

## FAQs About Behavioral Medications

The animal you are fostering is currently taking medication to help reduce stress and anxiety. We have prepared this list of frequently asked questions to help address any concerns you may have about these medications.

### Why were behavior medications prescribed to this animal?

We may prescribe certain medications to animals in our care who exhibit higher than average levels of fear or stress in order to reduce anxiety and help them feel more comfortable. Sometimes we may have observed excessive fear and stress in the shelter, and/or we may have been informed by previous caretakers that the pet struggled with anxiety in the home. The decision to place an animal on behavior meds is made jointly by the behavior and veterinary team at the shelter, as one part of a comprehensive treatment plan. The goal of these medications is to reduce anxiety – not to sedate the animal. These medications help balance the brain chemistry and stabilize the animal's stress response so that they feel better.

### Are there risks or side effects?

Fortunately, the medications we use are generally quite safe. Of course, any medication has a risk of side effects, but remember that *chronic stress has many serious health risks* as well. The most common side effect with most of these medications is usually a reduced appetite. If you are seeing any concerning symptoms, such as extreme lethargy or GI upset, please contact us right away.

### Why don't we just train them instead of using drugs?

Rest assured, training is very much a part of the plan. Medication isn't a magic pill, and isn't meant to be used alone. When used in conjunction with training though, we can often help changes happen much faster. We all need to feel safe in order to learn. When an animal experiences chronic stress, behavior change can be difficult and slow. Medications help bring that background level of stress to a more tolerable level, so that our training efforts can make faster progress. The Behavior department at HSHV will be in touch with you during your foster pet's stay to discuss any training and management recommendations based on that animal's individual needs.

### But my foster pet doesn't seem anxious . . .

Good! When the medications are helping we expect to see less signs of anxiety. This does *not* mean that we can stop giving the medications in the foster home – the meds are playing an important role by helping your foster feel and behave better by helping reduce stress.

### Can I stop the medications now that the animal is not in the shelter?

If your foster pet is on medication, it is because we have determined it was beneficial in their overall behavior plan. We hope and expect that being in a foster home will help minimize stress; however, when we have the animal in a good place behaviorally, we want to "stay the course." Adopters can decide with their veterinarians whether meds need to be part of a long-term plan, but when we find a combo that works, we will not be taking them off meds while they are in HSHV's care unless there is an adverse medical event. **Please continue to give the medications as directed throughout your foster pet's stay with you.**

If you have any questions or concerns at any point for the veterinary or behavior team at the shelter, please don't hesitate to reach out, and thank you for fostering!

**Non-emergent concerns**, please email [Fosters@hshv.org](mailto:Fosters@hshv.org) or call 734-661-3520  
**For emergencies**, please contact the foster emergency number 734-717-4424