



Refuge4Pet's Pet Fostering Policy

Refuge4Pets is a pet fostering service set up to support victims/survivors of domestic violence and abuse by temporarily caring for their pets so that they can escape to access the safety and support that they need before being reunited with their pets.

We foster dogs, cats, horses, small furrries, rabbits, reptiles, birds and exotics for up to 6 months providing we have a suitable foster home (longer in some cases if agreed).

In accordance with the Dangerous Dog Act (1991) we are unable to foster Pit Bull Terriers, Japanese Tosas, Dogo Argentinos and Fila Brazilieros.

Referral Process

We accept referrals from services who support victims/survivors of domestic violence and abuse which may include:

- Domestic violence and abuse services
- Sexual violence and abuse services
- Refuges
- Police
- Health professionals
- Housing officers
- Social care

We will except self referrals, but, we will signpost individuals to an appropriate domestic or sexual violence and abuse service to complete a DASH risk assessment prior to taking a referral if we have a suitable foster home for that pet(s). We understand that leaving is the most dangerous time which is why we signpost victims/survivors who self refer as it is important that people are supported if they want support.

Referral Criteria

- A current medium or high risk DASH risk assessment has been completed
- The victim/survivor wishes to be reunited with their pet(s)
- The victim/survivor is aged 16 or over
- The victim/survivor lives in Devon or Cornwall, or, is fleeing to the area, or, is fleeing away from the area
- The victim/survivor consents to any referral and understands and accepts the fostering terms and conditions.



Confidentiality

The location of the pet(s) in foster care will remain confidential from the pet owner and no information about the owner will be shared with the pet foster carer. This is essential in terms of protecting the safety of pets, pet foster carers and owners as we understand the lengths perpetrators of domestic violence and abuse will go to to continue the abuse and the relationship between domestic abuse and animal cruelty.

We are also not able to facilitate visits between pets and their owner's during the fostering period as we have extremely limited resources and it can also be very unsettling for pets.

Pet Fostering Terms and Conditions for Owners

- Refuge4Pets will act as the Guardian of the pet(s) for the duration of the foster period and we will do what is required to ensure the health, safety, wellbeing and welfare of pets in our care as directed by the Animal Welfare Act (2006), associated guidance, best practice standards and vets.
- Pets will be looked after by a pet foster carer in a home environment. Pet foster carers are carefully recruited during which they undergo a number of checks set out in Refuge4Pet's safe recruitment policy. If a foster placement breaks down for any reason, or, if we need emergency care for a pet we reserve the right to care for a pet in a kennel or cattery that is working alongside Refuge4Pets.
- We will monitor pets throughout their time in foster care as follows:
 - 24hr check
 - 48hr check
 - 72hr check
 - 7day check
 - Monthly there after, or more frequently as required and specified in the risk assessment and care plan.

Pet foster carers must comply with our monitoring processes.

- Each pet coming into foster care will undergo a vet check and have a risk assessment and care plan completed prior to placement.
- If appropriate Refuge4Pets reserve the right to change a pet's diet.
- During foster care placements all food and bedding will be supplied by Refuge4Pets, but we will not be held responsible for the loss/damage of any items sent with the pet such as bedding, toys etc.
- If a pet has to be cared for in a kennel it may be mandatory to vaccinate that pet.
- It is the responsibility of the owner to provide full disclosure of any pre-existing health conditions or behavioural issues. This is so important in terms of making



sure we provide the best care for a pet and can make informed decisions about their fostering needs.

- It is now a legal requirement that all dogs and horses are micro-chipped. As such, we will micro-chip all dogs and horses in our care, at our cost, if they do not already have a microchip. We will also micro-chip cats that do not have a micro-chip. Refuge4Pets is responsible for updating the details held on all microchips (new and existing) during a pet's time in foster care and at the end of the foster placement. While in foster care microchips are updated with Refuge4Pet's details and dogs wear a tag on their collar. All cats must stay inside at all times to mitigate the risk of them escaping.
- Refuge4Pets take every precaution to make sure pets are not able to escape, but, if this should occur we will notify the microchip provider and owner immediately. We are not liable for any pets that do escape, but we will do our utmost to find them.
- It is also a legal requirement that all horses have a passport. Owners should provide a current passport where possible. Refuge4Pets will arrange for a passport to be issued, at our cost, for horses that do not have a passport.
- In the event of illness or injury, Refuge4Pets will provide and cover the cost of veterinary care. We will do everything within our ability to preserve a good quality of life for a pet. However, we do reserve the right to euthanize a suffering animal on the sole recommendation of a veterinarian. In this circumstance Refuge4Pets are not responsible or liable. We are also bound by animal welfare legislation and will act within this at all times, this includes legislation such as the Dangerous Dogs Act.
- The pet owner acknowledges that Refuge4Pets and their pet foster carers are not responsible or liable for any complications or the death of a pet that is nearing the end of its natural life span. Pet owners also acknowledge that Refuge4Pets is not liable for any injuries to animals that occur as part of normal everyday life, such as walking dogs.
- Refuge4Pets will make every effort to keep the owner updated on the pet's progress while they are in foster care either directly if appropriate and safe, or via an agency representative. Once the owner is ready to be reunited with their pet they or the agency representative should contact Refuge4Pets to make arrangements for the pet to return that are convenient for all parties. Refuge4Pets should usually give pet foster carers seven days of notice that a pet will be returning home. Pets can stay in foster care for up to six months, but sometimes longer if necessary and agreed by Refuge4Pets and partners. The owner or agency representative should contact Refuge4Pets at least seven days before the end of the six-month foster period to make the necessary arrangements for the pet. If Refuge4Pets have any concerns about the welfare of an animal returning home we reserve the right to retain a pet in foster care and



work alongside owners, animal welfare organisations and partners to address any issues relating to the welfare and wellbeing of a pet.

- If, despite our every effort to contact a pet owner we have no contact with the pet owner or appointed agency contact and the 6-month foster period elapses Refuge4Pets reserves the right to assume ownership of the pet. In this situation we will work with animal welfare charities to rehome the pet ensuring their health, safety, general wellbeing and welfare.

Pet Fostering Terms and Conditions for Pet Foster Carers

- Pet foster carers must inform the Project Manager at least seven days before changes in personal circumstances that may have an impact on their suitability as a pet foster carer (including, but not limited to, the addition of new family pets or family members, financial difficulties or health issues).
- The pet foster carer must give the Project Manager 14 days' notice regarding any holidays in which respite care for the pet will need to be provided. If pet foster carers have holidays booked and plan to take the pet with them they must also inform the Project Manager giving 14 days of notice. This is important as we need to ensure that it is safe to take the pet to the area.
- If the pet foster carer needs to return the pet for any reason, either temporarily or permanently, the pet foster carer must contact the Project Manager who will arrange for the pet to be collected. Until collection by the Project Manager the pet remains the responsibility of the pet foster carer who must continue to care for the pet as described in this agreement.
- Any issues or emergencies concerning a pet must be reported to the Project Manager immediately.
- Refuge4Pets impose a strict confidentiality policy. The pet foster carer must not share photographs, descriptions or information of, or about the pet. This includes physically, via mobile technology or online including via social media. We do ask pet foster carers to keep a diary of a pet's time in foster care and owner's often like to see photos of their pet while they are in foster care. All photos must be taken in such a way that it is not possible to identify the pet foster carer, their family or their location. Photos can be emailed to the Project Manager who will forward them to the pet owner.
- Refuge4Pets will provide an accompanying information pack with each pet that will include a pet profile, risk assessment, care plan, emergency procedure and contact numbers. If for any reason the pet requires medical attention, the pet foster carer must immediately contact the emergency contact identified in the information pack.
- Refuge4Pets will supply the pet's usual food at the start of a foster placement to help the pet settle in their new surroundings. If appropriate Refuge4Pets reserves the right to change the pet's diet and feed. During the foster placement all food and bedding will be supplied by Refuge4Pets.



- Refuge4Pets are not liable for any damage caused by a pet to a pet foster carer's property. The named pet foster carer is covered by our employers' liability insurance but family members are not, which may include partners and children or other household members.
- Refuge4Pets are also not liable for any injuries that occur to pet foster carer's own pets caused by foster pets.
- Once the owner of the pet is ready to be reunited with their pet the Project Manager will provide seven days' notice to the pet foster carer to arrange collection of the pet. Pets must be returned to the Project Manager on request and it is the responsibility of the pet foster carer to return any other supporting items identified by Refuge4Pets at that time.
- Pet foster carers must comply with UK standards regarding securing pets travelling in cars.

Who Can Foster Pets

Pet foster carers must be over the age of 18 and be committed to caring for animals and able to offer a safe, suitable and loving home to a pet for up to 6 months. We need all types of foster home so having young children, other pets or working are not necessarily barriers to fostering, but these factors may limit suitability to foster some dogs in particular. Given the trauma that many of the pets that we foster may have experienced we need pet foster carers to have experience with the pets that they come forward to foster and be particularly patient, forgiving, confident, calm, caring and willing to persevere. It is a big commitment but equally a very rewarding experience.

Our pet foster carers must complete a successful home check, provide two references and they must provide written evidence if in rented accommodation that they are allowed to have pets. We do require all members of the household to be present during the home check and we will also want to meet any other pets in the household.

Our Commitment to Pet Foster Carers

- During foster placements Refuge4Pets staff will support pet foster carers and be on hand to provide advice and guidance
- We will visit you at least monthly
- You will have access to any available training offered to Refuge4Pets staff that is relevant
- We will make sure that you have everything you need to care for your foster pet(s)

Risk Assessment and Care Plans

If a concern is raised that a dog referred for fostering or in foster care is thought to be a type of Pit Bull Terrier, Japanese Tosa, Dogo Argentino and Fila Brasileiro then this



must be reported to the Project Manager who will seek advice from the Dangerous Dog Act Watch.

A risk assessment and care plan must be completed for each pet in foster care which must take into account:

- Breed specific advice from an animal behaviourist or vet where necessary.
- Whether a pet can live with other animals? If they have not previously lived with other types of animal caution must be applied particularly in the case of dogs being fostered with other dogs, cats, small furries etc. The risk must be thoroughly and carefully assessed and foster carers must understand and accept the risk.
- Whether the pet can live with children? If they have not previously lived with children, then dogs and cats must not be placed in foster homes where there are children under the age of 11 years of age or in some cases aged under 16 or 18.
- How long foster pets may be left unattended and this must be no longer than 4hrs for any dog given the nature of the circumstances in which we are fostering. Some dogs may not be able to be left at all.
- The risk of pets escaping which means all cats must be kept indoors and all foster dogs must stay on leads for at least 2 weeks or until we are confident that they will recall. Some breeds must not be allowed off lead during foster placement.
- Where a pet will be safe geographically.
- Whether a dog in particular has a history of aggressive behaviour, including a bite history.
- Horses in foster care are not able to be ridden or driven for insurance reasons.