

Kitsap Humane Society  
Foster Care Program

# Puppy Handbook



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## Introduction

Welcome to the team of dedicated puppy foster volunteers! Puppies under the age of 8 weeks need a mother—either a dog or a human surrogate. They are very vulnerable in a shelter and the chance to get them into a foster home within 24 hours is a chance to save their lives. This handbook is meant as a supplement to the Foster Care Program Manual and not a replacement.

### GUIDELINES:

- Foster puppies can carry illness into your home that could affect your health and/or the health of your resident animals and future foster animals, so maintaining the 2 week quarantine is vital.
- Foster puppies must be carried (in a carrier) if they are off of the foster volunteer’s property to reduce the risk of contracting diseases. See the section on Parvo Virus in the Foster Care Program Manual.
- The Kitsap Humane Society does not have the funds to pay for damage the animals may cause, nor can it be held responsible for damages to personal property or illness to personal animals.
- Young children should not handle small puppies as they are extremely fragile. Once the puppies can walk and play on their own, children must be supervised closely and taught proper handling techniques.
- Foster volunteers should wash their hands before and after handling animals, fecal waste, or housebreaking training pads.
- Foster volunteers should routinely clean the foster puppies’ quarters and disinfect the entire premises before new puppies are introduced. See the section on Disease Control in the Foster Care Program Manual.
- Foster volunteers can only have one litter of puppies at a time because of the difficulty of keeping litters separated and quarantined.
- Foster volunteers must be able to bring the puppies to the shelter for their vaccines and boosters every two weeks, and for medical check-ups as needed.
- Foster puppies are ready for spay/neuter surgery and are available for adoption when they are healthy and 8 weeks old. The foster parent must contact the Foster Care Coordinator (FCC) to schedule surgery appointments.

## Supplies

- **Carrier/crate:** KHS can usually supply foster families with carriers/crates that must be returned with the puppies when they return for adoption.
- **Enclosure (optional):** It is recommended to use a play-pen style enclosure that has a “den” (crate/kennel), puppy pads, water, food, and space to play.
- **Housebreaking Training Pads:** Also called puppy pads, potty pads, and pee pads, they are essential to housetraining.
- **Water bowls:** Should be heavy and difficult to tip over.
- **Food bowls (at least 2):** One is for dry puppy food, the other for canned food. You can use TV dinner trays, paper plates, or any relatively flat plate or saucer.
- **Food:** You should have dry puppy kibble, canned wet food (any brand for adults or puppies), and all-meat baby food (must not contain vegetables or onion powder). Offer several choices to weaned puppies to determine their preferences.
- **Heat:** These are only necessary for puppies under 2 weeks old, especially those who are smaller or by themselves. **BE SURE THAT THE PUPPIES HAVE ROOM TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE HEAT!**
  - **Heating pad:** Place it under several towels, and make sure that it covers only half of the floor area of their enclosure. **The heating pad should be on "low" or "medium" to prevent overheating the puppies.** Make sure to cover any electrical cords as well, so that the puppies are not tempted to chew on them.
  - **Hot water bottles or rice bags:** Heat in a microwave until warm to the touch without being uncomfortable. These should also be covered by towels, and should be changed regularly to ensure that they stay warm for the puppies to snuggle up against.
  - **Infrared lamp:** Securely attach overhead a sufficient distance from the puppy pen to maintain a temperature of approximately 85° in one section of the nursery. Ensure that any electrical cords that are within reach of the puppies are properly covered so the puppies are not tempted to chew on them.
- **Clean towels and blankets:** You will want to change bedding daily, so having plenty of extra towels on hand is a lifesaver!
- **Toys:** Be sure that any toys the puppies have access to are appropriate for their age. Toys should not have small pieces or strips that can be chewed or ripped off and puppies must be supervised while playing/chewing. Any porous material should be thrown away between litters, as they cannot be sanitized. Be sure to "puppy-proof" your home because puppies will chew on anything and everything.
- **Scale:** A scale will be very helpful in monitoring small puppies' growth to ensure that they are consuming proper amounts and to catch early signs of any potential issues.

## General Care

- All foster puppies and mother dogs **MUST** be kept at home! Puppies have not yet developed immunity to a variety of potentially fatal diseases that adult dogs can carry without symptoms. While you might be excited to play with the puppies in the park, they must not walk on any surfaces (such as parks or sidewalks) where another dog may have urinated or defecated in the past. Even if it appears clean it may still be harboring contagious diseases. It is imperative for puppies to stay in the home until they have been fully vaccinated—which is usually around 4 months of age.
- Be sure to **ALWAYS** keep your foster puppies in their carrier when outside or traveling in a car. Even if you think you are holding the puppies securely, they can be startled and dash away if they are not enclosed.
- Living quarters should be cleaned every day. When cleaning, place the puppies in a separate (sanitizable) area until the living quarters are **COMPLETELY** dry. All surfaces, bowls, toys, etc. should be disinfected so you should keep the puppies in a room without carpeting or hardwood floors.
- Keep the puppies clean. Sometimes dried feces can become caked on the underside of the tail or between the puppy's toes; this may be softened and removed by dipping the puppy's back end into a basin of warm water. Be sure to be gentle and dry them well so they don't get cold.
- Very young puppies should be kept in a large box or carrier lined with a towel for easy cleaning. It is crucial to keep the puppies warm and small litters or singlets will need help in staying warm. See the section on Heat under "Supplies".
- Puppies less than 2 weeks old typically do not urinate/defecate on their own and will need to be stimulated if they do not have a mother dog. This should be done every few hours (usually before and after feeding) by gently rubbing a warm moist cotton ball on the puppy's anus and genital area. Avoid excess irritation.
- It is recommended to keep a daily journal on their weights, appetites, energy levels, stool consistencies/color, if there is any discharge from the eyes or nose, and other notes.

## Behavior

Normal puppy behavior is playful, mouthy, and jumpy. You shouldn't discourage their liveliness or love, but there are techniques that fosters parent can utilize to ensure that they are playing appropriately. Most foster puppies will be ready for adoption at 8 weeks old, so you won't be able to do in-depth behavioral work with them but you can work on appropriate chewing, limit jumping, crate training, and wearing a collar. If the puppies fight over food, feed them separately and contact your Mentor or Canine Behaviorist for training tips. Don't attempt to take a toy or food away from a puppy if they are growling; move the other puppies away and wait until the toy or food is abandoned, then pick it up and put it away.

### CHEWING AND NIPPING:

Puppies play by using their mouths; this behavior is rarely aggressive and not intended to cause harm. Your goals should be to redirect your puppy's desire to put something in their mouth, such as an acceptable chew toy, and teach them that putting their teeth on skin is unacceptable. Teach your puppy that nipping "turns off" all interaction with you. As soon as you feel their teeth on your skin, yelp "ouch" in a high pitched voice and ignore them for a few minutes. It may take repetitions for your puppy to understand what is expected, so consistency is extremely important.

### JUMPING UP:

When a puppy jumps on you, they want attention. When you push or nudge them away, they are getting your attention and this becomes a rewarding behavior. When your puppy jumps up, hold out your arms, say "off", and turn away. Remain with your back to them until all four of their feet are on the ground, then quietly praise and give a treat. When your puppy realizes that they get the attention they crave when they stop jumping on you and sit, they'll stop jumping up.

### POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT AND CONSISTENCY:

Positive reinforcement is the presentation of something pleasant or rewarding immediately following a behavior. It is the most powerful tool for shaping or changing your pet's behavior. Correct timing is essential when using positive reinforcement. The reward must occur immediately, or your pet may not associate it with the proper action.

Everyone in the family should use the same commands. Consistency also means always rewarding the desired behavior and never rewarding undesired behavior. Your pet's positive reinforcement may include food treats, praise, petting, or a favorite toy or game. Experiment a bit to see what works best for your pet. Each time you give a food reward, you should also give verbal praise. Say something like "good dog" happily.

### WHAT TO AVOID:

Never tap, slap, or hit your puppy in the face for nipping or jumping. They could become "hand shy" and cringe or cower whenever a hand comes near their face. They could become afraid of you and refuse to approach you. They could respond in a defensive manner and attempt to bite you. They could also interpret a mild slap as an invitation to play, exciting them and causing them to be more likely to nip.

### CHILDREN AND DOGS:

From your dog's point of view, children also have a place in the dominance hierarchy. Because children are smaller and get down on the dog's level to play, dogs often consider them to be playmates, rather than superiors. Small children and dogs should not be left alone together without adult supervision.

## Housetraining

Since most foster puppies return to the shelter for adoption when they are 8 weeks old, you will only be able to work on basic housetraining habits. If you have a mother dog, she will clean up after her babies until they are 4-5 weeks old, which is when you can start housetraining.

Housetraining a puppy requires time, vigilance, patience, and commitment. It is possible to minimize the number of house soiling incidents, but every puppy will have an accident in the house at some point. It is important to remain consistent and be patient! Have a designated area within their space to place potty pads. Place the puppies on the pads as soon as they wake up, right after eating, before sleeping, and at least once an hour to start. Reward them with enthusiastic praise every time they eliminate on the pad. Change the pads frequently and encourage them to use it. Mother dogs cannot go outside because of the possibility of tracking diseases into the house and onto her puppies, so you'll have to train her to use the potty pads in a similar way.

### ELIMINATING OUTSIDE:

Once the puppies are coordinated enough, you may take them outside to eliminate (usually around 5-6 weeks old) but they must stay on your personal property. **BUT** you must also know the history of your yard; if you are **certain** that no dog with Parvo Virus (see the section on Parvo Virus in the Foster Care Program Manual) has been in your yard in the last 5 years, then the puppies can be on the ground. If you are unsure, keep the puppies indoors and utilize the potty pads.

If your yard has a clean history, you should still minimize the amount of time spent outside. Limit time outside to short potty breaks; choose a location not too far from the door to be the bathroom spot. Always take your puppy on a leash directly to the bathroom spot, praise them profusely once they've eliminated, and bring them immediately indoors.

When you catch your puppy eliminating in the house, do something to interrupt them, like making a startling noise (but not loud enough to scare them) and immediately take them to their bathroom spot, praise them, and give them a treat if they finish there. Never punish them for eliminating in the house; it is best to be proactive by taking them out frequently and watching your puppies closely for signs that they might have to go: sniffing, circling, and squatting. Cleaning the soiled area with an enzyme cleaner is very important because puppies are highly motivated to continue soiling in areas that smell like urine or feces.

### OTHER TYPES OF SOILING PROBLEMS:

- **Medical Problems:** House soiling can often be caused by physical problems, such as urinary tract infection or a parasite infection. Contact your Mentor if you suspect a medical issue.
- **Submissive/Excitement urination:** Some dogs, especially young ones, temporarily lose control of their bladders when they become excited or feel threatened. This usually occurs during greetings, intense play, or when they're about to be punished.
- **Territorial Urine-Marking:** Dogs sometimes deposit urine or feces, usually in small amounts, to scent-mark their territory. Both male and female dogs do this and it most often occurs when they believe their territory has been invaded.
- **Separation Anxiety:** Dogs that become anxious when left alone may house soil as a result. There are usually other symptoms, such as destructive behavior or vocalization.
- **Fears or Phobias:** When animals become frightened, they may lose control of their bladder and or bowels. If your puppy is afraid of loud noises, such as thunderstorms or fireworks, they may house soil when they are exposed to these sounds.

## **Bottle Feeding Guide**

### **BOTTLE FEEDING:**

You will need to purchase a pet nursing kit at a pet store that includes a bottle, extra nipples, and a cleaning brush. Cut a small “X” or poke a series of holes with a paperclip in the tip of your first nipple. You know that you have made the nipple opening just big enough if, when the bottle is held upside-down, formula drips slowly from it. Too small an opening will make the puppies work too hard to get their formula, tiring them out before they’ve had enough to eat. Too large an opening will force too much formula into them, too fast. Commercially available puppy milk replacer (PMR) should be given at the puppy’s body temperature. It is best to warm reconstituted formula in a hot water bath and test it on your wrist before feeding. Once the can is opened or the powder reconstituted, unused formula should be kept refrigerated and discarded after 24 hours. NEVER give a puppy cow's milk (or anything else besides the specified formula).

### **FEEDING TIME:**

Before each feeding, sterilize the bottles and nipples by boiling them in water. It is best to feed them on a table or in your lap; this allows them to feed with all four feet planted and their heads level, similar to nursing from their mom. Some puppies prefer to nurse standing on their hind legs while holding the bottle, or while wrapped in a hand towel like a burrito. Gently open a puppy’s mouth with one finger and place the tip of the nipple on their tongue. Pull lightly on the bottle to encourage vigorous sucking. Be sure to tilt the bottle up slightly to prevent the puppy from inhaling air. Do not force the puppy to nurse or allow them to nurse too fast. Never feed a puppy while they are cradled on their back—if the fluid goes down the wrong way it may end up in their lungs. After each feeding, gently massage their back or pat it lightly to burp.

If a puppy is not willingly drinking, or appears full early, do not force them to eat by squirting the formula into their mouths, as there is a high risk of aspiration. It is best to monitor their weight closely at this age to ensure they are getting the proper nutrition.

### **WEANING:**

Weaning is the process of teaching the puppies to eat on their own. Start by introducing the puppies to solid food by offering warmed canned food or softened kibble mixed with a little PMR in a shallow saucer. You can also soaking dry kibble in PMR until it is a mush-like consistency. Begin by placing one puppy near the plate of the slurry mixture; if they start eating, their littermates will probably catch on. Sometimes one will begin lapping right away and bite the edge of the plate while they figure it out. Some will lick the slurry off of your finger and then you can slowly lower your finger to the plate and hold it to the food. It can take a few feedings to master.

If they do not seem interested enough to even sniff your finger, try gently opening the puppy’s mouth and rubbing a little of the food on their teeth and they’ll hopefully start licking your finger. After offering the slurry, bottle feed to ensure that they get enough food. Be sure that the puppies have access to fresh water in a low, stable bowl at all times.

Once the puppies figure out how to eat on their own, you can offer them dry food moistened with a little warm water, PMR, or wet food and gradually decrease the amount of liquid until they are eating dry kibble. Feed them 3 or 4 times a day when they start weaning, and at around 6 weeks it is recommended to feed them twice a day. Because their digestive systems are still fragile, only offer them food specifically for puppies and don’t give them treats. You can use a different brand of puppy food as treats.

## Development and Care

Puppies who are separated from their littermates too early often don't develop appropriate social skills through playing (ranking, inhibited biting, sharing). Play is also important to help puppies increase their physical coordination. Interacting with their mother and littermates helps them learn "how to be a dog" and is also a way to explore ranking (who's in charge).

This is also a critical time for socialization and handling. You should handle their feet, clip 1-2 toenails, wipe inside of their ears, brush their coats, roll them over and pet their bellies on a daily basis to get them acclimated to human touch. You should also gradually introduce them to noises like the television, vacuum cleaner, microwave, doorbell to ensure that they will feel happy and safe in a normal home environment.

### <2 WEEKS OF AGE:

**Feeding:** Bottle feed formula per manufacturer's instruction every 2-3 hours or 6-8 feedings a day until puppies are full but not bloated.

**Environment:** The temperature of the nest box should be 85-90 degrees. Chilling is the number one danger to newborn puppies; see the section on Heat under "Supplies".

**Behavior & Training:** Newborn puppies should be handled minimally and will sleep 90% of the time and eat the other 10%. They should gain 10-15% of their birth weight daily. Touch and taste are present at birth and most behavior is influenced by their mother.

### 2-4 WEEKS OF AGE:

**Feeding:** Bottle feed formula per manufacturer's instruction 4 times a day until puppies are full but not bloated.

**Environment:** The puppies start being able to move on their own and will need less of a nest box and more of a pen enclosure. Lots of bedding, a crate for their "den", appropriate chew toys, water, and puppy pads should be in the enclosure.

**Behavior & Training:** The eyes open, teeth erupt, and hearing and smell develop. They begin to stand, walk a little, wag, and bark. Most behavior is influenced by their mother and littermates.

### 4-8 WEEKS OF AGE:

**Feeding:** The puppies should start weaning at 4-5 weeks old, with 1-3 bottle feedings a day until they are able to eat fully on their own (see the section on Weaning under "Feeding Guide"). Water should always be available, and once they are able to eat on their own, feed them two or three times a day to help with housetraining.

**Environment:** The puppies should still be confined to a space indoors, but the size of the enclosure depends on their breed and size.

**Behavior & Training:** Sight is well developed, they are becoming curious of their surroundings, and they are refining their physical and social skills through playing. They are able to start housetraining (see section on Housetraining). Puppies can be alarmed by normal experiences and need positive training and encouragement at this age and need opportunities to meet other dogs and people.

**Illness**

A healthy puppy has a lot of energy when awake; they are playful and will only spend a short time in your lap. Their eyes and nose should generally be free of any discharge. The stool will be firm and well-shaped. They should be gaining weight every day. Unfortunately, puppies do become ill and sometimes die while in foster care, so it is important to prevent disease and treat it as soon as it appears. You should always notify your Mentor if a puppy seems sick. They may give you advice or tell you to bring the puppy in to see Vet Services.

A note about treating your puppy: in general, if you need to treat a puppy, try to medicate them in an impersonal way. If you hold the puppy in your lap to medicate them, they will associate being picked up with being medicated, and think the worst every time you try to cuddle with them. It is better to put the puppy up on a table and wrap them in a towel to administer medication.

For more information, see the section on Illness in the Foster Care Program Manual.

<p><b><u>MEDICAL NON-EMERGENCIES</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Runny discharge from nose or eyes</li> <li>• Lack of appetite and/or weight loss</li> <li>• Lethargy and/or unusual behavior</li> <li>• Coughing and sneezing</li> <li>• Lack of bowel movement for more than 24 hours</li> <li>• Several bouts of vomiting or diarrhea</li> <li>• Large distended belly</li> <li>• Non weight-bearing lameness persisting for more than 12 hours</li> <li>• Swollen, painful joints or a gait that appears as if the animal is “walking on eggshells”</li> <li>• Lameness that initially improves but does not resolve in 24 – 48 hours</li> <li>• Incessant scratching of self</li> </ul> <p>If your foster animal experiences one or more of these signs, <b>please contact your Mentor for advice or to set up a Vet Check.</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"> <b><u>MEDICAL EMERGENCIES</u></b> </p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diarrhea for more than two days, especially if light colored—yellow or bloody</li> <li>• Vomiting for 24 hours or more</li> <li>• Not eating for more than 12 hours</li> <li>• Listless behavior or dehydration (pulled skin stands up over the nape of the neck for more than 3 seconds)</li> <li>• Very high/very low temps (anal, above 102.8F/below 100.2F)</li> <li>• Any difficulty breathing</li> <li>• Any problem associated with systemic signs, such as lethargy, loss of appetite, weakness, and fever</li> <li>• Bleeding</li> <li>• Trauma</li> </ul> <p>If your foster animal experiences one or more of these signs, <b>please call the <u>Veterinarian</u> listed on the Foster Request Form if it is after hours, and notify the FCC. If the emergency is during business hours, please bring the animal to KHS and notify the FCC.</b></p>
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## Common Ailments

### DIARRHEA:

Diarrhea is common in puppies and be caused by parasites, viruses, bacteria, food changes, stress, overfeeding, or 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 try adding 1/8 teaspoon of pumpkin puree (**not** pumpkin pie filling) to the food to help get rid of the diarrhea. Be sure to notify your Mentor if the puppy has any loose stool. If the diarrhea persists or if dehydration occurs, follow the protocol in the section on Medical Emergencies. Be sure to bring a fresh stool sample to any vet check appointments concerning diarrhea.

### VOMITING:

If your puppy is vomiting, it is possible that they are eating their meals too quickly. You should watch them when they eat and not allow them to eat too much too quickly. One episode of vomiting is generally not concerning, but if your foster animal vomits multiple times, notify your Mentor and they will advise a Vet Check.

### DISCHARGE:

It is normal for puppies to wake up with a little dark crust in their eyes or sneeze occasionally. If you notice that the puppies have yellow or green discharge coming from their eyes or nose, or they frequently cough, notify the FCC and follow the procedures in the section on Medical Emergencies. You can treat the symptoms of the eye infection by wiping the eyes with a warm, wet towel until it is time for your appointment.

### LETHARGY:

Healthy puppies are generally active when they are awake. Sick puppies may have low energy and want to just sit in your lap, but each puppy is different. You should keep notes on the activity level of each puppy so you will notice a change and can identify when one might not be feeling well.

### FLEAS:

Fleas are insects that love to feed on puppies. The common flea is hardy; it can live up to 4 months without feeding, and has a life span of up to 2 years! Although each flea only consumes a small drop of blood, fleas commonly attack in large numbers and an infestation can lead to anemia and even death. Fleas can also harbor tapeworms, so a large part of tapeworm treatment is flea control. For these reasons, it is essential that your home be free of fleas before bringing home a puppy.

If your foster puppy has fleas, it is important to remove them without harming the dog and wash all bedding in hot soapy water. One safe way to remove fleas from very young puppies is daily flea combing. Keep a jar of soapy water near you to dip the comb into after each stroke. If the puppy is less than 4 weeks old and infested, bathe with mild dish soap using warm water and immediately toweling dry thoroughly afterwards. If the puppy is over 4 weeks old, the veterinarians at KHS will administer flea treatment. **DO NOT** administer your own flea treatment.

## **Mothers and Puppies**

If you get a litter of puppies with a mother dog, you are in luck! She will do most, if not all, of the care necessary for the puppies and teach them everything they need to know to be awesome dogs, from eating dry food to playing appropriately with humans. It is important to have a warm, comfortable place for mom to nurse her babies, but it is equally as important to give her space to stretch her legs.

While she is nursing, be sure to have water available to her at all times and feed her two or three times a day because almost all of her calories will be spent feeding her babies. Because of this, nursing moms can be lethargic but otherwise healthy. You should still be aware of dehydration (see the section on Giving Medications and Skills in the Foster Care Program Manual), rapid weight loss, lack of appetite, or severe lethargy, which indicate illness. If you have a sick mother dog, she might not produce enough milk for her babies and/or not want to care for them. You might also have a mother dog that is not interested in caring for her babies for whatever reason; in these cases, you will have to supplement with bottle feeding and other care.

### **SOCIALIZATION:**

Most mother dogs will be attentive to her babies and social with humans, and will teach her puppies to be that way. However, KHS occasionally gets mother dogs who are unsocial or have other behavioral issues and in these cases, it is especially important for you as the foster parent to socialize the puppies. As soon as the puppies are at the age that they can start being handled and socialized (see the section on Development and Care), they should get regular human interaction. If the mother dog inhibits socialization or won't let you near her babies and they are fully weaned, the FCC might suggest returning her to the shelter before the puppies are ready to come back. Puppies should generally stay with their mothers for as long as possible, so the decision to separate early will be made on a case-by-case basis.

### **WEANING:**

An attentive mother should teach her puppies to eat on their own at around 4-6 weeks old. If you have stubborn puppies that want to keep nursing (sometimes the mother dog will allow this, other times she'll move away) but have the proper dentition for wet or dry food, keep the mother dog separate most of the time to encourage the puppies to eat on their own. Always offer food and try encouragement techniques before allowing the mother to nurse again. Weighing the puppies frequently will be crucial in knowing if they are getting enough food. Once weaned, the mother dog and puppies should be fed 3 times a day, and at around 6 weeks old it is recommended to feed them twice a day.

**Thank you for caring for puppies in need!  
We couldn't do it without you!**