

ANIMALS FIJI

Fostering an Animal, Can You Help Make a Difference?



Opinion



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Mary-Anne is a volunteer on assignment with Animals Fiji as part of the Australian Volunteers Program, an Australian Government Initiative.



Both cat and human enjoying the fostering experience.

must read

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As a non-profit charity, Animals Fiji depends on the kindness of donations to continue in their work to support animals across Fiji.

To find out more about Animals Fiji's services and how you can help please contact their Savusavu Clinic at (+679) 998 6253 or Nadi Clinic at (+679) 993 6647 or visit their website at www.animalsfiji.org.

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TAKE Note:

An important goal for Animals Fiji is to make animal shelters obsolete - where every animal is cared for in a loving home. Fostering helps make this possible.

The Northern Division of Fiji desperately needs volunteers to help animals requiring short-term care. If you think you could do this, your willingness to volunteer can make a meaningful impact on the animal's life.

All over Fiji, animals are still abandoned or need to be cared for temporarily until they are well and find a permanent home. Join us in fostering a brighter future for all animals in Fiji.

Call our clinics to see how you can help: Nadi Clinic and Animal Shelter: (+679) 993 6647 or Savusavu Clinic (+679) 998 6253 .



Animal shelter kitten waiting for someone to foster or adopt her.

Have you ever considered fostering an animal or bird from an animal shelter or veterinary clinic? Fostering means that you look after an animal for a short time, either while it is waiting for its forever home in an animal shelter or because it has been found sick or abandoned and needs a home while it is getting better.

If the animal is already in a shelter, isn't it being cared for there? Yes, it is, but below are some reasons why the animal will be happier in a foster home environment than in a shelter. It can also be a rewarding experience for you and can free up space in the shelter for another animal.

- **Increased capacity for care:** By fostering an animal, you are making space for another animal in the shelter - so that more animals in need can be helped.
- **Increased adoption success:** Animals in foster homes often have higher adoption rates as they can be more accurately matched to potential adopters.
- **Reduced stress:** For an animal, shelters can be noisy and stressful because of all the other animals around, unfamiliar smells and a generally busy environment. In a foster home, it is typically calmer and more relaxed, and the animal will feel better and safer.
- **Individual attention:** In a foster home, the animal can receive more attention from the carer. This personal attention helps build trust with humans, which can be vital as they may have had negative past experiences. At a shelter, the animal carers have many animals they look after and need to spend time with.
- **Social opportunities:** There



Adorable puppies waiting for fostering or adoption.

are more opportunities for the animal to interact directly with humans and other animals or pets. Being in a home makes them develop better social skills, making them more adaptable and have better chances of being adopted.

- **House training:** Animals awaiting adoption may not be fully house-trained, and fostering one where this has been identified as an issue provides a chance to work on this aspect in a home environment, making the transition to a permanent home easier.
- **Home life exposure:** Some animals have never been in a home situation, and being fostered helps them become accustomed to the routines and activities of a household. Being fostered in a home situation makes it easier for them to adjust when they find their permanent home.

- **Behaviour issues:** Living in a home setting can accurately assess the animal's personality and behaviour around humans and possibly other animals. This helps find them a home suitable to the animal and the people who will adopt them, making the possibility of a successful adoption more likely. Also, being in an animal shelter can be stressful for an animal, which can sometimes cause behaviour which does not occur in a permanent home.
- **Increase community awareness:** Fostering an animal not only provides a temporary home but also raises community awareness about the challenges faced by animal shelters.

Fostering helps provide an animal with a more nurturing and personalised environment and an in-

creased chance of finding a loving permanent home. Fostering and adoption helps to reduce the overcrowding in shelters and results in fewer animals wandering on the streets.

Is fostering a good option for you?

Fostering is a significant commitment. However, it can positively impact the lives of the animal, the community and yourself. Fostering can be emotionally rewarding, knowing you have played a key role in helping an animal.

Fostering allows you to experience pet ownership without a long-term commitment and is an excellent choice if you are unsure about adopting a pet permanently. It can also be a trial run to see if a pet fits your lifestyle before committing to adoption.

Fostering can also teach responsibility and empathy for families with children, especially if everyone in the household takes part in caring for an animal. It is also a way of actively helping the community by reducing the number of homeless pets and relieving the pressure on local animal shelters and rescue centres.

Fostering allows children to show that they are mature and committed enough to own and care for a pet.

Is fostering right for everyone?

While fostering can be a rewarding experience, it is important to recognise that it may not be the right fit for everyone. Here are some reasons to consider why fostering might not be for you.

- **Time:** If you have a busy schedule or are often away from home, it may be hard to supply the necessary care and attention to a foster animal.
- **Emotional involvement:** As

fostering involves time and care, you may find it difficult when it is time to part with the animal when it is adopted or if it becomes ill.

- **Financial aspects:** While many organisations cover basic costs of fostering, such as veterinary care, you may be asked to provide food or other items you may not be able to afford.
- **Existing pets:** If you already have pets, they may react badly to a new temporary housemate, which could lead to conflict.
- **Living in a small space:** If you live in a small or crowded space, providing a comfortable and safe environment for a foster animal may be difficult.
- **Uncertain living conditions:** If you think you may be moving soon, fostering may not be practical as stability is vital for you and the animal.
- **Health concerns:** If you or a family member have allergies, you may need to be careful about bringing new animals into the home. For example, pet hair can affect some people.
- **Inexperience with animal care:** If you have little experience caring for animals, then fostering an animal might be overwhelming, some foster animals need extra care and training and may have behavioural issues.

Fostering an animal can be a rewarding experience. However, you should thoroughly consider all the above issues and discuss them with the animal shelter or vet clinic you are dealing with. If you decide that fostering is not for you now, there are other ways you can help, such as volunteering or donating.

Source: Animals Fiji