

Age Guidelines for Foster Puppy Activities

Fostering puppies is a wonderful experience! You get to play a crucial role in the development of the puppy, and help them grow into a well-rounded, confident adult by giving them a firm foundation. Please follow these guidelines, as well as those outlined in the **Raising a Well-Adjusted Litter of Puppies** handout to ensure you are giving your foster puppies the best start to a confident, behaviorally healthy life.

0-5 Weeks Old: These puppies should stay indoors at all times and **should not** have interactions with other animals. They should remain confined to a small area, often times a plastic airline carrier and/or a puppy pen depending on their mobility needs. They are never to be taken out of the house, with the exception of returning to AHS in their carriers for appointments, until they have reached 5 weeks of age. It is encouraged, however, to have as many people as possible frequently & appropriately handle puppies within the confines of their area between the ages of 3-5 weeks. Ensure each person washes their hands before and after handling the puppy to avoid spreading any possible illnesses. Puppies should be handled minimally outside of daily care before the age of 3 weeks as they are quite fragile, do not have a sturdy immune system yet, and can lose body heat quickly. Quick handling sessions involving cuddles, light restraint, and touching of paws, ears, mouth, & tail should happen with each feeding of puppies in this age bracket.

5-8 Weeks Old: Beginning at 5 weeks of age, providing they have had their 1st vaccines, puppies should be allowed to go into a secured area of the foster's yard, permitting there are no strange dogs or wildlife that frequent the yard. If the yard is very large and/or does not have a secure fence, the puppies should be limited by a metal play pen. At this age, it is encouraged to allow puppies to fully interact with other fully vaccinated, animal-friendly adult dogs. They should also continue to be exposed to novel people, although they should continue to remain at the foster parent's house unless otherwise permitted by the AHS Foster or Behavior teams.

8-16 Weeks Old: Puppies at this age are allowed to go to public spaces with low traffic of other animals. While they shouldn't be allowed to interact with animals with an unknown vaccine history, they should continue to be exposed to novel sights, sounds, smells, and ground textures (gravel, concrete, etc.). Examples of appropriate outings include friend's houses, walking around the Outlet Mall, or restaurants with outdoor patio seating. People should be encouraged to appropriately interact with puppies while out and about. **DOG PARKS, PET STORES, HIKING TRAILS, OR POPULAR WALKING PARKS HEAVILY TRAFFICKED BY OTHER DOGS ARE NOT PERMITTED FOR PUPPIES IN THIS AGE RANGE.**

16+ Weeks Old: Providing a puppy has been fully vaccinated by 16 weeks, or your puppy has received at least 2 vaccines at/beyond 16 weeks, there are no activity restrictions. Puppies of this age are allowed to frequent pet stores, hiking trails, and popular walking parks. Caution should always be taken when meeting other dogs with unknown vaccine histories and/or unknown behavior towards other dogs. People should be encouraged to appropriately interact with the puppies to continue to socialize them to novel interactions. **PLEASE NOTE DOG PARKS ARE STRICTLY PROHIBITED FOR DOGS OF ANY AGE BEING FOSTERED THROUGH AHS.**

