

FOSTER MANUAL - A GUIDE FOR CATS & KITTENS



ONTARIO SPCA

AND HUMANE SOCIETY • PROTECTING ANIMALS SINCE 1873



Welcome to the Ontario SPCA Foster Care Program!



You can change the life of a cat or kitten by becoming a foster volunteer and opening your home and heart to a foster friend.

TOP TIPS

Have fun!

Make time to play with your foster friend!

Take lots of photos and videos to promote your foster friend!

Tell all your friends and family! Share with us and please share on your social media!

Make it a family project!

Again, have fun!

Is Fostering Right for You?

There are many things to consider when deciding to foster an animal.

Foster caregivers must:

- Be at least 18 years old
- Complete a foster care application and sign a foster care agreement
- Sign up as an “on-deck” foster, ready to pick up your cat or kitten within a 36-hour timeframe
- Be able to set aside time (as often as every two weeks for kittens) to bring your foster animal in for follow-up vaccinations and spay/neuter surgery
- Take on the responsibility for routine care in your home during the foster period
- Ensure that animals can be fostered in your home
- Isolate foster animals from family pets within the home, as required
- Quarantine your foster animals for 14 days to prevent disease spread, as required
- Kitten-proof your home to reduce potential safety hazards
- Maintain a peaceful, loving environment for the foster animals and spend quality time socializing them
- Utilize the emergency contact number for after-hour emergencies
- Maintain communication with the Foster Program Coordinator
- Commit to the entire foster period with the animal
- Try to spend a minimum of two hours per day with kittens to socialize them and monitor their health (time commitments will vary depending on your foster animals). For socialization and enrichment ideas visit shelterhealthpro.com.



In addition:

- Existing animals in your home must be up-to-date on vaccines and in good health
- Every family member in the household will need to be prepared for the commitment and emotions involved with fostering

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How the Foster Program Works

- A list of available foster homes is maintained by the Animal Centre Foster Program Coordinator
- Once a cat or kitten is identified as a candidate for foster care, the Animal Centre staff will develop an Animal Care Plan and determine the length of time required for foster care
- Potential foster care volunteers are contacted and a placement will be confirmed
- A time for the foster volunteer to pick up the foster cat or kitten and supplies are arranged
- The Animal Centre staff will review the foster animal's Animal Care Plan, including any appointments for return visits to the Animal Centre, with the foster volunteer
- The foster volunteer provides daily care and interaction as well as monitoring of health and behaviour of the foster animal
- The Animal Centre staff remain available to provide any resources or support required to ensure a successful foster placement for both the cat or kitten and the foster volunteer
- The Foster Program Coordinator will periodically check in to monitor the foster animal's progress
- The foster animal is returned to the Animal Centre for adoption
- The foster volunteer will be asked to provide information on their foster cat or kitten which can be shared with potential adopters

What are the Risks Involved?

Are there any risks to people?

The background of foster pets before entering the Animal Centre is not always known. You should be aware that bringing a foster cat or kitten into your home does come with some associated risks. At the Animal Centre, your foster pet will have had at least one set of core vaccines and will have begun parasite treatment, but they still could be carrying intestinal bacteria, parasites or other zoonotic agents.

Zoonoses are diseases of animals that can be transmitted to humans. Transmission may be direct (bites, secretions, excretions), or indirect (carried on clothing, equipment or through the air). The majority of diseases are not zoonotic; they are species-specific and affect only one or a few related species. Anyone can contract a zoonotic disease, however an immunosuppressive condition that limits a person's ability to fight off disease increases risk. These conditions include very young or old age, concurrent illness, and certain cancers (e.g. leukemia) or chemotherapy. Any concerns should be directed to your personal physician.

- ● ● Find more information on Zoonoses at <http://shelterhealthpro.com/index.php/zoonoses-public-health>

You can reduce the risks of spreading disease by using good hygiene practices. Hand washing after handling foster cats, properly cleaning up and disposing of feces and cleaning litter boxes regularly are effective, easy ways to reduce risks.

Visit <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/how-to-handwash.pdf> for the *Hand Washing Guide*.

Is there any risk to my pets?

You can take steps to protect your pets. The Ontario SPCA requires that before bringing a foster animal into your home, you ensure that your own animals are up to date on vaccines and parasite treatment and in good health. As with people, there are some animals that are at increased risk of infection. These include the very young, very old, pregnant and pets with compromised immune systems. Please discuss any concerns with your veterinarian.

You will also keep the foster cat or kitten in a separate area from your pets for at least the first 14 days to further protect your pets.

Preparing Your Home and Family to Foster

Choose a space for your foster cat or kitten

A relatively warm and quiet indoor space in the home is the ideal place for your foster pet. This should be a well ventilated, easy to clean area where a foster animal can be segregated from your pets. A basement room, spare bedroom, or laundry room generally works well, provided it can be shut off from the rest of the house. Remember that not all animals in the foster program have been house-trained, especially young kittens, so choose a space that is easy to clean and disinfect.

Pet-Proof the space from potential hazards (Courtesy of the ASPCA)

- Remove small, ingestible objects from the environment; this may include small toys or parts of toys, elastic bands, paper clips, string, sewing pins and needles, ornaments, tinsel and more
- Do not let your foster felines outdoors under any circumstances, including in shared hallways, and keep them separated from any resident animals in a confined space such as the crate you are provided with or in a spare room such as an extra bathroom
- Keep toilet bowls securely closed, especially when small kittens are in the home
- Secure window screens in any open windows no matter how small the opening
- Ensure that side panels on window AC units are securely in place and cannot be moved or opened
- Secure loose electrical wires, cords for window blinds and other potential hazards
- Remove plants and flowers from the vicinity of your foster animal's space; many types of decorative vegetation are highly toxic to animals
- Do not offer any human food to your foster animal
- Keep your home reasonably climate-controlled (if it's too hot for you, it's too hot for your foster)
- Ensure visitors do not leave doors or windows open, and are aware and conscientious about safety measures that are in place for your foster
- Discard old or uneaten animal food and keep fresh water available at all times
- Secure/remove household toxins such as cleaning agents, pesticides and solvents

● ● ● **NOTE: Foster kittens and cats must remain indoors only!**

What supplies do I need to get started?

The Ontario SPCA will supply all of the items needed to properly care for your foster cat or kitten during its stay in your home, including food and medications. If you would like to supplement some of the supplies on your own please feel free to discuss with the Foster Program Coordinator.

Picking Up Your Foster Cat or Kitten

Once you have been matched with a foster animal and your home has been prepared for your foster cat or kitten's arrival, a date and time will be arranged for you to pick up your foster pet.

Upon arrival at the Animal Centre, a staff member will review the cat or kitten's Animal Care Plan with you, and ensure that you have all the supplies you will need to get started. You are on your way with your foster friend!



On route:

Cats and kittens fostered for the Ontario SPCA are required to be transported in a secure carrier or cage, covered with a light towel or blanket to reduce the animal's stress during transport.

You've Arrived Home

Set up your foster cat or kitten's new living space before allowing the cat or kitten out of the carrier. Have the litter box, food and water bowls, toys and bed in place and allow the cat to explore the room quietly on their own. If the Animal Centre has provided you with a Cat Cabin be sure to set it up in the room as well. A Cat Cabin will smell familiar to your foster cat and provide him with a comfortable spot to hide. Try gently wiping any towels or blankets for your cat around their face and shoulders to transfer some of their scent onto their new living area. Do not wipe anywhere near your cat's hind end.



- ● ● ● ● ● ● ● **NOTE: Cats and kittens prefer their food and water to be placed away from their litter box, so separate the bowls and litter box as far away from each other as the room allows.**

Getting Acquainted with your New Cat or Kitten

Being in a new environment is stressful for most cats, and a normal reaction may be to hide.

Safe Haven: Allow your foster cat time to adjust to your home while being housed in a “safe haven” such as a roomy crate or a separate room. A spare bathroom is ideal since there aren’t hiding spaces and it is easy to disinfect. Block off small areas where the cat may try to hide and get stuck. Spending some quiet time sitting in the room with your cat may help them adjust.



Scared Cats: Scared cats have been known to hurt themselves by wedging themselves inside air-conditioners, heaters, and radiators; behind ovens or inside ceiling tiles—or by dashing out the front door in fear. It is much safer to keep a frightened new cat safely in one cat-proofed room. Open up your cat carrier and let the cat decide whether she wants to explore or wants to remain in the carrier. Many times a cat will remain in her carrier for hours. Secure the door in the open position and keep the carrier covered so your cat feels secure.

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- **Never try to pull your new foster cat out of hiding. Instead, use toys or treats to encourage her to come out. If your foster cat still won't come out, let her be.**
- **Cats need time to adjust to their new environment.**
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- **To keep your cat or small animal safe and away from outdoor dangers, make sure your foster animal remains indoors at all times.**
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Getting Acquainted with your New Cat or Kitten

Take It Slow: Let your foster cat get used to you slowly. Sit in the room and have treats with you. Read a newspaper or a book out loud while you're sitting there so the cat gets to know your voice. Offer treats to your foster cat in moderation. Never stare directly at your cat or stand or loom over your cat as your cat may feel threatened.

When your cat is eating, drinking, using the litter box and moving around the room in a relaxed manner, he may be ready to explore more of the house (after the initial quarantine period).

Take It Slower: However, if your cat runs when you enter the room, hides, only eats or uses the litter box at night, slinks around the room with his body low to the ground, hisses, growls or cowers, these are signs of fear. He's not ready to come out of confinement yet. Keep your cat confined and contact the volunteer director if there is no progress after one week.

It's All Normal: Some cats may need less than a day to adjust; others may need days or weeks to become comfortable enough to explore the entire house without fear. This is normal cat behavior.

Interaction With Children in the Home

Fostering can be a wonderful opportunity to teach children about respecting and caring for animals and a great socialization opportunity for the foster cat or kitten.

Everyone in your family will also have to be prepared for the emotional highs and lows that can come with receiving, taking care of, and returning a foster cat or kitten.

We encourage families to share in the responsibility of caring for their foster pets, but we do require that children are supervised at all times during this interaction. Please speak to your Foster Program Coordinator for best practices when introducing your children to your foster pet.

Introducing Foster Cats and Kittens to Resident Pets

If you want to introduce your foster cats or kittens to your resident pets after the 14-day minimum quarantine, recommendations from the Foster Program Coordinator can be provided on how to do so safely. Cats or kittens should not be introduced to resident pets unless they are free of signs of disease.

Start Showcasing Your Foster Cat or Kitten

Web Presence

We can share your cat or kitten's story on our social media. Please share on yours too! If you write a story about the cat or kitten's personality you can make a big difference in the number of calls the cat gets, so be descriptive.

Try to include things like:

- Whether the cat likes to be petted or held
- Is a lap cat
- Purrs easily
- Is vocal or quiet
- Is active and playful or calm
- Has good litter box manners
- Uses a scratching post
- Has experience with other animals and children, etc.

Of course, any cute things that she does or anything you want to point out about her fur or appearance is good as well. It can be as long as you want, but the typical description is a paragraph or two.

Try to focus on the positive, so we generate interest. Any bad habits can be discussed during the first conversation with the potential adopter.

Please e-mail the story to the Foster Program Coordinator.

We encourage you to update your cat or kitten's progress on your social media channels frequently.

Photos

Got a great photo or video of your foster cat or kitten? Please e-mail them in .jpg format for photos and .mpg format for videos to the Foster Program Coordinator with your story.



For photos and descriptions that entice adopters, check out these techniques from ASPCApro:

Hotshots-Getting Great Photos of Your Animals: aspcapro.org/resource/saving-lives-adoption-marketing/hot-shots-getting-great-photos-your-animals

All By Your-Selfie: aspcapro.org/blog/2014/06/12/tip-week-all-your-selfie

Daily Care

Daily Care for Moms with Kittens

Most mothers, even first-timers, can take care of themselves and their offspring quite well. For the most part, you will leave mom and babies alone while observing for any signs of trouble.

Provide a nesting box for nursing mothers so babies can't get out but mom can when she needs some peace and quiet. Only half of the nesting box should have extra warmth added.

Young Kitten Care

A kitten's survival depends on getting consistent nutrition and warmth. The mother's colostrum, which is the first milk produced, is vitally important to a newborn's cardiovascular system and defense against disease. Colostrum is rich in antibodies to help protect against various infections, but kittens can only absorb these antibodies and benefit from them for a short period after birth.

So-called "Fading Kitten Syndrome," when a newborn fades and dies despite adequate care, is usually due to either a genetic defect or lack of sufficient colostrum. For this reason, it is very important that newborns nurse as soon as possible after birth. If they do not find a nipple on their own, put their mouth close to one and hold them until they nurse.

Continued healthy nursing behavior is crucial for kitten survival. In order to tell if the kittens are nursing, put on exam gloves and gently pick up each kitten and feel for a round belly full of milk. A flat or concave belly indicates that the kitten may not be nursing. You should perform this check once or twice a day, always wearing your exam gloves.

Also, visually confirm that each kitten is actually latching onto mom. A gram scale works great to log each kitten's weight on your health monitoring sheet (found later in this guide). Healthy kittens should gain a little weight each day.

Problem Signs

During the first two weeks, kittens should spend approximately 90% of the time eating and sleeping. If kittens are crying during or after eating, they are usually becoming ill or are not getting adequate milk.

A newborn kitten is very susceptible to infections and can die within 24 hours. If excessive crying occurs, the mother and entire litter should be examined by a veterinarian. Please call us immediately.

Daily Care for Kittens Transitioning to Wet Food (3-5 weeks)

Transitioning kittens should be fed “gruel,” which is a pudding-like consistency mix of KMR or water and wet kitten food. They should be fed every 4-6 hours. Please notify your Animal Centre if you notice kittens not taking to the canned food. You are welcome to experiment with different consistencies but the gruel should be gradually thickened to get them ready for solid food. Leftover gruel should be discarded immediately if not eaten. Canned food that has not been made into gruel yet can be covered and refrigerated for up to 48 hours.

Once kittens have teeth, they could start to chew the nipple on a bottle, which can be very dangerous due to small pieces being ingested. This must be monitored closely.

Fresh water should be provided at all times for transitioning kittens.

To encourage a kitten to eat the gruel, place a small amount on your finger and place it on the kitten’s tongue or lips. The goal is that she will eat on her own from a plate or bowl. This transition period can take days to weeks. A variety of wet kitten food is good to feed your kitten, but avoid fish & seafood flavors.

Small litter boxes should be provided at this stage with non-clumping litter. Kittens will eventually learn how to use a litter box on their own but accidents are common for the first few weeks. If they defecate outside, move the feces to the litter box. You can also place kittens inside their litter box after meals.

Daily Care for Kittens Eating on their Own (5-8+ weeks)

Kittens who are eating completely on their own will need to be fed wet food about three times throughout the day. They should always have dry food and water available.

Don’t forget to clean their litter box at least once day (and focus on and enjoy this socialization period!).

Adult Cats

Adult cats are fed twice daily. You will be provided with the appropriate food and instructions.

Adults should be in the habit of using their litter box consistently. The litter box must be scooped daily to ensure that the cat does not avoid it and urinate or defecate elsewhere.



Grooming and Bathing

Adults: Groom your foster cat regularly (daily if possible) with a soft bristle brush. Brushing is an important part of routine care for pets and an important part of socialization for kittens. If you are comfortable clipping your foster cat's nail, please do so. If not, the Animal Centre staff can help with this during one of your scheduled visits to the Animal Centre.

If your foster cat requires bathing as part of the treatment plan, the Animal Centre staff will discuss this with you as part of the Animal Care Plan. Otherwise, if you feel your foster cat may need bathing, please call and discuss with the Animal Centre staff prior to bathing.

Kittens: Kittens should be kept clean and will often need bathing since they can be very messy.

Try to spot clean by only rinsing the kitten with warm water where he is dirty, such as his bottom. Make sure to not get a lot of water on his head, especially the eyes, nose and ears. If there is food stuck on his face, use a warm damp cloth.

Kittens cannot be put back into their home until they are completely dry. You can use a blow dryer on the lowest setting after towel drying.

Medication

If your foster cat or kitten requires medication at the time of pick up, information about the medication, including type, dose and schedule will be recorded on the Animal Care Plan. Additionally a medication log will be provided to you which includes specific dates and times to be initialed after each dose is given. Keeping detailed records of medication doses is important! It is also important that medication is given as directed. Never stop giving medication before it is finished. If you have any questions or concerns regarding medication for your foster cat, contact the Animal Centre right away.



Behaviour



Monitoring your Cat or Kitten's Health and Behaviour

It is important to monitor your foster cat or kitten's health daily. You will need to watch your foster cat or kitten closely for any changes to her health and activity levels.

You will receive a Daily Evaluation Sheet (Appendix B) to track the various physical and behavioural signs. Any changes should be recorded and discussed with the Foster Program Coordinator.

Behaviour to watch out for:

If you notice any of the following behaviours OR any behaviour you are uncomfortable or unsure of, contact the Animal Centre as soon as possible to discuss:

- Urination/defecation outside of litterbox
- Hissing or growling
- Biting or scratching
- Continued avoidance

Kitten Growth Milestones

Age/Weight	Milestones
Birth/2 – 4 ounces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eyes and ears are closed • Sleeps 90% of the time • Minimal handling
2 – 3 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Umbilical cord falls off
4 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begins to purr
10 – 14 days/8 ounces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eyes and ears should be open • Healthy kittens will be round and warm with pink skin and will rarely cry
2 – 3 weeks/12 ounces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby incisors erupt, can begin to eliminate without help • Will start crawling, standing and playing with littermates • Begin regular handling • Ready for deworming
4 weeks/ 1 pound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby canine teeth erupt, beginning to walk but do not have great balance, will begin to groom themselves, able to regulate their body temperature • Continue daily handling • Ready for first vaccine • Ready for gruel and may be ready for introduction of dry kitten food
6 weeks/1.5 pounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baby premolars erupt • Running, playing, using the litter box, grooming themselves • Should be eating dry kitten food, supplemented with canned
8 weeks/ 2 pounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ready for surgery and adoption!

Daily Cleaning

Providing a clean, sanitary living space dedicated to just your foster animal is a highly important part of caring for your foster pet and lowering the risk of the transmission of zoonotic and infectious disease.

Five key practices to control disease transmission include:

- Practicing good hand hygiene before and after handling animals or objects in the foster area
- Cleaning and disinfecting items in the foster area using the appropriate products
- Ensuring surfaces that are easy to clean and disinfect (vinyl or tile floor, not carpet if possible)
- Stocking the area with animal care supplies that are dedicated to the area and easy to disinfect
- Keeping human traffic to a minimum

There are some quick and easy steps you will need to take daily to ensure your home and your foster pet remain healthy and happy:

- Wash your hands before and after each interaction with your foster pet
- Wear disposable gloves while cleaning or scooping litter boxes
- Scoop out litter boxes at least daily
- Wash food and water bowls daily
- Remove any organic materials (feces, urine, fur, food) from bedding, floor, furniture etc.
- Wipe up any organic material using spray bottle of Prevail® and paper towel
- Wash and thoroughly dry bedding if soiled
- Clean litter boxes and scoop when soiled
- Pick up feces outside immediately
- Consider wearing a smock or other protective wear to avoid direct contact with your clothing that comes in contact with other animals

Cleaning vs. Disinfecting

Cleaning removes dirt, grease or visible debris from surfaces typically through the use of soap, detergent, or degreaser. Cleaning does not remove harmful organisms. Cleaning of the animal housing area, as described above should be undertaken daily.

Disinfecting removes harmful organisms through a chemical agent. Disinfectants do not always remove dirt or grease. Disinfecting is usually done only after a surface is thoroughly cleaned.

A thorough cleaning, followed by disinfection is required of all supplies and the animal housing area between foster animals and/or any time an animal has been ill or any type of health concern has been identified.

Supplementary resource:
Appendix C : Cleaning for Infection Control in the Foster Home

The complete Cleaning Cycle is a Process made up of 3 basic steps:

#1 REMOVE GROSS ORGANIC MATERIAL



#2 CLEAN WITH A DETERGENT



#3 DISINFECT WITH A SPECIFIC DISINFECTANT



During the quarantine period:

Surface/Object	Suggested Procedure	Special Step
High contact surfaces (counters, light switches and floors)	Daily cleaning using detergent and water solution or spray bottle of Prevail® and paper towel. Weekly disinfection using Prevail and allowing a five minute wet contact time with disinfectant on cleaned surfaces.	Sweep all floors daily. Vacuum all rugs and furniture vigorously and frequently!
Visibly soiled objects/ surfaces	Clean with a detergent and water solution and spray with Prevail® to allow for a five minute wet contact time.	
Litter boxes and food bowls	Daily cleaning and weekly disinfection with Prevail®.	Do not wash food bowls in water that has been used already to clean litter boxes.
All regular surfaces (any surface your foster animal comes in contact with like walls, blinds, etc.)	Weekly cleaning and disinfection with Prevail®.	Increase frequency of cleaning and disinfection to daily when infection is present.
Laundry (bedding, blankets and some toys)	Remove organic material before laundering . Use detergent and water temperature appropriate for fabrics. Bleach may be used for stain removal. Thoroughly machine dry on highest heat the fabric will tolerate.	Take caution in moving soiled items to washing machine to prevent environmental contamination . Throw away heavily soiled items and request replacements from Animal Centre.

After the quarantine period: Continue with daily cleaning of food and water bowls, scooping out litter boxes, daily wiping up any organic material and cleaning with spray bottle of Prevail® and paper towel.

Once Your Foster Cat or Kitten has Been Returned

Surface/Object	Suggested Procedure	Special Step
All surfaces and objects	Thorough cleaning and disinfection (using Prevail® disinfectant) between each animal's stay in your home.	Thoroughly clean surfaces with a soap or detergent, and then apply Prevail® using a spray bottle to allow for a five minute wet contact time. Allow to air dry or wipe dry after five minutes.
Floors and carpets	Sweep and wash all floors. Apply Prevail® using spray bottle to allow for a five minute wet contact time. For carpets, vigorously vacuum and overspray with Prevail solution.	Change vacuum bag if used.
Litter boxes and food bowls	Wash and spray with Prevail® to allow for a five minute wet contact time.	Do not wash food bowls in water that has been used already to clean litter boxes.
Laundry (bedding, blankets and some toys)	Remove organic material before laundering. Use detergent and water temperature appropriate for fabrics. Bleach may be used for stain removal. Thoroughly machine dry on highest heat the fabric will tolerate.	Take caution in moving soiled items to washing machine to prevent environmental contamination. Throw away heavily soiled items and request replacements from Animal Centre.

Socialization

You can help set your foster pet up for success through regular handling and play. The more comfortable they are interacting with people, the more social and attractive they will be to potential adopters. One or two play times daily, toy play, gentle handling and brushing are all wonderful ways to socialize while interacting with your foster pet. The Animal Centre can provide pet specific suggestions for socializing fosters (e.g. kittens and puppies)

The degree and nature of human contact a given cat prefers depends on its socialization to people and involves genetics, early rearing conditions, life experiences and personal preference. Providing opportunities for interaction with people gives cats and kittens the opportunity to become better socialized and increases their chances of being adopted.

Kitten Socialization

The ideal time for socializing kittens is from two to seven weeks of age. As soon as their eyes and ears are opening, socialization opportunities begin. Socialization after this age range is still possible, but becomes more difficult. Attempting socialization after 12 to 14 weeks of age will have more limited success.

Socialization is critical for young kittens, and they will need multiple short socialization sessions on a daily basis, as well as playtime and enrichment to help them learn to enjoy being around people.

- Keep the kittens confined to a large dog crate in a quiet room for the first few days to make sure they are eating well & adjusting to the new environment
- Provide them with a carrier without its door, or a cardboard box inside the dog crate and cover the crate with a sheet so they feel more secure
- The crate should be in a secure, cat-proof room where kittens cannot run away and hide once you start letting them out of the crate
- Once they are eating well and comfortable, and after the initial 14-day quarantine, allow them to explore this cat-proofed area when supervised; keep them confined when not supervised

Make sure to use every meal time as a socialization event:

- Offer kittens food and sit with them while they eat. Eventually work toward putting the food on your finger and having them eat it from there
- Once they are comfortable with this, slowly bring the food closer to you so that they have to climb on your lap to get the food
- Progress to petting them while they eat, starting with their face and shoulders
- Eventually work on handling more and more and then finally, picking up
- Find out how to socialize with food at <http://aspcapro.org/kittenfood>

Socialization

Short socialization sessions (3-5 minutes) several times a day are better than one or two long sessions. Once the kittens become social with you, have friends or family interact with them too, so that they learn to be social with everyone:

- Work on getting them used to household noises and voices by slowly introducing them (i.e. talking in a normal voice, laughing, opening cabinets, etc.)
- Always pair food or playtime with your presence, whether or not you are touching/interacting with them
- Give them safe objects to explore, such as paper bags and cardboard boxes
- Allow them to walk on different surfaces and explore when supervised
- Do not allow them to play with your hands or feet. This will encourage play biting which will continue and be painful once they get older

Engaging Your Foster Cat

The following has been adapted from material on the ASPCApro website at <http://www.aspcapro.org/blog/2016/10/04/can-training-cats-high-five-change-their-lives> . Here are some ways to engage with cats in your care:

- Gently talking to the cat
- Petting
- Grooming
- Holding
- Lap sitting
- Play

The cat must be allowed to approach and choose the level of physical contact it desires. Caretakers should be careful not to force an interaction on a cat.

The degree and nature of human contact a given cat prefers depends on its socialization to people and involves genetics, early rearing conditions, life experiences and personal preference.

Signs that indicate that the cat welcomes interaction include:

- Slow or affiliative blinking
- Purring
- Head butting against a person's hand or body
- Staying in close physical proximity
- Rubbing or pushing against a person
- Rolling around to the side and back in a relaxed manner



Quiet Socialization Time

Cats require routines that also include quiet time, and socialization with people. Most cats usually enjoy spending time with you, and welcome the opportunity to curl up on a warm lap:

- You can sit quietly, offer affection, and talk quietly. This can work especially well for shy or fearful cats
- Bring a book and start reading; let the cat choose to come to you. The cat may even help turn the pages
- While you read aloud, the cat will find the sound of your voice comforting and will learn social skills that will help the cat get adopted
- The key is your presence, quiet interaction with occasional petting, and a possible treat

Interactive Playtime

Playing with people can provide social interaction an opportunity for more physical activity. It can also contribute to the cat's socialization. Whether done within an enclosure, or in a play room, interactive play can entice most cats. Items such as fishing poles, feather wands, retrievable items or laser pointers that allow the cat to engage in predatory behaviour (eg. chase, pounce, capture) are generally favoured by cats.

Non-hazardous toys can be left in the room for cats to play with on their own. Toys that provide movement are considered best. Balls are excellent for this purpose, as they can be propelled by the cat and offer the predatory opportunities noted earlier.

As with all forms of enrichment, ensure each cat has access to one or more toys during the course of the day.



Avoid toys with small or ingestible parts; toys with strings or other materials that a cat might ingest should be removed after play.

Understanding Feline Behaviour

The ability to read feline body language will help you understand what the cat is communicating, and then implement the proper intervention such as enrichment, socialization, or modification.

Understanding what cats are communicating through their body language is essential for cat caregivers:

- It enables them to more accurately “read” the cats and understand their emotions and motivations for their actions and behaviours
- It helps them respond more accurately to behaviour issues like aggression

Visit **ShelterHealthPro.com** for more information on feline body language and feline communication.

Training

Cats and kittens love to learn. Knowing that their actions will earn them a reward gives them a sense of control over their environment. Training your foster cat or kitten provides mental and physical stimulation, facilitates positive associations with humans, and can build confidence in shy or fearful cats.

Visit **ShelterHealthPro.com** for resources for litter training, teaching a cat to wear a collar, clicking with cats, and more!



Need a resource?

Visit **ShelterHealthPro.com** for great information on animal care.

The screenshot shows the Ontario SPCA logo and the ShelterHealthPro.com header. Below the header are two resource cards. The first card features a photo of a person wearing blue gloves examining a cat's mouth and is titled "INFECTION AND DISEASE CONTROL". The second card features a photo of a brown rabbit jumping over a hurdle and is titled "ENVIRONMENTAL NEEDS AND BEHAVIOURAL HEALTH".



Wellness Appointments at the Animal Centre

Your foster pet will need to visit the Animal Centre at certain points during their stay with you for routine medical care, weigh-ins and vaccinations. They may also need to visit the Centre in if they show any signs of illness. You will find a list of scheduled appointments on the Animal Care Plan provided at the time of pick up. Generally these appointments will take anywhere from 15-30 minutes. You will be required to transport your foster pet to and from these appointments. If you are unable to make a scheduled appointment please contact the Animal Centre as soon as possible in order to re-schedule.

Veterinary care

All veterinary care provided to your foster pet must be approved by the Animal Centre Manager. You will be provided with contact information.

Please do not take your foster pet to see a veterinarian without approval from the Animal Centre. In most cases the Animal Centre staff will transport the animal to the veterinary hospital. In case of an emergency, in an effort to save time, Animal Centre staff may have to meet you at the veterinary hospital, or have you attend the appointment while they communicate with the hospital remotely.

If you notice any changes in your foster pet's health or behavior or have any concerns regarding the care of your foster pet during regular business hours, please notify the Animal Centre as soon as possible.



Emergencies

In case of an emergency:

The Ontario SPCA and Humane Society has partnered with Healthy Pets to give our foster parents access to online veterinary medicine in the event of an emergency after business hours.

If a foster pet is in distress and needs medical attention outside of animal centre business hours, our foster volunteers can access the Healthy Pets program and visit with a veterinarian via video conferencing. Foster volunteers will receive further information on the Healthy Pets program as well as how and when to access the program with their Animal Care Plan.

Examples of Emergency Situations (Call the Emergency Line)

- Very high or low body temperature
- Very pale, blue or grey gums
- Trauma – eg. hit by car, dropped, consistent limping, stepped on, unconscious
- Open mouth breathing, erratic, gasping
- Sneezing or coughing blood
- Seizures or neurologic symptoms
- Severe bleeding (includes bleeding in urine or stool)
- Not eating or drinking
- Continuous vomiting and dehydration
- Liquid diarrhea
- Lethargic
- Uncharacteristic/abnormal behaviour
- Straining to urinate/not urinating more than 24 hours
- Failure to defecate more than 2 days
- Unable to stand or walk

Examples of Non- Emergencies (Call the Animal Centre in the Morning)

- If your foster pet has vomited once or has diarrhea once but is still active, eating and drinking
- Decrease in appetite
- Coughing or sneezing without blood or airway blockage
- Clear, yellow, or green discharge from the eyes or nose
- Weakness
- Visible parasites

Bites or Scratches

If your foster cat bites or scratches any person, it is recommended that the person bitten or scratched receives First Aid and seeks medical attention. All bites and scratches involving your foster cat are to be reported to the Animal Centre immediately with all available details regarding the bite or scratch. The Centre is required to report all incidents to local Health Unit and to the Ontario SPCA Human Resources department. The Health Unit will advise the cat be placed under a mandatory quarantine period of 10 days to be monitored for potential zoonotic disease. The quarantine may take place in the foster home or at the Animal Centre. This will be determined through discussion with the Centre Manager.

Returning Your Foster Cat or Kitten

Scheduled returns:

Once your foster cat is ready to return to the Animal Shelter, the Centre staff will work with you to schedule an appointment. Appointments are scheduled during regular Animal Centre operating hours. The staff will do their best to accommodate your schedule. If you are unable to keep your appointment, please contact the Centre in advance to reschedule. It is very important that the Centre staff are prepared for foster returns so they can provide appropriate, comfortable housing for all the animals in their care.

When you return your foster animal, you will have the opportunity to share your foster parent experience with the Coordinator.

Unexpected Returns:

We understand that emergencies or unforeseen changes happen and that there are times when foster animals will need to return to the Centre unexpectedly. If you are in the midst of fostering an animal and for any reason are unable to continue care for that animal, please contact the Animal Centre as soon as possible and arrangements will be made to return the animal to the Animal Centre. In the case of an emergency, please call the emergency number provided.

We also request that you do not leave your foster cat with a third party. Any alternate care arrangements will be made by the Animal Care Centre staff.

Adopting a Foster Cat or Kitten

The purpose of the foster care is to provide temporary housing for animals in loving homes until they can be returned to the Animal Centre and placed for adoption.

There are times when a foster volunteer develops a special bond with a foster animal and considers adoption. If this happens to you, you will be able to adopt your foster cat or kitten. You will need to contact the Animal Centre staff to discuss your adoption process. If a friend or family member expresses interest in adopting your foster cat, please direct them to contact the Animal Centre. The Centre staff will discuss our adoption procedures with them directly.

Preparing for Your Next Foster Cat

We hope you enjoyed your experience as a foster parent providing special care for an Ontario SPCA foster cat or kitten!

Please return any supplies provided by the Animal Centre. A thorough cleaning, followed by disinfection is required of all supplies and the animal housing area between foster animals. See the Daily Cleaning Section: Once Your Foster Animal Has Left.

Let the Foster Program Coordinator know that you are ready and waiting for your next foster pet!

Appendix A

FELINE FOSTER CARE: DAILY MEDICAL EVALUATION

START DATE OF FOSTER: _____

NAME: _____ PETPOINT #: _____

NUTRITION:

Type of food: _____

Amount to be given: _____

Frequency to feed: _____

WEIGHT CHECK:

Date:										
Weight:										

DATE																				
OVERALL BEHAVIOR																				
Friendly / Playful																				
Scared/shy																				
Calm																				
Aggressive																				
Gets over stimulated/nippy																				
LITTERBOX BEHAVIOR																				
Uses litterbox																				
Accident outside of box																				
STRESS SIGNS																				
Appears depressed																				
OTHER OBSERVATIONS																				
Doesn't appear to like other cats																				
Appears to get along with dogs																				
Does not like to be picked up																				

DATE																				
HYDRATION STATUS																				
Normal																				
Abnormal																				
BODY CONDITION																				
Weight Loss																				
Unexpected Weight Gain																				
APPETITE																				
Good																				
Nibbling																				
Not eating																				
STOOLS																				
Normal																				
Loose																				
Diarrhea																				
None																				
URINE																				
Normal																				
Excessive																				
Straining																				
None																				
VOMITTING																				
Food																				
Bile / Liquid																				
Hairball																				
SNEEZING																				
Clear																				
Colour or blood																				
EYES																				
Clear discharge																				
Pus/mucus																				
Red/irritated / Swollen																				

COMMENTS:

Appendix B

During the quarantine period:

Surface/Object	Suggested Procedure	Special Step
High contact surfaces (counters, light switches and floors)	Daily cleaning using detergent and water solution or spray bottle of Prevail® and paper towel. Weekly disinfection using Prevail and allowing a five minute wet contact time with disinfectant on cleaned surfaces.	Sweep all floors daily. Vacuum all rugs and furniture vigorously and frequently!
Visibly soiled objects/ surfaces	Clean with a detergent and water solution and spray with Prevail® to allow for a five minute wet contact time.	
Litter boxes and food bowls	Daily cleaning and weekly disinfection with Prevail®.	Do not wash food bowls in water that has been used already to clean litter boxes.
All regular surfaces (any surface your foster animal comes in contact with like walls, blinds, etc.)	Weekly cleaning and disinfection with Prevail®.	Increase frequency of cleaning and disinfection to daily when infection is present.
Laundry (bedding, blankets and some toys)	Remove organic material before laundering . Use detergent and water temperature appropriate for fabrics. Bleach may be used for stain removal. Thoroughly machine dry on highest heat the fabric will tolerate.	Take caution in moving soiled items to washing machine to prevent environmental contamination . Throw away heavily soiled items and request replacements from Animal Centre.

After the quarantine period: continue with daily cleaning of food and water bowls, scooping out litter boxes, daily wiping up any organic material and cleaning with spray bottle of Prevail® and paper towel.

Once Your Foster Cat or Kitten has Been Returned

Surface/Object	Suggested Procedure	Special Step
All surfaces and objects	Thorough cleaning and disinfection (using Prevail® disinfectant) between each animal's stay in your home.	Thoroughly clean surfaces with a soap or detergent, and then apply Prevail® using a spray bottle to allow for a five minute wet contact time. Allow to air dry or wipe dry after five minutes.
Floors and carpets	Sweep and wash all floors. Apply Prevail® using spray bottle to allow for a five minute wet contact time. For carpets, vigorously vacuum and overspray with Prevail solution.	Change vacuum bag if used.
Litter boxes and food bowls	Wash and spray with Prevail® to allow for a five minute wet contact time.	Do not wash food bowls in water that has been used already to clean litter boxes.
Laundry (bedding, blankets and some toys)	Remove organic material before laundering. Use detergent and water temperature appropriate for fabrics. Bleach may be used for stain removal. Thoroughly machine dry on highest heat the fabric will tolerate.	Take caution in moving soiled items to washing machine to prevent environmental contamination Throw away heavily soiled items and request replacements from Animal Centre.

Appendix C

Upper Respiratory Infections (URI)

Viral and bacterial respiratory infections are very common in cats, especially young or stressed ones. Signs include clear to colored discharge from eyes and/or nose, loss of appetite, depression, congestion, sneezing, coughing, fever, etc. Keep the nose and eyes clear of discharge with warm, damp cotton balls. A cat who doesn't feel well appreciates some extra petting and quiet time in your lap. If you can coax your foster cat to eat, and she's drinking water, call the Foster Care Coordinator.

Wash your hands thoroughly after handling an animal with visible URI symptoms and before contact with any other cats as URI is extremely contagious. URI is similar to a human cold, but is generally not transmittable to people or other animal species except for cats. Any cat showing signs of an upper respiratory infection should be isolated from other cats in the household.

Dehydration

Watch carefully to see if your foster cat is drinking water and keep track of litter box activity. You can check for dehydration by lifting the skin up just a little lower than the back of the neck. It should be taut and snap back down when released. If it stands up or takes some time to go back down, the cat may be dehydrated. Please contact us right away if you think your cat is dehydrated.

Other Common Issues:

Let your coordinator know if you notice any of these:

- Fever (greater than 39.5C)
- Loose stool or has had diarrhea once but is still active, eating and drinking
- Continual vomiting or occasional vomiting that lasts more than a day or two
- Extreme lethargy for more than one day
- Eyes that are red and inflamed or have an extreme amount of discharge and swelling, vs. small amounts of discharge, usually in both eyes (common with a URI)
- Any crumbly wax-like substance in the ears, head shaking or scratching
- Fleas or flea dirt (black pepper-like substance in the fur)



ONTARIO SPCA

AND HUMANE SOCIETY • PROTECTING ANIMALS SINCE 1873

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The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Ontario SPCA): Protecting animals since 1873, the Ontario SPCA is a registered charity comprised of close to 50 Communities relying primarily on donations to fund animal protection, care and rehabilitation; advocacy; and humane education. The Ontario SPCA Act mandates the Society to enforce animal cruelty laws and provides Society investigators with police powers to do so – making the Ontario SPCA unique among animal welfare organizations in the province.

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