

PAWS Humane

Adult Cat Foster Guide



Everything you need to know about fostering adult cats!



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Welcome & Introduction

Welcome to the PAWS Humane Foster Care Program!

The Foster Care Program allows PAWS Humane to take in more cats per year than could be housed in the shelter due to limitations of space and resources. Your help will save the lives of many kittens who would be euthanized.

Generally, adult cats in the Foster Care Program have special medical conditions or are in need of socialization. Time spent in foster care is crucial for these cats and will help them begin the journey that will lead to adoption and to their forever home!

Although fostering is a lot of work, it is a very rewarding experience. You will help cats grow from helpless little beings to confident, well-adjusted family pets. You also get the fun of raising a cat without the responsibility of lifetime care. Most importantly, you are saving lives!



Foster family is asked to supply...

- Healthy & safe environment
- Litter
- Transportation to & from PAWS Humane
- Socialization (family & pet interaction, leash walks)
- Cat food (unless special dietary need)
- Interactions with toys & different noises around your house

PAWS can provide...

- Bowls (food & water)
- Toys
- Litter pan
- Crates
- Newspapers to line crate bottoms
- Blankets, towels, and appropriate disinfectant

Providing a Safe Environment

The Safe Room

Choose a space that is free of things that can hurt a cat. The room your foster cat is initially living in should be able to withstand litter box accidents, vomit, and spilled medicine. A bathroom is often a good choice for fostering (just don't forget to close the toilet lid and hide the toilet paper!). Since adult cats are generally fostered because of lack of socialization, the safe room will be crucial in order for the cat to feel comfortable and safe.

Cat-Proofing

Remember that cats are curious, and might try to get into everything! Block any electrical outlets and put away anything that a cat could swallow or get tangled in. Hide any breakable items. Block any small holes where a cat might hide and become inaccessible to you. It helps to lie down on your stomach so that you can see the room from the cat's point of view and identify potential hazards. Any windows in the room should be kept closed or securely screened.

Inside the Kitten Room

The cat room should contain everything the cat will need to eat, drink, eliminate, sleep and play:

- Have at least one bowl for water, one for food. It is best to provide more bowls if you have more than one cat so no one has to compete to access food.
- Put the litter boxes as far away as possible from food, water, and bedding.
- Old towels tend to work well as bedding. A secure sleeping area, such as a cat carrier with the door removed or a box on its side, will help the cat feel safe—especially important for shy cats.
- Provide safe, disposable or easily sanitized toys to entertain the cat when you are not with him.
- Finally, some type of scratching post or cardboard scratch pad will be necessary.

Daily Care

Health Monitoring

It is important to monitor your cat's health daily. If you notice anything wrong with your cat's health, please contact PAWS Humane immediately.

Feeding

Please feed your foster cat only what PAWS Humane suggests. The cat will generally be given one brand of food once they come to the adoption floor. Some human foods can be toxic to cats, so it is best to not experiment.

Daily Routine

Feeding

- Cats should be fed at least 2 times a day
- Pick up dirty food dishes
- Monitor appetites

Cleaning Schedule

- Scoop litterbox at least 2 times a day
- Monitor diarrhea
- Clay litter should be dumped and changed every other day

Playtime & Mealtime Stimulation

- Your cat should receive one to two play sessions daily with interactive toys (or more!)
- Remember to discourage play with hands
- Interactive toys should not be left unattended
- Safe solo toys such as ping pong balls should be left out at all times
- Change up the environment in small ways
(add cardboard boxes or move things around in room)

Socialization

- Socialize your cat a minimum of two to three 20 minute visits daily
- Undersocialized cats, 3 to 4, 20 minute visits daily
- Encourage affectionate behavior
- Your ccat should meet new people a few times weekly if possible

Handling & Gentling

- Medium or long-haired cats especially may benefit from daily exposure to brushing
- Exposure to being picked up

General Criteria for Emergencies

Emergency situations include:

- Continuous weight loss
- Continuous diarrhea
- Continuous vomiting
- Bleeding of any kind—nose, urine, stool
- Any trauma—hit by a car, dropped, limp, stepped on, unconscious
- Difficulty in breathing/blocked airway
- Lethargy
- Dehydration
- If the animal has vomiting or diarrhea, but is still active, eating and drinking, it can probably wait until the next day to receive help. **However, if the animal is lethargic and shows no interest in food or water, it is wise to seek emergency help at the time.**
- Coughing or sneezing should pose no immediate problems unless accompanied by blood or symptoms such as lethargy or dehydration.



If an emergency occurs outside of PAWS Humane hours and it needs to be immediately addressed, please contact:

The Animal Emergency
Center
(706) 324 - 6659

You will be reimbursed up to \$200 of the cost. Please contact the PAWS Humane Vet Clinic the following day.

Establishing Good Household Behaviors

Litterbox—Plastic boxes are usually the most cost effective and easy to use because they can be sanitized often. Some foster parents prefer disposable litter boxes.

Litter boxes should be kept clean all the time. Scooping the box twice a day is a good guideline, unless the cat is sick, in which case, you may need to clean it more often. If you're using a plastic litterbox, make sure to dump all litter out regularly, and wash with hot soapy water. A clean box will encourage good litter box habits and will limit the cat's exposure to germs.

Even though most adult cats know how to use the litterbox, your cat still may experience some litterbox problems. This can be from a medical concern (usually diarrhea) or due to the fact that the cat still adjusting to the household.

A few tips:

- Show your foster cat where the litterbox is and keep it in the same spot. If it is moved, show him the new location of the box.
- Clean all “accidents” well with enzyme cleaners (such as Nature's Miracle). Never yell at or otherwise punish a cat for urinating or defecating outside the box.
- One or two litterbox misses are acceptable, but if a cat is having repeated problems with litterbox usage, please contact the shelter.

Discipline—The best way to handle most undesirable feline behaviors is to prevent them.

In most cases, it's better to distract a cat from an inappropriate behavior and direct them to something more positive. Distracting a cat beforehand is even better because it lowers the risk that a cat may view the distraction as a reward. You can do this by getting their attention with noise, toys or treats.

Another way to address inappropriate behavior is to modify the environment. This may involve such things as putting plants out of reach, or using double sided tape on off-limit surfaces.

Any type of physical punishment, such as nose tapping or scruffing, is recognized by leading cat behavior experts as detrimental and counterproductive. Additionally, water bottles should not be used to correct cat misbehaviors.

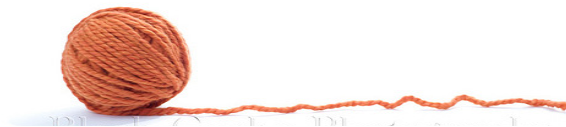
Playtime—Playtime is a very important part of cat development. Cats will need toys to play with so that they can occupy their minds as well as get exercise.

There are 2 types of toys you should provide for the cats: solo toys and interactive toys

- Solo toys should be easy to clean and impossible for the cats to consume. Ping-pong balls, toilet paper tubes and wine corks are great examples of solo toys. These toys can be left for the cat to play with even when you aren't there.
- On the contrary, interactive toys should never be left with an unsupervised cat. These toys are great for encouraging the cats to exercise and to enact their natural hunting skills, but if you aren't looking, a cat could eat parts of the toy or get tangled in them. Also, cats have been known to chew off pieces of rubber and get them caught in their intestines, so just watch them closely! Interactive toys include anything with string or parts (like buttons or feathers) that can come off and cause harm to the cat.

Always have toys available to play with when you are visiting with your cats. Discourage cats from biting hands or feet and/or using body parts as toys.

Claw Sharpening—Encourage good habits by providing your cat with a cardboard scratching pad. Encourage use of it by dragging toys across or up the post. Never “make” the cat scratch by holding their paws and doing the scratching motion. Cardboard scratchers should be changed in between your foster cats (there may be some more permanent options as long as you are able to sanitize them between litters). Discourage cats from scratching furniture by distracting them when they start, or covering the surface with a loose cloth or double sided tape (“Sticky Paws”).



Socializing & Handling

New People—Many times foster cats only get exposed to their foster parents, but ideally, they would be exposed to various people, especially since most foster cats are in foster care for socialization reasons. Control the interactions so that it is a good experience for the cat- make sure the petting is gentle, and that people use interactive toys for play.

Interacting with respectful children is also helpful. Children should always be supervised when handling your cat and should be old enough to understand how to handle cats gently. If a cat seems hesitant or fearful, it's best and safest to give the child other ways to interact with the cat that are positive and safe, such as using interactive toys or hand-feeding treats.

New Environments—If your cat is comfortable in the safe room and you have the ability to cat-proof other spaces in your home, you can expose them to other rooms. Allowing the cat to explore new spaces while having treats and interactive play available will create a positive association with these novel experiences. Keep the sessions brief and return the cat to the safe room if they seem overwhelmed. A large dog crate or playpen is another way to expose the cat to other rooms in a safe manner, keeping the cat's stress level in mind.

New Noises—It is beneficial to expose your cat to normal household noises as much as possible. The trick is to do it without traumatizing them. For example, start out with the TV or radio at a very low volume; if the cat is fine with that, increase it gradually over a period of days to a normal volume. You can run the vacuum briefly on the other side of the CLOSED door to the safe room and, once the cat is acclimated to that over time, crack the door open. This process can be repeated with other household appliances.

Grooming & Body Handling—It is important to get undersocialized cats used to being handled. This will help them be less defensive about different areas of their body being touched in the future and also helps prepare them for vet visits and general grooming in the future. Typically sensitive areas include toes/paws, chest and belly, and the mouth. Touch these areas in a gentle way, as part of your petting sessions.

Being picked up—Make sure your cat is picked up a few times a day or more. Try to make it a positive experience by petting the cat and encouraging purring and affectionate behavior when holding him. If your foster cat is defensive/aggressive when being held, do not force it. Only handle the cat as it is comfortable while still encouraging affectionate behavior.

Thank you for fostering
with PAWS Humane and
choosing to save lives!



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