be sure to give the puppies lots of praise when they first start using their papers or cry to go out. It is a good idea to confine the puppies to a relatively small space, because the larger the area the puppies have to play in, the more likely they will forget where the papers are. Keep the papers clean and away from their food.

5-6 Weeks: At about five weeks, puppies can start to roam around the room, under supervision. The strongest, most curious puppy will figure out how to get out of the nest. The others will quickly follow.

6-8 Weeks: By this time, you have "mini-dogs." They will wash themselves, play games with each other, their toys, and you, and many will come when you call them. Be sure to take them to their papers or outside after meals, during play sessions, and after naps. These are the usual times that puppies need to eliminate.

8 Weeks: The pups are ready for Adoption! Take photographs and e-mail them to the Foster Coordinator and arrange for a day for them to return to the shelter for Adoption!



Nursing Mothers and Their Puppies

- Intro
- Getting Started
- Supplies
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Intro

Often dogs land at the shelter pregnant or nursing very young puppies. An animal shelter can be a very scary place for a new mother – getting them into a foster home as soon as possible is the best way to help her take care of her puppies well. Fostering a mother dog and her puppies is a huge job and can be a long term foster as well – sometimes 8 to 10 weeks to get the puppies big and healthy enough for adoption. It is often a messy job as well! Fostering nursing mothers and her puppies is not for everyone – but the rewards of watching a mother care for her pups and helping those pups develop into healthy, happy dogs is extremely rewarding.

Getting Started

Depending on the age of the puppies, the needs of the nursing mother dog will be different. For instance, a mother with newborn puppies will need very little assistance from you. She will need a very quiet warm place, preferably a whelping box, plenty of food and fresh water and opportunities to leave her puppies for short periods of time to eliminate. The less interaction you have with puppies less than 4 weeks of age, the better, they are very fragile and handling them may needlessly stress out the mother. A nursing mother does NOT need to interact with owned pets during this period of time; she may become very aggressive if she fears her pups may be in any danger – even if your pets have never had any sort of issue with another animal, they should not meet the nursing mother dog during this critical period. Once the pups start eating on their own, they will begin exploring their environment more and more and the mother will welcome some help entertaining them, feeding them, cleaning them and having longer and longer periods away from them. Perhaps in the yard by herself or short walks around the neighborhood. Take your cues from the mother though – if she seems anxious away from her puppies, leave her with them.

Supplies

- **Whelping box** if pups are less than 4 weeks of age.



An upside down ½ of a crate will work, a large box with a small walkway cut out, or baby gating an area off so the puppies stay close to the mother. The mother needs to be able to easily leave the area to eliminate away from her puppies and stretch her legs as necessary. Change bedding regularly and make sure the area is free of drafts. Keeping a very even temperature is very important.

- **Newspapers** Keep several layers in the bottom of the box, and they will come in handy when the puppies start to roam around the room.
- **Water bowls** Heavy and impossible to tip. Should be stainless steel or porcelain/ceramic, NOT plastic, as plastic is difficult to disinfect because it is so porous.
- **Food bowls (one more than the number of dogs you are fostering)** One is for the eat-at-will dry food, the other for canned food. You can use TV dinner trays, paper plates or whatever you have; any relatively flat plate or saucer will do. The larger the litter, the larger the plate should be so that no one gets crowded out.
- **Food** The shelter will provide both hard and canned food for your foster puppies.
- **Plenty of clean towels and blankets**
- **Toys** Plastic, disinfect-able toys are good to reuse for new litters. Clean tennis balls and old stuffed socks.
- **Baby gates and exercise pens** For confining the puppies as needed



Feeding

Age 0-4 Weeks

Mom: The nursing mother dog should be offered plenty of food at all times – nursing puppies is incredibly hard work and her calorie intake needs to be much higher than a non-lactating dog. Most dog food prints recommended dosing for lactating mother dogs on the label. Make sure she always has access to hard kibble and fresh water because lactating dogs also tend to drink more than non-nursing dogs. Throughout the foster period, feed mom as much as she will eat – you cannot over feed a momma dog!

Puppies: Puppies should nurse vigorously and compete for nipples. Newborns can nurse up to 45 minutes at a time. Be sure to watch puppies nursing at least once a day, if the mother will permit it. Check that everyone is nursing and that there isn't too much jockeying for position. A great deal of activity and crying could indicate a problem with milk flow, quality or availability. When the mother reenters the box, there should be some fussing for only a few minutes before everyone has settled down to serious nursing. Puppies will sleep 90% of the time and eat the other 10%.

Age 4-5 Weeks

Puppies usually can drink and eat from a saucer by 4 weeks. Weaning should be done gradually. Introduce them to solid food by offering warmed canned food, mixed with a little water into gruel, in a shallow saucer. You can begin by placing one puppy by the plate of canned food gruel, and hoping for the best - if she starts eating, great! Her littermates will probably copy her and do the same. Some puppies may prefer to lick the gruel from your fingers, if this is the case; slowly lower your finger to the plate and hold it to the food. This way the puppies will learn to eat with their heads bent down. The puppies will walk in it, slide in it, and track it all. Be patient, sometimes it takes two or three meals before they catch on.

Age 5-6 Weeks

Feed gruel 4 times a day. Thicken the gruel gradually by reducing the amount of water mixed with it. Introduce dry food and water. If you are fostering a litter with their mother, continue weaning. For reluctant eaters, try mixing some puppy milk replacer into the gruel or tempt the puppy with some meat-flavored human baby food mixed with a bit of water. The familiar formula taste and smell or the meat flavor of baby food is often more appealing to the picky eaters than dog food. Once the puppy accepts the formula based gruel or baby food gradually mix in dry puppy food until the puppy has been weaned like the other puppies.

Age 6-7 Weeks

By this age the puppies should be eating dry food well. Feed the puppies at least three meals daily. If one puppy appears food-possessive, use a second dish and leave plenty of food out so that everyone can eat at the same time. Although the puppies may not eat much at a single sitting, they usually like to eat at frequent intervals throughout the day.

Age 7-8 Weeks

Feeding: Offer dry food 3 - 4 times a day. Leave down a bowl of water for them to eat and drink at will. If you have a litter with a bitch, she should only be allowing brief nursing sessions, if any. Do not feed the puppy's table scraps.

Age 8 weeks and over

Feeding: Offer dry food 3 times a day. Leave down a bowl of water for them to drink at will.

Eliminating

During the first 2-3 weeks of life puppies do not urinate and defecate on their own. This is stimulated when the mother is cleaning them. As the mother stops taking care of their eliminating needs but before the pups get the idea of eliminating outside of their nest, there will be A LOT of cleaning up for the foster provider to take care of. However, you can begin housebreaking at four weeks of age. This can be done by using a pile of newspapers or training pads in a corner. After each feeding, place the puppy on the papers, or outside, for him to go to the bathroom. Be patient! He may not remember to do this every time, or may forget where to find the papers, but he will learn quickly. Be sure to give the puppies lots of praise when they first start using their papers or cry to go out. It is a good idea to confine the puppies to a relatively small space, because the larger the area the puppies have to play in, the more likely they will forget where the papers are. Keep the papers clean and away from their food.



Socialization

Momma dogs will undoubtedly appreciate NOT having to deal with any other animals while they are nursing their puppies. Protecting and nurturing her puppies is her number one priority and any other animal could be seen as a threat to their safety, no matter how friendly they are. Keep momma dogs isolated from other pets in the home until you are certain she is very comfortable and completely non threatened, keep in mind this may be the entire time she is in your home. Once the puppies are around 5-6 weeks and can tolerate time away from mom, you can begin to introduce them to other animals in your home.

Growth and Development

In the 2 first weeks of life puppies are helpless and vulnerable. They are still developing basic reflexes, their hearing and vision is still not fully developed, and they are unable to properly control their body temperatures. They should therefore be confined to the nursery area. Young puppies should be kept in a large box or kennel lined with a towel for easy cleaning. It is very important to keep the puppies warm, especially during the first 2-3 weeks of life. A heating pad or a warm water bottle can be ideal sources of heating. If you use a heating pad make sure it only covers half or parts of the nursing area so that the neonates can move away from the heat if they need to, and also make sure it is set on "low" and that the electrical cord is out of reach of sharp little puppy teeth. The more puppies in your litter, the better able they will be to keep warm by sleeping together in a heap. Small litters and singletons need more help keeping warm, singletons will also often find comfort in a stuffed fluffy toy to snuggle up to. **Keep neonates away from heaters or cold drafts.** As the puppies get older, from 4-5 weeks of age, they can be allowed to roam a larger area of your house, but they should still be closely supervised and kept in a secured area when not confined to their nursing area. Remember these puppies are still very vulnerable to infections, such as canine parvo infection, and should be separated from other pets if possible, and only be allowed to interact with fully vaccinated, healthy dogs

Age 0-2 weeks:

- Ear canals open between 5 and 8 days.
- Eyes will open between 8 and 14 days. They open gradually, usually starting to open from the nose outward. All puppies are born with blue eyes, and initially no pupils can be distinguished from the irises - the eyes will appear solid dark blue.
- Healthy puppies will be round and warm, with pink skin. If you pinch them gently, their skin should spring back.
- When you pick a puppy up, it should wiggle energetically and when you put it down near the mom it should crawl back to her.
- Healthy puppies seldom cry.

Age 2-3 weeks:

- If there is a mother, she will begin to spend larger periods of time out of the nest, though she will not go far from it.
- Puppies begin to crawl around day 18 and can stand by day 21.
- They will begin to play with each other, biting ears, tails and paws even before their teeth have come in.
- Their milk teeth are cut during this period.
- They learn to sit and touch objects with their paws.
- Puppies begin their socialization phase - they will be strongly influenced by the behavior of their mother for the next six weeks. To further socialize puppies, increase the amount of handling, and get them accustomed to human contact. It is important not to expose them to anything frightening; children may seem intimidating and should be supervised closely while visiting to ensure gentle handling.

Age 3-5 weeks

- Adult eye color will begin to appear, but may not reach final shade for another 9 to 12 weeks.
- Puppies begin to see well and their eyes begin to look and function like adult dogs' eyes. Puppies will start cleaning themselves, though their mother will continue to do most of the serious cleaning.
- If there is a mother present, she will usually begin weaning by discouraging her puppies from nursing; however, some dogs (particularly those with small litters) will allow nursing until the puppies are old enough for permanent homes. Some nursing activity is the canine equivalent of thumb-sucking, that is, for comfort only. Even if puppies appear to be nursing, they may not be getting all the nutrition they need from mom. Make sure they are eating food and gaining weight.
- Be sure that the puppies always have access to fresh water in a low, stable bowl.

Age 5-6 weeks

- At about five weeks, puppies can start to roam around the room, under supervision. The strongest, most curious puppy will figure out how to get out of the nest. The others will quickly follow.
- Be sure to take them to their papers or outside after meals, during play sessions, and after naps. These are the usual times that puppies need to eliminate.
- Vaccinating and de-worming: At about 6 weeks, the pups should receive their first round of vaccinations and get a round of de-worming. The Foster Coordinator will work with you to get your fosters seen by AUSTIN ANIMAL CENTER vet staff to arrange this.

Age 6-8 weeks

- By this time, you have "mini-dogs." They will wash themselves, play games with each other, their toys, and you, and many will come when you call them.
- This is a very entertaining time to have puppies – they play hard, sleep hard and are learning all about their world. Socialization is KEY during this period to make sure the puppies learn not to be threatened by new things.

Age 8 weeks

- Puppies should now be ready for adoption if they are free of any symptoms of illness (runny nose, cough, diarrhea or hair loss).
- Take pictures of your puppies individually, cropped horizontally, and titled by their animal ID number and e-mail them to the foster coordinator for posting on the AUSTIN ANIMAL CENTER website.
- The foster coordinator will arrange for the puppies to come back to the shelter for adoption!

Diary of a Foster Mom

I fostered an awesome Chihuahua mix mom and her 7 puppies from the end of September until mid November. I had them from when they were about 5 days old until they were 8 weeks. And happy to say, they've all been adopted and are with their forever families. It was an amazing experience that I will definitely be doing again.

From about 5 days to 3 weeks, they were mainly taken care of by their mom. I had an extra room that really came in handy because I also have an older male dog that was very curious about the puppies, as well as two old lady cats who weren't thrilled with having these weird new creatures in the house. If you don't have an extra room, I would recommend putting them in a large closet or a bathroom. Having a closed off space, I think, made her feel more comfortable.

Sweet Pea (the mom) was really, really, really protective of these puppies. She warmed up to me right away but as soon as she saw my dog and was with the puppies, she would start barking at him. My advice with introducing them would be to let her get used to her space first and keep your dog as far away from them as possible. Once she's cool with you being around the puppies, then I would take her out and play with her and pet her as if she's your pet. This is when you can introduce her to your dog. I never let my dog in the puppy room and eventually he wasn't even that curious anymore. You will be amazed at how fast your momma dog can go from being smart, instinctual protective mom dog to being happy to please pet dog when taken away from her litter.



In the times when I took her away from her litter to go to the bathroom, hang out with me, and have some "time off" from being a food source :), I would leave the door open to the room and

put up a baby gate so that she could hear and see her puppies at all times. When I took her out, she would do her business pretty quickly and then want to get right back to them. If she was hanging out with me and heard just a little peep out of one of them, she'd go running back in there to check it out. I forget why I did this, but one time I put her out of the room and shut the door while tending to the puppies and that was a big mistake because she became frantic - so I'd recommend never doing that - make sure she feels like she can always get back to them if she needs to.

While she was still nursing a whole bunch, and cleaning up after the pups (something that was a surprise to me! It's kind of gross that she will eat all their waste but it actually makes your job a lot easier and teaches them not to go potty where they sleep and eat) during this time, I had her on wet dog food and she ate like a horse!! That meant that she had to go to the bathroom A LOT and it's usually pretty runny (I really don't mean to be gross but I had to find out that this was pretty normal and that she wasn't sick.)



My set up in the room was as such: I bought a couple of big plastic sheets and two canvasses - the kind that you get at home depot as drop clothes for painting. The plastic sheets were about \$2 a piece and the canvasses I think were about \$8 a piece. I laid one piece of plastic out and covered it with one canvas. (I suggest multiple because you will throw out the plastic once it is dirty and launder one canvas while the other is being used.) I put out a couple of puppy pads for house training. These come in handy when the pups are only a couple of weeks old because the mother will be going to the bathroom A LOT and she will need to use those when you aren't able to take her out 8x a day and when the pups are older, they will tend to use those (and a lot of other places too). I also bought a baby pool (the only place I could find these was actually at PetSmart since it was fall and Wal-Mart and target weren't carrying them that time of year). This kept the puppies contained for the first couple of weeks. Your little ones look like they might already be at the stage when they would be getting out of the baby pool so not sure if this is necessary. The baby pool was the cheap version of a whelping pen. In the baby pool, I put more puppy pads and on top of those I put baby receiving blankets. (This was a great tip I learned online). They are super cheap - like 5 for \$10, easy to clean, and plus they come in adorable prints. :) I read that you should get a heating pad for them but they tended not to sleep on it and since I don't keep my house too cold, it wasn't really needed.

Oh and LOTS of paper towels!!

I was also kind of a nervous Nelly when it came to their health and since I'm not a vet the only way I could tell that they were healthy was to weigh them. (This might have been overkill though). I got a little food scale with a basket and weighed them every day for a while and then every couple of days to make sure that they were gaining weight. They gained almost an ounce a day pretty consistently.

One thing I kept seeing on puppy raising websites as a tip, was to clip their toenails. Since they are so tiny, a regular dog clipper won't work but since I have cats I had a cat toe nail clipper that worked great. They recommend this because when they are nursing they are digging their paws into the mom and this can hurt her. I did this once a week and since they were so little they didn't seem to mind. (I wish I had actually started this when my dog was a puppy because he HATES getting his nails clipped now!)





As far as feeding, once she started to seem somewhat annoyed at nursing - about 3 to 4 weeks, we started them on puppy food - a blender is definitely necessary for this. The first time I tried it I blended it up with some luke warm water and they seemed somewhat uninterested. Then my boyfriend micro waved some water and blended it up so it was really warm and they took to it immediately!! This is the time that started feeding Sweet Pea dried food. She liked to eat the puppy mush though too so just try to be aware if the mom is eating all the food that was meant for the pups. And as far as water, I was concerned because for a while they were just nursing and eating the mush and didn't go near the water dish. Then just naturally with no reason, they started drinking from the water dish. They were still nursing up until I dropped them off at AUSTIN ANIMAL CENTER but usually Sweet Pea snapped at them if they tried once they were about 6 weeks.

That brings up something that really concerned me and my neighbor said was very normal. After a while, Sweet Pea would growl and grab them by their legs or their head with her mouth and I really thought she was hurting them! But apparently that is the momma dog's way of teaching her pups right from wrong.

At about 4-5 weeks I had removed the baby pool from the room and they just slept on a dog bed all together and put out a few blankets. I also had a futon in the room that Sweet Pea could jump on and the puppies couldn't. She seemed to really like this since at night I still kept her closed in the room with the puppies. She could still keep an eye on them but she was up away from them so that they weren't constantly bugging her for milk. I would suggest having some place that she can sleep that they cannot get to but she can still be with them.

This is also around the time that they understood that the door to the room wasn't the "end" of their world and they wanted to get out and explore. This is when they get fun and very messy. I let them out to play with me in the living room and there were many accidents. I did not discipline them since they are way too young to understand - just cleaned up their mess. (At this point, the mother dog is done doing that for you!!)



At about 5-6 weeks, I started taking them outside. At first they were kind of terrified - some more than others. And as soon as one would start whining, they all would start - even ones that looked like they were enjoying themselves. After the third time out, it was hard to get them all back inside they LOVED the backyard. Watch out for holes in your fence, or holes underneath sheds or decks because they will definitely want to check those places out. Once you can take them outside you can start on mild house training. I took them out about 5 times a day - once immediately in the morning when I heard them whining at the door, three times during the day, and once before bedtime (around 9PM - this time is kind of arbitrary - I just did this so my cat could come in the house since she wouldn't if the puppies were out of their room.) Surprisingly, they really would rather go to the bathroom outside and would go as soon as I took them out. Though still not disciplining for accidents in the house - that's something I would leave up to their owners once they are adopted.

At this point, my dog Ferris had become buds with Sweet Pea when the puppies weren't around. She was spending less and less time with them - wanting to take a nap with me or using the dog door to hang out outside by herself or with Ferris. If she is outside by herself, make sure your fence is really sound. I never witnessed this but my neighbor told me that a few times stray male dogs came sniffing around the fence and Ferris barked at them until they went away. Since she isn't spayed, apparently she will still attract unwanted male attention. As far as Ferris, I'm not sure if I created a situation where he was jealous of the puppies or if this is the way cranky old men dogs act around puppies, but they were REALLY interested in him and he didn't like it. They would follow him around and he would turn towards them and they would immediately sink to the grass and belly crawl towards him. He'd make this weird growl and snap at them but never ever bit them. I would just keep an eye out if you have an older male dog just to make sure he doesn't take it too far. The puppies, I guess, thought he was playing because they never learned to leave him alone.



At about 7 weeks, they learned to use the dog door and my life for about a week was spent counting to 7 to make sure all of the puppies were constantly accounted for. I had gotten different colored collars for each of them so that made it easier to know from a distance which puppies were which. Obviously, if I ever left the house, the puppies were put in their room. At this point, they were also eating regular puppy food without being blended. (I bought the big bag of Fromm's Puppy Gold in the pink bag from Bark n Purr which they liked). This is also the point where I started posting on Craigslist which I actually have some advice about as well. I tried to post one post for each puppy and Craigslist thought I was spamming so would only let me post three of the puppies listings. (This was the first time I ever posted something to Craigslist so that might be common knowledge). Also, I posted that I would send and take applications, this kind of turned into a mess. I would recommend that you direct people to the shelter to fill out their applications where they can take the ID number posted in your Craigslist ad and put it on the application and let the shelter deal with approving applications.

At 8 weeks, I got them all together and dropped them off. This was super tough as you will have grown really, really attached to these guys. I'm not sure if this is everyone's experience but my experience with the intake team was not very good as they just snapped them away from me, without giving me much time to say goodbye and basically dragged very frightened puppies by the scruff of their necks out of their kennel carrier and put them in another cage. Just be prepared for a very quick goodbye. On the other hand, when I went to check on them a few days later, the people at the adoption side were extremely friendly and went through each and every one of them on the computer to let me know their adoption status. That made me feel a lot better.



Fostering an Adult Dog

Realistic Expectations

Perfect dogs get adopted quickly. Dogs that are totally housetrained, small and cute, have fabulous manners and are terrific with all other animals do not stay at the shelter long. There is no need for us to find a foster home for these animals. It is the animals who are less than desirable to the average adopter who end up staying at the shelter for weeks and months at a time, awaiting a forever home. AUSTIN ANIMAL CENTER Staff determines which dogs at the shelter would benefit from a foster home. It may be based on their behavior at the shelter, the notes from a previous owner, or health. Very often adult dogs come to the shelter ill or injured and need foster care to recover. A variety of factors are used to determine which animals may struggle to get adopted at the shelter and need that extra special help only a foster home can provide.



Considering Fostering an Adult Dog

If you are considering fostering an adult dog, there are a few things you should consider before stepping up to take in a shelter dog as a foster pet. Typically these are larger, older dogs whose manners leave QUITE a bit to be desired. Perhaps they are not yet 100% housetrained. Perhaps they jump up all over folks when they first meet them. Perhaps they are holy terrors on the leash. Perhaps they have been in the shelter so long they have become frustrated and are showing aggression towards other dogs.



SPACE - Can you safely confine the dog while you are away from home or not able to supervise the dog? The shelter recommends crate training ANY dog to help them learn the house rules and reinforce housetraining. If needed, the shelter will provide an appropriate sized crate. Foster dogs should be kept exclusively indoors, and only let out when you are there to supervise. Having a securely fenced in back yard is helpful but not mandatory. Just remember, without a yard, you must leash walk the dog EVERY time it needs to go potty – even at 2am! And just because it has never occurred to YOUR dog to leave it's yard, shelter dogs may be diggers, fence jumpers or fence EATERS and should NOT be left unattended in the yard until you are 110% sure they have no escape artist tendencies.

TIME - Adult dogs can be left alone (safely confined of course!) longer than puppies and younger dogs, which make fostering an adult dog more feasible for folks who work full time. However, with a foster dog waiting for you at home, dinner with friends after work or happy hour with co-workers is no longer an option – your foster dog needs you! Dogs that stay a long time at the shelter are usually rambunctious, high energy dogs that need an above average amount of exercise. Fostering an adult dog is NOT for couch potatoes! Most of these adult dogs will need a long walk/run/hike everyday, of at least an hour (or two 30 minutes sessions may fit in better to your schedule). Trips to the park, hikes around Lady Bird Lake and finding a good large fenced in area for exhaustive games of fetch are all great ideas. Remember, a well exercised dog is too tired to eat your couch!



FAMILY – Consider every member of your family – two AND four legged! Long stay shelter dogs may be too rowdy and jumpy for young children or the dog may find the constant activity and noise that comes with a home full of children overwhelming. Children may not understand the needs of the foster dog, and that they may not be able to treat it just like they treat THEIR dog. Speaking of dogs, will the foster dog get along with your resident dog? We do require a Meet and Greet before moving forward with any foster placement – your dog(s) will need to come to the shelter to meet the foster dog to make sure everyone can live peacefully together. And speaking of peaceful – most long stay shelter dogs should NOT be trusted around cats, slow, steady, controlled introductions are a MUST, and the foster dog should NEVER be left unattended with a resident cat.

COMMITMENT – How long can you be committed to this foster dog? Since long stay dogs have already tried their hand at finding a forever home while at the shelter, having a dog leave the shelter for any length of time and enjoy all of the bliss of living in a home, only to be returned to the shelter seems a little counter productive. This may mean that you foster this dog for weeks or months, without a definitive end date for foster care. While the shelter will ALWAYS take back a foster dog if the foster situation is no longer working, we want to reserve this as a very last resort once the animal has already left to go into foster care. Since the dogs are not at the shelter, they are not being exposed to potential adopters everyday; it is up to the foster home to market them in the community to try to find them a forever home. If the foster home is unable or willing to do this marketing, the foster home MUST be able to supply the shelter with photos and behavior information and short videos if possible for the shelter’s volunteer marketing team to work on getting the foster dog “out there”. Foster homes must be willing to meet potential adopters and bring the dog to offsite adoption events (these are infrequent, but do pop up from time to time). From time to time the foster coordinator is asked to do Pet of the Week spots on local TV stations and may ask you to meet her at the TV station to feature your foster pet!

Training

It is our expectation that the foster dog's behavior will only IMPROVE in foster care. It is not enough to just find out it is a "great dog" outside of the shelter. It should learn to walk nicely on the leash, greet people in a pleasant way (no jumping or pawing at visitors), and be reliably housetrained. If it knows "sit", "stay" and "down" and will come EVERY time it is called, that much better to find it a forever home. A lot of dog savvy folks can do all of this on their own, but if you can't, that should not be road block to fostering an adult dog. We are currently contacting trainers throughout the city who are willing to "comp" training classes for our adult dogs in foster care but the foster must be willing to get them to the classes on a regular basis and follow through on everything they learn in training class!

Fostering a long stay adult dog, literally turning its life around in foster care, is an extremely rewarding experience. Many of you will keep your foster dogs, and as long as it is a good match the shelter will support your adoption 100%. You are by no means expected to keep them though! The GOAL is go from Foster to Forever!



Trouble Shooting for Fostering Dogs and Pups

A healthy puppy has bright eyes, a nice coat, and a plump belly. Younger puppies are content to sleep between feedings. As they approach 8 weeks they begin to spend more time playing. Unfortunately, puppies do become ill and sometimes die while being fostered, so it is important to take steps to prevent disease and treat it appropriately as soon as it appears.

Abnormal signs to watch for in a puppy:

Continuous diarrhea

Continuous vomiting

Constant crying

Reduced nursing

Reduced activity

Runny nose, sneezing or coughing

Hair loss

Bleeding of any kind: nose, urine, stool

Any trauma: hit by car, dropped, limping, stepped on, unconscious

If you have a sick puppy, you should report any symptoms to the foster coordinator. She can triage the issue over the phone or e-mail and have you bring in the foster(s) to be seen by the shelter vet staff if needed.

Do not take foster pets to your personal vet or to an emergency clinic unless specifically instructed to do so by the foster coordinator. Any vet bills you incur for your fosters at a personal vet clinic CANNOT be reimbursed.

Specific disease conditions in puppies:

Diarrhea

Diarrhea is common in puppies and can be caused by parasites, viruses, bacteria, food changes, stress, overfeeding, and other causes. If the diarrhea is mild and the puppy is otherwise alert and playful, you can try giving it less food but more often and monitor closely. Also ensure that the puppy gets a lot of fluid as they are prone dehydration. If the diarrhea is severe, lasts more than 3 or 4 feedings, or contains blood or obvious parasites, you should call the Foster Coordinator ASAP.

Vomiting

If your puppy is vomiting, it is possible that the puppy is eating his meals too quickly. You should watch him when he eats and not allow him to eat too much too quickly. If your puppy vomits 2-3 times in a row, you should call the Foster Coordinator ASAP as this could be a sign of an infectious disease.

Fading puppies

Once in a while, one or more puppies in a litter that were healthy and vigorous at birth will begin to "fade" after a week or two of life. They will stop growing; lose weight, and stop nursing and crawling. They may cry continuously and lose the ability to stay upright. The

mother dog may push them out of the nest, where they often chill and starve to death. Puppies fade very quickly - they will not last 48 hours without veterinary care - and many will not recover even with intensive care. Often there is no clear cause for this condition - it has been linked to birth defects, environmental stress and infectious disease. Early veterinary treatment is imperative, but even with tube feeding, rehydration and monitoring, many, if not most, fading puppies will die. If the shelter vet feels the foster is suffering and chances of recovery are very small, the shelter vet may opt to humanely euthanize the foster(s).

Fleas

Fleas are insects that love to feed on puppies. Although each flea only consumes a small drop of blood, fleas commonly attack in large numbers and an infestation can literally lead to anemia and even death in young puppies. It is therefore essential that your home be free of fleas before bringing home a small puppy. Fosters leaving the shelter will have been treated for fleas.

Kennel cough

Kennel cough is an extremely contagious respiratory disease that is often seen in animal shelters. Puppies with kennel cough typically cough or sneeze, and have nasal discharge. Kennel cough is often difficult for puppies to overcome, any puppy that is coughing or sneezing repeatedly, or has nasal and/or eye discharge requires veterinary attention. Report issues to the Foster Coordinator so a vet visit at AUSTIN ANIMAL CENTER can be arranged.

Ringworm

Ringworm is actually caused by a fungus, related to athlete's foot. On people and dogs, ringworm is most often shaped in a regular ring. The dog's fur will often fall out, leaving a round bare spot with a visible ring. Ringworm causes little distress and is not an emergency, but **it is contagious to cats, dogs, and people**. If you or your pets contract ringworm, you will need to seek treatment from your doctor and veterinarian (respectively). Everything the puppies touched while in your home will need to be disinfected with a bleach solution (at least 1 part bleach to 10 parts water, equivalent to 1+1/2 cup of bleach per gallon of water) or steam cleaned, it is recommended to repeat cleaning as ringworm spores are very hardy and can easily spread among other dogs and re-infect their hosts. If you have fostered a litter with ringworm, you should thoroughly clean and disinfect the area they were kept in and if you decide to foster another litter it is recommended to keep them in a different room than the ringworm infected litter.

Treatment

If your foster is diagnosed with an illness at the shelter, you will be provided with a "Treatment Sheet" indicating what illness the foster is being treated for and what medications or treatments the foster needs. If you have any questions or concerns about the treatments, please do not hesitate to contact the Foster Coordinator.

Medicating Puppies

A note about treating your puppy: In general, if you need to treat a puppy, try to medicate him in an impersonal way. If you hold the puppy in your lap to medicate him, he will associate being picked up with being medicated and in worst case become scared every time you go to cuddle him. It is better to put the puppy up on a countertop, maybe wrapping him in a towel to administer medication. It is also worth while to give extra praise and if appropriate give him a treat before and after medicating him, as this will help ease the stress of the situation and may even result in a positive association to medication time.