

# PETS IN CRISIS



## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS For Pet Owners

### What is Pets in Crisis?

Pets in Crisis is a temporary foster care program for pets whose owners are in the process of leaving or have recently left a violent relationship. We provide a caring home environment for pets while their owner seeks safe permanent housing.

### Who can take part in the program?

The program is available via referral from a caseworker only. It is specifically for pet owners at immediate risk of family and domestic violence who have had to flee their homes and seek refuge or temporary accommodation. If you are in this situation and require temporary care for your pet, ask your caseworker or health professional to submit the required forms.

### What kind of pets can enter the program?

We have the resources to take in domestic pets such as dogs, cats, and pocket pets (rabbits, mice etc.) however we are unable to accept larger animals such as horses or livestock.

### How much does it cost?

The service is free – it's funded by the WA Government and RSPCA WA – but there may be vet costs to get pets up-to-date with the minimum requirements needed to be enrolled in the program (sterilisation, vaccinations and microchipping).

### How much will the vet cost?

All vet work is undertaken by Vetwest, who are generously supporting the Pets in Crisis program by offering significantly discounted veterinary services. RSPCA WA will pay these costs up front and you will only be invoiced once the pet is back in your care. Payment plans are available. The average cost of vet care is:

	Dog		Cat	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Sterilisation	\$100	\$130	\$50	\$90
Microchip	\$20		\$20	
Vaccination	\$35		\$35	

Please note this is an average only; speys, castrations and medications are on a case-by-case basis dependent on type of animal, weight, etc.

### How long can pets stay in the RSPCA's care?

The maximum foster care placement available is three months. If you haven't secured safe accommodation in this timeframe, we will liaise with your caseworker on a weekly basis to best support you and your pet.

### I have more than one pet, how many can you take?

Providing your pet meets the enrolment criteria, we should be able to take them all. We will do our best to find a foster home where they can stay together, but if you have many pets, we may need to split them up across several foster homes.

### Is there any reason you may NOT accept an animal into the program?

All animals that enter the program must be sterilised, microchipped, vaccinated, and flea and worm treated to protect the foster carer's own pets while your pet is living with them. If they are not already, we will arrange this with Vetwest when your pet comes into the program. This vet treatment is done at a greatly reduced cost, which we pay upfront and then you pay back when your pet is returned to you at the end of its placement. Payment plans can be arranged to cover these costs.

For safety reasons we cannot accept aggressive animals.

### Why does my pet need to be sterilised to enrol in the program?

Unsterilised animals are a risk because of their potential to breed; and they are the reason why so many unwanted animals end up in shelters. Unsterilised animals are at greater risk of certain illnesses and diseases, and they generally have more behavioural problems than animals who have been sterilised. Most foster carers will not accept an unsterilised animal in their home due to the complications which can arise, especially as they usually have pets of their own. By law, all cats in Western Australia over the age of 6 months must be sterilised; and the government is in the process of tightening laws around dog sterilisation.

*Continued over page...*



## FAQ For Pet Owners

### Why is there such an in-depth questionnaire for dogs?

We have a duty of care to our foster carers to ensure the animal we place into their home is not a known risk to their safety and wellbeing. Because the dogs we take in are not being kept in a controlled environment (a shelter, kennels), we must undertake a thorough assessment to determine their suitability to the people and pets in the home where they will be staying. As a safety precaution, we need to know more about dogs to determine whether they are appropriate to go into an unfamiliar home with people they have never met.

Please let us know if your dog has behavioural issues that may require a specialised foster carer or that is better suited to a certain type of home.

Aggressive dogs will not be accepted into the program for the safety of staff, the foster carer, their family and pets. Please answer the questionnaire as truthfully as you can. If your dog is not suitable for the Pets in Crisis program, we may be able to help with some other options.

### Can I take my pet with me to a refuge?

We are currently working with some of the FDV refuges in Perth to organise on-site temporary accommodation facilities for animals. Ask your case worker to find out which refuges currently have emergency pet boarding facilities.

### My pet is not registered in my name, can I still enrol them into the program?

As pets are classed as property under WA law, we can only accept them with the registered owner's consent. Unfortunately, if your pet is registered in someone else's name, we will not be able to accept them. If your pet isn't registered or microchipped at all (there is no registered owner), we can get this done in your name on your behalf.

### What do I need to provide for my pet during the foster period?

Your pet will settle into their foster home more easily if they have some home comforts with them - like their bed, a favourite toy, and their regular food (as switching pet food suddenly is not ideal).

If you can't provide any of their belongings, don't worry - we can provide the foster carer with everything your pet will need while in their care.

### I have already left and had to leave my pet behind, how can I get them out of the house and into the program?

The first step is always to ask your caseworker to submit the relevant forms. Once accepted into the program, we will coordinate a time for your pet to be delivered to the RSPCA WA Malaga headquarters. If it is safe for them to do so, ask a friend or family member to go to the house to collect your pet. If it is not safe, your caseworker can arrange a police escort to accompany you or a friend/family member. When your pet has been collected from the house, they can then be handed over into our care.

Unfortunately our Pets in Crisis team cannot go to the house and take your pet as we have no legal right to do so.

### Will I be able to visit my pet while it's in foster care?

You will not be able to visit your pet during its foster placement.

Pet owners and foster carers will remain anonymous to each other at all times both during and after the program. All contact passes through the Pets in Crisis team - the foster carer will provide us with updates and photos of your pet that we will share with you via your caseworker, and if there is information you would like to share with the foster carer, your caseworker will tell us and we will pass the message on for you.

For the safety of all involved, it is also best that you don't reveal to friends or family (including children) that your pet is in the care of the Pets in Crisis program.

### How can I be sure my pet will be well cared for?

Pets in Crisis provide foster carers with all food and supplies to ensure your pet will have everything that is required to be safe and comfortable. We conduct a property check at the beginning of the foster period to ensure your pet will be secure, and check in regularly with carers throughout the foster period. Foster carers are asked to send fortnightly photos which will be passed on to you via your caseworker. If your pet becomes ill or injured during the foster period, carers have access to a 24/7 hotline to ensure your pet will receive immediate vet treatment.

Foster carers give freely of their time and resources to provide a loving and comfortable home for your pet.

*Continued over page...*



## FAQ For Pet Owners

### **When can I get my pet back?**

As soon as you're ready to get your pet back we will organise its return to you. It generally takes a couple of days to coordinate your pet's return from the foster carer, to our Pets in Crisis team, and back to you. This can work out well as it gives you time to settle into your new accommodation and allows you to pet-proof the property before your pet arrives.

You are the legal owner of your pet at all times and can request to get them back whenever you want. We have no authority to keep your pets against your will, even if your circumstances or plans change.

### **My pet has been abused by the perpetrator – can the RSPCA prosecute them?**

If you have evidence of the abuse then we can support you in lodging a cruelty complaint to the RSPCA's Cruelty Hotline. This will then be assigned to one of our Inspectors to investigate, like the many other reports they respond to daily. Evidence of cruelty (vet reports, video footage, external witnesses etc.) is critical in order to successfully prosecute those who carry out acts of cruelty or neglect towards animals.

### **I'm not sure if I can take care of my pet in the future, what should I do?**

RSPCA WA offers a surrender service for pet owners who can no longer take care of their animals. If you would like to surrender your pet for rehoming through the RSPCA, you can discuss this with our Pets in Crisis team.