

# Foster Care Manual

Updated 18 February 2020

# Thank you!

It takes a truly special person to open up their heart and home to an animal in need, so thank you, thank you, thank you.

Bringing our animals into your home gives them the helping hand they need before they can find their forever family. You'll be teaching your foster animals valuable skills in socialisation and training, turning them into the ultimate houseguests for their new parents.

Being a foster carer is a huge commitment that can take up a lot of your time, energy and emotions. Whether you're brand new or have been with us for a while, we want to express our deepest gratitude for your overwhelming generosity.

To us, and the furry friends you're caring for, you're a hero!

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# Introduction



## 1. Time and Commitment

A lot of commitment and effort is required to care for foster animals. Many animals who require fostering have already been through stressful changes, so you may be faced with an adjustment period where the animal is unsure or afraid. This is usually overcome with time and patience.

It is often advised that animals remain in foster care until they are ready to be rehomed. In some cases, due to unforeseen circumstances, it may be necessary to return an animal before it is ready for rehoming.

Caring for any animal means an attachment will be formed. Giving them up, even when you know they are going to loving homes, can be a very difficult and emotional experience. As a volunteer with RSPCA NSW, you can seek free assistance from Converge International's assistance program on 1300 687 327 or via [convergeinternational.com.au](http://convergeinternational.com.au).

## 2. Collecting Your Foster Animal/s

You will meet with the foster care coordinator or shelter staff who will provide you with equipment and supplies. You will also receive:

- Animal Details Form
- All relevant information about caring for your foster animal

## 3. Preparing the Space

Before bringing your foster animal home, prepare a suitable place for them to stay. A bathroom or laundry works well for kittens and puppies, dependant on the number of animals and their size.

The room should adhere to the following guidelines:

- Enough room to move freely
- Temperature can be controlled so the animal is comfortable and safe
- Adequate ventilation
- No gaps or holes
- Can withstand mess, e.g., litter box accidents, vomit, spilled water, etc
- Drain covers in showers or bathroom floors are secured and cannot be lifted
- Toilet lids closed
- No breakable items
- No small items
- Remove all medication or chemicals
- No items that could be swallowed by accident
- Secured windows (closed or with a secure screen)
- Secured heavy objects and appliances
- Separate from other household pets
- The space has been disinfected
- Tied up blind cables
- Unplugged electrical devices, with outlets and wires blocked with no cords or cables accessible
- Securely screwed in vent ducts for heating

Foster animals should be kept in a safe, secure and in an uninfected area, but not isolated – they should have ample time around humans for socialisation.

### 3.1. Bringing your Foster Animal/s Home

- Create distinct areas for sleeping, eating, toileting and playing. Put litter trays or absorbent pads in a corner as far away as possible from their food and bedding. If you have a litter of kittens, it is recommended you have one litter tray for every two kittens and clean the litter twice a day.
- Provide a shallow bowl of water, a bowl of dry food and a bowl of wet food. If you have a litter of kittens or puppies, make sure you provide enough bowls so they don't have to fight or compete for food. We recommend one bowl for every two kittens or puppies. Always watch them when they are eating to make sure they eat.
- Set up a play area with a variety of fun toys. Do not leave toys with string or ribbon unattended.
- Establish a sleeping area. Ensure their carrier cage (with door removed or wedged open) is available as a bed for them, they will also need other sleeping places close by. A cardboard box with bedding can make a good, secure sleeping place with a few modifications to allow small kittens to access it. If your foster animal/s are in a bathroom, place folded towels under their beds for extra warmth.
- Never try to pull your foster animal out of hiding. Instead, use toys or treats to encourage them to come out. If your foster animal still won't come out, leave them be for a little while. They may need time to adjust to an unfamiliar environment.

## 4. Feeding and Nutrition

The type, amount, and frequency of food your foster animal/s receives will be advised by the foster care coordinator. We will supply you with a high quality, nutritionally balanced diet with canned and dry food specially formulated to meet the needs of your foster animals.

It is important to monitor your foster animals' weight and body condition daily. Refer to [Appendix 4](#) for a reference chart of cat and dog body conditions.

If an animal stops eating or has a reduced appetite, please contact the foster care coordinator or another nominated contact person as listed on the Animal Details Form you received when accepting your foster animal.



## 4.1. Hills Feeding Guide

When feeding Hills Science Diet dry food, always provide fresh, clean water. Animals must be fed in accordance with the feeding guide relevant to the variety of food, while considering factors such as their health, body condition or veterinary advice.

If extra food is required, contact the foster care coordinator.

### Cats and Kittens

Cats	Feeding guide
Pregnant or lactating mothers	Dry food should be available at all times
Kittens over three weeks of age	Dry food should be available at all times
Adult cats on general maintenance diet	Twice daily

Age	Weight (kilograms)	Amount per day (grams)	Amount per day (in Hill's cups)
Kittens aged up to 4 months	0.5	31	1/4
	1	52	3/8
	1.5	71	5/8
	2	88	3/4
Kittens aged 4 to 6 months	2	73	5/8
	3	99	7/8
	4	123	1
	5	145	1 1/4
Kittens aged 7 months to 1 year	3	79	5/8
	4	98	7/8
	5	116	1
Cats aged from 1 year	3	48	3/8
	4	59	1/2
	5	70	5/8

## Dogs and Puppies

Dogs	Feeding guide
Pregnant or lactating mothers	Provide food at all times
Puppies up to 16 weeks of age	Three meals per day, spread over the course of the day
Puppies over 16 weeks of age	Two meals per day, spread over the course of the day
Adult dogs on general maintenance diet	Twice daily

Age	Weight (kilograms)	Amount per day (grams)	Amount per day (in Hill's cups)
Puppies aged up to 4 months	1	55	1/2
	2.5	110	1 1/8
	5	184	1 7/8
	10	310	3 1/8
Puppies aged 4 to 9 months	2.5	91	7/8
	5	154	1 1/2
	10	248	2 5/8
	20	434	4 3/8
Puppies aged 10 months to 1 year	2.5	73	3/4
	5	123	1 1/4
	10	207	2 1/8
	20	347	3 1/2
Dogs aged from 1 year	2.5	58	5/8
	5	98	1
	10	165	1 5/8
	15	224	2 1/4
	20	278	2 3/4
	30	377	3 3/4
	40	490	5
	50	568	5 3/4

## 5. Veterinary Care

### 5.1. Routine Veterinary Care

Veterinary care for foster animals is provided by RSPCA NSW Veterinary Hospitals, located at Yagoona, Rutherford, Tighes Hill and Broken Hill. Foster carers who don't live near one of these hospitals will be provided details of local veterinary hospitals or clinics they can visit. The foster care coordinator will work directly with the veterinarians to manage the health and wellbeing of each foster animal. All costs associated with the foster animal/s will be covered by RSPCA NSW.

#### 5.1.1. After Hours Veterinary Care and Emergency Veterinary Assistance

If a foster animal needs veterinary attention after hours because they are sick or injured, you will need to contact the emergency veterinary hospital number on the animal details form. Please contact the foster care coordinator or shelter the following day to discuss the situation.

RSPCA NSW will reimburse foster carers for veterinary bills for foster animals when taken for veterinary care after hours, or where an RSPCA NSW veterinary hospital is not nearby, subject to approval. In certain circumstances, RSPCA NSW may pay the veterinary hospital or clinic directly.

### 5.2. Vaccinations

Kittens and puppies receive a series of vaccinations between four and 16 weeks old, unless otherwise directed by RSPCA NSW veterinarians. Refer to the animal details form for their vaccination schedule.

Rabbits receive a course of vaccinations from at least four weeks old. Adult rabbits receiving their first vaccine should then be given a booster vaccination one month later, with continuing vaccinations every six months.

No animal under 16 weeks old should go into public spaces, or interact with animals that are not up to date with their vaccinations. Puppies can start going for walks 14 days after their 10-week old vaccination.

Kittens and cats should not be allowed outside, regardless of vaccinations received.

- Cats and kittens receive the F3 vaccine (feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus and panleukopenia)
- Puppies and adult dogs receive the C5 vaccine (parvovirus, distemper, hepatitis and kennel cough)
- Rabbits receive the Cylap RCD vaccine (rabbit calicivirus disease)

## 5.3. Worming

All required animals are wormed immediately when they come into RSPCA NSW care. The general worming schedule for cats and dogs is:

Age	Worming
Up to 3 months	Every 2 weeks
3 to 6 months	Every month
Over 6 months	Every 3 months

The foster care coordinator will provide worming tablets or paste for the appropriate age and weight of your foster animal/s.

## 5.4. Desexing

During a scheduled visit, the foster care coordinator or recheck staff will assess if your foster animals are ready for desexing using the following guidelines:

- Are the kittens or puppies the appropriate age and weight (1 to 1.2 kilograms) for surgery?
- Are they successfully weaned from their mother?
- Is your foster animal healthy? If they were sick or injured, have they recovered?
- Is there availability at the veterinary hospital and room at the shelter?

You will be advised of the date to return your foster animals.

### 5.4.1. The Day Before Surgery

Foster animal/s must not eat after 8 p.m. the night before scheduled surgery, as this will affect the anaesthetic.

They may have water; however, this must be removed early in the morning on the day of surgery.

## 5.5. Health

When checking your foster animals' health, consider the following:

- Are they bright, alert and responsive to you?
- Are they active and have energy in between resting periods?
- Are they eating well?
- Are they urinating and defecating? Does it look normal? (refer to [Appendix 3](#))
- Are their eyes and nose clear of discharge?
- Are their bottoms clean?
- Is there any hair loss, lesions or scaly skin?



## 6. Illnesses and Diseases

### 6.1. Diarrhoea

Stool can be an indicator of an animal's health. Normal stool is firm and has a definite shape. Soft stool is not firm, but still has some shape. Diarrhoea is liquid, with or without colour to it, and can be caused by parasites, viruses, bacteria, food changes, stress and other issues.

The diarrhoea health chart in [Appendix 3](#) can be used as a veterinary reference when describing diarrhoea.

Diarrhoea must be monitored as it can quickly lead to dehydration. If diarrhoea is seen, contact the foster care coordinator or another nominated person as listed on your Animal Details Form. In the meantime, offer bland food such as plain cooked chicken meat (human-grade only) and boiled rice to the affected foster animal.

### 6.2 Ringworm

Contrary to the name, ringworm is not a worm, but a fungal disease affecting the skin, hair and occasionally nails of animals and people. Ringworm symptoms can include:

- Patch of hair loss
- Scaling of the skin
- A red ring lesion on hairless areas
- Hair breaking off due to brittleness

If you notice any symptoms, call the veterinary hospital to schedule a test.

If ringworm is suspected, it's recommended to wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves, a gown and shoe covers when handling the animals, and to routinely clean the environment.

### 6.3. Parasites

#### 6.3.1 Worms

Parasites can be found in the stool or around the anus of any animals, but particularly young animals. The main types of worms include roundworm, hookworm, whipworm and tapeworm.

Tapeworms may look like grains of rice. Roundworms look like spaghetti and can be seen in or around the stool or in vomit. Hookworms are approximately 3 centimetres long. Whipworms are small worms approximately 5 centimetres long and can appear in watery or bloody diarrhoea.

If you notice worms, call the foster care coordinator or another nominated contact person as listed on the Animal Details Form you received.

### 6.3.2. Ear Mites

Ear mites are parasites that live in the ear canal. Your foster animal may scratch their ears or have a bald spot behind ears from continuous scratching. Animals may also shake their head. Their 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.

If you notice any symptoms, call the foster care coordinator or another nominated contact person as listed on the Animal Details Form you received.

### 6.3.3. Fleas

Fleas are an external parasite that live on the skin and survive by feeding on the blood of animals. Fleas are tiny dark brown insects, about one to two millimetres long, that appear flattened sideways and may be seen moving through their fur or on their skin. Your foster animal may continuously scratch themselves, or display signs of reddening, loss of hair or thickened skin.

If you notice fleas or the symptoms of them, call the foster care coordinator or another nominated contact person as listed on the Animal Details Form you received, as a test may need to be arranged.

### 6.3.4. Ticks

Paralysis ticks are dangerous parasites that can attach to the skin of animals. A toxin is secreted as they suck blood, which affects the nervous system.

Ticks often appear different, depending if they are engorged with blood or not. When engorged, they have a blueish to light-grey colour and can be firmly attached in the skin. Raised, thick skin or 'craters' may appear and are evidence of a prior tick attachment.

It's important to regularly check your foster animal/s for ticks, especially after spending time outside. Check at least once a day, using your fingertips to feel through their coat. Ticks or tick craters can be felt as lumps on the skin's surface. Always check the face, forehead, neck, inner and outer ears, skin folds, and between toes and legs.

Discontinue the check if your foster animal is stressed, as stress can make the toxin work faster. If you find a tick, note its location and size, and call the foster care coordinator or another nominated contact person as listed on the Animal Details Form you received.

Do not attempt to remove the tick, as incorrect removal could result in part of the flea or tick remaining in the skin of the animal.

If you reside in an area that is affected by ticks, you will most often be supplied with tick control supplies, such as Seresto collars.

### 6.3.5. Mange

Mange is caused by mites that infect the skin of animals. Some forms of mange are contagious to animals and humans. The symptoms include itching, hair loss and sores.

If you notice any symptoms, call the foster care coordinator or another nominated contact person as listed on the Animal Details Form you received.

## 6.4. Vomiting

Vomiting can be caused by a variety of different things. Dehydration can set in after continuous vomiting. If vomiting occurs, call the foster care coordinator or another nominated contact person as listed on the Animal Details Form you received. If it occurs two to three times in a row, or the foster care coordinator isn't available, contact the veterinary hospital immediately.

## 6.5. Eye Discharge

It can be normal for animals to have a small amount of discharge (little pieces of crust in the corner of their eyes after waking up). Contact the foster care coordinator or other nominated contact person as listed on the Animal Details Form you received if you notice any signs of:

- Continuous watery discharge
- Yellow or green discharge
- Swollen eyes
- Closed eyes or squinting
- Red eyes
- Eye injury

You can use a warm, damp towel to gently wipe the affected eye/s.

## 6.6. Upper Respiratory Tract Infection (URI)

URI's are common and caused by contagious viruses and bacteria. Symptoms include:

- Sneezing
- Discharge from the eyes or nose
- Congested breathing
- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy
- Dehydration

If symptoms are noticed, call the foster care coordinator or another nominated contact person as listed on the Animal Details Form you received.

## 6.7 Fading Puppies or Kittens

Occasionally, a kitten or puppy who appeared healthy will suddenly stop thriving. They will stop growing, socialising and crawling. They will begin to lose weight and may cry continuously. When this happens, they can fade quickly and, even with medical intervention, may not survive 48 hours. If any of the above symptoms are noticed, call the foster care coordinator or another nominated contact person as listed on the Animal Details Form you received. If they are unavailable, contact the veterinary hospital immediately.

## 6.8. Sick Animal Procedures

1. As soon as you notice any symptoms, separate your foster animals from your owned pets by housing them in a quiet room with fresh water and bedding. Do not separate siblings or litter mates, as this can cause stress and exacerbate any illnesses they may have. Allow somewhere for them to hide. A clean cardboard box is good temporary cubby for kittens, ensure it was not used to hold chemicals.
2. Call the foster care coordinator or another nominated contact person as listed on the Animal Details Form you received.
3. Thoroughly clean the animal's enclosure.

## 6.9. Zoonotic Diseases

Although most feline and canine infectious diseases only affect that specific species, zoonotic diseases can be transmitted from animals to people, and vice versa.

Children younger than five, adults older than 65 or pregnant women are easily susceptible to zoonotic diseases.

Weakened immune systems also make people susceptible to zoonotic diseases, which can be caused by, but are not limited to:

- Influenza, recently contracted or recovering
- Diagnosed or undiagnosed liver or kidney disease
- Receiving or recovering from cancer or chemotherapy treatment
- Bone marrow transplant recipients
- HIV

Always check with your doctor if you suspect your immune system may be weakened. Some examples of zoonotic diseases include:

- Ringworm
- Salmonellosis
- Campylobacter infection
- Giardia
- Cryptosporidium infection
- Roundworms
- Hookworms
- Cat scratch fever
- Toxoplasmosis
- Mange

Before animals are placed in foster care, they are carefully checked for any signs of these diseases, however, it is possible for symptoms to develop after you take them home. The following measures should be taken to reduce the risk of catching zoonotic disease from cats and dogs:

- Keep litter tray or puppy pads away from the kitchen or other areas where you prepare or store food.
- Use gloves when cleaning litter or picking up faeces and urine.
- Change litter trays at least twice a day.
- Use litter tray liners and empty out litter trays each day. Should the litter tray become soiled, this should be cleaned that day with hot water and detergent. Otherwise, intensive cleaning of litter trays with hot water and detergent should be done at least once a week. Do not touch your mouth or face while handling the foster animal. Do not kiss them or let them contact your face.
- If you are bitten, immediately wash the affected area with soap and water. Please contact the foster care coordinator who will send you an Incident Report Form that must be completed and returned to record the incident with the foster animal.
- Cover any wounds or broken skin with waterproof band-aids. Do not allow animals to lick broken skin.

If you believe you have come in contact or have been infected with a zoonotic disease, notify the foster care coordinator immediately. Any relevant out of pocket expenses may be covered by RSPCA NSW, pending approval.



## 7. Monitor, Contact Veterinary Hospital and Emergency Symptoms or Incidents

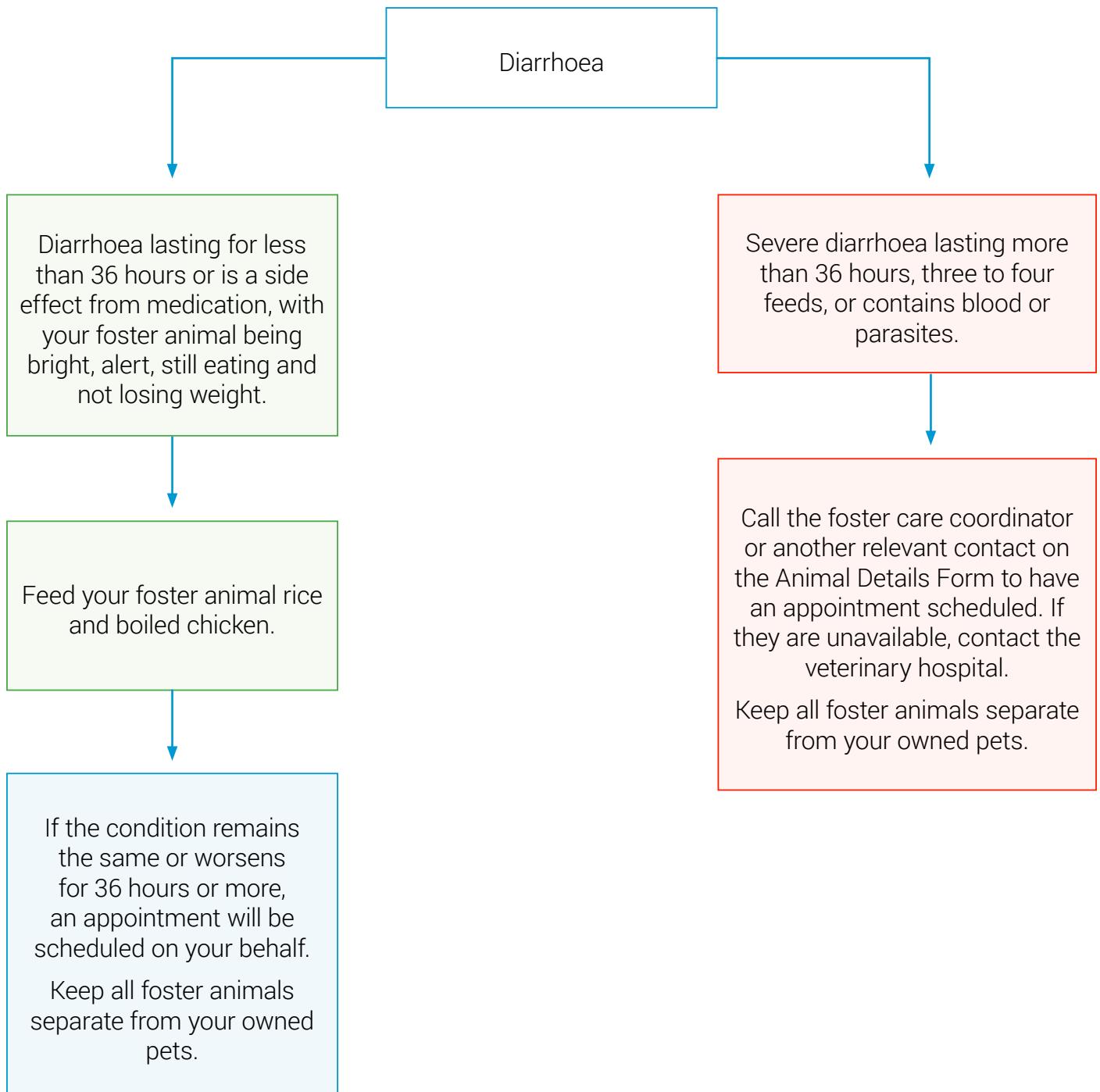
Monitor	Ask for Advice	Emergency
<p>Symptoms have been noticed but are not constant or have occurred for a short period of time.</p> <p>Monitor the animal and escalate if symptoms persist.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mild or temporary bloating of abdomen</li> <li>• Coughing</li> <li>• Diarrhoea lasting less than 36 hours</li> <li>• Dull coat</li> <li>• Lack of appetite for less than 24 hours, or three meals in a row</li> <li>• Lack of bowel movement for less than 24-36 hours or straining</li> <li>• Lethargy (lack of energy)</li> <li>• Runny discharge from the eyes or nose</li> <li>• Sneezing</li> <li>• Swollen eyes or eyes held closed</li> <li>• Vomiting, once off</li> <li>• Weight loss</li> </ul>	<p>Seek further advice on what to look for, how to alleviate symptoms, or if required, organise a recheck.</p> <p>Contact the foster care coordinator to update them on the animals' condition.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Severe diarrhoea lasting more than 36 hours, three to four feeds, or contains blood or parasites</li> <li>• A mix of continuous sneezing, breathing problems or discharge from the nose or eyes</li> <li>• Consistent bloating of the abdomen</li> <li>• Red ring on a hairless patch of skin</li> <li>• Minimal bowel movement for over 24 hours</li> <li>• Fleas or ticks found on animal</li> <li>• Lethargy (lack of energy)</li> <li>• Lack of appetite</li> <li>• Ulcers</li> <li>• Vomiting two or three times in a row</li> </ul>	<p>Requires immediate veterinary attention, go straight to a veterinary hospital.</p> <p>Remember to alert the foster care coordinator within 24 hours of taking them to emergency care.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A kitten or puppy who does not respond, or has not eaten for more than one day</li> <li>• Any trauma (hit by a car, dropped, limping, unconscious, etc.)</li> <li>• Apparent pain</li> <li>• Bleeding of any kind (from nose or in urine/stool)</li> <li>• Severe diarrhoea lasting longer than 24-36 hours</li> <li>• Difficulty breathing</li> <li>• Lameness</li> <li>• Red or brown-coloured urine</li> </ul>

If you have questions about the health of your foster animal, please contact the foster care coordinator or another nominated contact person on your Animal Details Form.

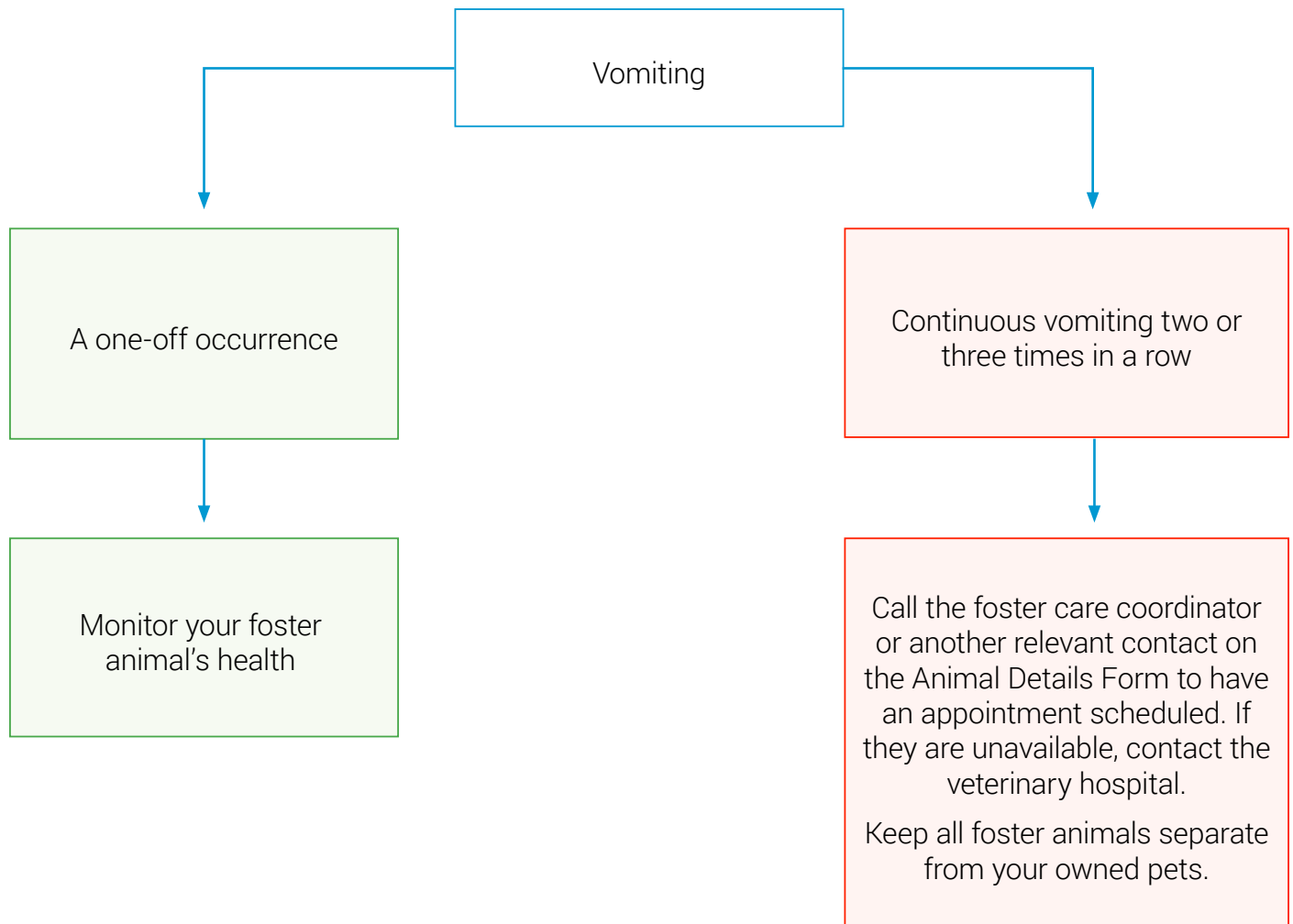
If your foster animal has an emergency that requires immediate attention, contact the veterinary hospital on your Animal Details Form immediately.

Please refer to the next few pages for some common health emergencies.

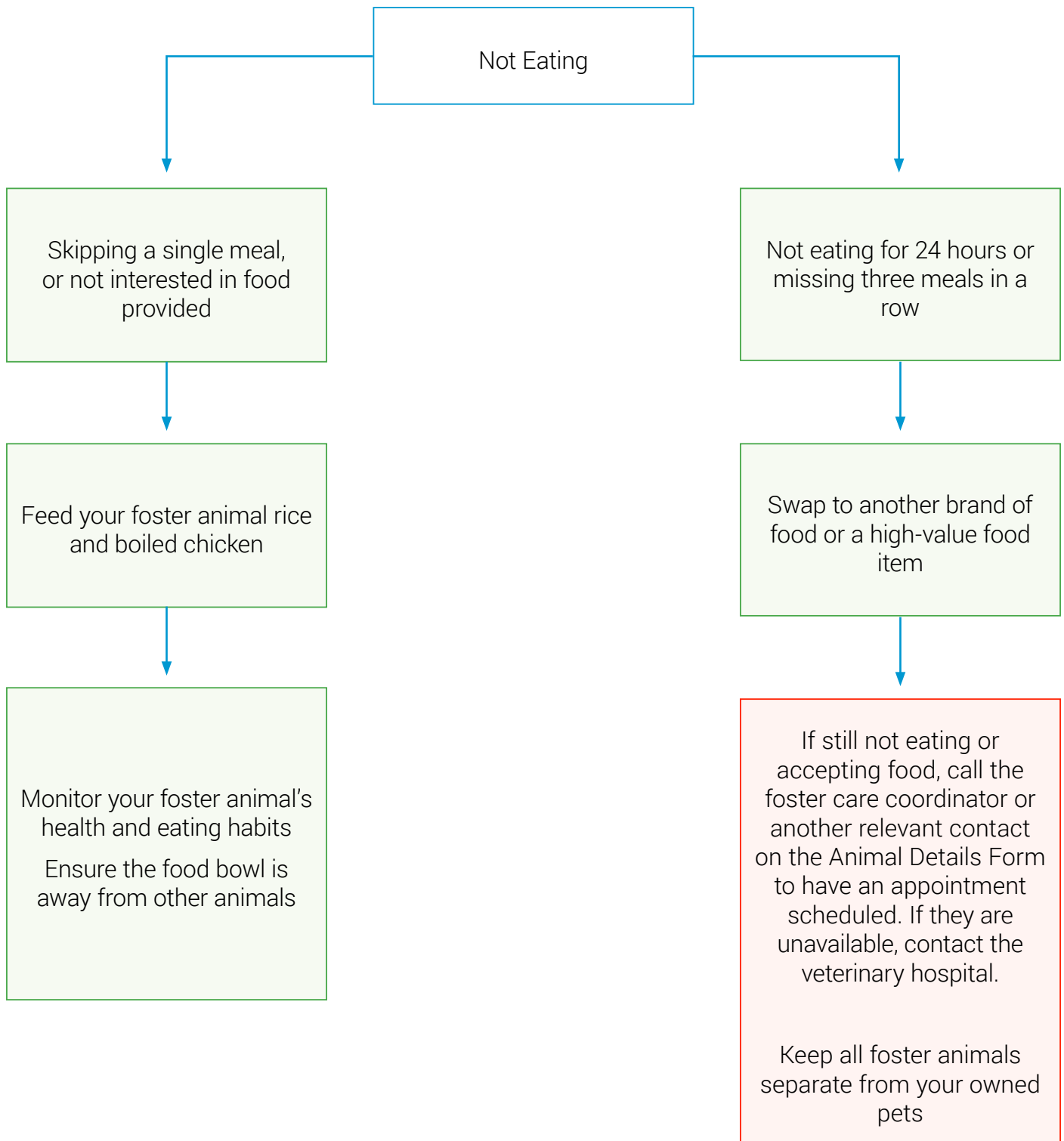
## 7.1 How to Monitor - Diarrhoea



## 7.2. How to Monitor - Vomiting



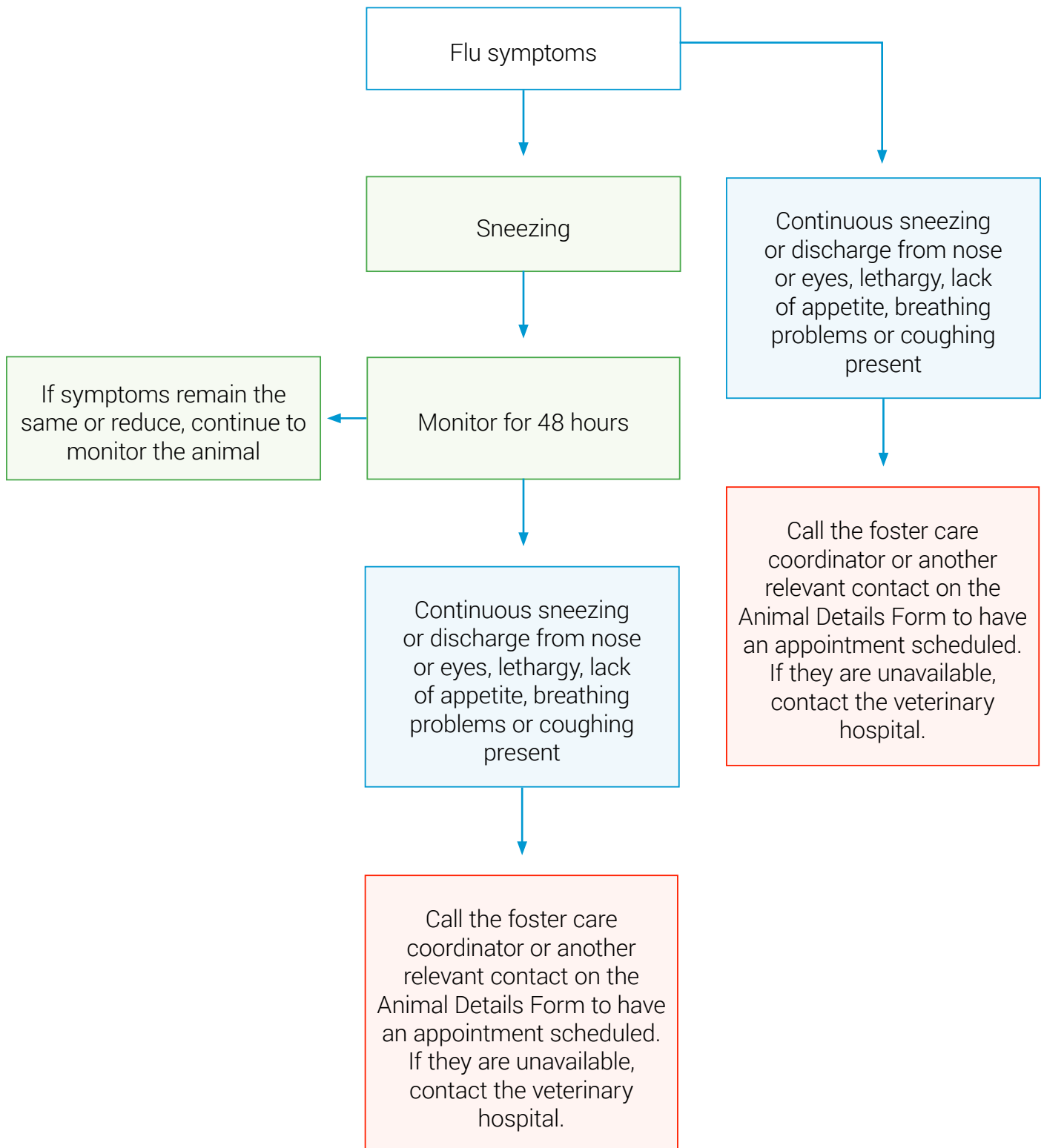
## 7.3 How to Monitor - Not Eating





## 7.4 How to Monitor - Flu Symptoms

If your foster animal is showing flu symptoms, separate all foster animals from your owned pets.



## 8. Cleaning Procedure

The aim of infection control is to:

- Minimise factors that can increase the likelihood of contracting an illness, by reducing stress, treating any underlying conditions, addressing pain, and enriching the environment.
- Optimise your foster animal's ability to resist disease by means of preventative healthcare such as vaccinations and parasite control.
- Decrease the likelihood of exposure to infectious disease pathogens by adhering to cleaning requirements.

Animals should be handled in the following order, due to immunity levels and immune system function:

1. Young or elderly animals, with underdeveloped or not fully functioning immune systems
2. Healthy animals
3. Infectious animals

### 8.1 Disinfectant Ratios

An appropriate disinfectant may be supplied to you if your situation requires it. Always ensure that plastic gloves are worn when handling the disinfectant, and all instructions relating to the product and its use are followed.

### 8.2 How to Disinfect an Area

1. Ensure plastic gloves are worn and all animals are placed in a temporary and previously sanitised location with fresh water available to them.
2. Once the appropriate disinfectant has been diluted to its appropriate amount, empty all litter boxes, faeces and items that will be thrown out from the area.
3. Using a spray bottle or sponge, cover surfaces the animal was exposed to or potentially exposed to with the diluted solution.
4. Once all surfaces have been sprayed or covered, follow the instructions (on the packaging or provided to you by the foster care coordinator) on how to wipe down the surfaces, if required.
5. The remaining unused solution can be kept stable for at least two days if kept sealed. Ensure the unused solution is disposed of appropriately.

## 9. Missing Animal or Animal Death

### 9.1. What to do if a Foster Animal Escapes

The first thing you should do if an animal is unaccounted for is check the external doors and windows of your home to determine how likely it is that the animal got outside. If there is an obvious route of escape, such as an open door, ensure all other animals are secure in your home before searching outside.

If you see your foster animal escape from your home, approach them very slowly and quietly so you don't frighten them, or they may run away. Try to coax them with food.

If your foster animal is missing but you have not actually seen them escape from your home, don't panic. Frightened animals have been known to hide silently for days at a time without making an appearance.

If it is unlikely the animal has escaped outside, concentrate your search inside. Start searching in the safe room and check in cupboards, drawers, backpacks and suitcases, behind or underneath furniture and any other dark, quiet, confined space you can think of. Try using food to lure the animal out from hiding.

If, after a thorough search, you cannot find your foster animal, please contact the foster care coordinator or shelter for further advice.

### 9.2. What to do if a Foster Animal Dies

In the unlikely event that this should happen, wrap the animal in a towel and remove them from the other animals. Immediately call the foster care coordinator or shelter for support and advice.

## 10. How do Foster Animals Get Adopted?

Most often, foster carers are encouraged to promote the adoption of their foster animals to suitable friends, family and other potential adopters. Feel free to utilise social media, unless the foster care coordinator or other relevant parties have requested it not be used.

There are times when certain animals must be returned into RSPCA NSW care for adoption, and carers are asked not to promote the adoption of that animal or to find a potential adopter. The relevant person will advise you if this is the case.

Some animals can be available for adoption from foster homes, with interested adopters contacting the shelter or volunteer branch to express their interest.

Most commonly, foster animals are returned to the RSPCA NSW location they were fostered from, usually a shelter, where they wait to be adopted. RSPCA NSW staff and volunteers provide daily care, enrichment and monitoring while they await adoption. All RSPCA NSW adoption policies and procedures are followed for all foster animals, no matter their adoption location.

If you are interested in following up with the status of your foster animal, contact the foster care coordinator or customer care at the nearest RSPCA NSW shelter who will happily update you.

## 11. Hold Period Before Fostering Again

If an animal has been diagnosed with an infectious disease there is a mandatory hold period where the foster carer is restricted from fostering animals. The mandatory hold period differs with each disease.

Disease	Mandatory hold period
Parvovirus	Six months
Ringworm	Three months from first negative test result, or can foster more ringworm positive animals
Panleukopenia	Six months
Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP)	If no other felines are owned: Three months If other cats or kittens are owned: No longer able to foster care

## 12. Taking a Break from Foster Care

If you wish to take a break from foster care for any reason, please alert the foster care coordinator or volunteer manager for your region. You can advise them of a date you will be available, or contact them when you are ready to recommence.

If you require assistance, as a volunteer with RSPCA NSW, you can seek free assistance from Converge International's assistance program on 1300 687 327 or via [convergeinternational.com.au](http://convergeinternational.com.au).



# Cat and Kitten Care



# 1. Caring for Your Foster Cat and Kittens

Set up your foster cat or kittens in a quiet room for the first 24 hours with food, water, litter box, toys, bedding, and a cardboard scratching post. Only enter when necessary to allow them to settle in.

If your foster cat or kitten is friendly or sociable a few hours after the initial trip home, spending time with them can help them settle in.

Let your foster cat and kittens get used to you slowly. Sit in the room and offer treats in moderation. Some may need longer than others to become comfortable.

If you have any questions or need advice, contact the foster care coordinator or other relevant person, as noted on your Animal Details Form.

## 1.1. Introducing your Foster Cat to your Cats

Cats can be very territorial and sometimes do not like change. Whenever a new cat or kitten is introduced to the home, it takes time for them to get used to each other. Points to consider when introducing cats are:

- Keep your foster cat or kittens in a separate room for at least a week so the existing cat can become used to their smell and presence, and the foster cat or kitten can adjust to their new environment, as well as for infection purposes
- Introduce your cat and the foster cat or kitten in stages, gradually increasing exposure time. Gradual introductions may help to reduce anxiety, and provides a good basis for the development of a healthy relationship
- After the foster cat or kittens have settled into their room, slowly introduce them to the rest of the house by bringing them out for 10 or 15 minutes at a time, under direct supervision. Eventually they will be confident enough to wander around freely, and your cat should be accustomed to them
- Ensure your cat has their own private space to retreat from the foster cat or kittens
- There may be initial hissing and tail swishing, but this should settle down after a few days
- Provide at least two litter trays

If you have any concerns about either your own cats or your foster animals, please keep them separate and contact the foster care coordinator or another nominated contact person as listed on the Animal Details Form you received.

## 2. Kittens without Mum

You will be provided with food and how often to feed them on your Animal Details Form.

It is important to observe kittens eating at least twice a day to determine whether all kittens are eating, or if some are being intimidated away from the food, or are not eating due to illness. If a kitten is not eating for more than two meals in a row, please contact the veterinary hospital immediately as this can become an emergency quickly.

### 3. Kittens with Mum

Kittens will not require food other than their mother's milk until they are three to four weeks old. Until kittens are this age, you only need to provide enough food for the mother. Most adult cats moderate their intake of food effectively and can have dry biscuits available throughout the day, and small amounts of canned food at mealtimes.

### 4. Introducing Solid Food

When kittens are around three weeks of age, they may start showing interest in their mother's solid food. Feed kittens small amounts of food if they are interested. Kittens may continue to feed from mum while trying solid food and this should be encouraged.

Around four weeks of age, it will become necessary to provide additional food and bowls for the kittens. It is not necessary to teach the kittens to eat this food – they will eat when they are ready. They may find it easier if you mix canned food with a small amount of warm water to give it a smoother consistency. Boiled chicken meat (human-grade only) can also be provided to kittens as a bridge to eating soiled food.

Do not force a kitten to eat by placing food in its mouth. Kittens will generally begin to eat solid food at around five to six weeks of age.

If a kitten who weighs around 450 grams is not eating solid food, not gaining weight, or is losing weight, please contact the the foster care coordinator or other relevant person, as noted on your Animal Details Form.

Refer to the [Hills Feeding Guide in Section One](#) for the approximate amounts of dry food to be fed to kittens and cats.

#### 4.1. Toxic or Dangerous Foods

Foods that are toxic or dangerous to cats and kittens include:

- Avocado
- Bread dough and yeast dough
- Chocolate
- Coffee and other caffeine products
- Compost, mouldy or spoiled foods
- Cooked bones (raw bones are okay, but be sure that the bone is large enough so that the cat or kitten cannot fit the whole bone in their mouth or swallow it whole)
- Corn cobs
- Currants, grapes, raisins and sultanas
- Fatty foods and fat trimmings
- Fruit seeds or fruit stones (e.g., apricot stones, avocado stones, mango seeds)
- Garlic
- Green (unripe) tomatoes
- Lilies (fresh or dead, all parts)
- Mushrooms
- Nuts
- Onions and onion powder
- Paracetamol
- Salt
- Too much fish
- Xylitol (sugar substitute found in some baking goods, chewing gum, lollies and toothpaste)

## 5. Elimination

During the first one to three weeks of life, kittens do not urinate or defecate on their own and require stimulation for elimination. Gently rub a warm cloth or cotton pad on the kitten's genital area and anus. This should be done before and after feeding. If a mother cat is present, she will stimulate the kittens.

### 5.1. Litter Box Training

Kittens should be encouraged to start using litter trays as early as possible, particularly when a mother cat isn't around. Most kittens instinctively know how to use a litter tray but may need some assistance in the early stages.

Set up a low-lipped litter box with three centimetres of kitty litter in a quiet area, with food and beds kept as far away as possible.

Gently place the cat or kitten in the litter box after each meal, play or sleep time, and give them lots of praise when they are successful. If kittens require manual stimulation to toilet, do this with the kitten in the litter box to create an association.

Placing a few soiled swabs that were used to manually stimulate the kitten to toilet in the litter box can also help with familiarising the kitten with the litter box.

### 5.2. Cleaning Your Kitten/s

Keeping the kittens clean from food and faeces is vital for their health. If you notice your foster kitten has food, urine or faeces on themselves, gently wipe them with a warm damp cloth. Be sure to dry the kitten afterwards so they do not become cold. Kittens are usually groomed by their mother, but in the absence of the mother, you must work hard to keep the kittens clean, but refrain from fully bathing.

## 6. Spot Cleaning

Spot clean a cat or kittens environment when there is minimal mess and they are not displaying symptoms of illness.

1. Allow each animal to remain in its area, or provide a cardboard box or carrier for them to hide in if they are timid. Provide clean water.
2. While wearing plastic gloves, remove the litter tray and remove large clumps. If the tray is soiled, empty and wash it with hot soapy water. Change your gloves after completing this step.
3. Empty bowls and clean with hot, soapy water and dry thoroughly.
4. Shake out towels and blankets and put them back where they were. Only replace bedding if it is visibly soiled or dirty. Clean any soiled toys.
5. Wipe off any stains or organic matter using a clean, wet rag or paper towel, but do not use disinfectant.
6. Clean any mess on your foster cat or kittens body with warm water and a clean cloth. Dry them with a clean cloth.

If the area is particularly messy, a full clean is required to sanitise the environment. Refer to [Section One, 8.2 \(How to disinfect an area\)](#).

## 7. Daily Cleaning

Items such as bowls and litter trays should be checked multiple times a day and cleaned out. If they are soiled, wash them with hot soapy water. It is very important not to use any harsh chemical products to clean them, as they could be toxic or leave a scent that will confuse the kittens. For example, ammonia smells like cat urine and is found in a number of cleaning products. Hot, soapy water will be sufficient for daily cleans. Bedding should be washed with household low-scent laundry detergent. Hot, soapy water will be sufficient for daily cleans. Bedding can be washed or thrown out when soiled.

## 8. Socialisation and Enrichment

Activity and exercise are important for cats and kittens. There is a wide variety of cat toys available, such as:

- Feathery toys
- Toilet rolls
- Objects attached to the end of sticks
- Soft toys
- Climbing and perching areas
- Table tennis balls
- Tunnels
- Sensory objects, such as walking over wrapping paper and butchers' paper
- Catnip or cat grass
- CD's hanging from string

Cats and kittens need a place to sharpen their claws. Cardboard scratching products are recommended. They can be cost effective, as they can be disposed of between foster animals which makes disease management easier.

Rotate toys so your foster cat or kitten does not become bored of them.

Never leave your foster cat or kittens unattended with ribbons, strings or small, easy to swallow objects, as they can cause intestinal obstructions.



## 9. Kitten Development

Neonatal kittens are still developing their basic reflexes, hearing, and vision, and are unable to regulate their body temperatures. Neonatal kittens should be confined to a nursery area. Kittens can sleep 18 to 20 hours a day.

Below is a table describing the ideal behaviour and development for kittens:

Weeks	Feeding	Development
0-1	Bottle feed every 2-2.5 hours. Overnight feeding can be every 3-4 hours. If there is a mother cat, ensure the kittens are nursing. Kittens can nurse for up to 45 minutes at a time. Excessive crying or activity could indicate a problem with the mother's milk supply.	One week old kittens will weigh approximately 100-110 grams and sleep 90% of the time. Minimal handling is required for the kittens. Newborns are deaf and blind and are unable to maintain their own body temperature. A heating source is required to keep them warm, such as an electric heating pad or hot water bottle under the crate, box or carrier to ensure they are constantly warm. Ensure there is enough room for them to move away from the heat source if they wish, and that they are unable to make direct contact with the heat source.
1-2	Bottle feed every 2-2.5 hours, with overnight feeding every 3-4 hours.	Kittens will weigh approximately 200 grams, with their ear canals starting to open. Keep the kittens warm with a heating source, as they are unable to regulate their body temperature.
2-3	Bottle feed every 2.5-3.5 hours, with overnight feeding every 3-4 hours.	Kittens will weigh approximately 280 grams and will begin to crawl and stand between 18-21 days old, and their eyes begin to open. The kittens will start to play with each other. Ensure that all interactions and handling introduced are gentle and positive. Keep the kittens warm with a heating source, as they are unable to regulate their body temperature.
3-4	Bottle feed every 3-5 hours until they are full but not bloated. Kittens may start drinking from a bowl and being introduced to watered down canned food.	Kittens will weigh approximately 370 grams. Their sight begins to develop, and they may start cleaning themselves but will still need help for larger messes. Start litter box training at 3 weeks of age. Keep the kittens warm with a heating source, as they are unable to regulate their body temperature.
4-5	Feed 3-4 times a day if on solid food, with weaning continuing if not completely on solid food.	Kittens should be using a litter tray at 5 weeks of age.
5-6	Feed watered down canned food 4 times a day. Introduce dry food and water. Some kittens do not like canned food - ask the foster care coordinator or another person listed on the Animal Details Form for suitable brands to try.	Kittens can start to wander around the room, under supervision. Play with the kittens often and expose them to many kinds of toys.
6-7	Feed canned and/or dry food at least 3 times daily. If any kittens are territorial with food, provide a second bowl so that everyone gets fed.	Kittens will start playing and washing themselves. Be sure to show them the litter box after each meal, play session and nap.
7-8	Each kitten will be eating 50 - 100 grams of food per day. Offer wet food 3-4 times a day. Always provide a bowl of dry food and fresh water.	Continue playing and socialising with the kittens.
8+	Feed wet food 2 times per day. Always provide a bowl of dry food and fresh water.	Kittens should weigh just under 1 kilogram. They are generally ready to be desexed when they reach this weight, and if their health allows it.



## 10. Under-Socialised Kittens

Monitoring and observing your foster cat or kitten's behaviour and socialisation levels is key to understanding how they are coping. Use the below points to assist with training, socialisation and getting them to show 'desired' behaviours.

- Allow the kittens to choose when they wish to interact.
- Provide hidey holes to help them feel comfortable.
- Feliway can be used to reduce signs of stress or anxiety.
- Hand feed them wet food or boiled chicken meat (human-grade only).
- Try playing with small, interactive toys and encourage them to participate.
- Do not pick up a kitten or cat if they don't like it.
- Ignore bad behaviour, such as hard scratches or bites, and only reward good behaviours using verbal praise, pats or treats.

## 11. Neonatal Kittens

### 11.1. Feeding

Never give a neonatal kitten anything other than their specified formula. Kittens who are less than three weeks old require a liquid formula.

The powder formula must be mixed for feedings. It is important to closely follow mixing directions on the packaging. If you are having trouble, please contact the foster care coordinator or another relevant person, as noted on your Animal Details Form.

If the formula is changed, ensure the new formula is slowly introduced. This can be done by combining the two formulas until the old formula is phased out.

### 11.2. Feeding Times

The below guide can be used as an approximate feeding guide for kittens:

Age (weeks)	Feeding	Frequency
0-2	10 feeds in 24 hours	Every 2-2.5 hours
2-4	7 feeds in 24 hours	Every 2.5-3.5 hours
4-5	5 feeds in 24 hours	Every 3.5-4.5 hours until on solid food

## 11.3. How to Feed a Neonatal Kitten

- ☑ Only use clean teats and bottles when feeding neonatal kittens.
- ☑ Ensure formula is warmed to 35°C-37°C before feeding.

1. Boil water to use for the mixture.
2. Ensure the water is not too hot (can curdle) or too cold (difficult to mix).
3. Add the appropriate amount of boiled water to the powder first, and mix to a paste.
4. Once combined, add the remaining water and mix thoroughly.
  - An electric whisk can be used for mixing larger quantities.
5. Feed kittens one at a time using an appropriate bottle and teat. Place the kitten on a counter top and let them feed with four paws on the counter and a level head, as this simulates how they would nurse from their mother.
  - Do not feed a kitten while on their back, as the formula can go down the wrong way and end up in their lungs.
  - We recommend wrapping the kitten in a loose "burrito" or feeding them on a soft blanket or towel.
6. Gently open the kitten's mouth with your finger and place the teat on their tongue. Stroking kittens can help them to eat.
7. Pull lightly on the bottle as this promotes strong sucking.
8. Tilt the bottle up slightly, preventing the kitten from inhaling too much air.
  - Do not squeeze the bottle to force formula into the kitten's mouth. This can cause formula to move into the lungs.
9. The kitten will naturally cease sucking when full and will pull away from the teat.
10. After feeding, gently massage their back.
11. Once they have finished eating and have been massaged, stimulate the kittens to urinate and/or defecate. Stimulate them with a warm cloth if required.
12. Fill out the Daily Weight and Feeding Record (see [Appendix 2](#)).



Leftover milk can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours or frozen for up to two weeks. It is advised to make up larger quantities and store it frozen in small portions (e.g., ice cube trays), so that the required daily feed volumes can be easily thawed out. Once milk is thawed, ensure it is either fed immediately or thrown away.

## 11.4. Cleaning Feeding Equipment

Keeping the kittens' nursing bottles and supplies clean is vital as it prevents diarrhoea, vomiting and infection. Clean the bottles and teats with hot, soapy water and a bottle brush. If you do not have a bottle brush, you may wash the bottle and teats in the dishwasher.

## 11.5. Weaning

Weaning should be conducted gradually when kittens are four weeks of age. Offer warmed canned food with water. It may take a few tries for kittens to understand. If they are not interested, wait a few days and try again. When they accept the mix, gradually thicken it by adding less water. Begin to offer dry food on a free-feeding basis.

## 11.6. Maintaining Kitten Health

Healthy kittens have bright eyes, a sleek coat and a plump belly. Their eyes and noses are generally free from discharge. Normal body temperature for kittens is 37.5°C.



## 11.7. Measuring Growth

All kittens under one kilogram should be weighed daily to ensure they are growing and gaining weight. When weighing your kitten, if you notice they have lost or not gained weight over a few days, please contact the foster care coordinator or another relevant person, as noted on your Animal Details Form..

# 12. Fostering Mums

In some cases, mums are fostered with their litters. There are a few things to consider for this type of foster situation: mother cats require a calm setting with privacy and minimal activity, as stress can cause them to stop taking care of their kittens.

## 12.1. Bringing Mum Home

You will need a separate space for a mum with her litter. When you first bring them home, leave the mum and her kittens alone in their new space. Mum will need some time, up to a few days, to adjust. Offer mum fresh food, water, a heating source to regulate body temperature and a clean litter box.

## 12.2. Socialisation

Even adult mother cats need socialisation; however, proceed slowly with any adult cat you do not know. Create situations for socialisation but let her come to you. Stop the interaction if you notice any negative signs, such as swishing tail, ears laid back, head jerk towards you, tensing up, a cranky meow, moving away, hissing or growling.

## 12.3. Mum and Her Kittens

For the first few weeks, mum will do everything necessary to take care of her kittens. Kittens start nursing very soon after birth. Mum will also groom her kittens. Cats should be left alone for the first two weeks except to feed, clean and check on the kittens a few times a day.

## 12.4. Separating Kittens and Mum

If all kittens and mum are healthy and well-socialised, there may be no reason to separate them before eight weeks, or when they are returned into RSPCA NSW care.

However, sometimes there are medical or behavioural reasons to separate mum from kittens earlier. These include:

- Mum is not taking care of the kittens. Warning signs include not nursing, grooming, or responding to the kittens' cries, and staying away from kittens who are under five weeks old
- Mum is under-socialised or has other behaviour concerns and is not easily handled by people. Mum may also prevent kittens from being handled if she has maternal aggression
- Mum is taking care of the kittens, but there are medical concerns for the mum or kittens

Please contact the foster care coordinator or another relevant person, as noted on your Animal Details Form if you notice any of these issues.

## 12.5. Possible Issues with Mum Cats

### Maternal neglect

In some cases, about eight per cent of the time, kittens die from poor maternal care. There are a few causes of maternal neglect. Some cats lack maternal instincts, and, in other cases, it is nature's way of handling sick or weak kittens. Environmental stress is a factor, which is why it is important to create a calm environment for mum and the litter.

Call the foster care coordinator or shelter if you notice any signs of maternal neglect such as the mum avoids feeding or grooming any of her kittens, or ignores their cries.

### Maternal hostility

If a mother cat starts to show signs of aggression, contact the foster care coordinator as this behaviour may need close monitoring.





# Dog and Puppy Care



# 1. Introducing your Foster Dog or Puppy to your Home

## 1.1. Preparing the Yard for an Adult Dog

Adult dogs must be provided with adequate shelter, either a kennel in the backyard, or free access to a garage or laundry. A spare bedroom can also be a safe area for your foster dog.

For backyards, ensure that the yard, at all times, is:

- Fully fenced, with an adequate height dogs cannot jump over, and in good condition, free from holes or large gaps. Move any items away from fencing that your foster dog could use to climb on and jump over the fence
- Adequate size for the breed of your foster dog
- Pools must be fully fenced so that dogs cannot access them
- Free from any hazards, such as sharp nails, loose items that the dog may chew on or dig up
- The dog has fresh and clean water, a comfy bed and plenty of toys to keep them busy

## 1.2. Introducing your Dog or Puppy to your Home

- Introduce your foster dog or puppy into your home slowly, and immediately cease introductions if dogs show signs of anxiety, stress or reactivity.
- Bring your foster dog or puppy into the house on the leash and let them sniff around at their own pace. In the initial stages, keeping them on the leash will allow you intervene if necessary.
- Create a distinct area for sleeping, eating, toileting and playing and show them to your foster dog or puppy. Ensure the allocated toileting area is in a corner as far away as possible from food and bedding.

Some simple planning can help alleviate stresses faced by a dog or puppy in a new environment. Some tips are:

- Always having a safe space for the dog or puppy, whether a kennel, comfy bed or a crate with an open door, so that they can come in and out at their own accord
- Give the dog or puppy some treats so they have positive associations with the unfamiliar environment. Having a bowl of dry food ready in their eating area when they arrive is a good way to start this process
- Reward behaviour that you want the dog or puppy to repeat
- Ensure you stick to the rules of where the dog is allowed in the house, as it is not fair on the dog to change the rules once it has settled in

## 1.3. Introducing your Foster Dog or Puppy to Other Animals

- Initially, keep the greetings brief to keep the dogs calm.
- Only allow a few seconds of sniffing each other before calling each dog back and rewarding them.
- After a minute or so, lead the dogs back together and allow another several seconds of sniffing. Repeat this process a number of times and gradually increase the length of time they interact, and reward them with treats.
- Take the dogs for a short walk together to relax both dogs and assist with bonding. It will also reinforce that positive, fun things happen when they are together.

Use positive reinforcement training to teach the dog or puppy basic exercises such as “sit”, “drop”, “down” and “come here” as early as possible and reward their good behaviour, as this will assist you with maintaining control during all interactions. Ensure everyone in the household is consistent with the same use of instructional words and body language to prevent confusing the dog.

- Newly introduced animals should not be left alone together unsupervised for the first few days.
- Never leave adult animals with puppies unsupervised.
- Make sure that your own dogs have some basic obedience training. Then you will have some control over them if there is a problem.
- Always introduce dogs to cats or other dogs while on a lead.

## 2. Puppies without a Mum

You will be provided puppy food, and instructions on how much to feed will be on your Foster Animals Details Form.

Each feeding should be supervised. Never leave puppies unattended to ensure there is no fighting or overeating, as some puppies may be bullied away from their food or not eating due to illness. If a puppy is not eating, please contact the foster care coordinator or another relevant person, as noted on your Animal Details Form.

## 3. Puppies with a Mum

Puppies with a mum will not require food other than their mother’s milk until they are four to five weeks old. Until the puppies are this age, you will only need to provide enough food for the mother. Puppies can start weaning at four to five weeks, when the introduction of solid food can start. The mother dog should eat puppy food while feeding her pups, as it will provide her the nutritional benefits to pass onto the puppies.

If a puppy or mother is not eating or nursing, please contact the foster care coordinator or another relevant person, as noted on your Animal Details Form. Contact the veterinary hospital if they are unavailable.



## 4. Introducing Solid Food

At around four weeks old, puppies may start taking an interest in solid food, either their mothers or if offered. At this point, provide the puppies a bowl of food like their mothers for them to eat. Puppies may continue to feed from mum while trying solid food – this should be encouraged.

At five weeks, a mixture of dry food, warm water and canned food can be introduced to the puppies. Begin by placing a puppy to the side of the plate, and they should start to eat, however, it may take a few tries for them to understand. After they have accepted the food, gradually thicken it by adding less water.

### 4.1. Toxic or Dangerous Foods

Foods that are toxic or dangerous to dogs, and should never be fed or available to dogs or puppies, includes:

- Avocado
- Bread and yeast dough
- Chocolate
- Coffee and other caffeine products
- Compost, mouldy or spoiled foods
- Cooked bones (raw bones are okay, but be sure that the bone is large enough so that your dog or puppy cannot fit the whole bone in their mouth or swallow it whole)
- Corn cobs
- Currants, grapes, raisins and sultanas
- Fatty foods and fat trimmings
- Fruit seeds
- Fruit stones, e.g. apricot stones, avocado stones, mango seeds
- Garlic
- Green (unripe) tomatoes
- Mushrooms
- Nuts
- Onions and onion powder
- Salt
- Too much fish
- Xylitol (sugar substitute found in some baking goods, chewing gum, lollies and toothpaste)

## 5. Daily Cleaning

Food and water bowls should be checked multiple times a day and cleaned. If they are soiled, wash them with hot soapy water.

Hot, soapy water is sufficient for daily cleans. Cleaning should include:

- Clean food and water bowls daily, and throw out uneaten canned food
- Remove faeces from the toileting area and soiled puppy pads at least twice daily
- Clean up any toileting accidents as soon as they are observed
- Check bedding twice daily. Replaced soiled bedding with clean bedding
- Removing all faeces in the yard as soon as possible to control parasites

## 6. Elimination

Once puppies are four weeks old, they can be taught how to urinate and defecate in the correct areas by themselves. Use a training pad in an area away from the food or in a set place in the backyard and encourage the puppies to follow you when they need to go to the toilet. Provide lots of praise and rewards when they go in the right spot, and if they have an accident, don't react to it. This should be done for each puppy after each feeding. They may not remember to do it every time, but repetition will form a routine.

### 6.1. Cleaning Your Puppy

During the first one to three 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 and after feeding if they are without their mum.

If a puppy needs excessive washing (e.g., diarrhoea and has dirty hind legs), wash the puppy using a specially formulated puppy shampoo with the correct pH, do not use human shampoo. Use a bowl or small tub with warm water, and securely hold the puppy in one hand the whole time. Towel dry the puppy thoroughly afterwards, or use a hair dryer on a low setting. Keep the puppy in a warm environment until completely dry. Do not wash a puppy in the afternoon, as it will be too cold overnight and the puppy will become chilled.

As part of your regular handling of puppies, it can be beneficial to gently brush them with a very soft brush or mitt.

## 7. Socialisation and Enrichment

Your dog or puppy should experience exposure to various things and should be encouraged to investigate a range of environments. If a puppy is not yet fully vaccinated, socialisation should only occur within the backyard or home.

Give your foster dog or puppy lots of treats near various things to help them associate the experience with something positive, which will in turn make them look forward to the experience again.

If the puppy or dog is displaying fearful behaviours, please contact the foster care coordinator or another relevant person, as noted on your Animal Details Form.



## 7.1. What Should your Foster Dog or Puppy be Exposed To?

If it is safe to do so, foster puppies and dogs should be exposed to a wide range of experiences, including:

- Bad weather (wind, rain, thunder)
- Balconies and stairs
- Bicycles, wheelchairs and prams
- Car rides
- Different surfaces (e.g., shiny floors, carpet, wooden floors, dirt, etc.)
- Large crowds
- Lawnmowers
- Lots of friendly people of all ages, genders and races
- Loud speakers
- Other dogs and animals
- Postmen
- Shopping centres (not puppies)
- Traffic noise (e.g., cars, motorbikes, trains, buses, etc.)
- Vacuum cleaners and noisy household appliances
- Veterinary clinics
- Walking after dark (in the backyard for puppies)

Socialisation is not just important for puppies. Once your foster dog has had a few days to settle into life with you, take them out and about to interact with their surroundings.

- Expose your foster dog to as many things as you can, try to keep the interaction as positive and enjoyable as possible.
- Take some treats with you and reward your foster dog for behaving appropriately in any situation.
- Remember to do this at your foster dog's pace. The key to socialisation is that the dog is comfortable.
- Never assume your foster dog has any pre-taught behaviours.

Always look out for signs that the dog or puppy is stressed or scared by the exposure. These can include:

- Ears pinned back
- Tail tucked underneath
- Urinating
- Low body



## 7.2. Enrichment

Dogs and puppies who are not provided with adequate mental and physical stimulation are more likely to display behavioural problems. By providing an enriching environment, you can help reduce and prevent behavioural problems from developing in the future.

Most dogs will rest and sleep the day away, however, others may become bored and start digging, chewing, barking or engaging in other problem behaviours. Try the following tips to enrich the environment:

- Offer a range of toys to play with and rotate them regularly so your foster dog doesn't get bored. Treat mats, Kongs or toys with peanut butter are recommended
- Save old cereal boxes, egg cartons and toilet rolls as these can be great fun for your foster dog to destroy. Put some food or a raw bone inside to extend its use. Your foster dog can chew and rip the toy, but should they start to eat it, remove it immediately.
- Clamshell paddling pools can be used as a digging pit. Half fill it with sand and bury a bone, toy or treats to encourage your foster dog to dig in the pit and not the garden
- If your foster dog likes water, fill the clamshell with water in the summer for them to paddle in. Place a toy, bone or apple in the water for your foster dog to play with

Mealtimes can also be used to entertain your foster dog:

- In summer, make ice blocks using a small container (e.g., an empty margarine container) with watered-down reduced salt stock and treats. Remove the frozen block from the container and give it to your foster dog to chew
- Use an interactive toy, such as a Kong, to prolong mealtimes and provide entertainment
- Offer half of your foster dog's meal in a variety of toys and hide these in places around the backyard to keep them busy when you leave

While you are home, engage your foster dog in the following activities to help them cope when you leave:

- Provide your foster dog with regular aerobic exercise as it releases serotonin
- Offer your foster dog a range of activities each day (e.g., frisbee, tennis ball, swimming, walking, training classes) and change the toy offered each day
- Actively train your foster dog using positive-based training methods and use them your daily interactions. You could teach your foster dog to fetch a toy, clean up their toys or find the remote
- Spend quality time with your foster dog as often as possible. Dogs are social animals and are often easier to manage if they receive adequate social interaction, so take any opportunity to include your foster dog in your daily activities, such as picking up the children from school

## 8. Puppy Development

Weeks	Feeding	Development
0-1	Bottle feed every 2-3 hours, with overnight feedings every 3-4 hours. If there is a mum dog, ensure that all puppies are nursing. Puppies can nurse from their mum for up to 45 minutes at a time. Excessive crying could indicate a problem with the mother's milk supply.	Puppies require minimal handling. Puppies will sleep about 90% of the time and eat for the other 10%. Puppies should be kept in a warm environment as low body temperature is the number one danger to newborn puppies.
1-2	Bottle feed every 2-4 hours, with overnight feedings every 3-5 hours. Bottle feed until they are full but not bloated. If there is a mum dog, ensure that all puppies are nursing.	Healthy puppies should be round and warm. When you pick up a puppy they should wiggle energetically and healthy puppies seldom cry. The puppy's ear canal should open between 5 and 8 days. Eyes will open between 8 and 14 days.
2-3	Bottle feed every 3-4 hours, until their bellies are full but not bloated. If there is a mum dog, ensure that all puppies are nursing.	Puppies begin to crawl around and should be almost standing. They will begin to play with each other, biting ears, tails and paws before their teeth come through. They should be teething at this time.
3-4	Bottle feed every 4 hours until the puppies are full but not bloated. Puppies may start to lap from a bowl, and watered down canned food can be offered to them. If there is a mum dog, ensure that all puppies are nursing.	Puppies begin to see well, and their eyes begin to look and function like adult dog eyes. Puppies will start cleaning themselves. If they have a mother, she will continue to do most of the cleaning. At 3 weeks old, puppies are in their canine socialisation period. If they have siblings allow them to play at will.
4-5	Bottle feed as needed to keep puppies from crying from hunger. Puppies can usually drink and eat from a saucer by 4 weeks. Weaning should be done gradually.	Begin housebreaking at four weeks of age. This can be done by using training pads or leading the puppy to an outside secure fenced in area of your home.
5-6	Feed food mixture 4 times a day. Thicken the mixture 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 puppy formula into the mixture.	At around 5 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 sleeping area and the others will quickly follow. Be sure to allow the puppies to have different types of toys around so they may explore and become familiar with a variety of surfaces and textures.
6-7	By this age, puppies should be eating dry food well. Feed the puppies at least three meals a day. Puppies may not eat much at a single sitting, as they usually like to eat at frequent intervals throughout the day.	Puppies can wash themselves and play games with each other and yourself. Some puppies may be food possessive, so you may need to use a second dish and leave plenty of food out. Do not use adverse or punishing correction techniques. Guide the puppies to their pads or outside after feeding, during play sessions, and after naps. These are the usual times puppies need to eliminate.
7-8	Offer dry food 3-4 times a day. Leave a bowl of water down for them to drink at will. Do not feed the puppies table scraps.	Continue playing and socialising with the puppies. You can begin training such as sit, down and come when called.
8+	Offer dry food 3 times a day. Leave down a bowl of water for them to drink at will.	By this time, puppies should be ready for desexing and adoption, if their health and circumstance allow it.

## 9. Neonatal Puppies

### 9.1. Feeding

Never give a neonatal puppy anything other than their specified formula. Puppies who are less than three weeks old are fed liquid or powder formula.

The powder formula must be mixed for feedings. It is important to closely follow mixing directions on the packaging, or if unsure, contact the foster care coordinator for advice.

If the formula is changed, ensure the new formula is slowly introduced. This can be done by combining the two formulas until the old formula is phased out.

### 9.2. Feeding Times

The below guide can be used as an approximate feeding guide for puppies:

Age (weeks)	Feeding	Frequency
0-2	6 feeds in 24 hours	Every 2-4 hours
2-4	5 feeds in 24 hours	Every 3-4 hours
4-5	4 feeds in 24 hours	Every 4-6 hours



### 9.3. Feeding Etiquette

- ☑ Only use clean teats and bottles when feeding neonatal puppies.
- ☑ Milk should be warmed to approximately 35°C to 37°C and mixed with the appropriate powder to water ratio.

1. Boil water to use for the mixture.
2. Ensure the water is not too hot (can curdle) or too cold (difficult to mix).
3. Add half the appropriate amount of boiled water to the powder first and mix to a paste.
4. Once combined, add the remaining water and mix thoroughly.
  - An electric whisk can be used for mixing larger quantities.

5. Feed puppies one at a time using an appropriate bottle and teat. Place them on a counter top and allow them to feed with four paws on the counter and with a level head, as this simulates how they would nurse from their mother.
  - We recommend wrapping the puppy in a loose "burrito" or feeding them on a soft blanket or towel.



13. Gently open the puppy's mouth with your finger and place the teat on the tongue. Stroking puppies can help them to eat.
14. Pull lightly on the bottle as this promotes strong sucking.
15. Tilt the bottle up slightly, which 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.
16. The puppy will naturally cease sucking when full and will pull away from the teat.
17. After feeding, gently massage their back.
18. Once they have finished eating and have been massaged, stimulate the puppies to urinate and/or defecate. Stimulate them with a warm cloth if required.
19. Fill out the Daily Weight and Feeding Record (See [Appendix 2](#)).

Leftover milk can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours or frozen for up to two weeks. It is also advised to make up larger quantities and store it frozen in small portions (e.g., ice cube trays), so that the required daily feed volumes can be easily thawed out. Once milk is thawed, ensure it is either fed immediately or thrown away.

### 9.4. Cleaning Feeding Equipment

Keeping the puppies' nursing bottles and supplies clean is vital as this will prevent diarrhoea, vomiting or infection. Clean the bottles and teats with hot, soapy water and a bottle brush. If you do not have a bottle brush, you may wash the bottle and teats in the dishwasher.



## 9.5. Weaning

Weaning should be conducted gradually when puppies are four weeks of age. Introduce solid food by offering warmed canned food, mixed with a little water in a paste in a shallow bowl. Place one puppy by the bowl and see if they eat.

If the puppies are being picky, offer the mixture from your fingers so they get the taste of it. If their mother is present, she will start to discourage her pups from feeding from her.

## 10. Fostering Mums

In some cases, mums are fostered with their litters. There are a few things to keep in mind in this situation. Mums require a calm setting with privacy and minimal activity. Stress can cause mums to stop taking care of their puppies.

### 10.1. Bringing Mum Home

A separate space should be set up for a mum 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. Mum will need a few days to adjust to her new space. Be sure to offer her fresh food, water and a clean nesting area.

### 10.2. Socialisation

Even adult dogs need socialisation. However, proceed slowly with any adult dog that you do not know. Create situations for socialisation but let her come to you. Stop the interaction if you notice any negative signs, such as a tense tail, ears laid back, head jerk towards you, tensing up, moving away or growling. Always move slowly and use caution when reaching into the sleeping area.

If you notice these behaviours, please contact the foster care coordinator or another relevant person, as noted on your Animal Details Form.

### 10.3. Mum and Her Pups

For the first few weeks, mum will do everything necessary to take care of her puppies. Puppies start nursing very soon after birth. Mum will also groom her puppies. It is often best to leave the mum alone for the first two weeks, except to feed, clean and check on the puppies a few times a day.

### 10.4. Possible Issues with Mum Dogs

#### Maternal Neglect

In some cases, about eight per cent of the time, puppies die from poor maternal care. There are a few causes; some dogs lack maternal instincts, and, in other cases, it is nature's way of handling sick or weak puppies. Environmental stress is a factor, which is why it is important to create a calm environment for mum and the litter.

Watch for signs of maternal neglect. Call the foster care coordinator if you notice the mum avoids feeding and grooming her puppies and ignores their cries.

If a mother dog starts to show signs of aggression, contact the foster care coordinator as this behaviour may need to be monitored closely.

# Guinea Pig Care



## 1. Introducing your Foster Guinea Pig to your Home

The minimum space on guinea pig requires is one metre (length) x 50 centimetres (width) x 25 centimetres (height). The more guinea pigs, the larger the space would need to be to ensure they have enough room to exercise and move freely.

Inside hutches are recommended, with the below steps being used to create a safe and enriching environment for guinea pigs.

- Keep the hutch in a sheltered area away from direct sunlight.
- Ensure the hutch is well-ventilated.
- Make sure the hutch is fly proof with appropriate wire mesh. This is important to prevent flystrike, which can be fatal.
- Hutches should be lined with soft grass, hay or newspaper that is changed regularly.
- Avoid wire floor hutches and do not use sawdust or wood shavings as they can cause foot injuries.
- Do not use straw as it does not absorb urine and hard stalks can cause injuries.
- Humidity should always be monitored, and kept between 40 and 70 per cent.
- Guinea pigs are at risk of changing temperatures, especially warmer weather. Damp towels, frozen ice treats or ice packs can be used to cool down guinea pigs if required.

## 2. Health

It is important to observe and record any signs of the following:

- Blood in urine
- Crusty eyes, sneezing
- Difficulty breathing, wheezing
- Drooling
- Dull eyes
- Hair loss, excessive scratching
- Lack of appetite
- Lethargy (lack of energy or enthusiasm)
- Hunched posture
- Limping
- Loss of balance
- Refusal to eat or drink
- Rough or puffed-up coat
- Watery diarrhoea

If you are worried about the health of your foster guinea pig or they are displaying any signs of illness listed above, contact the foster care coordinator or other nominated contact person as listed on the animal details form you received when accepting your foster animal.

## 2.1. What to Feed a Guinea Pig

The teeth of guinea pigs are always growing, so they require food that makes them chew continuously. They should always have good quality grass hay or fresh grass available to them. Examples include meadow, oaten, pasture, paddock, ryegrass, timothy and wheaten.

They also need fresh leafy green vegetables and herbs, including:

- Basil
- Bok choy
- Broccoli
- Brussel sprouts
- Cabbage
- Carrot tops
- Celery
- Coriander
- Dandelion
- Dark leafed lettuce
- Dill
- Endive
- Mint
- Other Asian greens
- Parsley

Guinea pigs also need a source of Vitamin C each day, such as capsicum, coriander, kale, citrus or kiwi fruit. Guinea pigs should also be eating 1/4 cup of plain pellets every day if their diet allows.

## 2.2. What Not to Feed a Guinea Pig

The following items should not be given to guinea pigs (please note, this is not an exhaustive list):

- Beans
- Beetroot
- Biscuits
- Breads
- Buttercups
- Cereals
- Chocolate
- Corn
- Garden shrubs
- Grains
- Lily of the Valley
- Nuts
- Onion grass
- Onions
- Peas
- Potato tops
- Raw beans
- Rhubarb leaves
- Seeds
- Sugar
- Spinach
- Sweets

## 2.3. Water

Always provide fresh, clean water. It is best to use a sipper-style water bottle, so the water does not get dirty. Be sure to check every day that the sipper is working.

## 3. Cleaning

Good cleaning practices will help keep guinea pigs healthy. Bedding should be changed, or spot-cleaned daily, and the entire enclosure must be cleaned at least once a week to avoid bacterial build up.

### 3.1. Weekly Cleaning of Enclosures

1. Set up an enclosed area (i.e., open-top large cardboard box, closed-in corner of the room) for the guinea pigs to roam in with grass hay, newspaper or toys while their hutch is being cleaned. Ensure fresh, clean water is provided to them.
2. Take out all objects from the enclosure and wash the water bottle, food bowl, hiding house, toys and bedding in hot, soapy water and let them dry fully.
3. Wearing plastic gloves, remove the remaining material from the cage (e.g., droppings, litter, newspaper, grass hay) and sweep up any dust into a dustpan and dispose of in the rubbish.
4. Mix one cup white vinegar, one cup hot water and five drops of liquid soap in a spray bottle.
5. Spray the mixture over the emptied enclosure and rinse off with water.
6. Thoroughly dry the enclosure using a clean towel or paper towels.

### 3.2. Grooming

If guinea pigs have long hair, they should be gently brushed each day to remove tangles. This is often a good time to check for external parasites, the length of their nails and for signs of illness.

## 4. Behaviour, Exercise and Enrichment

### 4.1. Basic Guinea Pig Behaviours

Guinea pigs are vocal animals with a wide range of noises.

- 'Chutting': a series of short sounds, usually when a he is relaxed and exploring his environment.
- Growling: when a guinea pig feels scared or threatened.
- Purring: a deep, constant sound that usually means they are content.
- Rumbling: similar to a purr, but is usually heard when a male is courting a female.
- Shrieking: this usually means that your guinea pig is in some kind of physical pain.
- Teeth chattering: a rapid series of squeaks and gnashing of teeth that means the guinea pig is annoyed or unhappy.
- 'Wheeking': high-pitched squeaking, usually indicating they are excited.

Some signs of stress in guinea pigs:

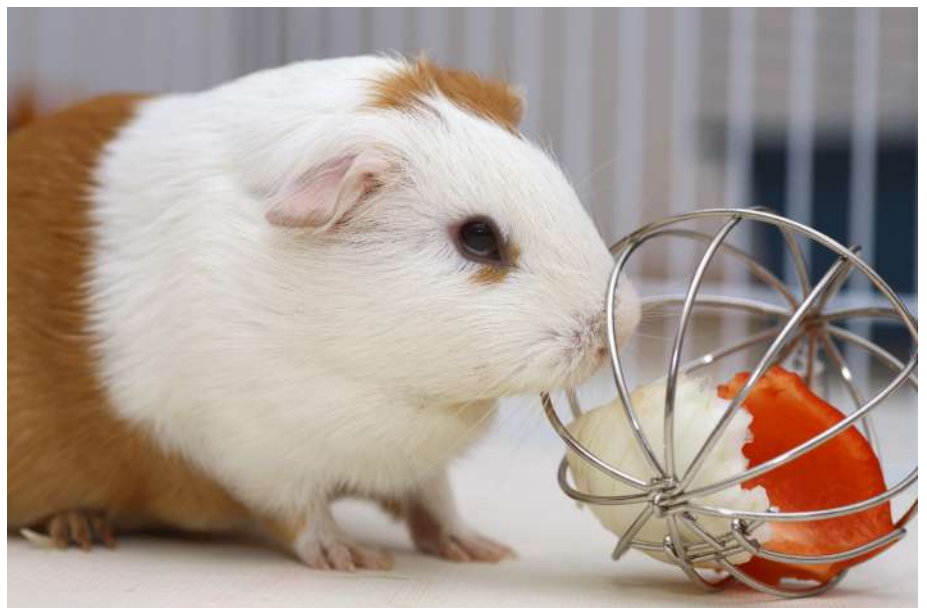
- Always hiding
- Hair loss
- Irritability or teeth chattering
- Poor appetite
- Sleeping a lot

## 4.2. Environmental Enrichment

The environment guinea pigs live in needs to meet their species-specific behaviour requirements and enable them to express their natural behaviours, such as walking, running, tunnelling, exploring, playing, stretching horizontally, retreating to a shelter and hiding, foraging, chewing, gnawing and jumping.

Some tips that should be used daily to allow guinea pigs to display these behaviours are:

- Providing the guinea pig enough space to run and play
- Giving them opportunities to forage, such as untreated wicker baskets or toilet rolls filled with grass hay and food hidden in their enclosure for them to find
- Make their enclosure varied and interesting with ramps and boxes
- Use strips of fleece fabric tied to the roof of their enclosure to make a 'forest' for them to run through
- Provide toys, chewing items and burrowing space, such as shredded paper, wooden branches, balls made from plastic, untreated willow or dried grass and small stuffed toys
- Wheels and leashes are not advised to be used for guinea pigs.





# Rabbit Care





## 1. Introducing your Foster Rabbit to your Home

Your foster rabbit's environment should have enough room for them to run, jump, sit, stand upright, sleep, exercise and express their normal behaviours. This can be inside your home or outside in a hutch. If inside your home, rabbits will still need a safe, escape-proof area to themselves but do not require a cage, unless specified by the foster coordinator. Rabbits should still have access to a safe place outdoors under direct supervision. Remember to keep any poisonous cleaning products and foods out of reach and protect your foster rabbits from potentially chewing power cables.

If outside in a hutch, these steps can help create a safe and enriching space for your foster rabbit:

- A hutch should be large enough for the rabbit to move freely with enough space to display their normal behaviours
- One section of the hutch should be completely covered for protection against the weather, with the other part using mosquito and fly proof wire mesh that allows fresh air and sunlight in
- A 'burrow' area, such as a box or straw they can run and hide inside, should always be provided
- The floor of the hutch must be covered with newspaper on the bottom and bedding material such as straw, grass hay or shredded paper on top to prevent sores on their feet
- An area made up for toileting and eating, set up away from their resting or playing area, and cleaned daily. As a prey species, rabbits tend to toilet in one corner. They can be litter trained like cats and kittens by putting a tray where they toilet. Only use recycled paper litter, not normal litter.
- The hutch should be fully cleaned out at least once per week
- Rabbits should never be left in the sun as they are very susceptible to heat stroke. Leave frozen water bottles inside the hutch on hot days, bring the rabbit inside when it is too hot

## 2. Health

A healthy rabbit is alert, has bright eyes and free and easy movement. The rabbit should not feel 'boney' and the muscles along either side of the spine should be firm and full.

It is important to observe and record any signs of the following:

- Changes in behaviour (e.g., inactivity, a hunched posture and lethargy)
- Diarrhoea or excrement that is wet
- Difficulty breathing
- Difficulty toileting
- Discharge from the ears, eyes or nose
- Grinding teeth
- Injury (e.g., open wounds, swollen limbs)
- Signs of pain (e.g., flinching and not wanting to be touched)
- Skin redness

As these signs can be subtle, it's important to observe your foster rabbit closely. If you are worried about the health of your foster rabbits or they are displaying any signs of illness listed above, contact the veterinary hospital for advice.

## 2.1. What to Feed a Rabbit

The teeth of rabbits are always growing, so they need food that requires them to chew continuously. Always provide rabbits with good quality fresh grass and/or grass hay, as this makes up 80% of their diet. Examples include meadow, oaten, pasture, paddock, ryegrass, timothy and wheaten.

They also need small amounts of fresh, leafy green vegetables and herbs that make up 10% of their diet, including:

- Basil
- Bok choy
- Broccoli
- Brussels sprouts
- Coriander
- Kale
- Dill
- Endive
- Mint
- Other Asian greens
- Parsley
- Spinach leaves

Rabbits should also be eating pellets, which provides good nutrients and makes up 10% of their diet.

They can also be given small treats occasionally, such as:

- Carrots
- Apple without seeds
- Pear
- Sultanas
- Banana

## 2.2. What Not to Feed a Rabbit

The following items should not be given to rabbits (please note, this is not an exhaustive list):

- All plants that grow from bulbs (e.g., garlic, shallots and flower varieties such as freesia, begonia and oriental lily)
- Avocado
- Biscuits
- Bread
- Chips
- Chocolate
- Cucumbers
- Lollies
- Onion
- Peas
- Potatoes
- Rhubarb leaves
- Rice
- Wild carrots

## 2.3. Water

Always provide fresh, clean water. It is best to use a sipper-style water bottle, so the water does not get dirty. Be sure to check the water daily to ensure the sipper is working.

## 3. Cleaning

Good cleaning practices will help to keep the rabbit healthy. Bedding should be changed or spot cleaned daily, and the entire enclosure must get a regular clean at least once a week to avoid bacterial build up.

### 3.1. Weekly Cleaning of Enclosure

1. Set up an enclosed area (i.e., open-top large cardboard box, closed-in corner of the room) for the rabbit to roam in with grass hay, newspaper or toys while their space is being cleaned. Provide fresh, clean water.
2. Take out all objects from the enclosure and wash the water bottle, food bowl, hiding house, toys and bedding in hot, soapy water and let them dry fully.
3. Using plastic gloves, remove the remaining material from the enclosure (e.g., droppings, litter, newspaper, grass hay) and sweep up any dust into a dustpan and dispose of in the rubbish.
4. Mix one cup white vinegar, one cup hot water and five drops of liquid soap in a spray bottle.
5. Spray the mixture over the emptied enclosure and rinse off with water.
6. Thoroughly dry the enclosure using a clean towel or paper towels.

### 3.2. Grooming

Long-haired rabbits should be brushed daily to prevent matting. Short-haired rabbits should be groomed weekly to prevent them from swallowing too much hair.

Check their nails regularly to ensure they are not getting too long. Exercise and digging will help keep their nails short. If their nails are too long, contact the foster care coordinator who can book them in for a recheck if required.

## 4. Behaviour, Exercise and Enrichment

### 4.1. Basic Rabbit Behaviours

Rabbits are expressive creatures who display the following types of behaviours:

- Grooming themselves, or other rabbits, several times a day as a sign of affection
- 'Chinning' is when a rabbit rubs the underside of their chin against something to mark it with their scent
- Rolling onto their back (unassisted) means they are very relaxed, but do not hold them in this position as it can be dangerous for them

Some signs of stress in a rabbit are:

- Aggression
- Changes in toileting behaviour
- Flattened ears
- Foot stamping
- Frozen in place
- Attempting to escape
- Constant hiding
- Lethargy
- Not grooming
- Over grooming
- Rapid or heavy breathing
- Squeals

### 4.2. Environmental Enrichment

Providing rabbits with a chewing log made of untreated wood to help prevent their teeth from overgrowing is a great enrichment item, as well as:

- An enclosed space for them to be safe and play
- Overturned cardboard boxes for hiding
- Treat balls
- Foraging items such as grass or hay-stuffed toilet rolls hidden in their enclosure
- Ramps to allow for climbing, exploration and play behaviour












# Neonate Daily Weight and Feeding

Name / ID	Animal 1	Animal 2	Animal 3	Animal 4	Animal 5	Animal 6
Date						
Weight						
			Feeding 1			
Milk Volume						
Stool / Urine						
			Feeding 2			
Milk Volume						
Stool / Urine						
			Feeding 3			
Milk Volume						
Stool / Urine						
			Feeding 4			
Milk Volume						
Stool / Urine						
			Feeding 5			
Milk Volume						
Stool / Urine						
			Feeding 6			
Milk Volume						
Stool / Urine						
Notes:						

# Diarrhoea Health Scale

## Bristol Stool Chart

<p>Type 1 </p>	<p>Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)</p>	<p>Type 1 and 2 Indicates constipation</p>
<p>Type 2 </p>	<p>Sausage-shaped but lumpy</p>	
<p>Type 3 </p>	<p>Like a sausage but with cracks on its surface</p>	<p>Type 3 and 4 Are stool health</p>
<p>Type 4 </p>	<p>Like a sausage or snake, smooth and soft</p>	
<p>Type 5 </p>	<p>Soft blobs with clear-cut edges (passed easily)</p>	<p>Type 5, 6 and 7 May indicate diarrhoea and urgency</p>
<p>Type 6 </p>	<p>Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool</p>	
<p>Type 7 </p>	<p>Watery, no solid pieces. <b>Entirely Liquid</b></p>	

Source: <https://www.continence.org.au/pages/bristol-stool-chart.html>

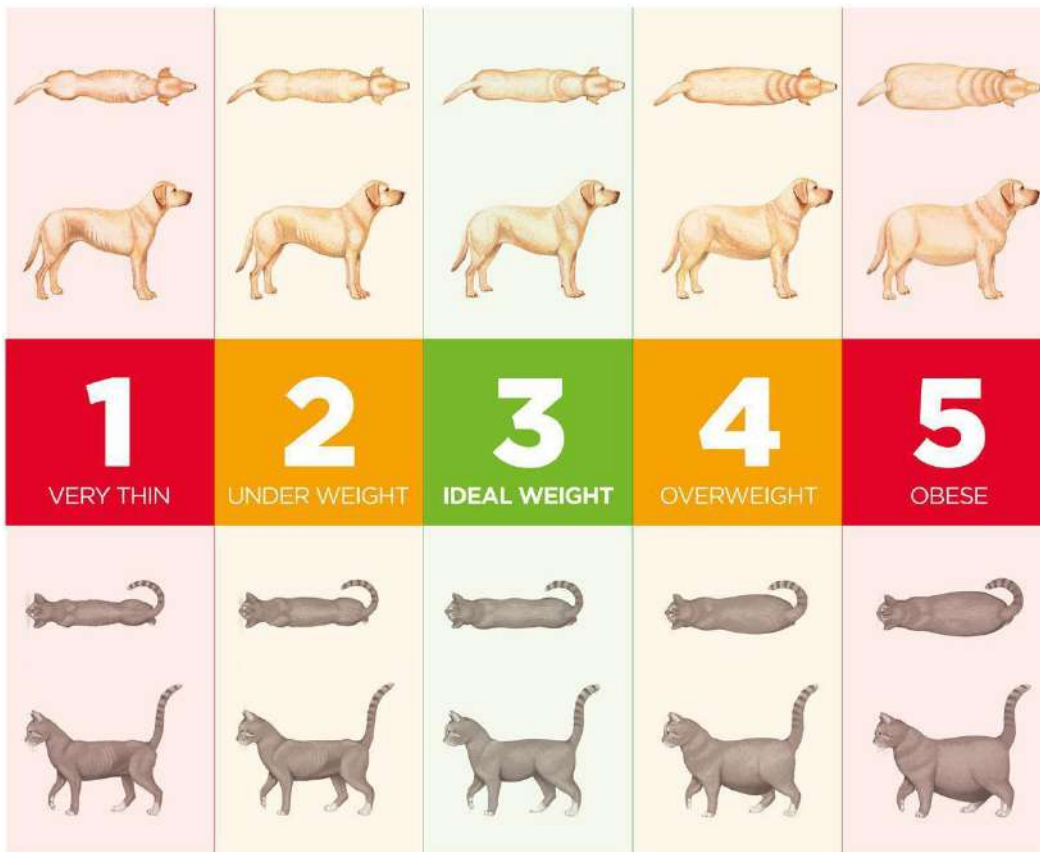


# Body Condition Scale



## How does your pet shape up?

Check their Body Condition score on the chart below



Source: Hills Pet Nutrition ©

### 1. Very Thin

Ribs, spine, pelvic bones and all other bones prominent from a distance. Obvious and severe loss of muscle mass with no discernible body fat. Severe abdominal tuck.

### 2. Underweight

Underweight and thin. Ribs are easily felt, and there is little fat and muscle cover, with a marked hourglass shape when viewed from above.

### 3. Ideal Weight

Ideal body condition, where ribs are easily felt but not visible. Well-proportioned waist with slight abdominal tuck.

### 4. Overweight

Noticeable fat deposits over rear legs and base of tail, with the waist absent or barely visible. Abdominal tuck may be absent.

### 5. Obese

Massive fat deposits over thorax, spine, base of tail, limbs and neck. Waist and abdominal tuck absent. Obvious abdominal distension

# Contact

**RSPCA NSW Volunteer Support Services Team**

201 Rookwood Road, Yagoona NSW 2199

✉ [fostercare@rspcansw.org.au](mailto:fostercare@rspcansw.org.au)

