

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.
- The foster team will discuss each pet's individual diet with you, and we will provide you with food.
- While in our care, animals are fed appropriate food for their age, size and health.
- Pets may be on a special diet which will be provided by the foster team.

CLEANING

- If your foster kitten becomes dirty, they may be bathed.
- 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. Give them access to a heating pad or snuggle safe afterwards.
- **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 AND PET INTRODUCTIONS

- 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.
- Avoid using your hands to play with your foster pet. Always use toys to promote positive play habits.

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.
- Building a trusting relationship with a scared kitten begins with patience.
- 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, give the kitten an appropriate toy to play with, and then give the kitten time alone to decompress.
- 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.

MEDICAL CARE

- Your kitten may require medication or a specific treatment plan while in your care. It is essential that all medications are administered as directed and treatment instructions are followed.
- If you encounter any difficulty giving medication to your foster pet, please notify the foster team as soon as possible so we can provide guidance or alternative solutions.
- If your foster pet shows signs of illness while in your care, **do not** take them to your personal veterinarian. All medical care must be coordinated through the Richmond SPCA.
- During your foster pet's pick-up appointment, the foster team will review how to distinguish between general sickness and emergencies, as well as the appropriate steps to take in each situation.

HOUSING

- Foster kittens should be limited to one room of your home such as a spare room, office, mudroom, or bathroom.
- 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.
- Make sure that your foster kitten does not have access to getting underneath heavy furniture or appliances.
- If housed in a bathroom, keep the toilet lid down.
- Inappropriate housing includes: anywhere outdoors, a shed, a non-climate controlled garage, a screened-in porch, or a non-child proofed room.
- Kittens will need to remain indoors only.

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 team at 804-521-1313 or fostercare@richmondspca.org. Thank you for your love of animals and for helping us save lives! You're a hero.