



SoHumane

Adult Cat Handbook



Guidelines for Cat Care and Socialization

SoHumane Foster Program

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Introduction

Thank you for your interest in being a kitten foster with SoHumane! Thanks to people like you we are able to give orphaned kittens a chance to find their forever homes. Our main goal with fosters is to get kittens to the appropriate age and weight to be in our adoption program. This handbook is here to help you get started on the basics of kitten care and socialization.

SoHumane will provide all basic supplies, medical care, and training to help you be successful. After reading this handbook, please let the Foster Coordinator know what type of fostering you are comfortable doing.

SoHumane's foster program is dedicated to providing the animals in our care any extra love and attention they may need during their journey towards adoption into a forever home. The reasons an animal is sent to foster care include:

- The animal is too young to be made available for adoption
- The animal is too sick to be made available for adoption
- The animal is recovering from a medical procedure
- The animal needs socialization before being adoptable
- The animal needs a break from the shelter environment
- The shelter space is at capacity

An animal's eligibility for foster care is decided by Foster staff and Foster Coordinators.



Supplies Being Provided

SoHumane will provide you with all the supplies your foster kittens will need like a bed, blankets, food, bowls, toys, and anything extra that your foster kittens may need.

Carrier

Food

Bowls

Bedding

Blankets

Litter

Litter Box

Toys

Brush

Medication (if applicable)

Fecal Sample Tubes

Scratchers

Treats



If you need any additional supplies or need to restock, please contact SoHumane!
(541) 779-3215 • adoptions@sohumane.org

Tips and Tricks for helping your foster cat

- 🐾 A large crate may work well as the cat's "safe place."
- 🐾 Medical cats should always be isolated from other animals in the home unless instructed otherwise.
- 🐾 Give your foster cat time to adjust! Some may warm up within the day, but others could take several days or weeks to acclimate.
- 🐾 Follow feeding instructions closely to help maintain a healthy weight of your foster cat.

Preparing for your Foster Cat

Before taking your foster cat home, prepare a special area away from other pets to help them adjust into their new home environment. Your foster cat may be frightened or unsure about what's happening so it is important not overwhelm him/her. The room should be equipped with food, water, a litter box and scratcher.

SoHumane asks all fosters to keep their new foster cat isolated for the first couple of days to allow the cat to adjust to his/her new surroundings. It is not uncommon for cats to hide under the bed or in a dark, quiet place. Isolating your foster cat will allow you to know what room they are in, monitor eating, drinking, and bathroom habits more closely. All foster cats are indoor only. A garage, backyard or outdoor enclosure is not a suitable accommodation for a foster cat.

During the first couple of weeks, minimize the people and pet introductions to your foster cat. They should only meet your household unless instructed otherwise. Personal pets are not permitted to meet foster cats without prior approval from SoHumane Foster Staff.



Source: Best Friends Animal Society "Bringing a New Cat Home" Article

Rules and Guidelines

Once an animal is in foster care, there are instructions for care outlined in the Foster Care Handbooks, but the general rules are as follows:

- Foster cats will not be allowed to go outside of the home unless in a secure crate for necessary transport.
- Foster Dogs and Puppies are **NEVER** to be taken to the dog park, groomers, or to unauthorized veterinarian visits.
- All behavioral and medical concerns must be reported immediately.
- Foster Parents must respond within 24 hours of communication from any Foster Staff, Foster Coordinators, or potential adopters.
- Communicate professionally and clearly with all Foster Staff, Foster Coordinators, and potential adopters.
- Refer to the designated foster handbook for animal care.
- When outside of the house all dogs are to be on leash at all times unless in a secure fence.
- The Foster parents agree arrive punctually to all scheduled greeting, medical, and intake appointments. If scheduling conflicts occur, foster parents must notify SoHumane within 24 hours of their appointment.

Foster Parents that do not follow the above policies are subject to immediate removal of the foster animal from the foster home as well as permanent termination from the SoHumane Foster Program depending on the severity of the offense.



Medical Issues You May Encounter

On occasion, we bring in animals that require special medical attention. There are times when foster care is the most appropriate option for the animal until they are healthy enough to be in the adoption program. If you foster a cat with medical needs, you will be informed of the full extent of the care needed for the animal which could be minimal or extensive depending on the animal. You will have scheduled checkups as well. SoHumane also expects fosters that have healthy cats watch out for anything that can be medically concerning.

Cat Feces

An animal's waste can be a strong indicator that something is not right. Healthy stool will be firm and brown. Diarrhea is a strong sign that something is not right, but it can be caused by anything from parasites, viruses, bacteria, food irregularities, and stress. Diarrhea needs to be monitored and treated in a reasonable amount of time to prevent dehydration. Mild diarrhea for 24 hours is not a concern, but if it persists, has blood, or parasites, please call your foster coordinator for assistance.

If you notice, rice-like worms in their poop whether they're moving or not, please call SoHumane's Vet Care Department.

Upper Respiratory Infection

It is incredibly common for cats in a shelter environment to develop an upper respiratory infection; it is much like the common cold for humans. Cats that have a URI may have symptoms like abnormal eye or nose discharge that is yellow/green or bloody. The cat might be coughing consistently or sneezing. They may also seem lethargic. Cats that have a URI are given medication to treat the infection over an extended amount of time. Contact SoHumane if you believe your foster animal may have an upper respiratory infection.

UTI

Urinary tract infections can be common, but luckily they can be treated fairly easily. Signs that your foster cat may have a UTI include high frequency bathroom breaks, strong odor urine, and/or unhealthy color. If you believe your foster cat has a UTI, please call SoHumane's Vet Care Department.

Vomiting

Vomiting is not serious unless it is continuous or if the animal has diarrhea as well. If vomiting occurs multiple times in a row, please call SoHumane's Vet Care Department.

Ringworm

Ringworm is a highly contagious skin disorder that can be difficult to treat. Signs of ringworm include abnormal hair loss in circular form. They may have a red ring on the outer edge. Ringworm is highly contagious to animals as well as humans and is contracted through the air. If you suspect Ringworm please call SoHumane's Vet Care Department during business hours.

FIV

Cats with Feline Immunodeficiency Virus may not show symptoms until years after the initial infection. The virus works slowly, yet the cat's immune system is compromised severely; they get sick often, and they have a difficult time recovering from sickness. Cats with FIV need to

be the only cat in the home and must be kept indoors to prevent the possibility of spreading the virus. A calm, stress-free home will help prevent them from possible sickness as well.

Feline Leukemia

Feline Leukemia is the second leading cause of death in cats in the world. It is a virus that is easily transmitted through saliva, blood, urine and feces. Symptoms of feline leukemia include fever, diarrhea, lethargy, respiratory issues, pale gums, yellowish eyes and mouth, and poor coat condition. Contact SoHumane Vet Care immediately if you have suspicions.

Emergencies

Emergencies are a possibility with fostering, so you should be prepared to take the appropriate action for any odd behavior changes you notice with your foster cat.

Non-Emergencies	Emergencies
Monitor First	Immediately call the foster coordinator if after hours
If worsening, call the foster coordinator	Come to the shelter during business hours
Runny discharge from nose or eyes	Continuous diarrhea for longer than 24-36 hours
Lack of appetite	Continuous vomiting longer than 12 hours
Lethargy	Loss of appetite
Diarrhea that lasts more than 3-4 feedings	Bleeding of any kind
Vomiting	Any trauma
Weight loss	Difficult breathing
Coughing	Not responsive
Sneezing	Lethargy over 24 hours
Lack of bowel movements for more than 24-36 hours or straining	
Swollen eyes	

Source: Charleston Animal Society "Health Cheat Sheet"

Dangerous Foods

Please do not feed your foster cat any food outside of cat treats and cat food. If your foster animal ingests any of these foods/chemicals on the list, treat the situation as an emergency.

- 🐾 Alcohol
- 🐾 Avocado
- 🐾 Chocolate, Coffee, and Caffeine
- 🐾 Citrus
- 🐾 Coconut and Coconut Oil
- 🐾 Grapes and Raisins
- 🐾 Milk/Dairy
- 🐾 Nuts
- 🐾 Onions, Garlic, Chives
- 🐾 Raw/Undercooked Meat, Eggs, and Bones
- 🐾 Salty snack foods
- 🐾 Xylitol
- 🐾 Yeast Dough
- 🐾 Household/Outdoor Chemicals
- 🐾 Household plants



Source: ASPCA "People Foods to Avoid Feeding Your Pets" Article

Stress in Cats and Behavior Problems You May Encounter

Reminders for Stress Reduction and Behavior Adjustments

Your new foster cat will likely be stressed initially which can overtime cause some behavior issues. Signs of stress include decreased/no appetite, hiding, lack of interest in attention, decreased grooming, and feigned sleeping (appear exhausted, constantly sleeping). Cats that are stressed are usually quieter than normal which may make it more difficult to notice. Highly stressed cats may behave in a fearful manner or even act aggressively. Watch for signs of stress in your foster cat, and if you do see them, make sure you are actively trying to reduce stress each day. If over time the stress does not appear to be decreasing, contact the Cat Foster Coordinator.

- 🐾 Make sure to keep the areas the foster cat has access to clean to prevent accidents and extra clean up!
- 🐾 Remain patient with any training issues.
- 🐾 Cats are at their most relaxed state in a calm, quiet home with a secure area to hide if they get scared.

Hiding

Provide your foster cat with multiple places to hide. Cardboard boxes, paper bags, a dresser drawer, or a cat tree can all be great places for your foster cat to hide. Be sure to allow places down low and up high for the cat to hide. When the cat is hiding do not disturb it. Hiding places should be a safe, private place for the cat which will help it to remain calm and bring its stress level down.



Scent

Cats are sensitive to smells. You should not use air fresheners or strong deodorizers near your foster cat. Yes, you need to sanitize and keep your foster cat's area(s) clean, but try to be aware of things that may smell nice to us because they can be quite aversive to cats. You may also help reduce your cat's stress by using its own scent. Take some small blankets, old t-shirts, or other cloth materials and rub it on the cat's neck and cheeks. Then, place them around the room to help the cat feel more comfortable. It will also entice them to explore. Feliway is a stress reducing pheromone that can be provided to you if your cat is struggling to transition to your home.

Scratching

Scratching is a natural and comforting behavior for cats. Be sure to have a least one place available for your cat to scratch in their safe space. (Scratchers will be provided by SoHumane.) If you notice your cat scratching inappropriate items you will need to add additional scratchers to the cat's area and help them by redirecting them and rewarding with treats and praise when they scratch the appropriate area.



Exercise/Play

Check out this quote from catbehaviorassociates.com
“Interactive play is a very powerful tool you can use to help your cat in a variety of situations. It’s great for trust-building, helping two cats become friends, exercise, stress relief, and the list goes on. Even though your cat may be one who is so revved up she can make a game out of playing with the dust bunnies under your furniture, don’t overlook how valuable it is to incorporate interactive playtime into your daily schedule.”



For more information and tips on how to play with your foster cat, check out: <http://www.catbehaviorassociates.com/interactive-play-therapy-for-cats/>

Your Cat’s Litter Box Do’s and Don’ts

DO:

- 🐾 Have at least one litter box per cat.
- 🐾 Scoop the litter box daily.
- 🐾 Wash the litter pans regularly.
- 🐾 Keep the litter box away from the cat’s food and water.
- 🐾 Keep the litter box in a quiet, secluded place.
- 🐾 If you are litter box training, always praise and give treats for using the box.
- 🐾 Soft, fluffy bedding can be attractive to cats when eliminating so be sure to keep dirty laundry or other enticing items picked up and away from the cat.



DON’T

- 🐾 Over or under-fill the litter box. There should be just enough to cover the cat’s waste.
- 🐾 Do not suddenly change the location of the litter box.
- 🐾 Do not suddenly change the type of litter you are using; this may cause more problems.
- 🐾 Never punish for not using the box as this can cause the cat to become fearful of you.

Aggression in Cats

Aggression can be an issue with cats for many different reasons. If your cat is displaying aggression in any way contact the Cat Foster Staff.

Source: Meow Foundation “Behavior 101” Article

Adoption through Foster

We will encourage you to promote your foster cat while in your care. Tell the people in your life about them! While they are in your care, you are their biggest supporter, and they are counting on you to get the word out about what they are like in a home. Because they are not in the shelter, they are not being seen by our customers. We will supply you with our business cards, so potential adopters have the ability to contact us and process an adoption. We can inform you about our adoption policies, so you are aware of what we look for in potential adopters. You will be aware of any restrictions a cat may have in order for them to be placed in the most appropriate home.

We may send a cat to foster to create space for other animals needing to be rehomed. Animals adopted out of foster are less likely to be returned because you, the foster, will have a stronger understanding of how they act in a home.

When it is time for the animal to return to the shelter for whatever reason, please provide us with notes and pictures about their personality. These help us when going over an adoption. If you absolutely fall in love with your foster animal, you have the opportunity to adopt them! Standard adoption policies and procedures will apply.

If you are no longer able to foster your animal, contact SoHumane to arrange a time to bring the cat back.



Source: Charleston Animal Society "Ready for Adoption" Article

Works Cited

- ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center. "People Foods to Avoid Feeding Your Pets." *ASPCA*, ASPCA, 2018.
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