



Colorado Feline Foster Rescue

FOSTER HANDBOOK

COLORADO FELINE FOSTER RESCUE: FOSTER HANDBOOK

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COLORADO FELINE FOSTER RESCUE

FOSTER HANDBOOK

Introduction

Thank you so much for your interest in fostering cats/kittens for Colorado Feline Foster Rescue (CFFR). By opening your home to foster cats/kittens, you are providing a critical function for the most at-risk homeless animal population and preparing them for their permanent homes.

Foster homes are asked to provide loving care and socialization for the cats/kittens, as well as transportation to and from veterinary appointments as needed. Although fostering can be a lot of work, it is a very rewarding experience. Through fostering, we are working together to *save them all*.

Contact Information for all Fosters

Cari Dicke, Foster Coordinator

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info@coloradofelinefosterrescue.org

Contact Cari **immediately** if you notice:

- Weight Loss
- Lethargy
- Skin Irritations or Abrasions
- Diarrhea/Vomiting
- Discolored discharge from eyes or nose
- Blood in stool
- Cold or excessively warm to the touch

Section 1: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for both adult cats and kittens

1.1 What do foster families need to provide?

- A healthy and safe environment for their fosters
- Transportation to and from necessary medical care as needed
- Socialization, attention, love, and play time to help teach them about positive human-pet interaction and relationships
- A lot of exercise and positive mental stimulation

1.2 How much time do I need to spend with a foster cat/kitten?

As much time as you can! With that said, the amount of time will vary depending on the energy level and needs of the cat(s) you are fostering. Ideally you will spend at least two hours per day socializing and playing with your foster to ensure that he or she receives adequate attention and stimulation.

1.3 Can I foster cats even if I have a full-time job?

Yes! The foster application and home visit are designed to help the foster coordinator match you with the best animal for your lifestyle and your current schedule. If you have a full-time job, the coordinator will match you with a cat who may be OK being alone during the workday; you would just need to provide ample attention to the cat before and/or after your workday.

Please note that you will need to make yourself available at times to take kittens to receive medical care if they are sick!

1.4 How long will the cat/kittens need to be in foster care?

Adult cats: The reason a cat is in foster will determine his/her readiness for adoption. A cat is cleared for adoption when she/he is finished with any medications and cleared of illness or is cleared through a behavioral assessment. Foster homes are generally needed for cats with medical or behavioral issues that are best resolved in a home setting rather than a shelter environment. You will be asked to complete a Foster Report Card on your cat when it leaves you.

Kittens: Once a kitten weighs over 2 ½ pounds (2 pounds, 8 ounces) and is older than 8 weeks, she/he can be spayed/neutered, and be put up for adoption. Kittens mature at different rates, and we will try not to leave you with one kitten, but the goal is to get everyone spayed or neutered and ready for adoption as soon as they're ready. You will be asked to complete a Foster Report Card on each kitten as they leave you.

1.5 How many cats and/or kittens will I be fostering?

Adult cats: Typically, one at a time, unless we have a bonded pair that needs to be fostered together, or you have additional rooms to separate more than one adult cat and are willing to take more than one.

Kittens: We like to have at least two kittens in a foster home together so they can socialize and learn from each other. Sometimes there are special circumstances in which a kitten goes to a foster home alone, but it's usually for a medical or behavioral reason. If you are fostering a mother cat and her litter, you will take the whole family at the same time.

1.6 Will I need to give my foster cat/kitten medication?

Almost all of the cats who we have in our foster program are rescued from shelters and have been exposed to shelter illnesses. While we do our best to ensure that we are aware of all the conditions that a foster cat may have prior to going home, many illnesses have incubation periods and symptoms may arise 7-14 days after your foster is in your home. If your foster starts to show signs of illness, contact your foster coordinator immediately. If your foster cat needs medications, these are typically oral medications, or eye/ear drops, and we will show you how to administer them.

1.7 Can I let my foster cat/kitten play with my personal pets?

**** Note: If your personal pets are allowed outdoors, they cannot interact with your fosters, as we need to minimize the risk of illnesses they may be exposed to. Refer to Section 3 Bringing Home Your Foster Cat for guidelines and tips on introducing your foster to your personal pets.**

Adult cats: There are a few guidelines that we ask foster families to adhere to regarding their personal pets. While foster cats playing with other pets is often fine, we advise that you consult with your veterinarian before fostering to ensure that all of your personal pets are healthy and up-to-date on all vaccines. Cats in shelters are very susceptible to illness and can carry or catch different diseases. We cannot provide medical care for personal pets if they come in contact with, or become ill, with your fosters.

Kittens: Kittens are **very** fragile and susceptible to illness as their immune systems are not fully developed. For this reason, we require that foster parents isolate foster kittens with their own supplies for **at least 7 to 10 days** to try and ensure that the kittens are healthy prior to exposing them to your personal pets. We also advise that you consult with your veterinarian before fostering to ensure that all of your personal pets are healthy and up-to-date on all vaccines. We cannot provide medical care for personal pets if they come in contact with, or become ill, with your fosters.

1.8 What if I need to go out of town while fostering?

Adult cats: If you have travel plans while fostering, please utilize a house or pet sitter. If this is not possible, please give the foster coordinator at least one week's notice (two weeks if your trip is around a holiday) so that we can find another foster for the cat. It's less stress on the cat if he/she can stay in your house while you're gone.

Kittens: If you have travel plans while fostering kittens, please give the foster coordinator at least two weeks' notice (or earlier if possible) to make arrangements for the duration of your absence.

1.9 What if my foster cat/kitten is not working out?

You are not required to continue to foster a cat/kitten if you feel it is not working out. We want fostering to be a good experience for you and for the cat/kitten. We will work on moving your foster as soon as possible. Please alert the foster coordinator if this situation arises.

1.10 Is it possible my foster kittens could die while in my care?

Sadly, kittens are extremely fragile and at risk, so it's always possible that they could become ill and pass away while in your care. *This may be the hardest aspect of fostering kittens.* If it's something you don't want to encounter, then fostering kittens may not be the best fit for you. However, please keep in mind that without foster homes, most kittens under 8 weeks of age would not stand a chance of survival in a shelter or in the wild. You are helping save lives.

1.11 What if my foster cat/kitten bites me?

If one of your foster cats/kittens bites you and breaks the skin, causing you to bleed, you need to report the bite to the foster coordinator immediately. The teeth of the animal, not the nails, must break the skin. If you are unsure, then please report the bite anyway. It is also important to thoroughly clean the area.

1.12 What if I want to adopt my foster cat/kittens?

We love “foster fails”! If you want to adopt your foster, let the foster coordinator know, complete an adoption on the CFFR site, and follow the full adoption process. We will ensure their medical records are current and give them a brief examination to ensure they are healthy enough to be adopted.

1.13 What if I know someone who's interested in adopting one of my foster kittens?

If someone you know is interested in adopting one (or more) of your foster kittens, please contact the foster coordinator as soon as possible. We do want to accommodate referrals from foster parents if we can. Interested adopters can submit an application to the foster coordinator before the kitten is ready for adoption, and be the first in line as soon as the kitten is available. *That said, we do not hold adoptable kittens for anyone.* We also offer a foster-to-adopt option where the potential adopter can become the kitten's foster immediately, and formally adopt once the kitten's spay/neuter is completed.

1.14 Will it be difficult for me to say goodbye to my foster kittens?

Saying goodbye can be the most difficult part of fostering, but remember that we will always have more cats and kittens who need wonderful foster homes. Keep in mind, by fostering these vulnerable pets, you are playing a crucial role in helping to save lives.

Section 2: FOSTERING ORPHANED KITTENS

APPROVED FOODS LIST: (DO NOT feed any grain-free food.)

- Royal Canin Mother/Baby wet and dry food
- Royal Canin Kitten wet and dry food

2.1 Preparing for your foster kittens

Your foster kittens should be separated from all other animals in your household and kept in a small area, such as a spare room or bathroom, where they have access to their food, water, and litter box. Because kittens cannot regulate their body temperature, this area should also be in a warm, draft-free area. It may be a good idea to consider an area that is easy to clean up in terms of spills and litter box accidents, which will happen when the kittens are learning. As long as mother cats and kittens are unable to reach the faucet, they can be kept together in a bathtub; mother cats are typically approving of this set-up as they can keep kittens together while being able to leave to eat and to use the litter box.

Please DO NOT put the kittens in an unsafe location such as the garage or any place that has outdoor access.

2.2 Supplies you'll need to take care of foster kittens:

- At least one bowl for dry food and one bowl for water: If you have a large litter of kittens, you'll need to provide more than one bowl each for water and food.
- A supply of wet and dry kitten food. Preferred choices include Royal Canin Mother/Baby wet and dry food; Fancy Feast wet kitten food; Hill's Science Diet dry kitten food; and Purina Pro Plan wet and dry kitten food. When kittens are learning to eat wet food, it is easier for them to eat from a flat plate rather than a bowl. Have several plates if you have several kittens, so they all get a chance to get to the food.
- Litter boxes with low sides. Use 2-4 boxes at a time, placed around their area. Cardboard flats, which canned food comes in, work great and can be disposed of later. Gatorade or La Croix flats (free at Costco!) are one size bigger and great for kittens who are 5-6 weeks old.
- Non-clumping clay litter, preferably Walmart Special Kitty Natural Clay. **DO NOT USE CLUMPING LITTER** or plastic liners!
- A soft place to sleep: Old towels or blankets work well, as do anything you can launder easily. A heating pad is recommended for orphan kittens who weigh less than 1 lb; kittens should not come into direct contact with heating pad, this can cause burns. The kittens should also have a space to move OFF the heating pad if they get too hot!
- A secure sleeping area: A cat carrier with the door removed or a box laid on its side to create a "den" work well.
- Toys: Use kitten-safe toys that are easy to sanitize and clean. Kittens can play with them when you're not home.
- Scratching post or pad: Kittens need to learn to scratch on these rather than on furniture.
- Thermometer and lubricant: Digital type for taking temperature rectally, and water-based lubricant (we will teach you how to do this!)
- Scale: You'll need one that weighs in ounces. Depending on their age, kittens need to be weighed in instructed intervals. Record their weights on the Kitten Weight Record.
- Nail trimmer: For trimming tiny nails.

2.3 Kitten-proofing Your Home

Foster kittens are tiny and cute, but just like children, they are also very curious. They will want to explore, so you will need to kitten-proof your home.

Here are some tips:

- Put away any small items that a kitten can swallow as well as any string, floss, or yarn.
- Hide any breakable items, block electrical outlets, and remove toxic plants. Lilies, Poinsettia, Philodendron are very popular plants that people do not know are poisonous. (Please see ASPCA's list of toxic and nontoxic plants: <https://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/cats-plant-list>)
- If your kittens are staying in a bathroom, make sure that the toilet lid is closed at all times.
- Block off any spaces that the kittens could crawl into and hide that would be difficult for you to access.
- When setting up your kitten room, be sure to place the litter boxes away from the food and water, but not so far that they are unable to locate the litterbox after they eat.

2.4 Scheduling medical appointments for your foster kittens

During the time that you foster kittens, you will need to make appointments for your kittens for vaccines, for spay/neuter surgeries, or if any illnesses arise. These appointments will be scheduled through the foster coordinator, preferably by phone, text, or email.

2.5 Scheduling Your Kittens for Spay/Neuter

When your foster kittens are at least 8 weeks old and weigh over 2 pounds, they can be spayed or neutered. Contact the foster coordinator to schedule these surgeries 3-4 weeks prior to when you anticipate the kittens will be at weight. (There may be a few weeks lead time to get these surgeries scheduled!)

2.6 Caring for your kittens

Because kittens are fragile, it is important for you to watch the behavior of your foster kittens closely and monitor their eating habits and overall health. You should weigh the kittens every 2 to 3 days to ensure that they are growing, and record the weight in your Kitten Weight Record.

Watch for signs of illness including frequent crying, restlessness, lethargy, lack of appetite, vomiting, weakness, coldness (hypothermia), diarrhea, blood in stool, dehydration, shallow or labored breathing, paleness or blueness in color.

Notify the foster coordinator immediately if a kitten is losing weight, is cold to the touch, or is having trouble breathing (either shallow or heavy breathing).

Kittens should never ride loose in a car. Always use your designated carrier to transport kittens to and from appointments.

2.7 Weaning kittens

Once your kittens are approximately four weeks old, it is time to start the weaning process. Your goal is to have the kittens eating on their own consistently by the time they're adopted. Beginning at four weeks, start offering wet food at all times, along with dry kitten food and water. Put out only as much wet food as they will eat in a six- hour period. Discard any leftovers.

During this stage, your daily responsibilities include socializing the kittens, and exposing them to new situations and environments. It is important to maintain positive experiences for the kittens; frequently provide treats and toys as they learn about new sounds, smells, places, and faces. Please limit catnip toys/treats to cats older than 6 weeks.

As always, watch the behavior of your kittens and monitor their health daily. Continue weighing the kittens every 2 to 3 days and record their weights in the Kitten Weight Record. Examine kittens daily to determine physical changes or potential medical problems.

During the weaning stage, you should introduce the kittens to the litter box; kittens should be able to eliminate on their own at approximately 4 weeks of age. Be sure to use non-scented, non-clumping clay litter, such as Walmart Special Kitty Natural Clay, and have 2-4 litter boxes placed around and in the corners of their room. Do not use plastic liners. One challenge is giving kittens too much room to roam while they are learning!

2.8 Caring for Independent Eaters

By 6 to 7 weeks old, your kittens should be independent eaters. Dry food should always be available to your foster kittens. Offer wet food 2-3 times daily as well to encourage eating and maximize growth.

Now that the kittens are using a litter box, be sure to scoop the box at least 2 times daily. You'll want to monitor the kittens for diarrhea; clean the litter box if diarrhea is apparent, and call the foster coordinator immediately.

At this stage, play with the kittens several times daily with interactive toys. Play time provides stimulation, encourages socialization, and releases excess energy. Use a variety of toys (balls, squeaky toys, feather toys, etc.) to determine which ones your foster kittens prefer; this information will be given to the new family. Cat toys don't have to be fancy or expensive. Cats often enjoy playing with something as simple as a paper bag (remove the handles for safety) or a box with holes cut in the sides. Toys such as ping-pong balls, toilet paper tubes, and scrunched up foil are safe.

It may seem cute, but discourage your foster kittens from play-biting your hands and feet. This is something that adopters may not find desirable. Stop play and offer kittens a toy to bite to minimize this behavior while they are teething.

Remember when your kittens are ready to be adopted, to complete your Foster Report Card! This will help your kittens get adopted.

2.9 Cleaning and Sanitizing Between Litters

Once you've returned your kittens to Colorado Feline Foster Rescue for adoption, you must sanitize your foster room or area before you can foster a new group of kittens. Remove anything the kittens touched and clean with a weak bleach solution, consisting of 1-part bleach to 32-parts water. Wipe down all baseboards.

Use the dishwasher to help sanitize any items that are dishwasher safe. Plastic or metal items that need to be sterilized, such as litter boxes or plastic toys, should be soaked in the bleach solution for 10 minutes and then rinsed off. Wash all bedding with bleach and hot water, and throw away any toys that cannot be sterilized. Being conscientious about sterilization will help ensure that your next foster group will not become ill from the previous group.

Section 3: FOSTERING MOMS AND KITTENS

APPROVED FOODS LIST: (Moms and kittens will be eating the same food. DO NOT feed any grain-free food.)

- Royal Canin Mother/Baby wet and dry food
- Royal Canin Kitten wet and dry food

Mother cats, also known as "queens", need to be in a calm environment to ensure they can be stress-free and feel they are keeping their kittens safe. Sometimes, stress can cause a mother cat to become aggressive or to not care for her babies properly. With that in mind, choose a private and quiet room of your home, away from the daily activities of your family, to situate the mother cat and her kittens.

It's also important that they be kept away from other pets in the home. Other pets can be perceived as threats by the mother cat and cause her to act aggressively to protect her young. If you have children and are active, it may be best to foster when the kittens are four weeks or older. Sometimes mother cats will behave less defensively if their kittens are older.

3.1 Bringing everyone home

Prepare your foster room before you bring the mother cat and her kittens home. You should put the litter box as far away from the mother cat's food and water bowls as possible and provide a couple "safe places" or "nesting areas" in the room where she can care for her kittens. It is important to provide a box or a dog crate, with the door removed and containing flat bedding, where she can keep her kittens when they are less than 5 weeks of age.

When you bring your foster kittens and their mom home, put all of them in the foster room, and allow the mother to explore on her own. Give her a couple of hours before you enter her room, and don't be alarmed if it takes a few days for her to feel comfortable.

3.2 Mom's care of her kittens

The mother cat should take care of her kittens exclusively for at least 3 to 4 weeks before she begins the weaning process for her babies. Each mother cat you foster will be slightly different in her level of attentiveness, but there are three basic stages of nursing (see below). If for any reason your mother cat is not performing one of the listed functions, please notify the foster coordinator immediately for evaluation to determine if the mom has a medical concern that needs to be addressed.

Kittens are born blind and deaf, but they can feel their mother's heat and seek her out to begin nursing at birth. Mother cats should be lying on their sides to ensure that their kittens can find the nipples for nursing.

There are three stages of nursing:

- One to Two Weeks Old: The mother cat initiates nursing by licking her kittens to awaken them and curling her body around them. After her babies awaken, they will search for the nipples, and then they will quickly latch on. (*Weigh kittens every 1-2 days during this time; since they will gain approximately ½ ounce every 1 to 2 days, it is imperative to notify your foster coordinator if they are not.*)
- Two to Three Weeks Old: The kittens' eyes and ears begin to open and they start to explore beyond the nesting area. This is when the kittens start interacting and playing with their mother. At this age, the kittens will initiate some of the nursing and the mother cat should comply by lying in the nursing position. (*Weigh kittens every 1-2 days during this time and notify your foster coordinator if they are not gaining*).
- Four to Five Weeks Old: The kittens begin weaning, and in turn, the mother cat no longer initiates any nursing. If the mother cat still allows the kittens to nurse, it will be initiated by the kittens and can be lateral or upright nursing. (*Weigh kittens every 3-4 days during this time*).

Occasionally, mother cats develop mastitis when their kittens stop nursing and begin to eat on their own. Mastitis occurs when the mammary glands become inflamed and harden, creating a very painful infection for the mother cat and causing symptoms such as fever and listlessness. If you think your mother cat may have mastitis, call the foster coordinator immediately.

The mother cat will groom and lick her babies frequently for the first 2 to 4 weeks. She will stimulate her kittens to pee and poop, and will generally consume the fecal matter and urine. As the babies become more mobile, they will start to leave the nest and deposit urine and yellow feces nearby, which is a good time to start introducing a couple low-sided litter boxes (disposable tend to work best).

To ensure that the mother cat has enough to eat, *give her access to both wet and dry kitten food at all times*. Food intake for a nursing mother can be 2 to 4 times more than the amount consumed by a non-lactating cat.

When fostering a mother cat, it is important for you to observe her behavior daily and watch her interactions with her kittens to determine any problems. Unfortunately, 8 percent of kittens pass away because of inadequate maternal care. This can happen for many different reasons, some of which are beyond our control.

3.3 Problem Behaviors in Mother Cats

The following will detail problem behaviors in mother cats and the appropriate actions you can take:

- **Maternal Neglect:** Sometimes a mother cat stops providing care to one or all of her kittens. The neglect may be due to a birth defect or weakness in the kitten; she may be acting in an instinctive natural manner, focusing on the stronger kittens. Neglect may also occur due to inexperience or environmental stress. In either case, it is important to observe behavior daily to ensure she is caring for her babies. If she permits you handling the kittens, you should weigh each one every 2 days to guarantee they are gaining weight. If you notice she is spending all of her time away from the kittens, is not grooming or nursing them frequently, or she doesn't respond to their cries, please call the foster coordinator immediately.
- **Maternal Aggression Toward Other Animals:** Aggressive behavior directed at other animals is common and expected from mother cats due to their strong maternal instinct to protect their young. With that in mind, please do not introduce her to the other animals in your home. As noted above, the mother cat and her kittens need their own quiet room away from other pets to ensure she and her babies can always feel safe. *If she has seen another animal and becomes stressed or aggressive, she needs to be left alone for approximately 20 minutes, during which time she can calm herself, and then you can check on her.*
- **Maternal Aggression Toward People:** At times mother cats will act aggressively toward people. These behaviors may include hissing, growling, swatting, and biting. Again, the mother is exercising her maternal instinct to protect her young.

We evaluate mother cats for these behaviors before sending them into foster homes, but sometimes the behaviors develop later. If you have a mother exhibiting any of these behaviors, *DO NOT try to "correct" the behavior with a spray bottle or any type of punishment*. She is acting instinctively to protect her babies and negative reinforcement could cause her aggressive behavior to escalate.

Contact the foster coordinator at the first sign of any of the above behaviors so we can assess the situation and decide on the safest option for the mother cat and her babies.

3.4 A Healthy Mother-Kitten Relationship

A mother's direct interaction with her kittens includes the "brp" or chirping calls she makes as she approaches them, as well as nuzzling and licking them to awaken them and to stimulate urination or defecation.

Initially, the kitten's activities are restricted to crawling along the mother's body and nuzzling against her to locate a nipple, often in competition with littermates. The kittens suckle, lie still by the mother, move around near her, and call out to her.

A call frequently given by the kittens is the cry associated with distress. It is given when a kitten awakens and

is hungry, when a kitten's movement is restricted (e.g. the kitten is trapped under the mother), or if the kitten becomes isolated and cold. *The mother should answer the call.*

Suckling is accompanied by kneading against the mother's abdomen. It is theorized that these kneading movements stimulate the mother's milk flow, help to develop the kitten's muscles, and to aid in digestion. The kittens may initially spend approximately 8 hours per day suckling, but this activity decreases as they grow older.

As kittens become older and more mobile, they also become increasingly responsible for approaching the mother and initiating suckling. In later stages of the weaning process (at approximately 7 weeks), the kittens become almost wholly responsible for initiating suckling. The mother may actively impede these efforts by blocking access to her nipples or by removing herself from the kittens' proximity.

If you notice that the mother cat is neglecting her kittens inappropriately or showing any negative behaviors as detailed previously, please contact the foster coordinator.

3.5 Separating Kittens and Moms

If all your foster animals, the mother included, are interacting in a healthy and friendly manner, we have no reason to separate the mother from kittens prior to their spay/neuter procedures. There are, however, a few medical or behavioral reasons for separating them earlier:

- If the mother cat is showing signs of maternal neglect and is no longer caring for her kittens, the foster coordinator may decide to separate her from her kittens.
- If the mother cat is semi-feral or very under socialized, we may decide to separate the kittens once they are consistently eating on their own and no longer require nursing (approximately 5 to 6 weeks). Separating them would prevent the kittens from learning feral behaviors from their mother and aid their socialization, which increases their chances of finding forever homes.
- If there is a medical concern of the mother or babies, a veterinarian could make the decision to separate the kittens from the mother cat.

The kittens' best chance at survival is to stay with their mom. Please do not separate your foster kittens from their mom for any reason, or attempt to supplement the mother's milk with formula, without consulting the foster coordinator.

Section 4: KITTEN MEDICAL AND EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS

When you get your foster kittens, you will receive a Foster Sheet that specifies the dates that vaccines are due and any medications that your kittens need. *You are responsible for scheduling appointments for your kittens' vaccines on or around the due dates indicated.* Vaccines and dewormers are given beginning at 6 weeks old and then administered every 2 weeks thereafter until the kittens are adopted. To schedule vaccination appointments, call or text the foster coordinator.

If you are fostering a group of kittens who require medications, please ensure that your kittens are given all prescribed doses. *Do not end medication early for any reason.* If any of your foster kittens have not favorably responded to medications after 5 days (or in the timeframe instructed by the foster coordinator), please contact the foster coordinator. Be sure to track the medications provided on the Foster Medication Log for each kitten

and submit them to the foster coordinator, along with any leftover medication, when the kittens have completely the prescribed round of medication.

4.1 Veterinary care

Colorado Feline Foster Rescue provides all medical care for our foster animals. If your foster kittens need veterinary attention, please notify the foster coordinator, who will schedule the appointment.

Please remember, foster parents will be responsible for payment of any medical care if they take their foster animal to a veterinarian without prior authorization from the foster coordinator.

4.2 Signs of Illness and What to Do Next

Kittens are stoic and can mask their illnesses when feeling unwell, so determining if a foster kitten is ill will require diligent observation of the kittens' daily activity and appetite levels. Be aware that kittens act differently at different ages. For example, a healthy two-week-old kitten will sleep often and get up only to nurse, whereas a healthy six-week-old kitten should have a lot of energy. If you have any questions about the health of your foster kittens, please contact the foster coordinator, who will be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

- **Eye discharge:** It is normal for kittens to have some discharge from their eyes when they awaken. But if a kitten has yellow or green discharge, or there is swelling around the eyes (making it hard for him to open his eyes), or if the third eyelid is showing, you need to contact the foster coordinator.
- **Sneezing and Nasal Discharge:** Occasional sneezing is common in kittens. If the sneezing becomes more frequent, examine the discharge coming from the sneeze. If the discharge is clear, the infection is probably viral and medication may not be necessary. If the discharge becomes colored, contact the foster coordinator to schedule an appointment, colored discharge may indicate a bacterial infection. Be sure to monitor the kittens' breathing: if they start to breathe with an open mouth, or wheeze, call the foster coordinator immediately and follow the Emergency Contact Protocol. Additionally, if you notice nasal discharge, monitor the kittens' eating habits more closely to ensure they are still eating, and continue weighing them every 1-2 days (lower capacity to adequately smell their food may cause cats to decrease consumption).
- **Loss of appetite:** Your foster kittens may be stressed after arriving in your home; stress can cause a lack of appetite. Unwillingness to eat can be very serious in kittens, so monitor closely the kittens' eating behavior. Kittens should eat on a 4-8 hour schedule, depending on their age. If a kitten is less than four weeks old and misses two meals, or if a kitten over four weeks of age goes more than 12 hours without eating, please call the foster coordinator. For a kitten who is not eating, please do not change the kitten's diet without contacting the foster coordinator. An abrupt change in diet can cause diarrhea, which will lead to dehydration.
- **Lethargy:** The activity level of your kittens will vary with each kitten in your litter and with age. Sick kittens may have lower energy levels and may not be active, play much, or move in general, and at times their posture may seem unnatural or in a hunched-over position. If your foster kittens' energy level decreases, please contact the foster coordinator. *Note:* Some undersocialized kittens will move less because they are frightened. If you have a fearful group of kittens, it can be more difficult to determine if their energy levels are low, but tracking all behaviors will help you decide whether you should contact the foster coordinator.
- **Dehydration:** Dehydration is usually associated with diarrhea, vomiting, and/or loss of appetite. To test

for dehydration, gently pinch the kitten's skin around the scruff area. If the skin stays taut, the kitten is dehydrated. Please call the foster coordinator immediately and start the Emergency Contact Protocol, dehydration can be fatal in kittens.

- **Vomiting:** If a foster kitten has vomited 2 or more times in 1 day, please notify the foster coordinator. If there is bile or blood in the vomit, please call immediately.
- **Pain or strain while urinating:** When kittens are first introduced to a new foster home, they may not urinate due to stress. If a kitten hasn't urinated in more than 24 hours, however, please contact the foster coordinator. Additionally, if you notice the kitten is straining to urinate, with little or no results, or is crying out while urinating, please contact the foster coordinator immediately; this may be indicative of an infection or a urethral obstruction, which can be life threatening.
- **Diarrhea:** In kittens, it can be tricky to determine if diarrhea is a problem. Soft stool diarrhea, most likely caused by stress, is normal for the first 2 days after you bring kittens home. Kittens who are nursing tend to have loose stool, but very watery, or very large volume, of diarrhea, is concerning. By the time kittens are 5 weeks old and are eating consistently on their own, they should have firm, normal stool. If your foster kittens have loose or liquid stool (we describe these as watery, soft serve ice cream, or melted soft serve ice cream in appearance), please contact the foster coordinator, and she will instruct you on proper dosing of OTC. Once your kittens are using a litter box, please monitor the box daily. Remember that diarrhea will dehydrate your kittens, so be proactive about contacting the foster coordinator if you notice diarrhea. If a kitten has bloody or mucoid diarrhea, please contact the foster coordinator immediately.
- **Hair Loss:** Please contact the foster department if you notice any hair loss on your foster kittens. It is normal for cats to have thin fur around the lips, eyelids, and in front of the ears, but clumpy patches of hair loss or thinning hair can indicate ringworm or dermatitis. It is important to check your foster kittens' coats every day.

4.3 Serious kitten ailments

Kittens are susceptible to the following illnesses:

- **Fading Kitten Syndrome:** Symptoms include unwillingness to eat, dehydration, lethargy, weight loss, coldness to the touch, and difficulty with, or labored breathing.
- **Panleukopenia (feline distemper):** Symptoms include unwillingness to eat, lethargy, vomiting, diarrhea and/or dehydration. The diarrhea often has a mucoid texture and/or is bloody.

If a kitten is displaying any combination of the symptoms listed above, please contact the foster coordinator *immediately*. These ailments can be fatal if left untreated.

4.4 Serious kitten ailments

What constitutes a kitten medical emergency? A good rule of thumb is *any situation in which you would call 911 for a person*.

The following includes specific symptoms that may indicate an emergency situation:

- Not breathing or labored breathing
- Symptoms of fading kitten syndrome or distemper (see Serious Kitten Ailments above)
- Signs of extreme dehydration: dry/pale gums, weakness, vomiting, not urinating, skin tenting (when the skin is pulled up, it stays)
- Abnormal lethargy or inability to stand

- Unconsciousness or inability to wake up
- Cold to the touch
- Broken bones
- Any trauma: hit by car, dropped, stepped on
- A large wound or profuse bleeding that doesn't stop when pressure is applied
- Loss of appetite for more than 12 hours

If a foster kitten displays any of these symptoms, please contact the foster coordinator *immediately*.

Section 5: SOCIALIZING AND INSTILLING GOOD BEHAVIOR IN KITTENS

A goal as a foster parent is to prepare your foster kittens for forever homes. While a big part of that is helping your kittens to grow and to be healthy, another component is helping them develop good habits to have as wonderful companions for their adopters.

5.1 Establishing good litter box habits

Introduce your kittens to the litter box at 4 to 5 weeks of age. Be certain the litter boxes you are using have low sides, making it easy for the kittens to climb in and out. Some foster parents like to use disposable litter boxes.

Keep kittens confined to a small area and have at least 2-4 litter boxes in each room the kittens can access. You can encourage the kittens to use the bathroom facilities by gently returning them to their litter box every 15-20 minutes while they're playing and doing so after they eat as well. One mistake is giving kittens too much space while they are learning to use the litter box. A kitten that is 4-5 weeks old, should only have about a quarter to one half of a regular sized bedroom.

Be certain to use non-clumping clay litter. You will need to scoop the box at least twice per day, more if you have a large litter, or if they have diarrhea. You will also need to dump the litter box entirely every 2 to 3 days and clean with dish soap. A clean litter box will promote good bathroom habits for the kittens. If your foster kittens are not using the litter box, please notify the foster coordinator so you can start resolving the issue before it becomes habitual.

Oftentimes, kittens miss the litter box if they have medical issues such as diarrhea, or if they have too much free space, causing them to forget where the box is when they need to use it. Clean all accidents with an enzymatic cleaner and *DO NOT EVER punish a kitten for having an accident*. Negative reinforcement potentially creates additional behavioral issues.

5.2 Discipline

One of your goals as a foster parent is to prepare your foster kittens for living successfully in their forever homes. We ask that you help your foster kittens develop good habits and skills through the use of positive reinforcement, which builds a bond of trust between you and your foster cats. The goal is to reward desirable behaviors and ignore/distract from unwanted behaviors.

You must not punish the kittens for behavior that you find undesirable; punishment is ineffective at eliminating

the behavior. If a kitten is doing something undesirable, distract him or her before the behavior occurs. It is also important for every human in the foster home to abide by the rules.

5.3 Play time

Play time is a very important part of kitten development. It is crucial for young kittens to have other kittens to wrestle with in order to develop appropriate play skills and be properly socialized with other kittens. Kittens also need toys to play with for physical exercise and mental stimulation. There are two types of toys that help with kitten developments:

- Solo toys are those the kittens can play with when you are not there. These toys should be easy to clean and impossible to consume. Examples include ping pong balls, toilet paper tubes, bottle corks, plastic shower curtain rings, and straws; be certain to dispose of any toys that get worn down or fall apart from usage. Please limit catnip toys to kittens at least six weeks old.
- Interactive toys are those you use to engage with the kittens in play. Examples are Da Bird (a feather dangling from a string) and other toys with yarn or string attached. *Never leave kittens alone with these toys, since they can easily strangle, or be ingested by, the kittens.*

Introducing your foster kittens to new things and new experiences will also help prepare them for living happily in forever homes. Follow these rules to positively expose your kittens to new people, environments, and noises:

- New People: Introducing your foster animals to new people will help them become well-adjusted adult cats. Monitor all interactions with new people, though, to ensure the kittens have positive, not frightening, experiences.
- New Environments: It will help the kittens' adjustment into adopters' homes if you can allow your kittens to experience different parts of your home. Whenever you introduce the kittens to a new space, provide treats and play with interactive toys so the kittens associate the new space with their favorite things. Keep the exploratory sessions brief so you don't overwhelm your kittens and return them to their living space if they do seem overwhelmed or frightened.
- New Noises: It is beneficial to expose kittens to a variety of normal household noises but again, try to do it in a positive way. The key is to introduce different noises gradually. For example, start by keeping a radio on low volume, and gradually increase the volume over a few days. You can also use a vacuum in another room at first, with your kittens at a safe distance. Then, over the course of a few days, move the vacuum noise closer to their room. If another person plays with the kittens while you make the noise, it may help alleviate any stress or fear that they may feel. Some kittens are naturally fearful; pay attention and adjust, you may have to go slower when introducing new noises to timid kittens.

Another important goal of fostering kittens is inspiring confidence in, and comfort with, being in a cat carrier, either with the door removed, or with it securely propped open, in your foster kittens' room. Put toys, treats and a soft blanket in the carrier to encourage the kittens to go in and spend time there.

5.4 Schedule for successful socialization

If your foster kittens are not socialized already prior to you bringing them home, you will need to have a more focused socialization plan. Remember, keep all experiences positive for the kittens.

Days 1-7: Your foster kittens may be hissing, swatting, spitting and/or growling:

Activities to engage in:

- Burrito-wrapping the kitten in a blanket or towel: Use gloves and a towel to handle the kitten if needed.
- Hand-feeding: Feed the kittens dabs of baby food (protein only, with no onion or garlic, on the ingredient list) or canned tuna by hand.
- Playing: Try engaging the kittens in play with interactive toys.
- Rocking the kitten: Turn the kitten on her back and cradle her like a baby. Rubbing her tummy until she falls asleep is very helpful.

Days 7–14: The kittens may hiss when you approach but respond to touching and petting.

Activities to engage in:

- Handling: Continue handling and petting the kittens. If improvement is shown, try to move to handling other body parts, but do not go too fast.
- More playing: Start standing and walking around while playing with the kittens, so they can adjust to normal human movement.
- Additional hand-feeding: Give the kittens treats while you handle them, to encourage their trust in you, to learn that you are not a threat.

After 14 days: Your kittens may still be shy but should be more comfortable with you approaching them and should no longer display defensive aggression behaviors. If your kittens only demonstrate modest improvement after 2 weeks of socialization attempts, please contact the foster coordinator for guidance.

5.5 Guiding your foster kittens' behavior

Kittens need to be socialized to interact appropriately with both humans and other cats. When you socialize kittens, you're helping to create happy, healthy, well-adjusted adult cats who will make wonderful companions. That is why it is essential to handle, talk to, and play with your foster kittens.

Well-socialized mother cats are more likely to have well-socialized kittens. The kittens will absorb their mother's calmness or fear while around people. If there is no mother cat, kittens will learn from their littermates. Play helps to increase social, coordination, and learning skills.

5.6 Kitten development and what to do

Time and effort are required to properly socialize kittens. In fact, when they are between 4 and 12 weeks old, daily socialization sessions are important in shaping the kitten's personality and emotional growth.

You will want your foster kittens to become familiar with having their front and back paws touched and their nails trimmed, their mouths opened, and their ears touched. Combining this type of handling with regular grooming sessions and body massages assists in preventing skin sensitivity or aversion to touch. And acquainting kittens with a variety of sights, sounds, and textures will help them grow into well-socialized adult cats. Our goal is to raise what we like to call FREE RANGE KITTENS.

Listed below are some characteristics of kittens at different stages and the steps you can take to help socialize them:

- **Newborn**

Appearance: Newborn kittens should be pink, firm, plump, and generally healthy-looking.

Temperature: Normal rectal temperature for newborns is 96-97 degrees Fahrenheit.

Eyes and Ears: Closed, but they can still hear, though poorly, and respond to bright light with a blink reflex.

Muscles: Healthy kittens will curl their bodies and limbs inward.

- **1 to 2 Weeks**

Temperature: Normal rectal temperature has gradually increased to 100 degrees Fahrenheit

Eyes and Ears: Open at approximately 11-15 days

Muscles: Kittens can use their front legs to stand and walk shakily.

What you can do:

- ❖ Engage in gentle handling and cuddling at this point. These sessions should be very short (1 to 2 minutes); great care should be taken in the handling process.
- ❖ Rub the ears and muzzle.

- **2 to 3 Weeks**

Temperature: Kittens are able to maintain their own body temperature within the normal range (100.5-102.5 degrees Fahrenheit)

Eyes: Vision is initially poor, even after the eyes have opened, but continues to develop until 3 to 4 weeks of age. If the eyes fail to open and the lids look sticky, wipe the lids very gently with dampened cotton lightly smeared with a tiny amount of petroleum jelly to ease their opening. The eyelids should never be pulled apart. If a kitten's eyelids still haven't opened by 14 days, contact the foster coordinator.

Muscles: The rear legs can now support the body. Kittens are crawling.

Teeth: Deciduous incisors begin to appear, followed by the deciduous canines.

What you can do:

- ❖ Provide the kittens with a whelping box area for sleeping and another area, away from the sleeping and feeding area, that contains the litter box.
- ❖ Provide five minutes of handling exercises. Gently roll the kitten over on her back for 5-10 seconds and then draw her close to you, stroking and cuddling her. Never do this while actively feeding the kitten. Be careful not to startle the kitten with sudden movements or loud sounds.
- ❖ Start grooming. Softly and gently brush the kitten's coat with a few strokes, touch the ears and mouth, and pretend to clip the nails by adding gentle pressure to the kitten's paws.

- **3 to 4 Weeks**

Eyes and Ears: Vision and hearing are improving. Blink response disappears with the development of accurate pupil control. The kitten is now able to use visual clues to locate and approach the mother. The eyes should be completely open by 17 days.

Muscles: By 21 days, kittens can walk with a fairly steady gait. They can also sit and have reasonable control of their toes.

Teeth: Deciduous incisors and canine teeth continue to come in.

What you can do:

- ❖ If the mother and kittens are no longer using the whelping box, remove it.
- ❖ At about 4 weeks old, the kittens will begin to eliminate on their own. This is a good time to introduce additional litter boxes. Use boxes with low edges so the kittens can easily climb in and out. Only use non-clumping litter, since kittens often try to eat the litter when they are learning.
- ❖ The kittens will begin exploring their immediate environment. Provide safe, simple toys to help stimulate them.
- ❖ The kittens can be introduced to people at this time, but this interaction should be carefully controlled. The interactions should be limited to 5 minutes of time spent in gentle massage and cuddling.
- ❖ As the main caregiver, you should continue the grooming and handling exercises: holding, cuddling, stroking each kitten's body, including the ears, tail, and muzzle.

- **4 to 5 Weeks**

Eyes and Ears: Vision is markedly improved. From 3 to 5 weeks, kittens learn guided paw placement and obstacle avoidance.

Muscles: Kittens are walking normally and start climbing. Social play is prevalent.

Teeth: Deciduous premolars come in.

What you can do: Continue the handling and socialization exercises.

- **5 to 8 Weeks**

Teeth: Kittens have an entire set of deciduous teeth by 5 to 6 weeks of age.

What you can do:

- ❖ The kittens are totally dependent on the environment you provide to stimulate and develop them. Play with objects increases at approximately 7-8 weeks of age, so continue adding appropriate toys to the kittens' environment.
- ❖ Introduce the kittens to as many different people as possible - people of different shapes, sizes, colors, sexes, and ages. Encourage kittens to allow individual handling by different people: men, women and supervised children. Keep the visits brief.
- ❖ Expose kittens to mild sounds, different areas and surfaces, and allow them to investigate. As the main caregiver, you should continue the handling and grooming exercises.
- ❖ If you choose, you can introduce the kittens to other animals while their mother is not present. Keep the visits brief and always supervised. These visits should be calm and pleasant; a traumatic incident at this stage could have a lasting effect on the kittens. Keep in mind that kittens can carry diseases that can be transmitted to other animals.

- **8 Weeks or Older**

What you can do:

- ❖ Protect kittens from unpleasant or negative experiences. The kittens' environment should be designed to help them develop a sense of security.
- ❖ Continue introducing the kittens to as many different people as possible.

- ❖ Continue handling and grooming exercises.
- ❖ At this stage, you can gradually introduce more intrusive noises, such as whistle blowing, hand clapping, bell jingling, and the vacuum cleaner running. Play with the kittens as you introduce the noise in the background.

5.7 Litter box training for kittens and adult cats

At approximately 4 weeks old, the kittens will begin to play in, dig through, and explore loose, soft materials such as dirt or litter. As a result of this investigative digging, kittens begin to relieve themselves in these materials. As such, kittens do not require instruction by their mothers or humans to relieve themselves in soft, loose materials, or to dig and bury their waste. Kittens are simply born knowing how to perform this activity.

However, litter boxes that don't provide an acceptable place to eliminate (from the cats' point of view) may cause cats to relieve themselves elsewhere. It is therefore important to provide a litter box that meets the kittens' needs. You want the kittens to like the box and use it consistently. Initially you may use cardboard flats with a small amount of a non-clumping litter in their area.

Location

Most people want to put the litter box in an out-of-the-way place so they can minimize odors and loose particles of cat litter around the house. Often, the litter box ends up in the basement, possibly next to an appliance on a cold cement floor.

This type of location, however, is often undesirable to cats. Young kittens may be unable to navigate a long flight of stairs in time to relieve themselves. And adult cats new to a home may not remember where the litter box is if hidden remotely.

It is also important to remember that if your litter box is next to a sometimes-noisy appliance, such as a furnace or washer/dryer set, cats may become startled when the appliance turns on. This may cause them to associate the litter box with the frightening noise, and they may then refuse to use the box in that location. Additionally, some cats like to scratch the surface surrounding the litter box and they may find a cold cement floor unappealing.

You can compromise by placing the litter box in a location - such as a closet or a spare bedroom - that provides some privacy but that is also conveniently located. If you place the litter box in a closet, be certain the closet door is wedged open from both sides to prevent the cat being trapped inside or outside the closet. If the litter box sits on a smooth, slick, or cold surface, consider putting a small throw rug or mat underneath the box. The cats will have something to scratch and less litter will be tracked throughout your home.

Type and depth of litter

Research has shown that most cats prefer fine-grained litters. Clumping litters are usually finer in grain than typical clay litter. With kittens younger than 8 weeks, however, *only use non-clumping litter*. Because very young kittens often taste their litter and play in it, the dust from clumping litter can solidify in their respiratory or digestive tract requiring emergency intervention

Different cats prefer different depths of litter, but most cats do not care for litter that is more than approximately 2 inches deep. Cats do not choose areas for elimination where they sink into several inches of litter or dirt. It is not true that the more litter you put in the litter box, the less often you will have to clean it. Regular cleaning is

essential, regardless of the litter depth.

Number of boxes

Try to have at least as many litter boxes as you have cats. In doing so, no one can be prevented from using the box because it is already occupied. It also keeps one cat from "guarding the litter box" and preventing other cats from accessing it.

Litter boxes can be placed in several locations throughout the house. This practice helps train young kittens because there is always a box nearby that they can access in time to eliminate.

To cover or not to cover

Many cats don't show any preference for a covered versus a non-covered litter box. But, if a cat is very large, a covered litter box may not allow sufficient room for him to turn around, scratch and dig, and position himself in the way he prefers.

It is ideal to use uncovered boxes when training kittens because it is easier for them to get into and out of the litter box.

A covered box tends to provide more privacy and may be preferred by shy, timid cats. It is a good idea to offer both types of litter boxes to discover which one the cat prefers. If you do not want to purchase a covered box to determine which one your cat prefers, a litter box cover can be made from an upside-down cardboard box with the flaps and one side cut away.

Cleaning the box

Litter boxes should always be kept clean. Feces should be scooped out of the litter box daily. The number of cats and the number of litter boxes will determine how often the litter needs to be dumped and completely changed. Twice per week is a general guideline, but you may need to change it more or less often, depending on the circumstances. If you notice any odor, or if much of the litter is wet or clumped, it is time to change the litter.

When washing the litter box, DO NOT use strong-smelling chemicals or cleaning products. The smell of vinegar, bleach, or pine cleaners may cause the cat to avoid using the litter box. Washing with soap and water should be sufficient. Letting the container air-dry in the sun is also a good idea, but it will be necessary to have a back-up litter box while the other one is being cleaned.

Section 6: FOSTERING ADULT CATS

APPROVED FOODS LIST:

- Royal Canin Adult wet and dry food
- Science Diet Adult wet and dry food

Foods that are NOT approved: Blue Buffalo, Wellness, Meow Mix, Friskies, 9 Lives, Natural Balance, any store brand foods, and any grain-free foods.

6.1 Preparing for your foster cat

When you take your foster cat home, he may be frightened or unsure about what is happening, so it is important not to overwhelm him. Prepare a special area for the foster cat to help ease his adjustment into a

new home environment. Sometimes it is better to confine the foster cat to a small room, such as a bathroom, at first, to let him adjust before giving him free rein in your home. Equip the room with food and water dishes and a litter box.

Additionally, we recommend a small room because cats will typically hide in new environments. It is not uncommon for a foster cat to hide underneath a bed or in a dark, quiet place for the first couple of days. Isolating your foster cat when you first take her home allows you to know what room she is in and helps you to monitor her eating, drinking, and litter box habits more closely.

We require all foster cats to be housed indoors only. A garage, backyard, or outdoor enclosure is not a suitable or safe accommodation for a foster cat.

During the first couple of weeks, minimize the people and pet introductions to your foster cat, so that she is only meeting immediate family and your personal pets. If you have other pets at home, it is especially important to give your foster cat a space of her own where she can stay while adjusting to the new sounds and smells. Do not leave your foster cat unattended in your home with your personal pets until you are comfortable that all of the animals can interact safely.

6.2 Supplies you will need

The following items will help your foster cat make a smooth transition to living in your home:

- At least 1 bowl for dry food and 1 bowl for water: Stainless steel or ceramic work best.
- A supply of dry cat food: All cats are fed dry food unless a special diet is needed. We use science diet and ask that foster cats be fed a food of that quality.
- A soft place to sleep: Old towels or blankets work well if you do not have a cat bed.
- Uncovered or covered litter box: Be certain the box is an appropriate size for the cat.
- Litter: Please use clumping litter for adult cats, unless you are given other instructions.
- Scratching posts or trays: Try different types to determine which the cat prefers.
- Cat treats: Giving treats is a good way to help train and build a positive relationship with your foster cat.
- Cat toys: Be certain the toys are durable and safe (without bits that would be harmful if swallowed).
- Grooming supplies: A well-groomed cat has a better chance of being adopted.

6.3 Cat-proofing your home

Foster cats come from a shelter environment, and even if they have previously lived in a home, we do not always know how they will react in a new home. Before bringing home a new foster cat, you will want to survey the area where the cat will stay. Remove anything that would be unsafe or undesirable for the cat to chew, and securely latch any cupboards the foster cat may get into (please be aware that cats can open non-latching drawers and cupboards). Cats like to climb up shelves or bookcases, so you will need to remove anything that can be knocked down. Human food and chemicals can be very harmful if consumed by cats, so please store them in a place the foster cat cannot access. Never underestimate your foster cat's abilities. The following are additional tips for cat-proofing your home:

- Be certain that all trash cans are covered or latched and keep them inside a closet. (Do not forget the bathroom trash bins.)
- Keep the toilet lids closed.
- Keep both human and pet food out of reach and off counter tops.
- Move house plants out of reach. Cats like to chew on plants, and many are toxic to them.
- Be certain that aquariums or cages that house small animals, like hamsters or fish, are securely out of reach of your foster cat.
- Remove medications, lotions, or cosmetics from any accessible surfaces.
- Move and secure all electrical, charging cords, and phone wires out of reach. Cats may chew on or get tangled in them.
- Remove any clothing items that have buttons or strings, which can be harmful to your foster cat if consumed.
- Relocate knickknacks or valuables that your foster cat could damage.

6.4 Bringing home your foster cat

Taking care of a foster cat requires a commitment from you to be certain the cat is happy and healthy. Thank you so much for opening your heart and your home to these cats who desperately need your help. Without you, we could not save as many as we do.

6.5 Choosing a foster cat

The CFFR team will work with you to select a foster cat who matches your specific skills, requirements, and ability. We will always do our best to match you with a cat who fits with your lifestyle and schedule. If the foster cat requires medications, you will be shown how to administer them. Be honest: If you are not comfortable with anything about the animal you may be fostering, please tell us before you take the animal home.

Please note: If for any reason you are unable to keep your foster cat, please notify the foster coordinator right away.

6.6 Cat introductions

If you have personal companions who are cats, you will need to introduce them to the foster cat. Even if you know the cat you are fostering does well with other cats, you will need to introduce them gradually. Before bringing your foster cat home, create a separate “territory” for her. This area should be equipped with food, water, a scratching post, a litter box, access to natural sunlight, and comfortable resting places. Your other cats should have their own separate territory.

Over a 1- to 2-week period, let the cats smell each other through a closed door, but don't allow them contact with one another. Exchanging blankets or towels between the areas will help them adjust to each other's scent. Next, allow them to see each other through a baby gate or a door that is propped open 2 inches. If the cats are interested in each other and seem comfortable, allow them to meet. Open the door to the rooms between the cats and observe them closely. If any cat shows signs of significant stress or aggression, separate them again and introduce them more slowly.

6.6 Dog introductions

If you have a personal dog companion, you will need to introduce the foster cat carefully and safely. Start by keeping them separated. As previously noted, create a separate “territory” for your foster cat and equip it with food, water, a scratching post, a litter box, and comfortable resting places before you bring her home.

Over a 1- to 2-week period, allow the dog and cat to smell each other through the door, but do not allow them contact with one another. Exchanging blankets or towels between the dog's area and the cat's area will help them adjust to each other's scent.

After a week or two, do a face-to-face introduction. Keeping your dog on leash, allow your foster cat into same area. (If you have more than one dog, introduce one at a time.) Do not allow the dog to charge or run directly to the cat. Try to distract the dog as best you can so the cat can approach without fear. Watch the body language of each animal closely and do not continue the interaction if either animal becomes over-stimulated or aggressive. The idea is to keep the interactions positive, safe and controlled.

Finally, never leave your dog unsupervised around the foster cat.

6.7 Children and cats

Since we do not always know a foster cat's history or tolerance level for different types of people and activities, please teach your children how to act responsibly and respectfully around your foster cat. We will do our best to place you with an appropriate animal for your home situation, but you still need to supervise all interactions between children and your foster cat.

Key points to remind your children include:

- Always leave the foster cat alone when he/she is eating or sleeping. Some cats may nip or bite if bothered while eating or startled while sleeping.
- Do not tease or provoke the foster cat.
- Do not chase the foster cat around the house as this can frighten or harm him.
- Pick up the foster cat only when an adult is present to help. Cats can become frightened when picked up, and they may sometimes scratch with their sharp nails, even though they do not mean to cause harm.
- Be careful when opening and closing doors to not accidentally let the foster cat outside.

6.8 Daily care - feeding

All foster cats should be fed a diet of dry and wet cat food. We ask that you only feed the foods from the approved food list. Feed your foster cat twice daily; the amount will be based on the age and weight of your foster cat. Be certain the cat always has access to fresh, clean water. Your foster cat can also be fed a good quality wet food once or twice daily if he or she likes wet food.

You may give your foster cat treats of any kind (unless he/she has known allergies or is on a special diet). Giving treats helps you and your foster cat to bond with each other. Keep in mind that some human food and house plants (which cats like to chew on) are poisonous for cats, so remove any plants or food from areas that your foster cat can access.

6.9 Daily routine

When you first bring your foster cat home, be certain not to overwhelm her with too many new experiences all at once. Moving to a new environment is stressful in itself for many cats, so keep introductions to people and animals to a minimum during the first two weeks. It also helps to establish a daily routine of regularly scheduled feedings and play times.

Additionally, on a daily basis, be aware of your foster cat's appetite and energy level. If she's not eating well or seems listless, something may be medically wrong. You might want to record your observations to easily identify any potential health issues.

6.10 Litter box

You can help your foster cat be more adoptable by paying close attention to his litter box habits and making the litter box as inviting as possible. The litter box should be located in a place the cat can access easily. If you have other cats, there should be one litter box for each cat in the house, plus one extra. The litter boxes should be placed in quiet, low-traffic areas so the cats are not startled when using them. Be certain to use large-sized boxes.

You can also prevent litter box issues by keeping the litter box as clean as possible. Scoop out each litter box at least once daily and empty it completely for cleaning every two weeks. When you clean the litter box, use a mild soap (such as dishwashing soap), not strong-scented detergents or ammonia.

If your foster cat is not using the litter box, please notify the foster coordinator immediately so you can resolve the issue before not using the box becomes habitual. Keep in mind that a cat may miss the litter box if she has a medical issue such as diarrhea, or she may avoid the box if she has a urinary tract infection, which causes pain while urinating.

If your foster cat has an accident, DO NOT discipline or punish her. It will only teach her to fear and mistrust you. Clean all accidents with an enzymatic cleaner. Nature's Miracle and Simple Solution are two products containing natural enzymes that tackle tough stains and odors and permanently remove them.

6.11 Grooming

A clean and well-groomed cat has a better chance of being adopted, so brush your foster cat regularly, especially if he has longer hair. If you are comfortable, you can trim his nails, but please exercise caution

because you can cause pain and bleeding if you trim the nails too short. Any of the CFFR team can show you how to trim nails properly.

Cats do not generally like being bathed, so please do not bathe your foster cat.

6.12 Mental Stimulation and exercise

Because play time provides stimulation, encourages socialization, and releases excess energy, provide your foster cat with at least one or two play sessions per day. The length of the play sessions will vary depending on the cat's age and health. Try a variety of toys (balls, squeaky toys, feather toys, etc.) to determine which ones your foster cat prefers. Cat toys do not have to be fancy or expensive. Cats often enjoy playing with something as simple as a paper bag (remove the handles for safety) or a box with holes cut in the sides.

Do not leave your foster cat alone with any toys that could be easily ingested or cause harm to the cat. Examples are string toys, yarn, and Da Bird (feathers dangling from a string and wand). Toys such as ping-pong balls and toilet paper tubes are safe. Discourage your foster cat from play-biting your hands and feet. This behavior may not be desirable to potential adopters.

6.13 Safety Requirements

Foster cats must live indoors. If your foster cat seems very curious about going outdoors or is constantly at the door waiting for a moment to go outside, please take extra precautions to ensure that he or she doesn't accidentally sneak out when you are coming or going. Additionally, do not allow your foster cat to ride loose in a car. Use a carrier at all times to transport your foster cat to and from appointments.

Section 7: ADULT CAT MEDICAL AND EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS

If you are fostering a cat who requires medications, please be certain that he/she is given ALL prescribed doses. Do not end medication early for any reason. If your foster animal has not responded to prescribed medications after five days (or in the timeframe instructed by a veterinarian), please contact the foster coordinator.

7.1 Veterinary care

Colorado Feline Foster Rescue provides all medical care for our foster animals. Because we are ultimately responsible for your foster cat's well-being, our staff must authorize all treatment.

If your foster cat needs to be seen by a veterinarian, please notify the foster coordinator and she will schedule the appointment.

Remember, foster parents will be responsible for payment of any medical care if they take their foster animal to a veterinarian without prior authorization.

7.2 Signs of illness and what to do next

Cats generally mask their illness when they do not feel well, so determining if your foster cat is ill will require diligent observation of the cat's daily activity and appetite levels. It is smart to journal these levels. You will also need to record any of the following symptoms, which could be signs of illness. Contact Cari with any concerns.

- **Eye discharge.** It is normal for cats to have some eye discharge when they awaken and some may have more than others, depending on the breed. However, if your foster cat has yellow or green discharge, swelling around the eyes (making it hard for him to open his eyes), or the third eyelid is visible, contact the foster coordinator.
- **Sneezing and nasal discharge.** Sneezing can be common in a cat recovering from an upper respiratory infection. If the sneezing becomes more frequent, watch for discharge coming from the nose and contact the foster coordinator.

- **Loss of appetite.** Your foster cat may be stressed after arriving in your home, and stress can cause lack of appetite. However, if the cat hasn't eaten after 24 hours, please notify the foster coordinator. Additionally, if the cat has been eating well, but then stops eating for 12 to 24 hours, call the foster coordinator. Please do not change the cat's diet. An abrupt change in diet can cause diarrhea, which can lead to dehydration.
- **Lethargy.** The activity level of your foster cat will vary depending on age and personality. Keeping an activity log and journal will help you determine when your foster cat is less active than he normally is. If the cat cannot be roused or seems weak and unable to stand, contact the foster coordinator immediately, this is an emergency situation.
- **Pain or strain while urinating.** When a cat first moves into a foster home, he or she may not urinate due to stress. If the cat hasn't urinated in more than 24 hours, however, please contact the foster coordinator. Additionally, if you notice the cat straining to urinate with little or no results, or crying out when urinating, please contact the foster coordinator immediately, this may be indicative of an infection or a urethral obstruction.
- **Diarrhea.** It is important to monitor your foster cat's pooping habits daily. Soft stool is normal the first two or three days a new cat is in your home, most likely caused by stress and a change in food. If your foster cat has liquid stool, however, please contact the foster coordinator.
- **Hair loss.** Please contact the foster coordinator if you notice any hair loss on your foster cat. It is normal for cats to have thin fur around the lips, eyelids, and in front of the ears, but clumpy patches of hair loss or thinning hair can indicate ringworm or dermatitis. It is important to check your foster cat's coat every day.

7.3 Common ailments in rescue cats

Rescue cats may suffer from upper respiratory infection, giardia, or intestinal parasites. Symptoms of upper respiratory infection include sneezing (often with colored discharge), discharge from the nose and/or eyes, decrease in appetite, dehydration, and slight lethargy. Symptoms of giardia or intestinal parasites include vomiting, poor appetite, lethargy, diarrhea (often with a pungent odor), and/or dehydration.

7.4 Criteria for emergencies

What constitutes a medical emergency in a cat? A good rule of thumb is any situation in which you would call 911 for a human.

The following are specific symptoms that could indicate an emergency:

- Not breathing or labored breathing
- Signs of extreme dehydration: dry/pale gums, weakness, vomiting, not urinating, skin tenting (when the skin is pulled up, it stays there)
- Abnormal lethargy or unable to stand
- Unconsciousness or unable to wake up
- Cold to the touch
- Broken bones
- Any trauma: hit by a car, dropped, stepped on
- A large wound or profuse bleeding that doesn't stop when pressure is applied
- Loss of appetite for more than 24 hours

Contact the foster coordinator immediately for any one or more of these conditions/situations.

Section 8: ADULT CAT BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT

One of your goals as a foster parent is to help prepare your foster cat for living successfully in a forever home. We ask that you help your foster cat develop good habits and skills through the use of positive reinforcement, which builds a bond of trust between you and your foster pet. The basic idea is to reward desirable behaviors and ignore/distract from unwanted behaviors.

You must not punish a cat for a behavior that you find undesirable; punishment is ineffective at eliminating the behavior. If the cat is doing something undesirable, distract him or her before the behavior occurs. It is also important for every human in the foster home to abide by the rules established for your foster cats, which will help them to learn faster.

Some foster cats will have behavioral issues, which we are aware of at the time of their rescue. Some of these behavior challenges are fearfulness, house soiling, or aggression toward other animals. We will only place cats with behavioral issues with a person who feels comfortable working with the cat on his/her particular issues. We will provide that person with all the necessary information so that proper care and training can be given to the foster cat.

When you return your foster cat to the rescue for adoption, you will be asked to complete a report card with information regarding how the foster cat behaved in foster, which helps the staff adequately describe the cat to a prospective adopter.

If you feel unable to manage any behavior your foster cat is exhibiting, please contact the foster coordinator to discuss the issue. We will guide you and help in every way we can.

Thank you so much for opening your heart and your home to foster animals. Together, we can Save Them All.

APPENDICES

10 Reasons Why 2 Kittens Are Better Than 1

Foster Report Card

Kitten Weight Record

Foster Medication log

Nebulizer instructions

Ringworm information

Ringworm lesion chart



10 REASONS WHY TWO KITTENS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

1. **You'll save two lives instead of one!**
2. **One kitten can become lonely and bored, leading to mischief.** Kittens need a playmate, especially if their human is gone all day at work. Like any young animal, they need stimulation to develop properly. Two kittens entertain each other and enrich each other's environment. Try to get two right from the start, to ensure happy times. Siblings are great, but any two of the same age can form close bonds.
3. **An older, established cat will likely be more accepting of two kittens than one.** One kitten will seek out the older cat as a playmate or worse, tease and pester the senior cat, which can cause stress to an older cat. The kitten in return, will be "rewarded" for his playful efforts with hisses and swats. Two kittens will expend their energy in play with each other, leaving their older "uncle" to relax in peace.
4. **Kittens learn by copying.** If one kitten is quick to learn appropriate litter box use, the other will be likely to copy. Two kittens will also groom each other, making post-meal bath time easy!
5. **Two kittens help each other burn off energy.** Even the most devoted human caregiver can quickly become exhausted by trying to keep up with the energy of a single kitten. Two kittens will wear each other out, leaving their human parent free to just enjoy watching them. A single kitten will likely keep an owner up at night, continuing to play long after the lights have been turned off. A pair of young cats, on the other hand, will entertain each other - effectively tiring themselves out while their owners sleep like babies. When they want to play at 2:00AM they have each other - not you.
6. **Fewer behavior problems with two kittens.** Many people who experience behavior problems with kittens find that some of them go away when they adopt another playmate. What may be perceived as mischief is often just the result of boredom. Much like their human counterparts, kittens sometimes misbehave because "negative attention is better than no attention."
7. **Curiosity overcomes "food finickyness."** If one kitten is finicky about food, this is often overcome by curiosity at what its sibling is eating. (Feed one cat Same Old, the other cat New Stuff, and they both end up tasting the New Stuff.)
8. **Photo Opportunities.** Kittens will often play so hard that they simply flop where they are, and more likely than not, they will flop next to (or on top of) each other. There is no sight so endearing as two kittens curled up together for a nap. Their peaceful innocence can soften the heart of even the grumpiest curmudgeon, and the sight of that blissful moment will wash clean the slate of their previous misdoings.
9. **Having two kittens is insanely fun.** No doubt kittens are fun, but having two is twice the fun. Watching two kittens play together can be hours of entertainment and laughs — it's better than television and no commercials! With only a single kitten, both you and the kitten will miss SO MUCH. Don't let that happen! If you have a chance to get a pair, seize the opportunity.
10. **They will each have a friend for life.** Two kittens who grow up together will almost always be lifelong friends. Although they will sometimes have their little squabbles (what friends don't?) you will more often see them engaging in mutual grooming, playing together, and sleeping with their best pal. Your cat will remain more playful and youthful into his/her later years with a companion.



COLORADO FELINE FOSTER RESCUE Foster Kitten/Cat Report Card

Fosters, an example report card is found below on the next two pages.

You will complete your report cards on the foster resource page here:

<https://coloradofelinefosterrescue.org/foster/foster-report-card/>

Is this report card for a kitten or adult?
Kitten < 1-year old
Age Range (per Petfinder guidelines)
Kitten - Under 6 months
Gender
Female
Size / Weight
Small - 0-6 Lbs
Medical Information
Kitten/Cat date of birth
04/15/2023
Kitten/Cat Intake Date
05/20/2023
Color/Markings
Lavender Point Mix
Breed
Domestic Short Hair (DSH)
Kitten/Cat Full Name
Ophelia Clarke
Health and Behavior

Check or uncheck all that apply

- Spayed/Neutered
- Vaccinated

Did they interact with:

- Children
- Dogs
- Other Cats

Children

Unknown

Dogs

Unknown

Cats

Good Fit

Kitten/Cat Bio

Hello there, I'm Ophelia, a fun and confident lavender point female kitten born on 4/15/2023. Despite being the smallest of my litter, I never let that hold me back. Wrestling with my littermates is one of my favorite pastimes. We have so much fun together, pouncing, rolling, and playfully tussling especially in the tunnels. I'm also quite sociable and get along well with my foster mom's adult cats too. I would absolutely love to go to a forever home with some furry friends or even one of my littermates.

When it's time to unwind, I have a couple of cherished activities. The first is sunbathing. Oh, how I revel in the warmth of the sun's rays on my fur! You can often find me perched on a cozy windowsill, luxuriating in the sunlight and savoring the simple pleasures of life. And when I'm not busy sunbathing, my ultimate happiness lies in curling up on your lap. There's nothing quite as divine as having my belly rubbed while I peacefully doze off to sleep.

Photos / Videos

Photo & Video Upload

- [Ophelia-1.jpeg](#)
- [Ophelia-2.jpeg](#)
- [Ophelia-3.jpeg](#)
- [Ophelia-4.jpeg](#)

2/3

Report Card Status

Is this report card final?

Yes





COLORADO FELINE FOSTER RESCUE
FOSTER MEDICATION LOG

Please refer to your foster medication log for medication dosing. To access the medication from your Boston Bottle, please keep your Boston Bottle closed and capped and shake the medication if directed. Then set the Boston Bottle upright, and removed the red cap from the top of the bottle. Put your syringe directly into the top of the bottle while still upright, then pick up the bottle and turn it upside down with the syringe still attached to the top. Pull the syringe plunger back until the medication lines up with your foster cat's dosing. Then give kitty the medication. Please contact Cari at 303-888-7238 or email us at info@coloradofelinefosterrescue.org with any questions or concerns.

Foster name: _____ Treating: _____

Cat/ kitten name: _____

Medication 1: _____ Instructions: _____

Medication 2: _____ Instructions: _____

Medication 3: _____ Instructions: _____

Medication 4: _____ Instructions: _____

Date: _____ Initials _____ Time given AM _____ PM _____	Date: _____ Initials _____ Time given AM _____ PM _____	Date: _____ Initials _____ Time given AM _____ PM _____
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NEBULIZER INSTRUCTIONS:

Contents of bag:

- 1 Nebulizer
- 1 Nebulizer medication bag (saline bag with Gentamax mixed in)
- 1 Large Syringe with a needle attached
- 1 Nebulizer rubber tub
- 1 Nebulizer cup
- 1 Top-loading carrier that has Nebulizer cup taped to the door
- 1 Large blanket to cover the carrier with

How to use the Nebulizer:

1. Using the syringe with the needle, pull out the maximum amount of fluid the syringe will hold.
2. Unscrew the bottom of the Nebulizer cup and fill with the fluid. Screw back together.
3. Place the cat/kitten in the carrier.
4. Turn the Nebulizer on. Make sure it is making a mist into the carrier. Cover the carrier tightly with the blanket.
5. Set a timer for 1 hour.
6. Remove the cat/kitten.
7. Feed the cat/kitten immediately after they come out of the treatment.
8. Do this 2-3 times per day until congestion is gone.

Call Cari Dicke at 303-888-7238 if you have any questions!



FUN WITH FUNGUS! Ringworm Information Guide

First...Ringworm is NOT a worm!

Ringworm is the common name for the skin infection caused by a group of fungi. Most often it will cause a circular area of fur loss that is red and may be slightly raised. Ringworm can also have other characteristics, but these circular, hairless lesions are the most common symptom. Ringworm is closely related to athlete's foot in people, and it is contagious to us; the young, old, and immunocompromised are more likely to get it.

Will I get ringworm from my cat/kitten?

It is possible for you and anybody in your living space to get ringworm from your foster, but there are things you can do to limit the risk! Washing your hands after handling the cat/kitten, keeping up with their bath treatments and/or oral medicine, and keeping them isolated to a room from the rest of the family for the length of their treatment can all help reduce the chances of transmission.

What if I get ringworm?

While ringworm is a curable, self-limiting ailment in healthy adults, and while effective over-the-counter treatments are available, we always recommend getting professional advice to resolve it in a timely manner.

What about my other animals?

In order to keep your other pets from getting ringworm, we recommend that you keep your cat/kitten isolated in a room that is easy to clean. Washing your hands and changing your clothes in between your ringworm kitty and other animals can reduce the chance of spreading the fungus as well. Remember, your shoes can also be a carrier of the spores, so a pair of slip-on shoes also helps!

What about my home?

If you keep your cat/kitten in a confined, tiled area, it's simple to clean the space! After a basic cleaning with your usual mopping and scrubbing products, ringworm is killed using a bleach dilution of 16-parts water to 1-part bleach. Let the solution sit for approximately 10 minutes for maximum efficacy. Combining a once-weekly deep-cleaning with freshly-washed towels and bedding can significantly reduce the risk of spores hanging around in your home!

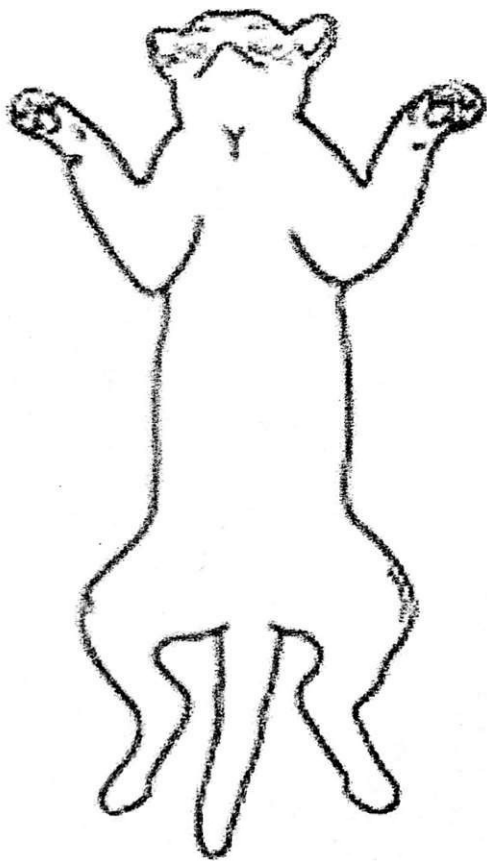
What treatment will my cat/kitten need?

Your cat may be prescribed a once daily oral medication in conjunction with lime sulfur dips or spot treatments 1-2 times per week.

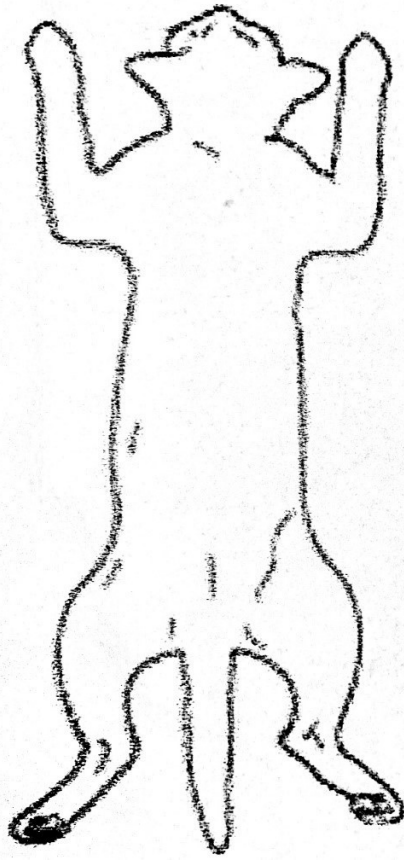
COLORADO FELINE FOSTER RESCUE

RINGWORM LESION CHART

Cat Name _____ Date _____



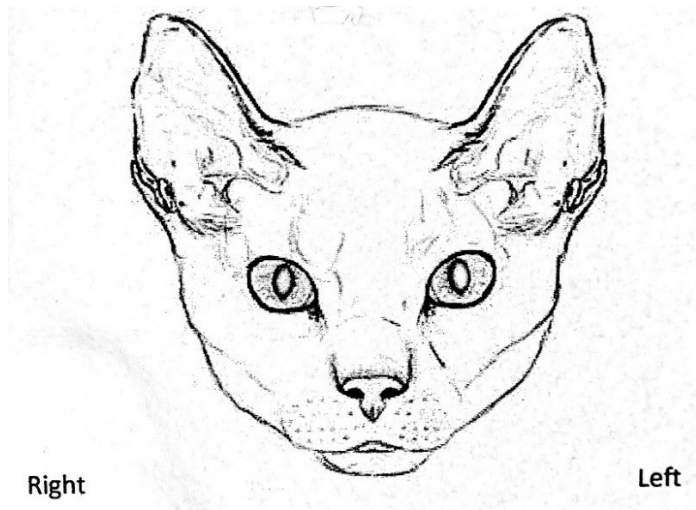
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