



info@forrescue.net

Cat Foster Basics

Thank you for offering to foster with Friends of Rescue! The following document is a brief overview of how fostering works within our organization. First and foremost, you are not going at this alone. You have a Foster Liaison who is your mentor, your supervisor, your shoulder to cry on and your rock during this entire process.

Selecting Your Foster

The fostering family will choose their animal with the help of their Foster Liaison. FOR has an ongoing waitlist of animals that need out of our local shelters NOW! Our priority is these animals that are in the most urgent need because of their health and/or age, so those in high rate kill shelters are at the top of our list.

As a foster family, you need to consider the age of the cat you want to foster. This includes factors such as the age of any children in the home, your personal animals, the activity level of your household, the number of hours the cat will be home alone, etc. Choosing a foster that matches your lifestyle will make it easier for you both! Bottle fed kittens require around the clock care, whereas weaned kittens may be left alone some. Teen and adult cats require minimal care, but should be well socialized with humans in order to have a successful adoption, so being home alone for over 10-12 hours a day may not always be best for the animal.

When you've decided the age of the cat you should foster, you can choose from our waitlist or visit the local shelter with your Foster Liaison. Together, we'll make a decision. All cats coming into the FOR program must have a stable temperament and be adoptable and ***MUST be approved by the Friends of Rescue Board.***

All kittens must be tested for FELV/FIV, as early as possible. This test is most accurate at the age of six weeks. If you select a kitten that is less than six weeks old, it is important that you have the means to keep this kitten separate from any of your own cats, so if necessary, a large crate may be used, which is available in the storage shed, although we prefer you have a safe, quiet room available for fostering. Before the kitten leaves the shelter, we will ask for sponsorship from our supporters so that the first set of tests and vet visits are covered for the animal.

We ask that you commit to the foster animal you select. If you find fostering is not for you, then you never have to foster ever again. But please, ***please commit to seeing the one you chose through to adoption.*** It puts stress on the group to try and absorb an animal back into another foster home.

Bringing Your Foster Home

Before going home, give some thought to your home layout and have a room ready. We ask our foster homes to provide a quiet place for cats to settle in and a playroom for small kittens. We suggest that foster cats are dewormed and parasite free before sharing a litter pan with your personal cats. Also, introducing them right away may be very stressful for everyone involved. You need to allow the new foster to acclimate to one room with their litter, food, and water readily available, as well as a soft and warm spot to sleep and some toys. This room also gives your own animals the opportunity to smell the newcomer and vice versa. However, even if you do not have any other pets, the first thing to do is introduce the new cat to where the litter box will remain. Set them down in it and let them get out of it in their own time. As long as they know where it is, and it is cleaned regularly, there shouldn't be any "bathroom issues". Cats want to use a litter box and are very easily trained. And you will soon learn that discussing poop with your Foster Liaison will become part of your new life!

It's very possible that your foster will have one or more of the common ailments that result from neglect and their time in the shelter – intestinal upset, skin issues, or upper respiratory infections (which are contagious to your own cats – another reason isolation is best for the first few days.) Your Foster Liaison has dealt with many of these and can assist you. Our board has over twenty years of foster experience and is glad to assist with any questions or concerns you might have along the way. Once you get the hang of it, you'll know what to expect and it won't be worrisome. Often, the foster will just need a little time, good nutrition, and rest. Your Foster Liaison can help you assess the condition of your foster before requesting a vet visit.

It's important that you get to KNOW your foster. Be patient and spend time with them. Learn the personality, their likes and dislikes. This will allow for a better bio at adoption time and provide their potential adopter with the best information.

Vet Appointments

All medical treatments are covered by FOR and are completed by one of our approved vets. If you and your Foster Liaison decide the cat needs vet care, your liaison will schedule the appointments for you. It is important that you DO NOT contact the vet on your own. We have a network of veterinarians who provide us with discounted rates - as long as your Foster Liaison is making the appointment - and since our vets are generous with their discounted rates to help us save more animals, we respect their time and cannot have multiple volunteers contacting them. Your liaison can and will contact them with any concerns you may have, to set up appointments and change

appointments. Please be timely for your scheduled appointment as we are very respectful of our vets' time and do not want to be late for appointments!

As previously mentioned, all cats are FELV/FIV tested, but additional visits are scheduled for sterilization, micro-chipping, and vaccinations. They will be treated for all known symptoms of neglect, and examined by a licensed veterinarian. Your foster liaison will provide you with de-worming medicine to administer to your foster.

Petfinder and Adopt-a-Pet

Because we choose to not hold weekly adoption events, these listing services are VERY important to us. We need excellent photos, video, and a well written bio for your foster cat. Your Foster Liaison will assist you. When we do host an event, it is absolutely voluntary and not required for you to attend. However, there is some success associated with these events and we encourage you to attend, not only for your foster to gain exposure, but for you to meet other foster parents in our program and feel like part of our family.

Inquiries and Applications

Inquiries about your animal will be handled by your Foster Liaison with your support. If you meet someone who is interested in your foster, ask them to email info@forrescue.net. It is important that you first thank them for asking about your foster then refer them to our application (<http://forrescue.net/cat-application/>). You can also explain that our fee is \$75 for kittens under 6 months old and \$25 for kittens over 6 months of age. When discussing the adoption fee, always include the list of services provided to each cat so they'll understand how minimal our fee actually is.

When an application is received, the vet listed on the application needs to be called to verify that the potential adopter has pets that are up to date on vaccines (especially rabies) and are altered. You want to make sure that if their own pet is ill, they take care of it, so you know they will take care of your foster when it's adopted. You will also communicate with the potential adopter via phone and/or email. You want to discuss why they are deciding to adopt now, if they've had animals before and what happened to them, pretty much verifying everything they wrote on their application. If all agree that it's a possible home match, only then is a visit scheduled.

If the vet staff can't give us complete information or there is a discrepancy, we ALWAYS give the applicant an opportunity to clarify. There may be an error or they may be willing to correct the problem (update their animal's vaccines, for instance). When they are kind enough to complete an application and inquire about a homeless animal, we owe it to them to give them every opportunity to explain their personal situation.

Options for scheduling a visit include meeting at the adopters home (a good way to make sure you have a good feeling about the environment), meet at your home, or use the FOR office on FOR Friday's. If you chose to meet at another location due to

distance traveled, DO NOT ever meet in a parking lot or remove a pet from a carrier in an open area. And although the visitation process is adaptable, your Foster Liaison will lead you through it. For long distance adopters, we require a few photos of their home - casual shots to reassure us that they can offer a safe home. Google Earth their address as well.

The adoption is completed once a contract is signed and the adoption fee is paid. Checks are made payable to FOR, or payments can be made using PayPal with address info@forrescue.net. Payments and contracts are turned into to you Foster Liaison as soon as possible.

Above all, we want you to feel as sure as possible that the adopter will be a forever home. As it states in the contract repeatedly, the cat *must be returned to us* if it doesn't work out at *any time*. No expiration. We want your foster pet to be safe forever – whether with them or back in our hands.

After a few days, you will need to check back in with the adopter to be sure all is going well. You may need to help them understand that every animal goes through an adjustment period. Most additions to the family take a few weeks to feel totally comfortable in their new home. Truly, most homeless animals have been through many home and shelter changes in the weeks before being adopted – and they may be very stressed. We coach adopters to be patient and understanding and help them problem solve through the initial period.

In closing, THANK YOU for considering the Friends of Rescue program. As a foster parent, you'll be supported by a Foster Liaison (your main point of contact) as well as the entire FOR Cat Team. It's important to remember that every homeless cat has different needs and every situation is different! We ask that you be prepared to commit to your foster until they find an adoptive home and assure you that you will be totally supported by other FOR volunteers and FOR funds.