

# KITTEN FOSTER CARE GUIDELINES

## FEEDING

- We recommend that kittens have access to dry food throughout the day.
- We also feed kittens wet food twice a day, unless otherwise instructed.

## CLEANING

- If your foster kitten becomes dirty, you are welcome to give him or her a bath.
- Wash him or her with a warm washcloth and regular, unscented Dawn dish soap.
- Make sure to dry the kittens completely, as they become cold very quickly.
- Do not wash kittens in flea shampoo or administer any flea medication. If you observe fleas on your kitten, please notify the foster care coordinator.

## PLAY

- Foster pets should be kept separate from your own animals, unless we provide permission.
- Most kittens in foster care have not received a full series of vaccination boosters due to their young ages. If your foster kitten is not fully vaccinated, do not let him or her meet any other animals. This is for the safety and health of the kitten as well as your own pets.
- There should be no unsupervised alone time between foster pets and owned animals.
- If we have indicated that your kitten can play with your own pets, then please make sure the play area is set up in a way that allows you to easily separate the animals in case they have a disagreement.

## SOCIALIZATION

- Some kittens are scared and need time to adjust to their new surroundings, and it is not unusual for them to hide during the adjustment period. Some become overwhelmed; they may hiss or puff up when approached until they are comfortable in the new surroundings.
- The time it takes a pet to adjust differs depending upon the pet. It could take anywhere from one day to several weeks for a kitten to feel comfortable in new surroundings.
- Let the kitten come to you because once he or she is comfortable, he or she will come out of hiding!
- Make sure the kitten has easy access to food and a litter box (even if this means feeding under the bed initially).
- Use wet food (microwave for two to five seconds because warm food is more tempting), baby food (chicken, or turkey) or toss treats to entice a kitten out of hiding.
- Do not try and pull the kitten out from his or her hiding place; this will upset the kitten and could result in the kitten defending himself or herself by scratching or biting.
- If the kitten twitches his or her tail, flattens his or her ears, or swats at you, leave him or her alone. Give the kitten time and generous space to calm down. Try again later.
- Occasionally kittens may use their teeth or claws inappropriately during play. When this happens, gently tell the kitten “too bad” and gently place him or her on the floor and walk away.
- Be calm and quiet when handling a fearful kitten. Try not to overwhelm him or her with attention; several short positive interactions throughout the day will be the most beneficial for the kitten.

## HOUSING

- Foster kittens should be limited to one or only a few rooms of your house. They can be free in these rooms while supervised.
- When unsupervised or overnight, kittens need to stay in a warm, safe area. We can provide a dog crate if a size-appropriate area (such as a spare bathroom) isn't available.
- Keep your foster pet in a room that can be easily cleaned, sanitized and/or disinfected after the foster period is over, in case of illness or parasites.
- Clean and comfortable bedding should be kept where the kitten sleeps.
- Inappropriate housing includes: anywhere outdoors, a shed, a non-climate controlled garage, a screened-in porch, or a non-child proofed room.

## SIGNS OF ILLNESS

- Loss of appetite
- Lack of energy
- Blood in stool
- Vomiting, Diarrhea
- Sneezing
- Nasal or eye discharge
- Limping or favoring a limb
- Pale gums
- Fever

This handout provides recommended care guidelines for foster kittens. These guidelines are subject to change based upon specific information regarding the individual animal you are fostering. If you have any questions concerning your foster animal, contact the foster care coordinator at 804-521-1313 or [fostercare@richmondspca.org](mailto:fostercare@richmondspca.org). Thank you for your love of animals and for helping us save lives! You're a hero.