

FOSTERING 101

Southeast Missouri Pets



**SOUTHEAST
MISSOURI PETS**



**Where Pets
Become Family**

Shelter • Adopt • Support

About Us

- Requi Salter – Foster Coordinator
- Colleen Retz, DVM – Veterinarian
- Kelli Dysinger– Volunteer Coordinator
- Jenn Farmer– Executive Director
- Kimberly Minakata– Shelter Operations Director

Fostering Questions/Inquiries: Requi Salter

Shelter line: 573-334-5837 extension 103

Email: requi.salter@semopets.org

What Qualifies an Animal for Foster Care?

- Age
 - Nursing kittens and puppies
 - Orphaned kittens and puppies
- Medical Conditions
 - Pregnant
 - Injuries
 - Illness
- Behavioral Concerns
 - Shy/Fearful
 - Semi-feral kittens
 - Kennel stress/Need a break
 - Separation anxiety



Foster Cases

- Orphaned kittens and puppies (bottle babies)
- Weaned kittens and puppies (under 5 weeks)
- Weaned kittens and puppies (over 5 weeks)
- Nursing animals
- Semi-feral kittens



Bottle Babies: Orphaned kittens and puppies under 4 weeks old

- One of the hardest foster assignments to take on
 - Time frame for this case can be as long as 8 weeks depending on the age of the animal being placed
 - Highest mortality rate
- Feeding can range from every 1-2 hours to every 4-7 hours depending on age and condition.
- Must be closely supervised, as they cannot regulate their own temperature or urinate/defecate on their own (depending on their age)
 - Foster parents must keep orphans warm at all times.
 - Foster parents must stimulate kittens or puppies to eliminate.

Orphaned Infants Between 4 & 6 Weeks of Age

- SEMO Pets often receive kittens at this age, as they start to move around and make noise causing people to find them easier.
- Most times, these animals were with a mother up until the point when someone intervened and brought them to us.
- Can be challenging to wean off mother/formula to solid food.
- May still need assistance with eliminating.
- Animals at this age are more mobile, harder to contain, and can be messy. (Especially puppies.)

Orphaned Juveniles Between 6 & 8 Weeks of Age

- Best and easiest case for foster beginners
 - Foster period is typically 2-3 weeks at most.
- Animals are eating on their own and thriving, usually just waiting for weight gain and development.
- Some animals may remain in foster care past 8 weeks of age.
- Socialization is key for these cases. Expose the foster animals to loud noises, nail trimming, children, etc.

Nursing Kittens and Puppies

- Keep mama and her babies separated from your pets, as mothers can be protective.
- Foster period can last as long as 8 weeks.
- Ideally animals are not weaned from their mother until 6 weeks of age, sometimes longer.
 - Valuable learning experiences are gained from the mother.
 - Mother usually does most of the work by feeding, stimulating, cleaning, and socializing her babies.



Pregnant Animals



- Not a very common foster assignment
- Foster period can vary greatly depending on how far into the pregnancy the animal is. SEMO Pets cannot always accurately determine this.
 - Once babies are born, the foster period will be 8 weeks.
- In most cases, animals deliver on their own and do not require human assistance.
- SEMO Pets staff will be able to help if any issues arise.
- Mother's behavior may change once babies are born.

Semi-Feral Kittens

- Usually these fearful or fractious kittens are between 5 and 8 weeks old and are eating on their own.
- Foster period depends on the kittens' age and behavior. In some cases, the kittens come back to the shelter from foster at 10-12 weeks old.
- The older the kitten, the harder to begin socializing.
- Semi-feral kittens have no trust in humans and in worst-case scenarios may try to bite and scratch.
 - They need lots of positive social interactions with people.
 - In many cases, separating litter mates is necessary.



Adults that Need Alternative Housing

- We are working on expanding this program for more participation.
- Animals that would benefit from this program:
 - Dogs that are extremely stressed by the kennel environment
 - Dogs with reported behavioral concerns that cannot be replicated at the shelter
 - Long term residents that need a break from shelter life
 - Large transports or seizures that overwhelm SEMO Pets capacity for care within the shelter
 - Animals accepted into a rescue program that are awaiting transport or are on a waitlist.
- If you are interested in fostering an adult shelter cat or dog, please contact Requi Salter!

Zoonotic Diseases

- Zoonotic diseases are those that are transferred from animals to humans.
- All animals are seen by a vet prior to going into a foster home. Occasionally but not often, a condition or disease may go undiagnosed due to the incubation period or no symptoms observed at time of intake or exam.
- The best way to prevent transferring diseases to you, your family, or other animals is to **WASH YOUR HANDS** after handling the pet. The best thing to do is wash before you handle or play with the foster animals and to **IMMEDIATLEY** wash your hands after you're done handling them. This will help prevent illness, contamination of items, and the spread of disease.

Common Illnesses

- Parasites: Giardia (z), Roundworms (z), Hookworm, Tapeworm, Coccidia,
- Ringworm (z)
- Mange: Sarcoptic (z), Demodex
- URI/Kennel Cough (z)
- Panleukopenia
- Parvovirus
- Distemper

(z) = zoonotic

Common Symptoms

- Poor appetite
- Weight loss
- Lethargy
- Dehydration
- Diarrhea
- Coughing/Sneezing
 - Kennel Cough (CIRDS)
 - Upper Respiratory Infection
- Eye/Nasal discharge
- Itching
- Alopecia (hair loss)



Foster Assignments

- When kittens, puppies, or other animals needing foster care come into SEMO Pets and are evaluated for placement, appropriate available foster homes will be contacted.
- Many calls are made for the same animal or set of animals. You may call back and the animals have already been placed. Let us know if you are available and we can keep you on standby!
- SEMO Pets is very flexible on foster assignments. If you have a conflict or do not feel that it is a good time to take on a foster, there is no obligation.
- If you agree to take a foster assignment and realize that perhaps you've gotten in over your head, tap out! We can find another foster to take over for you or help lighten your load.
- If you think you can only take one foster assignment per season, that's okay! Every little bit helps and is appreciated.
- Want to take back-to-back foster assignments? Amazing! Let's talk about self care.
- Want to take multiple foster assignments at once? This may be possible depending on your setup and ability to keep the animals separate.

You've Accepted A Case – Now What?

- SEMO Pets provides the following for fosters:
 - Pet food and/or formula
 - Litter, litter boxes, puppy pads, blankets/towels, toys, dishes, bottles, heat sources, etc.
 - Crates or pens
 - These must be returned clean and disinfected when fostering is complete, either for the assignment or the year, depending on whether you plan on doing back-to-back foster assignments.
 - Any needed medications, medical supplies, or treatments

We encourage fosters to obtain their own supplies, if possible. All personal foster supplies need to be properly sanitized between foster assignments.

Important Notes Part 1

- For general questions, call or email Requi at 573-708-8065 and Requi.Salter@semopets.org
- Should a foster pet need to see a vet, the foster coordinator will schedule the appointment for you.
- For some medical concerns, we may require you to bring the animal to the shelter for an analysis.
- After-hours emergency vet cases must be pre-approved through SEMO Pets.
 - Taking a foster animal to an outside vet or emergency vet hospital without prior authorization is at your cost.
 - SEMO Pets may opt to take back any failing animals or tough cases that are going to require extra amounts of care.

Important Notes Part 2

- Animals cannot change hands to a potential adopter prior to spay/neuter surgery and official adoption completion.
- If you will be out of town during your foster period, we will help make arrangements for your foster.
- SEMO Pets asks that you do not foster for other organizations while having a SEMO Pets foster in your home.



Fostering is a rewarding way to help animals in need and save lives. We would love to have you as part of our foster community!

