

FELINE FOSTER MANUAL

updated 10/2021

THANK YOU!

SFC Virginia thanks you for opening your home and your heart to a kitten or cat in need. Whether you foster a kitten who needs some time to grow, or an adult cat who needs a place to hang until she finds her forever home, you make it possible for us to provide the very best care possible for all our residents at SFC. Fostering is messy, rewarding, stinky, adorable, and sometimes a heartbreaking job. We certainly could not provide the level of care we do without valuable foster homes like yours.

**From all our cats and kittens:
Thank You!**



GREETINGS, FOSTER PARENTS!

Thank you for participating in the SFC Virginia Foster Care Program. We appreciate your willingness to open your heart and home to homeless mother cats and kittens. Your dedication allows our organization to rescue and raise cats and kittens from underserved shelters across the state.

The guiding mission of the Kitten Foster Care Program is to give mother cats and kittens the individualized care, and socialization they need to prepare them for adoption. Information gathered during the foster process helps us place cats and kittens in homes and with families who can best meet their needs. Specific goals of the program include:

- Providing a safe, healthy, nurturing environment for mother cats to raise their kittens.
- Socializing shy or timid cats and kittens.
- Giving our adult cats a comfortable place to stay until they are adopted.
- Allowing mother cats to recover in a relaxing, uplifting environment.

This manual outlines the responsibilities and expectations as an SFC foster caregiver. This should serve as a resource throughout your foster care experience.

Before taking your assigned foster cats/kittens home, please:

- Review the "Overview of Key Responsibilities and Policies."
- Let our Foster Manager know if your address or phone number has changed since submitting your initial application.
- Read and agree to the foster care agreement – found at the end of the online foster application and this packet. We will also ask you to physically sign a contract each time you take a new foster home.
- Save the foster program phone numbers into your phone:

Ashley Ogle (Foster Manager) at 540-376-5558

Ryan Barker (Executive Director) at 913-530-0487

Stephanie Hubbart (Kitten Medical Foster) at 540-424-2923

Join our SFC Fosters Facebook Group!
Search "TEAM SQUISHYFACE" on
Facebook or scan the QR code with
your smartphone's camera



OVERVIEW OF KEY RESPONSIBILITIES & POLICIES

To ensure a successful foster program, we ask that you follow our general policy guidelines to ensure that each foster home is responsibly providing a wonderful home for these kittens to grow up and explore the world. To this effect, you will want to keep in mind the following:

- Keep cats/kittens inside at all times.
- Cats/kittens should always be in a carrier when traveling outside of the house.
- Keep doors/windows closed at all times, unless covered with a screen that is securely in place. The window should only be open no more than 1 inch with a support in place so the window cannot be opened any further. A frightened cat/kitten can escape through the tiniest holes!
- If a cat/kitten does manage to get outside, you must attempt to get the cat/kitten back inside immediately. If you delay, the cat/kitten may get frightened and run away, decreasing your chances of getting the kitty back inside. Do not chase the cat/kitten as this may make him/her run further away from your home. The easiest way to get your mother cat back to your home is to put her kittens in a secure carrier by the door or window that she went out. The kittens should cry for her, and her maternal instincts will kick in, bringing her back to them. Often mother cats will return to the house or foster room to be with the kittens. If this is not working, you can also place her litter box outside your door so she will smell where she needs to come back in. Most mother cats were strays and are familiar with being outside, but that does not mean that they all have 'street smarts'. Some will hide and be scared as soon as they get out. Look under bushes, decks, foundations, etc. If the mother cat is injured, she may be silently hiding as to not attract predators. If you cannot get the kitty yourself within 1-2 hours, call the Foster Manager to determine a strategy to recapture the kitty. SFC has humane traps available for this purpose and works with a local trapper when needed.
- When fostering a mother cat, it is important to keep her and her kittens separated from your other animals for at least a week to ensure they stay healthy. A seemingly fine cat can become ill due to stress from a move.
- Foster kittens must not be introduced to your resident cats unless your resident cats are indoor only cats. It is not our standard procedure to test all kittens for under 6 months for FeLV/FIV, and adult cats are tested at the time of alter. Please weigh this risk before allowing your resident cats to interact. Kittens should be vaccinated for more than five days before they can meet any of your household pets, and these visits should be limited and supervised. Food dishes, water bowls, and litter boxes cannot be shared. They must be picked up so they do not use each other's boxes or bowls, or the cats should meet in an area where litter boxes and food/water dishes are not present.

KITTY PROOFING YOUR FOSTER ROOM AND HOME

Cat-proofing and especially kitten-proofing your home is much the same as child-proofing it! That means hiding or removing cords, removing small items that kittens can choke on, etc. Bathrooms make ideal foster rooms or an unused bedroom.

To begin, your foster room should be COMPLETELY cleared out and only consist of basic cat necessities (i.e. bed, food, water, litterbox, and toys). This means removing all toiletries and decorative items from the bathtub, counters, or any other surface the kittens can access. Kittens love to play with anything they can get their paws on and could be injured by heavy or sharp items.

Make sure to put your foster supplies in a separate room. Please do not leave it out for your foster kittens to get into as the items inside could be dangerous. Once your kittens are vaccinated and clear of any illness you may decide to have them visit other areas of your home or interact with your resident pets. These visits should be short and well supervised. DO NOT give the kittens free reign of your home unsupervised. They can get injured, lost, have accidents outside the litter box, etc.

Before introducing your kittens to other areas of your home, please do a thorough walkthrough, and keep the following concerns in mind:

- Kittens might chew on electrical cords resulting in burns or even death. Protect your electrical cords with plastic tubing or by spraying them with "Bitter Apple", a bitter tasting deterrent that you can find at pet stores.
- Kittens can choke on small items. Keep rubber bands, paper clips, needles - anything kitty can swallow - out of reach.
- Keep plastic bags, which can cause suffocation, out of reach.
- Secure any heavy items that could fall and potentially injure them.
- Refrain from using any hot appliances while the kittens are out. Kittens are naturally curious and could get burned.
- Review the toxic houseplant list at www.aspc.org/pet-care/poison-control/plants and remove all poisonous plants from your household. Or, to deter kitties from munching on poisonous and non-poisonous plants, you should spray the plants with a product sold at pet stores for this very purpose.

HOUSING + LITTERBOX

You must provide a clean, safe environment for your foster cats/kittens. SFC recommends that you ALWAYS start your kittens in a non-carpeted, easily sanitized room in the unlikely event that your kittens have a contagious illness that cannot be removed from carpeting. If you end up with a severe contagious illness in a carpeted room, you will either have to remove the carpeting or not use that room for fostering again. SFC recommends a bathroom or an unused bedroom as your foster room.

When fostering a pregnant cat or young kittens, keep these tips in mind:

- Consider protecting your furniture and carpet with sheets or plastic table covers. Kittens can be messy, especially when they're learning to use the litter box! Make sure sheets/covers are securely tacked down so kittens can't get under them.
- Until the age of 3-4 weeks, the mother cat will clean the genitals of her young to stimulate the bowels and bladder. As the kittens start showing interest in the litter box, provide them with an easily accessible box - such as a shoebox lid, cookie sheet, or cake pan. Once the kittens are more mobile, you should give them a larger litter box.

Kittens should be introduced to the litter box when they start eating solid foods. They need a box with shallow sides: a cookie sheet or cake pan is perfect. After they have eaten, place them in the box. They will learn how to use the litter box very quickly. Sometimes they learn how to use the litter box without any help from us, if they have been watching Mom use her box.

Observe how the kittens watch all of Mom's actions. They find her quite fascinating and are learning how to act like cats by observing her.

Orphans may need a little more assistance from you. Simply pick them up and place them on the litter after each meal. When you bring home your foster kittens, show them where you placed their litter box. Keeping the box clean is very important...daily cleaning is a must. SFC recommends cleaning the litter box at least two times a day. No cat or kitten wants to use or smell a dirty litter box. Make sure the litter box is as far away from the food and water as possible. Place the bed near the food, not the litter box.

We will provide you with pellet litter and the litterboxes needed at all stages of learning. We do not use clumping litter for kittens; unless your foster is having litterbox issues, we recommend sticking with pellet litter throughout the foster period.



EXPENSES AND DONATIONS

SFC covers all medical care expenses for foster cats if performed at our partner spay/neuter clinic, or through one of our local veterinary partners. Any care provided outside of this scope must be approved in advance. SFC will not reimburse any personal expenses incurred by foster parents for unauthorized veterinary care; seeking veterinary care for your foster cat or kittens at another vet is not permitted without explicit approval from the Foster Manager.

Expenses that you incur during your term as foster parent, whether for supplies or medical care will not be reimbursed or covered by SFC and cannot be applied to an adoption fee. These expenses, however, may be considered a tax-deductible donation. Keep all receipts and ask for an in-kind donation form once your litter is adopted. Always consult a tax professional to determine whether your foster expenses are tax-deductible.

SFC will provide you with food and litter. It is best to keep the foster kittens on a consistent food type when possible so as not to cause digestive upset. Other supplies that may be provided to you (please ask) or that we recommend purchasing include:

- Litter pans
- Beds and blankets
- Carrier/Crate
- Heating pad or warming disk
- Nursing supplies and formula
- Wipes
- Scales
- Toys
- Food and water bowls



If there are supplies you do not need, or need more of, speak with your Case Manager and we will arrange for pickup.

If you are interested in purchasing food or litter for your foster cat/kitten, we recommend pellet litter and Purina Pro Plan Wet and Dry Kitten Food or Royal Canin Mother and Babycat Wet and Dry Food.



FINDING WHO NEEDS FOSTER

Trello Board

The majority of incoming animals are posted to our Trello board at least 24-72 hours before arrival. If you see a group you are interested in fostering, please contact the Foster Manager via facebook messenger or email at foster@sfcva.org. Please note that the majority of kittens need to be fostered in pairs (or as an entire litter), and kittens with a mom will be fostered with their mom at least until fully weaned.



Scan for
our trello
board



Foster Facebook Group

On Facebook.com, search "TEAM SQUISHYFACE" to join our group. You must provide the name used on your foster application, and answer the subsequent questions for admittance. This group is private and is a place to post photos of your foster, ask questions and engage with other caregivers. We will also place photos/information about animals needing fosters here. Photos you share on the group may be used on your fosters adoption profile as well as in educational and promotional material throughout the organization. Along with intermittent emails, the Foster Facebook Group is the best way to keep up to date on any changes happening in the program.

CASE MANAGERS

SFC uses volunteer Case Managers to help provide support for each foster caregiver. Our case managers are experienced fosters able to provide mentorship and answer all of your kitten/cat-related questions.

The CM can answer questions for you regarding kitten-proofing your foster space, behavioral and dietary concerns, and basic health and medical questions.

You should contact your CM with ANY questions or concerns you may have about your kitten's health or well-being. If you are worried that one of your foster may be sick, try to get some information together before you call:

- How long have the symptoms been going on?
- Is kitty eating, drinking, pooping, peeing, playing?
- Any vomiting?
- Diarrhea?
- What is the kitty's temperature? Normal temperature is 100.0-102.6 F. If you are worried but you aren't sure about the symptoms mentioned above, call your mentor anyway - that is what they are here for.

If you don't have a CM you typically work with, one will be assigned and should reach out within 48 hours of you picking up your foster. If you do not hear from someone, please contact the Foster Manager at foster@sfcva.org. She will also be your interim mentor if you have any questions and your backup mentor if yours is not available.

PICKING UP YOUR FOSTERS

Foster Pickups take place after intake, typically on Wednesday and Saturday evenings between 5-7pm. Your foster pets will have arrived earlier that afternoon, and in most cases will have been given a Dawn bath along with their intake exam, which includes first vaccinations, dewormer, flea/tick preventative, and microchipping. Pickups outside of this time window **MUST** be arranged in advance with the Foster Manager.

Unless told otherwise, the address for foster pickups is 9916 Brock Rd, Spotsylvania VA 22553. At the time of pickup, we will give you any supplies we have that you need and will have you sign a foster contract for this group of animals.

If we applied flea/tick preventative prior to pickup, please do not give another Dawn bath for at least 24 hours to allow this time to work. We recommend keeping your foster in a bleachable space for at least a week after coming home.



If your kittens are newborns on arrival or born in care, we will not name them before you take them home. Before your kittens are 6 weeks old we would like you to name them, the sooner the better. Please notify your CM when you have chosen a name. Please do not change names if they have been named before you receive them.

Please use names that are friendly, non-offensive, and not too difficult to pronounce or spell. Try to make them unique so that we don't have 10 kittens named "Fluffy".

Quick tip on naming your kittens: Theme your kittens' names for easier marketing. Try naming by letter, tv shows, movies, cartoons, or music groups!



First and foremost, we ask that you treat your foster cats/kittens with the same love and care that you give to your own companion animals. Daily attention (at least one full hour a day) from yourself, family members, or friends makes kittens more people-oriented and more adoptable. This includes petting, playing, cuddling, trimming nails, and grooming.

By spending time with your foster cats on a regular basis, you will not only increase their chances of being adopted quickly, but you will also be able to determine their likes and dislikes - this helps us place them in homes with families that best meet their needs.

You should also monitor your foster cats for behavior problems, such as inappropriate urination or scratching furniture. If problems arise, contact your CM to discuss behavior modification strategies. SFC is not responsible for damages that might occur to yourself, others in your household, or your personal property as a result of feline behavior problems.

If you have "cat-friendly" dogs in your household, please consult with your CM about proper introductions with your foster cats/kittens. Kittens who have been raised with dogs, and adult cats who enjoy (or at least tolerate) the company of canines, often have an advantage come adoption day!

UNDERSOCIALIZED KITTENS

Semi-feral kittens are a special challenge. These kittens can be socialized, but only with daily handling. Sometimes they will hiss and spit when you attempt to pick them up. Gently pick them up using a small towel or fleece blanket and hold them close to your body, but away from your face. Give them a sense of security and speak softly to them; brushing their head with a toothbrush can mimic the feeling of moms' tongue grooming them. These kittens need plenty of reassurance and attention.

DO NOT give them a room in which they can hide from you. They need a box or crate where they can feel secure but are always accessible to you. They will not become socialized unless they are handled many times a day. They need your help becoming accustomed to the sights and sounds of people and an active household. This should be done gradually and consistently. For more information, contact your CM.





KITTENS WITH MOM

The recommended diet for pregnant or nursing cats is eating canned and dry kitten food. Kittens will naturally nurse from mom and generally start showing interest in solid food around 4 or 5 weeks of age. Canned food should be fed 3-4 times a day in small amounts (one quarter of a 3 oz. wet food can). Dry food should be left out all day along with water.

KITTENS WITHOUT MOM

(0-4 weeks) Many times, unweaned kittens are brought to the shelter without their mother. As a foster caregiver you will have the added responsibility of bottle-feeding along with socialization.

BOTTLE FEEDING

Before you feed a kitten, always make sure you've assessed his temperature to make sure it is safe to feed. If a kitten is overheated or too cold, it is not safe to feed until you have gently stabilized their temperature.

WHEN TO BOTTLE FEED A KITTEN

If we receive an orphaned kitten that is too young to eat on their own or if the mother cat is can longer nurse, we then need to bottle feed the kitten.

A mother cat's milk can dry up when they are sick, on medications, or too stressed. Supplemental bottle feeding can also be helpful when a kitten loses weight or fails to gain weight for a 7-day period, even if it is still nursing on mom. In this case, you will only be "topping off" the kitten after it nurses.

Foster parents will be provided supplies for bottle feeding (as available):

- Nursing bottle and nipples • Milk replacer formula • Fleece blanket or towels • Baby wipes
- Scale • For kittens 2 weeks or younger: Syringes

Kittens under 2 weeks are to be fed every 2-3 hours.

PREPARING THE BOTTLE

Be sure you sterilize the bottle and nipple before each feeding. Check your bottle's nipple to see if formula drips from its tip. If it does not, you will need to widen the hole. You can do this by using a hot needle to poke a larger hole or by using a razor blade to make a small "x" in the top. Do not make it too wide though. You only want the formula to drip slowly, not pour, out of the nipple. Warm the formula to no more than 100°F. Test the formula on your wrist – it should feel warm, not hot.

START FEEDING

Place your kitten on its stomach on a towel so they can grip the towel with their nails. Lift their head to a 45 degree angle. Squeeze a small drop of formula on to the tip of the nipple. Insert the nipple into their mouth (you may have to open their mouth for them). The angle will help keep air from entering their stomach and will keep milk at the front of the nipple. The kitten should roll her tongue into a U-shape and begin to swallow. Never hold a kitten on their back or in the air when you feed them; practice the rule "all four on the floor."



When your kitten is full, their tummy will be slightly rounded and bubbles will form around their mouth. If the kitten has not finished the bottle, do not force the kitten to drink the rest of the milk.

If the kitten is not drinking well, you can use a toothbrush to brush down their sides. This mimics a mother's tongue and will often soothe them. They should nurse from the bottle better using this technique.

You can also try syringe feeding:

- Fill a clean 1 to 3 cc syringe with warmed formula.
- Push a few drops in the kittens mouth and wait for them to swallow.
- Repeat this until the kitten has consumed a sufficient amount.

Some kittens benefit from "burping" in between feedings. If the kitten unlatches prior to finishing the expected amount for that feeding, you can rub or gently pat their back, give them a few moments and then offer the bottle again.

It is important not to overfeed or underfeed your kitten. Overfeeding can cause serious health problems that begin with diarrhea, and end with dehydration. One way to tell whether you're consistently feeding too much is the appearance of grayish stool. On the other hand, a kitten who is not fed enough will cry continuously, appear restless, and then listless. Refer to the below table for how much and how often to feed your kitten.

MIXING FORMULA

SFC uses KMR or Breeders Edge brand formula. Gently stir or shake one-part powder into two parts warm water (a part may be a teaspoon, tablespoon or cup). Kitten formula is known to clump and can clog a bottle's nipple; using a small wire whisk or fork can help break up the clumps. Do not mix more formula than can be consumed in 24 hours. Do not use a blender. Reconstituted formula should be kept refrigerated. Opened powder cans of KMR brand can be refrigerated for up to 3 months, or can be frozen for up to 6 months to preserve freshness. Breeders Edge brand powder is shelf stable and does not need to be refrigerated. Unopened powder should be kept in a cool, dry place.

**visit the
"kitten lady"
on youtube for
more
instructional
videos and
tips!**

kitten weight and feeding chart

AGE	WEIGHT	AMOUNT PER FEEDING	SCHEDULE
0-1 week	50-150 grams	2-6 ml	Every 2 hours
1-2 weeks	150-250 grams	6-10 ml	Every 2-3 hours
2-3 weeks	250-350 grams	10-14 ml	Every 3-4 hours
3-4 weeks	350-450 grams	14-18 ml	Every 4-5 hours
4-5 weeks	450-550 grams	18-22 ml	Every 5-6 hours
5-8 weeks	550-850 grams	(weaning; offer ample wet food)	Every 6 hours

AFTER THE MEAL

CLEAN UP YOUR KITTEN

Using baby wipes or a warm, damp washcloth, wipe excess formula off of your kitten's fur. Formula left behind can cause the kitten to get a crusty face or moist dermatitis that causes the fur to fall out. If needed, gently towel dry the kitten when you are done. Never submerge your kitten in water.

HELPING YOUR KITTEN GO POTTY

Kittens younger than 3 weeks of age cannot eliminate by themselves – they need your help. After feeding the kitten, take a wipe or toilet paper and gently rub the kitten's genital area in small circles. This action mimics a mother cat's licking and stimulates the kitten to relieve themselves. Rub until you see evidence of urine and/or stool and continue stimulating the area until they are complete. A kitten should urinate with every feeding, but it may only defecate 2-3 times daily.

TROUBLE EATERS

If you have a kitten that is having a harder time bottle feeding or weaning or is losing weight, please contact your case manager immediately. We can provide support and additional supplies such as miracle nipples, baby food, or Royal Canin Baby and Mama Cat wet and dry food when available.

SOLID FOOD



4 weeks old: You can start introducing canned food as kittens usually start showing interest in what mom is eating. We call kittens at this stage “mushers”. Mix a little warm water with the provided canned food and place it in a container with low sides like a plate or small dish. Have the wipes ready because they are likely to walk through their food when learning to eat at this stage; After a few attempts they will get the idea. You can warm the food in the microwave for about 6 seconds. Make sure to stir the food and test it with your finger. If needed you can gently touch the kittens muzzle to the “mush” to engage them to begin eating or try feeding drops of mush through a syringe.

5-6 WEEKS OLD

Offer approximately 1/6-1/4 of a can three times a day. If that is too much food in the beginning, you can adjust accordingly. Always have dry kibble and water available. Separate kittens that may bully their littermates out of food to ensure everyone is getting enough.



6-8 WEEKS OLD

Feed 1/4 of a can per kitten, 2 times a day. Always have dry kibble and water available.

BATHING YOUR KITTEN

If you have to bathe your kitten, be aware that water temperature is really important! A cat's normal body temperature is between 100-102.6°F, so the water needs to be pretty warm, like your bath water. Try not to do full immersion baths. If you can get away with just a bottom, face, or leg, do that. Imitating as best you can the firm licking motion of a mom cat's tongue will help the kitten feel more comfortable about the experience. And remember a little shampoo goes a long way!

A general rule of thumb is once you have rinsed them off really well, rinse once more. Make sure they have a place to dry off that is toasty warm and not drafty, keep them there until they are completely dry. We recommend using the blue Dawn brand dish soap that is known for washing animals affected by oil spills. Bathing with Dawn can also help wash away fleas that may be on your kitten.



KEEPING YOUR KITTEN WARM

If needed, heat kittens slowly so that you do not put them into shock. You can do this using a heating pad, a towel that has been heated in the dryer, a Snuggle Safe warming disc, or by tucking a kitten under your shirt and using your own body heat. While heating the kitten, gently massage the body and extremities to get blood flowing throughout the body.

Never let a kitten lie on a heat source without cover. Make sure that they have space to crawl off the heat source if they get too warm. Constantly check the warmth of the heat source to make sure it cannot burn the kitten, but that it is staying warm enough.

Kittens cannot maintain their own body temperature. The average rectal temperature of a newborn kitten ranges between 97-98°F. Between 2-21 days old, a kitten's temperature will be about 98-100°F. You will need to build the kitten a nest to keep it warm. The temperature in the nest where a newborn kitten is kept should be 86°F. The temperature can be lowered five degrees a week thereafter until a mild 75°F is reached. To regulate the nest temperature, put a towel or blanket over the carrier to trap in the heat.



QUICK TIP ON

TEMPERATURE TAKING:

THOROUGHLY CLEAN THE END OF THE THERMOMETER WITH ALCOHOL. THEN, PUT A LITTLE LUBRICANT ON THE END. HAVE A FRIEND HOLD THE KITTEN FOR YOU OR WRAP HIM IN A TOWEL LIKE A BURRITO TO KEEP HIM STILL. SUPPORT THE HIND END WHILE THE THERMOMETER IS INSERTED IN THE RECTUM. INSERT THE THERMOMETER 1/2" INTO THE KITTEN'S RECTUM, ENOUGH TO COVER THE METAL TIP. KEEP THE THERMOMETER IN UNTIL IT STARTS BEEPING, THEN REMOVE AND CLEAN WITH ALCOHOL.

NORMAL KITTEN TEMPERATURES:

NEWBORNS 97-98°F

2-4 WEEKS 98-100°F

4+ WEEKS 99-102.6°F

USE DISTRACTIONS - KITTENS WILL ALMOST ALWAYS STRUGGLE WHILE THEIR TEMPERATURE IS BEING TAKEN.



CHECK UP APPTS AND VACCINATIONS

Upon intake, your kittens were given their initial round of dewormer, vaccines and other treatments depending on their age and condition. Your foster case manager will schedule their booster appointment 2-3 weeks from their intake date and every 2-3 weeks thereafter until they are adopted or have completed their vaccine series. All of these vaccine appointments are typically done at SFC HQ in Spotsylvania. Your Case Manager will be in touch with you to schedule this in advance.

Your kittens will receive the following treatments and vaccines dependent on their age:

0-4 weeks:

- Dewormer (Pyrantel) every 2 weeks

4 weeks - 4 months

- Dewormer
- Ivermectin (ear mite treatment)
- Flea/Tick Preventative
- Plus FVRCP vaccines every 2-3 weeks

4 months+

- The above treatments and vaccines
- Plus a Rabies vaccine

FVRCP is the vaccine for Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, and Panleukopenia (URI and Distemper). Pyrantel is for worms. You might see these pass in the stool after treatment - they will look like spaghetti.

KITTEN DEVELOPMENT

The following is some general information about what to expect at each stage of development. Remember that these are averages. Please weigh your kittens regularly to keep an eye on development. Daily is best for the first 3 weeks or if the kittens get sick, otherwise every 2-3 days is fine. Kittens should gain about four ounces per week, on average. The following is adopted from Alley Cat Allies.



img: the Kitten Lady

NEWBORN

When kittens are first born, they are completely helpless—their eyes are closed, their ears are folded, and they can't stand, keep themselves warm, or eat on their own. They rely on mom (or you) for everything! Dehydration is one of the biggest killers of kittens, along with chilling. Some signs of dehydration include limpness, unresponsiveness, sunken eyes, and lethargy. You can check on their hydration by pulling up the skin at the scruff when the kitten is in a standing position. If it does not return to resting position quickly, the kitten is dehydrated. Newborn kittens need to be fed every two hours, around the clock.

1 WEEK

At about 7 days old, kitten's ears will unfold and their eyes may start to open, though their eyesight is still unfocused. They have doubled their birth weight to around 8 ounces. They are now more aware of their surroundings. If you have a litter, they will huddle together for warmth and comfort and rarely venture far from their mother, their nest, or each other. They sleep most of the time.

In this adorable and information-packed video from the Kitten Lady, you'll learn everything you need to know about how to determine a kitten's age, what developmental milestones to expect, and how to care for kittens week-by-week from birth to adoption age!



KITTEN DEVELOPMENT

TWO WEEKS

The cuteness level is about to multiply! At two weeks the kittens will begin to interact with each other, their ears will unfold and they will begin to knead. Though they still spend most of their time sleeping, they will start to play and develop fine motor skills and take unsteady first steps; be careful though, kittens at this age cannot not yet retract their claws.

Kittens older than 10 days can eat every three to four hours, and their incisors will start to show. Continue to stimulate your kitten to go to the bathroom after each feeding. A healthy kitten will urinate almost every time you stimulate them and have a bowel movement once or twice a day. Completely solid feces usually will not form while kittens are drinking formula. If you notice the kittens are having trouble urinating or defecating, please contact your CM.



THREE WEEKS

By the third week, you can tell if the kittens are boys or girls. Their teeth are coming in and their walking is becoming more confident. You can start providing a litter box and wet food. Try mixing wet food with kitten formula to create a “mush” or “slurry”.

At this age, solid food training is strictly for practice, and you should continue feeding formula for nutrition every four to six hours. At this age, kittens can start to eliminate waste on their own and may start to look for a litter box. Provide them with a small, shallow litter pan with a layer of pellet litter. Show kittens the litter box, and they should quickly start using it out of instinct. To help them out, you can put in cotton balls or tissue paper that you used to stimulate them to urinate in the litterbox.

Its playtime! Playing is an important part of kitten socialization because it helps them bond with each other and build confidence around people. Play with kittens for at least two hours a day (all together or broken up). Take time to socialize each of the kittens individually. At this age kittens will love to play with toys, and you should encourage that!

KITTEN DEVELOPMENT

FOUR WEEKS

Time for a check up! Dependent on the age at which you received your fosters you may have had at least one appointment previously. At your next visit your kittens will receive their first FVRCP vaccination.

In another step towards independence, weaning starts at about four weeks old. Mix kitten formula with wet food, and either let the kittens eat it themselves from a dish or feed them the mixture with the bottle or from a syringe. Eventually, they'll start eating more food and less formula. Once they can eat wet food, start mixing the formula with dry food too. Once they start eating solid food, make sure you always provide them with water. Fresh food should be provided 2 to 3 times a day. Continue to socialize and play with the kittens everyday.



FIVE WEEKS

Your kitten's eyesight is now fully developed, and they realize there is A LOT of fun to be had. At this age your fosters are extremely playful; safe, positive interactions with people are very important. Continue to spend at least two hours a day socializing them.

If you have a kitten that is struggling to socialize, food is a great motivator. Try holding the kitten while he eats or having him eat out of your hand; even just sitting by while they eat boosts their confidence in interacting with people.

They should now be almost exclusively eating wet and dry food, served in separate bowls, along with water; formula can still be used to supplement. On average your kittens will weigh from 18.5-19.5 ounces, be eating two to three times a day, and using their litterbox.



KITTEN DEVELOPMENT

SIX WEEKS

Daily care for your fosters is becoming much easier, and your job as a caregiver is now to raise confident and well-adjusted cats. Continue to prepare them for common activities happening in a home environment: being carried often, coming in and out of carriers, being handled by the vet and meeting new people.

You should now see distinct personalities with each of your kittens. Start thinking about drafting write ups and taking pictures for their adoption profile. It's about time to visit SFC HQ for an appointment for vaccine boosters - your foster CM should be checking in with you to schedule this!



SEVEN WEEKS

It seems like it happened overnight, but your kittens are very coordinated and adventurous. Be sure to triple check your kittens play area to ensure there aren't small objects, cords, or scalable items they can use to escape. It is likely that baby gates won't contain the kittens anymore, so keep an extra eye on them at all times.

If you haven't already, this is the time to introduce your fosters to a scratching post and perhaps trim their nails for the first time. Your kittens likely have only a few ounces left to gain before they will be returned for surgery and adoption; start saying your goodbyes and packing up supplies. If you are interested in adopting your foster, this is the time to let your foster case manager know so we can reserve them for you!



KITTEN DEVELOPMENT

EIGHT WEEKS

It's time for adoption!

At 1 lb, 14oz, your kittens can be spayed or neutered and head to an adoption event if they don't have an adopter lined up ahead of time. Most kittens are confident enough to explore away from their mother (or foster caregiver) and should be fully weaned (no longer using formula). They will seek attention from people and have an established routine of playing and sleeping.



QUICK TIPS for Socializing

- Keep carriers open and accessible with bedding and a surprise treat that appears each day so it becomes a “happy place” and a place to play
- Avoid using your hands (or feet) during play time. Keep toys in a rotation and engage your kitten in games of “catch”
- Trim your kittens nails often with treats and praise. Don't force all the nails at once, if the kitten pulls away, take a break and revisit it later
- Help your kitten get used to strangers (i.e. potential adopters). Have calm friends and family over to sit and socialize your fosters. Pair the meetings with tasty treats and toys to help them feel more comfortable



HEALTH CONCERNS

The following is a list of common medical issues you may encounter as a foster parent with your mother cat and/or kittens. This information is not meant to be extensive, just to give you an idea of what common ailments may look like and how they might be resolved. If your foster kitten displays any of these symptoms, talk to your Case Manager or the Foster Manager.

- Sneezing or congestion with green or yellow discharge from the nose or eyes.
- Coughing, wheezing, or heavy breathing.
- Diarrhea or vomiting - this can be life threatening to kittens!
- Straining to urinate or defecate - this can be life threatening, especially for male cats!
- Bleeding from any part of the body.
- Lethargy - kitten seems sleepy all the time.
- Fever.
- Paralysis.
- Extreme change in attitude or behavior.
- Not eating or drinking regularly.
- Temperature too low (below 98°F) or too high (above 104°F).

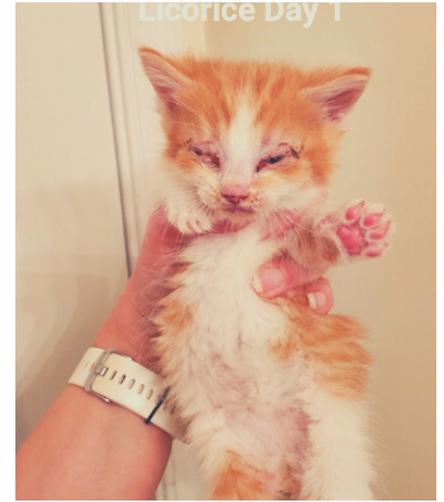
COMMON HEALTH CONCERNS

URI

Upper respiratory tract infections (URI) or “kitty colds” are common occurrences in shelters. The majority are caused by one of two viruses, although they can have some bacterial components.

Signs of URI include congestion, excessive sneezing, fever, discolored (green or yellow) nose or eye discharge, and/or a fever. If your foster cat/kitten is showing signs of URI, please do the following:

- Make sure the cat/kitten is eating. Cats that are congested often won't eat because they can't smell the food. If they are not eating well, warm up a strong-smelling canned food, and offer it to them. You can also provide them several different options to ensure there is one they like. Contact your CM if your kitten is not eating at least 50% of the food offered.
- If the cat/kitten has eye or nose discharge, clean their nose/eyes at least twice daily with a wet, warm washcloth. Gently wipe the eye from the nose side out to the side of the face.
- If the cat/kitten is congested, place them in a room with a humidifier, or in a carrier in a bathroom with the hot shower running (steam) to aid congestion. You can also hold the kitten on your lap. Nothing should ever be added to the water like Vic's Vapor Rub or similar products. Also, never leave a kitten alone in a bathroom with the hot shower running unless it is in the carrier. A product called “Little Noses” can also be used on URI kittens. Please use Little Noses without decongestant (saline-only solution). This product can be used as long as needed, and can be used in both nostrils up to three times daily.
- Provide supplemental warmth, especially for young kittens (rice sock, snuggle safe warming disk, etc.).
- Contact your CM or the Foster Manager for additional steps including adding Tobramycin (eye drops) or Amoxicillin depending on your kittens' symptoms.



COMMON HEALTH CONCERNS

VOMITING

Vomiting can be very dangerous for kittens because they dehydrate so quickly. Vomiting is not as common as diarrhea, so it's especially troubling, particularly if the kitten is vomiting repeatedly. Message your CM if you see vomiting in your kittens.

CONJUNCTIVITIS

Conjunctivitis is characterized by swelling and/or yellow or green discharge around the eyes. To clean the kitten's eyes, use a cotton ball or gauze that is clean with warm water. If the eye is sealed shut you will need to use the warm cotton ball as a compress and let it sit there for a few minutes. This will soften the crusted material around the eye. Once it is soft and pliable you can wipe it from the eye. Start at the area closest to the nose and wipe outward. Don't force the material off of the eye. You may need to continue to let the cotton ball set on the eyelid to soften the material for longer. Once everything has been cleaned around the eye you can administer eye medications if prescribed. It will be helpful to the kitten if you can gently wipe the eye clean multiple times a day. If you do not have a cotton ball or gauze square you can use a soft washcloth. Make sure that you use a clean washcloth each time and never share between kittens.

DEHYDRATION

Dehydration can kill a small kitten quickly. To test your kitten's hydration by "tenting", you take a pinch of skin over the cat's shoulders and pull up gently, the skin should snap back into place when released. If the pinch of skin stays up (the "tent"), it is a sign of severe dehydration. With smaller kittens another way to test hydration is to feel the gums. If they are sticky instead of slippery, the kitten is dehydrated. Also look at the color of the gums. If it is white with no color, please report this when you call the Foster Manager or your CM.

COMMON HEALTH CONCERNS

DIARRRHEA

Cat Fecal Scoring Chart



AnimalBiome

SCORE

DESCRIPTION

PHOTO

1

Very hard and dry; requires much effort to expel from the body



Most Firm

2

Firm, but not hard; segmented in appearance



3

Log-shaped; little or no visible segmentation; moist surface



4

Moist, soggy log; loses form when picked up



5

Very moist, but has a distinct shape; present as piles rather than distinct logs



6

Has texture, but no defined shape; present as piles or spots



7

Watery; no texture; flat puddles



Least Firm

A few things to keep in mind when examining your kitten's poop:

- A little bit of bright red blood on poop is ok. So is a little bit of bright red blood on a kitten's bottom. It's usually a reaction to something that they ate, new food, stress, new location, etc.
- A lot of blood is not ok.

Diarrhea is probably the most common problem with kittens. Runny poop seems to be a kitten's preferred response to almost all stress or illness. It can be dangerous for kittens because the water lost in the stool tends to dehydrate them rapidly. You should be feeding only one type of canned and dry kitten food. Diarrhea is categorized as a #4-7 on the fecal scoring chart; 4-5 are fine occasionally, but if persistent, warrants speaking to your CM For next steps.

If diarrhea persists for more than 48 hours:

- Talk to your CM so they can help you triage.
- Notate the weight of your kitten and fecal score (see chart) so SFC can prepare for your appointment and potential treatment options
- Optional: In addition to medication, give each kitten one teaspoon of canned pumpkin each day. Be sure to use plain canned pumpkin only, not pumpkin pie mix or spiced pumpkin mix.
- If the kittens are eating well, gaining weight, active, and not dehydrated, it is possible that we may advise that the diarrhea does not need treatment and is something the kittens just need to outgrow as their immune system matures.

Please note that at any time during treatment for diarrhea, if your kittens are vomiting or dehydrated, have liquid (not forming) diarrhea, diarrhea dripping from their bottoms, refusing to eat for more than 8 hours, or acting lethargic, you should talk to your CM or the Foster Manager immediately.

COMMON HEALTH CONCERNS

PANLEUKOPENIA

Panleukopenia, also known as “Panleuk,” is a viral infection that most commonly affects kittens and young cats. It is transmitted through direct contact with saliva, vomit and feces. An infected mother cat can also transmit Panleuk to her kittens at birth. Left untreated, it is almost always fatal. This illness can be difficult to deal with because the virus is very durable, can survive in the environment for up to a year, and is highly transmissible. This means that other unvaccinated cats can become infected with Panleukopenia simply by coming into contact with places where an infected cat has been. Testing for Panleukopenia is not routinely done during intake since the test will not show positive until the virus is shedding. The test also does not have a high accuracy rate, and if the mother cat has been vaccinated, then the kittens may test positive. Vaccinated cats and kittens will sometimes have a false positive from the Parvo test.

Symptoms of Panleuk include vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite and lethargy. Symptoms can take 3-10 days to present once a kitten has been infected. Once kittens are suspected or confirmed of having Panleuk, they are put into quarantine or placed with a specialized foster home for treatment. Due to the ease of transmission and the high number of potential fatalities from this disease, kittens with this disease must be isolated ASAP.

RINGWORM



Check out the Kitten Lady's Ringworm FAQ for more info!

Ringworm is the common name for the skin infection caused by a group of fungi; it is not caused by a worm at all. It is closely related to athlete's foot in people, and it is contagious to people; the young, old, and immunocompromised are more likely to get it. Ringworm is also contagious to other animals including dogs and cats.

Most often, it will cause a circular area of hair loss that is red, crusty, and may be slightly raised. Ringworm can have other characteristics, but these circular hairless lesions are the most common symptom. SFC checks all kittens with a diagnostic tool called a Wood's Lamp prior to sending pets to foster care, but this is not foolproof, as the pet could have been exposed prior to arrival but has yet to develop symptoms. The best way to decrease the risk of ringworm exposure to your household is to quarantine your foster pets away from other animals in a cleanable space for at least a week after you receive them.

Ringworm treatment consists of 21 days of an oral medication and lime dips every 4 days until a negative culture is reached. If you notice hair loss spots on your foster pets, please take good photos of the area of concern and communicate with your Case Manager.

COMMON HEALTH CONCERNS

RINGWORM

Examples of Ringworm Infection, Diagnosis and Treatment in Felines:



GENERAL AND EMERGENCY CARE

Most common ailments and illnesses can be handled in-house with guidance from our veterinarian partners. Contact your Case Manager or the Foster Manager at 540-376-5558 if you have concerns about illness or emergencies.

Once a foster cat or kitten is in your care, you are responsible for transporting him or her to SFC or an approved veterinarian for necessary and scheduled medical care. Always use a secure carrier, designed specifically for companion animals, when transporting cats.

If emergent care is needed then you may be able to seek medical care with VVC Fredericksburg or another vet partner. Emergency care must be approved PRIOR to the vet visit. Call the Foster Manager at 540-376-5558 or the Executive Director at 540-369-3553 for guidance and approval. **Otherwise, SFC will not reimburse the veterinary expenses.**



VVC Fredericksburg

1301 Central Park Blvd,
Fredericksburg, VA 22401
(540) 372-3470

Lee's Hill Pet Hospital

10693 Spotsylvania Ave,
Fredericksburg, VA 22408
(540) 710-7111

The Spay Spot

3750 Brown Station Rd,
Upper Marlboro, MD 20772
(301) 780-7203

FOSTERS PASSING AWAY

Sadly, kittens are fragile, so it is always possible for them to become ill and pass away while in a foster home. The survival rate of a an orphaned kitten is 75-80% and those odds would be much lower if they did not have the help of humans like you. Losing a foster kitten is hard and feeling sad or guilty is normal but do not let this discourage you from continuing to foster. If this is something you don't wish to encounter, fostering underage kittens may not be right for you; But keep in mind that without foster homes most of these kittens would not have stood a chance at survival. Whether it is one day or many months, the warmth and love you provide is worlds better then the life they had before. What you are doing is an irreplaceable service and means the world to these tiny creatures and so much to us. We appreciate you, and thank you for saving lives.

"FADING KITTEN" PROTOCOL

Fading Kitten Syndrome is a life-threatening emergency in which a kitten, sometimes one that was previously healthy, "crashes" and begins to fade away. When this happens, it is vital that you take these steps immediately!

SYMPTOMS

- Low Body Temperature - the kitten feels cool or cold to the touch
- Extreme Lethargy - not getting up, unable to stand, not responding to touching/petting
 - Gasping for breath
 - Meowing/Crying out

CAUSES

- Hypothermia (being too cold)
- Hypoglycemia (not enough blood sugar)



Step 1: Get them warm

- Create a "kitty burrito" with a towel. Immediately wrap the kitten up in a towel like a burrito leaving their face exposed only. Their whole body, tail, ears, and paws should be in the towel, only nose and mouth exposed. Do not take the kitten out of the towel to adjust them, check on them, etc. Every time you take them out you will make them cold again, even if it is only for a second.
- Wrap a heating pad turned on *low* around the burrito towel (to avoid burns) as an extra source of heat. Secure it around the towel so it stays in place.

Step 2: Get their blood sugar up

- Supplies: Cotton Swabs, Corn/Karo Syrup (maple syrup can be substituted)
- Dip a cotton swab in the corn syrup.
- Rub corn syrup on the kitten's gums and under the tongue.
- Repeat this every 5 minutes until improvement is seen. If no improvement is seen in approximately 1 hour you should expect to bring the kitten to an experienced medical foster for critical care.

Step 3: Notify us!

Even if the kitten improves, text the foster manager at 540-376-5558. We will want to schedule an exam as soon as possible.



Remember:

It can take hours for kittens in this condition to return to normal. Once they have shown marked improvement, they can return to their normal activities, but you should continue to monitor them for any reoccurrences. You should also supplement them with syringe feeding once they are able to eat.

Keep in mind that even with love, attention and treatment, some kittens still won't make it. Try not to blame yourself during this difficult time. Any foster kitten that you have cared for was given a second chance at life BECAUSE of YOU! The Survival Rate with your care far surpasses the survival rate in nature.

The joy of letting go of one foster group is knowing you soon will be able to take in another set that may not otherwise be able to find a place to grow in such a loving environment. Please consider the following guidelines when transitioning between groups.

Once you have taken the kittens back to SFC, it is time to clean and prepare your kitten room for your next foster group. You will need to remove all bedding, and wash it in hot water with bleach added. Follow your machine's guidelines for adding bleach to the wash load.

You will also need to clean any non-porous supplies (litter boxes, toys, etc.). Empty all contents, and wash with hot soapy water. Rinse well and then fill with hot water, add one cup of bleach and let it sit for at least 10 minutes. Rinse and dry well.

For food and water dishes you can run them through the dishwasher, and they will be cleaned for your next group. Or, you can clean them as you did the litter box if you don't have a dishwasher.

If you have carpeted floors you will need to vacuum well and spot clean any areas that need it. If you have a carpet cleaner you should use it between groups. If you do not have carpet, sweep and mop the floor. Once the floor is dry, mop again with a bleach water solution (1 cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water) and let it sit for ten minutes. Afterwards you will want to rinse with clear water and then let it dry.

You will need to wipe down all surfaces with a bleach water solution or Clorox Cleanup. You should also wipe the walls down. You do not have to do all of the wall but at least the bottom 3 feet. If you have a bed in the room, change the covering on it. If you have a chair or couch or cat tree in the room you will need to vacuum it and spot clean if needed. Ideally, your foster room will be void of anything covered in material like a chair or couch unless it is covered with



CLEANING BETWEEN YOUR FOSTER GROUPS

DISINFECTING YOUR SPACE

If you were fostering animals with a contagious illness, a more thorough cleaning process is warranted.

Quarantine of animals with contagious illness is essential to the prevention of large outbreaks and effective treatment. Disinfection procedures should be used in quarantine areas twice weekly to help prevent reinfection of pets as they recover.

1. Contagious animals should be housed in a room with tile or linoleum flooring (such as a bathroom).
2. Follow strict handwashing procedures and consider keeping specific clothing or footwear to help prevent spread of illness throughout home.
3. Quarantining in open areas using baby gates or kennels is non-ideal.
4. If fostering both healthy and sick cats, they must be kept strictly in separate areas. Foster parents must take care not to transfer bacteria or spores on their clothing or skin. Tie long hair back and consider changing clothes between groups. Wash hands up to elbow in hot water and soap for at least 30 seconds after contact. Sick animals should be the last animals contacted.
5. Hard scrub regular enclosure/space while animals are in a kennel. Remove everything, scrub all surfaces with detergent, then spray all surfaces with 1:10 bleach solution and let sit for 10 minutes. Dry and set up the space. All laundry must be washed with bleach.

ADOPTION FROM FOSTER CARE

- Kittens are available for adoption after 8 weeks of age if they are at least 1 # 14oz, healthy, and spayed/neutered.
- Foster caregivers get first choice on adopting, and are given the opportunity to "network" their fosters among friends, family, and coworkers before they are placed online for public applications. If at any point they are returned to SFC or transferred to another caregiver, the original caregiver no longer will have "first dibs".
- Foster parents who wish to adopt their foster cats are required to pay the adoption fee.
- SFC typically adopts to indoor only homes. We believe cats live longer, safer lives indoors - and because we believe cats can live happy, active lives indoors - we adopt to indoor only homes unless a cat has been determined to be indoor-outdoor by the shelter. We also have a Barn Cat program for adopters looking for an exclusively outdoor cat or for feral kittens who do not succeed in socializing.
- SFC will not adopt to a family that is planning on declawing a cat. Declawing a cat involves the removal of the claw up to the first knuckle joint. If someone is interested in a declawed cat, we will direct them to any cats in our care that have been previously declawed.
- All cats and kittens must be spayed or neutered before they go home with adopters. No exceptions.

Adoption Fees:

Single Kitten (2-6 months) \$150

Pair of Kittens \$200

Adult Cat \$100

Senior Cat (7+) \$75



MEET & GREETES

Helping find an adopter for your foster pet is a tremendous help for the SFC team, and allows you to see and play a role in the entirety of their journey from intake to forever home. If meet and greets aren't your thing, that is totally fine. Pets without adopters will go to one of our adoption events after spay/neuter to look for a new home.

- Pets must be at least 7 weeks old and in care for at least 7 days before meeting prospective adopters.
- If you have networked your pet and found an adopter on your own, have them fill out an application online at www.sfcva.org and give the name of the confirmed adopter to your case manager as soon as possible. SFC must be informed of networked adopters by the time of dropoff for spay/neuter, or as advised by your CM.
- If you are not interested in networking your pet or do not have an adopter in your network but are willing to conduct meet and greets, please let your CM know. We will make your pet live on our website and collect applications.
- Your CM will send you 1-2 applications at a time to contact. Meet and greets can be done at your home, at the SFC HQ, or in a mutually agreeable public location depending on the age of the pet. Once you have a confirmed adopter, please communicate with your CM.
- Remember that SFC is a low-barrier organization and to approach each meet and greet with an open mind. The important part is to find an appropriate match for your foster pet's personality and needs.

SFC FOSTER CONTRACT

SFC VIRGINIA - FOSTER CONTRACT

Animal Name: _____

Foster Start Date _____ Foster End Date _____

1. I hereby acknowledge receiving the above-named animal(s).
2. I agree that the animal(s) will at all times remain in the sole property of SFC Virginia.
3. I agree to provide the animal(s) with good loving care, including but not limited to companionship, food, water, shelter, and medication when required.
4. I understand that the medicines and other supplies provided by SFC Virginia are for use with foster care animal(s) only, and will not be administered to pets that do not belong to SFC Virginia.
5. I understand that SFC Virginia must authorize all veterinary care in advance. I agree to personally incur the cost for any treatment that has not been authorized.
6. I understand and acknowledge that I do not have any right of authority to transfer or place foster animal(s) in other homes or with other individuals without involvement of SFC Virginia.
7. I agree that every animal I provide foster care for must be physically returned to SFC by the date set above or at any time upon the request of an SFC case manager or staff member. I also agree to contact SFC and return the animal(s) immediately if I am no longer able to provide adequate care.
8. I agree to provide reliable transportation of the animal(s) to and from SFC HQ or to any necessary appointments. I agree to assume all liability while transporting the animal(s).
9. I agree to hold SFC Virginia harmless from any direct or consequential damages arising out of this foster care arrangement including, but not limited to, property damage and personal injury.
10. I acknowledge and agree that SFC may terminate this foster care arrangement at any time, with or without cause.
11. I have never been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect or abandonment.
12. I understand that SFC Virginia holds regular office hours at 9916 Brock Rd, Spotsylvania VA 22553 between 10-6 Monday-Friday, and that after-hours and weekend support, supply pick-ups, and dropoffs must be coordinated through my volunteer case manager or the Foster Manager.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

SFC CONTACT INFO

FOSTER CARE CONTACT INFORMATION

Questions about the Foster Program: If you have general questions about our foster program, please email foster@sfcva.org.

Routine questions about your Foster Pet: For general questions or non-emergency questions regarding your foster pet, please contact your assigned case manager. This can include concerns, supply requests, behavioral consult requests, to schedule a vaccine appointment or non-emergency vet visit, or to schedule returns if needed. Your CM should be in contact with you within 48 hours of receiving your foster. If you do not know who your CM is, please email the foster@sfcva.org account and someone will get back to you ASAP.

Emergency Situations - call Ashley at 540-376-5558 or Ryan at 913-530-0487

- Please do not text if it is a true emergency. Refer to the chart below for definitions of emergency.
- If you do not receive a response within 15 minutes, call the secondary option:
 - Stephanie Hubbart (Board Secretary/Medical CM) at 540-424-2923

Reminders:

- Decisions on the care of foster pets are made by SFC leadership
- SFC will not be held liable for any medical costs incurred that were not approved by SFC leadership. If you have a medical concern, please follow the steps outlined above.

EMERGENCY- Contact Ryan/Stephanie

- Diarrhea not responding to treatment
- Uncontrolled bleeding
- Sudden non-weight-bearing lameness
- Difficulty/inability to breathe or shortness of breath
- Seizure or loss of consciousness
- Persistent vomiting
- Swollen face or eyes
- Sudden weakness or collapse
- Hit by Car
- Intense Pain

Urgent Health Concern- Contact Ryan/Stephanie/Ashley

- Mild difficulty breathing
- Acting painful
- Large open wounds
- Limping/looks broken
- A combination of any of the following: lethargy, inappetance, diarrhea, vomiting

Health Concern-Contact CM

- Cough, discharge from eyes/nose
- Abrasions and minor cuts
- Eye, ear, or skin infections
- Limping
- Small amount of blood in urine
- Diarrhea (diarrhea lasting longer than 24 hours is upgraded to URGENT health concern)

A pet that gets loose or is missing in foster care MUST be reported ASAP to Ashley at 540-376-5558 and to Spotsylvania Animal Control at (540) 582-7115 or Stafford Animal Control at (540) 658-7387. Please do not wait to report!

QUICK FAQ

How do I become a foster parent?

You will need to fill out the SFC Virginia foster application online. For more information you can visit www.sfcva.org/foster

How do I get a group of foster kittens?

After you have completed foster application you will be prompted to add yourself to the foster facebook page. As foster kittens become available, staff will contact caregivers who have indicated an interest in fostering kittens. We also post foster opportunities on the facebook page "Team Squishyface" and on Trello. Once contacted, our staff will coordinate pick up and provide additional details with you.

What is required of me as a foster parent?

Providing a safe, 'kitten-proofed' room in your home that contains the kittens' necessities; food, water, bedding, litter box, toys, etc. You are responsible for ensuring that your kitten receives any scheduled medical treatments on time, is healthy, and well socialized.

I found a litter of kittens. Can I foster them through your program?

Yes, with approval and appointment. We will try to work with you on setting an appointment if you are the foster parent. If you cannot foster this litter it may take us some time to find a foster home. We will do our best to work with you.

What are the requirements for a foster room?

The foster room needs to be a designated place for your foster kittens to live the entire time. SFCVA recommends a bathroom for ease of cleaning. A spare bedroom, or other room could work as well. This room will need to be 'kitten-proofed' and have plenty of space for a litter box, food and water dishes, as well as sleep and play areas.

What supplies do I need to provide myself?

SFC will provide you with a high quality dry and wet kitten food diet and pellet litter. With supplies in limited quantities, it helps when foster parents can supply food dishes, toys and scratching implement, bedding, and other small incidentals. However, if you need help with some of these supplies, we will do our best to provide them.

How much do I need to supervise my foster group?

You need to do welfare checks on your foster group several times a day. This is to make sure everyone is healthy, eating, and using the litter box. You should spend about 1-2 hours per day interacting with your foster group so that they become well socialized.

Can my foster kittens and mom cat interact with my resident pets?

You should wait at least two weeks before introducing vaccinated foster kittens to your resident pets. You cannot introduce unvaccinated kittens to your resident pets until five days after the kittens receive their first vaccines. If your kittens or resident pet are sick, they cannot interact with each other. You must supervise all interactions between your kittens and resident animals. We recommend you do not introduce a Mama cat to your resident pets unless given permission to do so. It is important to note that we do not routinely test kittens under 6 months or adults in our care for FeLV/FIV until the time of alter.

Can my children interact with the foster kittens?

We encourage your children to have supervised interaction with foster kittens. Children should not be permitted to handle newborn kittens. Caution and direct supervision is a must!

QUICK FAQ

Who do I call for help?

If at anytime you have non-emergent questions or concerns you can text, message, or call your volunteer case manager. For after hours emergencies please call the foster manager at 540-376-5558.

If my foster kittens get sick do I take them to my own vet?

All veterinary care will be provided through SFC. Foster parents are not permitted to seek veterinary care from outside clinics. Any visits to outside veterinarians that are not pre-approved will be the financial responsibility of the foster parent.

What do I do if my own cats get sick?

Your foster cats and kittens should be housed separately from your resident cats. However, we do recognize that cross contamination can happen. If your own cats get sick it is your responsibility to seek veterinary treatment. Remember there is always an inherent risk of disease when you bring new animals into your home. This is why we highly recommend that all animals in the home are current on vaccinations.

Do my resident pets have to be up to date on their vaccines?

For everyone's protection and safety your resident pets are highly recommended to be up to date on vaccines.

What if I have to leave out of town unexpectedly?

Contact your case manager as soon as possible so that we can find alternate placement for your kittens. Please do not place your fosters in an alternate home without permission.

THANK YOU for helping save lives!
We look forward to working with you.

