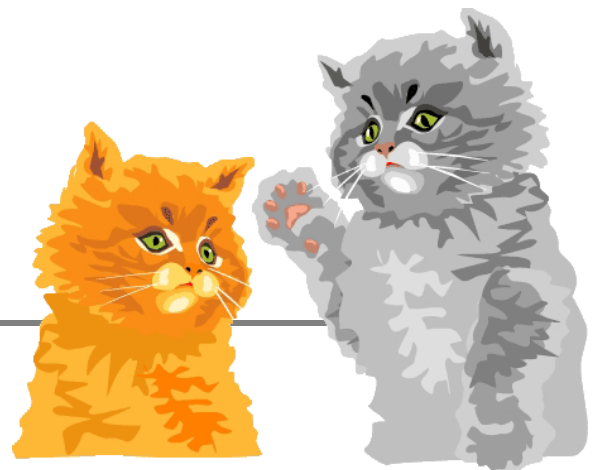


# Independence Animal Shelter

# Cat Foster Manual

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## Introductory MESSAGE

Thank you for your interest in the Independence Animal Shelter's Cat Foster Program! This manual is a guide the help you get started as a cat foster home. Foster homes help us to save many lives of animals each year. This manual is intended to help guide foster parents through their fostering experience. We understand that you will have many questions, regardless of whether you are a new or long time foster home volunteer. Please do not hesitate to call or email us with any questions and concerns you may have. Foster Parent Orientations are held on an as needed basis and Cats 101 is required before you may foster a cat/kitten. Foster volunteers must complete Cats 102 within 60 days of their orientation.

### Important Information:

- Foster cats are to be kept strictly indoors and all efforts should be made to prevent escape. Cats will push out screens, jump off balconies and high fences and dart out open doors and windows.
- All veterinary visits **MUST BE APPROVED BY THE SHELTER MANAGER OR HER DESIGNEE**. There are no exceptions to this rule and any vet visit made without prior approval will be the financial responsibility of the foster home volunteer.
- If you have an interested adopter for your foster animal or if you are interested in adopting, please know that all foster animals **MUST ALWAYS** go through the usual adoption procedure at the shelter and all animals will be spayed or neutered *before* being sent home with the new adopter.

*Most foster cases are routine where foster homes will provide care and TLC to kittens (with or without a mother) that are too young for immediate adoption from the shelter. Occasionally, there may be a sick cat, newborn kittens, or an adult cat in need of foster care. Foster homes will always be made aware of any special circumstances prior to committing to foster.*

### *Foster Home Approval Process:*

*Read Foster Care Manual  
Complete Feline Foster Program Application  
Meet with a Staff Member for an Interview  
Schedule Required Foster Care Orientation  
Complete Feline Foster Program Addendum  
Attend Cats 101 Class  
Foster and Save Lives!*

*There occasionally may be required and optional foster home training classes and foster animal socialization and training classes.*

## TIPS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

1. Always get pre-authorization before going to the vet and use a vet from our list.
2. Always notify the Shelter Manager or her designee when a cat dies or escapes, when you have cats ready to return to the shelter for adoption and of any other important information.
3. Provide regular updates on your foster animals. Be sure that your foster cat(s) receive the required vaccinations and dewormings as scheduled on the Foster Health Record.
4. Ask for advice if your cat/kitten has stopped eating.
5. Kittens can die quickly without proper care when they become sick, so ask notify the shelter immediately if their behavior changes.
6. Check your sick cat/kitten for hydration - they should be drinking water, using the litter box, have loose elastic skin tone, and a moist mouth.
7. Never use clumping litter for kittens under six months of age.
8. Wash your hands and change your shirt after handling sick animals to prevent spread of illness.
9. Never let your foster cats outside; guard against escapes.
10. All cats must be returned to the shelter and go through the regular adoption process.

## SICK CAT CARE

Due to limited observation time at the shelter, the health of any cat or kitten can't always be accurately assessed. Any time you think your cat might need immediate veterinary care, contact the Shelter Manager or her designee for guidance and approval to take the animal to the vet if necessary.

### Upper respiratory infections (URI's)

An upper respiratory infection is similar to a human cold. If you believe your foster cat is sick, contact the shelter to find out if medications need to be started. A cat with an upper respiratory infection is often congested and cannot smell its food and won't eat. Tempting your foster cat with smelly canned cat food, Hills A/D food, baby food (no onions in ingredients, please), chicken broth, or even tuna in water (last resort as too much can cause diarrhea) will often get them eating again. You may have to coax them to eat by using your fingers, and even smearing it on their lips or nose. If your foster cat has not eaten for more than two days, force-feeding with a syringe may be necessary. Steam from a vaporizer or hot shower may help to clear the nasal passages. Keep the nose and eyes clear of discharge with warm, damp cotton balls. The shelter has saline solution available to use a nose drops to lessen the nasal congestion. A cat that doesn't feel well appreciates some extra petting and quiet time in your lap.

### Dehydration is a serious concern.

Watch carefully to see if your foster cat is drinking water. You may have to carefully watch the level of the water bowl, and keep track of litter box activity. You can check for dehydration by pulling the skin up just a little lower than the back of the neck. It should be taught and snap back down. If it stands up or takes some time to go back down, the cat may be dehydrated. A lethargic cat is often dehydrated. If your cat is dehydrated, subcutaneous fluids may be necessary. You can be trained to administer fluids or you can transport the foster animals to the shelter for fluids to be administered by staff. Please contact us immediately if you think your cat is dehydrated. Temperatures over 103 degrees should be reported. If nasal discharge is thick and yellowish-green (vs. clear and watery), this may be an indication that a bacterial infection has set in, and antibiotics may be necessary.

### **Other things to watch for and to report to shelter staff:**

- Loose stool or diarrhea - usually caused by parasites that may or may not be visible in feces. The cat may need to be dewormed again.
- Continual vomiting or occasional vomiting that lasts more than a day or two.
- Extreme lethargy for more than 2-3 days.
- Eyes that are red and inflamed or have an extreme amount of discharge and swelling, vs. small amounts of discharge, usually in both eyes that is common with a URI. This can often be treated with eye ointment picked up at the shelter.
- Any crumbly wax-like substance in the ears (possible ear mites).
- Fleas or flea dirt (black pepper-like substance in the fur).
- 

### **Veterinary Visits:**

- **All vet visits must be pre-authorized by the Shelter Manager or her designee unless you are willing to pay for the visit yourself. Foster animals must be taken to an approved veterinarian.**
- Always use the Animal's ID Number at vet visits.
- All **authorized** vet visits are paid by the IAS and will be billed directly to the shelter so there are no out-of-pocket vet costs to a foster parent. We must be very cautious when deciding whether or not a foster animal needs to go to the vet as office visits add up very quickly. Each case will be evaluated individually by what is best for the animal as well as what is economically feasible for the shelter. If you take your foster cat/kitten to the vet and pay for it yourself, you will **not** be reimbursed.
- Please review the list of medications and supplies available at IAS below. Please do NOT accept these items from a vet to help save money.

## **MEDICATIONS AND SUPPLIES AVAILABLE AT IAS**

To help save money, please do *not* accept these items from veterinary clinics; come to the shelter to pick up items as needed/directed:

- Flea Medications
- Droncit (for tapeworm)
- FVRCP vaccination or boosters
- Ear Mite medications
- Pyrantal (routine wormer, mainly for roundworms)  
Panacur
- Teramycin antibiotic eye ointment
- Triple antibiotic eye ointment
- Fluid bags (Lactated Ringers)
- Tubing, syringes and needles for fluid administration

## **AUTHORIZING VET VISITS**

The following information may be useful in helping you decide what warrants a veterinary visit. If the vet visit needs to happen ASAP, it will most likely be obvious. All vet visits must be authorized by the Shelter Manager or her designee. Important Note: Always use the animal ID numbers for vet visits.

Some foster parents prefer to pay for vet visits themselves so they can go to a vet that is convenient for them. This is fine as long as it is realized and agreed they won't be reimbursed and are doing it as a donation. Receipts can be kept for charitable donation/tax write-off purposes.

### **Authorization to foster parents for vet visits may be given for any of the following:**

**Cats:** fever (103.5+), respiratory distress (choking, wheezing, open-mouth breathing, shortness of breath), green secretions and/or bad odor from nasal area, not eating or drinking for more than a few days, extreme lethargy for more than a day or two, obvious distress, pain, or pronounced behavior changes.

Remember, a dehydrated cat may simply need fluids and after administering fluids, the cat may not even need to see a vet. Some kittens noticeably rebound after a "crash" since all they needed was fluids or calories.

#### **Kittens:**

- If you notice any of the above cat symptoms in a young kittens, help should be sought much sooner, preferably the same day. In addition, kittens less than 2-3 weeks that are open mouth breathing, not nursing or taking the bottle, and crawling away from the litter/mother are bad, often hopeless signs. Vet care will usually not help, may prolong the kitten's suffering and will use money that might be better spent on more hopeful cases. Euthanasia is often the most humane option. Please call the shelter for guidance.
- If kittens are eating and active, then there is no urgency in seeking a vet visit.
- If one or two kittens in a litter appear to be sick and you are directed to take them to the vet or bring them into the shelter, it is recommended that you take the entire litter to be examined.

#### **Diarrhea**

- For adults, observe for a couple days to see if it resolves. Watch for signs of dehydration/lethargy and administer fluids as necessary.
- For kittens, if energy lags, watch for dehydration and contact the shelter.

If symptoms are unchanged after completing a course of antibiotics, contact the Shelter Manger or her designee.

#### **Taking Care**

Most vet visits are for the purpose of seeking *antibiotic* for complicated or unresolved URI. It is not likely that x-rays, dental work, surgeries, expensive medical treatments or treatment for a chronic condition will be authorized.

#### **Euthanasia**

Any animal that requires euthanasia will need to be returned to the shelter unless otherwise directed. Please contact the Shelter Manger or her designee for guidance in making this decision.

#### **Allergies**

Cats, like people, can have allergic reactions to medication. Most medications are not given first at the vet office. If some sudden, adverse reaction happens after giving a new medication, such as wheezing or eyes being more inflamed, do not give any more medication and call the Shelter Manger or her designee.

## **VACCINATION AND WORMING GUIDELINES**

**The IAS administers the FVRCP vaccine to cats and kittens and also deworms them upon intake if they are old enough.**

- "FVR" stands for feline viral rhinotracheitis, which is a disease that causes sneezing and discharge from eyes and nose (the URI, or upper respiratory infection, symptoms often seen).
- "C" stands for calici virus, which causes oral ulcers and symptoms similar to, but less profuse, than FVR. Calici virus sometimes progresses to a type of pneumonia.

- "P" stands for panleukopenia (aka "feline distemper"); the usually deadly disease that attacks rapidly dividing cells and causes loss of appetite, bloody diarrhea, and/or vomiting, extreme lethargy, and collapse.
- Foster Animals may require additional vaccinations and deworming. A health record will be sent with each foster animal outlining dates that foster animals should return to the shelter for routine care.

### **Kittens should be started on vaccines at six weeks of age.**

By this age the maternal antibodies (from the mother's colostrum, or antibody-rich first milk) are beginning to fade. *Boosters need to be given every 3 weeks until 16 weeks of age.* The vaccine will not trigger the desired response until the maternal antibodies have worn off and it is impossible to tell when exactly that happens.

"Between 6 and 16 weeks of age, a window of risk exists lasting one to two weeks during which a kitten's passive antibodies [maternal antibodies] are no longer fully protective, but may yet interfere with the vaccination process. For this reason, kittens should not be vaccinated before six weeks of age, and should not complete the vaccination series before 12-16 weeks of age."

### **SPAY/NEUTER SURGERY INSTRUCTIONS**

Foster parents may be instructed to take their foster cats to the vet to be altered prior to returning them to the shelter for adoption. You will be given paperwork to take to the vet with the animals.

Please follow the instruction below:

- Give the animal no food or water after midnight.
- Transport the animal to the assigned vet and drop off between 7 AM – 8 AM for surgery.
- Give the vet staff the paperwork provided by the shelter with the animals' ID numbers
- Call the vet between 2:00-3:00pm to check on the recovery of your animal and to find out when the animals can be picked up.
- Take the animals home to recover and return them to the shelter for adoption as directed by shelter staff.
- Nursing mothers should be 3-4 weeks past weaning, it is best to allow nursing to at least 8

## Contact Information for Independence Animal Shelter Foster Home Parents

Aimee Wells.....816-325-7211  
Jennifer Polston.....816-325-7211  
Johnny Osborn.....816-325-7206  
Carol Leibold.....816-325-7206

### Emergency Contact Information

Aimee Wells.....816-935-5081  
Jennifer Polston.....816-985-8050

Shelter Line.....816-325-7207