

LIFE-SAVING ADULT & SENIOR CAT

FOSTER CARE

GUIDE



DEAR FOSTER FAMILY,

You are about to embark on a memorable live-saving adventure! Thank you for opening your home and heart to cats in need. Cats who stay in the shelter long term deteriorate over time. Some of these effects can be life-long.

Fostering adult and senior cats is a rewarding process that saves hundreds of lives in our community each year, and we could not do it without you! In this manual, you will find helpful tips to ensure success. Our cats typically need to be fostered until they are adopted and this process can take anywhere from a few days to a few months. We encourage fosters to give their foster cats time to decompress away from residential animals. Going from the shelter environment to a home environment is a big change and oftentimes they need time to settle, sleep, and recharge before being ready to engage with new animals and environments.

Requirements to foster adult and senior cats vary depending on the animal. The Foster Coordinator and PAWS staff can help find the best fit for your home.

Sincerely,

The PAWS & More Foster Team



TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Preparing Your Space:	
Preparing the Cat Room	3
Common Foster Reasons	4
Socializing Fearful Cats	5
Behavioral Foster: Inappropriate Elimination	5
Behavioral Foster: Feline Aggression	6
Bringing your Foster Cat Home	
Cat to Cat Introductions	7
Cat to Dog Introductions	7
Common Health Concerns:	
Diarrhea, Parasites, Vomiting, Eye Discharge	8
Ear Mites, Fleas, Ringworm, and Mange	9
URI, Hyperthyroidism, Diabetes	10
Emergency Symptoms	10
Routine Care	
Routine Care	11
Vaccinations and Dewormer	11
Additional Support Provided	11
The Finishing Line!	
Spay/Neuter Surgery	12
The Day of Surgery	12
Ready for Adoption	13
What Happens Now	13

Preparing Your Space:



Tips & Tails

Use glass or metal bowls as plastic bowls are porous and not as easy to clean:

Clean linens and toys regularly

Preparing the Cat Room

Before you bring home your foster, make sure that you have a suitable place for the cat to stay while they acclimate to your home and residential animals.

- A space where temperature can be controlled.
- Separate from other household pets.
- Can withstand foster messes: litter box accidents, vomit, spilled water, etc.
- No breakable items.
- Electrical outlets and wires are blocked.
- No small items.
- Secured windows (closed or with a secure screen).
- Secured appliances (toilet lids closed).
- The needs of each cat are different and the space you set up will likely change based on your foster's needs.

Cats with medical conditions:

- Cats with medical conditions may need a foster until they improve or are adopted
- Some cats will have lifelong medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, or hyperthyroidism
- Some cats will have shorter term care needs such as post surgical care, injuries, and URI's

PAWS & More will provide all necessary medication and there is always a way to get a hold of us in emergency cases after hours

Fearful Cats:

Fearful cats often come in as strays, seized animals, or owner surrenders. These cats typically deteriorate in a shelter environment and may become more fearful/aggressive over time. Fearful cats need patient, loving homes while they learn that humans are safe for them to interact with.

Behavioral Cats:

The most common behaviors we see at the shelter are inappropriate elimination and aggression towards people or other animals. These cats need a very patient caregiver while we determine what is causing the behaviors and start a treatment plan. This may be as simple as offering a different litter box or moving the litter box to a new location. Some behavioral cats will be prescribed anxiety medication. Every cat is different.

Senior Cats:

- Cats as young as 7 may be considered senior cats.
- Senior cats need extra care and love and often spend much longer in the shelter than other cats and kittens.
- Older cats need to have everything in an accessible location that is not too high for them to jump.
- They need soft warm areas to relax and sleep.
- They also need an observant care giver who can recognize signs of pain and illness.
- Some of the common things to look for will be found under the "Common Health Concerns" section of this manual.
- Maintaining a healthy weight is crucial for senior cats.
- Mostly, senior cats just want to sleep in a warm and loving home.



Socializing Fearful Cats

Socialization is a very important part of cat care when you have a fearful foster. It is your job to convince fearful cats that humans are kind and loving.

Allow all cats to acclimate to their new environment before trying to interact with them. This may take a few days.

Fearful cats need to have many short encounters to encourage them that humans are friendly. Interact with shy cats calmly, stroking them and talking to them in a comforting voice. Be patient as some cats may take longer to warm up to humans.

Fearful cats will sometimes run away from you when you try to approach them. Simply sit on the floor calmly and wait for them to come to you. Let them become accustomed to your presence and, when they finally approach, use a calming voice and stroke them gently.

Whether you have a senior cat, a fearful cat, or a behavioral cat foster: confinement is truly the key to success!

Behavioral Cats: Inappropriate Elimination

Some cats may use the bathroom outside of their litter box. Here are some things to try:

- Confine the cat to a small room or haven
- Make sure the litter box is in a safe location for your foster away from residential pets if necessary. (Sometimes other cats/dogs will terrorize the foster while they are trying to use the box)
- Change the litter
- Change the litter box to a different style
- Offer more litter boxes in different locations

Always inform the Foster Coordinator and/or PAWS staff to litter box issues so we can schedule a vet appointment if necessary

Some common reasons include:

- Medical Conditions:
 - Inflammation of the urinary tract
 - Kidney and thyroid diseases
 - Diabetes mellitus
- Litter Box Aversions
 - The foster could dislike the box, the litter, the location of the box, or all three.
- Inappropriate Site Preference
 - Cats may just prefer going in a different location or on a different surface.

Behavioral Cats: Feline Aggression

The first step in managing an aggressive cat is to ensure that there is no medical reason for aggressive behavior. Diseases such as hyperthyroidism, osteoarthritis, dental disease, and central nervous system problems may cause aggression

Managing Feline Aggression:

1. Early intervention is best.
2. Any type of physical punishment can increase a cat's fear or anxiety and worsen aggression.
3. Medications may help, but only in combination with behavioral and/or environmental modification.
4. Recognizing aggression and startling an aggressive cat without physical contact is usually effective.
5. Avoid situations that you know make a cat aggressive.
6. Separate cats that act aggressively toward each other and reintroduce slowly with positive reinforcement, as described in the Territorial Aggression section.
7. Food treats are excellent positive enforcers of non-aggressive behavior.

Types of Feline Aggression:

Fear Aggression: Cats demonstrating fear aggression may flatten their ears against their heads, hiss, bare their teeth, or crouch low to the ground with their tail tucked under their body, and their fur may stand on end.

The best way to deal with fear aggression is to identify and avoid situations that produce a fearful response. You can attempt gradual desensitization by briefly exposing the cat to the stimulus that causes the fear from a distance, and then rewarding non-aggressive behavior with food and praise.

Petting-Induced Aggression: To manage a cat with petting-induced aggression, fosters should avoid uninvited handling or petting, any type of physical punishment or restraint, and attempts to pick up or interact with the cat while he is eating. Rewarding a cat with a food treat for allowing brief, light stroking without signs of aggression may also be helpful.

Redirected Aggression: When a cat is excited by a stimulus but cannot respond directly, the cat may redirect his aggression toward a human or another cat. The best way to prevent this type of aggression is to remove or avoid the stimuli, for example, by pulling down a window shade, using deterrents to keep stray cats away from the window, or by preventing aggressive interactions among indoor cats.

Pain-Induced Aggression: Cats that are in pain may act aggressively toward people or other pets in an attempt to avoid touch, movement, or certain activities that might worsen the pain. Fosters can manage pain-induced aggression by refraining from touching painful parts of a cat's body while notifying PAWS & More to develop a treatment plan.

Status-Induced Aggression: Cats may occasionally show signs of aggression toward people or other pets when they want to establish social dominance. Cats that block doors with their bodies or swat at other cats as they pass may be demonstrating this type of behavior.

The best way to address status-induced aggression is to ignore an offending cat completely.

Territorial Aggression: Cats tend to establish and defend their territories. They may show aggression toward newly introduced cats, and occasionally other animals or people, that encroach upon their established domain. The most important thing to keep in mind when dealing with territorial aggression is not to rush an introduction or reintroduction. New or returning cats should be confined to their own room with a separate litter box, water, and food.

Introducing Your Foster to Residential Animals/People:

Cat introductions

- Confine your new cat to one medium-sized room with her litter box, food, water and a bed.
- Feed your resident pets and the newcomer on each side of the door to this room at a comfortable distance.
- Switch sleeping blankets or beds between your new cat and your resident animals.
- Once your new cat is using her litter box and eating regularly while confined, let her have free time in the house while confining your other animals to the new cat's room.
- Avoid any interactions between your pets that result in either fearful or aggressive behavior.

Dog introductions

- Make sure the cat has a safe place to escape
- If your dog doesn't already know the commands "sit," "down," "come" and "stay," you should begin working on them.
- Small pieces of food will increase your dog's motivation to perform, which will be necessary in the presence of such a strong distraction as a new cat.
- After your new cat and resident dog have become comfortable eating on opposite sides of the door, following the steps outlined in the Cat Introduction.
- Put your dog's leash on, and using treats, have him either sit or lie down and stay. Have another family member or friend enter the room and quietly sit down next to your new cat, but don't have them physically restrain her. Have this person offer your cat some special pieces of food or catnip. At first, the cat and the dog should be on opposite sides of the room.
- More short visits are better than a few long visits.
- Next, allow your cat freedom to explore your dog at her own pace, with the dog still on-leash and in a "down-stay." Meanwhile, keep giving your dog treats and praise for his calm behavior.
- If your cat runs away or becomes aggressive, you're progressing too fast. GO BACK to the previous introduction steps.
- Utilize Positive Reinforcement when the dog is calm with the foster cat.
- Directly supervise all interactions between your dog and your foster cat until you are certain your foster will be safe.

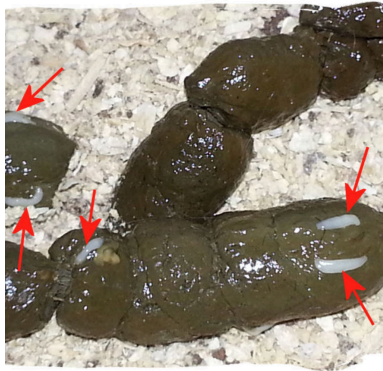
Tips & Tails

Always provide safe places for dogs and cats to retreat to when overstimulated.

Supervise your foster dogs interactions with other dogs and cats until you feel comfortable leaving them alone in the same space together

Take introductions slowly, don't rush things, and give them time in between interactions to regroup and decompress before trying again.

Give them time!



Tapeworms in Litter Box



Roundworms in Cat Vomit



Diarrhea



Diarrhea

Diarrhea is liquid, with or without color to it. Diarrhea can be caused by parasites, viruses, bacteria, food changes, stress, overfeeding and other issues.

Diarrhea must be monitored as it can quickly lead to dehydration. If the cat is active/behaving normally, mild diarrhea that occurs for 24 hours is not a concern. If the diarrhea is severe or contains blood/parasites, contact the Foster Coordinator or PAWS to schedule a check.

Parasites

Cats can show tapeworms either in their feces or on their anus. These look like segmented grains of rice or could be long with connected rice-like segments. Roundworms look like spaghetti and can be seen in feces or in vomit. It is common to see parasites a few days after a dog has received de-wormer. That means it's working! If you notice worms, contact the Foster Coordinator or PAWS.

Vomiting

Vomiting is not serious unless it happens continuously. It can lead to dehydration. If vomiting occurs, contact the Foster Coordinator or PAWS right away. If dehydration occurs, PAWS will provide sub-q fluids at the shelter. We can also provide anti-nausea medication, when necessary.

Eye Discharge

If you see yellow or green discharge, swollen or closed eyes contact the Foster Coordinator. You can use a warm, damp towel to wipe the affected eye(s). PAWS will provide antibiotic drops/ointment if needed. Eye discharge is a common symptom of upper respiratory infections, so be sure to note any sneezing and/or runny nose.

Ear Mites

Ear mites are parasites that live in the ear canal. You may notice a bald spot behind ears due to continuous scratching. They may also violently shake their head. The ears may smell bad and you may see brown discharge that resembles coffee grounds. Ear mites are contagious to other cats and need to be treated.

Contact the Foster Coordinator if you notice any of these symptoms.



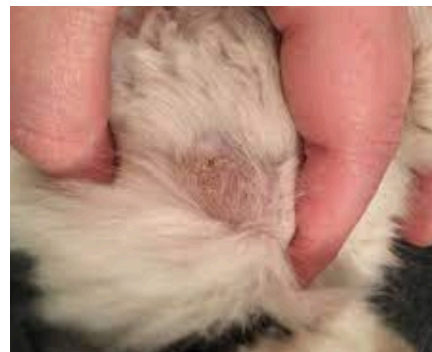
Fleas

Cats that have fleas will scratch themselves often. When fleas are severe you will notice fleas jumping and crawling on your fosters fur and skin. When less severe (early stages) you may start to notice itching. Look for flea dirt. Flea dirt resembles coffee grounds and will be found on the skin when fleas have been present. If you notice adult fleas, flea dirt, or other symptoms, contact the Foster Coordinator or PAWS.



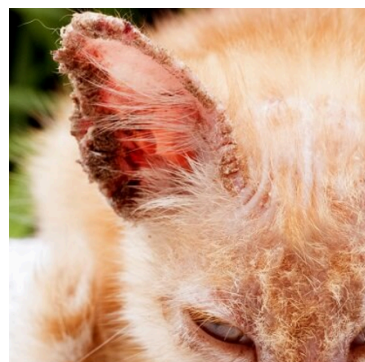
Ringworm

Ringworm is a contagious fungus that can spread to other animals and humans. A sign of ringworm is thinning hair or patches of hair loss with crusty looking skin. Ringworm is difficult to remove from your house. To help with prevention and to prevent spreading, maintain cleaning protocols and a good hand washing routine. Contact the Foster Coordinator if you notice any hair loss.



Mange

Mange is caused by parasites that infect the skin of kittens. Some forms of mange are contagious to other animals and humans. The symptoms include itching, hair loss and sores. Mange needs to be treated. If you notice these symptoms, contact the Foster Coordinator.



Common Health Concerns:



Upper Respiratory Tract Infection (URI)

URIs are common and are caused by contagious viruses and bacteria.

Signs to look for:

- Sneezing and discharge from eyes/nose
- Congested breathing
- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy (lack of energy)
- Dehydration

If you notice any of these signs, please contact the Foster Coordinator.



Hyperthyroidism

Hyperthyroidism is a common disease in cats, and mostly afflicts cats middle-aged and older. The most common clinical signs of hyperthyroidism are weight loss, increased appetite, and increased thirst and urination. Hyperthyroidism may also cause vomiting, diarrhea, and hyperactivity. The coat of affected cats may appear unkempt, matted, or greasy

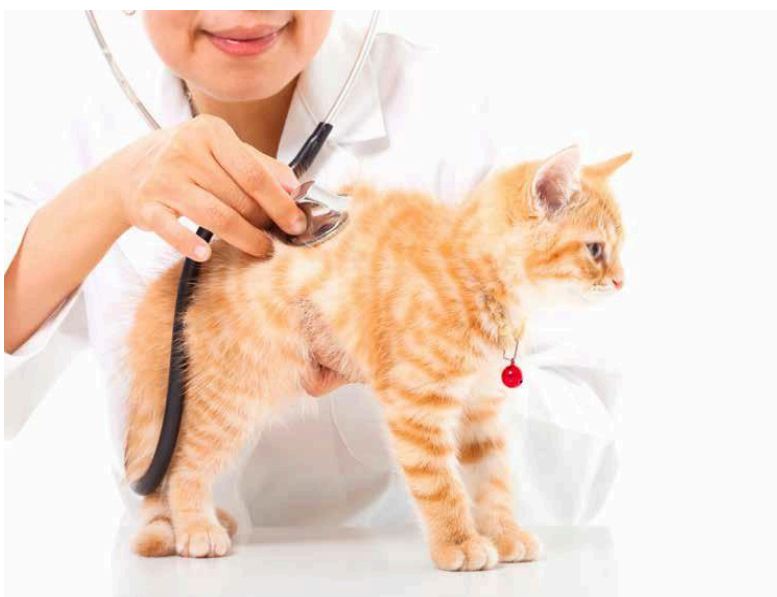
Diabetes

Obese cats are up to four times more likely to develop diabetes than ideal weight cats. The two most common signs of diabetes noticed by animal caretakers at home or in the shelter are weight loss despite a good appetite and increased thirst and urination. If you notice these symptoms, contact PAWS or the Foster Coordinator.

Emergency Symptoms:

- Panting
- Pale Gums
- Low temperature
- Extreme lethargy
- Refusal to eat or drink

If you notice any of these symptoms, utilize the emergency contact sheet to get in touch as soon as possible.



Routine Care

Routine Care (medications, vaccinations, dewormers, etc) for foster animals is provided by the PAWS staff during normal business hours. After hours, the foster coordinator will take calls when emergencies arise. In the event of an emergency, the foster coordinator will contact the Shelter Director and medical staff at PAWS.

The PAWS and More Animal Shelter will not reimburse individuals for vet bills for foster animals when taken for veterinary care outside of that which is pre-authorized by the PAWS and More Animal Shelter.

Vaccines and De-worming Schedule

Cats receive two FVRCP (distemper) vaccinations. The second vaccine will be given three weeks after the first. Every cat will receive 2 doses of Pyrantel, 2 weeks apart. Depending on the cat, additional medications may be needed for parasites. The Rabies vaccination will be administered before they go to foster if they are healthy enough and reach the age requirements.

Additional supportive/medical care PAWS provides directly at the shelter

- Sub-Q Fluids - for dehydration can occur in kittens.
- Vitamin B12 Injection-often used for lethargic kittens
- Eye drops/ointment-for conjunctivitis, which is very common in URI kittens
- Antibiotics - For URI's or infections
- Appetite Stimulants - Commonly used if kittens are sick and not eating
- Anti-Nausea Medication - used for vomiting
- Testing and Treatment for Parasites



Spay/Neuter Surgery

Most of the time, adult cats will go to foster already spayed/neutered but we will inform you if they still need their surgery scheduled/completed.

Veterinary Clinic Information

Town and Country Veterinary Clinic
622 N 12th Ave, Washington, IA 52353

Iowa Humane Alliance
6540 6th St SW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

Animal Haven Veterinary Hospital
120 Oak Crest Hill Rd SE, Hills, IA 52327
319-679-3322

Kalona Veterinary Clinic
405 6th St, Kalona, IA 52247

Scheduling

Fosters can be dropped off at the shelter a few days before surgery if necessary. Please contact the shelter to coordinate spay and neuter surgeries. Beth S. transports animals to various vets depending on availability. If it is more convenient, fosters may drop off their foster animals at the scheduled appointment

The Day of Surgery

Cats must be fasted. No food after midnight.

READY FOR ADOPTION!

Tips & Tails

Photo Taking Tips:

Know your pet

Get on their level

Use the right lighting
and setting

Be patient

Have fun and be
creative!

What happens now?

We love when our fosters are able to find adopters for our cats. If you have someone interested in your foster, please contact the shelter and have the interested party fill out our “Adoption Questionnaire”.

The Foster Coordinator will reach out periodically for updates, pictures, and descriptions of your fosters personalities!

Most adult cats leave the shelter and go to foster ready to be adopted. We understand that sometimes fosters want to adopt the animal they are fostering and we love that! Please let us know before a meet and greet is scheduled if you are wanting to adopt your foster cat. Otherwise, fosters are listed on the website as soon as possible and meet and greets can be scheduled right away. Meet and greets may happen at the shelter, or if you are comfortable, adopters can meet the foster at your home.

