



**Foster Volunteers
Health and Safety
Induction Booklet**



Health and Safety information for Foster Volunteers

IMPORTANT

Thank you so much for kindly offering a loving foster home to our animals in need. Your application has been received and before we progress, you will be required to read through this health and safety information and complete an assessment via your SPCA contact so we can ensure you are familiar with the risks and are happy to proceed.

At SPCA New Zealand, health and safety is a priority for us, and we require active participation by everyone to ensure the safety and wellbeing of yourself, your family and our animals while you foster.

1. Health and Safety Participation

SPCA adopts health, safety and welfare as a fundamental business objective, however **health and safety is everyone's responsibility under the [Health and Safety at Work Act 2015](#)**

SPCA (as a PCBU) must take all practicable steps to ensure your safety, which includes providing you with information, instructions, equipment (PPE) and training to protect you, managing any identified risks, and investigating all incidents that are reported.

Foster volunteers (*workers under the Act*) must take reasonable care of their own health and safety, and the health and safety of others, which includes co-operating with any reasonable health and safety policies, procedures and instructions you have been advised of, some of which include completing required training, reporting incidents and risks, and using any **personal protective equipment** provided.

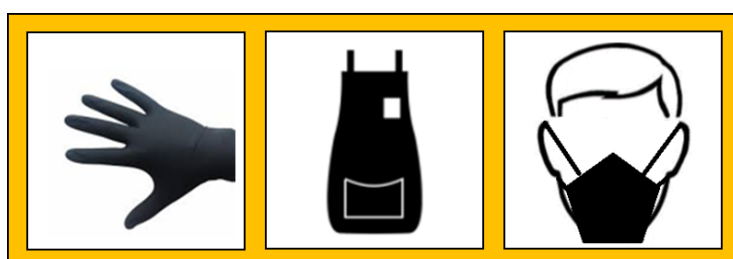
2. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

SPCA will provide you with PPE that is intended to be worn or used to protect you against risks to your health and safety. When you come in to pick-up your foster animal, you will be advised of any additional precautions to take.

Some things to be aware of:

- Always wear gloves if you are handling or mixing chemicals or dealing with faeces.
- Always wear a face mask if you are spraying chemicals.

You must use PPE and Safety Equipment in accordance with the instructions provided, return any unused PPE when finished with it and report damage or loss immediately. Please contact your local centre if you have any questions or concerns.



3. Emergency Procedures

We strongly encourage you to have [a household escape plan](#) for your whole family in the event of fire. If you need to evacuate your house, do not try and take any animals with you. Get yourself and your family out first and call the fire service. When they arrive, advise them of the location and number of animals in the house.

If you need to evacuate your house:

1. Do not try to take your foster animals with you - get yourself and your family out first
2. Call 1-1-1
3. When emergency services arrive, tell them the location and number of animals in the house

When you visit an SPCA centre, in an emergency, please follow the directions of the Fire Wardens.

4. Incident Management

An incident is an instance of something happening, like an event or occurrence. At SPCA, they are generally classed as **accidents, injuries, illnesses, events or near hits** that occur in the workplace, or in the process of completing work related activities (such as fostering).

As a worker, you are required to;

- **REPORT** all foster related incidents - verbally if requiring first aid – hospital treatment
- **REPORT** all foster related aches, pains or stress symptoms
- **REPORT** all injuries or illnesses that may affect your ability to foster
- **REPORT** any near-hits or dangerous occurrences you witness related to fostering

IF YOU ARE INJURED OR BECOME ILL WHEN FOSTERING, FOLLOW THIS PROCEDURE:

1 SEEK HELP IMMEDIATELY • MINOR: Treat the injury • MODERATE: Seek medical treatment • MAJOR: Call 111 – Ask for Ambulance	2 REPORT WHEN SAFE • Notify your SPCA contact as soon as possible • They will report it via our normal online reporting processes	3 RETURN WHEN CLEARED TO • Ensure your SPCA contact is aware of the outcome of any further treatment
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5. Risk Management

A **risk** can be defined as “the possibility that death, injury or illness might occur when a person is exposed to a hazard.”

As a fosterer, you are required to;

- **REPORT** every hazard you encounter, no matter how minor

IF YOU NOTICE A RISK WHEN FOSTERING, FOLLOW THIS PROCEDURE:

1 IDENTIFY IMMEDIATELY • Is it a risk? • Does it require attention?	2 ISOLATE IMMEDIATELY • Make sure no one can be hurt by it • Move it out of harms way IF SAFE • Cordon it off safely	3 REPORT WHEN SAFE • Notify your SPCA contact as soon as possible
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6. Physical Risks to People while Fostering

Although hazards will vary in each individual home, there are some general ones to be aware of when fostering animals. For your own safety you need to be aware of some of the more common hazards that can cause harm or illness to you and other people. This list is not exhaustive, and you will be provided further information in relation to the animals you will be fostering. Please contact your local centre if you have any questions or concerns.

6.1 Animals

Fosterers need to be familiar with safe animal handling techniques relevant to the species they will be fostering. If relevant to your role, you will be trained in the correct technique for safe handling of dogs, cats and/or small animals. Please contact your local centre if any incidents occur, or if you have any questions or concerns.

Risk:

- Animal-inflicted injuries (e.g. scratches, bites) - the highest number of animal injuries at centres involve cats
- Zoonotic disease (e.g. ringworm)

How to Mitigate the Risk:

- Only handle animals you have been trained to handle
- Observe any animal before approaching and handling, and never;
 - Approach an animal from behind or Interrupt an animal that is sleeping or eating
- Wear PPE when required and practice good personal hygiene
- Immediately treat any injuries inflicted by an animal to prevent infection or further injury
- Supervise children at all times when around foster animals



6.2 Transporting Animals (Vehicles)

Animals in foster care will need to be transported to the SPCA centre or a nominated veterinary clinic for regular check-ups, vaccinations, desexing, etc.

Risk:

- Vehicle accidents
- Animals roaming free in the vehicle can cause an accident
- Animal-inflicted injury (e.g. scratches, bites)

How to Mitigate the Risk:

- Always ensure that your vehicle is maintained in warrantable condition
- When traveling to/from the centre, animals must be secure in the vehicle (use of the foot well is preferred if possible).
- Do not let animals roam free in the vehicle or be held. Felines and small animals must be in carry cages (*placing a towel over the top will reduce stress on the animal*). Canines must be in a travel crate, seatbelt harness or contained in one area of the vehicle. Large animals should be transported in appropriate vehicles.

6.3 Cleaning Chemicals

On some occasions we may give you chemicals to use to clean your foster room - if this is the case, we will give you instructions and PPE.

Risk:

- May cause serious injury if ingested, inhaled or if skin/eye contact occurs
- Vapours/fumes may cause skin rashes, dermatitis, irritation to eyes, allergies and respiratory problems

How to Mitigate the Risk:

- Only handle chemicals if you are trained to do so
- Wear appropriate PPE (e.g. disposable gloves, face mask, goggles)
- NEVER mix different chemicals
- Ensure chemicals are stored correctly and clearly labelled
- Never touch your face/mouth while handling
- Wash hands thoroughly after use
- Familiarise yourself with the relevant Safety Data Sheets (SDS) for each chemical you use
- Seek medical attention immediately if injured.



6.4 Slips, Trips and Falls in the Home

Risk:

- Physical injury from slipping or falling over loose animals
- Physical injury from slippery floors when cleaning rooms and uneven surfaces when walking dogs

How to Mitigate the Risk:

- Wear non-slip, closed-in, flat shoes when working with animals
- Promptly clean up animal "accidents" to avoid slipping over
- Ensure toys on the floor are highly visible so you don't fall over them
- Be aware of your surroundings and look where you are going
- Take extra care when carrying cages



6.5 Manual Handling

Some animals can be heavy to lift or move, as well as their food, bedding, litter, cage, etc. It is important that you are aware of your lifting ability and **only lift what you are capable and confident lifting**. Never risk being injured or injuring an animal. Ask for help if you are lifting or moving heavy items or animals.

Risk:

- Physical injury resulting from lifting, dragging, pushing or putting down an object

How to Mitigate the Risk:

1 PLAN YOUR LIFT Do a risk assessment: • Is it necessary? • Can someone help you? Assess the task: • Where is it going? • How heavy is it? • How solid is it? 	2 PLANT YOUR FEET Make sure your base is stable: • Are you balanced? Be aware of the terrain you are working in 	3 BEND YOUR KNEES If you need to bend down for the load; • Bend your knees • Keep your back straight 	4 STRAIGHTEN YOUR BACK When lifting, carrying or putting down items: • DON'T twist your body • DON'T jump • DON'T RUN 
5 GRIP THE LOAD • Use your hands to grip the load properly If you lose your grip: • Gently place the load down • Start again 	6 KEEP CLOSE TO YOUR BODY • This will ensure stability when moving • Keep the item close to your centre of gravity 	7 WALK SLOWLY • Sudden movements could result in serious injury • Concentrate on the task • DON'T get distracted 	8 LOOK AHEAD • Look towards your destination • Remain aware of your surroundings • Move your feet in the direction of your body movement 

DON'T

- Twist when lifting
- Bend your back
- Jump or run
- Lift bulky or heavy loads alone
- Look down while moving the load – look in the direction you are going

7. Health Risks to People while Fostering

7.1 Zoonotic Diseases

A Zoonotic Disease is a disease that can be spread between animals and humans. It can be caused by viruses, bacteria, parasites, and fungi. You are not expected to be an expert in zoonotic diseases, you just have to have an understanding of what could be present, and the symptoms. You will be advised if the animals you are fostering have a known zoonotic disease. Please contact your local centre if you have any questions or concerns.

In the meantime, avoid contracting a disease by complying with the following rules;

- Use personal protective equipment (PPE) as required:
- Wash your hands properly and frequently with anti-bacterial soap, and before handling your own pets
- Disinfect wounds thoroughly and cover open wounds (e.g. cuts, scratches, grazes)
- Report any animal bites or injuries immediately and see a doctor if required
- Seek assistance before handling fractious animals
- Foster animals should not have access to the whole house unsupervised

If you are pregnant, or trying to become pregnant, please let us know before working with cats and consult your GP before volunteering or fostering. If you are immuno-compromised, you may be at higher risk of contracting a zoonotic disease. **Requirements for confidentiality will be respected.**

If you have any concerns, please speak to your SPCA contact before handling any animals. If you think you have contracted a zoonotic disease, seek medical help and advise your SPCA contact.

To learn more about Zoonotic Disease, please refer to the links below;

Disease:	Transmission:	Disease:	Transmission:
• Giardiasis	<i>Parasite</i>	• Campylobacteriosis	<i>Bacterial *contagious</i>
• Ringworm	<i>Fungal</i>	• Ornithosis / Psittacosis	<i>Bacterial</i>
• Cat-Scratch Fever	<i>Bacterial</i>	• Cryptosporidiosis	<i>Parasite</i>
• Coccidiosis	<i>Parasite</i>	• Toxoplasmosis	<i>Parasite *pregnancy risk</i>
• Leptospirosis	<i>Parasite *can be fatal</i>	• Visceral Larva Migrants	<i>Parasite</i>
• Sarcoptic Mange	<i>Parasite *contagious</i>	• Cutaneous Larva Migrants	<i>Parasite</i>
• Salmonellosis	<i>Bacterial</i>	• Toxocariasis	<i>Parasite</i>

7.2 Stress

Stress is the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them. We will take all practicable steps to prevent unreasonable stress and to support you in managing the demands of fostering. If you are feeling stressed or upset, please contact your local centre if you have any questions or concerns.

There are a couple of situations that can increase your stress levels:

- **Foster animal escapes** - Sometimes, despite best intentions and ensuring that all doors and windows are closed, and housemates knowing not to let out the animals – they escape. If this happens, you must contact us immediately. We can then provide you with tools and advice as to how to get your foster animal back.
- **Your own animals get sick** - Please follow the guidance of our teams on whether or not you are able to mix any foster animals with your own animals.
- **Your foster animal dies or must be euthanised** - You have to remember that you are fostering some of the most vulnerable animals that we have and unfortunately sometimes, they don't all make it. This is a stressful and emotional time. Please contact us as soon as possible as we can offer you support.

7.3 Compassion Fatigue

Compassion fatigue is a condition characterised by a gradual lessening of compassion over time. Compassion fatigue affects those working with human trauma victims, but it also affects those working directly and in-directly with animals - especially if we work with sick and injured animals. After a time, this recurrent stress can take its toll on our mental health, especially if we are focusing all our efforts on looking after others while foregoing our own needs. If you are suffering from compassion fatigue, you won't be able to fully devote yourself to the aid of the animals in our care. It is crucial that you look after yourself and take steps to prevent compassion fatigue.

Prevention for managing stress and compassion fatigue

There are no known clinical treatment options for compassion fatigue, but there are a number of recommended preventative measures:

- Practice physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioural self-care to manage stress
- Appreciate that amidst the more challenging things there are always good things happening to keep you inspired and proactive (compassion satisfaction!)
- Be selective with social media - constant exposure to unreliable and unhelpful negative online opinions and criticism can feed into compassion fatigue
- Talk to, and spend quality time with family, friends and pets

7.4 Pre-Existing Illness or Injuries

If you have a medical condition or are recovering from an injury that may affect your ability to safely perform your role as a fosterer, you must contact us immediately. If you are pregnant, taking any medication that suppresses your immune system, or suffering from an immune-suppressive disease, you **must seek advice from your medical practitioner before fostering**.

It is strongly recommended that you have had a tetanus vaccination within the last ten years. While animal bites and scratches can be common, one of our most common hazards is from people cutting themselves on cans/tins. Please contact your local centre if you have any questions or concerns.

7.5 Allergies

Some fosterers find they are allergic to the dander or dust off the coats of cats, dogs, rabbits and birds.

Risk:

- Allergic reaction to the dander or dust, chemicals or food (e.g. peanut butter used for enrichment)

How to Mitigate the Risk:

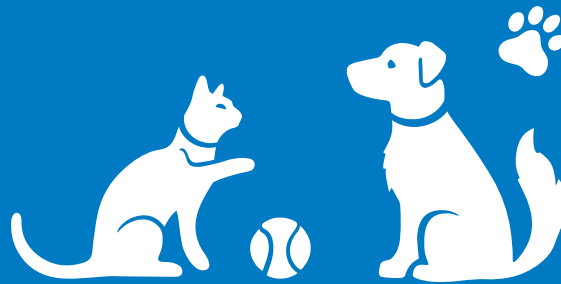
- Advise your SPCA contact of any allergies BEFORE you start fostering
- If you or a member of your family develop an allergy when fostering, let your SPCA contact know immediately
- If possible, avoid whatever triggers the allergic reaction
- Use appropriate PPE
 - Be aware of the symptoms including difficulty breathing, constriction of the airways, development of hives, swelling of lips, tongue or throat

7.6 Managing your own Health and Wellbeing - Tracksuit

As a fosterer you have access to the tracksuit-inc® program which gives you the opportunity to participate in a range of health-related activities.

- To register click [here](#) and follow the prompts
- Company code is: SPCAWellness





**Thank you for taking the time to read
the Health and Safety Induction.**

Please complete and submit the required assessment.

For assistance with this document, please
contact your SPCA contact.

