

# Foster Care

## GUIDE



[sbhumane.org/foster](http://sbhumane.org/foster)



## *Dear Foster Family,*

First and foremost, THANK YOU! You are about to embark on a life-saving adventure that you'll never forget and become a hero to your foster animal! Our foster program exists to give young animals a chance to grow and to give injured, sick, or under-socialized animals an opportunity to heal.

In this manual, you will find guidance and helpful tips to ensure success for the duration of your foster animal's stay.

### **Types of Animals That Need Foster Homes**

- Puppies or kittens too young to be adopted
- Dogs or cats that need socialization and love
- Injured dogs or cats recovering from surgery
- Sick dogs or cats
- An abandoned mother with a litter of kittens or puppies
- Any animal when the shelter becomes overcrowded

If the requirements included in the following section do not work well with your current schedule, please let us know. We can help you find a foster situation that will work best for you!

Sincerely,

**Santa Barbara Humane**

**[foster@sbhumane.org](mailto:foster@sbhumane.org)**

**cell: 805-203-3181**

**office: 805-964-4777 ext. 305**

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# Preparing for Your Foster

## Preparing the Room

Before you bring home your foster(s), make sure that you have a suitable place for them to stay. A bathroom often works well. The room should adhere to the following guidelines:

- A space where temperature can be controlled.
- The space has been disinfected by using a mild bleach solution (1 part bleach to 32 parts water).
- Separate from other household pets.
- Can withstand messes: spilt water or food, vomit, urine, feces, etc.
- No breakable items.
- Electrical outlets and wires are blocked.
- No small items.
- Secured windows (closed or with a secure screen).
- Secured appliances (toilet lids closed)

Everything you will need to care for you foster will be provided free of charge.



- **Use glass or metal bowls as plastic bowls are porous and not as easy to clean.**
- **Clean linens and toys daily.**
- **Supervise play time.**



## Cats

- Indoors only (do not let your foster cat/kitten outdoors).
- A large crate or separate room (bathroom or large closet) is best.

## Dogs

- Dogs should be kept indoors in a crate when unattended or a separate room/office.
- Dogs should be on a leash at all times when outdoors unless in a private secure fenced in area.
- Foster dog/puppies are not permitted to go to dog parks.
- While dogs are social animals, they are individuals and do not like every dog they meet.

## Puppies

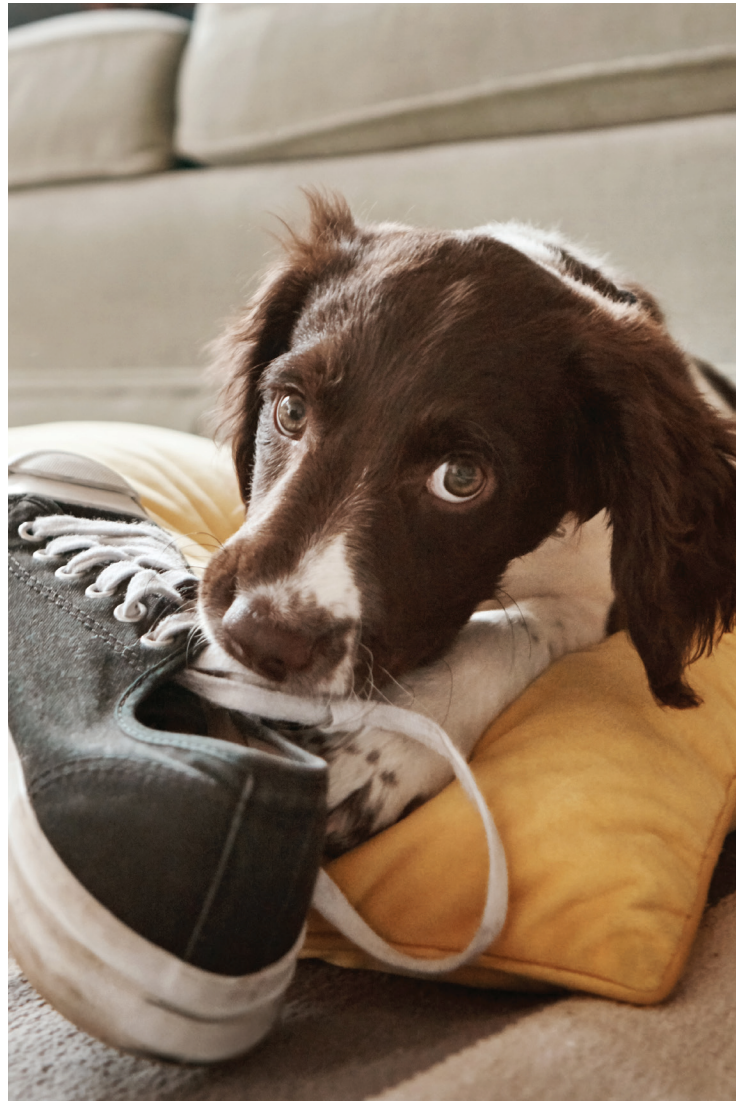
- Indoors – kitchen or bathroom. Baby gate or corral provided upon request.
- Puppies should be around humans for socialization purposes and should not be isolated.
- Outdoors – only if supervised by an adult. Puppies younger than 5 months should NEVER go to off-leash areas because they are not fully vaccinated.
- Puppies should not be exposed to other dogs or places frequented by other dogs due to the risk of diseases such as parvovirus.

## Puppy Development

In the first two 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 a nursery area. Puppies should not be allowed to mingle with your own pets.

During the first 1-3 weeks of life puppies do not urinate or defecate on their own and require stimulation for elimination. Gently rub a warm cloth or cotton pad on the puppy's genital area and anus. This should be done before or after feeding.

Keeping the puppies clean from food and feces is vital for his or her health. If you notice your puppy has food, urine, or feces on him or her gently wipe the puppy down with a warm damp cloth or baby wipe. Be sure to dry the puppy well afterwards so they do not become chilled.



- **Poisonous household plants include Lilies, Sago Palms, Corn Plant, Aloe Plant, and Asparagus Fern.**
- **Supervise your foster animal when around children and other animals.**
- **Puppies are chewers! Be sure to remove all electrical cords and small objects.**




# Neonate Feeding

## Type of Food

Never give a neonate puppy anything other than their specified formula! (No cow's milk!)

Puppies who are less than three to four weeks old are fed a combination of liquid or powder formula. After a feeding, unused liquid formula can be stored for up to three days in the refrigerator or frozen for future feedings. Frozen formula will last for 6 months.

The powder formula must be mixed for feedings. It is important to closely follow mixing directions: one part powder into two parts warm water (as it can cause diarrhea or constipation if not done correctly). When mixing do not use a blender. Any reconstituted powder formula can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours. After that point, it must be discarded.



**To warm nursing bottles, fill a coffee mug half way with hot water and place the bottle of formula into mug. After a minute or two, test formula by sprinkling a few drops on the back of your hand. Formula should be warm to the touch, but not hot.**



## Feeding Etiquette

- Only use clean nipples and bottles!
- Feed puppies one at a time. Place them on a countertop and allow them to feed with four paws on the counter and with a level head. This simulates how they would nurse from a mom.
- Do not feed a puppy while she is on her back. This can cause formula to go down the wrong way and end up in the lungs.
- Gently open the puppy's mouth with your finger and place the nipple on the tongue.
- Stroking puppy can help them to eat.
- Pull lightly on the bottle. This promotes strong sucking.
- Tilt the bottle up slightly. This prevents the puppy from inhaling too much air.
- Do not squeeze the bottle to force formula into the puppy's mouth. This can cause formula to move into the lungs.
- After feeding, burp your puppy by gently massaging her back.
- Be sure to stimulate the puppy after or before feeding. Stimulate them with a warm cloth if necessary.
- Fill out the Daily Health & Behavior Record Sheet at the end of this guide.

## Weaning

Weaning can occur at 4 to 5 weeks and should be conducted gradually. Create a gruel by mixing moistened dry food with water or canned food. Introduce them to solid food by offering warmed can food, mixed with a small amount of water into gruel, in a shallow dish.

Begin by placing puppy to the side of the plate, he or she should start to eat, it may take a few tries for puppies to understand. If they are not interested, wait a few hours and then try again. After they have accepted the gruel, gradually thicken it by adding less water. Begin to also offer dry food on a free feeding basis.

If the mother is present she will usually begin weaning the puppies by discouraging them from nursing; however, some dogs will allow the nursing until the puppies are old enough for spay/neuter surgery. Some nursing activity is the canine equivalent of thumb sucking, that is, for comfort only. Even if the puppies appear to be nursing, they may not be getting all of the nutrition they need from mom. Make sure the puppies are eating food and gaining weight.

## Amount of Food

Overfeeding is as dangerous as underfeeding. Feed puppies and kittens until they are full but not bloated.

## Cleaning Equipment

Keeping nursing bottles and supplies clean is vital as this will prevent diarrhea, vomiting, or infection. Cleaning the bottles and nursing nipples is quite easy. Using hot, soapy water, clean the bottle with a bottle brush. If you do not have a bottle brush, you may wash the bottle and nursing nipple in the dishwasher. You may place them in the silverware rack or in a dishwasher basket.

## Additional Feeding Considerations

The digestive systems of puppies are fragile. Do not offer puppies treats. Only feed them the food provided by the Foster Coordinator.

If puppies are fighting over food, start to feed them separately. Contact the Foster Coordinator for support.

Never take food away from a puppy that is growling. Simply remove the other puppies and wait for the food bowl to be unattended.





## Fostering Moms

In some cases, moms are fostered together with her litter. There are a few things to keep in mind for this type of foster situation. Moms require a calm setting that has privacy and minimal activity. Stress can cause moms to stop taking care of their puppies.



## Bringing Mom Home

You will need a separate space for a mom with her litter. When you first bring them home, leave them alone in their new space. The separate area may be referred to as a whelping box or nesting area. Mom will need some time, up to a few days, to adjust to her new space. Be sure to offer mom fresh food, water and a clean nesting area.

## Socialization

Even adult dogs need socialization; however, proceed slowly with any adult dog that you do not know. Create situations for socialization but let her come to you. Stop the session if you notice any negative signs, such as tensing up, moving away, or growling. It is always best to move slowly and use caution when reaching into the nesting area.

## Mom and Her Puppies

For the first few weeks, mom will do everything necessary to take care of her puppies. Puppies start nursing very soon after birth. Mom will also groom her puppies. It's best to leave the mom alone for the first two weeks except to feed and to go outside for potty breaks.

## Possible Issues with Mom Dogs

**Maternal Neglect**—In some cases, about 8% of the time, puppies die from poor maternal care. There are a few causes of this. Some dogs lack maternal instincts and, in other cases, it is nature's way of handling sick or weak puppies. Environmental stress is an important factor, which is why it is important to create a calm environment for mom and the litter. Foster parents should watch for signs of maternal neglect. Call the Foster Coordinator if you notice the mom avoids feeding and grooming her puppies and ignores their cries.

**Maternal Aggression**—As mom protects her puppies, it is common for her to be aggressive towards humans or other animals. Do not try to introduce your household pets to your foster mom as this adds too much stress to the environment. If aggression becomes severe, call the Foster Coordinator.







# Basic Training Tips

## Mouthing

- Puppies are born with instincts to bite. One of the most important things they learn, as a puppy, is how to control the strength of their bite.
- Puppies naturally train each other how to bite. When one puppy bites another too hard, the other puppy yelps loudly and stops playing.
- As a foster parent, you can play this role. Any time a puppy mouths with too much force, yelp loudly. If the puppy stops biting, then praise him/her. If the puppy continues biting, turn your back on the puppy and walk away. After ten seconds or so, resume play happily.
- Remember: Mouthing is important! A puppy who is never allowed to mouth will grow up to have a hard bite.
- Never scold, tap on the nose, or yell no at a puppy who is biting. Bite inhibition is a crucial development for puppies. A puppy who is punished for biting can turn into an adult with unsafe jaws (because they do not know their jaw strength). Simply yell "ouch" when a puppy bites too hard.

## Toys

Having toys available for your puppy is vital for their mental health and development. A selection of toys is best such as plush squeak toys, rope toys, stuffed Kongs, and teething toys.



## Housetraining

We always want to set our puppies up for success, and doing so in the house training process is essential! Puppies should have frequent breaks and be taken outside to the same spot to relieve themselves every 30 – 60 minutes when active (when waking up from a nap, after drinking or eating, and after a play session). A puppy can hold his/her bladder one hour for each month of age (i.e.: 2 months = 2 hours, 3 months = 3 hours).

**Remember these five steps to successful house training:**

1. Prevent accidents
2. Reward going to the bathroom
3. Anticipate bathroom needs
4. Interrupt accidents and avoid punishing
5. Clean up accidents with enzyme cleaner

**Pee pads for puppies five weeks and under:** Place puppies on pee pads immediately after waking up, after eating, and about once an hour. Praise the puppy enthusiastically every time he/she urinates or defecates on the pad. Change the pads frequently, as puppies tend to chew on pee pads.

## Crate Training

House training and crate training go hand in hand. A crate can be a great tool to use for your puppy, but it can also be misused. The crate should be big enough for your puppy to stand up, turn around, and stretch out; we will make sure you go home with the correct size, but your puppy may grow. Please let us know if you need a larger crate.

Your foster puppy/dog should have a short term confinement area, such as the crate, and a long term confinement area, such as an x-pen or baby gated section of the house or room.

If you are beginning to crate train, feed your puppy in the crate, provide stuffed chew toys only in the crate, and/or play crate games to build a positive association with the crate. Keep sessions short and fun, and have your puppy in the crate for short periods of time when you are home.

**Never use a crate as a form of punishment for your foster puppy or dog.**

## Positive Reinforcement

As a foster parent, there will be many situations for you to train your animal. Santa Barbara Humane only promotes training using positive reinforcement.

**Do not scold or punish bad behavior.**

- When an unwanted behavior is offered/performed re-direct the puppy with a kissy noise or toy. Praise and reward the puppy for stopping the undesired behavior and giving you attention.
- Punishment can instill fear, which can lead to aggressive behavior.
- Praise and reward good behavior.
- When a behavior is immediately followed by a positive outcome, that behavior is strengthened.



**After your dog eliminates plan an extra few minutes to play with your puppy. Dogs quickly learn to hold their bladder if they immediately go inside after they relieve themselves.**

## Runaway Foster

- **If your foster escapes or runs away contact the Foster Coordinators immediately. You may also contact animal control for your area.**
- **If your foster dog gets loose while on a walk don't chase, simply lie on the ground and calmly call their name.**
- **If your foster cat escapes the home place a blanket that smells like the cat/home and litter box outside of the home.**
- **Be sure to have your foster's collar and tags on at all times.**
- **If you did not receive your fosters tags at pick up, call the Foster Coordinators.**



# Socialization

From three weeks to three months, puppies are biologically primed to learn that new sights, sounds, smells, objects, environments, and people are fun and safe. This is the most crucial and sensitive period in a puppy's life.

Socialization is not simply exposing a puppy to a variety of people, places, and things, but using positive proactive socialization training. Each new person the puppy meets should be a wonderful experience with treats and toys. Take things slow if your puppy seems fearful of the new person, place, or thing.

## Socialization Checklist

Socializing your puppy to these items/actions is as easy as touching your puppy's paw and giving a treat, having a man with a hat give a treat as he walks by or saying hello and giving affection.

### People

- ☐ Men — tall, bearded, younger, older, men with canes/walker, men with hats, etc.
- ☐ Women — tall, younger, older, with purses, with walker/ canes/crutches, etc.
- ☐ Children — behaviorally appropriate - keep puppies on the ground

### Behaviors

- ☐ Laughing
- ☐ Talking loudly
- ☐ Walking
- ☐ Jogging
- ☐ Running

### Household Items

- ☐ Vacuums (turned off)
- ☐ Mops & brooms
- ☐ Bicycles
- ☐ Skate boards
- ☐ Tricycles
- ☐ Lawnmowers (turned off)

### Surfaces

- ☐ Grass
- ☐ Concrete
- ☐ Stairs
- ☐ Carpet
- ☐ Tile
- ☐ Hardwood

### Health & Grooming

- ☐ Nail clippers (not used)
- ☐ Feet being touched
- ☐ Ears being touched
- ☐ Tail being touched



# Maintaining Foster Health

## Diarrhea

There are three types of stool: normal, soft and diarrhea. Normal stool is firm and has a definite shape. Soft stool is not firm but still has some shape. Diarrhea is liquid, with or without color to it. Diarrhea is common and can be caused by parasites, viruses, bacteria, food changes, stress, overfeeding and other issues.

Diarrhea must be monitored as it can lead to dehydration. If the foster is active, mild diarrhea that occurs for 24 hours is not a concern. Feed the foster less at a time but more often. If the diarrhea is severe, lasts more than 3-4 feedings, or contains blood or parasites, call the Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck.

## Parasites

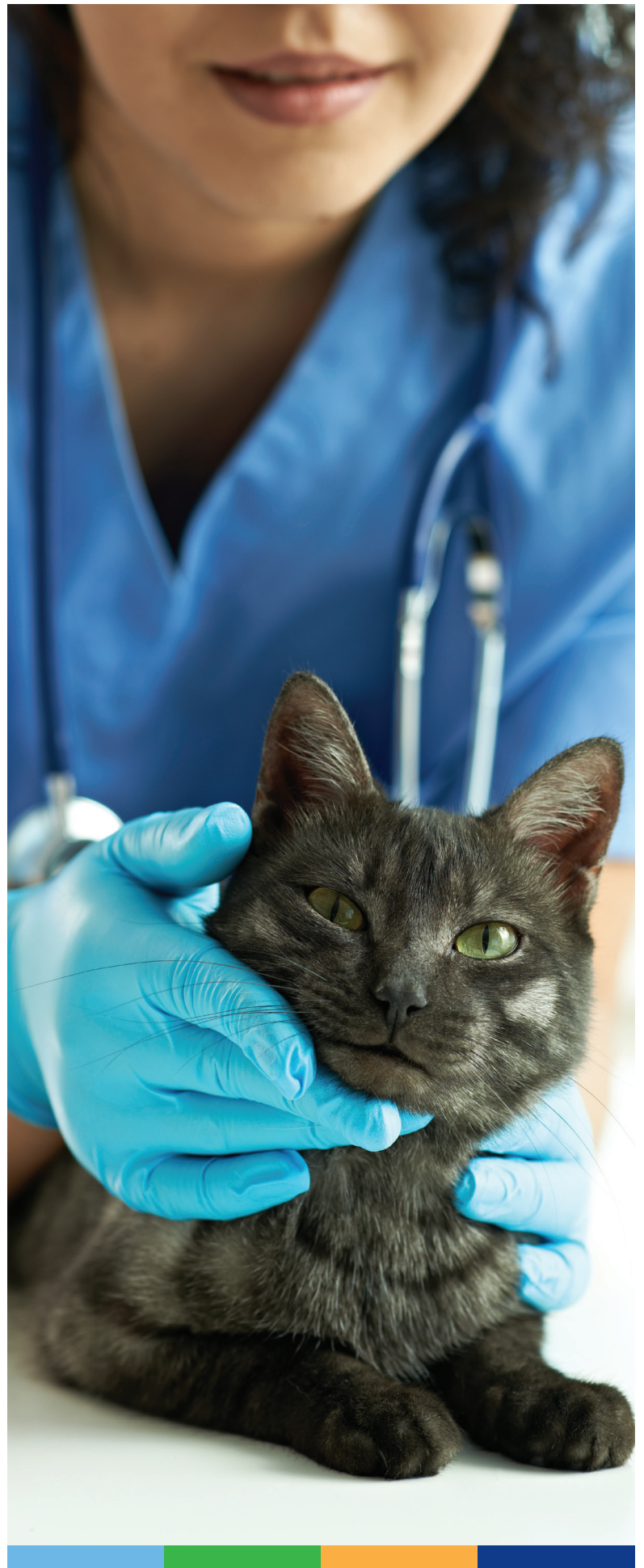
Fosters are dewormed upon intake and at every recheck. Parasites are commonly found in the stool of puppies and kittens. Tapeworms may look like grains of rice. Roundworms look like spaghetti and can be seen in the litter box or in vomit. If you notice worms, call the Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck.

## Vomiting

Vomiting is not serious unless it happens continuously or accompanied with diarrhea. It can lead to dehydration. If vomiting occurs 2-3 times in a row, call the Foster Coordinator right away.

## Eye Discharge

It is normal for animals to have little pieces of crust in their eyes after waking up. If you see continuous yellow or green discharge, swollen or closed eyes call the Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck. You can use a warm, damp towel to wipe the affected eye(s).



## Ear Mites

Ear mites are parasites that live in the ear canal. You may notice a bald spot behind their ears due to continuous scratching. They may also violently shake their head. The ears may smell bad and you may see brown discharge that resembles coffee grounds. Ear mites are contagious to other animals and need to be treated. Call the Foster Coordinator if you notice any of these symptoms.

## Fleas

Animals that have fleas will scratch themselves often. Topical and oral flea prevention are given to fosters over 4 weeks of age. Flea prevention for puppies under 4 weeks includes daily brushings with the flea comb and daily bedding changes. If you still notice signs of fleas, you can wash the puppy in a small amount of Dawn® dish soap followed by using a flea comb to remove any remaining fleas. Be sure to thoroughly dry him/her following a bath. Baths should not be given more than once every 1-2 weeks. If you still notice signs of fleas, call Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck.

## Ringworm

Ringworm is a contagious fungus that can spread to other animals and humans. A sign of ringworm is thinning hair or patches of hair loss. Ringworm is difficult to remove from your house. To help with prevention and spreading maintain cleaning protocols and a good hand washing routine. Call the Foster Coordinator if you notice any hair loss.

## Upper Respiratory Tract Infection (URI)

URIs are common and are caused by contagious viruses and bacteria.

Signs to look for:

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

If you notice any of these signs, please contact the Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck.

## Distemper

Distemper is a highly contagious and fatal disease that attacks the respiratory, gastrointestinal and nervous systems. It is transmitted through direct contact with contaminated saliva, blood, or urine.

Signs to look for:

- Severe Upper Respiratory Infection or Pneumonia
- Lethargy
- Neurological signs such as seizure activity, convulsions, and
- partial or complete paralysis.

## Parvovirus

Parvovirus is a deadly and contagious virus that attacks a dog's gastrointestinal tract. Once parvovirus is present in an environment it is difficult to remove. It is transmitted through direct contact with contaminated feces.

Signs to look for:

- Lethargy
- Dehydration
- Loss of appetite
- Abdominal pain and bloating
- Fever
- Low body temperature
- Vomiting
- Severe diarrhea with or without blood

If you notice any of these signs, immediately contact the Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck.

## Fading Puppies

Occasionally, a puppy that appeared healthy will suddenly stop thriving. They will stop growing, socializing and crawling. They will begin to lose weight and may cry continuously. When this happens, they fade quickly and, even with medical intervention, may not survive 48 hours. There is not understood cause for this condition. Occasionally, puppies die in foster care. If this should occur contact the Foster Coordinator.

## Scheduling Rechecks

Foster animal(s) are required to return to the shelter every two weeks for vaccinations, deworming and general exams. All rechecks require an appointment made at the time of pick up. If for any reason you are unable to keep your scheduled appointment please contact the Foster Coordinator to reschedule.

## Vaccines

Kittens and puppies receive vaccinations every two weeks from the time they are 4 weeks of age until they are 16 weeks or unless otherwise directed by our veterinarians. Animals 12 weeks and older receive a Rabies vaccine.

Cats & kittens receive FVRCP Vaccine (feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus and panleukopenia)

Dogs & Puppies receive the DHPP Vaccine (Distemper, Hepatitis, Parvovirus, Parainfluenza).



# SANTA BARBARA HUMANE | Health & Behavior Record

Use the attached tables to track weights, abnormal medical or behavior signs, and appointment information. Each foster animal should have their own tracking table. If you need additional copies of the tracking tables, please visit [sbhumane.org/foster](http://sbhumane.org/foster).

Foster Animal's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Weight	Abnormal Medical Signs (Lethargy, diarrhea, vomiting, coughing, sneezing, nasal/eye discharge)	Abnormal Behavior Signs (Shy, scared, hissing, growling, biting)	Appointments & Services

# SANTA BARBARA HUMANE | Health & Behavior Record Sheet

**Foster Animal's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]



# SANTA BARBARA HUMANE | Health & Behavior Record Sheet

**Foster Animal's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

[illegible]