

# Cat/Kitten Foster Training

## Manual



Longmont Humane Society

A Reference Guide for Foster Volunteers.



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## Contact Information

### EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

#### Longmont Humane Society

9595 Nelson Road, Longmont, CO 80501

303-772-1232 x 234

(If no one answers in the Foster Department you can dial "0" and have a staff member paged)

Tonya is usually in the office **Tuesday through Saturday**. Hours may slightly vary. You can typically reach me from **9:00 am until about 4:00 pm**. However, we have staff in the shelter 7 days per week!

### LHS FOSTER ANIMAL EMERGENCIES:

**Tonya Ouellette, Foster Coordinator, 720-515-3678**

If you experience an emergency with one of your foster animals (e.g. – serious injury or health concern, runaway foster animal), foster staff is on call 24/7 to help you! Call the emergency line at any time of day or night!

Contact a Foster Department staff member or the shelter with any health concerns – **do not wait until it becomes an emergency!**

**LHS Foster Emergencies:**

**720-515-3678**

**(720-515-FOSTER)**

### After Hours for Emergency Euthanasia:

**Aspen Meadow Veterinary Specialists, 104 S Main St Longmont CO, 80501, 303-678-8844**

Aspen Meadow will assist *only* with emergency euthanasia after hours at no charge if you cannot reach Tonya or get to the shelter in time. Please make sure to take the copy of your foster agreement with you as this will help with the paperwork and identify you as an LHS foster parent. Emergency Center personnel should also try to contact us before proceeding with any treatment of the foster animal.

### NON-EMERGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

#### Longmont Humane Society

For general questions during normal shelter hours (11:00 am to 6:00 pm 7 days per week)

303-772-1232 X 0

Let the answering staff know what your call is regarding and they will direct you to the right person.

**Tonya Ouellette**

Foster Coordinator

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*\*This page should be copied and kept where it will be handy.\**



## Additional Literature and Information

The following information sheets and articles are available upon request or on the Foster section of the Longmont Humane Society Website

1. **Sneezing, Diarrhea, and Hair Loss...Oh My!**
  - a. How to recognize and handle common issues in Foster Animals
  
2. **Foster Feeding Protocols – Cat/Kitten**
  - a. A handout detailing the general feeding guidelines for various cat ages and foster situations
  
3. **How to Determine a Cat’s Age and Sex**
  - a. Contains diagrams of both genders and what to look for in the teeth to determine an approximate age of an animal
  
4. **Raising Neo-Natal Kittens**
  - a. An informative article on the developmental stages of kittens and how to raise and care for them as prepared by the University of California at Davis Shelter Medicine program
  
5. **Bottle Baby Care and Trouble Shooting Guide**
  - a. How to care for and identify issues with bottle babies and what may be done to help
  
6. **Transitioning Bottle Babies to Slurry**
  - a. Tips and tricks for transitioning stubborn babies off of the bottle and onto real food! Also includes information on litter box training.
  
7. **Additional Foster Animal Health Tracking Sheets**
  - a. Additional handouts to track the weight, eating, and bathroom habits of your foster animals

## Foster Program Information

The Longmont Humane Society (LHS) Foster Care Program provides temporary homes for animals that are sick, injured, too young, or have behavioral issues that prevent them from being adoptable in their given state. The program has saved hundreds of lives of vulnerable companion animals over the years. It provides a chance at survival for animals that might not otherwise thrive in different circumstances.

Fostering is a huge commitment that requires a large amount of both time and energy. People who choose to foster are preparing the fostered animals for a successful future. By becoming a foster parent you are giving the gift of hope to animals in need. The staff and the animals at LHS can never thank you enough for your commitment to these special animals.

### Foster Requirements:

In order to become a Foster Volunteer, you must:

- Be 18 years of age or older.
- Have the consent of all adults living in your household.
- Have the consent of your landlord if renting.
- Have current vaccinations for all household pets and negative FeLV/FIV tests for all cats in your home.
- Be able to spend an adequate amount of time with your foster animals while they are in your care.
- Have a securely fenced yard to foster dogs, or be willing to keep your foster dog(s) on leash at all times while outdoors
- Agree to keep foster felines indoors at all times.
- Agree to follow the guidelines and recommendations of the LHS Staff regarding vaccination schedules, treatment of disease, and cleaning protocols.
- Understand that any veterinary care sought outside of LHS for your foster animal(s) that has not been pre-approved by LHS staff will **not** be reimbursed.
- Understand that LHS is not responsible for any damage, injury, or illness to animals or humans caused by a foster animal in your care.
- Understand that LHS remains the legal custodian of the animals; that all fostered animals must be returned to the Shelter at the end of the foster period; and that LHS cannot guarantee placement of all animals.
- Have the facilities (use of spare rooms, etc.) and willingness to **isolate** foster animals from your own animals.
- We recommend that you attend a LHS volunteer orientation prior to fostering, but it is not required

## Foster Volunteer Job Description

**Objective:** To provide a temporary home environment for animals that are not ready to be adopted and to provide care to enable the foster animal(s) to recover, heal, develop, and become adoptable.

### Responsibilities:

- 1) Provide food, shelter, grooming, socialization, and care for all foster animals in your home
- 2) Ensure the safety of the foster animal at all times and isolate the foster animals from your pets as required.
- 3) Report any health issues to a member of the foster care department and bring animal(s) to shelter for necessary vaccinations or health care follow-up.
- 4) Return animal(s) to the LHS for adoption after foster care is completed.

### Required Training:

- 1) We recommend that you complete a volunteer application and a volunteer orientation.
- 2) An initial inspection of the area in your home you will be using for fosters is required before you take home a foster animal for the first time. Additional annual inspections are required.

### Supervision:

Direct supervision by the Foster Coordinator and additional mentorship by experienced Foster Volunteers and/or Shelter Staff.

### Benefits:

- Opportunity to play a life-saving role in animal welfare and give the gift of hope to needy companion animals.
- Increased knowledge of animal behavior and care.
- Personal satisfaction and unconditional love from the foster animals.
- Community Service Hours for NHS or other projects for high school students in the home (*no court ordered community service*)

## Common Cat Foster Situations and Descriptions

There are many different foster opportunities available! Below are some descriptions of our most common needs, though there may be more and different opportunities at any given time. Foster lengths will vary with each animal. The ones listed below are simply a general guideline.

### **Mother Cat with Nursing Young**

Sometimes we will have nursing moms dropped off at the shelter with their kittens either as strays or surrenders, or a cat will give birth while already here. Mom will need to be kept with her kittens until they are weaned around 4-6 weeks of age, and the kittens will need to remain in foster until they are ready for surgery and adoption (around 8-9 weeks of age). May require up to 9-10 weeks in the foster home.

### **Bottle Baby Kittens**

Occasionally, we may get newborn kittens in to the shelter who do not have a mother and will need to be bottle fed until they are able to eat on their own. These little guys generally require round the clock care, including overnight feedings, until they are at least 2-3 weeks old. They will not be very mobile or able to eliminate on their own until they are at least 3 weeks old as well, and will need to be kept warm at all times. They can live in a carrier for the first couple of weeks. May require up to 9 weeks or so in the foster home.

### **Slurry Baby Kittens**

These little guys are just past the bottle feeding stage and have just started eating on their own around 3-5 weeks of age. The slurry refers to a mixture of canned kitten food and kitten formula as they may not be able to eat the dry food on their own and will just be learning to drink water on their own as well. They will sometimes need some assistance via syringe or supplemental bottle feeding until they really get the hang of it, and will require at least 4-5 daily feedings until they are eating more consistently on their own. They should be starting to use the litter box on their own, but may need some help with that at first as well. Will usually require 4-6 weeks in the foster home.

### **Underage Kittens**

These kittens will be about 5-8 weeks of age and should be fully weaned and eating completely on their own and generally be pretty good with the litter box. They will usually be pretty independent and playful and will only require two wet food feedings in addition to their dry food. Will usually require about 2-3 weeks in foster depending on their age.

### **Under-Socialized Cats/Kittens**

These kitties can vary in age and need some work learning how to fully trust people so they can become adoptable. Some will have come from feral cat colonies or hoarding situations and may never have known people before, and others just may be very shy. They will require a lot of patience and work with safe handling techniques to properly socialize them. The time in foster will be extremely variable depending on how easily they are able to be socialized.

### **Sick, Injured, Surgery Recovery, Break from Shelter and Hospice Cats**

These are many various scenarios that we may have a need for. These guys can vary in age, temperament, and need level. Most just need some TLC until they can come back for adoption, or a comfortable place to live out their days due a terminal illness. We will give complete instructions for their care both in the home and any necessary follow up back at the shelter. The time in foster will be extremely variable depending on the reason for foster.

## Necessary Cat/Kitten Foster Supplies

We will always provide all necessary medical care, including medications and vaccinations for all foster animals; though all medical issues need to be seen by the shelter clinic unless otherwise arranged through the Foster Department. Below are additional supplies you will need for your foster kitties:

### Suggested Supplies to Keep on Hand

- Dry Science Diet Kitten and/or Cat Food
- Wet, Paté style Kitten and/or Cat Food – avoid Fish varieties because of sensitive kitten tummies!
- Non-Clumping Clay or Pine litter – **Change entire litter box daily!**
  - What we use at the shelter – best for kittens under 6 weeks as they may still be learning to use the litter box and may mistake the litter for kibble on occasion
  - Should only need ½ cup for smaller litter boxes and 1 cup for larger boxes per day
  - Clumping litter can be used for adults and older kittens
    - Should be scooped daily and changed fully every week
- Litter Box or Boxes – different sizes/heights
- Food and Water Bowls
- Old Towels, Blankets, and/or Cat Beds
- Kitchen Scale – to keep track of weight gain!
- Digital Thermometer, Rubbing Alcohol, and Vaseline – to take temperatures!
- Newspaper or Puppy Pads
  - For under the litter box while they are still learning to contain messes!
- A Variety of Cat/Kitten Toys
  - Best to have them be completely washable or disposable (e.g. – plastic shower curtain rings, ping pong balls, paper bags, paper towel rolls, plastic jingle balls, feathers on a stick/string, laser pointer, etc)
- Dawn and Bleach/Accel to clean and disinfect the foster area during and after an animal's stay

### Additional Supplies that May be Needed

- Kitten Nursing Bottles and Extra Nipples
- Kitten Milk Replacer (KMR)
- Syringes for supplemental feeding
- Snuggle Safe Discs or Rice Socks for supplemental heat
- Whelping Box for Nursing Mothers
- Thick Gardening Gloves to assist with Semi-Feral Handling

*We are happy to provide any and all necessary supplies (including all those listed above), though we ask our foster parents to provide as much as they are willing and/or able to. Fostering should not be a huge financial burden. If you are unable to provide any of the supplies necessary, we will do our best to accommodate your needs. Please clean and return any borrowed supplies at the end of the foster period!*

### Purchased Supplies

If you are able to provide any of the basic supplies necessary for your foster animals, we greatly appreciate it. Make sure to save all receipts as it is considered a tax-deductible donation to the Longmont Humane Society.

## Providing a Safe Home Environment

### The Safe Room

Choose a space that is free of things that can hurt a kitten. The temperature should be able to be easily regulated to keep the environment at an appropriate temperature for kittens. It should also allow you to fully isolate your foster kittens from your own pets, as some kitten illnesses are transmissible, and occasionally fatal, even to grown cats. The room in which your foster kittens are living should be able to be easily cleaned and disinfected. You should also be prepared for litter box accidents, vomit, and spilled medicine. A spare bathroom is often a perfect space for fostering!

Other suggested spaces include:

- Spare bedroom/office – wood/tile floor preferred, but carpets can be covered with a tarp or shower curtain – just be sure kittens can't get underneath it!
- Large Wire Dog Crate – Can be placed in any room, preferably on top of something that is easy to clean (towel, tarp, etc). Depending on size can hold 2-5 kittens
- Laundry Room/Mud Room – provided there are no small spaces for kittens to get under/behind!

### Kitten Proofing

Kittens are very adorable and can appear innocent, but are still very much babies and will try to get into everything if given the chance! It is important to keep windows closed, block any electrical outlets, cover/hide electrical cords, and put away anything that a kitten could swallow or get tangled in. Make sure to remove any breakable items or other things you don't want ruined by the claws and/or teeth of a growing kitten! It is also very important to block any small holes or areas where a kitten could get into and become inaccessible to you. It will help to lie down on the floor on your stomach to see the room from a kitten's point of view.

### Suggested Set-Up

Your kitten room should contain everything that the kittens will need to eat, drink, eliminate, sleep, and play:

- ❖ Have at least one bowl for water, one for wet food, and one for dry food. It may be better to provide more bowls if you have several kittens so no one has to compete for access to their food.
- ❖ Litter boxes should be placed as far away as possible from food, water, and bedding.
  - Be sure to provide enough litter boxes that everyone has a clean place to eliminate – may need at least 2 boxes for 4 or more kittens!
- ❖ Old towels/Blankets tend to work very well as bedding. Just be sure they do not have long strings or large holes in them where the kittens could get tangled or stuck!
- ❖ It may also be a good idea to have a secure sleeping area, such as a cat carrier with the door removed, or a cardboard box on its side. This will help the kittens feel safe, and can be especially important for shy kittens.
- ❖ Provide safe, disposable or easily sanitized toys to entertain the kittens when you are not with them. Plastic jingly balls, ping pong balls, wine corks, plastic shower curtain rings, or balls of paper/foil can work well.

## Importance of Isolation

While we know that you just want to let your foster animals roam your home and play with your own animals, it is definitely best to keep them isolated in their own room for at least the first two weeks. We do not allow kittens from different litters to comingle here in the shelter for 2 weeks, and that policy should be followed in the home as well. This is important even if you do not have any other animals in your home. The goal is to keep everyone happy and healthy and to keep any issues that may arise contained. We may occasionally recommend that you socialize your animals with your fosters (with dogs it is usually unavoidable), but it is important to isolate them at first for the following reasons:

### ❖ Disease Prevention

- **Known Illnesses** - If your foster animal is sick when they get to your home, it is best to keep them isolated so they do not infect your resident animals, and so they do not spread their illness all over the house leaving the possibility of reinfection later on.
- **Possible Illness** - Most communicable diseases will pop-up within 14 days. Kittens can appear healthy, but may be carrying something that could develop within that time frame. By keeping everyone separated and confined to a smaller area, you are insuring that they are not able to spread disease to any other animals or areas of your home which can make treating and permanently getting rid of the disease(s) much easier.
- **Intestinal parasites** can both be caught and transmitted through the litter box. Fosters should not share the family litter box, and your cat(s) should not have access to your foster animal's litter box.

### ❖ Stress and Behavior Issues

- **Adult Cats** - Most do best if they are slowly introduced into a home environment, especially after having lived in a shelter. The sudden access to the space in a big house can be very overwhelming and cause them to get lost and/or hide or have issues getting to and using the litter box. Just as we recommend with a newly adopted cat, foster cats should have their own space for a few days to allow them to acclimate to the new environment, and be slowly allowed out into the rest of the house.
- **Nursing moms** can be very protective over their litters and need a quiet place to nurture and raise them until they are ready to be weaned. Too much space and exposure to other animals can lead her to continually relocate her brood or just stop caring for them altogether.
- **Kittens** may not seem to have much stress with their new environment, though they still need to be isolated. They are likely still getting the hang of the litter box, and having too much access far away from it may cause them to go somewhere else because they were unable to find their way back. Additionally, their safe room will be free from hazards and hiding places, whereas the entire house may not be safe for them and they could get trapped under or behind furniture.
- **Resident Animals** – Your own animals may seem to do well with the addition of new foster animals, but it can be stressful for them to have new friends continuously come in and out of the house. Keeping the foster animals isolated help to eliminate some of that stress, but can also prevent negative interactions between them which can be more damaging to both your animals and your fosters.

## Daily Care and Health Monitoring

It is very important to monitor a kitten's health and weight on a daily basis regardless of age – though it is VITAL in a bottle or slurry fed kitten. We will usually provide a Foster Animal Health Tracking sheet for each animal where you can record their weight, eating habits, and overall health. If you do not have a kitchen scale, we can provide you with one for the duration of the foster period so that you can easily track their weight.

### Weighing your Kittens

A kitten's weight can be one of the best ways to track overall health. If they are either losing, or not consistently gaining weight, it can be an indicator of an underlying problem, even if you are not seeing any other apparent issues at the time.

Kittens, especially those under 6 weeks of age, should be weighed daily or every other day. From birth, they should gain about ¼ to ½ oz every day, or ½ to 1 oz every other day. A healthy kitten will usually weight about ¼ pound (4 oz) for every week of age. Some will take a bit more time to gain weight, and others may surpass their siblings in a very short amount of time. Regardless of which category a kitten falls under, we still want them to be consistently gaining weight.

**\*\*Any weight loss in a bottle fed kitten should be addressed as soon as possible! Always call the emergency line if you have a serious concern!\*\***

### Feeding

Most fosters will not have a special diet, but we still want them to remain as consistent with the shelter diet as possible. We are always happy to provide their food if necessary, but if you decide to donate the cost of their food, we ask that you feed Science Diet whenever possible (or a mixture of Science Diet and other food). All cats have sensitive digestive systems and can have bad reactions to a sudden diet change, and some human foods can be toxic to cats. Kittens are particularly sensitive to sudden diet changes, and keeping everything consistent can help prevent many issues.

The Foster Animal Information sheet that will be provided to you when you pick up your foster animals will have specific feeding instructions for your foster animal(s). If you lose the sheet, you can always contact the Foster Department or consult the Foster Care Feeding Guidelines to determine the general idea.

If your foster kittens are refusing to eat the food you have provided, it could just be them being picky or stressed, but could also be a sign of a bigger problem! Please call the Foster Department if your foster kittens have not eaten in 12 hours – sooner for a bottle or slurry fed kitten!

### NOT EATING!

Not eating can quickly become an emergency, so please contact the foster department if your kitten has not eaten in 12 hours – or 2 or more feedings for a slurry, or bottle fed kitten!

303-772-1232 x 234



## Daily Care and Health Monitoring

### Daily Duties

- Feed! – may be doing 2-3 times per day or more
  - Discard and replace if there is litter, feces, or other contaminants in the existing dry food.
  - Feed each kitten/cat wet food according to their age
  - For Adult Cats: Feed the appropriate amount of dry food as listed on the Foster Animal Info Sheet and/or on the feeding chart on the Cat/Kitten Feeding Protocols sheet
- Clean bowls and Supply fresh water.
  - Throw out the previous day's water, clean the bowl, and add new water every day
  - Be sure to thoroughly clean bowls if there was any litter, feces, or other contaminants in either the water or food bowls.
- Clean the litter box and check urine/stools for any obvious issues (blood in urine, loose stools, vomit in or near litterbox, etc)
  - Change out the litter fully every day if you are using non-clumping pine or clay litter.
  - Scoop the box daily if using clumping litter
  - Be sure to contact the Foster Department with any concerns!
- Health Check!
  - Look inside mouth at gums and teeth to be sure gums are pink and hydrated (not tacky or sticky)
  - Check litterbox for diarrhea/loose stool, blood in urine, etc
  - Check energy levels and interest in food/water
  - Contact the foster care department if anything is abnormal or concerning!
- Socialization, Handling, and Playtime!
  - Kittens have a lot to learn and should be played with for 20 minutes or more, 2x daily – more for under-socialized kittens
  - Use a variety of toys, and try to encourage them not to use their claws or teeth on people, and remember to discourage play with hands!
  - Encourage affectionate behavior, and have them meet new people as often as possible
  - Get them used to being picked up, and gently handle paws in preparation for nail trimming
  - Most kittens will benefit from exposure to brushing/grooming in small amounts
- Keep written record of the foster's weight, food intake, and medications given.

### As needed duties:

- Weigh animals every other day for very young, once a week for older animals.
- Clean Bedding/Dishes/Litterboxes
  - All bedding, food/water bowls, and litter boxes should be thoroughly cleaned at least once per week
- Trim nails
  - If you are unable to trim the nails, feel free to contact the Foster Department to have it done here!
- Write down all dates that vaccines and de-wormer are due on your calendar, check regularly, and make appointments with a member of the foster care department as needed.
- Check your food and litter supplies and call the foster care department if you need more.

## General Cleaning Procedures

Kittens can create quite a large mess in a short amount of time! It is suggested that your isolation area for cats and kittens be in a room without carpeting for ease of clean up and disease prevention. If you only have a carpeted area, we suggest placing a tarp or shower curtain liner securely underneath any bedding to make cleanup easier! You will need to regularly clean the foster area, as well as fully disinfect it between foster groups.

Keeping your foster area clean will serve several purposes while your foster animals are in your care.

- Keeps foster animals cleaner and more comfortable
- Be able to identify any issues (e.g. – diarrhea, vomiting, etc) more quickly
- Significantly reduces the spread of disease

### Routine Cleaning While Foster Animals are in Residence

You should plan to fully clean the foster area(s), including litter boxes, bowls, and bedding, at least once per week. You can keep your fosters in a crate while cleaning and return them to the space once finished.

#### Hard Surfaces, Litterbox(es), and Bowls:

All surfaces (floors, walls, etc), litter boxes, and food/water bowls should be cleaned with a solution of gentle soap (e.g. Dawn Dish Detergent) and warm water at least once weekly. They should be thoroughly rinsed and dried prior to being returned to the foster area. Bowls can also be run through the dishwasher.

#### Bedding and other Soft Materials:

Bedding for foster animals should be removed and replaced at least 2x weekly (or more often if soiled with vomit, urine, or feces). Bedding should be washed in a washer with hot water, or the whites cycle, with detergent and bleach, but no fabric softener, to insure that it has been sanitized. We recommend using primarily old towels and blankets.

### Cleaning and Disinfecting Between Groups or with Disease Outbreaks

Your foster area(s), and everything your foster animals used during their stay should be fully cleaned and disinfected after your foster animals have been returned to the shelter, or during/after a disease outbreak (e.g. – URI, intestinal parasites, distemper, etc) to prevent further spread of the disease\*. Anything that *cannot* be washed and disinfected (e.g. – cardboard scratching posts, toilet paper tubes, etc) should be discarded and not used for any future foster groups. We suggest using either bleach or Accel (can be obtained from the Foster Department) to remove any lingering disease or other contaminants. Be sure to remove any organic matter (fur, litter, dirt, etc) before using bleach.

Start by removing everything the kittens slept on, ate from, played with, and eliminated in. Scrub everything the kittens could reach (including the walls!) with a weak bleach solution (**1 part bleach to 32 parts cold water**). Food/water dishes, litter boxes, and any reusable toys should be soaked in the same bleach solution for 10 minutes and then thoroughly rinsed and dried. Dishes can also be washed in the dishwasher, as the heat will sanitize them. As above, all bedding or other reusable soft materials should be washed in a washer with **hot water, detergent, and bleach**, but no fabric softener.

*\*For disease outbreaks, keep the foster animals in a crate in another isolated area of the household while you clean the room and other supplies. Be sure to thoroughly rinse all surfaces after the bleach application, and wash with the gentle soap solution as well to be sure all traces have been removed.*

## Medical Care and General Health Concerns

All cats will receive FVRCP and Rabies vaccination (as appropriate for their age), be microchipped, and spayed/neutered before they can be put up for adoption. While all animals are checked for general health before going into foster, they may develop other health concerns along the way, and may need to be seen by the LHS Veterinary Staff. All medical care for your foster animals will be provided by LHS for the duration of the foster period, and until they are adopted. Unless previously arranged and approved, any medical care sought elsewhere will **not** be reimbursed. Additionally, we cannot provide any medical care for your personal animals – *the initial isolation period is crucial!*

Please note that unless otherwise instructed, **all** Foster Animal processes will take place at the **Intake Desk**, and Foster Staff will handle the scheduling of all exams with our shelter clinic. The Well Pet Clinic will **not** know who you or the animals are, nor will they be able to help you with any issues.

### Vaccine Boosters for Foster Kittens

Kittens should receive a vaccine booster every 2-3 weeks from their first booster around 1 month in age until they are 16 weeks old. If your kittens were not vaccinated prior to going into foster for health reasons (under 1lb and/or 1 month in age, URI), please contact the Foster Department once they reach that milestone and/or complete treatment to schedule their first vaccine. Otherwise, their revaccination date will be printed on the Foster Animal Information form you should have received when you picked them up from the shelter (will be 3 weeks from their previous vaccine). This date is not set in stone, and they can be vaccinated at your convenience anytime within 1 week before or after that date. Please contact the Foster Department to schedule a time to bring them in to the shelter. You will bring the animals to the **Intake Desk** and our Animal Care Team will take care of the vaccines. Unless we are extremely busy, these appointments should only take about 15 minutes or so to complete. We are happy to make alternative arrangements if necessary!

### Spay/Neuter Surgery

All animals that will be available for adoption must be spayed/neutered before they go to their forever homes. We perform these surgeries in our shelter clinic Monday-Friday. All cats and kittens must be healthy and of the appropriate weight before they can be scheduled for their surgery. Most animals will not need to return to the foster home to recover from surgery and will be made available for adoption the following day. However, exceptions are certainly possible.

#### Eligibility:

- Healthy (no URI and at least one week post completion of antibiotics)
- At least 8 weeks of Age and over 2lbs in Weight
- Nursing Moms must be fully dried up from Nursing

#### Scheduling:

Please contact the Foster Department to schedule a surgery date once the eligibility criteria have been met for your kittens. We can schedule individual kittens, but we generally like to wait until the entire litter is ready before we alter anyone. Foster animals can either be returned to the shelter a day or two prior to surgery to our Intake Desk between **11am and 6pm**, or you can drop them off at the Well Pet Clinic entrance (located on the northeast corner of the shelter building) the morning of between **7:30 and 8:00am**. Kittens are welcome to have access to their dry food and water overnight before surgery, but should not be fed wet food in the morning. Adult animals should not be fed after 10:00pm the night before. Please attach all Velcro collars as they were assigned, or have labels on the carrier/kittens to identify them. Please use their **original** names if you have not informed the Foster Department of any name changes in the foster home. Cats/Kittens should be brought to the shelter in a carrier.

## Signs of Sick Kitties and What to Do

Most kittens come into the shelter as strays, so we often do not know anything about their previous medical history. While they may initially appear healthy, they have fragile little immune systems and may develop diarrhea or an Upper Respiratory Infection (URI), among other illnesses. Most are generally pretty mild, but can sometimes be life-threatening, so it is important to be very observant of changes in your kittens' behavior and isolate your fosters from your other animals! Below is our standard process for the most common issues.

### Diarrhea

There are 3 different types of cat stool: normal, soft, and diarrhea. Normal stool will be firm and well-shaped. Soft stool will still have form, but may be more cow-pie-like – this is the first sign of diarrhea! If it gets worse and becomes completely liquid, then you have reached full blown diarrhea. It can be caused by a variety of things (e.g. - stress, diet changes, or intestinal parasites) and is very common in kittens. The biggest concern with diarrhea is dehydration, which can become a serious issue very quickly – Please be sure to let us know of any issues as soon as possible!

Here is our standard diarrhea treatment protocol:

- **Fortiflora for 5 days** – This is a probiotic supplement that you put on their wet food. Can be obtained at the shelter. Give ½ packet once daily for every 2 kittens.
- **Amoxicillin** – We will start amoxicillin for all kittens in the litter if the stool has not improved by day 3 of the Fortiflora. Give 0.1cc per pound of body weight 2x daily for 7 days
- **Fecal Sample** – If diarrhea is not improved by day 5 of Amoxicillin, we will request a fecal sample to test for parasites
  - Fecal samples need to be as fresh as possible. They can last for up to 24 hours if refrigerated, but it is always best to bring them in sooner! We are happy to provide you with a fecalyzer for easy sample collection, or you may bring it in a plastic bag or disposable tupperware container. It is okay if there is litter or other debris in the sample. Please come to the intake desk during regular shelter hours with the fecal sample, the animal's name and/or number (provided on the Foster Animal Info sheet and Contract). The front desk staff will call the Healthcare Team to come collect the sample.

### Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)

Because of the stress of the shelter environment, URI spreads rapidly throughout the cats in the shelter. Even though your fosters may not display symptoms before they leave the shelter, they may still develop the disease after being in your home. Feline URI is only contagious to other cats, and is easily treated with antibiotics. It can survive in the environment for a while, so it is advised to thoroughly disinfect any areas/materials that your fosters have been in contact with. Please also be sure to wash your hands after handling your fosters.

- **Symptoms** – Consistent Sneezing, Watery/Goopy Eyes and/or Clear/Yellow Nasal Discharge.
  - It should be noted that occasional sneezing is relatively normal in kittens and may not be a sign of URI. However, if it becomes more frequent and is accompanied by ocular or nasal discharge, please contact the Foster Department!
- **Diagnosis** – Contact the Foster Department if you think any of your foster animals are developing a URI. In general, we will not need you to bring them in for a formal diagnosis, but we will need a current weight in order to give the proper dosage of medication. If you cannot weigh them at home, we will do it here.
- **Treatment** – Our standard process is to give Doxycycline for 10 days to treat the infection. This is usually a yellow liquid that is taken orally. It is given only once a day. We will usually give you pre-dosed syringes, but may provide you with a list of doses and a small bottle of medication on occasion.
  - Make sure your kittens are still eating and drinking! Keep nasal passages clear as kittens may not eat if they cannot smell, and always call with any major concerns!

## Fleas

The majority of the kittens we send out into foster were born outdoors, and they occasionally come into us with fleas. We may not always see them before they leave the shelter, but always let us know if you find them! Kittens with fleas will scratch often, and you may see dark dust on them or their bedding. Fleas are transmissible to both dogs and cats by direct contact, but they can also live in bedding and carpets. If you suspect fleas, be sure to vacuum often and change/wash bedding frequently!

To Treat:

- Bathe all kittens 2-3x weekly with blue Dawn dish detergent for 2-3 weeks.
  - Be sure to keep eyes and ears dry and remove any visible fleas
  - Do NOT use flea shampoo or other flea products without the direction of the Foster Department!
- If kittens are over 8 weeks in age, contact the Foster Department for a topical flea treatment

## Ear Mites

In addition to fleas, it is possible that your kittens may have ear mites. These are little bugs that live in the ears and cannot be seen by the naked eye. Kittens with ear mites will usually be frequently scratching their ears, and you will notice a thick, dark brown discharge in their ears. They are contagious between cats, but usually only in very close contact. Diagnosis can only be done by a microscopic exam of the discharge, so we will ask you to contact the Foster Department to arrange a time to come into the shelter. If the result is positive, we will treat them with an in-ear treatment that needs to be repeated in two weeks. Even if only one kitten is symptomatic, we will treat everyone to prevent it from recurring!

## Ringworm\*

Ringworm is a highly contagious fungal infection of the skin that affects ALL mammals, including humans! In kittens, it is characterized by hair loss around the nose, mouth, or ears; but may also be seen on the paws, tail, or abdomen. We check all kittens for any hair loss and look them over with a wood's lamp before they leave the shelter to make sure we aren't missing any obvious signs of ringworm. However, this does not guarantee that an animal is 100% clear and it is still possible that they may develop lesions while in foster care. Treatment usually takes 4-6 weeks, and because of its contagious and zoonotic nature, we are unable to treat it in the shelter. However, we are happy to treat it in the foster home. Diagnosis is confirmed with both a wood's lamp exam and a fungal culture. If you see any signs of hair loss and are concerned about Ringworm infection, please do not hesitate to contact the Foster Department to arrange a time for an exam!\*

*\*Because of the highly contagious nature of ringworm, a specific appointment will need to be made with the shelter clinic through the Foster Department, and we will ask that all animals remain in your vehicle until otherwise instructed by our staff.*

## Other Issues to Call About During Regular Shelter Hours:

- Vomiting (3 or more times in 24 hours)
  - If just food, they may be eating too much and/or too quickly. Try offering less food at one time, and spacing out feedings.
- Difficulty Eating or Loss of Appetite (more than 24 hours in adults, 2-3 feeding for kittens)
- Increased Urination, Difficulty Urinating, or Dark/Bloody Urine w/ or w/o accompanying Litter Box Issues
  - Likely a sign of an underlying urinary tract issue.
- Bites from a foster animal that draw blood
  - Refer to the later section on Bite Incidents for additional information
- ANY other symptom you think may be concerning! Do not wait until it becomes an emergency!
  - Remember that we have healthcare staff at the shelter 7 days per week, so if Tonya is not in, there should be someone here who can help!

## Emergency Situations

While rare, there is always the possibility of experiencing some kind of emergency situation with one of your foster animals. Kittens, especially, are fragile little beings and can have seemingly small issues become much bigger problems very quickly! Also, a seemingly perfect situation isn't always perfect, and accidents happen. If you aren't sure if it is a true emergency, err on the side of caution and give us a call! A false alarm is *always* better than a true emergency!

During regular shelter hours, always feel free to bring an animal right into us. A call to the shelter or on the emergency line is appreciated as well! If it is after hours, *always* call the emergency line (720-515-3678)!

### Example Emergency Situations:

- Severe diarrhea, especially in combination with vomiting or with a lot of blood in the stool
  - Can be a sign of Feline Distemper
- Severe lethargy or dehydration, labored breathing
  - Gums will usually be very pale and/or sticky/tacky. Pressing on the gums will usually result in no color change, or very slow color return
- Fading Kitten Syndrome (see below)
- Runaway Foster Animal
  - If one of your foster animals gets out and you cannot find them, we want to be notified as soon as possible so that we can get Animal Control involved and be able to keep an eye out at the shelter!
- Accidental Injury – caused by another animal or some kind of trauma
  - Accidents will happen, and if they do, we want to be able to help that animal as quickly as possible.
- Fever over 103.5°F – normal temperature range is 100-102.5°F. High fevers can become dangerous fast!
- Unconsciousness, seizures, uneven pupil dilation, or fainting
  - Unable to be roused from sleep, uncontrollable shaking of part of, or whole body

LHS Foster Emergencies:

720-515-3678

(720-515-FOSTER)

### Fading Kitten Syndrome

A “fading” kitten is one that appears healthy at birth but fails to survive beyond 12 weeks of age. Death usually occurs because of one of the following reasons: congenital defects, low birth weight, nutritional diseases from inadequate diet fed to the mother, infectious diseases, lack of antibodies from the mother, severe parasites, etc. Unfortunately, kitten death due to “fading” is not uncommon. Symptoms usually include sudden and continuous lack of appetite, increasing lethargy, or sudden death. Usually the circumstances are unavoidable.

***\*\*Remember it is not your fault!\*\****

By being a foster parent you are giving an animal every opportunity to survive.

### **In the unfortunate event that one of your foster animals passes away...**

If an animal does pass away in your care, it needs to be brought back to the shelter as soon as possible to be examined. You are welcome to bring back the animal during regular shelter hours 7 days a week. Come to the intake desk on the east side of the front of the building and be sure to tell them the name and number of the animal. It is also a good idea to bring in the rest of your animals to be checked out by the healthcare team just to be sure they are all still healthy. Please call ahead so the staff will know to expect you. In every case, **ALWAYS** call Tonya on the emergency line!

# Fostering Nursing Queens and their Kittens

## Mothers and Babies

We take in many Nursing Queens and their kittens throughout the year. They will vary in age from newborn up to 3-4 weeks in age when they arrive. They are a very fun foster, but they definitely have some more specialized needs! See below for general guidelines on how to house and what to expect!

### Ideal Environment

In a word: CALM. Nursing mothers will often be very protective over their kittens, especially when they are first born. They need privacy, quiet, and minimal activity to help them acclimate to your home. It is usually best to mostly leave her alone for the first week or two after the kittens are born to minimize her stress.

Nursing mother cats should have a separate room away from the hub of daily activity. A clean, warm, dry, quiet, out of the way area should be provided for the mother to raise her young. A nesting box is essential for her and her babies. The box should be big enough for the mother to comfortably lie away from the litter if she chooses, but small enough so the kittens can reach her. A whelping box, large cat bed, empty litter box or a large carrier generally work well. Line the box with towels or blankets, and be sure to change and wash the bedding frequently.

Additionally, nursing moms should have no other access to other animals. Even though your animals may be very friendly with the kittens and even the mom, she may see them as a very serious threat and may try to harm them. The stress could also cause her to withdraw which will then negatively impact the health of her kittens. Once the mother cat has been returned to the shelter and the kittens are healthy, they are welcome to begin interacting with the pets in your home.

### Feeding and Litter Box

Because milk production requires so much energy, nursing mothers should eat dry kitten food and be given three to four feedings of wet food a day in order to make enough milk for their babies. They will also need plenty of clean water! Mom should also have a large litter box available. Be sure the sides are high enough that the kittens cannot climb in and get stuck. Clumping litter is fine until the kittens start litter training, but then you should switch to pine or clay – be sure to add a couple of smaller more shallow boxes for the kittens when they are ready! Sometimes it will take a day or two for the mother to eat or use the litter box, but please contact us with ANY concerns!

### Weaning

Weaning should be a gradual process. The mother should take care of the weaning process herself, but you will want to be sure you are supplying enough food for the nursing mother and weaning babies. Begin introducing the "slurry" mixture (1 part canned food to 2 parts warm water or milk replacement) when the kittens are three weeks of age. At five weeks the kittens should be reducing their intake of mother's milk. Once they are consistently eating the gruel, gradually decrease the amount of liquid until it is just canned food. **NEVER** give cow's milk. Kittens should be fully weaned between 6 and 8 weeks of age. Once they are primarily eating on their own, Mom can be brought back to the shelter to begin her "drying up" process so that she can be spayed and ready for adoption!

### Maternal Neglect

The younger they are, the more they will depend on Mom for ALL of their needs. Although the mother is caring for the babies, it is vitally important to monitor both the health of the mother and each of the kittens to insure everyone is getting everything they need! Some kittens may need extra support depending on how attentive Mom is to the litter. Please call us if you see any signs of neglect! These include, but are not limited to:

- Mom spending ALL of her time away from the kittens.
- She does not groom or nurse them frequently or at all
- The kittens cry and she seems not to respond

## Kitten Development & Socialization Guidelines

A great amount of time and effort is required to properly socialize kittens between the ages of 4 to 12 weeks. Daily socialization sessions are important in shaping the animal's future personality and emotional growth. Combine simple play with handling exercises. This familiarizes a kitten to having its paws touched (front and back), mouth opened, and ears touched. Combining this with regular grooming sessions helps prevent skin sensitivity or aversion to touch. Here is what to expect at various stages of kittenhood.

### **Newborn-2 weeks**

Neonatal kittens should be pink, firm, and plump. The ears and eyes will be closed at birth and usually begin to open at around 10-14 days old. The eyes will open on their own, and may only be partially open at first. **NEVER** force the eyes open. If they have not opened after 14 days, please contact the foster department. Healthy kittens should be easily able to suckle and will spend the majority of their time eating and sleeping. At birth, their normal temperature will be 96-97°F, but will normalize to around 100°F in the first few days. They are unable to regulate their own body temperature, and should have a heat source if they are without their mother. They will be able to scoot around at first, and will start using their front legs to stand and slowly/shakily walk around 1-2 weeks of age.

### **2 to 3 weeks**

Their vision will be very poor until they are about a month old, but they should be crawling and looking around, and will be able to better control their movements and support their body weight. They are able to maintain their own body temperature, but should still have a heat source available if they do not have their mother. At this point, you will notice their deciduous incisors erupting, which will soon be followed by the canines between 3 and 4 weeks of age. Increase the amount of handling time and start to include clipping the nails when necessary. Normal Temperature: 100.5 to 102.5°F which should remain consistent for the rest of their development.

### **3 to 5 weeks**

By three weeks kittens should be able to walk fairly steady, can sit, and control their toes. Their vision and hearing are normal. They will start to investigate their environment and toys can be added at this time. They will be experiencing a large amount of sensory stimulation, so it will be important to introduce new things slowly as to not frighten the kittens as a frightening experience at this age could make a life-long impression. At around 4-5 weeks of age, their deciduous premolars will start to erupt and they may start to develop an interest in food. If they have a Queen, you can start offering additional wet food at feeding times. If they do not have a Queen, start to transition off of the bottle. They will become much more playful and social and should be handled more and more frequently to help their social development!

### **5 to 8 weeks**

By 5-6 weeks, kittens should have all of their deciduous teeth, and they should be old enough to start their kitten vaccination series. They will be playing with toys and continue to become more and more playful. It is important to introduce the animals to as many different people as possible and have them handle the kittens gently. Supervised visits with other animals are also appropriate as long as they are healthy and you believe it is safe for them (please refer to the Comingle Date on your Foster Animal Information sheet). These visits should be calm and pleasant; otherwise it could traumatize the kitten. Be sure to expose the kittens to mild household sounds and different surfaces.

### **8 weeks and beyond...**

The kitten is almost fully developed at this stage, needing only experience. Female kittens become sexually mature between 4 and 12 months of age. Male kittens become sexually mature around 7 to 10 months. Begin to introduce the kitten to louder noises such as a vacuum cleaner, dishwasher, and/or washing machine. Only praise a kitten for positive reactions. Do not force it to approach a scary situation.

## Establishing Good Household Behaviors

Kittens are extremely curious and playful, and are very likely to want to explore and test out everything in their environment. They will outgrow some of this as they get older and more experienced, but it is still important to reinforce good habits from the start while still letting kittens be kittens! Establishing boundaries, exposure to new people and things, and ensuring proper litter box use will make for a happier and well-adjusted kitten once they move on to their forever homes.

### Playtime and Handling

Playtime is an essential part of kitten development. Kittens are naturally playful and need to release this energy. Having littermates helps with this, but they still need regular interactive time with toys. Just be sure that they are able to be easily sanitized between litters, or are disposable. Ideally, they should also have at least one other feline friend to wrestle with so they can learn appropriate play skills and be socialized with other kittens/cats. We will always try to send kittens out in sets of at least 2 to avoid "single kitten syndrome."

Socialization with humans is also of vital importance. Kittens should be handled daily, and all handling should be a positive experience for them. They should get used to being held, pet, and especially having their paws touched. We want to discourage the use of their claws and teeth on people, so hands should NEVER be used as toys. You should also be sure to touch their paws daily and get them used to the idea of getting their nails trimmed. If you are comfortable, feel free to trim their nails as necessary. We are happy to trim their nails as needed, all you need to do is ask!

### Scratching

All cats are likely to scratch, and it is best to encourage them to use the proper surface as early as possible! We recommend a cardboard scratching post or pad, which should be changed or sanitized between foster litters. Encourage use of it by dragging toys across the surface. However, kittens should never be "forced" to scratch by holding their paws or doing the scratching motion. Discourage kittens from scratching furniture by distracting them when they start, or cover the surface with a loose cloth or double stick tape.

### Litter Training

Around 3-4 weeks of age, kittens are likely to start being interested in, and able to use the litter box. While this behavior is mostly instinctive and you generally should not need to litter train kittens, occasionally they need a little encouragement. After feeding, you should place each kitten into a shallow litter box with a small amount of **non-clumping** clay or pine litter (1/2 cup for small litter boxes, 1 cup for large ones). Some are early learners, but others can take some time to get the idea. Just keep trying until they get it! Do NOT scratch the litter with the kitten's paws. The dig/bury instinct will come in time!

It is best to have multiple litter boxes available for young kittens to reinforce good behavior. The less distance they have to travel, the more likely it is that they will use the box. Be sure that all of the kittens can easily climb in and out of the litter box. When they are first learning, a cookie sheet, pie plate, or other shallow dish can be used as a litter box until they are tall enough to use a standard size one. We also have shallow plastic and cardboard litter boxes that can be used at first.

If one of your kittens is consistently eliminating outside of the box, but otherwise appears normal and healthy, there are a few tricks you can try:

- Add a second litter box in the location they are going
- Try a different litter type, or a mixture of different litters – *We have clay, pine, and corn if you need!*
- Add some attractant to the litter box – *We have Cat Attract at the shelter that can be sent home!*
- Put the material they are using (towel, puppy pad, etc) into the litter box in place of litter. If they start using it correctly again, start slowly adding litter on top of it until you can remove it completely!

## Discipline & Troubleshooting

The best way to handle most undesirable feline behaviors is to prevent them! Because they are so curious, kittens are likely to get into things that they should not. In general, the best way to prevent undesirable behavior is through modification of the environment. If they don't have access to plants, cords, and small hiding places, they won't be able to get into trouble! However, most home environments are not devoid of such enticements. Distracting kittens with noise, toys, or food can be very helpful in turning them away from things they should not get into and inappropriate play with people or their siblings. A spray bottle can also be useful if the kitten is unable to be distracted.

### Biting

Kittens may nip and bite during play or while being petted. To prevent biting, make sure the animal is getting enough play time; three times a day is ideal. Never encourage a kitten to play with fingers or toes. If the animal is about to "play" with your finger or toe, divert its attention with a toy so it is distracted from attacking you. Be gentle when petting the kitten and gradually increase its tolerance for handling by routinely touching the paws, tail, and belly. Stop petting the animal if s/he shows any signs of irritation such as nipping, tail swishing, growling/meowing, etc. If the kitten does bite, do not punish it with a nose tap, hit, swat, etc. Instead correct the animal by withdrawing, saying NO, clapping your hands, and blowing on its face. Calmly leave the room if the kitten does not stop biting.

### Bite Incident

If a bite breaks the skin, clean and flush the wound immediately. All bites that break the skin MUST be reported to a member of the foster care department. Colorado law requires any dog or cat bites that break the skin to be reported to the Department of Health and the animal must be put on a 10 day quarantine period for rabies. If you are no longer comfortable fostering the animal it may be returned to the shelter.

***\*Do not withhold information about a bite in fear that the animal will be euthanized - just because an animal bites does not disqualify it from being adoptable!\****

### Introduction of New Kittens

Occasionally, we may ask you to add a single kitten to your litter so they can learn appropriate play with other cats. At this age, integration is usually pretty easy and straight forward. There may be some negative interaction at first (mild hissing, batting, and some rough play), but this will usually settle in a few days. They should be easily distractible with toys or noise if the behavior starts to escalate.

### Fighting

Kittens may play quite roughly with each other – including wrestling, kicking, and biting. This behavior is normal, and unless they are hurting each other, the play is harmless. To decrease the amount of fighting, increase the amount of human playtime with the animals. Interrupt fighting by clapping your hands or saying NO. Separating the kittens for brief periods of time may also help. For any questions or concerns, call the Foster Department.

The following are signs of a more serious problem:

- Persistent "bullying" by one kitten – the other kitten(s) may seem scared of the aggressor, and s/he is difficult to distract with noise or toys
- Significant differences in size, where the larger kitten is not playing well with the smaller one(s)
- One kitten is preventing the other kitten(s) from using the litter box or accessing food/water
- One kitten is sick or generally weaker and unable to keep up with the play

When in doubt, separate the kittens, and please contact the Foster Department for more guidance! We are always happy to rehome an animal if you are uncomfortable handling the issue at home!

## Fostering Under-Socialized Kittens

Under-socialized, neglected, and frightened feral kittens may be the most challenging shelter animals to foster, but can also be one of the most rewarding as you watch them transform! These guys will need a lot of TLC and handling to help them become happy and social kitties! These kittens may not have been inside a house or car, been litter trained, or have experienced kindness from a human. These kittens are likely to be very frightened and may hiss and "spit" at people. The more ferocious the kitten acts, the more scared it is.

Unlike normal, social kittens, we recommend that feral littermates be separated from each other. When together, they may feed off of each other's cues, and be much harder to socialize. Once they lose the protection of a group, they are forced to become a bit more self-reliant and are more likely to befriend people. We may also recommend that they join a friendly cat, kitten, or litter. They may be more comfortable around other cats, and being around a social cat will help them learn, and hopefully begin to emulate, appropriate behavior with humans.

### Home Environment

Under-socialized animals must be closely monitored to reduce the chance of escape or destructive behavior. A quiet, confined environment is best for these kittens. A small space such as a dog crate or small bathroom works best. If they are confined to a room, make sure to block off hiding spaces so you can access the kittens without having to chase them and cause additional stress. However, it is still important to give the kittens a safe place to hide – such as a tipped over box with a towel inside.

When you first bring the kitten home, give them some time to acclimate to their new environment before attempting to handle them. The kitten needs to learn that their foster home is a safe place. Visit with them frequently, move slowly around them, and talk gently to them. Playing talk radio or reading aloud around them may also be a useful tool to help them associate people as a good, trustworthy entity. If possible, allow the kitten to approach you.

### Handling

Consistent handling can be one of the most effective ways to get feral cats and kittens to become social and happy house cats. Some kittens will calm down the moment they enter the home, and handling will be easy from the get go, but others take more time to build their trust. It is very important to have many people handle the kitten so they do not learn to trust only one person. If the kitten is hissing, spitting, swatting, and/or growling, it is best to protect yourself with gloves and/or a thick towel to prevent them from being able to bite, and so you can approach them fearlessly. The best way to correct their defensive behaviors is by being gentle yet firm, and completely unafraid of the kitten, even when at their most ferocious.

It is generally easiest to pick up a super scared kitten by the scruff of the neck. This will slightly immobilize them and also give you a good hold away from their teeth. Spend as much time as possible actually holding the kitten, and maintain a gentle scruff until you are sure they will not try to get away. Talk to the kitten and gently pet them with your free hand, but be careful not to give the kitten the opportunity to bite. Let go of the kitten if it becomes too difficult to handle, but try to always be the one who ends the handling session. Give the kitten a treat or feed them immediately after handling. This will reward the kitten and hopefully reinforce the idea that good things come from people. Handle the kitten as often as possible throughout the day for at least 5-10 minutes each session.

### Feeding

Smelly and tasty food can be the gateway to a feral kitten's heart and trust. They likely did not have regular access to food prior to being brought into us, and they are likely to appreciate regular meal times. If at all possible, try to hand-feed your kitten. At the very least, stand by as they eat so they begin to associate you with their food. We recommend Turkey and Chicken Baby Food as an enticing treat!

## Undersocialized Kitten Flowchart

The following is meant to help you see the progress in your foster kitten's behavior and know when to contact the Foster Department for more assistance. Some cats will take longer than others to become social, and some may never come around. There are many adoption options for these kitties, even if they do not fit the "traditional" mold. In very rare cases, a cat or kitten may be euthanized for behavior reasons, usually because of other factors as well. The Foster Department is happy to discuss any policies with you at any time!

### FIRST FEW DAYS

*Your kitten(s) may be hissing, spitting, swatting, growling, and trying to bite*

#### Activities to Engage In:

- Burrito the kitten (use gloves and towel to handle if necessary)
- Hand-feed wet food or baby food
- Practice picking up the kitten(s) and returning them to a safe space repeatedly to get them used to the approach
- Play soft music or talk radio at all times

### AFTER 5-7 DAYS

*Your kitten is still hissing, spitting, swatting, and growling, but has improved some:*

- Separate all of the kittens from one another and try to confine to a smaller area.
- Continue handling, increase playtime, work on getting kitten(s) used to humans approaching/walking around them while playing, and play soft music or talk radio.

*Kitten(s) are still hissing on approach, but responsive, purring, warming up to being pet*

- Continue with focus on handling to gain more of their trust. Continue hand-feeding and work on interactive play.

### AFTER 10-14 DAYS

*Social, purring, and relaxed with handling and approach:*

- Congratulate yourself on a job well done! If the kitten is over 8 weeks of age and 2lbs, they can come back to the shelter for surgery and adoption!

*Still a little hissy or shy and apprehensive:*

- Some kittens may remain a little shy, but keep working on them for a little while longer!

*No change or improvement in behavior:*

- Contact the Foster Department. We will try to work with the kitten in the shelter, but they may just be a tough nut to crack and will become a part of our Barn Cat Program!  
Thanks for all of your hard work with this kitty!

## Return and Adoption

When the fostered animal is brought back to LHS, the animal is given a health and behavioral evaluation before it can be made available for adoption. Foster parents are encouraged to provide a write-up about the animal for display on the animal's kennel. The write-up can be clever (but always honest and positive) and should contain information about the animal's personality and behavior. You are welcome to create a kennel card for your fosters, but please also email the text to the foster care department so it can easily be added to the animal's profile.

### Returning Foster Animals

When your foster animals are ready to return to the shelter for adoption, contact the foster care department to schedule a good time to bring them back. Come to the intake desk and let the staff know that you are returning the animal(s) from foster. They will then have the Animal Care Team get the animal set up in a kennel. Please make sure to bring any extra supplies and/or write ups with you. Animals returning from foster do require an exam and/or surgery along with a behavioral evaluation before they can be made available, so please don't panic if your animal isn't immediately on the adoption floor or website!

Please understand that returning your foster animal(s) to LHS can be a very emotional time, even under the best of circumstances. When polled, foster volunteers overwhelmingly said their least favorite part of the foster program was returning the animal and not knowing if or when the animal was adopted, and to whom. While we will not be able to disclose *exactly* where your foster animal(s) ended up, I am always happy to tell you when they have been adopted or their current status. Please feel free to check in whenever you like!

Everyone at LHS understands the mixed feelings foster parents have when returning their animal(s) to the shelter. Many staff members are also foster parents and have experienced these same emotions. Do not hesitate to speak of your feelings. ***You are never alone.***

Foster volunteers give the animals they care for the best gift anyone could give – the beginning to a happy life in a loving home! Be proud of all the wonderful work you did, and be happy that you are able to continue to help even more animals in the future!

### Adoption Process

Each adoption from LHS entails a questionnaire and evaluation process to ensure that the animal's needs will be met by the potential adoptive family. A member of the Client Care Team at the adoption desk will assist the family through the adoption process. Most family members should meet the animal prior to adoption. Potential adopters are also told about the importance of diet, exercise, obedience classes, and how to best introduce the new animal to other animals already in the home. We stress that it is best to keep cats indoors and not to have cats declawed. If foster parents feel the animal needs a certain type of environment (such as a six-foot fence for dogs) we encourage them to provide this information to the Foster Care Department so it can be added to their profile and communicated to potential adopters. The Client Care Team does everything within their abilities to find the animal a loving, responsible, lifelong home.

When the animal is adopted, an adoption contract is signed and the adoption fee is paid. Handouts are available online or by request relating to common problems, supplies the animal may need (or enjoy), obedience classes, etc. If problems do occur, new adopters are encouraged to call us so we may help them work on the problem area. All dogs adopted through LHS come with free behavioral support for the life of the animal. Animals that have not been sterilized while in foster are spayed or neutered before going to their new home.

If a fostered animal needs to come out of adoptions for a while (i.e., develops upper respiratory disease, kennel cough, or simply needs a break from the shelter life), the original foster parents will usually be contacted first to see if they would be willing to foster the animal again.

### **Know someone interested in one of your animals?**

Sometimes foster parents know of people who might want to adopt their foster animal. Foster parents need to let these interested people know that they must go through the adoption process at LHS.

Foster parents should inform the interested party to contact the intake desk to set up an adoption hold on the animal(s)\*. There is a fee associated with this hold. If the animal is able to be adopted, they will be called by our Client Care Team when the animal is made available. They will have 24 hours from the time the animal is made available to adopt. If they are still interested in the animal, they simply need to come into the shelter and go through the process described above. **IPs should be informed that LHS cannot guarantee that every animal will qualify for adoption.**

If you, the foster volunteer, want to adopt your foster animal, you will need to inform the foster care department so that we can place an IP hold on the animal. There is no fee for Foster Parent IP holds. You will also receive a 20% discount on the adoption fee and no dog/family meets are required for animals that have been in your home already. You will need to fill out the adoption application and have it approved by a Client Care staff member.

*\*Occasionally, there will be an existing IP on an animal. These are usually the finder (if the animal was stray) or occasionally a staff member. IPs are first come first served. You are welcome to ask the Foster Department about any existing holds at any time!*



## **Thank you, Foster Volunteers!!!**