



PROPER CAPE INTRODUCTION

Introduction

PAWS foster puppy raisers are given a cape for their foster puppies when the puppies turn 16 weeks old and have gotten all their vaccinations (DA2PPL and rabies).

Our primary reason for waiting until the foster puppies are 16 weeks old is the risk of disease. Puppies who aren't fully vaccinated but are still going out in public have a much higher risk of getting a disease, and we want to reduce the risk as much as possible by waiting until the puppies are fully vaccinated.

Our secondary reason for waiting until our foster puppies are 16 weeks old is to help ensure proper socialization during the puppy's critical learning period. Experiences that puppies have before 16 weeks of age greatly impact how they grow and mature.

Giving our foster puppies new experiences at home ensures that we can control the environment and make sure it is a positive experience for our foster puppies. Going out in public during this time increases the chance that your foster puppy will have a negative experience that could be hard to offset in the future.

Introduce the Cape Gradually

When you are given a cape for your foster puppy, it is extremely important that you introduce the cape slowly and carefully. While getting the cape can be exciting and it can be very tempting to put it on and take your foster puppy in public right away, this can be a very negative experience for your foster puppy.

Firstly, puppies are not used to wearing the cape, and some puppies are overly sensitive to that feeling, which can make wearing the cape stressful or overwhelming for them. Secondly, a puppy's first public outing can also be a lot for them to process, so it is best not to compound the two by introducing your foster puppy's cape and introducing public outings at the same time.



Because of this, we highly suggest spending 2 weeks introducing the cape to your foster puppy at home before taking your puppy out in public with the cape on. During that time, you can take your foster puppy to a park or other non-busy outdoor environments to help your foster puppy adjust to being in public before wearing a cape.

How to Properly Introduce the Cape

The trick to getting your foster puppy acclimated to the cape is ensuring that their first experiences in the cape are short and sweet.

There are a few different activities you can do with your foster puppy to help them adjust to wearing a cape:

- 🐾 Hold up the cape in front of the puppy and reward them for approaching, sniffing, or investigating it.
- 🐾 Hold the cape up by the chest strap so the fabric part is hanging down. While holding the chest strap open with one hand, lure the puppy's head through the opening using a treat in your other hand. Repeat this exercise to encourage your foster puppy to willingly put their head through the opening.
- 🐾 Put the cape on your foster puppy right as they are about to eat a meal and take it off as soon as they are done eating. You can do this for every meal if you wish!
- 🐾 Put the cape on your foster puppy and encourage them to walk with you around the house, praising and giving them treats very frequently (every step or two). After one lap around the house with the cape on, take the cape off, reward and walk around the house again.



How to Identify Cape Stress

It is important to recognize when your foster puppy is feeling stressed by the cape and be prepared to take it off if necessary. There are a few telltale signs that your puppy is uncomfortable in the cape and that they may need more time acclimating to it at home:

- 🐾 Shaking off
- 🐾 Freezing/stiff body posture
- 🐾 Turning to look or bite at the cape
- 🐾 Scratching at the cape
- 🐾 Slower response to cues
- 🐾 Less willing to take treats
- 🐾 Sudden burst of energy/running for a few steps

If your foster puppy continues to have issues with wearing or putting on their cape after working on desensitization, please contact the PAWS Foster Puppy Department or your Puppy Club Leader for help.