

# Types of Cats for Fostering

## 1. PURPOSE

This document defines the types of cats that are sent to foster.

## 2. SCOPE

This information provides guidance to any staff responsible for deciding foster placement needs of cats.

## 3. BACKGROUND

Not all cats are best served by being in foster homes. This information helps to identify the categories of cats that can best utilize the type of care provided by foster homes.

## 4. OVERVIEW

### Adult Cats

Any adult cats that are not suitable for the adoption center will need foster. This can be for a variety of reasons, including, but not limited to, medical needs surpassing what can be provided in the shelter setting (i.e. Diabetes, serious injuries, chronic conditions, hospice needs, etc.) and behavioral needs that are not conducive to the hectic environment (i.e. socialization, cats that are shut down due to stress, aggressive cats, etc.). Happy, friendly, healthy cats and those with minor issues, such as upper respiratory infections, minor diarrhea, nervous cats who are settling in, etc. do not generally require foster.

### Adult FeLV+ cats

Due to the lowered immune system of FeLV+ cats and the risk of transmitting illnesses, adult FeLV+ cats need a foster for at least 10-14 days prior to going to an adoption center, sometimes a little longer if they get sick (23 weeks). These cats are often very easy as they are usually only in need of rescue due to testing FeLV positive and not for any behavioral or medical reasons. FeLV+ cats require foster homes with either no other cats or other FeLV+ cats.

### FeLV+ Kittens (Under 6 months-old)

Kittens will sometimes test positive for the FeLV+ virus because they are still carrying their mom's antibodies. FeLV+ kittens have the ability to fight off the FeLV virus and are not considered truly diagnosed as FeLV+ until they are at least 6 months-old, at which point the odds of fighting off the virus go way down. Since these kittens could end up being either FeLV positive or negative, they require foster homes until they either test FeLV negative or are 6 months-old. These foster homes must have no other cats to ensure that neither the kittens nor resident cats are exposed to the FeLV virus.

### Ringworm Kittens

Kittens are more susceptible to ringworm, a common, harmless, and completely treatable skin fungus, due to their reduced immune systems. During the summer months, shelters become overrun with kittens, many of whom have ringworm, and our Ringworm Adoption Center does not have the capacity to take them all in. Foster homes become vital to enabling us to save and treat these kittens.

### **Socialization Kittens**

Kittens that have never truly interacted with people require socialization to learn that people are not a threat. Earning kittens' trust can be a very rewarding process that does require a good deal of dedication and patience. As the kitten gets older, socialization can become more difficult. Socialization often takes about 4-8 weeks, but can vary depending on the severity of the case. Once socialized, these kittens can go into the adoption center.

### **Momma cats with babies**

APA! receives a lot of mom cats nursing babies or pregnant teenager cats in the shelter that need foster care. They should have a quiet, safe place to raise their kittens. This is one of the most rewarding foster experiences, watching the mom love, clean, and care for her babies. Typically these cats need fostering for 6-8 weeks to let the babies get big enough for spay/neuter.

### **Weaned kittens (6-8 weeks old)**

Weaned kittens are able to eat food on their own and can be left alone all day while the foster is at work. They usually love to play and have lots of energy. They typically need foster care for about 2-3 weeks to get big enough for neuter and then are off to adoptions. They can also be "preadopted" at this age.

### **Orphaned gruel babies (3-5 weeks old)**

These kittens do not have a mom to take care of them, but are starting to transition to wet food. They can be left alone for 4-6 hours at a time (up to 8 hours overnight), and eat a mixture of wet food + kitten formula. They sometimes need supplemental bottle feeding while they learn how to eat on their own and go to the bathroom in the litter box. These cats are great for fosters that work part time or can come home to check on them during lunch.

### **Orphaned bottle babies (0-3 weeks old)**

These are the most intensive, but most rewarding type of kittens to foster. They need to be fed every 2-3 hours (but can go up to 5 hours overnight) and since they do not have a mom, they need the foster to be their surrogate mom. Fosters will clean them, feed them, help them go to the bathroom everything a mom would do. These kittens are completely helpless and need the foster's help to grow into big, strong, healthy cats. These are perfect for stay-at-home moms or dads and people that work from home.

## **5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

You may need to contact relevant departments: Cat Foster Program, Neonatal Foster Program, Cat Adoption Program, Neonatal Nursery

For questions regarding this policy, contact document manager.