

# Field to Foster Process

A field to foster (FTF) process is an alternative approach to fast-tracking animals from the field to foster homes without fully admitting them to the shelter. An effective FTF process will help you remove animals from at-risk environments, engage foster caregivers, and preserve your shelter capacity to serve the animals most in need of intensive or longer-term care. An FTF process is especially helpful in cases of large-scale neglect or institutional hoarding in which a group of animals without serious medical or behavioral needs need help quickly.

## FTF Stages

### 1. Planning & Logistics

- Planning meeting
- Discuss population in need
- Foster recruitment & scheduling
- Determine capacity

### 2. Animal Arrival

- Number of animals
- Transport details
- Probable medical & behavioral needs

### 3. Animal Exam

- Initial triage (staff, supplies, & process)
- Planning for animals needing additional care
- Approximate timing

### 4. Animal Foster-Out

- Foster matching
- Foster scheduling, communication, and counseling
- Staffing

## FTF Process Benefits

### Removing Animals from At-Risk Situations Quickly

An FTF process provides a fast, streamlined way to move animals from at-risk situations into foster homes.

### Preserving Shelter Capacity

Fast-tracking needy animals from the field to foster homes allows you to preserve precious shelter space for the animals most in need of the intensive, ongoing care that only a shelter can provide.

### Engaging Foster Caregivers

Foster caregivers increase their commitment because they've been involved in the process from the start and can truly feel and see the impact, they make by fostering an animal in need. Participating in an FTF process also allows foster caregivers to develop new skills and increases their active participation as caregivers, even beyond the FTF process.

# Field to Foster Best Practices

## Get Input & Commitment from All Shelter Staff & Functions

An FTF process is not a one-person show. To succeed, you'll need input and buy-in from everyone on your team.

## Get Foster Caregivers Involved from the Start

In our experience, foster caregivers can become enthusiastic champions of an FTF process, but only if they are ready and willing to take home an animal sight unseen.

## Prepare for Contingencies

Mentally rehearse the day of the event ahead of time and imagine what might not go according to plan due to circumstances beyond your control. Create plans to address these possibilities so you don't have to think of something "on the fly" and under time pressure. For example, it's likely that some animals will have medical and behavioral needs so severe they can't be fostered out right away. Set aside additional space and staff to care for them. Identify animals in your existing population that could be fostered out in their place so you can maximize foster engagement and manage your capacity for care regardless of any surprises.

## Clear Communication of Roles & Responsibilities

Ensure everyone on your team knows exactly what they should be doing on the day of the FTF event. Consider creating one-page job aids or reference guides for each staff member clarifying what they should be doing and where they should be doing it for each stage of the process.

## Set Up Your Space for Success

Arrange the physical space in your shelter to maximize efficiency and reduce triggers for fear, anxiety, and stress. Consider carrying out a dry run of the process using stuffed animals to identify potential obstacles or problems.

