



Foster Carer Registration Scheme

What is the foster carer registration scheme?

The *Domestic Animals Act 1994* (DA Act) recognises the integral role foster carers, Community Foster Care Networks (CFCNs), and rescue organisations play in the management of lost, stray and abandoned dogs and cats in the Victorian community.

Individual foster carers may apply to their local council to become a registered foster carer as part of a voluntary scheme. Council cannot force a foster carer to enrol in the scheme as it is not mandatory.

Registration with the scheme is valid for one year and council may set a registration fee. Foster carers who choose to enrol in the scheme receive:

- a reduced registration rate of approximately \$8 for each dog and approximately \$8 for each cat they foster during the first 12 months the animal is in their care*
- the ability to supply dogs six months of age or older, and cats eight weeks of age or older to registered pet shops as an approved source.

*Fees are current as of 1 July 2024.

I am a foster carer, and I don't currently register the dogs and cats I foster. What advice do you have?

The registration of dogs and cats over three months of age is mandatory. If they choose to, individual foster carers, including those volunteering with a CFCN or rescue group, can voluntarily enrol with the local council in which they reside and receive the reduced registration rate for cats and dogs in their care.

Foster carers not enrolled in the scheme must still register foster dogs and cats over the age of three months with their local council.

How does voluntarily enrolling as a foster carer reduce the costs of fostering?

Under Victorian law, foster carers are required to register all animals (over three months of age) housed at their premises with the local council, even if the animal is only with them temporarily.

The cost of registering a dog or cat can be more than \$100 if a dog or cat is entire.

Individual foster carers, including those volunteering with a CFCN or rescue group, can voluntarily enrol with the local council in which they reside and receive the reduced registration rate for cats and dogs in their care.

Do all foster carers need to be registered?

No. Each individual foster carer can choose to enrol in the scheme. While it is not compulsory to enrol, it is highly recommended to avoid paying a full registration fee for each and every cat or dog that is in temporary care with you. It also avoids receiving an infringement for an unregistered dog or cat.

How do I apply to become a registered foster carer?

To become a registered foster carer, you will need to contact your local council for application information.

Councils may set an application fee for enrolling foster carers to the scheme.

How long does my registration as a foster carer with council last for?

A foster carer registration remains in force until 10 April of the year following the granting or renewal of registration.

Are there any requirements I need to comply with as part of my foster carer registration?

A foster carer registration is subject to any prescribed conditions and must also comply with any conditions set out by council.

Failure to do so may incur a penalty of five penalty units.

What type of conditions can be set by council?

Council may set conditions on a foster carer registration. The conditions may be consistent across all registrations or council may set specific conditions on an individual basis.

As a foster carer registered with the scheme, do I need to register every cat and dog in my care, even if it is in my care for four weeks?

All cats and dogs over three months of age are required to be registered with the council they reside in. You will need to register each and every cat or dog that comes into your temporary care.

I am a rescuer. I often take in large numbers of dogs that I shelter until I can find foster carers to help rehabilitate them. Do I need to register as a shelter?

If you have more than five adult equivalent animals in your care at any given time, you must register your premises as a shelter with your local council. You should speak to your local council about how your rescue organisation works and determine the best option for you.

I am a member of a rescue group. Do I enrol with the council as a foster carer or does my rescue group do this?

A rescue group is not able to register a person as a foster carer on their behalf. If you wish to receive a reduced registration fee for each cat and dog you foster, you will need to enrol into the scheme with the local council in which you reside in.

Can local council refuse my application to voluntarily enrol as a foster carer?

Yes. Local council have the right to refuse your application to be a voluntarily enrolled foster carer.

When granting or renewing foster carer registration, council must take into account:

- whether the applicant has failed to comply with requirements of the DA Act or regulations
- the applicant has been found guilty of an offence under the DA Act or regulations, or an offence under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1986* (POCTA Act) or regulations
- whether the applicant has been subject to a notice to comply under the DA Act or POCTA Act
- the premises where the foster care will be provided is the same as a rateable property as a registered domestic animal business
- the applicant is a proprietor of a domestic animal business.

Can local council cancel or suspend my foster carer registration?

A foster carer's registration may be suspended or cancelled if the foster carer has failed to comply with a condition of their registration.

Registration can also be suspended or cancelled if the foster carer has been found guilty of an offence under the DA Act, Domestic Animals Regulations 2015, the POCTA Act and regulations made under this Act, served a notice to comply under the DA Act or POCTA Act or an associated offence against a law in another state or Territory.

Registration can be suspended or cancelled if the premises where the foster care will be provided is the same as a rateable property as a registered domestic animal business or if the foster carer is also a proprietor of a domestic animal business.

I am a foster carer who occasionally breeds from my pet dog. How does the proposed legislation affect me?

If you have one or two fertile females as pets, then there is no issue if you occasionally breed from them.

You can still voluntarily enrol as a foster carer with your council, and the animals will not count towards your five-animal limit.

If you have three or more fertile females as pets however, your occasional breeding requires you to register as a breeding domestic animal business or recreational breeder. This would prevent you from registering as a shelter and must be disclosed when voluntarily enrolling with your local council as a foster carer.

These restrictions are designed to close the supply chain for breeders. That is, they prevent a breeder from registering a breeding business on one premises, opening a shelter on another and distributing their puppies/kittens through the shelter into a pet shop, either owned by them or someone else.

If I voluntarily enrol as a foster carer with my local council, do I still need an ‘excess animal permit’?

Some local councils place limits on the number of dogs or cats a resident can have. This is part of the local planning scheme and differs between councils and between property types (e.g. residential zone vs farming zone).

Even if you are voluntarily enrolled as a foster carer with your local council, you may still need an ‘excess animal permit’ if the number of dogs or cats on your property (whether permanently or temporarily) exceeds the allowable limit.

You should contact your local council for more information about the number of animals you are allowed to keep under your local planning scheme.

Do I need a source number from the Pet Exchange Register if I’ve voluntarily enrolled as a foster carer with council?

Yes, council will issue you with a source number once you are registered to the scheme.

Your source number will be required if you provide cats and dogs to pet shops.

If I am registered to the scheme, can I provide cats and dogs to pet shops?

As a foster carer registered with the voluntary scheme you are able to provide cats (eight weeks of age or older) and dogs (six months of age or older) to a registered pet shop. Only an approved source may provide cats and dogs to registered pet shops. An approved source is a shelter, pound or foster carer registered with the scheme.

Will I need to demonstrate to the pet shop that I am an approved source?

Yes, you will need to provide the pet shop with a copy of your foster carer registration certificate that is issued to you at the time of your registration.

The pet shop will need to make and keep record of your source number, name, address and telephone number.

For more information

Visit <http://www.animalwelfare.vic.gov.au> or email pet.welfare@ecodev.vic.gov.au or call 136 186.

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