



### Adaptil can help your foster dog

Dogs around the world have benefitted from Adaptil. Owners have noticed many benefits, from their dog feeling more confident to helping them settle when left home alone.

Shortly after birth the mother will produce a scent or 'pheromone' that gives her puppies the confidence and support to learn about the world around them. Adaptil is a copy of this dog appeasing pheromone and has been proven to have the same reassuring affect on adult dogs, helping them adapt to new situations and provide support when feeling anxious.

Plugging in an Adaptil diffuser or fitting an Adaptil collar on your new foster dog can help them adapt quickly to their new environment.



### Feliway can help your foster cat

Have you ever noticed cats rubbing their cheek on objects around the house or even on you? They do this to mark their home as safe and familiar. Feliway is a copy of this mark or 'pheromone' and it has been proven to reduce anxiety in cats helping create a safe haven in the home.

Millions of cat owners around the world have noticed a difference in their cat after plugging in a Feliway diffuser. Whether it's spending more time with the family or just simply helping to create a better bond with others in the household.

In addition, Feliway has been clinically proven to help reduce or stop inappropriate behaviours caused by stress, including scratching, urine spraying, conflicts between cats and over grooming. Cats also seem to be more happy and affectionate with Feliway.



# FOSTERING ANIMALS

## General information on fostering an animal in RSPCA care



Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals

Telephone: 0300 1234 999 [www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk)

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# General information

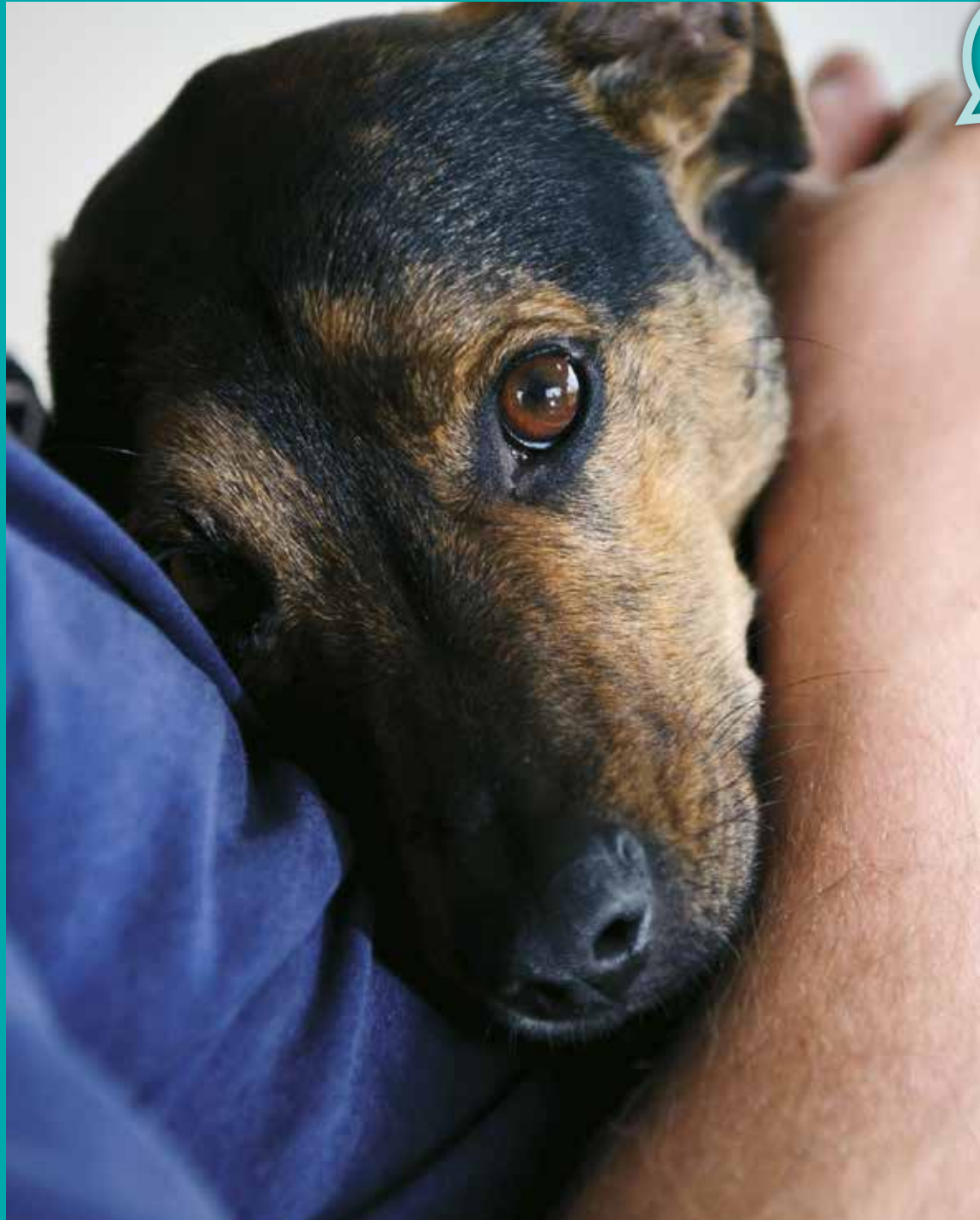
## on fostering an animal in RSPCA care

Most of the animals in RSPCA care have been rescued from cruelty, neglect and suffering. We spend weeks – sometimes months – rehabilitating these animals and preparing them for a new life and a loving new home. We look after cats, dogs, rabbits and other domestic animals, some of which find it very difficult to cope in an animal centre or private boarding environment.

Volunteer fosterers provide a vital resource to the RSPCA as they can offer these animals a calm and loving environment during their rehabilitation and help to improve their chance of finding a permanent new home.

**We are extremely grateful to those who donate their time and energy to help the animals in our care.**

Thank you for considering fostering an animal on behalf of the RSPCA. Without volunteers like you, the RSPCA couldn't help as many animals as we do each year.



## What is fostering?

Fostering is not ownership or adoption of an animal – the RSPCA remains the legal owner or custodian of the animal. The RSPCA defines fostering as ‘the temporary accommodation of animals in a home environment’. At the end of the fostering term, you give the animal back to the RSPCA.

The fostering term may last as little as a few days and could last anything up to two years – a typical placement is around six months. The length of time an individual animal is likely to require foster care will always be discussed with you prior to placement of the animal. It is usual practice that an animal being advertised for rehoming is moved to another RSPCA location after around three months to increase their rehoming potential – again this will depend on the individual animal being fostered and will be discussed with you by the fostering coordinator.



### Who are fosterers?

Fosterers are animal-loving, compassionate people who generously open up their lives and homes to care temporarily for animals who are in need. Fosterers offer their time, care, homes and love for free.

Knowledge of animal care and previous experience of owning the type of animal you wish to foster is desirable but not essential. The RSPCA website is full of information on caring for an animal and fosterers are given information on animal care.

Fosterers need to be prepared for wear and tear to their house from toileting accidents, to chewing and scratching of furniture and

personal belongings. The RSPCA does not offer compensation for this level of wear and tear. There is information on insurance in the fostering agreement which sets out the RSPCA's responsibilities in relation to third party damage or injury.

And lastly, fosterers need to be emotionally strong enough to say goodbye to the animal at the end of the fostering placement.

### What support is given to fosterers?

You will be given a point of contact with the RSPCA – your fostering coordinator. They are there to support you throughout the fostering process.

Fostering placements can range from a couple of days to several months and during this time you will receive:

- monthly contact from us
- additional support and training
- provisions for holidays.

For pet animal fostering, the RSPCA will provide the essentials for your foster animal – food, litter, veterinary care, basic bedding and basic toys.



## What is required to be a fosterer?

To be a fosterer you will need to meet the following criteria:

- If you are living in rented accommodation you will have to obtain written permission from your landlord, allowing animals to live on the premises.
- Existing animals in the household should not have an untreatable contagious disease – for example, cats with Feline Leukaemia Virus (FeLV), Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV), Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP) or any animal with active ringworm (it's all right if animals have been treated for ringworm and given the 'all clear' by a veterinary surgeon).
- You need to be at least 18 years old.
- You need to have up-to-date tetanus protection.
- You will need two references from non-family members who can vouch for your character and experience.

Additionally, you will need to provide the right environment and suitable accommodation for the species of animal that you wish to foster; as well as the time, patience and love to provide for your foster animal's needs.

### How do I apply to become a fosterer?

- Contact your local RSPCA animal centre or branch to offer your services.
- You will need to complete an application form and provide two references.
- You will have a pre-fostering home visit by one of our trained home visitors.
- You will be asked to sign a formal RSPCA Fostering Agreement, which sets out the legal terms and conditions of fostering.

No person residing in the household where the animal will be cared for can be disqualified from keeping animals or have had a deprivation order made under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and/or have unspent convictions for offences relating to animals.

### What next?

- An animal requiring foster care will be matched to you – this could be straight away or you may have to wait until a suitable animal becomes available, which could take several months.
- You will be given details of the animal's health, behaviour and the expected duration of the fostering placement before you accept the animal.
- We will regularly check that you are getting along with your foster animal.
- We will visit you and your foster animal occasionally, by prior appointment, to help support and guide you or you may be asked to bring your foster animal to us on a regular basis for health and weight check-ups.
- We ask that you keep records of your foster animal's health and behaviour while they are with you.



## Providing animal care

The following information covers the general care information that applies to the fostering of any species of animal. In addition to this booklet, you will be given a species-specific booklet for the species of animal you are going to foster.

This booklet applies to any animal being fostered in the RSPCA, where the fosterer is looking after a small number of animals within the confines of their house or where animals would usually be housed in

purpose-built accommodation in a garden. It does not apply to dogs or cats being kept in kennels or catteries.

Anyone who looks after an RSPCA animal must follow all relevant legislation including the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and relevant Codes of Practices, RSPCA policies, RSPCA Minimum Standards and RSPCA Minimum Expectations.

As an ambassador of the RSPCA, it is important that anything that you do or say in reference to the RSPCA is in line with our public policies and positions.

As a fosterer, you should be familiar with our policies on animal welfare, which are available to download from our website at: [www.rspca.org.uk/utilities/aboutus/policies](http://www.rspca.org.uk/utilities/aboutus/policies).

We encourage you to stay informed of our activities by joining one of our online communities. You can find out more on our website at: [www.rspca.org.uk](http://www.rspca.org.uk) – go to 'Stay in touch' at the bottom of the page.



### Standards of care

All animals in the RSPCA deserve the same minimum standards of care and we use the Animal Welfare Act 2006 to guide us on what care is required.

As a fosterer, you are required to meet the five welfare needs of the animals that we temporarily place in your care. The five welfare needs are:

- a need for a suitable environment
- a need for a suitable diet
- a need to be able to exhibit normal behaviour patterns
- a need to be housed with, or apart from, other animals
- a need to be protected from pain, suffering, injury and disease.

The RSPCA has some additional expectations which fosterers need to be aware of.

- Animals need room to perform natural behaviours. It is acceptable for an animal to be kept in accommodation that restricts freedom of movement if it is only short term or on veterinary advice (e.g. cage rest). 'Short term' is defined as no more than seven days.
- You will need to organise routine vaccinations and administer flea treatment and worming, as appropriate to the species. You will also need to keep a record of treatments administered.
- You will need to make and record monthly health checks – we have an online training course to help you learn how to health check an animal.
- You will also need to make daily checks for any signs of disease, illness or injury and record any observations, as well as any appropriate action taken if you detect any problems. We have an online first aid course available to fosterers.

There may be specific standards of care for the individual animal placed in your care and your fostering coordinator will provide you with these in writing.

### Veterinary care

As part of your fostering agreement, we will arrange for you to have a nominated veterinary practice to use. Appointments will usually be arranged through your fostering coordinator.

Your fostering coordinator will give you information on what you should do in the event of an emergency where immediate veterinary attention is required. It's a good idea to plan what you will do in an emergency – for example, how you will transport your animal to the veterinary surgery, and do you know where the surgery is located and the best way to get there?

Only use medicines and treatments supplied to you by, and with the instructions given by, the veterinary surgeon or your fostering coordinator. Further information is given overleaf. You will need to complete an animal treatment report for your foster animal every time you administer any medicines or treatments. Copies of this form are available from your fostering coordinator.



### Veterinary medicines

As part of the fostering role we may need you to treat your foster animal with routine preventative treatment. The most common medicines used will be those that treat fleas and worms. It is important that you read and follow the instructions on the packet carefully as some of the products can be harmful to humans and animals if not handled correctly.

Veterinary medicines need to be stored in a clean, dry place that is not subject to extremes of temperature. A garden shed, unheated outbuilding or cupboard next to a radiator are not suitable places to store

these products. Incorrect storage can lead to the products becoming ineffective. You must only have prescription veterinary medicines for the animals you are currently fostering. If an animal is rehomed or returned to the RSPCA you need to return any unused prescription veterinary medicines.

If you are unsure how to use the products provided then please contact your fostering coordinator for advice. If a vet has assessed the animal and prescribed a specific treatment for that animal, do not use alternative treatments or treat other animals with the medicines provided, without veterinary advice.

We recommend that any spot-on/pipette treatment is applied in the evening to allow the product to dry overnight, reducing the risk of human contact with the product. Wear gloves if possible and wash your hands thoroughly afterwards. Ensure that children do not touch the animal following a spot-on/pipette treatment until the area is dry – drugs could still be present on the fur of the animal which could be harmful if swallowed. Try to avoid the animal getting wet for 48 hours following a pipette/spot-on treatment and do not allow dogs to swim for four days after treatment.

Please record all veterinary medicines given on the RSPCA animal treatment report and please return any unused or out-of-date drugs to the RSPCA for disposal. The packaging for used drugs (e.g. empty pipettes) can be disposed of in normal domestic waste.

### Completion of standard paperwork

We require all of the animals in RSPCA care to have standard paperwork and your fostering coordinator will provide you with the paperwork relevant to the animal in your care.

For all animals in foster care, we require;

- a daily observations form
- a health check form (completed on a monthly basis)
- behaviour observations (completed as and when you have something to record)
- an animal treatment record (usually this will be completed by your fostering coordinator but you may need to record details of any flea and worm treatments you administer).

If you are comfortable doing the monthly health check yourself, you can follow our free online health check training course. You need an email address to be able to access this. Ask your fostering coordinator if you would like to register. If not, then we will arrange for someone to health check the animal for you. If you are fostering an animal through an animal centre, it is highly likely that they will ask for you to take the animal to them for the monthly health check – your fostering coordinator can advise you on your local arrangements.

### Health and safety

Fosterers need to make sure they have up-to-date tetanus protection. You can check your vaccination history with your GP and, if you have not had the required doses, your GP should offer this free of charge as part of the UK vaccination schedule.

Anyone interacting with animals should remember to practice good hygiene and ensure hands are washed before eating and after handling animal faeces. Utensils for feeding, grooming and cleaning should be kept and washed separately from those for the family. Fosterers should wear suitable protective clothing if the fostering coordinator advises there is any risk.

Zoonotic diseases are those that can transfer from animals to humans. Fosterers should make medical practitioners aware that they care for animals and notify them of injury from an animal. Fosterers should note the risks of zoonotic diseases, which can be a serious risk to unborn babies and their mothers. Anyone who is scratched, bitten or feels unwell after handling an animal should seek medical advice immediately, no matter how minor any injury

may appear. Incidents should always be reported to the fostering coordinator.

Unless fully aware of safe handling measures, disease control and the risk of injury to themselves and others, your family members (children or adults), or visitors should not handle the animal, or come into contact with any animal that carries the risk of zoonotic disease. Supervision is recommended at all times.

### Transport

If you are using your car to transport your foster animal on behalf of the RSPCA, for example to pre-arranged veterinary appointments, you are advised to notify your car insurer that you are using your car for volunteering purposes – failure to do so could invalidate your policy. This should not result in any increase to your premium as it will be classed as 'social, domestic and pleasure use'.

### Caring for foster animals that do not belong to the RSPCA

The RSPCA provides care for animals at the request of the police while the owner/person responsible for the animal is taken through the criminal justice system. The RSPCA does not have ownership of these animals unless a court awards the RSPCA ownership, or the owner transfers ownership to the RSPCA. We refer to these animals as 'case animals'.



As we are not the owner of these animals, there are certain legal implications and requirements as to how we provide care. For example, we cannot authorise any invasive veterinary procedure, such as neutering, without the consent of the owner or a court order. Your fostering coordinator will provide you with any information needed, should you be asked to foster a case animal.

The RSPCA PetRetreat scheme is another area where the RSPCA boards animals but does not have ownership of those animals. PetRetreat is a pet fostering service for families

fleeing domestic violence. You can find out more about the scheme on our website – [www.rspca.org.uk/petretreat](http://www.rspca.org.uk/petretreat).

If you are asked to foster a PetRetreat animal, you will be given information specific to the PetRetreat scheme by the PetRetreat fostering coordinator.

For both case and PetRetreat animals, we are unable to discuss the case or the domestic situation the animal has come from. It is very important, for yourself and the foster animal, that you do not post any photos of your foster animal on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter or Instagram. Pictures are easily shared through social media and may lead to an owner identifying you and the location of their animal.

If you chose to foster case animals, you need to understand that the animal(s) may be returned to their owner if the allegations are not upheld. You may not like this decision but the RSPCA must always act within the confines of the law; there may be legal implications in failing to return the animal when requested to do so. These implications can include criminal and/or civil proceedings against any person

who prevents the return of the animal to the legal owner. Occasionally, we may request that animals are returned to an RSPCA animal centre shortly before the case completes. This is to protect fosterers as we may need to reveal details of where the animals are located at completion of the case.

### Holidays

We do ask that you don't take on a new foster animal if you are going on holiday within six weeks of the animal's arrival. This is to prevent your foster animal feeling unsettled.

Please speak to your fostering coordinator well in advance of any planned holiday so they can make arrangements for your foster animal's care. The RSPCA will arrange for your animal to be looked after while you are away – either at one of our animal centres, with another fosterer or at a private boarding establishment.

### If your foster animal is lost, goes missing or is stolen

It is very unusual for foster animals to become lost, missing or stolen. If this does occur, please inform your fostering coordinator as soon as possible and within 12 hours.

### At the end of the foster placement

At the end of the placement, your fostering coordinator will contact you requesting that your

foster animal is returned or collected; usually within two days of the request.

Please ensure that your foster animal is ready for collection/return and that any equipment specific to your foster animal is also returned; especially bedding and toys as these can help them feel more settled during the transition.

Talk to your fostering coordinator about when you might feel ready to take in the next foster animal – we appreciate that many people like to have a few weeks break between animals to clean and relax!

### List of further reading and useful information

- *RSPCA Policies on animal welfare* – go to: [www.rspca.org.uk/utilities/about-us/policies](http://www.rspca.org.uk/utilities/about-us/policies).
- *RSPCA Minimum Standards* – a copy is available from your fostering coordinator.
- To find out about your obligations under the Animal Welfare Act 2006 and the Codes of Practice visit [www.gov.uk/animal-welfare-legislation-protecting-pets](http://www.gov.uk/animal-welfare-legislation-protecting-pets). For fosterers in Wales, please visit [wales.gov.uk](http://wales.gov.uk).
- The RSPCA website has lots of useful information on providing for the needs of the animal in your care at: [www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare](http://www.rspca.org.uk/adviceandwelfare).

## Any questions?

If you are unsure about any aspect of fostering or have any queries on animal care, then please do contact your fostering coordinator.

Many animals that we take in have either suffered or have not received the care and affection that they need and deserve. Living with a foster family helps to provide these animals with one-to-one care and allows them to build up their confidence and get used to living a normal lifestyle in a home environment.

**Thank you for volunteering for the RSPCA and for helping us to end cruelty, promote kindness and alleviate suffering to animals.**

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