FOSTER MANUAL

NORTHEAST ANIMAL SHELTER
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The Program:

Thank you for your interest in becoming part of the Northeast Animal Shelter Foster Family! Foster homes help us to rescue more cats, as well as provide information to adopters.

Fostering can be a wonderful experience for you and your family. You can feel great knowing that you have made a positive and life-changing difference in a shelter cat’s life!

There are several options available in our foster care program:

*WE ARE HERE TO TALK WITH YOU ABOUT WHAT OPTIONS WORK FOR YOU AND HOW TO GET STARTED!

**Full Shelter:** (3-7 days) There are times when we have an overwhelming amount of cats who need our help. By fostering, you are helping us to save even more lives.

**Orphans/Pregnant/Nursing:** (approx. 3 months) Fostering for cats near labor, nursing, or kittens in need of bottle feeding.

**Socialization:** (2-3 weeks) Occasionally we have kittens, teens and adults that need some extra time working on socialization or other skills before they are ready for adoption!

**Medical Cases:** (1-2 weeks) Some of our cats and kittens need a bit of time to recover either after surgeries or with medical conditions. A home setting promotes faster healing.

**Behavioral:** (varies by case) For some pets, a shelter is a stressful place and they are looking for a chance to open up in a practice home. Some pets require more life skills or simply someone to really care and help them adjust to their life changes!

That could be you! Don’t worry, our behavior team is here to assist you.
All pets in foster care belong to Northeast Animal Shelter and are subject to applicable policies, rules, and restrictions. NEAS will be as accurate as possible when providing information about the medical and behavioral health of pets seeking foster placement, but cannot guarantee the medical or behavioral health of any pets.

If injury or illness occurs to you or you pets(s) from contact with a foster pets, NEAS would be responsible for the medical care and expenses of the foster animal only. In some cases you may be asked to keep your pet separate from the foster pet for a period of time.

1. Foster care providers are expected to follow and abide by all guidelines and protocols regarding proper care and handling of foster pets, including giving them food, access to water at all times, health care and provide for their behavioral needs as directed. Foster pets must be kept in climate controlled homes with temperatures between 60 and 80 degrees.

2. Cats and Kittens must be in an enclosed carrier while outside. Foster cats will not be allowed loose outside.

3. Cats aren't be allowed on leashes or harnesses.

4. If an resident cat goes outside, the foster cat cannot have any contact with the resident cat to avoid the spread of possible illnesses and infections.

5. If a foster care provider refuses to return a foster pet for for any reason at the request of NEAS, or has improperly transferred the custody of the pet to another individual or entity, the foster care provider will be permanently removed from the program and NEAS may initiate appropriate legal action in order to secure the return of the pet.

6. Do not give foster animals medication and supplements unless prescribed by NEAS Veterinary staff or alternate care arrangements have been made and approved by the Foster Care Coordinator. Do not, for any reason, stop medication unless directed to do so by a NEAS representative.

7. Foster care providers must notify the Foster Care Coordinator immediately if a foster animal bites a person or animal, seems to be having a serious medical issue, or becomes loose or lost.

8. Children under the age of 18 are not to be left unsupervised with any foster animals.

9. NEAS employs a positive reinforcement approach for all training and behavior needs- our behavior team is here to assist you. Any behavioral aids or training devices need to be directly approved by the Director of Behavior before being utilized.
ARE YOU PREPARED?

GETTING READY

Fostering a pet is a commitment that will affect your entire household. Discuss your plans for fostering with all individuals that will be interacting with the pet and make sure that everyone is on the same page for this life-saving endeavor. Planning things like where a litter box will be, who will be doing the primary care-taking and preparing the home beforehand will make the entire process easier!

1. Discuss what kinds of cats are appropriate- young or old, high or low energy- are you prepared to take on a fearful animal, or a pregnant mother?
2. Do you envision a playful energetic cat will make a great playmate for your existing cat?
3. Do you think a kitten would pester an senior cat? Can you separate if necessary?
4. How long are you gone during the day and do you have enough time?
5. Do you have small children that will interact with the cat?
6. Are you planning any vacations, hosting parties or other commitments during the time you may take a foster animal?

CAT-PROOF A ROOM!

Walk into the space in which you plan to confine your foster cat and ask yourself:
-Is there room for the cat’s litter box?
-Make sure any aquariums or cages that house small animals like hamsters or mice are securely out of reach of the cat.
-Is there anything special that can be chewed on?
-Are there exposed electrical wires?
-Are there any coffee tables where a happy tail or paw can knock something over? Do you keep food on your counters that the cat can knock down?
-Are there any plants in the space? Consult a toxic plant manual.
CHECKLIST

Remember, Northeast Animal Shelter is happy to supply whatever is needed for our fosters, but if you already have some things at home, be sure to let your Foster Coordinator know exactly what you need! Here are some things you should take stock of before bringing home a foster cat!

- Litter box
- Litter
- Scoop
- Treats
- Toys
- Bowls
- Food
- Carrier
- Bed
- Scratching Post
You’re Ready!

As an approved foster parent, you will receive emails from the Foster Care Coordinator providing a brief description of cats and kittens needing foster homes. When you see a pet that may be a good match for your household and lifestyle, simply contact the Foster Care Coordinator and the process will begin!

The Foster Care Coordinator will contact you to provide more information and set up a time for you & your family to meet. We will provide you with the necessary supplies for fostering and support you through the entire process. We are always available to address any questions or concerns.

Elizabeth Booth
Foster Care Coordinator
foster@neas.org
(978-745-9888) Extension 327
Emergency Number: 425-314-3653

Dot Baisly
Director of Behavior
dot.b@neas.org

Jenna Bradley
Adoptions Manager

Northeast Animal Shelter
(978-745-9888) Priority Extension- 91
Important to Remember:

Bringing Your Foster Home: Many cats are nervous adjusting to new homes. It can take up to a couple weeks for cats to fully decompress. We ask that you confine new foster cats to one room to allow them time to adjust. It is important to wait until the room is set with everything the cat will need—letterbox, food, water, before opening the carrier and letting them out. The carrier should not be opened during car rides, or outside the home to prevent accidental escapes.

Indoor Only- NEAS cats and kittens are not allowed to be outside for any reason. Cat harnesses and leashes, as well as Catios will not be allowed. It is also important to note to secure windows before arrival—cats, if frightened or motivated, can burst through screens and become lost.

Cats and Children: Children are welcome to assist in fostering cats and kittens while supervised. It is important to not leave children alone with foster animals. Make sure to instruct your child to be calm and quiet when being introduced to the foster cat. If the cat is uncomfortable, never force interactions. Nervous cats can always scratch or lash out. Dangle toys and laser pointers allow energetic kittens to engage with children without risking needle-like kitten nails.

YOUR FOSTER CAT SPEAKS WITH HER WHOLE BODY:

Eyes- The pupils can tell you a lot. Do not pick up your foster cat if the pupils are wide and dilated, as this means the cat is stressed out and fearful.

Ears-When the ears are flattened and pressed onto the head, your cat is feeling fearful or defensive. Leave your foster cat alone or sit quietly in the room and let them adjust to their surroundings and your presence.

Tail- A cat that is holding their tail straight up is confident, but if the fur is puffed and raised, this can signal anger or fear. Unlike a dog, a slow wag indicates mild annoyance, but a faster wag shows agitation and anger.
Northeast Animal Shelter does not guarantee the disposition of any pet. For this reason, if there are resident pets in the home, we always encourage you to introduce the animal slowly, if at all. If you are having the foster pet for a short time, consider if the two animals need to interact. Be prepared to separate any pets in the home, and please contact the Foster Care Coordinator with any issues.

Cat to Cat
Introductions:

- Never leave your cat alone with the foster cat.
- Never expect your foster cat to share the same litter box as an resident cat.
- As your foster cat should be confined to one room, it is a good idea to put something in the room that smells like the existing pets.
- Allow them to smell each other under the door. Provide treats while this is occurring.
- Swap blankets and feeding bowls.
- Use a baby gate for a slow introduction where the two cats can see each other/feed on opposite side.
- Never attempt to physically place the cats near each other. This can result in scratches and stress.

Cat to Dog
Introductions:

- Never leave the foster cat alone with your dog.
- Provide places for your cat to hide and jump onto in each room of the house.
- Have a "dog-free" zone in the house so the cat can relax- this should contain the food, litter box, and water.
- Make sure the dog does not have access to the foster cats food, and litter box.
- Leave the leash on your dog in order to prevent chasing or roughhousing.
- Allow time for your foster cat to adjust. Cats are environmentally sensitive. Try to keep interactions between the two calm.
BODY LANGUAGE
The guide to knowing what they're feeling!

**Fearful/Tense**
The cat in this photo is cornered-it's back is arched, ears pinned, eyes dilated and the back furr is raised.

**Relaxed**
The cat's body is relaxed and languid. She is focused on you, but uncaring.

**Talking Back**
The pupils are very large. This cat is telling you to leave his space. If taken further, this cat would swat.

**Playful/Hunting**
This cat is focused, and ready to pounce! Playtime is not over.

**Overstimulated**
The cat's eyes, either after physical attention or playtime, are dilated or it's tail is flicking quickly.

**Nervous**
The cat's eyes are not dilated, but he is hunched in his safe zone. Allow him to make the first approach.

**Needs Space**
The cat is hissing and aggressing toward. The cat at this point needs space.

**Social**
This cat is focused on attention. His body is fluid, his eyes are not dilated, and his ears are pointed up. Ready for pets!

**Anxious**
The cat's eyes are lidded, the pupils semi dilated, and mouth slightly open.
Help get your foster a forever home!

When fostering an cat for N.E.A.S., you can be that animal's advocate! Clear notes, and pretty photographs really help us advertise and promote your foster pet! While only pets being placed in foster, like senior cats, need beautiful photos, the notes from a foster home are often the deciding factor in many adoptions!

Tips for Writing Great Bios!

Accentuate the positive and let potential adopters know why they should consider your cat

You will improve your cat's chances at finding their forever home with just a few key strokes! Send in notes and bios about your foster cat to the Foster Care Coordinator so they can add them to the pet's record and their website profile!

Tell Potential adopters what you know about the foster cat. Have they met any existing pets? Do they use the litter box? Are they chatty? Be honest, but positive when describing your foster cat. It is always helpful to highlight why someone would want to bring the cat into their home.

Tips for Taking Great Photos

The picture is the first thing a person sees on our website! If the pet has a poor photo, visitors may move on without reading a dog's description! If you want to give your cat the best chance possible, take large, clear, high resolution photos of the pet will surely help!

1. Take a lot of digital pictures. If you don't have a digital camera or camera phone, you can contact the Foster Care Coordinator to see if a photo shoot can be arranged.

2. Pictures taken in natural light are much better than those taken inside or with a flash. Lighting is important in capturing a pets detail and coloring.

3. Use treats or toys or make strange noises to make your cat face the camera and capture a full-face image. It is also helpful to make sure the cat is stationary first, then capture their attention!
Fearful Cat Information

It may be that you end up with a foster kitten or cat who is in their crucial socialization window, or who may not have had the best socialization when younger. Please let us know if you experience any behavioral issues with your foster. Our Behavior Team is here to help you. Here is some basic information you may find helpful.

Commonly Known Signs of Stress:
• Raised fur
• Hiding
• Pinned ears
• Growling

Less Commonly Known Signs of Stress:
• Dilated eyes
• Flicking of the tail
• Arched back.

When experiencing these signs, please allow the cat to make the first moves and allow time for them to adjust.

TIPS:
- The smaller the room confined in the better. The Bathroom is usually the best bet. Be sure if your shower has curtains to tie these up as fearful cats will hid in them/climb up them.

- Fearful cats will find hiding spaces- you want to eliminate spots like under the bed and in the closets and provide a accessible space like a carrier or a cardboard box.

- Provide somewhere high to sit for the fearful cat. Cats are naturally predators and having perches- even like a chair or a scratching post- allow them to feel more in control and comfortable.

Socialization is not a straight line- and that's okay! Be patient, and allow for progress to happen. If you feel you have hit a wall or a road block, reach out to the Foster Care Coordinator.
Tips & Tricks!

Litter Box Tips:
Place the litterbox in a private location that is convenient for you and your cat. It should be in the room that the foster cat will remain in for the majority of the time and away from high traffic areas. At NEAS, we use a basic clay litter, but certain cats may require a different type. If there are any litter box issues, reach out to the Foster Care Coordinator, but also pay attention to the type of litter box. Is it covered or uncovered? Is it automated? What type of litter are you using? Be prepared to switch things up in order to find a solution.

Scratching Posts/Pad:
By providing a scratching post and other toys, it gives your foster cat an appropriate place to do what comes naturally. Scratching not only helps your foster cat shed the sheath of its claws. If you do not have one, NEAS can provide a temporary one if they are available. You will need to take steps to protect any delicate materials or furniture that will come into contact with your foster cat- draping a blanket or sheet can help, or utilizing cat deterrent sprays or protective tapes on furniture that you don’t want scratched.

Overstimulation:
Overstimulation is the swatting or biting behavior that cats exhibit when they receive too much petting or play. Some cats and kittens can demonstrate these seemingly aggressive actions after approaching you for attention. Keep petting and play sessions short if you notice this behavior in your foster cat. It is important to be aware of the foster cat’s body language and to look out for warning signs- tail flicking, skin twitching, dilated pupils, head turns, and ears pinned back are often early signs that the cat has had enough for now.

Always feel free to reach out to the Foster Care Coordinator with any concerns or for more tips and tricks!
**Kittens, Kittens, Kittens!**

**Kitten-Proofing:** Kittens are perfect little mess makers! Be sure loose items like electrical wires, curtain cords and things that dangle are put away or secure. The bathroom is the best place to keep kittens- the floors make it easy to clean and there are less hiding places. Garbage bins and toilets need to be shut to prevent accidents, and it is important to make sure windows and exits are carefully closed as well. Kittens can be rough on furniture, so remove any pieces you wouldn't want claw marks in!

**Adoring Public:** We understand wanting to show off your new foster kittens! They're cute and sweet! We do ask that fosters avoid showing them off or posting them on social media until they are six weeks old due to viability and for requests for adoption. Double check with the Foster Coordinator when taking new fosters home!

**Fading Kitten Syndrome:** FKS is a life-threatening issue where a kitten that was previously healthy begins to fade away. Symptoms include: extreme lethargy, low body temperature, gasping for breath, unwilling to eat and crying. Please contact the Foster Care Coordinator, or any shelter supervisor if you experience these symptoms in your foster kittens immediately.

**Feral/Undersocialized:** Kittens often arrive at the shelter being found outside and needing some help getting adjusted to living in a home. It is important to sequester these kittens in a bathroom or a space with no areas to hide in. These kittens are in the most need of handling, patience and time. Always use a wand toy to gently stroke the head or chin to make sure they are comfortable with touch to avoid any scratches, and let them come to you first. For more information, see NEAS's behavioral handouts.

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**Kitten Development Chart:**

**1-3 Weeks:** Kitten's eyes and ears begin opening at this time. They need to be kept out of bright light. Their mother should be taking care of them fully with no human help.

**3-5 Weeks:** The kittens will begin walking and using the litter box at this point. There are always some accidents while they are learning! It is important to use non-clumping type of litter to avoid them ingesting it and becoming sick. This is a good time to start kitten-proofing the room.

**6-8 Weeks:** Socializing the kittens is incredibly important. In the last three weeks before adoptions, kittens should be handled often, be played with frequently, and also receive their first rounds of vaccines and dewormers!
Common Medical Concerns

Upper Respiratory Infections: Cats are subject to contracting viruses that can cause symptoms that are very similar to the common cold in humans. It's called an URI. This illness often occurs in a shelter due to the exposure to other infected pets, the less-than-desirable places the pets come from, and the stress of a new environment. If your foster cat begins to sneeze, has a runny nose or runny eyes or is coughing, let the Foster Care Coordinator know and we can set up an appointment with our staff veterinarian. It is important to never provide medication to the foster animals without the express permission of a NEAS representative.

Pain While Urinating: If you notice your foster cat straining while urinating, peeing outside the litter box, frequent urination, or peeing with any hint of a reddish color in the urine, they could have a Urinary Tract Infection (UTI). It would be important to collect a sample of the urine- NEAS can provide the means to do so, and would then treat with approved medications.

Frequent Diarrhea: If your foster cat is having diarrhea that lasts longer than 2-3 days, please contact the Foster Care Coordinator. Depending on the length of stay and the medical history, our medical team will decide what would be the best course of action- whether a food change is needed, if we need to try additional medications, or if we should run a stool sample.

Please inform your Foster Care Coordinator if you notice anything out of the ordinary with your foster cat, such as:

- Lethargy
- Excessive vomiting
- Dehydration
- Loss of appetite
- Hair loss
- Swollen ears/ear scratching
Pregnant/Nursing

How to set up a room for expecting mothers:
It is important for the mother to have a safe, separate, quiet, calm room for her to give birth and relax in the days leading up to the birth. A "whelping box" could be a box with a side cut out and made comfy, an airline crate missing the top, or a cat carrier. Let us know if you need help making the mom her own peaceful oasis!

What To Expect When Your Expecting:

**Signs of Labor**
When your momma starts to do any of these things, she may be near labor!
- Restless pacing
- Panting
- Loss of appetite
- Scrabbling in her bed/Nesting
- Frequent urination/vaginal discharge

**Signs of Distress**
*If your foster displays these signs, please contact the shelter*
- Resting/ restless for more than 2 hours after a kitten is delivered and you think there may be more babies on the way
- Foul smelling odor or excessive bloody vaginal discharge (Some is normal)
- The new mother is excessively tired or vomiting

Emergency Medical Numbers

Priority Shelter Line-978-745-9888X91

For Emergencies Only-425-314-3653

Pregnancy Duration:
Cats: 58-67 Days

Feeling overwhelmed and need more information? Reach out to your Foster Coordinator!
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Q. IS IT HARD TO GIVE THE FOSTER CAT BACK?
A. It can be. Think of fostering like babysitting. You know going into it that you can’t keep the children you are caring for. Fostering is no different! You can rest easy knowing that you’ve been a monumental part of their life and they will find a wonderful new home!

Q. HELP! MY FOSTER IS NERVOUS!
A. Allow time for adjustment. While it normally takes 3 days or longer for a cat to settle. This can show in nervous pacing, hiding, and fractious behavior and can make the process feel overwhelming at times. Being patient can allow a cat time to settle and adjust into their environment. If this behavior persists, reach out to the Foster Care Coordinator!

Q. CAN I ADOPT MY FOSTER?
A. Yes, if you decide this is your forever friend, we encourage you to adopt! Let the Foster Care Coordinator know at the earliest time to avoid us posting the pet for adoption.

Q. HOW LONG DOES EACH ANIMAL STAY IN FOSTER CARE?
A. Each situation is different! Our foster needs range from a day or two, or until the pet has been adopted, which can take several weeks.

Q. WHAT IF MY FOSTER PET BECOMES SICK?
A. Northeast Animal Shelter provides the foster pet’s medical treatment. The pet must be seen by NEAS medical staff. Emergency care must be approved by an NEAS representative. If you have any concern about your foster cat, please contact the Foster Coordinator before taking the animal to the vet.

Q. MY FRIEND/ COWORKER/ NEIGHBOR WANTS TO ADOPT MY FOSTER! IS THIS ALLOWED?
A. Yes. Please have them contact the Foster Care Coordinator to start the adoption process. Please note no guarantees are made.
CONGRATULATIONS

YOU DID IT!

Your foster cat has been adopted! You've found them a wonderful new home! The staff at Northeast Animal Shelter greatly appreciate your time, energy and dedication. You are helping to save lives!

Please let us know if there's anything we can do to make fostering easier and more rewarding. On behalf of all the pets and staff, we thank you!