



## POLICY

Title of Policy	Copyright
Policy Number	3.3
Category	Animal Welfare
Approval Body	Board of Directors
Approval/Effective Date	
Proposed Date of Review	

### CONTEXT AND PURPOSE

This policy outlines the process for accepting animals into the care of Meant 2B Loved Pet Rescue Society. The goal is to ensure that the rescue operates within its capacity for care, provides high-quality support for each animal, and maintains the well-being of foster caregivers. This policy also establishes guidelines for managing intake, returning animals, fostering breaks, and behavioral issues.

### SCOPE

These guidelines and procedures apply to all volunteers, employees, and board members of Meant 2B Loved Pet Rescue Society involved with the intake of animals.

### POLICY STATEMENTS

#### 1. Determining capacity

Properly assessing the capacity of foster homes and the rescue itself is essential for providing humane care for all animals.

##### 1.1 Key Considerations:

- **Foster Capacity:** Each foster home has a unique capacity based on its space, availability, and ability to care for animals with special needs (e.g., medical or behavioral).
- **Animal Needs:** Special-needs animals reduce overall capacity because they

require more intensive care. Capacity should always be determined with these factors in mind.

### **1.2 Action Steps:**

1. **Set Capacity Limits:** Calculate the number of animals the rescue can manage based on resources and the 15-minute-per-day-per-animal rule.
2. **Assess Foster Homes Regularly:** Conduct routine check-ins with foster caregivers to make sure they are not overwhelmed and are able to provide appropriate care.

## **2. EXCEEDING CAPACITY**

Exceeding capacity not only impacts the well-being of the animals but also places undue strain on fosters, volunteers, and rescue resources. Some signs of exceeding capacity include:

### **2.1 Signs of Over-Capacity:**

- Animals with a poor external appearance (unkempt, malnourished, or neglected).
- A large number of unsocialized or under-socialized animals.
- Overcrowded conditions that prevent animals from receiving proper care from the foster parents and the rescue volunteers.
- Inconsistent record keeping, causing important health and behavior information to be missed.
- Animals are kept in environments that are not regularly cleaned, leading to waste buildup, high ammonia odors, and ongoing medical issues like skin infections or respiratory problems. Food and water bowls may not be washed frequently, leading to contamination and poor hygiene.
- Foster burnout, leading to high volunteer turnover.
- Financial strain, resulting in rations on supplies or inability to pay for veterinary care.
- Animals remaining too long in foster care without progress toward adoption.

### **2.2 Action Steps:**

1. **Monitor Capacity:** Regularly assess the health of the animals, foster home conditions, and resource availability.
2. **Communicate Clear Limits:** Ensure that all team members are aware of capacity limits and stop intakes when limits are reached.

### **2.3 Creating a Plan for Responsible Intake (with Animal Pathway Planning)**

All intake decisions must be carefully considered based on the rescue's resources, capacity, and the specific needs of the animals. Animal Pathway Planning will be used to help streamline the intake process and ensure that every animal is placed on an appropriate care pathway.

### **2.3.1 Structured Decision-Making:**

- Assess the animal's needs based on its health and behavior at intake, and determine which care pathway (e.g., medical, behavioral, or adoption-ready) is appropriate.
- Assign animals to foster homes based on their specific care pathway to ensure they receive the attention they need.

### **2.3.2 Capacity Review:**

- Ensure the rescue has the foster homes, volunteers, and financial resources available to provide care before taking in new animals.

### **2.3.3 Emergency Protocols:**

- Only in urgent or life-threatening situations should the rescue take in animals beyond capacity. In these cases, a plan must be put in place to handle the increased load.

### **2.3.4 Alternative Solutions:**

- When at capacity, divert animals to other organizations or provide community resources (e.g., low-cost spay/neuter programs, pet food bank, owner-to-owner adoption) to help owners keep their pets until space becomes available.

### **2.3.5 Follow-Up and Monitoring:**

- Each animal must be placed on a clear pathway and monitored regularly through monthly check-ups to track their progress.

## **3. Managing Animal Returns**

Returned animals are common, especially if there were behavioral issues that were not addressed before adoption. The rescue must have a system for handling these returns.

### **3.1 Reserved Foster Capacity for Returns:**

- Always ensure there is space available for animals that may be returned. This is particularly important for animals with known behavioral issues, such as inappropriate litter box usage in cats or cannot be in a home with another animal.

### **3.2 Behavioral Support for Adopters and Fosters:**

- Provide adopters with post-adoption support, including resources for managing common behavioral issues like litter box training and adjusting to a new environment.
- Ensure that foster homes receive ongoing behavioral support to manage difficult animals before they are placed for adoption.

## **4. Managing Animal Returns**

Returned animals are common, especially if there were behavioral issues that were not addressed before adoption. The rescue must have a system for handling these returns.

### **4.1 Reserved Foster Capacity for Returns:**

- Always ensure there is space available for animals that may be returned.

This is particularly important for animals with known behavioral issues, such as inappropriate litter box usage in cats or cannot be in a home with another animal.

#### **4.2 Behavioral Support for Adopters and Fosters:**

- Provide adopters with post-adoption support, including resources for managing common behavioral issues like litter box training and adjusting to a new environment.
- Ensure that foster homes receive ongoing behavioral support to manage difficult animals before they are placed for adoption.

### **5. Foster Care Support & Vacation Coverage**

Foster caregivers are essential to the rescue, and their well-being must be prioritized to ensure they do not become overwhelmed or burned out. Additionally, plans must be in place for when foster caregivers need breaks or vacations.

#### **5.1 Foster Support for Behavioral Issues:**

**5.1.1 Training:** Offer ongoing education and resources for foster caregivers, particularly around managing behavioral issues like inappropriate urination or anxiety.

**5.1.2 Regular Check-ins:** Foster homes will receive bi-weekly check-ins to identify any issues early and provide support.

**5.1.3 Access to Behaviorists:** Ensure that foster caregivers have access to behavior specialists or experienced volunteers for guidance.

#### **5.2 Vacation and Break Coverage:**

**5.2.1 Temporary Foster Arrangements:** When foster caregivers need to take a break, advance notice is required so animals can be transitioned smoothly to another home.

**5.2.2 Foster-to-Foster Transitions:** Detailed information about the animal (medical history, behavioral traits, daily routine) should be shared with the new foster caregiver to ensure continuity of care.

**5.2.3 Emergency Placement:** In urgent cases, have a system in place for immediately moving animals to temporary boarding or foster homes.

### **6. Post-Adoption Support to Prevent Returns**

To reduce the likelihood of returns, it's crucial to offer post-adoption support.

#### **Post-Adoption Follow-Up:**

- Provide adopters with behavior support for the first 30 days to help manage issues like anxiety or litter box problems. Regular follow-ups during this period can identify and address problems early, preventing returns.

### **RELATED POLICIES AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

<https://humanepro.org/sites/default/files/documents/RescueGroupBestPracticesGuide.pdf>