



# SafePet

## A Program Guide for OVMA Veterinary Clinics

## **SafePet Program guide for OVMA veterinary clinics**

### **Program Overview**

The Ontario Veterinary Medical Association (OVMA) started the SafePet Program in 2003 to assist women at risk of abuse in making the decision to leave an abusive situation and enter a registered women's shelter.

The SafePet Program has operated through the combined efforts and coordination of Ontario Violence Against Women (VAW) shelters and volunteer OVMA member veterinary clinics since it began, and although it has evolved over the years, it is the hope of the OVMA that it will continue to provide assistance to women at risk of abuse. The basic premise of the program is to assist women who have entered a VAW shelter by helping them find temporary shelter and care for their pets while they are unable to care for them directly.

To address this problem, the OVMA SafePet Program was created to help VAW shelters connect with veterinarians and volunteer pet foster parents and networks who would work together to facilitate a safe and viable option for women in need of somewhere to take their pets while staying in a VAW shelter.

### **SafePet Checklist for Veterinary Clinics**

In many cases, when a woman is experiencing abuse, so are her pets. Pets are often a source of support and companionship throughout the trials and emotional turmoil of living in an abusive situation; creating a deeply emotional bond between the pet and pet owner.

1. Under the SafePet Program, women's shelters act as the hub for the program by facilitating a relationship with program volunteers. Volunteers include pet foster families and OVMA volunteer veterinary clinics.
2. OVMA member veterinary clinics agree to volunteer to provide free veterinary care and exams to pets belonging to women who have entered a VAW shelter. If specific treatment is required, clinics and the Pet's owner can apply for Farley Foundation funding.
3. Pet foster parents are found by shelters by recruiting from the community or by contacting local rescue groups, kennels or other pet friendly businesses and charities that may have volunteer foster families to assist in the SafePet program.
  - o Shelters may contact participating clinics with questions regarding the suitability of a Pet Foster Parent.
4. Once a women has contacted the shelter and had identified the need to register to the SafePet Program - contact is made by the shelter with a shelter-approved pet foster parent to arrange care.

5. Once a pet foster family is established, contact is made with a participating veterinary clinic and the pet is taken to the clinic by the SafePet participant for a pre-foster care exam.
6. The veterinary exam ensures that the animal is in good health before it goes into pet foster care. Once the pet has been dropped off at one of the volunteer veterinary clinic for an exam - the women's shelter, veterinary clinic and pet foster parent coordinate transportation to the designated pet foster parent's home. Ideally, this would occur by the Pet Foster Parent picking up the pet after the exam.
7. At the end of foster care, and once a SafePet participant is ready to claim her pet again, the shelter arranges for the return of their pet from foster care to the pet owner.

## **Other Questions**

### **1. How do veterinary clinics learn about women in need of their help and begin participating?**

A staff member of a VAW shelter may request that a veterinary clinic examine a pet under the SafePet Program. No one else may request a clinic's assistance in SafePet other than a VAW shelter.

### **2. What happens when we receive a request directly from a woman in need of assistance, or someone acting on her behalf other than the VAW shelter?**

If you receive a request directly from a woman in need of assistance, or someone acting on her behalf, please refer the individual to a VAW shelter in your area.

### **3. How should the veterinary clinics prepare to support the animal?**

When contacted by a VAW shelter about a SafePet animal, you and your staff can prepare yourselves by the following steps:

1. Ask the caller to specify the breed, weight, temperament, and any other pertinent information you feel is necessary to know before the pet arrives (Medical records if available).
2. Once the foster care has been arranged, schedule a time when you can examine the pet.
3. Provide direction to the clinic, and determine a time for the pet to be delivered to the clinic by the owner, or her agent.
4. Taking in the Pet:
  - When the program participant, or her representative arrives, have a member of staff take her and her pet to an area in the clinic where details can be discussed in private. Remember that this is a very stressful time for a woman seeking shelter, so try to make her feel at ease while in the clinic.

5. Once the examination is complete, notify the shelter that the animal is healthy and safe for foster care and ready to be picked up and coordinate pick up/drop off of the animal into foster care.

SAFE PET PROGRAM WAIVER OF CLAIM AND PLACEMENT AGREEMENT

Owner Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_  
LAST FIRST (CURRENT PHONE NUMBER)

Veterinary Practice: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

The following agreement is made between \_\_\_\_\_, hereafter referred to as the veterinary facility, and the undersigned owner or her authorized representative, hereafter referred to as the owner/agent.

- 1. The veterinary facility agrees to provide to the animal(s) described below, free of charge, vaccinations and physical examination if needed for admittance into the veterinary facility or placement with a pet foster parent identified and approved by the Violence Against Women Shelter. The veterinary facility will be giving custody of the animal(s) to such pet foster parent who will enter into an appropriate agreement with the veterinary facility prior to taking custody of the animal(s).
- 2. The veterinary facility retains the right to refuse to accept, or refuse to place with a pet foster parent, any animal(s) that, in the opinion of facility staff, endangers the health of other animals and/or the safety of facility staff or the pet foster parent and his or her family.
- 3. The owner/agent hereby certifies that she/he is the owner of the animal(s) described below, and agrees to allow the veterinary facility to provide any necessary veterinary care, including diagnostic, therapeutic, surgical and preventative treatments and euthanasia as may be deemed appropriate by the attending veterinarian(s), for the duration of the agreement. Prior approval for such treatments will be obtained by the veterinary facility from the owner/agent, where possible.
- 4. The owner/agent hereby releases the veterinary facility and the pet foster parent from any liability by reason of loss of or injury to the animal(s) which may derive from any cause, including the rendering or failure to render medical care, or relating to the placement of the animal(s) with a pet foster parent.
- 5. If the animal is placed with a pet foster parent, the owner/agent must provide the veterinary facility with at least 24 hours advance notice if the owner/agent wants the veterinary facility to retrieve the animal(s) to enable the owner/agent to remove the animal(s) from the veterinary facility. The animal(s) must be removed from the veterinary facility immediately following its retrieval. In a situation where the pet foster parent elects to return the animal(s) to the veterinary facility, the veterinary facility will notify the owner/agent that the animal(s) has been returned and the animal(s) must then be removed by the owner/agent from the veterinary facility.
- 6. The owner/agent hereby agrees that she/he is responsible for:
  - a. Payment in full of all charges incurred due to boarding provided by the veterinary facility while waiting for the animal(s) removal, as required under paragraph 5 above;
  - b. Payment in full for any required medical treatment, other than vaccinations and a physical examination;
  - c. Removing the animal(s) from the veterinary facility immediately upon the return of the animal(s) to the veterinary facility by the pet foster parent.
- 7. The owner/agent understands that ownership of the animal(s) will transfer to the veterinary facility if left at the veterinary facility as a result of the failure of the owner/agent to remove the animal(s) as required in paragraph 5 above. The owner/agent further acknowledge that should this occur, the animal(s) will be considered abandoned and may be disposed of at the discretion of the veterinary facility. Such disposition may include euthanasia.

Animal Description(s)

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  Dog  Cat  Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  Dog  Cat  Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  Dog  Cat  Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Owner/Agent per.

Veterinary Facility per.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Name)

SAFEPET PROGRAM PLACEMENT AGREEMENT (PET FOSTER PARENT)

Pet Foster Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_
LAST FIRST (CURRENT PHONE NUMBER)

Veterinary Practice: \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

The following agreement is made between \_\_\_\_\_, hereafter referred to as the veterinary facility, and the undersigned volunteer pet foster parent, hereafter referred to as the pet foster parent.

- 1. The pet foster parent has agreed to provide to the animal(s) described below, at his or her own expense, the following:
a. Shelter; and
b. Food, water and appropriate exercise.
2. If the pet foster parent is no longer able or willing to take care of the animal(s), the animal(s) can be returned to the veterinary facility at any time during normal business hours on 24 hours advance notice.
3. If the owner of the animal(s) has advised the veterinary facility that she wishes to reclaim and take possession of the animal(s), the veterinary facility shall provide the pet foster parent with 24 hours advance notice to return the animal(s) to the veterinary facility. Once such notice has been provided, the pet foster parent shall return the animal(s) to the veterinary facility.
4. The veterinary facility shall use its best efforts to keep the identity and address of the pet foster parent confidential and shall not disclose this information to the owner of the animal(s). If the owner of the animal(s) requests visiting privileges while the animal(s) is in the custody of the pet foster parent, the pet foster parent must agree in advance to such visitation, and in the absence of such agreement, no visitation shall take place.
5. In the circumstances, the veterinary facility cannot be responsible for (and makes no promises regarding) the continuing health of the animal(s), its behaviour or risk to the pet foster parent or third parties.
6. The pet foster parent will be solely responsible for the behaviour of the animal(s) while in the custody of the pet foster parent. The pet foster parent hereby releases the veterinary facility from any liability whatsoever, including loss of property, or injury to the pet foster parent, members of his or her family or any third party coming in the contact with the animal(s) while in the custody of the pet foster parent.

Animal Description(s)

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
\_\_\_\_\_
[ ] Dog [ ] Cat [ ] Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_
[ ] Dog [ ] Cat [ ] Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_
[ ] Dog [ ] Cat [ ] Other (specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Pet Foster Parent per.

Veterinary Facility per.

(Signature)

(Signature)

(Name)

(Name)

(Address)

(Address)