

# LONGMONT HUMANE SOCIETY'S CAT ADOPTION INFORMATION

Congratulations on your adoption! Thank you for making the compassionate choice to adopt your cat from the Longmont Humane Society.

*This adoption is a turning point in your new cat's life! Whatever stories she could tell you about her past (and they might be quite eye-opening!), the best one begins today as she goes home with you! While she was our guest in the shelter, we did everything we could to keep her happy and healthy. Now it's up to you, but we want to send you off with some tips we have found to be helpful to families with new feline members.*

- Start your new cat in one room for the first week or so. Unless you have a quiet household or live in a very small space, she is likely to be overwhelmed at first. When you see that she is comfortable and confident there (and consistently using her litter box), you can begin letting her out to explore the house or apartment. Let her explore her new environment without the interruption of other animals or small children so that she can become familiar with her new environment without fear or interference.
- It is recommended you make an appointment with your veterinarian for your cat's wellness exam within the first few weeks. Take along your copies of the adoption contract and medical history report to give the veterinarian the dates of the vaccinations that your cat received at the shelter.
- Read the information in the following pages regarding health care and vaccinations, nail clipping, upper respiratory infections, introducing the new cat to other pets, and ensuring good litter box habits.
- Make sure you have all necessary equipment and supplies! You undoubtedly already have food, dishes, and a litter box. You will also need plenty of **un-scented** litter, toys (interactive ones, like the "Cat Dancer," and balls or stuffed toys to play with on her own), a sturdy scratching post, brush, comb, nail clippers, and a safety collar and ID tag.
- Plan to continue feeding her a measured, daily amount of high-quality food, such as the brand we have been using at the shelter. It will save you money in the long run by enhancing her health and well-being.
- Most importantly, if you experience any behavior problems with your new cat, contact your veterinarian or call us for FREE behavior follow up. The number is 303-772-1232 x229. Professional help can solve problems most easily and economically in the early stages before complications occur or behavior becomes habitual.

We will always do our best to answer your questions and address your concerns!

## Shopping List for a New Cat or Kitten

### Food:

Adult cats at the shelter are used to having *Science Diet Feline Adult Optimal Care* dry food available at all times (we feed them a specific amount per day according to their current weight). Kittens have *Science Diet Kitten Healthy Development* dry food available at all times. In addition, we give a spoonful of canned food (any brand) morning and evening to stimulate their appetites. These foods are available for purchase at the shelter retail store, and other pet supply stores.

To switch to another brand, mix in the new food in a 1 part to 3 parts ratio for a few days, then go to half and half, 3 parts to one, and complete the switch over 10-14 days. We recommend continuing with the canned food through the transitional period of 2-3 weeks, for adult cats, and 4-6 weeks for kittens.

Kittens should be fed a high-quality kitten formula dry food until they reach 1 year of age. Adult cats and juvenile kittens may have a difficult time transitioning into their new diet. To support proper feeding habits if the cat or kitten is not eating, we would suggest warm wet food, baby food or a splash of kitten milk replacement on top of wet food. Cats and kittens are drawn to smelly foods such as tuna and baby food. Do **not** feed cow's milk to your cat or kitten! **If you notice your new kitten or cat has stopped eating, it is recommended to seek veterinary care immediately.**

### Equipment:

*Collar and ID Tag:* Absolute Necessities! It is highly recommended to use a breakaway or safety collar for your cat. Because of the acrobatic nature of cats, they can get caught by their collars on branches, etc, and a safety collar will break away to prevent injury. It is always a good idea to have the cat's name and your name and phone number on the ID tag so that if your cat gets lost they can be easily returned. The rabies, microchip, and license tags are also a good addition to consider.

*Food and Water Dishes:* Each cat should have her own food dish, preferably of stainless steel or ceramic.

*Litter Box & Scoop:* The rule of thumb for multiple cats is: 1 box per cat, +1 box. Boxes come in various sizes; some have hoods, some have rims; there are even some fancy self-cleaning jobs. Most important is that the box be large enough for your cat. We also recommend that you initially avoid using a covered litter box or pan liners (unless specifically recommended for your cat) as they can discourage proper litter box usage at first. You should also avoid placing litter boxes near washing machines or in other areas where there may be loud, random noises that could frighten your cat, possibly causing them to avoid that area.

*Litter:* We primarily use non-clumping pine pellet litter here in the shelter. We recommend continuing to use this at home, unless otherwise recommended for your cat, or do a slow transition over to the new litter to ensure consistent litter box habits. "Clumping" type litter, with texture similar to sand, seems to be accepted by most cats. It does make box cleaning easier, though you may want to use a rug under the box to catch grains that cling to paws. Daily paw checks should be

done when using clumping litter to ensure that clumps are not accumulating. Cats definitely prefer unscented litter! Scoop every day, or the clumps will break down and release odor.

*Scratching Post:* Cats need to exercise their feet, legs, neck, and shoulders by scratching, so a large, sturdy post is best. Many have perches or beds built in. The best ones combine several textures, such as sisal rope, jute, or burlap, on the scratching surface. Cats may have different preferences of position (vertical vs horizontal) and texture, so you should play around with this to find the right scratching surface for your cat. We also recommend against carpet on the scratching post as it may encourage the cats to begin scratching your carpet.

*Grooming:* Nail clippers, either made for cats or human toenail clippers, are recommended for the weekly pedicure to keep those nails short and healthy! A soft bristle brush, a "slicker" type, for pulling out dead undercoat, and a steel comb for medium or longhaired cats will keep your pet groomed. Depending on the length of fur, cats should be brushed weekly (longhair) or biweekly (short hair). This will vary depending on the individual cat's needs as well. A larger cat who can't reach to groom his back should get a daily brushing to prevent oil build up and matting.

*Bed:* Most cats appreciate a snug nest (or 2 or 3...) in which to curl up and relax. This is a necessity if you don't plan to allow your cat onto the furniture! Windowsill nap ledges are especially appreciated by indoor cats! Cardboard boxes with a blanket are also a favorite! They tend to like deep set bedding that they can feel nestled and secure in.

### **Toys:**

*Interactive toys:* Cat Dancer, "fishing poles" with various objects on a string, light toys (laser pointers or flashlights), and homemade variants, are toys you use to play with your cat. Good for giving a kitten a workout to encourage sleeping through the night, or getting an older cat to get enough exercise; they also help break the ice with new cats!

*Other toys:* A variety of toys will allow you to rotate them to keep the cat intrigued when they are on their own. Balls, squeak toys, stuffed animals, kitty mazes, and many more will appeal to your cat's changing moods. An indoor cat can't have too many toys! Many of these supplies can be purchased at our retail store here at the shelter. Other options include bird feeders outside of windows and/or the nature channel playing on your T.V. These can help keep a cat entertained while you are at work meaning they are less likely to bombard your legs when you arrive home!

## **Introducing your new Cat or Kitten to other Pets**

### **Resident cats:**

While you are setting up the room your new cat or kitten will occupy for the first week or two, let your other cats examine the bed, toys, litter box, etc. When you bring your new pet home, allow the others a very brief sniff of the carrier. Have ready a bit of their absolute favorite treat, and give it to them as they sniff; then whisk the carrier into the prepared room.

Whenever you go into the new cat's room, give treats to your old cats, so that they associate the new arrival with good things for them. During the time the new pet is adjusting in his room, switch beds, or blankets, and toys, so the cats become accustomed to each other's scent. Let them have their own space entirely for the first couple of days, and then start introducing the new smells. Feed the cats on opposite sides of the door so that they associate the positive idea of their food with the other cat.

When you are nearly ready to introduce the cats, give the new one a chance to explore the house while you take the old cats into the new one's room and play with them there. Be sure the new cat knows the lay of the land before letting her out to join the others. Use whatever your old cats like best to reinforce their tolerance of the newcomer: if it is a food treat, use it liberally; if it is a game, or ritual, or toy, make sure that they get more of it whenever the new cat is around.

Whenever there are signs of aggression (stalking, hissing, swiping or ambushing), interrupt the sequence with something distracting that won't be taken as a reward (use a squirt bottle; make a loud noise; clang pots and pans together - you get the idea!). Loud noises will be heard by both cats, and therefore both will feel the consequences. This is OK if both cats are at fault in the altercation; but if not, it is probably best to use a different tool. The squirt bottle can be a very effective tool if one cat is bullying the other. When used, only the bully feels the spray, but the other cat isn't affected.

It usually takes cats from a few days to a few weeks to sort out new relationships. Be vigilant that no one is assuming the role of bully, and that every cat can eat uninterrupted, rest peacefully, and get to the litter box without interference. Distracting a cat that is showing evil intent, and rewarding their small gestures of tolerance generally works much better with cats than punishing them. At any point in the introduction process, you can go back to the beginning for a few days, and start over. If you are worried about serious discord, call us! You don't want bullying behavior to become habitual!

### **Resident dogs:**

If your dog is very excitable, or not used to cats, teach him something that will be incompatible with chasing or harassing the cat, such as "down-stay." Have him do it whenever you go into the cat's room, and reward him extravagantly. After the cat has had a day or two to adjust, take the dog into her room with you (on a leash, with the leash dragging) and have him "down-stay." Reward him lavishly for good behavior in the presence of the cat. When you first let the cat out into the rest of the house, it is also a good idea to keep the dog dragging his leash. Have him "down-stay" whenever the cat is close, and continue to reward him. Once the cat is confident and knows her way around

the place, let the dog off the leash and continue to reward the dog for all non-aggressive behavior in the presence of the cat.

If the dog is calm, gentle and tolerant of cats, reward him anyway, whenever the cat is present. Good things should happen to him when the cat is present. For at least the first few weeks, don't leave dogs and cats together unsupervised!

## Ensuring Good Litter Box Habits for your Cats

Reliable use of the litter box is absolutely essential behavior for a house cat. Fortunately, it is easy to achieve, since no training is required, and you merely manage your cat's environment to take advantage of the species' natural elimination habits. By following these simple rules, you can make 99.9% sure your cat will be completely civilized in this respect!

- **Spay or neuter your cat before the onset of puberty.** This will virtually eliminate the hormone-driven urge to "mark" his territory by spraying urine against vertical surfaces. If you get your cat after the age of 6 months, have him/her altered immediately. If the cat has begun to spray, expect it to take 6 weeks for the hormone levels to drop.
- **Don't declaw your cat!** A reluctance to use the litter box correlates strongly with declawing, for reasons not yet fully understood. It seems likely that the pain in the paws after surgery is aggravated by the act of covering urine and feces in the box, and the box is abandoned in favor of a more comforting surface, such as carpet, laundry basket, or the bathtub. Although the failure to use the box may not be constant, it may persist throughout the cat's life whenever any discomfort or stress is experienced.
- **Keep the litter box clean!** The most common reason for failure to use the box is poor housekeeping by the human! At a minimum, the box should be scooped every day. If you use scoopable litter, it should be emptied and washed with soap and water every 2-3 months. If using clay, paper, or pine litter, washing once a week is essential.
- **Select the litter and the box from the cat's point of view.** Cats usually prefer the scoopable litter (looks and feels like fine sand) that is NOT scented. Ideal depth is 1" -2," though individual preferences may vary. If you have a kitten, or an elderly, arthritic cat, make sure the sides are not too high. Some cats do not like covered boxes. Old cats and very large cats may need an extra-large box.
- **Have enough litterboxes!** In a multi-cat household, the rule is one box per cat, plus one box. There's nothing more frustrating than finding the bathroom occupied when you really need it, and cats feel the same way. Bad habits can start from just such an emergency.
- **Locate the box, or boxes, with accessibility and privacy in mind.** If you put the box in the basement, you have to be sure the door is never left closed. This is one drawback of using a bathroom for the box! The ideal location, to a cat, is not too far from his favorite resting place, not too close to his food or water, and in a relatively quiet, low traffic part of the house. If your home has multiple levels, it may be a good idea to have a box on each one. It is best to keep all litter boxes away from washing machines or other areas that may have loud, random noises that can frighten your cat and cause them to avoid that location.
- **Always check for medical problems FIRST!** Whenever a normally well-civilized cat fails to use the litter box, the first step should always be an exam by the vet. Diarrhea is obviously a sign of being unwell, but urinary tract infections may have no other symptoms than frequent urination and sometimes failing to use the box.
- **Always eliminate all traces of house soiling accidents.** Even if your cat did it because she was sick, she could return to the site if you don't remove the odor completely. Use an enzyme cleaner, such as Nature's Miracle. If you aren't sure you've found all spots (a cat with a bladder infection may only produce a few drops), borrow a black light to find them.

# Vaccination Recommendations for Cats

The following is a suggested feline vaccination schedule. Please follow your veterinarian's advice as there can be many medical reasons for modifying the schedule.

## **FELINE DISTEMPER COMBO (FVRCP)**

Your cat or kitten will have received at least one vaccination while at the shelter against Panleukopenia, Rhinotracheitis and Calicivirus. The dates are recorded on the medical history report.

### Kittens 8 weeks and older:

- Initial vaccination
- Booster every 3 - 4 weeks until 16 weeks of age
- Yearly booster or as recommended by your veterinarian

### Adult cats over 16 weeks of age:

- Initial vaccination
- Yearly booster

## **RABIES**

State law requires that cats over 12 weeks of age, and owned 1 month be vaccinated against rabies. Rabies vaccines will need to be boosted at 1 year after the first vaccination, and then every 3 years thereafter. If your cat was old enough at the time of adoption, a rabies vaccine will have been administered at the time of adoption and will be listed in your animal's medical records. If they were under 12 weeks of age at the time of adoption, you should have been given a voucher to have the rabies vaccine done at our Well Pet Clinic once the kitten is old enough to receive the vaccination. Walk-In vaccines, heartworm and FeLV/FIV testing, and microchipping services are available during the following hours:

### **Monday through Saturday: 9:30am-12pm and 1:30-5pm**

A \$15 drop-in fee applies, and Doctor's visits are by appointment only. For more information or to schedule an appointment please call **303-651-0610**.

## **FELINE LEUKEMIA (FeLV), FELINE IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS (FIV)**

The feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline leukemia virus (FeLV) are two viral infections that are transmissible from cat to cat. They are among the most common infectious diseases of cats. Both diseases are eventually fatal. Although your cat may appear to be healthy, some cats can live upwards of 7 years without showing any symptoms. It is possible for your cat, if infected, to spread the disease without showing symptoms.

Cats which are at risk for exposure with feline leukemia virus (FeLV) should receive a vaccine against feline leukemia virus. Cats at risk for exposure to FeLV include those cats which spend part

or all of their lives outdoors. Cats which live inside and do not contact other cats are not at high risk for exposure to feline leukemia virus (FeLV) and thus are not generally recommended as candidates to receive a vaccine against feline leukemia virus.

The American Assoc. of Feline Practitioners (AAFP) does recommend that all kittens receive a vaccine against feline leukemia virus due to the fact that young kittens are more susceptible to feline leukemia than more mature cats and kitten owners often do not know for certain whether they will be allowing their new kitten access to the outdoors. The AAFP further recommends that all cats which are to receive the vaccine for feline leukemia virus (FeLV) have a negative test for feline leukemia virus before vaccination.

### **PREVENTIVE HEALTH CARE**

- Regular physical exams and boosters safeguard your cat if performed yearly through middle age. Elderly cats should see the vet more often, and have regular geriatric blood tests done to monitor health.
- Teeth and gums are best maintained by a healthy diet and periodic cleaning.
- Periodontal disease can significantly shorten a cat's life.
- See the vet at the first sign of health or behavior problems! Underlying medical conditions may be responsible for some undesirable behaviors.



## About Upper Respiratory Infections in Cats and Kittens

Your new pet may have been exposed to a feline upper respiratory virus (URI), and may not begin to show symptoms for up to 2 weeks. The disease is similar to the human cold, in that the airborne virus mutates too rapidly to allow for effective vaccine prevention, and it is impossible to eliminate it from the shelter environment.

We treat cats and kittens that come down with URI while here with antibiotics and supportive care, and if we have observed sneezing in your pet, you will be sent home with medications. These don't CURE the virus, but work to prevent bacterial secondary infections, which can be serious, especially in young kittens.

Monitor your new pet carefully for the first 2 weeks. Be sure she's eating and drinking readily, and is active and playful.

If you notice any sneezing and/or discharge from nose or eyes, squinting or eye redness, loss of appetite, or she is being unusually quiet, then she may have URI.

Although the virus often runs its course without permanent damage in 10 - 14 days, there is a chance she could develop a serious secondary infection. Young kittens especially, with the stress of recent surgery and a move to a new environment, can get very sick, very fast! Do not ignore these symptoms. If you alert your vet and get the animal on medication and supportive care, she will be fine. But if you wait, you may jeopardize your pet's health.

URI is contagious to other cats, and this is another good reason to isolate the new pet at first, especially if you have other cats.

The Longmont Humane Society does all it can to safeguard the health of animals in our care, but we cannot assume responsibility once a pet leaves our facility. We do not provide medical services for owned animals, as all our resources are devoted to the homeless ones in the shelter. If you have further questions about URI, please call your veterinarian.

Your adoption also included a free gift of pet medical insurance. You should have received an email with a link to activate that insurance. If you have not received it, please contact us so we can help! Once activated, this medical insurance will fully cover many medical conditions such as URI.