



**CONTRA COSTA
HUMANE SOCIETY**

Cat Foster Manual:

A Guide for Cat Fosters

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Thank you for opening your heart and home to one of our county shelter’s orphaned cats. Your generosity will provide young and old, injured and sick, abused and under- socialized cats a chance to grow or heal before finding their forever homes. Contra Costa Humane Society began its foster care program in 1992. Since then, the program has saved thousands of animals that might otherwise have been euthanized.

This manual is designed to provide foster parents with a comprehensive overview of Contra Costa Humane Society’s Foster Cat Program. Along with the information included in the foster packet, this manual is meant to be a helpful resource for foster parents and should answer many of the questions that may arise before and during foster care. Foster parents should always consult with the Foster Cat Team members for specific help and assistance. All information is subject to change.

REASONS TO FOSTER

Fostering is a wonderful experience for you and your family - you can feel good knowing you have helped save a homeless cat’s life. Even better, you’ve created space in the shelter to accommodate other homeless cats in need. Foster cats provide companionship and purpose - your act of kindness is repaid in rewards that are beyond words.

Cat needing foster homes

- Kittens too young and/or immature to be adopted
- Abandoned mothers with litters of kittens that require more socialization than available at the shelter
- Injured cats and/or those recovering from surgery
- Neglected or abused cat that need tender loving care
- Cats suffering from “shelter stress” in need of a calming home environment
- Cats with colds or with special medical needs
- Any cat when the shelter becomes overcrowded, or the cat has simply been there too long
- Older or senior cats looked past because of age, medical or behavioral needs

REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL FOSTER PARENTS

In order to become a foster parent, you will need to do the following:

- Be 21 years of age or older
- Provide a copy of your driver’s license
- Agree to and sign the Cat Foster Agreement at the end of this guide
- Pass a home safety inspection (at CCHS’s discretion)
- Provide a safe, loving and stable environment for the foster animal until it is adopted
- Be willing to foster your animal from rescue to adoption (the time per animal may vary depending on its needs)
- Have patience and an understanding that all animals are rescue animals and their backgrounds and behaviors can be unknown. Be prepared for some adjustment in the beginning. It can be stressful for both you and the animal to be in a new situation. Be patient and know that things will get easier!
- Resident animals need to be current on all vaccines and spayed/neutered

- Willingness to work with behavioural concerns that require training
- Agree to keep your foster cat indoors only at all times
- Transport your foster to veterinary appointments and adoption events as necessary
- Be able to separate foster and resident animals if needed (for medical or behavioral reasons, for example)
- Accommodate adoption meetings with pre-qualified potential adoptive families either at foster home or off-site
- Be prepared to be financially responsible for a portion of the cat's care. CCHS provides as much as possible but financial constraints can lead to a reduction of items provided.
- Treat the animal as a member of your family!

As a CCHS foster, you are not only helping to prepare your foster cat for a permanent, loving home, but you are also helping to represent CCHS as a respectable, reputable organization within the rescue field. Fosters are required to adhere to policies, protocols and CCHS's Code of Conduct as outlined in the Volunteer Manual.

HOW THE SELECTION PROCESS IS DEFINED

On any given day, there may be hundreds of cats residing in public shelters. These cats are brought to the shelter for the following reasons:

- Owner surrender
- Found by animal control officers or brought in by member of the public as a stray
- Left in the after-hours depository, with or without identification or information
- Impounded for neglect or other investigation

Cats that are brought in as strays or left in the after-hours depository are initially held as stray cats in order to allow their guardians a chance to reclaim them. Cats that have some form of identification (collar, tags, microchip, or tattoo) are held 3-5 business days, while cats with no identification are held for 3 business days.

Once the stray hold is finished (or after surrender by the owner), the cat is then medically and temperamentally evaluated by shelter vets to determine its suitability for adoption to the public. If the cat is medically sound and passes the informal temperament test, she is made available for public adoption. If the cat has a medical concern, she will be made available to rescue groups for medical reasons; if she doesn't pass the temperament test, she will be made available to rescue groups for behavioral reasons (or not available at all if deemed aggressive). If the cat has an obvious medical injury, a temperament test may be omitted as the injury will affect results.

Cats that are initially available only to the public for adoption may become available to rescue groups during their stay if they develop a medical concern (upper respiratory infections, etc.), a behavioral concern (stress), or if they've simply been there too long with no interest from the public. Despite common belief, the shelter does not set a number of days a cat can stay before being euthanized. Cats have been known to stay in the system longer than a month in order to maximize chances for adoption. Once available to a rescue group though, it is the last option for the cat.

Therefore, while hundreds of cats may reside in the shelter, only a percentage is available to rescue groups. Some rescue group representatives go in and adopt cats that are only available to the public for adoption by paying all the necessary adoption fees, but it is CCHS's first priority to help the cats that are at risk for euthanasia.

This manual is designed to provide foster parents with a comprehensive overview of Contra Costa Humane Society's Cat Foster Program. Along with the information included in the cat foster packet, this manual is meant to be a helpful resource for foster parents and should answer many of the questions that may arise before and during foster care. Foster parents should always consult with the Cat Foster Team members for specific help and assistance. All information is subject to change.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How long of a time frame do I need to commit to?

Our goal is to have fosters commit to a year-long period, with breaks in between animals. That may mean that you foster, say, six animals over the course of the year or it may mean one. The time commitment per animal is completely dependent upon that particular animal's needs. It's important for fosters to understand that we cannot guarantee a time-frame for a foster, but we want them to find their forever home just as much as you do! If committing to a year-long period is more than you're able to do currently but you'd still like to help foster, perhaps consider being a Respite Foster, which allows you to temporarily foster an animal when it's current foster goes on vacation, has an emergency, etc. It may also allow you to foster an animal for a temporary amount of time until a full-time foster is available.

Can I still foster if I have animals of my own?

Most certainly! As you know your own animal's personality best, we take that into account when pulling animals from shelters. We ask that foster families have an area of the house where new animals can be separated as needed (a bedroom or other indoor living space), which is beneficial during introduction periods or should there be a medical or behavioral concern.

It's important to note that some cats have not been cat-cat tested during their time at the shelter, and it is not possible to test them with dogs before pulling them. If introducing a foster cat to a home with a resident cat or dog, we ask that it be done very cautiously with the dog on leash for an extended period of time, and always under supervision. We do not require that resident animals and fosters be separated throughout the foster period, but do take all steps to prevent any transmission of illnesses or personality conflicts, and do ask that resident animals be current on all vaccines.

How long is the cat typically in my care before being adopted?

Typically, it takes about 10-14 days for a cat to settle into a foster home enough to give us the best picture of its disposition and personality. For that reason, it's ideal to have a cat in foster care for 2 weeks before being put up for adoption. During this time, the cat will also be spayed or neutered and receive necessary medical care. Some cats that go into foster are immediately ready for adoption, for example, if they're already altered, microchipped and medically and behaviorally sound. On average, a cat may be in foster care for up to two months before being adopted, but many factors affect this time frame, such as breed, disposition, temperament, training and medical needs.

Can I still foster if I rent?

Yes, we just need written authorization from your landlord stating that it's okay for you to foster before taking a foster in.

Can I still foster if I work 40 hours per week?

Yes! The most important thing to consider is whether you feel you have the time to commit to fostering, especially if you lead a busy social life outside of work. If you feel you do, then we try to pull the most

compatible type of foster for your lifestyle. Kittens would not be ideal with the amount of training and attention necessary, but perhaps an easy-going adult cat that's fine to relax while you're away at work. Oftentimes, depending on the age of the animal, a companion animal for them is beneficial while you're away, so fostering two easy-going animals may be the best fit.

Can I foster if I have children?

We have many foster homes with children, and they're a tremendous help in socializing the right animals. We ask that children be over the age of 7 years. We do take into account specific factors, such as the kids' familiarity with animals, their activity level, etc. as this helps us to best match a foster. Depending upon the animal, they may have just undergone a tremendous amount of stress, and so placing them in a home with children would only exacerbate potential behavioral concerns. Others gravitate towards kids, so we give them what they love!

What if I don't have a secure yard, or no yard at all?

All of our foster cats are required to be **indoor-only** at all times during their foster care.

How are the animals promoted? Am I required to bring them to weekend adoption events?

Our dogs and cats are promoted through our website, Petfinder.com, AdoptaPet.com, and an additional 10 or so other sites as well as Facebook and Craigslist. We do hold weekend adoption events for our Kitty Corner cats and may have events where we ask foster cats to be present as well. Advanced notice will be given in cases such as these, however.

Does CCHS pay for supplies and medical care?

CCHS strives to provide all necessary supplies for fostering of the cat. Supplies such as food, treats, toys, litter & boxes, leashes & collars are kept at CCHS's offices and can be requested as needed. If the item is necessary to fostering and we do not have it on hand we will get approval for purchase by a CCHS staff member. CCHS is not able to cover "luxury" items, such as baths at bathing stations, grooming, etc. Please check with your foster coordinator in the case of any needed supply item, allowing enough time for disbursement. Any items or supplies that the foster wishes to donate to the foster animal are tax-deductible and always appreciated!

It's in the cats' best interest to stay on consistent food so as to avoid digestive upset. That being said, much of the food CCHS uses is donated, and therefore, doesn't necessarily remain a consistent brand. We will do our best, however!

All necessary, pre-approved medical care is covered by CCHS.

Can I return the cat if I can't foster her any longer?

Unfortunately, these are situations we try very hard to avoid as we don't operate a shelter. We ask that fosters be fully committed to fostering for the length of time necessary for that animal to find its forever home. Understand that the cat has been under an extreme amount of stress recently and may not settle in as quickly or easily as you might like, but it is not the cat's fault. Should an emergency arise, we will obviously try to accommodate as best as possible, be it a respite foster, a boarding facility, or Kitty Corner for foster cats, but we cannot make a guarantee.

Should an emergency arise, such as the cat acting aggressively towards your resident dog, cat, or a family member, please enclose the cat in a comfortable room with food and water until you can contact your Foster Coordinator. **Do not, under any circumstances, surrender the cat to a public shelter.**

The Pepper Policy: Emergency situations needing another foster home

Should a dire emergency come up and you find that you are not able to continue to care for your foster cat, please contact your Foster Coordinator immediately to discuss your situation. **Again, do not, under any circumstances, surrender the cat to a public shelter as the cat risks being euthanized.** In cases of need, your CCHS representative will institute the following protocols to find temporary care for your foster cat until a new foster is available:

- Contact all other cat fosters to see if any are able to foster
- Contact staff and cat-related volunteers for temporary care
- Board the cat in an approved dog boarding facility
- Contact other rescue coordinators

I'm worried I might fall in love and want to keep the animal!

We won't lie... it happens sometimes! We are not opposed to fosters adopting fosters, although by allowing them to find a new forever home, fosters can help yet another animal in need. Our foster families say all the time that despite it being hard to say goodbye to a foster, it's all worth it in the end when you find that perfect adoptive family and you know the animal lives happily ever after! If fosters find that they're absolutely smitten with their foster and can't bear to live without her, we ask that that decision be made and we be notified before we put the animal up for adoption publicly. Once she is up for adoption, if there is an interested party, we can no longer guarantee adoption to the foster.

IMPORTANT RULES AND REMINDERS REGARDING YOUR FOSTER CAT

In addition to the requirements and responsibilities outlined in the Foster Agreement and throughout this manual, foster parents **MUST** abide by the following rules:

- All vet visits must receive verbal or written approval by CCHS before taking action
- You must visit a vet that is approved by CCHS unless otherwise arranged with a CCHS coordinator
- Foster cats must be indoor only and never allowed outside
- When transported, the cat must be in a cat carrier
- Foster cats must not ever be left unattended in your car
- Any aggressive behavior must be immediately communicated to your Foster Coordinator
- Foster parents must respond within 24 hours to communications from CCHS staff, Cat Foster Team members, or potential adopters

Should your foster cat become lost

Despite all of your best efforts, a situation may arise where your foster cat escapes from your house. Should this occur, it is vital that you contact your Foster Cat Coordinator or the Adoption Program Director immediately, no matter what time, day or night. Please provide the following information during the call:

- When the cat escaped
- How the cat escaped
- Where (location/area) the cat escaped
- If the cat was wearing its collar & tags or if the cat had slipped out of her collar

Once you have notified your CCHS contact person, they will do the following:

- Notify the county shelter
- Post an ad on Craigslist
- Make flyers and distribute
- Post on Facebook

- Contact local vets
- Contact microchip company

You can help to find the cat by:

- Contacting neighbors and walking/driving through surrounding areas
- Posting flyers
- Assisting your CCHS contact person, as he/she sees fit

Supervising your foster cat

As previously noted, there are important reminders regarding your supervision of your foster cat that are deserving of repetition and explanation.

- **Your foster cat must be indoors only at all times** and not allowed outdoors.
- **Foster cats should not ever be left in your garage while you are gone.**
- **Your foster cat should not ever be left unattended in your car, even if it's "just for a minute"** while you run an errand. On a warm day (70-80 degrees), the temperature in a parked car can reach between 100-120 degrees in just minutes, even with partially opened windows. On a 90 degree day, the interior temperature can reach as high as 160 degrees in less than 10 minutes. Parking in the shade does little to amend this scenario. When exposed to such high temperatures, your foster cat can quickly suffer brain damage or die from heatstroke in just 15 minutes. Cats can only cool themselves by panting and sweating through their paw pads, so baking in such a warm environment leaves them no opportunity to effectively cool themselves.

Should dangerous situations occur due to the foster family's negligence, CCHS is not liable for any damages done to persons or property.

CAT FOSTER TEAM

The cat foster program could not exist without the support and dedication of the volunteer Cat Foster Team, who are invaluable to the success of the Cat Foster Program. Specific Cat Foster Team members are listed on the **Contact Information** sheet located at the end of this packet.

- **Adoption Program Director:** The CCHS staff member assigned to oversee the foster program.
- **Foster Coordinator:** An individual assigned to you and your foster cat to support you throughout the entire foster care process.

PREPARING TO FOSTER A CAT

After being approved by CCHS staff as a qualified foster home, but before you bring a foster cat home, we suggest you prepare yourself, your family and your home for a new feline companion.

Be physically and mentally prepared

Fostering is a family affair, so it's important that everyone in your household is ready, willing and able to provide a loving home for an orphaned cat. Many adults and children have a difficult time adjusting to a new schedule or routine, and also have a difficult time "giving up" an animal to its forever home. Make sure everyone is ready for this new, albeit temporary, addition to your family. Be realistic about your time commitment to a foster cat. Don't over-extend yourself when starting out. You may want to begin with foster sitting. And even if you have experience with adolescent cats, starting with an adult or older cat is a great way to build your foster parenting experience.

Where to keep your foster cat

Planning where you will keep your cat **before** you bring your cat home will make the entire process easier for everyone. When you first bring a foster cat home, you'll want to confine them to a single room, such as a bedroom. This room should not be an isolated room, but a room where you spend a large part of your day or evening. This room is especially important when you're at work or away from the house, as it will be a new environment in which they need time to become familiar and comfortable. This safe space will allow them adjustment without being thrown into the mix.

Keep the door closed to the safety room for the first few days of foster care. By keeping the cat in one room, you're also helping to prevent "accidents" that may occur because of stress or adjusting to your routine. (Even a litter-box-trained cat might have an accident or two during this adjustment period.) For cats that are not box-trained, keeping them confined to one room will help start this important training while you monitor their activities.

The Do's

- Do keep your foster cat indoors in a location with a safe space available.
- Do keep your foster cat in a warm/cool (depending on the season) and dry location.
- Do keep your foster cat in a carrier when transporting.
- Do keep your kittens indoors in a kitchen, bathroom, mudroom or laundry room (you may want to use baby gates to limit access to other parts of your home). Kittens should be around humans for socialization purposes and should not be isolated.

The Don'ts

- Do not place your foster cat around other strange dogs or cats as we often do not know the cat's past history. Foster cats should not be put in a position of possibly fighting with a strange animal, reducing their chances for adoption and increasing their chances of euthanasia.
- Do not allow your foster cat outdoors, ever.

How to cat-proof a room

Walk into the room in which you plan to introduce your foster cat, and ask yourself:

- Is the litter box accessibly placed?
- Is the scratching post accessible?
- Is there a safe place for the cat to hide if desired?
- Is there anything that can be clawed or scratched, such as drapes, a couch or rugs?
- Are there exposed electrical wires?
- Is there anywhere the cat can hide where you wouldn't be able to get her out if hidden?
- Are there tables or desktops with objects that can be knocked off?
- Are there plants in the room? If so, check the list of toxic plants in this manual.
- Is there anything you're worried about being ruined-breakable, rugs, antiques, etc.? It is wise to remove these things or determine a new introduction room.

Items you will need

The Cat Foster Program often receives donated supplies, so be sure to ask CCHS when you are picking up your foster cat, or your Foster Coordinator when you get home!

Needed

- Food and water bowls
- Litter box, scooper and litter

- Cat collar with a CCHS ID tag which must stay on the cat at all times. Collars and ID tags are available thru CCHS.
- Treats
- Cat carrier, which can be provided by CCHS
- Bedding - a clean, old blanket or towel or a cat bed that is washable
- Toys such as: play mice, feather wands, bell balls, etc. Do **not** give your foster cat toys that may cause choking or perforations.

Optional

- Odor neutralizer (such as Nature's Miracle) for any "mistakes"
- Flea comb/brush
- Baby gate(s)
- Bitter Apple (to spray on leashes, woodwork, drapery — anything you don't want chewed)

Items provided by CCHS include all items listed in the "Needed" list. CCHS may have other available items as well, including those in the optional section. **All items loaned are to be returned to CCHS.**

Transporting your foster cat

The safest way to transport your cat from the shelter to your home (or anywhere else), is in a secure non-cardboard cat carrier. The carrier should be secured so that it doesn't tip over or move around. It is always a good idea to put a blanket down under the carrier or in the back section of your vehicle, so that if your cat becomes car sick, or has an accident, the blanket will protect your seats and carpet.

To get your foster cat into the carrier, place the back of the carrier against a solid surface such as a door or wall and place the cat in head first. Some cats are timid of this approach, however, so you may need to stand the carrier on its end (with the open door facing up) and place the cat inside back-feet first. Remember to always put your cat in a carrier while inside in a secure location. Do not ever attempt to place your foster cat in a carrier while outdoors.

It is a requirement of CCHS fosters that they hold both a current driver's license and car insurance and provide CCHS a copy of both.

SELECTING AN APPROPRIATE SHELTER CAT TO FOSTER

Now that you're ready to foster, it's time to find an appropriate shelter cat to bring home. After being approved by CCHS as a qualified foster home, we'll begin looking for a foster cat that matches your lifestyle, experience or situation. Once found, we'll contact you to schedule a meet and greet with the potential foster cat. After meeting the cat in person, you and CCHS representative will decide if it is a good match.

INTRODUCING YOUR FOSTER CAT TO YOUR RESIDENT ANIMALS

When introducing a foster cat to your own companion animals, we suggest you have both your resident dogs and cats vaccinated for rabies, as well as DHLPP and Bordetella for dogs, and FVRCP and FeLV for cats. Always keep a collar on your foster cat with identification tags in case she gets scared and tries to escape.

Allow your foster cat to settle down and get to know her surroundings first before you start introductions to unfamiliar animals. Take your time and create a stress-free environment.

Make sure your foster cat has a safe room in which to stay before introducing her to your resident animals, and to where she can escape if desired. This allows both your foster cat and your resident animals some time to get used to one another's scents before they first meet.

Introduction basics

- Do be alert and make the reintroductions gradually and calmly. Understand that your resident animals may be extremely territorial in your home.
- Do give your own animals LOTS of love and praise.
Do leave a leash on your dog when you are in the home, so that you can get immediate control if needed.
- Do not allow children to be involved during introductory periods as this may cause additional confusion or stress.
- Do talk normally, letting the animals know that you are fine; they are fine; everything is fine!
- Be patient and go slowly with your foster cat as she may have been through a stressful surgery, abusive situation or a lot of recent changes.
- Don't leave your foster cat unattended with your resident animals in the first few days. Even if they seem to get along well in your presence, you should separate them when you leave your house. After a week or more, you may determine that this is no longer necessary.

Some common early mistakes

- Allowing the animals to freely interact right away
- Leaving toys and treats around the house. This may cause resource guarding with your resident animals which can escalate very quickly. Remove all toys and treats before you arrive home with your foster cat.
- Feeding your foster cat with your resident animals. It's best to separate them initially, and to supervise always.
- Over-stimulating your foster cat with introductions to many people or animals.

Introducing your foster cat to your resident cat

Initial Introductions

- Begin by cracking the door to the safe room a few inches and allowing your foster cat and resident cat to sniff each other through this space. If either displays any aggression towards the other, close the door and repeat the process until the visits become calm.
- You can also help them to get used to one another by interchanging their toys and bedding so that they get used to each other's scent.
- Once the "sniff visits" are going well, you can begin supervised visits by allowing your foster cat to come out of the room and explore at her own pace.
- Let each cat enter each others' territory for about a half hour, then separate the cats and repeat the process a few times each day. This separation times allows them to process the information they gained while they were together, as well as regain their sense of territory and confidence.

Continuing the introductions

- Continue this process each day, lengthening the amount of time they are together each session.
- It's important to be patient and encouraging in their interactions. If you're relaxed, they will be more at ease. Always praise friendly behavior profusely.
- Don't rush the introductions or force them to interact more than either is willing. Pressing them to accept each other will only slow down the adjustment process.

Understanding initial cat-cat dynamics

The key to introducing cats to one another is patience. What we may perceive as fighting is actually their way of working out their territory. Do not punish a cat for aggressive behavior towards another cat. This is not

teaching the cat that the behavior is inappropriate, but instead, making the cat more stressed and upset, prolonging the cat-to-cat aggression. The best way to react is either to stay silent and calmly separate the cats, or to speak softly to them.

The only times your intervention may be necessary is if their exchanges with one another become physical enough to draw blood or if one is continually chasing or dominating the other. The best way to intervene is to squirt them with a spray bottle containing water, ideally just squirting the one who is instigating the aggression. If a spray bottle isn't handy, a loud noise, such as clapping hands also works well. Do not get in the middle of a cat fight, as cat bites to humans can be serious. Once they have separated, place your foster cat in her retreat room, where she will feel safe. The average amount of time it takes for cats to establish territory rules with one another is 2 weeks to 2 months; it can take longer. It is important to not become frustrated if they do not bond immediately. Patience is the key!

Introducing your foster cat to your resident dog

Before you introduce your foster cat to your dog, it is best to ensure you have confirmed or instilled basic obedience in your dog. You will need to have your dog under control and know which behaviors are appropriate when interacting with a cat.

Initial Introductions

- Begin by keeping your dog in a different room and allow the cat to become comfortable in her own room.
- Once the cat is comfortable, let her explore the rest of the house for short periods each day while the dog is in another room. This will allow them to pick up each other's scent.
- After a few days, allow the two to meet. Introduce them when the cat is up on a high surface unreachable by the dog (such as a countertop or furniture) and then bring the dog into the room on a leash (keep the dog on leash). Observe their interactions - a dog that is showing overt aggression, such as snarling, growling, baring teeth, etc., will probably never accept a cat.
- If all is reasonably calm so far, walk the dog around the room on leash but don't let go of the leash in case the dog decides to chase the cat. On-leash interactions give the cat the opportunity to approach the dog if she chooses, or to find a route of escape.

During the first few meetings, the cat and dog will probably not interact face to face. It's a natural instinct for a dog to want to chase a cat, so it's safest to assume the dog will chase if given the opportunity. A few important points to remember during these introductions include:

- Never allow the dog to intimidate the cat by barking or chasing. Each time the dog acts inappropriately (barking or pulling), let him know these behaviors are unacceptable; try using a quick sharp tone, like "Aah-Aah" to get his attention and redirect his energy.
- On the other hand, if the cat bops the dog on the nose as a warning, that's a good sign and should not be discouraged. When they set up boundaries between themselves, they are beginning to establish a working relationship.
- Let the two interact (with the dog on leash) for about 30 minutes, then return the cat back to its safe haven and bring the dog to its dog crate or bed. Offer both animals some treats and lots of praise.

Continuing the introductions

- Increase the amount of time they are together a little each visit.
- It's important to be patient and encouraging in their interactions. If you're relaxed, they will be more at ease. Always praise friendly behavior profusely.

- Don't rush the introductions or force them to interact more than either is willing. Pressing them to accept each other will only slow down the adjustment process.
- When the cat and dog seem to be getting used to each other, let the dog go, but keep his leash attached to his collar. Let him drag it around the house as he wanders; that way you can control him at any time. The cat will probably hide at first. You should use your best judgment as to when they can begin supervised sessions with the dog off-leash.

FOSTERING – THE FIRST WEEK

Now that you're home with your foster cat, you should start a regular routine so your cat can begin to adjust to your household. During this adjustment period, please keep stimulation to a minimum. Some recommendations include:

- Allow your foster cat plenty of quiet time to adjust with her new environment, but plan on spending time interacting with the cat daily.
- Do not introduce your foster cat to animals other than your own. This includes neighborhood animals, and animals belonging to your family or friends. Why? There is no way to tell how your foster cat will behave when introducing her to other animals. If your foster cat bites a person, dog or cat, you are required to report it to CCHS immediately.
- Don't throw a party, or have a lot of people over to your home right away. **During the first week you should try to spend quality one-on-one time with your new foster cat.**
- The most important thing to do during this initial transition time is to clearly, but NON-confrontationally, establish the household rules. As well, take care not to "indulge" your foster cat's timid, tentative or fearful behavior; we understand how tempting this maybe as many of our foster cats have come from less than ideal situations, but in the long run it does not benefit the cat.

Expectations of behavior

Many of the adolescent or adult cats needing foster care have experienced abandonment, abuse or neglect. They may be very timid when they first come into your home. With patience and understanding, they can learn to trust again. If your foster cat doesn't come out of the carrier while you are in the room, allow her time alone in the room, closing the door behind you. Check on the cat every hour or two, to see if she has ventured out. Always open the door slowly to be sure the cat doesn't bolt out of the room and speak softly when in the room. If there is a large piece of furniture in the room (again, try to avoid having things under which the cat can inaccessibly hide), she may hide beneath it for a time – maybe even a day or two. Check to see if you can find the cat, speaking softly while you look for her. Once you have verified that the foster cat is still in the room, try sitting and talking to her for awhile. You may wish to offer the cat a treat...most cats love a small piece of cooked chicken or fish.

After a day or two, your foster cat should begin to venture out as she learns that you will not make loud noises, and you are the provider of food and water. If the cat has not ventured out after the end of the second day, you may wish to call your foster coordinator for advice. If she is not eating or drinking water, be sure to call by no later than the beginning of the third day.

For kittens, always have them in a room where they cannot hide from you – ideally a bathroom, until they are at least 7 weeks of age and enjoy socializing with you and your family. After that time, they can be moved to another room that may be more convenient for you. If a kitten does not eat within the first 24 hours of arriving at your home, call the foster supervisor immediately.

In order to monitor if your foster cat is eating, when you put out dry kibble, use a level one or two cup (depending on the size and age of the kitty) measurement of food. If you are unsure if the kitty is eating, you

can pour the food back into the measuring cup to see how much the cat has eaten that evening or the next morning. It should be fairly obvious if canned food has been eaten. Allow time for adjustment. While it usually takes about 24 hours for a cat to settle in, it will take much longer for their overall adjustment to this new environment. Typically, a cat's true personality emerges 10-14 days after introduction to a foster home. On the average, foster parents have their cats for about 2 months before they're adopted. This will be enough time to give the cat a good foundation for her new family. Your foster may have been traumatized before coming to you – you'll be teaching that people are good and can be trusted. You should handle and work with your foster cat every day. If she shows any signs of aggression or fear, contact your Foster Coordinator for guidance.

FEEDING

What to feed your foster cat

The food you feed your foster cat is important because, as the saying goes, "You are what you eat!" and this applies to animals as well as humans. It especially applies to cats that have been sick, injured or found as strays. High quality cat food is preferred over grocery store cat food. CCHS will pay for all pre-approved food associated with your foster cat.

The *Whole Dog Journal* suggests looking for specific words and ingredients on food labels such as:

- "Chicken" is better than "poultry."
- "Chicken meal" is better than "chicken by-products," which is better than "chicken digest," which is better than "animal digest" (which is the worst!).
- Good sources of protein (whole meats or single-source meat meal, like "chicken meal" rather than "poultry meal").
- Whole-meat source as one of the first two ingredients (chicken or chicken meal).
- Whole, unprocessed grains, vegetables and other foods (unprocessed food has a greater chance of having its nutrients and enzymes intact).

Food should NOT contain:

- Meat by-products.
- Fat or protein named generically (animal, poultry fat, meat meal), it should instead read beef or chicken fat or lamb meal.
- Food fragments (brewer's rice, corn gluten, etc.).
- Artificial preservatives (BHA, BHT or ethoxyquin).
- Artificial colors.
- Sweeteners.
- Propylene glycol.
- Corn (this is rocket fuel for your cat).

Diet change

Some cats react to a change in diet with diarrhea. If this happens, feed them cooked rice mixed with cottage cheese or boiled chicken (skin & fat removed) for a day or two. Then reintroduce the dry kibble.

Feeding schedule and quantity

Create a consistent schedule for feeding your foster cat. Feed at the same times every day, or if your cat is capable of free-feeding without eating it all at once, free-feeding is okay, too. All cats who have been weaned from their mothers should be fed dry food. This helps their teeth to stay cleaner and healthier. Canned food is optional and can be given as a treat each day, but do not allow your foster cat to solely eat canned food.

Create a separate space for your foster cat to eat so they will feel comfortable. If you have other animals at home, it's best to feed your foster in a separate area.

Do not feed any "people" food. You do not know what the adoptive family will want to do, so don't start a habit they will have to break; and by feeding only cat food, you are also discouraging begging. Feeding will depend on the age and size of your foster cat.

- **Healthy adult cats** should be fed twice daily, usually about 1/2 -3/4 cup given at each feeding.
- **Nursing mothers with kittens** should be fed dry kitten food rather than adult food. She needs the extra calories and nutrients to feed her babies. She can also be fed 1/2 can of canned food twice daily. If she is nursing more than four kittens, she may need additional food.
- **Adolescent cats (4 months to 1 year)** should be fed dry kitten food twice daily and may also receive canned food twice daily, usually about 1/4 to 1/2 can per feeding.
- **Weaned kittens (6-8 weeks to 4 months)** should be fed both dry kitten food and canned food (usually a poultry flavor). Kittens between the ages of 6 weeks to 3 months should get fed 2-3 times daily with dry food and 1/4 to 1/2 can canned food. Kittens 3-4 months of age should get dry food as well as 1/4 to 1/2 can canned food twice daily.
- **Transitional kittens, weaning kittens (4-6 weeks) or any kitten without prior feeding knowledge** should be fed a mixture of baby rice cereal and baby food, mixed with KMR liquid.
- **Un-weaned kittens** will start to experiment with their mother's food at about 4 weeks of age. Both canned and dry food should be available to them. NOTE: Mom's milk can sometimes dry up unexpectedly. Be sure to check her milk sacs once a day or so, so that you are sure that she is able to feed her babies. If she can't feed them, you will need to feed the kittens. Contact your Foster Coordinator immediately if you suspect there is a problem.
- **Orphaned un-weaned kittens** – see the "Bottle Babies – Feeding and Elimination" section of this manual.

The quantity of food you provide your foster cat can vary depending on weight, age and activity level. Please refer to the suggested amounts on the cat food package you are feeding your foster cat as the amounts may change depending on the brand. Remember to reduce this amount to compensate for any treats or wet food. Obesity is an epidemic for pets in the US, and can lead to health problems, exacerbate existing health issues and reduces overall quality of life. Please do not over feed your foster cat.

Food allergies

If your foster cat is itching a lot, it may be due to food allergies. We recommend sticking to simple, easy-to-digest diets of dry cat kibble with chicken as the protein ingredient. If your cat appears to be allergic to chicken, look for food made with salmon.

EXERCISE, TRAINING AND ATTENTION

Exercise

Foster cats should be provided exercised every day, which can be accommodated with play toys such as feather wands, laser toys, fuzzy mice, etc. If your foster cat is an adolescent, you may need to step up the activity level to include regular play sessions. A cat that is exercised regularly will tend to sleep when you are not at home - and a sleeping cat cannot do undesirable things! The exception to this is if your foster cat is recovering from an illness or injury, then they may need rest, or if it is elderly.

Training

Most potential adopters are looking for cats with basic manners, such as not biting or scratching in play and not clawing at furniture or jumping on countertops. Set boundaries for your foster cat, and be consistent.

Cats do not respond well to punishment while being trained. Hitting your foster cat is abusive and will only make her fear you. For other behaviors you may want to discourage, such as scratching or climbing on counters, use a spray bottle full of water, shake a small can with coins or pebbles enclosed, or clap your hands sharply to startle the cat. She will learn to associate the undesired behavior with the startling result and will stop the behavior if you are consistent. If you only correct the cat occasionally, she will not associate the startle with the behavior, and therefore will not stop the behavior.

Scratching Posts

To encourage your foster cat to use a scratching post to scratch rather than your couch, try sprinkling a bit of catnip over the area of the post you want her to scratch. This will entice her to not only dig her claws into the preferred area, but to rub up against it. You can also try attaching a toy to the post, which will coax her to play with the post. Scratch your nails against it to entice her to try, and likely they will. Praise the cat profusely when she uses the post on its own. Cats typically either prefer horizontal or vertical scratchers, so it can be beneficial to try both. Different substrates are also available, such as sisal, cardboard and carpet.

Biting Behaviors

If your foster cat is biting, it could be in response to her desire for attention or because she is annoyed or overly stimulated. Many young cats do this in play, too, which is why it's pertinent to not teach them as young kittens that hands are play toys. Either way, it is a behavior that must be stopped. You must not allow the cat to be the alpha of the house, and therefore, you must restrict access to that which is making her bite. If your foster cat bites while you are petting her, stop petting her immediately, saying "Ah-ah" when she bites. Limit petting time until she stops biting. If the cat bites in response to food being placed in front of her, don't put down the food bowl until she stops biting. If the cat bites you while you're in bed or sitting on the couch, restrict her access to those areas until she learns not to bite.

If your foster cat bites for no apparent reason, try understanding her actions, movements and behavior each time it occurs. Be diligent in trying to determine what the stimulus is that's causing the behavior. Perhaps she doesn't like being bothered during a nap or while eating. Maybe she doesn't like company when playing with toys. Whatever you determine it to be, try avoiding doing it, or correct the behavior with proper training.

Do not use the spray bottle on an aggressive cat as this may only increase the aggressive behavior. If you have a cat showing this tendency, or any other training issues, be sure to talk to your Foster Coordinator, as often these are concerns best handled on a case-to-case basis.

Litter-box training

The litter box should be placed in a quiet place – high traffic areas can cause your foster cat to look for another place to do her "business" in private. Take the cat to the litter box immediately after bringing her home, and if a kitten or adolescent, about an hour after she eats and several times during the day, scratching at the clean litter with your fingers to interest the cat. Place her inside if needed to show her it is a safe place.

No matter what age your foster cat is or what type of litter you use, if the litter box is not clean, the cat will not use it! You must scoop out the box at least once a day. If you have several cats or a litter of kittens, you

will probably need to scoop out the box 2-3 times a day. You may also wish to have a second litter box available for them – the general rule is one box per cat.

It is important to have patience with new cats and understand that mistakes are inevitable after so much stress and change. If your foster cat does have a mistake, **never put the cat's face in the mess, or yell at the cat**; she will not understand the rationale and you will only be teaching the cat to fear you and go in places where you cannot see her. If you catch your foster cat in the action of making a mistake, say "Ah-Ah!" and pick the cat up and place her in the litter box, praising her. If she goes in the house while you're not paying attention, don't correct the cat - it's not her fault. Clean it up and go back to your schedule. You will then want to use some odor neutralizer (like Nature's Miracle) on the areas where the accident occurred to ensure she will not smell and use that area again.

If you have placed the box in a quiet area, and are keeping it clean, and your foster cat is still not using it, there are a few things to consider. Ask yourself, are you:

- Offering clean facilities?
Cats are fastidious creatures and prefer their litter boxes relatively free of waste matter. Implement a rigorous daily cleaning routine, more often if you can. Remember... litter costs less than living room carpet, so scooping and changing the litter frequently is a prudent investment! Cats usually aren't fond of the smell of soap and disinfectant, so clean the box with warm water and either a sparing amount of soap or a little vinegar or lemon juice to neutralize the odor (do not use ammonia; it smells like urine to a cat!). Your foster cat needs familiar olfactory cues to recognize her litter box as the place to do business.
- Providing a large enough litter box or one with or without a lid?
Make sure the box is big enough. Your foster cat should be able to easily hop in, have room for a vigorous scratch, eliminate without hanging over the edge of the box, be able to cover her waste, and easily hop out again. If the cat is regularly "missing" the box when eliminating, she may be telling you the box is too small.

Some cats also prefer hooded boxes while others do not. Oftentimes it is necessary to experiment with each to determine which type your foster cat is most comfortable using.
- Giving her the litter of her choice?
Cats are extremely sensitive to the smell and texture of litter. Studies have shown that cats generally prefer the texture of sand-like scooping litters. Litter comes in many forms, including wood chips, newspaper, sand, wheat, and corn. Try offering a selection of different litters in different boxes and then see which she prefers. Chemical-free, dustless litters are also beneficial for both the cats respiratory health and yours.
- Putting the box in a cat-friendly spot?
The location of the litter box is very important to a cat. Locations to avoid include her feeding area, bustling thoroughfares, and inaccessible parts of the house, such as dark, damp basements or chilly attic spaces (especially unappealing to older cats!).
- Providing enough boxes?
In a multi-cat household, the rule of thumb is "one box per cat." Distribute the boxes throughout the house. If your home has several stores, you should have a litter box on each floor.

Additional training tips

- Short 5 minute training sessions, 4-6 times a day, is more effective than one long session.
- Cats need and respond to positive rewards, such as a tasty treat or affectionate petting session, when learning new behaviors.
- You provide the guidance and information she needs to succeed and build her confidence. Always praise your foster cat when she is doing something good.
- Be consistent with your terminology and routine. Your foster cat will become confused if you let her jump on the counters sometimes, but not others.
- Cats respond more to “Aak-Aak” or “Ah-Ah” instead of the word “no.”
- Be patient and calm. Cats respond to your tone of voice and facial expressions as well as your emotions.
- Never lose your temper with a foster cat or strike her - EVER. We want to create and support a harmonious feline/human relationship.

Attention: Socialization & playtime

It is critical to spend time each day with your foster cat. She may or may not have had a pleasurable lifestyle before you, but regardless, cats like routine, so no matter what the cats' previous experience, she is bound to be frightened by changing environments.

As a general rule, children under 16 years old should NOT be left alone and unsupervised with foster cat. Do not allow children to behave with the foster cat in a manner you would not want the child to behave with a younger sibling. Teach children to leave a cat alone when he is eating, chewing and sleeping. A young child may not differentiate between a foster cat and a cat they have grown up with, so you must make sure to keep everyone safe.

If you're fostering kittens, make sure they meet and are handled by many different visitors so they are well socialized and will be adaptable as an adult. Expose them to children (supervised) as much as possible.

Adult cats

For adult cats, socialization will involve gaining their trust. This can be accomplished by speaking softly to the cat, petting and grooming her as she begins to accept you. Unless you are fostering an exuberant youngster who is ready to play the first day, you may have to wait a few days before you try toys with your foster cat. If the cat is shy, she may run from you if you attempt to throw a toy her way. Give the cat some time before you begin to play; then begin with a toy that doesn't involve any fast moves on your part...perhaps a catnip-scented stuffed toy or a laser toy. Let the cat play at her own pace.

Adolescent cats and kittens

For younger cats and kittens who want to play, a feather toy on a stick or string is popular. You can wave it around for them to chase and pounce on. Don't be surprised if they growl fiercely if you try to take the toy away to make it go again. This is their “kill”. Tug the string or stick and make it move again. Lightweight balls of foam or crumpled paper are very popular, as is the plastic ring from a gallon milk bottle.

Always use a toy to play with cats – do not use your hand as a toy! Do not encourage cats to bite or scratch, even in play. Biting and scratching behavior that is cute in an 8 week old kitten will be painful when done by a larger cat, and may cause the cat to lose its adoptive home. If the cat or kitten bites or scratches you, say

“Ouch!” or “Ah-Ah!” loudly and stop moving your arm or hand. Then replace your hand with a toy that they can bite or scratch. And don’t forget to spend time each day just petting and cuddling with your foster kitty!

Young and/or un-weaned kittens

With very young or un-weaned kittens, you should handle each kitten for a few minutes each day to get them accustomed to being held by humans. You will have to gain the mother cat’s trust before you begin handling the babies. Speak softly to her, and provide her with food and attention. Many mother cats are happy to let you handle their babies as long as they remain within her sight. It’s important not to remove the kittens from the mother’s sight at all possible times.

As the kittens grow, you will begin to be able to play with them. Their eyes and ears open around 10 days old. They begin to play with one another around 3 weeks of age. By 4 weeks of age, they are learning to track objects with their eyes, so they can begin to play with small toys and you. Remember that they can’t keep themselves warm yet, so don’t leave them on a cold floor for very long and be sure to return them to their box.

BEHAVIORAL ISSUES

Some foster cats will have specific needs regarding behavior, training or socializing. CCHS or your Foster Coordinator will advise you if your foster cat has a behavior problem that may require your help if it is known beforehand, such as an abused or fearful cat who needs socializing or confidence-building. A cat with an unknown/questionable history may just need to be observed in someone’s home before being adopted. Many times it is the foster parent that is the first to learn about a foster cat’s specific behavior so constant communication with your Foster Coordinator is important. There are many resources that we can provide to help you manage most behavioral issues.

Some of the most common behavioral issues with cats include:

- Destructive scratching
- Attention seeking
- Biting and rough play
- Inappropriate litter-box issues
- Urine marking behavior
- Fearfulness
- Cat/cat or Cat/dog aggression

If your foster cat is exhibiting any behavioral issues, ask yourself the questions below:

- Is my foster cat getting enough exercise?
- Is she being left alone for long periods of time?
- Does she have interesting toys to keep her mind engaged and stimulated?
- Is she getting enough attention and playtime?
- Am I reinforcing bad behavior?
- Does my foster cat have a safe place that is cat-proofed with appropriate toys, or am I leaving my own belongings within reach?

You should also talk with your Foster Coordinator and about any behavior issues. We don’t expect foster parents to be miracle workers. If your foster cat requires more attention, exercise or training than you can provide, the best solution for you and your foster cat might be a different foster home (again, this is why it’s very important to consider the type of cat you feel would be best suited to your lifestyle).

Regardless of the issue, we don't allow punishment as this is rarely effective in resolving behavior problems. Punishment will not address the cause of the behavior, and in fact it may worsen any behavior that's motivated by fear or anxiety. Punishment may also cause anxiety in cats that aren't currently fearful.

Never discipline your cat after the fact. People often believe their cat makes this connection because she runs and hides or "looks guilty." But cats display submissive postures like cowering, running away, or hiding when they feel threatened by an angry tone of voice, body posture, or facial expression. Your cat doesn't know what she has done wrong; she only knows that you're upset. Punishment after the fact will not only fail to eliminate the undesirable behavior, but may provoke other undesirable behaviors, too.

VETERINARY AND MEDICAL CARE

All veterinary care must be pre-authorized. Once a visit has been authorized, call to make an appointment at the vet office determined by your Foster Coordinator. Veterinary contact information is listed on the Contact Information page at the end of this packet. Please arrange to have your foster cat seen during regular business hours. CCHS may have some basic supplies and medications available such as flea and parasite treatments, antibiotics & ointments.

Please note: CCHS has a policy that it **will not** reimburse individuals for vet bills for foster animals if you do not receive pre-approval or go to an approved vet office. Emergency/nighttime clinics should only be used in cases of dire emergencies. In such cases, if you cannot reach a Cat Foster Coordinator, please use your best judgment. Reimbursement is available for Emergency Clinic visits in the case of true emergencies.

General guidelines for seeking vet visits

- Kittens younger than 12 weeks must see a vet for the following:
 - Persistent diarrhea that lasting for more than 2 days
 - Vomiting and diarrhea for more than 1 day
 - Vomiting more than once in an hour
 - Not eating for more than 12-24 hours
 - Lethargy without fever for more than 12 hours
 - Lethargy with fever
- Cats older than 12 weeks must see a vet for the following:
 - Diarrhea that lasts for more than 1-2 days
 - Diarrhea and occasional vomiting for more than a day
 - Vomiting more than 2-3 times in an hour
 - Not eating for more than 24 hours
 - Lethargy without fever for more than a day
 - Lethargy with fever

For all of the above, you still must call your Foster Coordinator before seeking medical treatment. If a situation arises after-hours and you are not able to reach your Foster Coordinator or a CCHS Cat Foster Team member, please use your best judgment when taking your foster cat to an emergency clinic, as noted above.

Levels of Emergencies

- True, life-threatening emergency (needs to be seen ASAP):
 - Seizures, hit by car or other blunt force trauma, total inability to stand up, severe respiratory distress with frantic gasping for air, profuse bleeding or large open wound, minimal movement with pale white gums

- Emergency (should be seen same day or within a few hours):
 - Difficulty breathing, vomiting more than 4 times in 1 hour, possible broken limb with no other signs of trauma (i.e. step on cat's foot), bloody diarrhea, extreme and unusual lethargy
- Minimal Emergency (can wait 12-24 hours):
 - Limping, sneezing, runny nose, coughing, intermittent diarrhea, open mouth breathing that coincides with upper respiratory infection, congestion, intermittent vomiting, single episode of a seizure.
- Non-emergency:
 - Cold symptoms (sneezing, runny nose or eyes), conjunctivitis of eyes, small bout of diarrhea for a day, vomiting once or twice, decreased appetite, minor limping.

Illness

Your foster cat may not display any signs of illness initially. Therefore, it's up to you to observe your cat closely each day. Call your Foster Coordinator if you see abnormal behavior; unusual discharges from the eyes, nose or other body openings, coughing, sneezing, abnormal lumps, limping, difficulty getting up or down, loss of appetite or abnormal waste elimination or vomiting.

Vaccination and de-worming

Adult cats are vaccinated once every 2-3 years (dependent upon the vaccine), while kittens may be vaccinated starting at 4-6 weeks of age and should be given boosters until they are 16 weeks old. If you are fostering a very young orphaned kitten, we will refer you to a Vet to determine age and vaccination schedule.

If you're fostering a kitten, you need to return the kitten to the vet for the following vaccination boosters:

- 8-10 weeks: FVRCP vaccine and de-worming
- 11-13 weeks: FVRCP vaccine and de-worming
- 14-16 weeks: FVRCP vaccination
- 16 weeks: Rabies vaccine

Annual boosters are recommended in conjunction with veterinary protocols.

Spay and neuter

Some foster cats are altered prior to going into foster care. However, for those who aren't, CCHS will have them spayed/neutered during foster care or just before going into their new adoptive homes.

If your foster cat is unaltered at the time of adoption, CCHS has adopters sign a Sterilization Agreement, which gives adopters a date by which the cat must be altered. Adoption is not "official" until spay/neuter has happened. Both male and female cats can be neutered or spayed as early as 8-10 weeks of age.

Fleas

Fleas are common parasites that feed on mammals. They are very common with dogs and cats, and the shelter typically sprays incoming dogs and cats with a topical flea treatment upon entry. Kittens over 8 weeks of age and adult cats can be treated with Advantage or Frontline (younger kittens are treated with smaller doses). We do not recommend flea dip treatments, flea powders or flea collars. Fleas can kill when left untreated, especially in small kittens, as they can cause flea anemia. When your foster cat is ready to be adopted, she should be clean and flea free.

Topical treatment is a preventative measure CCHS strives to provide as financially able.

To check for fleas, inspect your cat daily - inspecting the rear, groin, belly, and tail, under the chin and head, and neck (common places for fleas). Look also for black specks of flea dirt, which is actually digested blood. Before you begin combing, get a bowl of tap water and put a few drops of dish soap in it. You can put any fleas you find in the water and they will drown. (If you don't use soap, the fleas may swim to a fluff of fur and jump out of the water.) If fleas are present, treat as soon as possible. Change bedding and vacuum the floors daily. The washing machine will remove fleas, eggs and dirt.

Two common results of fleas are Flea Allergy Dermatitis and Tapeworm, both of which are easily treatable and not contagious to people or cats.

Flea Allergy Dermatitis (FAD)

Flea Allergy Dermatitis is an allergic reaction to the saliva deposited by fleas when they bite. It presents itself as a reddened rash with small crusty lesions, particularly above the tail, on the inner thighs, abdomen, neck & ears. The cat will be very itchy and the fur in those areas will typically be stained red from licking. FAD is treated by applying flea control prevention and bathing the cat in the interim.

Tapeworm

Tapeworm is an intestinal parasite that attaches to the intestinal walls of a cat (or dog) and feeds on nutrients entering the animal's system. Tapeworm comes from ingesting infected fleas. As the tapeworm grows, it will shed its non-reproductive tail end segments, which are shed in the animal's stool. Segments will look like small, moving pieces of white rice. If you see tapeworms, call your Foster Coordinator to discuss a vet visit. Tapeworm is easily treated with a one-time injection or an oral pill. Tapeworm is not contagious to other pets or people. The only way to get tapeworm is to ingest an infected flea at a particular stage of the tapeworm lifecycle.

Parasites

Parasites can cause diarrhea, stomach bloating or vomiting. Parasites include tapeworms, round worms, hookworms and mange. Tapeworms will look like pieces of rice coming out of your foster cat's anus or in her stool. Round worms and hookworms may be vomited, and roundworms look like spaghetti (hookworms are smaller and rarely distinguishable without the aid of a microscope). Mange is an infestation of tiny mites that bite and cause intense scratching, reddened skin and loss of fur. Only rare cases of mange (sarcoptic) are contagious to humans. If you suspect your foster cat has parasites, call your Foster Coordinator to schedule a fecal test. Once diagnosed, parasites are easily medicated and treated.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea can be caused by several factors, including stress, change of diet, poor diet, eating garbage, parasites and viruses. If your foster cat has diarrhea and has no other symptoms, rule out change of diet by feeding your cat cooked rice mixed with cottage cheese or boiled chicken for a day or two, and then reintroduce dry kibble slowly. Provide plenty of fresh water since diarrhea can cause dehydration. To check for dehydration, pull the skin up over the shoulder blades. If it snaps back quickly, the cat is not dehydrated. If the skin goes down slowly, then the cat is dehydrated and may need fluids. Dehydration can be very dangerous for a kitten so call your Foster Coordinator if you suspect your foster is dehydrated, or if you notice other unusual symptoms along with diarrhea, such as extreme lethargy, vomiting, etc.

Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)

A very common illness that affects many cats and kittens housed in communal living situations (such as shelters), URIs are caused by a virus and are very similar to human colds. Symptoms include watery eyes, a runny nose, sneezing, congestion and difficulty breathing, a fever, lethargy and decreased appetite. As a

virus, URIs will typically resolve on their own, but cats and kittens should be put on antibiotics to prevent against secondary infections such as pneumonia. If left untreated, URIs can be deadly, especially to young kittens.

Panleukopenia

Panleukopenia, also called feline Distemper, is closely related to canine Distemper. Panleukopenia is a highly contagious virus that an infected cat secretes in large amounts in all body secretions including feces, vomit, urine, saliva, and mucus. It is contagious to other cats but not to people or dogs. Signs of infection are depression, loss of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, fever and general malaise. The virus is often fatal and most commonly affects younger or unvaccinated cats. This virus can be deadly to cats. The FVRCP vaccine protects against this disease.

Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP)

FIP is a very serious disease with nearly 100% mortality. It is not contagious to people or dogs and moderately contagious to other cats. FIP results from infection of the Corona virus and nearly all cats and kittens living in shelter or communal living situations have been exposed to the virus. While exposure has taken place, only a small percentage of exposed cats or kittens will convert the Corona virus to FIP. If converted, the disease leads to the failure of the infiltrated organs, fevers unresponsive to antibiotics, and often the accumulation of thick yellow fluid in the belly or chest. A cat may be continually re-infected through shed Corona virus in the stool. Symptoms of FIP may include a distended abdomen, lethargy, lack of appetite, hanging head over food and water bowl without eating or drinking. The cat or kitten will typically die within 1-2 weeks.

Ear mites

Common in young cats, ear mites appear as a dark black waxy build-up in the ear. Your foster cat will likely be scratching at her ears or shaking her head often as the infection gets more severe. Ear mites are treated with daily medication prescribed by a vet. For minor infections, the ears can be cleaned daily with a Q-tip and mineral oil.

Injured cats

Injured foster cats will have specific needs. They'll most likely be recovering from surgery and will come with veterinary orders. They may need to be confined to a crate or a small room to limit mobility.

This type of foster situation may require you to schedule follow up appointments with the cat's veterinarian. As with all foster cats, watch for signs of illness, since injured foster cats are under additional stress and are more prone to illness. Lots of human contact is important for healing injured cats. Active play should be limited, but cuddling, petting, talking, brushing and massaging are all good social activities for a recovering animal.

How to take a cat's temperature

A normal temperature for cats and kittens is 100.5 to 102.5 degrees. Any temperature below 100 degrees or above 103 can be a problem. Contact your Foster Coordinator in either situation.

You will need:

- Rectal thermometer.
- Vaseline.
- Disinfectant (30:1 water and bleach solution).

Step by step instructions:

1. Sterilize the thermometer by dipping it into the disinfectant solution.
2. Dry with a clean paper towel.
3. Shake the thermometer down to under 80 degrees.
4. Coat the tip of the thermometer with a small amount of Vaseline.
5. Insert the tip of the thermometer ½ inch into the cat's rectum and hold there for 1-2 minutes.
6. Be gentle, as the rectal tissues are fragile, and you don't want to tear the tissue.
7. You may need a second person to help hold the cat to prevent struggling.
8. You should speak softly to the cat. Sometimes it is helpful to stroke the cat around the head to distract her from what is going on in the other direction.
9. Be sure to sterilize the thermometer again when finished.

If a cat has a temperature below 100 degrees, place her on a heating pad turned to low and covered her with a towel immediately. If the cat's temperature is 103 degrees or higher, move her to a cool area and apply cool water all over her body (not cold water, as this can send the cat into shock). Apply ice packs or cold towels only to her head, neck and chest. Let her drink small amounts of cool water or lick ice cubes. Contact your Foster Coordinator immediately.

Poisonous foods and household items

Many household products can be toxic to cats. Remove any rat or mouse poisonings, antifreeze and windshield wiper fluid from your home before fostering! And store cleaning products and other items listed below out of reach of pets.

Outside Hazards

- Antifreeze that contains ethylene glycol has a sweet taste that attracts animals but is deadly if consumed in even small quantities; one teaspoon can kill a seven pound cat. The HSUS recommends pet owners use safe antifreeze in their vehicles. Look for antifreeze that contains propylene glycol, which is safe for animals if ingested in small amounts. Ethylene glycol can also be found in common household products like snow globes, so be sure to keep these things out of reach of animals.
- Cocoa mulch contains ingredients that can be deadly to pets if ingested. The mulch, sold in garden supply stores, has a chocolate scent that is appetizing to some animals.
- Chemicals used on lawns and gardens, such as fertilizer and plant food, can be easily accessible and fatal to a pet allowed in the yard unsupervised.

Inside Hazards

Food Items

The following common food items are poisonous for cats and dogs:

- Chocolate, Caffeine, Grapes/Raisins, Coffee Grinds, Tea
- Macadamia Nuts, Walnuts, Mushrooms, Onion and Garlic
- Alcoholic beverages
- Apple seeds, apricot & cherry pits
- Candy and gum that contains Xylitol
- Moldy foods, potato leaves and stems or potatoes that have turned green, Rhubarb leaves
- Salt, Yeast dough
- Chicken bones (cooked) can splinter and choke a cat.

Poisonous Plants

The ten most common poisonous plants are:

- Azalea/Rhododendron, Castor Bean, Cyclamen, Kalanchoe, Lilies, Marijuana, Oleander, Sago Palm, Tulip/Narcissus bulbs, Yew

NEONATAL KITTEN CARE

Fosters who care for nursing moms and their litters will watch an amazing developmental process unfold as mom teaches her kittens all about life. Having mama cat present often is much easier; she feeds and cleans her kittens, corrects them, and teaches them to use a litter box. The foster then aids in cleanliness and a supportive environment for mama cat, as well as socializing the kittens to humans.

Oftentimes, however, neonatal kittens are brought to the shelter without their mom. Caring for orphaned bottle baby kittens is both exhausting and rewarding and is not something everyone can do! It requires constant round-the-clock care, including feeding every few hours. Bottle baby kittens without a mother are not appropriate fosters for people who work away from home.

Supplies

Supplies you will need if fostering neonatal kittens without a mother:

- Box or carrier
- Towels and washcloths
- Nurtural, Just Born Formula, KMR formula, or goat's milk
- Hill's Prescription Diet A/D or baby food
- Bottles and nipples
- Dishes with low sides (paper plates or saucers)
- Heating pad
- Flea comb
- Baby shampoo or Dawn dishwashing liquid
- Litter box with low sides (a pie tin, plant water catcher, box, etc.)
- Litter and scoop

Supplies you will need if fostering neonatal kittens with a mother:

- Box or carrier
- Towels and washcloths
- Wet food, Hill's Prescription Diet A/D or baby food
- Dishes with low sides (paper plates or saucers)
- Heating pad
- Flea comb
- Baby shampoo or Dawn dishwashing liquid
- Litter box with low sides (a pie tin, plant water catcher, box, etc.), as preferably two
- Litter and scoop

From birth on, kittens must be kept clean and flea free. Fleas can kill a kitten by causing severe anemia. Flea combing daily is usually enough, but you should be prepared to bathe kittens in warm water and appropriate shampoo when they get food on themselves, have excessive fleas, or have diarrhea. They must be thoroughly dried after bathing to avoid becoming chilled, which can lead to illness. Wrapping them in a towel and drying them vigorously and/or using a hair dryer on a low setting are recommended.

Orphaned Kitten Care: Newborn to Three Weeks

Until three weeks of age, kittens need a substantial amount of bottle feeding. Since the mother is not available, the foster parent must provide all of the mother's functions: feeding, warmth, cleaning and stimulation to urinate/defecate. There is no set rule that applies to all litters of kittens, but following are guidelines to help you.

Safety and confinement for orphan kittens

These kittens should be set up in small living quarters (crate or box with bedding) kept consistently warm at about 80-90 degrees. They will pile on each other to keep warm, but a hot water bottle and warm bedding are needed. Heating pads can be dangerous. If used, they should be kept on low, with several layers of bedding between the pad and kittens, and they should be monitored closely.

Under two weeks: Chilling, diarrhea and dehydration are the biggest killers of kittens this young. If they have been orphaned, you must assume that they are chilled. The bedding arrangement must include a heating pad with plenty of padding between the kittens and the heat. A towel folded over once to make two layers of towel is ideal. You can burn the kittens if you do not monitor them carefully.

Feeding orphaned kittens

Kitten milk replacer, such as KMR, should be mixed and fed according to package directions. Generally, feeding every 3 hours is needed in the beginning. By 3-4 weeks of age, feeding every 4-5 hours with a night break of 8 hours should work well.

Milk replacer can be fed by dropper, syringe or bottle as kittens accept it and need larger feedings. Some of the kittens may be too weak to suck from the bottle and you will need to feed them with syringes. If you need to syringe-feed the kittens, drip the formula slowly into the side of their mouths, and give them time to swallow. Going too fast can cause liquid to go into their lungs and cause pneumonia.

Do not hold kittens on their backs, or allow them to suck too fast, as this can lead to aspiration of formula into the lungs. The kittens should be tilted forward and slightly up, as if they were nursing on their mother. Never try to bottle feed an unconscious or semi-conscious kitten.

Feed until the kitten's tummy feels tight and full. Sick kittens will not eat eagerly, and you will have to feed them slowly and often to ensure they are getting enough food. After each feeding, you must stimulate bowel and bladder movement. Use a warm, damp cotton ball or later a cloth as volume increases. Mineral oil on a Q-tip at the anus may stimulate defecation. Gently massage their genital areas in a circular motion and do not stop until they have finished eliminating.

Note the color of the urine. If it is light yellow or straw colored, this is normal. If it is a bright canary yellow, the kitten is dehydrated and needs fluids immediately. Cottage cheesy stools or diarrhea are also an indication of illness. Call your Foster Coordinator if you see these symptoms.

Cleaning orphaned kittens

Initially, newborn kittens should be kept in a box or crate, and bedding should be changed as needed. The process of stimulating urination/defecation, then cleaning or soaking up urine/feces with cotton or cloth should keep kittens fairly clean.

As kittens become more mobile and learn to urinate/defecate on their own, a larger box or small, papered, gated area like a kitchen or bathroom may be used to confine them. Keep area free of feces/urine. The

weaning process (low dish of mushy food) can make for messy feet and faces - wash with a warm wet cloth as needed. If you must bathe the kittens, make sure they are thoroughly dried after bathing to avoid chilling, which can lead to illness.

Weaning orphaned kittens

As your kittens grow and become more mobile, weaning time approaches.

- **3-4 weeks:** Weaning can be started at 3 weeks by offering formula in a low dish or pie plate with or without canned food mixed in. Be sure to offer when kittens are hungry, so they will make their best effort to lap/lick/eat. Supplement with bottle feedings as needed until kittens are lapping consistently from a dish.
- **4-5 weeks:** By four weeks, the kittens have enough teeth to begin experimenting with solid foods. During this first week of weaning, place some canned cat food in the center of a low-sided dish, mixed with kitten formula to create a “slop”. Using your finger, put a little bit of food onto their mouths and then show them the food dish. Do this several times until they drop their heads to eat. Don’t be surprised if they walk in the food. You may still need to supplement bottle feedings, but by 5 weeks no more bottle feedings should be needed. You should also start leaving a small bowl of water in their feeding area at this age. If they do not show much interest in water, goat’s milk is a digestible substitute.
- **5 weeks:** At 5 weeks, offer wet food without any milk replacement formula mixed in and begin offering dry food as well. You can start this by mixing some dry food into their wet food.
- Continue feeding the wet food/kibble mixture until **7 weeks** or so.
- **8 weeks:** By 8 weeks, the kittens should readily eat dry food with decreasing amounts of wet food 2-3 times/day.

Medical care for orphaned kittens

If signs of illness develop in the kittens, notify your Foster Coordinator. Lack of appetite and diarrhea are of special concern. Check umbilical cords daily until the cord dries out and falls off. Eyes open at 7-10 days - watch for infections/crusting at the lids. Newborns without a mom may also try to nurse on each other causing injury (genitalia are the common site for this false “nipple”). Kittens may need to be separated if this occurs.

De-worming should occur at 2-3 weeks of age. A second dose should be administered 10 days later. From birth on, kittens must be kept clean and flea free. Fleas can kill a kitten or cause anemia. Daily flea combing is usually enough, but you should be prepared to bathe them as necessary. If fleas are found, call CCHS for advice in treating newborns. At 6 weeks of age, the kittens should get their first set of vaccinations.

Nursing mothers with kittens 0-4 weeks old

Safety and confinement for kittens with mothers

A small, quiet, warm, easily cleaned room (laundry room, bathroom, family room, kitchen, or mudroom) is best for a mother and her kittens. Clean bedding should be provided with food and water nearby. A child’s plastic baby pool or the base of a large plastic dog or cat crate lined with a blanket makes a wonderful, safe den for mom and kittens.

Mama cat will spend most of her time nursing, cleaning up and caring for her kittens. Later, as the kittens become more mobile and less demanding on her, she may enjoy more time away from them and play actively with people or seek retreat from the kittens. As the kittens become more mobile, check their living area for hazards.

Feeding nursing mothers and her kittens

Mama cat requires extra nutrition for adequate milk production. Feed a premium diet three times each day. (Oftentimes, a kitten kibble is given to nursing moms to provide them extra nutrients. Nursing moms will typically be thin and will sometimes have an unkempt coat while nursing.) Be sure all the kittens are nursing and steadily gaining weight. Newborns depend entirely on mom's first milk, receiving valuable antibodies (colostrum).

For instructions on feeding the kittens as they are weaning from Mama cat, please refer to the section above entitled "Weaning Orphaned Kittens."

Medical care for kittens and mothers

Call your Foster Coordinator if you see any signs of illness in mother or kittens. If the mother cat goes off food or is stressed, milk production may drop sharply, and kittens may have to be raised as orphans. Check mother's mammary glands daily for redness, hardness, discharge or streaking color. A hard, red, hot or painful mammary gland may mean mastitis which should be checked by a veterinarian. Call your Foster Coordinator if you believe your nursing mother has this condition.

As long as the kittens all nurse and gain weight, milk production is probably adequate. If milk production or mother's calcium reserves are inadequate, the mother may develop eclampsia, an emergency situation of low blood calcium levels requiring immediate attention. Symptoms include muscle twitching, tremors, anxiousness, progressive or stiffening, seizure-like tremors.

Nursing mothers often "blow their coat" when nursing due to nutrition demands on their body; feeding a good diet in adequate amounts helps avoid this situation. Vitamin supplements can also help. The mother's vaginal discharge (lochia) should taper from dark mucoid green to reddish brown in smaller amounts by 3 weeks postpartum. Routine medical treatments for the mother include a de-wormer, and vaccines as soon as she is finished nursing.

Check the kittens' umbilical cords daily until they dry and fall off. Eyes open at 7-10 days — watch for infections/crusting at the lids. If you see fleas, ask CCHS for advice on treating the newborns. Fleas can be especially dangerous to newborn kittens, causing flea anemia when infested.

Kittens should receive their first dose of de-worming medicine at 2-3 weeks of age, followed by a second dose in 10 days. At 6 weeks of age the kittens should receive their first set of vaccines.

Kitten development and socialization

If your foster kittens have a mother present, be aware that mama cat may be protective of her kittens, but most mother cats will allow a calm, gentle approach by adults picking up and handling kittens. Kittens need a lot of human contact. Handle them as much as you can.

It's important to start handling and manipulating kittens right from birth to get them comfortable with humans. Although their ears and eyes are still sealed, their sense of smell is already relatively well developed.

The growing kittens should be handled every day, and gentle grooming should be started at 4-5 weeks. As they become more aware of their environment, they should be exposed to as many stimuli as possible, including the vacuum cleaner, young children, men, women, other friendly animals, loud noises, etc. However, you must pay attention they do not become too stressed, over-stimulated or tired.

Important kitten experiences

- When the mother is not available it's important that kittens come in contact with an older, friendly cat from about 5 weeks of age on.
- Kittens have to learn how to communicate like a cat and most importantly, how to submit. A kitten that has not learned submission from its mother or another adult cat will be more difficult to train later on.
- At this age, it's also very important that kittens learn bite inhibition - best from their littermates or an adult cat.
- Starting at 8 weeks, the puppy is ready to learn "human" language and the rules of human society. Socialization with other cats and humans has to be continued. With any introduction, be aware of the possibility of transmission of infectious disease - use good judgment.

GETTING YOUR FOSTER CAT ADOPTED: THE ADOPTION PROCESS

Determining if your foster cat is ready

As previously mentioned, it can take a cat about 10-14 days to settle in to a foster home enough to give us the best picture of its disposition and personality. Some cats that go into foster are already ready for adoption. If not, and you are unsure if your foster cat is ready to be adopted, ask yourself the questions below:

- Did your foster cat or kitten gain or lose enough weight?
- Is your foster cat healthy?
- Has the cat recovered fully from an illness?
- Is your foster cat successfully socialized with no major behavioral issues?
- Is your foster cat or kitten litter box trained?
- Does your foster cat or kitten have good basic manners?

If your foster cat is ready for adoption, please continue on to the next section.

I can't part with my foster cat and want to adopt!

So you've fallen in love! This happens sometimes when fostering animals, and as always, if it's a good match all around, fosters are given the first opportunity to adopt. We do require, however, that this decision be made *before* we advertise the animal as available for adoption. Once she is up for adoption, if there is an interested adoptive party, we can no longer guarantee adoption to the foster.

To officially adopt your foster cat, you will be asked to complete the appropriate adoption paperwork and pay the applicable adoption fee. Upon adoption, all items loaned to you by CCHS for foster purposes should be cleaned and returned promptly.

If adopting your foster cat, you may still be able to continue fostering depending upon the particular situation (i.e. time, cat-cat specific dynamics, etc.). Should you decide however that you are not interested in adopting your foster cat and would like to continue fostering, please continue reading to find out how to best help your foster cat find its forever home.

Promotion of your foster cat

How CCHS promotes

Available cats are advertised in the following manners by CCHS, including but not limited to:

- CCHS website

- Adoptapet.com
- Petfinder.com
- Nearly 100 other websites that range in viewer traffic
- Facebook
- Craigslist
- Flyers, as applicable
- Advertisement with veterinary hospitals, CCHS newsletters, and other publications, as applicable

How fosters can help promote

We always appreciate help from the foster as well. Here are some simple ways that you can help to promote your cat:

- Send an email to your family, friends, neighbors and colleagues. Let them know about your foster cat and ask them to help you spread the word and to tell their friends and colleagues
- Spread the word at your child's school, your place of worship, or other organization to which you belong
- Record a video of your foster cat or create a slideshow with more photos and give them to us so that we can have them posted with your foster cat's bio
- Many companies have newsletters, email lists, blogs or intranets where you might be able to post information about your foster cat.
- Blog about your foster cat, or find a local community blog and blog about your foster cat there!
- Participate in any CCHS events that will help you promote your foster cat
- Post flyers at local pet friendly venues

Please review any of these activities with your Foster Coordinator to ensure that you are consistent with CCHS policy.

Tips for taking great photos

We can't stress this enough...a picture is worth a thousand words. The picture is the first thing people see when they visit the CCHS website or other avenues of adoption. If the cat has a poor picture, visitors may move on to another cat without clicking or reading your cat's bio. If you want to give your cat the best chance possible, take large, clear, good quality (high resolution) pictures of the cat alone. A good picture is often the difference between a cat who generates inquiries and one who doesn't.

- Take a lot of digital pictures. You may have to take 50 pictures to get 1 or 2 really great shots. If you don't have a digital camera, borrow one from a friend or contact your Foster Coordinator and we can arrange for a special photo session.
- Pictures taken in natural light, such as by a window, are usually much better than those taken with a flash. Lighting is very important for accurately capturing a cat's coloring and detail. Have the sun or light source behind you and check to make sure you're not casting a shadow on your subject. Try to avoid red "laser" eye.
- Use treats and/or a toy to capture the cat's best expression. Sometimes having two people makes this process easier.
- Try taking pictures using a neutral backdrop. Select a background that contrasts with the cat's coloring. Darker-colored cats will show up better against a lighter backdrop.
- Try different props. If the cat likes to play, you might get a picture of the cat with her favorite toy. Wrap a bandana around the cat's neck to add a streak of color (especially good for solid and darker-colored cats). A bright, cheerful collar is a nice touch.

- The cat is the subject of your picture so the cat should take up the majority of space in your picture. Avoid excessive amounts of background. The cat's eyes should be focused on you. Try to capture at least one "hero" shot, where the focus is on the cat's face. A full body picture is also a great way to show size and scale.
- Exercise the cat before your photo shoot. A calmer cat is easier to photograph! Before snapping the photos, take the time to get the cat as calm and relaxed as possible, so the photos don't show an animal that looks anxious or scared.
- Take pictures with different scenarios – napping, cuddling, playing, with kids or other pets, etc.
- Check out the competition. Visit Petfinder.com and look at the photos of similar cats and see which ones pop out to you. Then try to mimic these shots with your own foster cat.
- Videos also work wonders! If you're able to take a video of your foster cat playing, interacting, doing something cute, etc., please send it to us!
- If your first attempts fail, don't be discouraged. Just keep trying and have fun.

When you are having fun, your foster cat will probably be having fun too and it will show!

The Adoption Process: From Applications to a New Home

The process for adopting a foster cat is identical in concept to adopting a cat from the shelter, but is slightly more in depth because of screening and scheduling. As a foster parent, your involvement in the adoption process is both extremely important and essential.

Inquiries by phone or online

If a potential adopter inquires about your foster cat, we ask the interested party to read the cat's bio on the CCHS website and submit a completed cat adoption application, found online. The application can be completed online and submitted by email, or is available for download as well. Downloaded copies can be faxed to the CCHS office or dropped-off. The Adoption Program Director monitors incoming applications daily. Once an application is reviewed and approved, the Adoption Program Director will contact the potential adopter and conduct a phone interview. Once completed and if passed, the Adoption Program Director will pass the potential adopter's information to the Foster Coordinator, who will then contact the potential adopter and set up a meeting with the foster and foster cat. If at the meeting all parties feel comfortable with the potential adoption, the cat is allowed to be adopted or go into a trial adoption that day or when schedules permit. Appropriate paperwork is then completed. Trial adoptions allow the potential adopter to take the animal home for a one-week period to see if the cat is a good fit within the home, which can be a benefit if there are other resident animals in the home. The cat still belongs to CCHS during the trial adoption period.

During the trial adoption, if all seems to be going well in the home, the potential adopter can then choose to adopt. Home inspections are not required.

Sometimes a potential adopter seems like a good match on paper and by phone, but in person, it becomes clear that the match is not well suited. This is why it is important to ask plenty of questions and watch the interactions, particularly those of the cat (does she seem abnormally shy, reserved or uncomfortable around the potential adopter? Does she cower? Does the potential adopter seem understanding of this or is she forcing interaction? Are the kids acting kindly towards the cat?) If there are any hesitations or reservations at the adoption meeting, the Foster Coordinator will let the potential adopters know that they will be in touch the following day, after everyone's had a chance to process the meeting and interactions. The foster cat will not be allowed to go into a trial adoption if there are any reservations whatsoever on the part of the Foster Coordinator, foster family, or potential adopter. The Adoption Manager will take all feedback from the

Foster Coordinator, foster parent and/or potential adopter and determine how best to proceed. The foster will never be responsible for verbally having to deny an adoption.

Meeting children & resident animals

CCHS does not generally require that all adoptive family members be present for the meet and greet, or final adoption, although it is helpful if we can see the interaction amongst all family members. If the adoptive family has children, we do always ask that they be present at the adoption meeting so that we can carefully watch the interaction and determine if it is a good match. Foster cats are typically not allowed to enter into a trial adoption until CCHS has met the children.

Screening potential adopters at the adoption meeting

Foster parents often say their goal is to find a home even better than their own! CCHS will screen for qualified applicants, but your input is critical to finding an appropriate forever home for your foster cat. Remember, this can be a very emotional experience, but it's important to stay neutral. A Cat Foster Team member should always be present at the adoption meeting. This way you have the opportunity to observe the potential adopter with the foster cat, rather than just answer or ask questions. Some things that the CCHS representative and foster will be asking or observing at the adoption meeting include:

- This should be a two-way dialog, rather than just a one-sided Q&A session. Instead of just answering a question, use this as an opportunity to learn more about the potential adopter and find out if they are a good match. Feel free to probe for specifics, as you know your foster cat best.
- Don't over-sell or under-sell your foster cat. This should be an open and honest discussion about what the potential adopter is looking for and how this matches the needs of your foster cat.
- Be objective about personality traits. The best way to approach this is to ask about what they are looking for in personality **before** you talk about what type of personality your foster cat has (beyond what is already mentioned in the bio). This way you can find out if they really are a good match, or if they are going on appearances alone or telling you what you want to hear.
- Ask a lot about their past experiences with cats. Even if this is their first cat, how do their friends or family approach cat ownership? Most people are greatly influenced by those around them.
- Find out how they would approach training and/or behavior problems. Again, don't tell them what you are doing, but find out how they would handle this. Better yet, find out how they handled this with previous cats! This is where the hypothetical questioning can come in handy. "What would you do if you came home to find out she just chewed your brand new Jimmy Choo sandals?"
- What are the family's expectations of a "rescue" cat? How are they going about finding a cat? Is this a thoughtful process?
- On a final note: Just because the potential adopter might approach something differently than you, this doesn't mean that they won't be a great home for your foster cat. That said, trust your instincts. If you don't feel good about the potential adopters, then let CCHS know your concerns.

Finalizing an adoption

Should everything be going well at the meet and greet or during the trial adoption, the potential adopter is allowed to officially adopt and appropriate paperwork is completed. Final approval of all adoptions is at the sole discretion of CCHS. Please do not make any promises during a meeting. Once the adoption is approved by a CCHS representative, the adopter signs the necessary paperwork and pays the adoption fee. **An animal is never allowed to go home with an adopter until adoption paperwork has been completed.**

What does the adopter take home and what is returned to CCHS?

The foster should provide the adopter with any medication that your foster cat is taking, along with instructions and a few days worth of food. You can give the adopter your foster cat's favorite toy, or

anything else that will help with the transition, provided it either does not belong to CCHS or has been approved by CCHS. If you feel comfortable, you can pass along your contact information to the adopter should they have any immediate questions after taking the cat home. This is not required, however.

CCHS provides the adopter with an adoption packet, which is inclusive of:

- The foster cat's shelter and medical records
- A guide to bringing a new adoptive cat home
- Coupons, a training DVD and other informational material

The foster should retain all of the supplies provided to you by CCHS and return them to CCHS in a cleaned, sanitized condition within two weeks of the adoption. This includes litter boxes, litter scoopers, collars, blankets, beds, bowls, toys, etc.

Saying goodbye

Fostering a needy pet is one of the most important things an animal lover can do. It's also an emotional, often life-changing experience that isn't for everyone—even for those who can do it, saying goodbye is never easy. But, it also signifies one of the happiest events in the pet foster care system—a new family being created. Here are a few tips to help you with the transition of letting go:

It gets easier with time. For many people, the first time you say goodbye to a foster pet is the hardest—the second time is easier, the third, even more so. While you never stop caring for the foster animals that come into your home, you will soon realize that the sadness is often replaced with the satisfaction of knowing you were instrumental in saving a life.

Become active in the adoption process. Many foster parents enjoy taking an active role in the adoption process and find that it helps with the transition of saying goodbye. While every rescue has a different policy on how involved a cat foster parent can be, CCHS is delighted to have your input. The information you provide may be invaluable to ensuring that your foster cat is matched with the right family.

Focus on the ultimate goal. It's only natural to find you have a stronger bond with certain animals and may even question whether or not to adopt your foster pet. At these times it's important to remember why you became a foster parent—it's about helping to save a life. Shelters across the country are overflowing with adoptable animals, but in the absence of available foster homes, many have no choice but to turn to euthanasia. As a foster parent, it's vital to keep your original goals in mind and remain committed to helping foster pets find loving, forever homes.

Learn to celebrate. One simple action you can take to help alleviate the "letting go blues" is to celebrate the occasion. From throwing a little goodbye party to treating yourself to a special dinner, it's good to commemorate the fact that your foster pet has found a new forever home and is alive because of you. It's also important to acknowledge your hard work. So go ahead, pat yourself on the back for a job well done and celebrate!

Don't feel guilty. After days, weeks or even months of bonding, it can be painful to say goodbye to a foster pet. You may even experience strong feelings of guilt for not adopting the animal yourself—this is to be expected. However, it's important to understand that while these feelings are natural for you, animals are incredibly resilient and adaptable—your foster pet will become part of her new family and be living happily ever after in no time!

Start or join a foster support network. It's very important for pet foster parents to communicate with like-minded folk. By joining a foster support network you'll be able to share advice and experiences, give support and even provide a shoulder to cry on.

Take a break. With the constant demands of foster work, you may begin to feel a bit burned out—and that's completely understandable. You may also simply need time to process your feelings in between fosters. It is important to recognize these feelings and follow through with the break. While you may feel guilty or pressured to immediately open your home to another foster pet, if you burn out completely, there will be one less foster home available—so take time!

Cherish the memories. Consider saving memories of your furry foster friends in a scrapbook. From photos, to reminiscent stories and other memorabilia—a foster scrapbook is a great way to capture the memories of your foster pets, while honoring the many animals whose lives you have directly helped.

YOUR CAT IS ADOPTED: CONGRATULATIONS AND THANK YOU!

Your foster cat has been adopted! You've helped find her a permanent home that will cherish and love her. You gave her the gift of not only life, but a good life.

The staff and volunteers at Contra Costa Humane Society appreciate your time, energy and dedication. Without you, we could not continue to do our part in giving these amazing cats a second chance.

Please let us know if there's anything we can do to make fostering easier and even more rewarding. On behalf of all the graduating cats of CCHS, we thank you!

CONTACT INFORMATION

Cat Foster Team

- Adoption Program Director: Chrissy Wilberg
 - Office: (925) 279-2247, ext. 303
 - Email: adoptions@cchumane.org

CCHS Approved Veterinary Hospitals

- Valley Veterinary Hospital
1780 Ygnacio Valley Road
Walnut Creek, CA 94598
(925) 932-2420
- Alpine Veterinary Hospital
5201 Clayton Road
Concord, CA 94521
(925) 285-8464
- Animal Care Clinic
3340-K Princeton Plaza
El Sobrante, CA 94803
(510) 222-9966
- Brentwood Veterinary Hospital (speak with Hollie)
4519 O'Hara Avenue
Brentwood, CA 94513
(925) 634-1177
- Wellpet Veterinary Clinic
4040 Railroad Avenue
Pittsburg, CA 94565
(925) 427-4300
- SAGE Emergency Center (after-hours only)
1410 Monument Blvd.
Concord, CA 94520
(925) 627-7243

This Cat and Kitten Foster Care Agreement is entered into between the Contra Costa Humane Society (the "Charity/We/Us/CCHS"), a California non-profit corporation, and the undersigned (the "Caretaker" or "You"). In consideration of the mutual promises in this agreement, and other good and valuable consideration, the Charity and Caretaker agree to the following terms and conditions, intending to be legally bound:

1. **The Cat(s).** You agree to provide temporary boarding and foster care (together, the "Foster Care") for cats/kittens (together, the "Cats") until the Cats are adopted into permanent homes, whenever that may be. You understand that CCHS does not operate a shelter facility and that foster care can often last up to a year. You will become a continual Foster Care provider for different Cats until such point as You or We choose to end your Foster Care with the Charity.
2. **The Foster Care.** You will provide the Foster Care in your home at the address at the end of this Agreement, in an area decided upon by the Charity, subject to the terms and conditions of this Agreement. Your Foster Care for the Cats will be comprised of the following:
 - Providing wholesome cat food, water and clean litter pans daily;
 - Bottle feeding for kittens, if necessary;
 - Providing a warm, safe place inside your home;
 - Keeping the Cats indoors at all times;
 - Administering medicines, if any;
 - Transporting to the veterinarian, as necessary;
 - Transporting to adoption events, as necessary;
 - Socializing and playing
3. **Veterinary Care.** Whenever possible You will use a veterinarian recommended by Us. You will telephone Chrissy at (925) 279-2247, extension 303, of this Charity to advise her of any emergencies involving the Cats and for pre-approval of non-emergency veterinary care.
4. **Costs and Expenses.** The Charity will pay all veterinary treatment costs that may be incurred for the Cats during the Foster Care; provided, that We have given You prior approval for such treatments, except in the event of a medical emergency, in which case You will use your best judgment in the matter. You will give Us any receipts from the veterinarian for the veterinary care and medicines. The Charity will pay all pre-authorized food and supply expenses necessary for the Cats during the Foster Care. Any voluntary purchases made by You that have not been pre-authorized by the Charity are not subject to reimbursement by the Charity. You are providing the Foster Care out of your love for cats, and as a volunteer, at no charge to the Charity.
5. **No Liability.** You are not liable to Us for any injuries to, illness or disappearance of the Cats arising out of the Foster Care, except if such injuries, illness or disappearance are caused by or arise out of your gross negligence or intentional misconduct. We are not liable for any bodily injury or property damage, losses or injuries whatsoever to You or other persons, or to your or another persons' pets, caused by the actions, behavior or health of the Cats, or arising out of the Foster Care, except if such damage, losses or injuries are caused by our gross negligence or intentional misconduct.
6. **Vaccinations.** We represent that if the Cats are not current on their necessary vaccines (FVRCP, Rabies), de-wormed (kittens), spayed/neutered or microchipped, CCHS will provide that necessary medical care during their foster period. You agree to take the Cats to the appointed veterinarian for any necessary treatment, vaccines, or spay/neuter surgery as instructed by CCHS.
7. **Returning Cats.** You agree to contact Us immediately by telephone in the event that You are no longer able or willing to provide Foster Care to any or all of the Cats. You will continue to care for the Cats for a reasonable period until We are able to come to your home to retrieve any Cats being returned, or until We can accept the return of the Cats from You at our facilities. We will notify You by telephone whenever We wish to retrieve any or all of the Cats, whether for adoption into a permanent home or any other reason. You will cooperate with Us by promptly arranging a mutually satisfactory time for Us to pick up any Cats being returned. You may not entrust the care of the Cats to any other person or relocate the Cats. You further agree to take the Cats back into your home for foster care should they be returned within a two-week period after adoption.
8. **Adoption.** In the event that You wish to adopt any or all of the Cats as a household pet(s) for yourself, You must first enter into our Adoption Agreement, and if the Cat is not yet sterilized, also enter into our Sterilization Agreement. If the Cat is being transferred to You from another foster home, the previous foster has no more than 3 days, following the date of transfer, to decide to adopt the Cat.
9. **Loaned Equipment and Supplies.** We will temporarily providing You with the necessary equipment and supplies for use in providing the Foster Care. You will return these items to Us in good, clean condition (subject to normal wear and tear) at the end of the Foster Care period, or whenever We request them. If the foregoing items are lost, stolen, or damaged

beyond normal wear and tear as a result of your negligence or misconduct, You will promptly pay Us the replacement price to purchase new items.

10. **Foster Guide Receipt.** I acknowledge that I have received a copy of the Contra Costa Humane Society Cat Foster Guide. I agree to abide by the rules and guidelines included in the Cat Foster Guide. I further agree to comply with the policies, procedures and Code of Conduct outlined in the Volunteer Manual.
11. **Entire Agreement; Modifications; Binding Effect.** This Agreement is the entire Agreement between You and Us. Any modification to the Agreement must be in writing, signed by both You and Us. This Agreement binds your and our respective heirs, executors, personal representatives, successors and assigns.

Foster Caretaker

Date

Signature

Print Name

Street Address

City, State, Zip

Email

Phone Number

Charity
Contra Costa Humane Society

Signature

Print Name and Title