



FOSTER PARENT GUIDE

If you have any questions or concerns contact your Team Leader:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

TOP TEN TIPS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

1. Always get pre-authorization before going to the vet and use a vet from our list.
2. Check in weekly with your team leader. Text or a call is fine.
3. Ask for advice if your cat/kitten has stopped eating.
4. Kittens crash fast, ask early if their behavior changes.
5. Check your sick cat/kitten for hydration - they should be drinking water, using the litter box, have loose elastic skin tone, and a moist mouth.
6. Never use clumping litter for kittens under six months of age.
7. Wash your hands and change your shirt after handling sick animals to prevent spread of illness.
8. Never let your cat outside; guard against escapes.
9. Never give a cat to an adopter without seeing the completed adoption paperwork or before spay/neuter surgery has been done.
10. Always ask if you have any questions. You aren't bothering us by requesting information.

SICK CAT CARE

Due to limited observation time at the shelter, the health of any cat or kitten can't always be accurately assessed. After you've picked up a cat or kitten for fostering, if you think your feline(s) needs immediate veterinary care, please contact your designated team leader.

Upper respiratory infections (URI's)

Similar to human colds, cats are often congested and cannot smell its food. Tempt your foster cat with smelly canned cat food (fish flavors), baby food (no onions in ingredients, please), chicken broth, or even tuna in water (last resort as too much can cause diarrhea). You may have to coax them to eat by using your fingers, and even smearing it on their lips or nose. If your foster cat has not eaten for more than two days, force-feeding with a syringe may be necessary. If you don't know how to do this, we can describe this or show you how. Steam from a vaporizer or hot shower often helps clear the nasal passages. Keep the nose and eyes clear of discharge with warm, damp cotton balls. A cat that doesn't feel well appreciates some extra petting and quiet time in your lap. If you can coax your foster cat to eat, and its drinking water, the infection will usually run its course, and no additional treatment is necessary. Please ask about using the home remedy of betadine/normal saline solution as eye/nose drops to help decrease the severity of a URI. We often have pre-mixed solution available for foster parents to pick up. If nasal discharge is thick and yellowish-green (vs. clear and watery), this may be an indication that a bacterial infection has set in, and antibiotics may be necessary. In this case, we will direct you either get medication from us (usually Clavamox) or take your foster to the vet.

Dehydration is a serious concern.

Watch carefully to see if your foster cat is drinking water. You may have to carefully watch the level of the water bowl, and keep track of litter box activity. You can check for dehydration by pulling the skin up just a little lower than the back of the neck. It should be taut and snap back down. If it stands up or takes some time to go back down, the cat may be dehydrated. A lethargic cat is often dehydrated. Please contact us right away if you think your cat is dehydrated. We may arrange a home visit, direct you to the shelter for fluids, or as a last resort, to one of the local veterinarians that bill the shelter directly.

Other things to watch for that may require additional care or a vet visit:

- Loose stool or diarrhea - usually caused by parasites that may or may not be visible in feces. Depending upon the parasite, this can be treated with wormer picked up at the shelter or a vet visit.
- Continual vomiting or occasional vomiting that lasts more than a day or two.
- Extreme lethargy for more than 2-3 days.

- Eyes that are red and inflamed or have an extreme amount of discharge and swelling, vs. small amounts of discharge, usually in both eyes that is common with a URI. This can often be treated with eye ointment picked up at the shelter, but we may need to do a vet visit if the infection doesn't respond within a couple of days.
- Any crumbly wax-like substance in the ears (possible ear mites). Ear mite medicine can be picked up at the shelter.
- Fleas or flea dirt (black pepper-like substance in the fur). If you see flea dirt, we will find out if *Revolution* was already applied. One application lasts 30 days. If it hasn't, or if you find live fleas, please bring your foster cat(s) to the shelter for *Revolution* to be applied.

Veterinary Visits:

- All vet visits must be pre-authorized unless you are willing to pay for the visit yourself. If you take your foster cat/kitten to the vet and pay for it yourself, you will **not** be reimbursed.
- Contact your Team Leader ASAP if you feel a vet visit is needed.
- Please only go to a clinics approved by us in advance.

KITTEN TIMETABLE AND CARE TIPS

Kittens grow, develop and mature fast. At times, the changes can be seen from day to day, not just from week to week. Kittens should remain with their mothers for at least five weeks, as this is a vital teaching period for mom and learning period for baby cats. Here's a quick breakdown of their development:

Week Two: Eyelids are open

Week Three: Smell develops

Week Four: Hearing, teeth and the ability to walk develop. Litter training starts. First does of dewormer is given and the second dose 14 days later.

Week Five: Play begins as kittens start 'stalking' prey like bathrobe sashes, curtain cords and their own tails.

At four and six weeks, litter training should be mastered by the kitten, and more complex food (specially formulated or softened solids) should be introduced. We recommend Fancy Feast kitten food mixed with KMR formula to create a 'kitten slurry' that's more liquid based than solid based. At week 7-8 introduce solid foods that are soaked with water or formula. Eventually, they will make their way to solid Kitten Chow.

As for litter, avoid clumping litter with kittens. Use a pine pellet litter or recycled paper litter for mom and kittens during this time. Also, choose a litter box that's right for your kitten. Select one with adequately low sides that allow your kitten to get in and out with ease. Get your kitten acquainted with the box. At a quiet moment, gently place the kitten into the box and demonstrate how to scratch in the litter. Repeat this at times when your kitten might normally use the litter box – in the morning, after naps, and following meal times.

Kittens should be fully weaned from mom at six to eight weeks of age as they begin to explore more of their universe and at 8 weeks, a kitten is almost ready to be sent to a new home, if that is part of his destiny.

The job of raising a healthy and well-adjusted kitten can be seen as a partnership between a human (or humans) and a mommy cat. Everybody has jobs to do that really can't be done by either party alone. However, if you have any questions, let us know.