

Reference Guide for Cat & Kitten Foster Care Volunteers

Job Description and Responsibilities

Major objective: To ensure a nurturing environment in the comfort of your own home which will allow the fostered animal to grow, heal, socialize and become or remain adoptable.

Responsibilities: Feed, socialize, groom and medicate animals. Ensure the animal's safety and respond to the animal's needs. Isolate foster animals from your own companion animals when necessary. Ensure that your companion animals are current on vaccinations and spayed or neutered. Observe and report any problems with the animal to the Foster Department staff. Maintain confidentiality regarding foster animals and their situations. Comply with the Humane Society's philosophies and policies and act as a Humane Society representative.

Home inspection: Have a home visit by a member of the Foster Office staff. Foster homes are considered an extension of the Shelter and must be inspected.

The inspection will include:

- Food storage (no bags on the ground, closed container)
- Disease control (i.e. is home clean?)
- Where foster animal is housed
- Review of policies and procedures

Commitment: A minimum completion of three foster care contracts or a six-month period.

Please contact the Foster Department regularly with updates on foster animals: strayhearts@taosnet.com or 575.758.2981

Placement into Foster Care

Placement: When an animal is in need of a foster home, the Foster Office staff contacts available volunteers. As many volunteers as possible are called to ensure that the animal is quickly placed. We ask that these calls be returned as soon as possible, even if you are unable to foster at the time of the call.

Paperwork: Once you agree to foster an animal (or litter), the cat or kitten and its paperwork are prepared for pickup. An appointment is made for picking up the animal and the cat will be tested for FEL/FIV. **Cats and kittens must leave the shelter with collars and in carriers. Cats and kittens will have a temporary ID tag with MCHS information.**

Foster Agreement: When you arrive at the Shelter, you will sign a Foster Agreement and pick up the cat/kitten and any supplies available. You will receive a copy of your agreement. **If you cannot fulfill the entire foster term (due to scheduling restraints, vacations, or unforeseen events), contact us as soon as possible so that arrangements can be made for another foster home or for the animal to be returned to the Shelter.**

Veterinary appointments: You are responsible for setting any veterinary check-ups, vaccination appointments or spay/neuter appointments. All vet visits must be approved by the Foster Coordinator—**prior** to visit! Remember that distemper boosters **MUST** be given at the Shelter or the foster parent pays for them.

Responsibility: Foster animals must stay in the immediate care and residence of the foster volunteer. **Leaving your foster animal in anyone else's care is prohibited**, unless specific arrangements have been made with the Foster Department. If you are unable to care for a foster animal for the entire length of the foster agreement, notify the Foster Department as soon as possible so that alternate arrangements can be made.

Foster Volunteer Duties

- Daily duties

- Feed—may be necessary 2 times a day, every 4 hours or less for orphans.
- Clean bowls
- Supply fresh food and water.
- Clean area where animal urinates and defecates; check for problems (bloody urine, runny stools)
- Groom or accustom the animal to being groomed.
- Check entire cat or kitten thoroughly for symptoms of health problems, especially after any surgery—can be done while grooming.
- Play with and socialize cat or kitten(s).
- Keep written records of an animal's weight, food intake, medicines, deworming and vaccinations and other pertinent information. This becomes increasingly important when fostering more than one animal. Most of this information is given on your Medical Checklist.

- “As needed” duties

- Weigh animals, every other day for very young kittens, once a week for older animals.
- Check regularly to ensure that all vaccination and deworming schedules are met and make appointments with Foster Department staff —will require trips to shelter.
 - Clean bedding.
 - Administer flea preventative on a monthly basis if you have the foster animal more than 30 days.
- Trim nails—Accustoms the cat or kitten to having its feet worked with.
- Schedule spay/neuter surgery during foster care, if applicable. Please notify the Foster Department when surgery has been scheduled. Turn in spay/neuter certificate to the Foster Office afterwards (mail or fax).

Purchases: Purchases made for foster animals are considered donations to the Humane Society and are tax-deductible. Keep your receipts. Bring your receipts into the Foster Department, (usually done once a year), and a staff member will complete a donation form for tax purposes for you.

Suggested Fostering Supplies

The Foster Office will supply your foster cat/kitten's collar and ID tag. Keep these on the animal at all times. Call the Foster Department for a replacement collar if collars become lost or too small.

Brushes/nail clippers	Toys
Rectal thermometer, K-Y Jelly [®] /Petroleum Jelly	Rubbing alcohol
Cotton balls, facial tissues or toilet tissue for infants	Scale for weighing
Soft, non-ravel blankets/towels	Newspaper
Ceramic/weighted bowls	Stain/odor remover
Heating pad	Litter box

Playpen (sometimes requires makeshift lid)	Carrier
Non-clumping litter and scoop	Humidifier
Scratching post (the cardboard types work well and are inexpensive)	Notebook

Food

The Foster Office will supply food if donations are available. We recommend high-quality cat/kitten food, dry and/or canned (Science Diet®, Purina®, Iams®, Nutromax®, Eukanuba®, Walthams®). Growth (kitten) formula if animal is younger than a year or a nursing mother.

Toys

Be cautious: Items that are most attractive to cats are often the very things that are most dangerous. Cat proof your home by checking for: string, ribbon, yarn, rubber bands, plastic milk jug rings, paper clips, pins and needles, or anything else that could be swallowed. Avoid or alter toys that are not cat proof. Items include ribbons, feathers, strings and eyes or other parts that could be removed, chewed, and/or swallowed.

Soft toys should be machine washable. Check toy labels for child safety; a stuffed toy that is labeled “safe for children under 3 years old” cannot contain dangerous fillings. Problem fillings include nutshells and polystyrene beads. However, even safe stuffing is not digestible. Rigid toys are not as attractive to cats as to dogs.

• Recommended interactive toys

— Round plastic shower curtain rings. These are fun as a single ring to bat around, hide or carry. They can be linked together and hung in an enticing spot.

— Plastic rolling balls, with or without bells inside.

— Ping Pong balls or practice golf balls with holes to help cats carry them. Try putting one in a dry bathtub; the captive ball is much more fun than one that escapes under the sofa.

— Paper bags (remember to remove any handles). Paper bags are good for pouncing, hiding and hunting littermates.

— Sisal-wrapped toys

— Toilet paper and paper towels rolls are ideal; “unwind” a little cardboard on one end to get them started.

— Plastic bags are not safe toys. Many cats like to chew and ingest this type of plastic.

Animal-Proofing Your Home

Cats and kittens are curious creatures. Many are capable of jumping onto high surfaces or squeezing into the smallest of spaces. To protect foster animals in new environments and to safeguard your belongings, it is necessary to animal proof your house.

• Kitchens/bathrooms/utility rooms

— Use childproof latches to keep little paws from prying open cabinets.

— Keep medications, cleaners, chemicals, and laundry supplies on high shelves.

— Keep trashcans covered or inside a latched cabinet.

— Check for and block any small spaces, nooks, or holes inside cabinetry or behind washer/dryer units.

— Make sure cats or kittens haven't jumped into the dryer before you turn it on (this does happen!).

— Keep foods out of reach (even if the food isn't harmful, the wrapper could be).

— Keep toilet lids closed to prevent drowning.

• Living/family room

— Place dangling wires from lamps, VCRs, TVs, stereos, and phones out of reach.

— Keep children's toys put away.

— Put away knickknacks until the cat or kitten has the coordination and/or understanding not to knock them over.

— Block all those spaces where your vacuum cleaner doesn't fit, but a foster kitten could.

— Remove dangerous items, like string and pins. Put away all sewing and craft notions, especially thread.

— Move houseplants—some of which can be poisonous—out of reach, including hanging plants that can be jumped onto from other nearby surfaces.

— Secure aquariums or cages that house small animals, like hamsters or fish, to keep them safe.

— Make sure all heating and air vents have a cover.

- Garage

- Most garages usually contain too many dangerous chemicals and unsafe items to be an acceptable foster care site. Foster animals should never be housed in a garage.
- Move all chemicals to high shelves or behind secure doors.
- Clean up all antifreeze from the floor and driveway, as **one taste can be lethal to an animal.**

- Bedrooms

- Keep laundry and shoes behind closed doors (drawstrings and loose buttons can cause major problems).
- Keep any medications, lotions or cosmetics off accessible surfaces (like the bedside table).
- Move electrical and phone wires out of reach of chewing.

- Potentially dangerous situations

- Closet and bedroom doors
- Open doors to the outdoors (escape)
- Open dryer doors
- Open cabinet drawers
- Computer wires (electrocution or strangulation)
- Folding chairs
- Potted plants (possible poisoning or pulling plant off of shelf onto animal)

Never underestimate a foster animal's abilities. Accidents happen!

Paperwork/Cat's Folder

When you come to the Shelter to collect your foster animal, we will give you paperwork relating to its medical history. We will also give you blank adoption applications, a copy of the schedule of upcoming MAU events, and other information to help you find your foster cat a new home.

Medical checklist: We will furnish you with a checklist of what vaccinations and tests your foster animal received while at the shelter. You should take this form along anytime you take your cat/kitten to the vet. It is important that you let us know about medical treatments your foster pet undergoes so we can update our records here at the Shelter. Please ask the vet for a copy of any bills and pass them along to the Foster Office. Unless you're bringing the animal to the vet for an accident or illness that occurred in your home, you are not to pay the vet. Be sure to tell them it's a shelter animal and give them its AIL number, and please use its shelter name/tag number.

Foster Supplement Information form: Foster volunteers are required to provide a Foster Supplement Information form. These are in your folder, available at the Foster Office, or a PDF version can be emailed to you. These notes can be clever (and always honest), and should contain information about the cat's personality and behavior. Most potential adopters are interested in knowing if the cat is box-trained and whether it gets along with children and other pets.

List of participating vets: Several veterinary practices located within Taos County have signed contracts to provide services to the Humane Society at a reduced rate. Your foster cat should be seen by one of the vets on this list. If the cat needs spay/neuter surgery, the vet must also be on that specialized list. Please call Stray Hearts to discuss a vet @ 758.2981.

Spay and Neuter of Foster Animals

Shelter policy: The Montgomery County Humane Society requires that all cats and dogs be spayed or neutered. Intact animals should be spayed or neutered while in foster care. They recover from the procedure in their foster home and are then ready to be placed for adoption.

If a patron wants to adopt two animals of opposite sexes, one of them **MUST** be spayed or neutered **BEFORE** it goes home. The same applies if they already have an un-spayed or un-neutered animal in their home. All animals leaving Montgomery County **MUST** be spayed or neutered before they go to a home out-of-county.

Spaying or neutering at an early age: We have a list of vets who will spay or neuter an 8 week old kitten if it weighs at least 2 pounds. Please call the Foster Office at 240-773-5967 for the list. These are prepuberal sterilization procedures or “early spay-neuter”. Prepuberal animals are those under 6 months of age. Over 10 years of data nationwide have shown that early spay-neuter has no ill effects on the development or personality of a kitten. Additionally, females spayed before their first estrus derive more protection from developing mammary cancer in the future. It ensures that no animal will leave our county being able to contribute to the overpopulation problem. In almost all cases, kittens less than 4 months of age are spayed or neutered while in foster care.

Recovery: Adult female cats take 10 days to fully recover. Adult male cats take 7 days to fully recover. Kittens take 3 to 5 days to recover, unless problems arise. Recovery in the foster home is usually 3–5 days, depending on the animal.

Food and water: The night before surgery, kittens should have access to food and water. UNLESS YOUR VET INSTRUCTS DIFFERENTLY, they can have water the day of the surgery. Adult cats should not have food after 7:00 p.m. the night before their surgery.

Care after surgery

Rest and quiet: Your foster should be kept as quiet as possible after surgery, with lots of rest away from other pets and active children, (no jumping, swimming, etc). Kittens should be kept relatively calm (no roughhousing) for 2-3 days.

Food after surgery

Some animals may have a decreased appetite for 1–3 days following surgery. Start slowly with a small amount of food. If the cat vomits, take away the food and water until the next morning.

Incision: The incision should be kept dry for 2 weeks (no bathing, swimming, etc.)

— Check the incision daily.

— Watch for excessive swelling, blood, pus, reddening, painfulness, or anything else unusual.

— Do not allow the animal to lick or chew at the incision. This may lead to infection or other serious complication.

— **If licking or chewing becomes a problem, call immediately for an “E-collar” to prevent further irritation of the incision.** We may have one on hand at the Foster Office!

Many animals will have an area on their front leg shaved. This is from the insertion of the I.V. catheter.

Fostering Young Kittens

We receive many nursing queens with kittens, as well as orphaned kittens. Foster homes are needed to provide nursing queens and growing kittens a safe, warm environment in which they can raise their young. In this type of situation, foster volunteers closely monitor the progress of the litter. They also provide attention and socialization to the adult cat and the growing kittens.

• Daily duties

— Feed and water nursing queens and kittens; observe their overall health and behavior.

— Feed orphaned kittens, as often as every 2 hours, depending on their needs, throughout the day and night.

— Bottle-feed any kittens with nursing queens, if necessary.

— Stimulate orphaned kittens to urinate and defecate after every feeding.

— Clean orphaned kittens after feedings.

— While handling kittens, look for signs of development (eyes opening, earflaps unfolding, teeth erupting).

— Clean and sterilize nursing bottles, syringes and nipples.

— Help nursing mothers when they are ready to wean infants.

Foster cats need to be kept indoors throughout their foster period and travel in carriers to and from the Shelter or veterinary clinic.

Any factor that influences the mother’s health, labor or delivery will affect the health of the newborn kittens.

Because milk production requires energy, the queen's food and water supply should be increased 2 to 4 times her normal intake.

Nesting box environment

A clean, warm, dry, quiet, out-of-the-way site should be provided for the mother cat (queen) to raise her young. A queening box is essential for the mother and her babies.

The box should be large enough for the queen to comfortably lie away from the litter if she chooses, but small enough so the kittens are easy for you to reach. The sides need to be high enough to prevent the young from wandering, but low enough for the mother to be able to come and go with ease. The box should be lined with appropriate materials. If you are using a cardboard or wooden box, line the bottom with heavy plastic. Several layers of clean newspaper should be laid on top of the plastic to absorb moisture and odor. Clean, dry, soft, non-ravel, removable material should be placed on top of the newspaper (blankets, mattress pad, etc.).

Examine towels or blankets after each washing to ensure they remain free from any holes or frayed edges. Towels or blankets on the nesting box floor provide good traction for the young ones to crawl around without slipping.

It is important that the area where the kittens are kept is warm and smooth, so that the area around the umbilical cord does not become infected. Never place kittens in deep, loose bedding, (straw, hay, or shavings). These materials could obstruct breathing or be inhaled and cause respiratory infections.

The temperature at the level of the young should be 85–95°F. Be careful if using heating pads or electric blankets. They can become too hot and cause burns. If either of these items is used, it should be placed underneath the nesting box and only cover the bottom half of the nesting box space. The cord can be placed inside PVC pipe to prevent electrocution caused from a kitten biting the cord.

Drafts/dampness will chill neonates (very young kittens), even when room temperature is sufficient. Do not place cardboard boxes housing the young on concrete; this will draw a large amount of heat away from them. Kittens are not able to maintain their own body temperature until they are 2 to 3 weeks old.

Guiding your foster kitten's behavior

It is VITAL to include petting, talking and playing with foster kittens and cats in order for them to build good "people skills". Well-socialized queens are more likely to have well-socialized kittens. The kittens "feed" off the mother's calm or fearful attitude toward people.

Kittens separated from their littermates too soon often do not develop appropriate social skills. These can include but are not limited to:

- Learning how to send and receive signals to other cats
- What an inhibited bite is
- How far to go in play wrestling with littermates

Play helps to increase physical coordination and social skills, learning limits and how to be a cat by interacting with littermates and mother. Play, in particular, changes markedly near the end of the weaning period (about 7 weeks). Social play patterns become increasingly associated with predatory play patterns. The frequency with which kittens play with inanimate objects increases around 7 to 8 weeks of age.

Queen-kitten relationship: A mother's direct interaction with her kittens involves the "brrp" or "chirp" call as she approaches them. It also includes nuzzling and licking them to awaken them and to stimulate urination and 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 (i.e., it is trapped under its mother), or it becomes isolated and cold.

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

As the kittens become older and more mobile, they become increasingly responsible for approaching the mother and initiating suckling. In the later stages of the weaning period (at about 7 weeks old), 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.

Kitten development and what you can do

A great amount of time and effort is required to properly socialize kittens between the ages of 4 to 12 weeks. Daily socialization sessions are important in shaping the kitten's future personality and emotional growth.

Combine simple play with restraint exercises. This familiarizes a kitten to having its paws touched (front and back), mouth opened and ears touched. Combining this with regular grooming sessions and body massages help prevent skin sensitivity or aversion to touch. Acquaint kittens to different sights, sounds and textures.

Age	Teeth	Temperature	Eyes and Ears	Muscles
<p>Neonates: Neonatal Kittens should be pink, firm, plump and generally healthy in appearance</p>		Normal rectal temperature for newborns is 96–97 °F	Eyes: Closed, but can still hear (poorly) and respond to bright light with a blink reflex.	Healthy kittens will curl their bodies and limbs inward.
1 to 2 weeks		Normal rectal temperature has gradually increased to 100°F	Eyes: Open at approximately 11–15 days	Kittens can use their front legs to stand and walk shakily.
2 to 3 weeks	Deciduous incisors erupt, followed by deciduous canines	Able to maintain body temperature within the normal range (100.5°F–102.5°F)	Vision: Poor even after the eyes open, but continues to develop until 3–4 weeks of age. If the eyes fail to open and the lids look sticky, the lids should be very gently wiped with dampened cotton and a little petroleum jelly smeared on them to ease their opening. The eyelids should never be pulled apart. If the eyelids still haven't opened by 14 days, contact the Foster Department.	The rear legs can now support the body. Kittens are crawling.
3 to 4 weeks	Deciduous incisors and canine teeth erupt		Vision and hearing normal. Blink response disappears, due to the development of accurate pupil control. The infant is now able to use visual clues to locate and approach the mother. Ears should be completely open by 17 days.	By 21 days, kittens can walk with a fairly steady gait. Kittens can sit and have reasonable control of toes.
4 to 5 weeks	Deciduous premolars erupt		Guided paw placing and obstacle avoidance develop between 3–5 weeks. Vision is markedly improved.	Kittens are walking normally. They are climbing. Social play is prevalent.
5 to 8 weeks	Entire set of Deciduous teeth by 5 weeks	Normal range is 100.5°		Play with objects and locomotor play rise markedly around 7–8 weeks
8 weeks plus	Change from milk teeth to adult teeth starts at about 3 1/2 months			f

1 to 2 weeks: You can engage in gentle handling and cuddling at this point. These sessions should be very short (1–2 minutes) and great care should be taken in the handling process. Rub the hair coat gently with your hands, and gently finger the webbing in between the toes. Rub ears and muzzle. Invert the kitten so it is facing the ceiling and gently rock back and forth, up and down

2 to 3 weeks: Be careful not to startle the kitten with sudden movements or loud sounds.

The living area should have 2 areas, one for sleeping and the other for a litter box (away from the sleeping and feeding area).

Provide 5 minutes of handling exercises; the purpose is to stimulate the kitten, not to alarm it: Gently roll the kitten over on its back for 5–10 seconds, and then draw it close to you, stroking and cuddling it.

Softly and gently brush the kitten's coat a few strokes, touch the ears and mouth and clip nails (see nail clipping section or call the Foster Department if you are not sure how to do this).

3 to 4 weeks: Do not permanently remove the kitten from its mother or littermates at this time. It is critical to the kitten's development that it continues with this social interaction. It is important to provide a stable home environment to balance the excess stimulation a kitten is experiencing. This would NOT be a good time to move the queening box.

The kittens will start to investigate their immediate environment. Safe, simple toys can be added for them to discover at this time. The kittens can be introduced to people at this time, but this interaction should be carefully controlled. The interaction should be limited to 5 minutes of time spent in gentle massage and cuddling. The main caregiver should continue grooming and handling exercises: holding, cuddling, and stroking the kitten's body, including ears, tails, and muzzle.

4 to 5 weeks: Continue handling and socialization procedures.

5 to 8 weeks: The kitten is totally dependent on the environment you provide to stimulate and develop it. Introduce the kitten to as many different people as possible—people of different shapes, sizes, colors, sexes and ages. Encourage the kitten to allow individual handling by different people: men, women, and supervised children. Also introduce the kitten to other animals. Supervise the visits (about 5 minutes). These visits should be calm and pleasant. A traumatic incident at this stage could have a lasting effect.

Continue to add appropriate toys to the kitten's environment. Expose the kitten to mild sounds. Expose the kitten to different areas and surfaces, allowing it to investigate. The main caregiver should continue handling and grooming exercise

8 weeks plus: Female cats become sexually mature between 4 and 12 months of age. Male cats become sexually mature around 7 to 10 months. Protect the kitten from experiences that could have a lasting effect. Introductions to people are extremely important as the kitten develops the ability to form permanent relationships with humans at this time. Supervise the visit, but expose the kitten to as many different types of people as possible.

The kitten's environment should develop a sense of security. Introduce the kitten to a carrier. Introduce the kitten to louder noises gradually, such as a vacuum cleaner, washing machine and/or dishwasher. Play with the kitten as you introduce the noise in the background. The environment should be mentally stimulating to help the kittens develop. Make noises by blowing whistles, clapping hands, jingling bells, and turning the vacuum cleaner on throughout the day.

Encourage the kittens to explore, sniff, or lick these noisemakers. Exposing kittens to a variety of unusual sounds helps them become accustomed to these noises. It will also minimize fearful, nervous reactions to

noises later in life.

Only praise a kitten for positive reactions. Do not punish a kitten by forcing it to approach a scary situation and do not comfort it if it shows fear.

Adolescent: 13–16 weeks: The kitten is fully developed, needing only experience. The kitten's mind can still be influenced. The kitten's flight instinct is developing and this may cause it to run from real or imagined threats. Be consistent with rules, continue grooming and socialization.

Litter training kittens and cats

When a kitten is about 4 weeks old, it will begin to play in, explore and dig in loose, soft materials, such as dirt or litter. Soon, this investigative digging results in the kitten's eliminating in these materials. Kittens DO NOT have to be taught by either their mother or their human guardians to relieve themselves in soft, loose materials or to dig and bury their waste. This behavior is called "innate" or "instinctive" because the kitten is born knowing how to do it. However, where a cat eliminates can be affected by its experiences. Litter boxes that do not provide an acceptable place to eliminate **from the cat's point of view**, may cause a cat to relieve itself elsewhere. It is important to provide a litter box that meets the kitten or cat's needs so that it will like the box and use it consistently.

All that is really necessary to litter train a kitten or cat is to provide an acceptable and accessible litter box that follows the criteria listed in this section. What is **acceptable** and **accessible** must be determined from the cat's point of view, not the guardian's. It is not necessary, or even recommended, to take a cat to the box and move its paws back and forth in the litter. This may actually be an unpleasant experience for the cat and may initiate negative associations with the litter box.

Location: Most people want to place the litter box in an out of the way place in order to minimize odor and loose particles of cat litter tracked around the house. Often, the litter box may end up in the basement, possibly next to an appliance, on an unfinished, cold cement floor.

This type of location is often undesirable to the cat. A small, young kitten may not be able to get down a long flight of stairs in time to relieve itself, especially if it started out on the top floor of the house! An adult cat that is new to a home may not remember where the litter box is if it is located in an area that the cat seldom frequents.

A cat may become startled while using the litterbox if a furnace, or washer or dryer suddenly turns on. It may associate the litter box with the frightening noise and refuse to use it in that location.

Some cats like to scratch the surface surrounding their litter box and may find a cold cement floor unappealing. You may have to compromise by placing the litter box in a location that affords the cat some privacy, but is also conveniently located.

If you place the litter box in a closet, be sure the closet door is wedged open from both sides. This will keep the cat from being trapped inside or outside of the closet. If the box sits on a smooth, slick or cold surface, consider putting a small throw rug or mat underneath the litter box. The cat will have something to scratch and less litter will be tracked through the house.

Type of litter: Research has shown that most cats prefer fine-grained litters. Clumping litters are usually finer grained than typical clay litter. **Only use non-clumping litter with kittens younger than 12 weeks.** When first exploring the litter box, kittens tend to taste their litter and play in it. This causes the dust from clumping litter to solidify in their respiratory or digestive tracts.

Depth of litter: It is not true that the more litter put into a litter box, the less often you will have to clean it. Regular cleaning is essential, regardless of the depth of the litter. Cats do not choose areas for elimination where they "sink into" several inches of litter or dirt. Most cats will not like

litter that is more than about 2 inches deep. Some cats prefer even less than that, especially some longhaired breeds

Number of boxes: A good litter box guideline is to have at least as many litter boxes as you have cats. That way, no one can be prevented from using the box because it is already occupied. Litter boxes can be placed in several locations around the house. This practice helps to train young kittens because they can get to the closest box in time to eliminate. It also keeps one cat from “guarding” the litter box and preventing other cats from accessing it.

To cover or not to cover: Many cats will not show any preference for a covered versus a noncovered litter box. However, if the cat is very large, a covered litter box may not allow sufficient room for it to turn around, scratch and dig, and position itself in the way it prefers. Uncovered boxes are easier to use 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 type the 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 must 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 changed. Twice a week is a general guideline, but it may need changing more or less often, depending on circumstances. If you notice any odor to the box or if much of the litter is wet or clumped, it is time to change all the litter.

Do not use strong smelling chemicals or cleaning products when washing the litter box. 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 is also a good idea, but it will be necessary to have a back-up litter box while the other one is being cleaned.

Orphaned Kittens

When very young kittens are orphaned (“bottle babies”), foster volunteers are needed to bottlefeed them and provide them with **round-the-clock** care. Foster volunteers must feed, stimulate young kittens to eliminate, take care of their grooming requirements, and closely monitor their progress.

The results are rewarding as you watch bottle babies grow into healthy and active kittens. The length of foster care for bottle babies is typically 2–3 months. Kittens are placed into foster care with their litter or individually if only one kitten is brought to the shelter

- Suggested supplies for bottle babies
 - Animal nursing bottle with nipple, or syringe with or without nipple
 - Tissues, toilet paper, baby wipes, cotton balls (**unscented only**)
 - Stuffed toys for kittens to cuddle (Snuggle Critters work very well-found; at www.UPCO.com)
 - Heating pad

• **Facilities needed:** Infant kittens are easily kept in small carriers, baskets, playpens or boxes. As they grow, they will require an easy to clean area separated from your own companion animals, but not isolated from normal activities

Recommended diet and feeding techniques

NEVER FEED COW'S MILK TO A KITTEN! Cow's milk is not easily digested by kittens and may cause serious digestive problems.

Food: The Humane Society will provide kitten milk replacement formula (KMR®). Nursing queens will need high quality kitten growth food.

Do not feed a kitten until it is thoroughly warmed, should it become cold. It cannot digest any food until its body reaches normal temperature.

Using milk replacement formulas: Use a fork or wire whisk to mix the milk powder in small amounts. Formula may be mixed in a blender using short pulses, but should be allowed to sit for a few minutes to allow the air bubbles to settle out. Keep formula refrigerated after mixing.

Always warm the formula before feeding. It should feel warmer than your body temperature ($100^{\circ}\geq -102^{\circ}\geq F$) on your wrist. Heat only enough formula for each feeding and throw away any uneaten warmed formula after each feeding. Do not reuse warmed formula. Bacteria can develop after the formula has been warmed and can cause gastrointestinal problems for the kitten.

Keep both mixed formula and the formula powders in the refrigerator. Dry formula powder may be kept in the freezer for up to one year.

Overfeeding will cause bloat and distress, because the formula is not readily absorbed. Whatever the planned volume is for a feeding, stop when the stomach begins to show fullness.

Do not overfeed.

General guideline for formula feeding, based on age

Age Time Table Feedings per day

0-2 weeks Every 3-4 hours, 24 hours a day 6-8
2-3 weeks Every 4 hours, 24 hours a day 6-8
3-4 weeks Every 4-5 hours 5-6
4-5 weeks Every 5-6 hours 3-4
5-6 weeks Every 6 hours, from morning until 10 or 11 p.m. 3-4
6-8 weeks Every 8 hours 2-3

All determinations of feeding frequencies are based on the kitten's weight.

Feces (stool): The stools, (feces), should be tan to brown, firm and well formed.

Tips on bottle feeding

Use a small towel to hold the kitten. This will reduce stress on the kitten from cold hands and tight fingers, and will give the kitten something to hang onto. The kitten's forelegs should be unconfined to allow it to "knead" as it would on the mother's abdomen during feeding. The "kneading" is essential as it helps to develop the kitten's muscles and initiates peristaltic action of the intestines, which aids in digestion and elimination.

Use a small syringe (3 cc or less) for feeding newborns. Graduate to a larger syringe when the kitten is taking 3 or more cc's at a feeding. Do not use much larger syringes as this causes the formula to be drawn into the kittens mouth too quickly and can lead to aspiration.

An animal nursing bottle and nipple may be used for larger kittens. If using a bottle, gently burp the kitten by placing it in on its stomach in the palm of one hand and patting it on the back a few times with the other hand. This will allow any air ingested to be expelled, however, you won't hear

the kitten “burp”.

Do not put more than the amount for one kitten’s feeding in the bottle at one time. This will help you keep track of how much each kitten consumes per feeding and will keep the kitten from overeating.

Feed the kitten in an upright position, body perpendicular and chin parallel to the floor. Support the lower body with the palm of your hand and hold the head steady with your thumb and forefinger. Check the tummy for fullness after feeding 2/3 to 3/4 of the formula to avoid overfeeding.

Once the kitten opens its eyes, it may prefer to be fed in a prone position—belly on a flat surface, holding the syringe with its forepaws. Wrap the kitten in a towel or soft cloth when feeding to make it feel more secure and easier to hold.

A syringe with a sticky plunger should be thrown away: it can cause the formula to be expressed in sudden spurts, which can lead to aspiration. Throw away stretched catac nipples before the kitten aspirates from a hole in the tip that is too large.

Aspiration of fluids: Aspiration (inhalation of fluids into the lungs) of formula can be fairly common. If aspiration occurs, the kitten can be turned upside down and gently shaken once to help the fluid drain out. If this happens with very young kittens, a small bulb syringe or eyedropper can be used to suck the fluids out of the nostrils. Do not feed any more to the kitten until it has completely cleared the fluid from its lungs, usually by sneezing. Aspiration can be a dangerous situation, and can lead to possible pneumonia and death. If crackling or popping is heard as the kitten breathes, contact the Foster Department immediately.

Measure the amount of formula needed for all the kittens for one feeding and warm it in a glass container with a pour spout, (like a measuring cup), to a temperature of about 100° to 104°F. Then pour the proper feeding amount for each kitten into a bottle as you prepare to feed it. Another method is to fill the desired number of syringes, place a catac nipple on each, and place the filled syringes in warm water.

Check the temperature of the formula on the inside of your wrist before feeding each kitten. It should feel warm, not hot.

Maintaining temperature

It is a good idea to purchase a small thermometer, and place it in the container with the kittens to monitor temperature. The temperature should be maintained between 80°F and 90°F at the level of the kittens.

It is important that the container be placed 1/2 on and 1/2 off the heating pad for kittens less than 3 weeks. By doing this, the kittens can crawl to a cooler spot if they become too warm. Kittens should be able to maintain their body temperature without an additional heat source by 3 weeks of age, but will still need something to cuddle with, like a blanket or stuffed toy.

Common signs of kitten illness

Illnesses during these periods are primarily caused by infections, (bacterial, viral, protozoan and parasitic), or malnutrition during weaning.

• Some signs of illness in neonatal kittens are:

- Frequent crying
- Restlessness
- Weakness
- Hypothermia (lower body temperature)
- Diarrhea
- Dehydration
- Altered respiration (labored, shallow or “crackling”)

- Cyanosis (white to bluish color of mucous membranes)

Management of neonatal illness

Immediate care is required. Ill kittens need external warming with hot water bottles or a heating pad. Gradually warm the kitten and turn it every hour. If using a hot water bottle to warm the kitten, check the bottle frequently to insure it hasn't lost its heat and is unintentionally cooling the

Once the kitten's normal body temperature has been reached:

- Encourage food intake—diluted formula or meat baby food
- Encourage water intake—diluted formula, if the kitten is still on the bottle

Weigh the kitten daily, if possible, to assess weight gain or loss.

Observe the degree of moisture of mucous membranes, skin elasticity and clearness of urine in assessing hydration levels. It is highly recommended to regularly record weight, feeding schedule and amount of food eaten at each feeding, urine, feces, and any other important information. Then you can refer to these records to insure they are growing at a normal rate, as well as if the kitten(s) becomes ill.

Healthy kittens have moist gums, elastic skin, and clear, colorless urine when normally hydrated. Dry gums, loss of skin elasticity or any yellow color or odor to urine indicates dehydration.

Causes of neonatal illnesses: Illnesses are usually acquired in utero, during the birth process (seen in neonates and 0 to 2 weeks of age), or in post weaning period

Fading Kitten syndrome: A "fading" kitten is one that appears healthy at birth, but fails to survive beyond 12 weeks of age. Death generally occurs because of one of the following: congenital defects, low birth weight, nutritional diseases resulting from inadequate diet fed to the mother, infectious diseases, lack of antibodies from mother, or miscellaneous causes (such as severe intestinal parasites).

Kitten death due to "fading" is not uncommon. Usually the circumstances are unavoidable. REMEMBER THAT IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT! Also remember that you gave the kitten every opportunity to survive.

IMPORTANT: If an animal in your care should pass away, please call Stray Hearts immediately!

Weaning and feeding kittens

Generally, it is best to start weaning kittens at 3 to 5 weeks of age. Weaning should be a gradual process. If you are lucky enough to have the queen with her kittens, she will take care of the weaning process herself. You will want to be sure you are supplying enough food for the nursing queen as well as the weaning kittens.

How to wean: Begin introducing 3 to 5 week old kittens to semi-solid gruel, made from 1 part canned food to 3 parts hot water or kitten milk replacement formula. Make sure to serve the food at body temperature, (98° to 100°F). Offer this mixture 3 to 4 times daily. Remove the gruel after about 15 minutes and discard.

Introducing food: Dip your finger into the gruel and let the kitten lick at it, or smear a small amount on the kitten's lips. Be careful not to get any of the gruel in the kitten's nose. You may also touch a finger into the gruel and then place the finger into the kitten's mouth. At around 5 weeks of age, the kittens should be reducing their intake of mother's milk. Once they are consistently eating the gruel, gradually decrease the amount of water used. Always provide plenty of fresh water in clean bowls. All changes in amounts and consistency of food should be made gradually to promote good digestion.

Never give cow's milk.

Some kittens take longer to wean than others. It is important to always watch the litter to ensure that each individual is eating healthy amounts of food. Check tummies for fullness after each

3-6 weeks: Gruel 3 times a day. Dry food always available.

6-8 weeks: Canned food 2 times a day. Dry food always available.

Helping the queen's milk supply dry up

The queen's milk can be "dried up" by withholding food for 24 hours, then adding it back slowly, increasing it by 25% each day for four days. Many queens will dry up as they wean their kittens. It will vary with each individual queen.

Mastitis

Mastitis is an inflammation of one or more of the mother cat's mammary glands. Mastitis usually occurs within 6 weeks after giving birth, if it is going to occur at all. Symptoms of mastitis include fever, listlessness, loss of appetite and neglect of the young. Affected mammary glands are usually swollen, hot and painful to the touch. You can feel firm nodules within the tissue of the teat. The cause is often from a bacterial infection in the mammary gland and may require antibiotic treatment. If the cat will tolerate it, hot packing the affected glands will encourage drainage. The use of Bag Balm® will also promote healing.

Non-septic mastitis results from milk stasis. It most commonly occurs after weaning.

Fostering Juvenile Kittens

We receive many kittens younger than 8 weeks of age. Placement into foster homes allows these kittens to mature, socialize, and to begin their vaccination series. Young kittens are usually placed into foster homes with their littermates, but occasionally a large litter may be split up or a single kitten may need care. **Kittens must be at least 8 weeks of age and weigh 2 pounds to be eligible for adoption.**

Facilities needed: An easy to clean area separated from your own companion animals, yet not isolated from normal activities. Examples are a bathroom, spare bedroom, heated laundry room or kitchen. Some foster volunteers use a playpen, but a makeshift lid is recommended.

Fostering Injured or Surgery Recovery Cats

The Humane Society receives many animals in need of medical care. The period for an animal recovering from surgery may vary from a few days to months, depending on the severity of the injuries and treatment involved.

These cats or kittens might require **daily medications or special diets**, as well as visits to a veterinary clinic. Some cats or kittens need complete 'bed rest' in order to fully heal, and some may require some sort of rehabilitation exercises.

Facilities needed: An easily accessed, easy to clean area, separated from your own companion animals. It may also need a quiet place to stay. For others, being right in the middle of things is

- Daily duties
 - Administer medications/ointments as required.
 - Exercise animals as required for therapy.
 - Provide bed rest conditions, if required.

Please report any health or behavioral problems to the Foster Department immediately.

Fostering Ill Cats & Kittens

Shelter cats and kittens are frequently exposed to diseases that are contagious to other cats and kittens. These illnesses can affect felines of all ages and can include upper respiratory infection, mites (skin and ear), intestinal parasites, or feline panleukopenia.

The immune system of the infected cat or kitten may be compromised because of any of these illnesses. While fostering ill cats or kittens, a volunteer will likely be asked to administer daily medication, provide a special diet, and ensure regular visits to a veterinary clinic.

Facilities needed: An easy to clean area is needed. The area should be completely isolated from your own companion animals, such as a spare bathroom, bedroom, den or heated basement.

- Suggested supplies

- Medication(s) will be provided by the shelter if the cat/kitten is sick when going into foster care.

- Pill applicator, if needed.

- “As needed” duties

- Be aware of possible check-up appointments

- Medicate as directed by veterinary staff.

- Observe signs of improvement or deterioration.

- Inform Foster Department immediately if problems occur.

Fostering for Overpopulation

This is the bulk of our fostering needs. Foster volunteers are always needed to provide temporary housing for adoptable animals in order to alleviate overcrowded conditions at the shelter.

Facilities needed: An easy to clean area, isolated from your own companion animals. This can be a spare bathroom, bedroom, den, or heated basement.

Fostering Under-Socialized (Semi-Feral) Kittens

Under-socialized, neglected, and frightened kittens may be the most challenging to foster. They require specialized care in order to qualify for adoption. Many arrive never having lived indoors among people, with minimal human contact during their critical imprinting stage. These kittens may have never been inside a house, may not be litter trained, and may have never before experienced kindness from a human. **They will require a great deal of attention, patience and time from their foster family.**

Under-socialized kittens must be closely monitored to reduce the chance of escape or destructive behavior. They frequently require fostering for at least a month while they acquire the social skills that will make them treasured lifelong companions for a lucky family. Kittens over four months of age are usually not sent to foster homes. After this age, the possibility for rehabilitation is much

Facilities needed: An ideal place is an easy to clean area that is separated from your own companion animals, yet not isolated from normal activities. Under-socialized kittens are housed best in smaller rooms with just a few hiding places (bathrooms are ideal). The kitten can be found more easily this way.

- Suggested supplies

- Canned food can be used as a treat or for enticement, and should be given when you are able to spend time with the kitten, if possible. Do not withhold food, but make it enticing enough for the kitten to come out of hiding when a person is in the room.

- Daily duties

- Handle the kitten: talking, stroking, brushing, lifting paws, check ears, mouth, and eyes.

Reading aloud in the room where the kitten is staying can also be helpful. During this time, you may have treats, or an enticing toy to lure the kitten out of hiding. While you read, act like you are not aware the kitten is there, even when it comes out to see you.

- Introduce the cat to a litter box.
- Socialize the kitten, when ready, to other people.

Suggestions for Cleaning Procedures

The most common disease organisms seen at the shelter are: viruses, bacteria, parasites and fungi. It is important to consider all objects with which a foster animal may come into contact and disinfect accordingly. This will help protect your companion animals and any future foster animals.

Cleaning agents: All surfaces may not be easily cleaned, but thorough washing and/or vacuuming helps in decreasing the numbers of environmental pathogens. In order to decide on the effectiveness of a particular cleaner, it is necessary to determine the active ingredients, strength and proper contact time.

Using bleach as a disinfectant: the recommended dilution is 1 part bleach to 30 parts water (1/4 cup bleach to 1 gallon water). The recommended contact time is 10 minutes. **Color Safe bleach does not disinfect like regular bleach.**

Consider washing animal laundry in a separate load from family laundry. Do not use fabric softeners. Use **unscented dryer sheets only** to cut down on static cling if desired.

Websites: Some useful websites are www.pinesol.com, www.cloroxhome.com, www.simplegreen.com, or www.ddfl.org/behavior/cleaning.htm

Reading labels: It is important to read the labels on non-toxic, environmentally friendly products like Simple Green®. **It is not a disinfectant.** The company does make a Simple Green D®, which is a disinfectant. This also applies to newer products, including Clorox Wipes®. **Bleach is not an**

ingredient in this product!

Products like Febreze® are generally safe to use in a home with animals, although, **some animals can have allergic reactions. Use these products with discretion.**

CAUTION: DO NOT USE TILEX®! It contains antifreeze and is deadly if ingested.

Cleaning to Remove Pet Odors and Stains

Has your foster cat or kitten left “scent marks” of urination and/or defecation on your floor or furniture? To successfully retrain the cat or kitten to avoid these areas and remove these smells and stains, follow these basic steps:

Find all soiled areas using your nose and eyes. A black light will show urine stains. Turn out all lights in the room, use the black light to identify soiled areas and lightly outline the areas with

• Laundering

- Machine wash as usual, adding a one pound box of baking soda to the wash along with your regular detergent. Air dry, if possible.
- If you can still see or smell the stain, machine wash again and add an enzymatic cleaner. Follow the manufacturer’s directions carefully. Enzymatic cleaners can be purchased at pet supply stores.
- To discourage future accidents on bedding, cover the bed with a vinyl, flannel backed tablecloth. They are machine washable, inexpensive, and unattractive to the cat or kitten.

• For carpeted areas and upholstery

- Soak up as much urine as possible with a combination of newspaper and paper towels. The more fresh urine you can remove before it dries, (especially from carpet), the simpler it will be to remove the odor. Place a thick layer of paper towels on the wet spot and cover with a thick layer of newspaper. Stand on this padding for about 1 minute. Remove the padding; repeat until the area is barely damp.

— If possible, take the FRESH, urine soaked paper towel to the cat's litter box, and let the cat or kitten watch you do it. **Act happy!** This will help to remind the cat or kitten that eliminating is not bad.

— Rinse the affected zone thoroughly with CLEAN, COOL WATER. After rinsing, remove as much water as possible by blotting or by using a vacuum designed to pick up liquids.

— Neutralizing (enzymatic) cleaners will not be effective on the area if you have previously used other cleaners or chemicals. You must first rinse every trace of the old cleaner from the carpet.

— To remove all traces of an old chemical, consider renting an extractor or wet-vac from a local hardware store. This machine operates much like a vacuum cleaner and is an efficient, economical rinsing method.

— Now that the area is clean, use a high quality pet odor neutralizer available at pet supply stores (look for "enzymatic" cleaners). Test the affected surface for staining first, then read and follow the instructions carefully.

— If the area still looks stained after it is completely dry from extracting and neutralizing, try any good carpet stain remover available.

— If the urine has soaked down into the padding underneath the carpet or into wooden baseboards, cleaning will be more difficult. You may need to remove and replace that portion of your carpet padding.

— Make the appropriate bathroom area attractive to the cat and teach it where you want it to urinate and defecate. The retraining period may take a week or more. It took time to build the bad habit, and it will take time to replace that habit with a new, more acceptable one.

• For floors and walls

— If the wood in furniture, walls, baseboard or floor is discolored, the acid in the urine has affected the varnish or paint. The layer of varnish or paint may need to be removed.

— Washable enamel paints and some washable wallpaper may respond favorably to enzymatic cleaners. Read the instructions carefully and test in a less visible area.

Safety and Incident Reports

Don't put yourself in a compromising situation with any animal. Always practice safe animal handling and disease control. Report aggressive behavior or a bite that breaks the skin to the Foster Department immediately.

Checklist for handling a bite incident

• Clean and flush the wound immediately with soap and water.

• Report the incident to a Humane Society staff member. If the bite occurs when the shelter is closed, call the emergency line at 240-773-5900. They will need to know which dog was involved and the circumstances of the bite.

• **See your doctor.** Receive tetanus prophylaxis and antibacterial treatment when required. It is not advised to have sutures or wound closure unless unavoidable.

State law requires any dog or cat that bites and breaks the skin to be placed on a 10-day quarantine for rabies observation.

During this time, the cat or kitten may be quarantined in your home, unless you are not comfortable with this arrangement. If you prefer, the cat or kitten may be returned to the shelter and placed in the "cat closet" for the duration of the quarantine. When the quarantine period ends, the cat or kitten may be re-evaluated by the Humane Society staff.

• When a bite is not reported

— **It creates a hazard for others handling that animal.** An animal that has bitten once is usually less inhibited in biting a second time.

— If the bite is never reported, we may release a rabid animal into an otherwise healthy population.

— **If the animal is rabid,** it could mean the death of the bitten individual and post-exposure treatment for those who have had close contact with the victim. This can include parents, spouse, children, neighbors, and pets.

Medical Problems

All animals are evaluated for age, health and temperament before being placed in a foster home.

Diseases: Several diseases are commonly seen in a shelter environment. Most of these diseases have incubation periods before symptoms appear. **Your foster animal may have been infected with a disease before going out into foster care, but not show symptoms until after you have brought it home.** Unfortunately, there aren't always tests to determine some diseases before an animal shows symptoms.

If the foster animal is showing signs of illness at the time you come to take it home, the Foster Department staff will send medications and instructions with you. If symptoms occur once the animal is in your care, please call the Foster Department **immediately** to have a vet visit authorized. All veterinary care is given at a veterinary clinic which has signed an agreement with the Humane Society. A list of participating vets can be obtained from the Foster Office.

Symptoms: Symptoms should lessen within a few days of starting medication. If the symptoms persist, call the Foster Department immediately.

It is extremely important to administer all medications and finish the entire prescription.

Instructions: You will be given instructions when picking up each foster animal. **Please follow them closely.** These instructions are designed to protect the foster animal, your own animals and those animals belonging to your friends and neighbors. Many diseases are extremely contagious and can live for long periods outside of the 'host' foster animal.

Awareness: Be aware of the animal's general well being as you feed and play with your foster animals. If you have any health-related concerns, please contact the Foster Department as soon as you notice a problem. **Please do NOT wait until a crisis occurs.**

Emergencies: If you have an emergency during business hours, please call the Foster Department. After hours, contact the Shelter's emergency number at 240-773-5900. They will contact the supervisor on call on your behalf.

Always check with the Foster Department staff before making an appointment with a veterinary clinic. They can help trouble shoot the foster animal's condition.

Symptoms of Health Problems

It is important that foster volunteers be able to interpret changes in an animal's appearance, bodily functions and behavior in order to detect signs of illness.

If you have questions about an animal's health, call the Foster Department and describe the animal's condition over the phone. Home care instructions can often be given or an authorization made to have the animal visit a vet clinic.

The following are some symptoms that require immediate attention:

- Labored breathing, excessive panting or incessant coughing
- Vomiting of blood or bile
- Severe diarrhea, especially when accompanied by vomiting
- Pronounced limping or paralysis
- Unconsciousness, seizures, uneven pupil dilation or fainting
- Marked behavioral changes

Listed below are some symptoms of illness:

Eyes

- Yellow or green discharge
- Uneven pupil dilation: concussion, seek immediate attention
- Swollen conjunctiva, including 3rd eyelid
- White film or cloudiness over eye or yellowing on white part of eye
- Red or blinking eyes

Ears

- Dark, flaky debris or Dark, waxy discharge with yeasty smell
- Yeasty smell with no discharge
- Animal exhibits pain when ear is rubbed or cleaned
- Frequent scratching at ear

Nose

- Yellow or green discharge
- Scabs or skin loss
- Bleeding from nose
- Excessive sneezing

• Mouth

- Loss of appetite: in adult animals for more than a few days, in juvenile animals for more than one day.
- Increased appetite for over a week
- Vomiting, usually more than three times
- Trouble eating or chewing, painful gums or teeth
- Bright red gums or pale gums
- Ulcers or lacerations on gums or lips
- Excessive salivation, especially a change in the amount of salivation
- Labored breathing during rest, coughing
- **Labored breathing with pale or bluish gums: very serious, call vet clinic immediately!**
- Panting, with red skin and/or gums: animal is too hot. Cool by taking indoors or shady area and giving slightly salted water or electrolyte solution, like Gatorade®

Skin

- Redness
- Lacerations
- Lumps
- Hair loss
- Scabs
- Frequent scratching
- Dry coat
- **Dehydration—a dangerous condition for an animal to develop, and it will need immediate attention.** Dehydration is indicated by dry skin, lack of skin elasticity, dry mucus membranes or darker yellow-colored urine. To detect dehydration, use the following steps:
 1. Gently grasp the loose skin above the animal's shoulders or along its rib cage, lift the skin and let it drop back into place. If the skin drops back slowly or remains bunched up, the animal may be dehydrated. (Not always accurate in infant animals.)
 2. Check gums. Dry, sticky and/or pale gums could indicate dehydration.
- Anal/genital area
 - Diarrhea: bloody, liquid diarrhea—seek immediate medical attention.
 - No bowel movement for more than 48 hours
 - No urination for more than 24 hours, especially in male cats

Gait

- Discoloration/changes in feces
- Sudden lameness/limping that doesn't improve with rest within 24 hours.
- Animal experiences pain upon walking or handling.
- Decreased activity, limpness, and crying for more than 15 minutes can be signs of hypothermia or hypoglycemia.

- Temperature
 - Rectal temperature below 99.5°F or higher than 102.5°F at rest
- Enlarged lymph nodes
 - Neck
 - Front legs
 - Rear leg
- Behavior
 - Lethargic
 - Poor appetite
 - Increased appetite with weight loss
 - Excessive drinking
 - Increased urination or accidents in the house
- Straining to urinate or defecate
- Frequent scratching at ears or skin
- Crying, whining, growling
- Head shaking
- Seizure or convulsions, **seek immediate medical care**

Common Medical Problems Seen in Cats and Kittens

Diarrhea

Diarrhea is a fairly common ailment among kittens. Kittens are more severely affected by diarrhea than cats. They should be closely observed because their condition could quickly become life threatening. **Diarrhea left unchecked can kill a kitten very quickly.**

Watch your foster kitten(s) carefully. Check for recurrent bouts of diarrhea, blood or mucus in the feces, foreign material in the feces and frequency of defecation.

If a foster animal becomes ill

Be attentive. Familiarize yourself with the animal's habits so that you will recognize any unusual changes in its behavior. The Foster Department staff will want to know details, such as the color or consistency of feces, changes in eating habits or energy level. Be ready to state when a problem began, how often it occurs and whether the condition tends to happen at specific times, (e.g., mealtime, bedtime, after exercise).

Watch the clock. If mild symptoms do not disappear in 24 hours, call the Foster Department.

Use caution when tending to a sick or injured cat or kitten. Do not allow children or other animals to interact with a sick or injured feline.

When you call the Foster Department, it will be helpful if you know the animal's temperature, if it is vomiting, has diarrhea, is active or listless, whether or not it is eating and drinking, and the cat or kitten's age. When it concerns the health of foster animals, there is no such thing as a "stupid" question!

Administering Medication

Administering medication

It is essential that medications be given for the full amount of time prescribed, even if the cat or kitten begins to look and act better.

Administering pills: The cat's mouth is opened by pulling its upper jaw upward. The upper jaw should be grasped behind the long canine teeth with the lips folded in so that they will be inside the mouth. Your forearm is pushed against the head as the upper jaw is pulled up. If the cat does not open its mouth, you can squeeze its lips against its canine teeth and gently force it to do so.

The pill is held between the thumb and forefinger of your other hand. The third finger is placed on the incisors of the lower jaw to hold it down while the pill is dropped on the back of the tongue. The mouth should be held shut until the cat has swallowed the pill.

Pet "pillers" are available at pet stores, and are safer than using your fingers to place the pill in

the back of the cat's mouth. Some might even be available in the Foster Office. Ask us.

Baytril tablets may be crushed between two spoons and combined with a drop or two of water. Put the entire thing into the cat's mouth and hold it closed until he swallows. Or, combine the crushed powder with approximately 1/4 tsp of wet food and feed to the cat before his regular meal. Be sure he eats all of the medicine-laced food before his regular dinner is served.

Kittens are given liquid medication if possible.

Administering pastes

The easiest way to administer a paste is to place the appropriate amount as a ribbon on your finger, open the cat or kitten's mouth, and smear the paste on the roof of the mouth. If the paste is pre-measured in a syringe, it may be placed on the cat's tongue.

An alternate method is to place the paste on the cat or kitten's front leg, where it will be licked off. This alternate method is not as accurate a dose as giving the paste directly. Use the alternate method only for medications that do not have to be measured accurately.

Administering liquids

Tilt the cat's head back, open the mouth and slowly dribble the liquid from a syringe or dropper onto the back of the tongue (always administer liquid medication from the side of the mouth). If the cat coughs or sputters, decrease the amount of head tilt. If the medication is bitter tasting, the cat may foam at the mouth.

Medical notations

Some abbreviations you might see on your foster's medical checklist:

SID once per day TID three times per day

BID twice per day QID four times per day

q every eod every other day

po By mouth sq Sub cutaneous (under the skin)

im Intra muscular iv Intra venous (in the vein)

Eye drops and ointment

Drops: Tilt the head back slightly, gently holding the eye lid open. Bring the bottle of drops over the eye and drop in the prescribed amount.

Ointment: Tilt the head back slightly, gently holding the eyelid open. Squeeze a small amount of ointment inside the lower eyelid. Close the eye to distribute the ointment evenly over the eye. It may be necessary to get the help of an assistant. Cats may be wrapped securely in a towel to help administer any medication.

Ear drops and ointment

Grasp the tip of the ear with one hand and hold the earflap perpendicular. With the other hand, drop in the prescribed number of drops or the amount of ointment. Continue to hold the ear firmly (to prevent head shaking), and massage the base of the ear to work the medication down inside the ear canal.

Checking Temperature

Caution: The rectum of a young kitten can be damaged if the thermometer is inserted too far into the rectum.

How to take the temperature

Normal temperature is from 100° to 102.5°F.

You will need a rectal thermometer to take a cat's temperature. Digital thermometers are best. Use petroleum jelly to lubricate the end of the thermometer. If using a digital thermometer, place the thermometer gently into the animal's rectum, and leave it there until the digital model beeps. Leave a glass thermometer inside the rectum for about 1 minute. Contact the Foster Department immediately if a cat or kitten's temperature is over 104°F.

Grooming Foster Cats & Kittens**Grooming procedures and training**

Gleaming hair with a lively, resilient "bounce" sets off your foster animal's fine qualities, makes it more attractive to a potential adopter and indicates it is in good health.

Most adult cats are fairly adept and cleaning and grooming themselves. However, it is still necessary to groom them regularly. This action accustoms a cat to being handled and allows you to check for any health problems. Regular grooming can also make cats more easily examined by a veterinarian.

Even though kittens don't have enough fur at first to need much grooming, regular short "training periods" will accustom the kitten to being handled in this manner and will make any nail trimming or medicating a much less stressful process for both of you.

Longhaired cats will require much more frequent grooming than the shorter-haired breeds.

Regular grooming will help prevent longhaired breeds from developing snarls and tangles on the abdomen and around the inner thighs.

Rest the cat comfortably in your lap and gently groom it with a comb or brush, depending on the coat. Paws, toes, ears and mouth should be checked as part of the grooming. Keep the sessions short (about 5 minutes).

If a cat is less than thrilled with this routine, you may need to hold the scruff of the neck, (gently but securely) to prevent its leaving or offering too much resistance, or offer her treats to reward her for tolerating grooming.

Additional grooming care

Ears: Check foster cat and kitten ears at least once a month, orphans more often. Carefully clean out wax deposits with a cloth-wrapped finger or a cotton swab dipped in baby oil. NEVER PROBE DEEPLY INTO THE EAR. You may permanently injure the ear canal or other delicate inner parts. Be alert to possible trouble if the inner part of the ear is inflamed or has a foul odor. Notice if the animal persistently shakes its head, rubs it against the floor, holds it tilted to one side or scratches at its ears.

Eyes: Keep foster cat and kitten eyes clean of any discharge. Wipe the eyes with soft cloth, cotton or a tissue paper moistened in boric acid or mild saline solution. Work from the eye corner outward, never across the eye, as this will spread any possible infection.

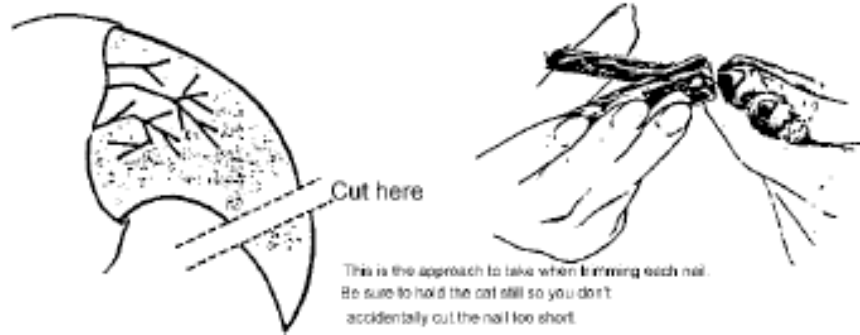
Nail Trimming

Nails grow continuously. When nails are not worn down naturally by activity, they may need to be trimmed. Before trimming your foster cat's nails, get it accustomed to having its paws handled. Begin by gently petting the cat's legs and paws while giving it a treat, making this a pleasant experience.

Gradually increase the pressure on the paw so that petting becomes gently squeezing, as you will need to do to extend the claw. Continue with the treats until your cat will tolerate this kind of touching and restraint. This may take longer with cats that have rarely had their legs or paws handled. Apply a small amount of pressure to the cat's paw, with your thumb on top of the paw and your index finger under the paw, until the claws are extended. You should be able to see the

pink or “quick”, which is a small blood vessel. You DO NOT want to cut into the pink portion, as it will bleed and be painful for the cat.

If you cut off just the sharp tip of the claw, it will dull the nail and prevent extensive damage to household objects and to your skin. The nails can be trimmed weekly. If a nail clipper is used, it is important to keep the clipper perpendicular to the claw so as not to crush it.



If you are uncomfortable trimming any foster cat or kitten's nails, please do not attempt it. Seek assistance from a vet office or professional groomer. MCHS does not pay for toenail clipping.

A special thank you to the Montgomery County Humane Society and the Humane Society of Boulder Valley (Colorado) for sharing their documents which formed the basis of this information packet

FOSTER INFORMATION SUPPLEMENT FOR CATS			
AIL #	TAG/NAME:	DATE:	FOSTER:

Breed/colors: _____ Age: _____ SEX: Female Spayed Male Altered

Spay/neuter stitches removed? Yes No

Date of last RABIES vaccination: _____ Date /Results of FIV TEST: _____

Date/Results of FELINE LEUKEMIA TEST: _____

ANY MEDICAL HISTORY adopter should be aware of? (Allergies, Surgery, Medications, etc)

BRAND/FLAVOR of CANNED FOOD: _____ HOW OFTEN _____

BRAND/FLAVOR of DRY FOOD: _____ HOW OFTEN _____

DOES CAT USE LITTERBOX? Always Sometimes Never Other

ANY LITTERBOX PROBLEMS? (urinates/defecates over edge, marking, etc.)

DOES CAT LIKE DOGS? Yes No Don't know

OTHER CATS? Yes No Don't know

IS CAT USED TO CHILDREN? Yes No Ages _____

Would you describe this cat as: AFFECTIONATE, loves to be around people
CALM, not much bothers him/her
NERVOUS around strangers/children
RECLUSIVE, prefers to be alone

Does cat use a SCRATCHING POST? Yes No Sometimes Never Don't know

TYPE of SCRATCHING POST: Carpet Sisal Bark Cardboard Other _____

Has cat ever BITTEN or SCRATCHED a CHILD? _____ an ADULT? _____

BITTEN WHEN PETTED? _____ IN PLAY? _____ UNPROVOKED BITE? _____

Which forms of CORRECTION do you use? Yell "NO" HIT cat CONFINE cat
SPRAY with water OTHER, please explain: _____

Further COMMENTS HELPFUL for ADOPTION _____