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4 Facts About Fostering Pets that Might Surprise You

If you're an animal-lover, you've probably heard a lot about the importance of fostering homeless pets until they find their forever families. People who bring pets into their homes, even temporarily, are truly playing a huge role in reducing the homeless pet population.

Here are four astonishing things we discovered about fostering from animal rescue volunteers:

1. Rescuers do *a lot* of fostering themselves

Animal rescuers don't have a nine-to-five job when it comes to working with the critters in their care — in fact, many of them foster multiple pets. And we do mean *multiple!*

"I maintain 40 to 50 dogs and 40 to 50 horses on my property all the time," noted Melanie DeAeth, President and Founder of True Blue Animal Rescue in Texas. "The animals get adopted, but there are always more coming in as some leave."

Lisa Jensen, a Board Member of [Safe Haven Animal Rescue](#) in Oklahoma City, said that her rescue relies entirely on foster families, many of whom are also Safe Haven members. "My organization is a 100 percent volunteer- and foster-based program. We do not have a location," she said. "All of our animals are in foster homes with us."

And because these rescuers work around-the-clock in *and* out of their homes, thousands of lives are saved every year. "We are able to adopt out over a thousand animals each year," Lisa added. "Most rescues with that number have paid staff. I'm pretty proud of our volunteers."

2. Without foster homes, many rescues can't operate at all

Like Safe Haven Animal Rescue, many rescue organizations don't have a physical space to shelter creatures in need—and if it weren't for foster volunteers, their animals would have nowhere to go.

"Because we don't have a shelter with infinite space, we rely on a network of volunteer foster homes to house the animals that come into our care. That is, people open up their homes voluntarily to take them in," explained Marina Hebert, a volunteer with [Small Animal Rescue Society of BC](#) in Vancouver.

Since they have limited options as to where to place pets in need, they—like many rescues—must prioritize some animals over others. "Our priority for intake is the abandoned, sick, abused and neglected, as well as animals whose owners need to rehome them due to emergencies such as illness or fleeing domestic abuse," she said.

3. Fostering can be a 'test run' for potential pet parents

Many selfless people who bring foster pets into their lives know they can't commit to a forever pet. Others, however, see fostering as an opportunity to learn if a pet is a good fit for their family—and most rescues will be in full support of this type of trial. Be aware that your behavior [can affect](#) your foster. Some pets can be prone to anxiety.

"You can even foster an animal before committing to adoption," Marina told us, adding, "If it doesn't work out, the rescue will take the animal back. That's quite a different experience from exchanging money for an animal at a pet store that the staff didn't really know, and that's the end of it!"

4. It can be hard to say goodbye to a foster pet — but it's *so* worth the heartache

Because so many animal rescue [volunteers](#) do their own fostering, they know that it can be tough to [say goodbye](#) to a foster pet when he finds his forever family—but they also know how ultimately rewarding it is.

"Many people say they can't foster because it would be hard to let them go. I want people to know it's hard for me too, but I know I can't keep them all," Melanie admitted. "A little piece of my heart goes with every single one that gets adopted from my home."

Fostering—and, of course, adopting—is an incredibly generous way to save a life. If you're interested in helping an animal find his forever home, reach out to your local animal shelter or rescue organization to see how you can help.

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