

## Getting Pets into Foster Care

### A Quick Guide for Getting Started or Expanding

*Last Updated: June 30, 2026*

New World Screwworm (NWS) is preventable and treatable, but time matters. If you haven't already, start with the full background. Review [New World Screwworm: What Shelters and Rescues Need to Know](#). Then come back here when you're ready to start getting more pets out to foster homes.

One thing we know from every animal welfare emergency: **communities want to help**. When people hear that pets in their community need them, they show up. Even if you're worried your community is too small or you don't think they'll help, just ask anyway. You may be surprised. **The organizations that ask are the ones that get help.**

### Why Getting Pets into Foster Care Matters Right Now

Foster homes are safer for animals during the NWS crisis. Here's why:

- Fewer flies indoors than in open-air shelter kennels
- One-on-one daily care means wounds are spotted faster
- Fewer animals in one place reduces risk if a suspected case arises
- Post-surgical animals, seniors, puppies, and kittens are safest in homes — not kennels

This works even if you have never run a foster program before. If you have an existing program, this is your playbook for ramping it up quickly.

For detailed protocols on wound management, fly mitigation, medications and more, see all resources at: [bestfriends.org/network/issues/new-world-screwworm](https://bestfriends.org/network/issues/new-world-screwworm).

### Start Here: Which Animals to Move First

Prioritize these animals for foster placement as quickly as possible:

Animal Type	Why Priority
Post-surgical animals (spay/neuter, injury repair)	Open incision sites attract flies. Home monitoring = better wound care.
Puppies and kittens, especially bottle babies	Highly vulnerable. Must stay indoors, away from flies.
Senior pets or animals with skin conditions	Slower healing and higher wound risk. Benefit most from close daily attention.
Animals in outdoor or open-air housing	Direct fly exposure. Highest immediate risk in the shelter environment.

Animals with any open wound or hot spot

Any open wound is a potential entry point. Follow the [steps for wound management](#), and get them into a foster home.

## How to Get an Animal into a Foster Home

Follow these steps for every animal you place in foster care. If you don't already have a foster program, that's okay! This is a great time to get started. You don't need a formal program right now, just a willing family and a few basics. Here's a simple foster home application you can use to get started.

For more detailed guidance on wound care and NWS-specific protocols, refer to [these resources](#).

Step	What to Do
1	<p><b>Identify the animal</b></p> <p>Choose an animal from your priority list above. Note any wounds, surgical sites, or health concerns before placement.</p>
2	<p><b>Do a health check</b></p> <p>Look at ears, mouth, paws, skin folds, and any wound or surgical sites. If you see unexpected drainage, foul smell, or signs of larvae, consult your vet before placement.</p> <p>See the <a href="#">Fly Mitigation &amp; Wound Management</a> resource for a full inspection checklist.</p>
3	<p><b>Prepare a simple foster packet</b></p> <p>Every foster family should leave with the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Your shelter's name and a direct contact for NWS concerns</li> <li>• A brief overview of what to watch for. Print or email <a href="#">this PDF document</a> for them.</li> <li>• Basic care instructions for this specific animal</li> <li>• Medication and wound care supplies if applicable. Ask your vet about fly repellent; <b>never use permethrin or DEET on cats</b></li> </ul>
4	<p><b>Place the animal</b></p> <p>Send the animal home the same day if possible. All animals should be kept indoors. For animals with open wounds, the bandage should be clean, dry, and secure before they leave.</p>
5	<p><b>Keep records</b></p> <p>Keep a record of the pet and the foster's information using your shelter management software or, if you don't have that, a spreadsheet so it's easy to reference.</p>
6	<p><b>Check in within 48 hours</b></p> <p>A quick text or call: "How is [name] doing? Any wound changes or concerns?" Log the response. If you hear anything unusual, connect the foster with your vet immediately.</p>

**7****Keep checking in weekly if possible**

We know bandwidth is an issue, but a brief check-in once a week keeps the animal visible and the foster engaged and feeling supported. Ask: “Is the animal doing well? Any health concerns? Has anyone shown interest in adopting?”

## How to Ask Your Community to Foster

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People want to help during a crisis. A clear, honest ask is all you need. Below are two versions of a social media post: one to orient your community on the situation, one to make the direct foster ask.

**Post 1: Inform your community first**

*"You may have heard about New World Screwworm, a fly that has been confirmed in the southern U.S. We want you to know: the animals in our care are healthy and have no signs of screwworms. We're taking proactive steps to keep them safe — including moving animals into foster homes where fly exposure is lower and daily monitoring is closer. We're staying on top of this and will continue to provide updates as we have them. We are so thankful for your continued support."*

**Post 2: Make the foster ask**

*"Because of the New World Screwworm situation, we need to move more animals into foster homes where they're safer, have fewer fly exposures, and get closer daily care. Fostering right now is one of the most meaningful things you can do for pets in our community. We'll give you everything you need. Can you help? Check out these adorable pets in need of foster and then message us [link to message] or visit [your link]."*

Then include photos of pets in need of foster homes.

When reaching out, be clear about three things:

1. **It's safe.** Foster homes have far less fly exposure than shelter kennels. You'll give them simple instructions for keeping their foster animal safe.
2. **It's simple.** You're not asking fosters to be vets, just to care for the animal and call you if anything looks off.
3. **You're backed up.** Give every foster a direct contact — a name and phone number or email address — and tell them how quickly to expect a response.

**Ask fosters to do this every day:**

- A quick hands-on check: ears, mouth, paws, any wounds or surgical sites
- Look for anything that seems bigger, smells unusual, or is draining unexpectedly
- If something looks off, call the shelter contact. Don't wait.
- Keep the animal indoors as much as possible, especially dogs with open wounds

## Tell Your Local News

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Local news stations and reporters are actively looking for community stories right now. **A shelter proactively protecting animals from NWS, and asking the community to help, is exactly the kind of story they want to tell.** It's also one of the fastest ways to recruit foster families.

Reach out directly to your local TV news desks and newspaper reporters. A simple email or phone call is all it takes. Here's a pitch you can adapt:

**Sample media pitch:**

*"Hi — I'm reaching out from [Organization Name]. With New World Screwworm confirmed in [state/region], we're proactively moving animals from our shelter into foster homes, where they're safer from fly exposure and get closer daily care. Our goal is to get [XX] pets into foster homes by [XX]. We're asking our community to step up as foster families, and the response has been wonderful. We think this is a story your viewers/readers would care about — both the challenge we're managing and the community coming together to protect animals. We'd love to have you come see what we're doing and meet some of the animals looking for temporary homes. Would you be interested in a visit or a short interview? We can be available today."*

Tips: Send to the assignment desk by email, then follow up with a call. Include a photo of an adoptable animal if you can. Tuesday–Thursday mornings are typically the best time to pitch local TV.

## Empower Foster Families to Help Animals Get Adopted

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Every foster home is a chance for an animal to be adopted without ever coming back to the shelter. The faster an animal is adopted from foster care, the less time it spends in a higher-risk environment.

Some organizations have policies that require animals to be returned to the shelter for adoption. **This crisis is a good time to try letting foster families help find adopters directly.** It reduces how many animals need to come back through your doors, and it works! Foster families are often the best advocates for the pets in their care.

### How to make foster-to-adopt work:

1. **Tell your foster families it's encouraged.** Let them know they can share their foster animal on social media and talk to people in their network about adoption. Make sure they know the process of how to adopt a pet from your shelter.
  2. **Give them a few good photos.** Or ask them to take photos at home! Animals in a cozy home environment are far more appealing than kennel photos.
  3. **Make it easy to refer an adopter.** "Send us their name and contact info and we'll take it from there." That's all a foster parent needs to know.
  4. **Respond to adoption leads quickly.** Aim for 24 hours. Use digital paperwork when possible so adopters don't have to come in.
  5. **Celebrate every adoption.** When an animal is adopted from foster care, thank the foster family publicly. It recruits more fosters and shows your community that stepping up works.
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### More Resources

Access Best Friends Network's full [NWS resource library](#)

Outbreak tracking and confirmed case map: [screwworm.gov](http://screwworm.gov)

[Access Best Friends Network's foster resources here](#)

Questions? Reach the Best Friends Network team at [bfnetwork@bestfriends.org](mailto:bfnetwork@bestfriends.org) or visit [bestfriends.org/network](http://bestfriends.org/network).

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