

Adoption Counselor Handbook



Adoption Counseling

Adoption counseling is about making a life long match between people and cats. Your goal will be to use communication techniques to gather information and use that information to educate and assist the public in choosing the right cat. Open ended questioning, active listening and discussion will help you build a positive rapport with the adopter and will help with the education process.

Be aware of your own behavior, attitude, tones and body language. As always if you are not comfortable with a situation, or do not know the answer to a question – ask a staff member. There are no scripts, each situation is different – empower yourself to make the right decision.

Adopting a cat is a serious commitment. That being said, our adoption counseling is much more relaxed than at most other shelters. We do not have a paper application, we do have adopters sign an adoption agreement once a match has been made. Our absence of structure is deliberate. We want to make adopting an approachable and enjoyable experience.

(Note: All adopters must be 18 or older. At this time we do not check everybody's ID, but if unsure, you should ask to see ID.)

Interpersonal Communication

There is a white board in the hallway by the basement stairs. Please always check it and our discussion boards at the beginning of your shift for pertinent notes related to that day's shift, and/or cat behavioral notes.

Medical Concerns - There is a medical concerns log on which you can record non-emergency medical concerns in the hallway. Please refer to list of emergency situations posted on the wall under the white board.

There is a living google doc where you can access other AC contact info, and edit your own. You will receive the link by email. It is also posted on the wall downstairs by the computer for reference. You will also gain access to the "Lead Volunteers" board on our discussion boards. **Please use the Discussion Boards! They are an essential tool for sharing information at Cat Town.**

At Cat Town, it's important to us that we treat each other with respect and kindness. If you have a problem, please talk to the Volunteer Coordinator, together you'll work to find a solution to the problem. Do not gossip about each other and our patrons. We have such important work to do, there is no room for negativity. Let's support each other!

Occupancy in the Cat Zone

- Cafe staff monitor the amount of people entering the cat zone
- All non-adopters need to leave at the end of the hour. They can ask the cashier if they want to check in for a second hour.
- The capacity for the Cat Zone is 10 people per hour. This number may change if a potential adopter arrives.

- Let the cashier know if you're ready for the next group. It's hard for staff to see if everyone is out from the previous group or if you're done cleaning.
- You may ask troublesome visitors to leave the Cat Zone. (*example: You've warned a child twice about not chasing the cats, told the parent, and it happens again. They can be asked to step out and take a break, or re-read the rules. Maybe they'll come back in, maybe not.*) **If you do not feel comfortable doing this alert staff immediately.**

Guidelines for Exceptional Customer Service

- Greet, make eye contact, smile!
- Listen to the adopter's needs, answer questions, offer assistance
- Ask lots of questions. Communication is the cornerstone to any placement. Giving the potential adopter your undivided attention during the conversation process will enable you to make the proper educated and caring placement. Do not interrogate.
- Cast aside judgement and prejudices. Remember, we do not discriminate or turn people down for an adoption due to race, sex, age, language, or the way the person looks or dresses. Assess the situation and gather all the facts fully before making rash judgments. It is always helpful to consult with another adoption counselor or staff member before making a final decision.
- If you feel yourself wanting to say "no"
 - Ask yourself if there are "red flags" present, or if you're reacting to personal prejudices
 - Ask the potential adopter more questions about their situation to try to understand where they're coming from
- *Remain kind* -- it's very important that people feel respected and have a positive experience, even if they are not approved for adoption.
- Thank Each and Every Customer

Potential Red Flags

"Red Flags" may come up during your conversation. You will need to ask more questions to clear up the situation, or decide to deny the adoption.

- "I'm in a hurry, can we make this quick?"
- "Can you adopt a cat for just a year or two?"
- "Does your vet do declawing?"
- "I'm going to surprise my daughter with a cat for her birthday"
- "My cat ran away..."
- "My dog chases cats if he sees them run"
- "I'm going on vacation next week..."

Our Deal Breakers

- Declawing
- Outdoor only -- cat must at least come in at night (some cats are NOT okay for outdoors - we will discuss further)
- No litter box -- cat must have litter box available
- Cats must be allowed in building -- no college dorms, unless approved by staff.
- Adopter must be 18 or older

Adoption “Interview”/Conversation Questions

There are certain questions you must go over with every adopter. If you need to contact management for a second opinion, they will need to know the answers to all of these questions to make an informed decision.

- Describe your ideal cat (age, gender, energy level, affection)
- Any behavior deal breakers? What is your greatest concern about getting a new cat?
- What is your cat experience? (Ever had kittens? Behavior issues you’ve had to deal with? Ever had a shy cat?)
- Do you want an indoor only, or indoor/outdoor cat?
 - We do not adopt cats to be outdoor only
 - Cats must come in at night and have access to indoor litter box. (In adoption contract.)
 - If indoor/outdoor
 - Cat must be at least one year old
 - AND must be indoor only at new home for at least 2 months
- Are you looking for a single cat? Thinking of getting other pets in the future?
- Do you have other pets?
 - Type of pet
 - Age, sex, personality
 - Has it been around other animals? Other cats? How does it react?
 - What do you see as a successful relationship between your current pet and new cat? (You need to set up realistic expectations.)
- Describe your home life
 - Are you allowed to have pets?
 - Checked with landlord, roommates, spouse, etc?
 - Work schedule?
 - Travel often? Have you thought about who will care for your cat when you’re out of town?
- Do you have roommates?
 - It’s *suggested* that roommates come to the cafe to meet the cat before it goes home. Check for allergies, and personality clashes.
- Do you have kids?
 - How many? Ages?
 - What is their experience with cats?
 - Kids **MUST** be present before adoption is approved. Exceptions must be approved by Ann.
 - We do not let parents adopt a cat as a surprise gift.
 - We do not save or reserve cats. If a parent has to bring the kids in later to meet the cat, we cannot guarantee it will still be available.

Assuming the adoption counseling is going well so far, you will start to ask more specific questions about how the cat will be set up and introduced into the home:

- Where will the cat go when you get home? Go over the plan for introducing the cat to new home and/or other cats/kids.
- “Tell me about the litter box.” Where will it be? What kind of box do you have? What kind of litter do you plan to use? Do you know how often to scoop and clean box?
- How will you deal with your cat’s scratching? What preparations have you made?
 - We do **NOT** support declawing and do not adopt to someone who plans to declaw.

Special Situations

- **Check Google Doc. with every adoption** to keep up with the cats' full stories, and whether or not a cat requires additional counseling contact management.
- **Forgotten kittens (FKP) Shy/under socialized cats need adoption approval from staff**
 - **Must go to homes who are experienced with under socialized cats**
 - **Must go to a home with another cat or to a home with an existing cat**
 - **No children under 12**
 - **Please do not refer to any of our cats as "feral"**. Even though we get some cats from Feral Change, they are NOT feral. If a cat is feral, it would not be in the Cat Zone. Our under-socialized cats are not feral. *See attached Feral info sheet at end of this packet.*
 - A better way to explain a stray cat's history is to explain that the cat was rescued off the street, or arrived at OAS because they were abandoned or lost. A cat may have been found near a feral colony, but it is not feral if we're able to have it in the Cat Zone.
 - These cats will be identified in the google document. Also, have an assigned case worker to follow up with the adopter.
- **Somebody wants a "Mouser" (A cat to catch mice)**
 - The first thing to say is that not all cats are hunters - especially those who have lived indoors with people their whole life. So there are no guarantees that a pet cat will be a good mouser.
 - The other thing to consider is disease - mice can infect a cat with roundworms, toxoplasmosis, and in rare occurrences (but not unheard of in the west) plague. Also a mouse that has eaten poison and then is caught by a cat can poison the cat as well.
 - If someone has an outdoor space (like a barn or large yard) and is looking primarily for rodent control, I would refer them to **Oakland Animal Service** or **10th Life Foundation**. Both organizations take feral cats and cats that need to be outside cats out of local shelters and have a complex system of acclimating them to new territory. They are another important rescue partner that takes the "unadoptable" cats that would previously have been euthanized.
<http://www.oaklandanimalservices.org/adopt/oakland-feral-cats-program/faqs/>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/tenthlifefoundation?fref=ts>
 - Find out how they would feel about the cat if the cat doesn't know the first think about hunting mice. If that's not a deal-breaker, and they really wants a companion, you can move forward with adoption counseling.
- **Emotional Support Animals** - This seems to be the latest "thing" these days for people who want to get around the issue of living in a "no pets " rental, and many people are unaware of the process required to prove that they need a pet for medical reasons.
 - Scenario: Someone comes in looking for a cat as an emotional support animal. They mention that there might be some delay in actually adopting a cat because their landlord doesn't allow pets. When asked if they have talked to their landlord about allowing them to have a pet, they say "well, they have to be, it's the law."
 - We need to treat this like any other renter who has landlord approval for a cat.
 - Make sure that all agreements have been made with the landlord before the cat can go home - not just let someone say they have a note from their doctor and are going to claim it as a support animal.
 - Some apartments require the following steps to be taken for Emotional Support Animals:
 - An M.D note needs to be provided to the landlord
 - Proof of vaccination, spay or neuter, vet receipts (up to a year), a health summary note from their veterinarian
 - A property visit from the landlord to inspect the home prior to allowing a pet on premise.

- This process can take 2-3 weeks after lawyer's draw up the necessary paperwork and both parties signed on the new tenant lease with the attached addendum-reasonable accommodation.
 - We will not place a cat on hold while paperwork is in process. Please ask them to return after they have the proper paperwork in place.
 - You can always refer people to management if you feel stuck or uncomfortable in an adoption counseling situation.
 - Resources:
 - Federal Fair Housing law. <https://www.animallaw.info/article/emotional-assistance-animals-rental-housing-how-guide>
 - Does an emotional support animal need specialized training?
 - HUD defines an emotional support animal as an animal that "provides emotional support that alleviates one or more identified symptoms or effects of a person's disability." These animals do not need specialized training. In fact, HUD states that, "[f]or purposes of reasonable accommodation requests, neither the FHA nor Section 504 requires an assistance animal to be individually trained or certified." While training is not required for an assistance animal, one court has stated that an assistance animal must facilitate the disabled person's ability to function.
 - <https://www.animallaw.info/article/faqs-emotional-support-animals#s2>
- **When a cat goes to a home with other pets**
 - The introduction needs to be made slowly
 - Make sure include additional Introduction handout in Take Home Packet
 - It can take months for cats to get used to one another. Don't rush things.
- ***FIV+ cats*** can live safely with other pets, but do be sure to go over proper medical care. FIV+ cats have compromised immune systems and colds or medical concerns need to addressed immediately. FIV- cats need one medical check-up a year. It is suggested that FIV+ cats get 2 check ups a year.
 - Please include an additional hand out on FIV+ cats in the Take Home Packet
- **Bonded pairs** must stay together
- **Foster to Adopt** -- This is an option to use at your discretion when somebody wants to adopt, but the situation is complicated, or they just need a "safety net". It allows the adopter to take the cat home, feel out the situation, and later finalize the adoption. It makes returning the cat seem easier (honestly, it's really easy to return a cat either way, but we do not want to encourage willy-nilly adoptions.) Please limit the use of FTA. There are no situations that "require" FTA.
 - **FTA must PAY the adoption fee at time of signing the paperwork, just like an adopter.**
 - We do not "offer" refunds if the cat gets returned. They would have to contact the executive director for that.
 - We do *not* provide supplies for FTA. (Sometimes people get our foster program confused with FTA)

Declining Adoptions/ Saying "no"

- Tell the adopter there are no cats suitable for their situation at this time
- Suggest they look at the cats in our foster program if you think they may be a better fit
- Lead them to form the conclusion on their own that they should not adopt a cat.
- Frame it as being in the cat's best interest to not adopt.
- You can tell them you need a second opinion or call management.
- Be honest: "I'm sorry, I don't think this is a good match." Briefly explain why. ex: Fluffy is a young cat and has a lot of energy; it's going to be really hard for her to be home alone a lot, and I'd like to find a situation that is better for her well-being. I'd encourage you to consider adopting an older cat that would be happy spending days alone. Have you checked out our foster program?"

Sealing the Deal

Notes:

- Medical records will be *emailed* to adopters usually within 7 business days of adoption. Make sure they know to check their email. If they need the medical records for any reason before, please let them know to email foster@cattownoakland.org
- All adopters and FTA folks will receive check-in emails from Cat Town staff.
- Foster to Adopt folks must stay in contact with us during the transitional period and need to contact us when they want to finalize.

The following check-list is posted in the hallway for your reference with every adoption.

Adoption Checklist

Go over this list with *each* adoption to make sure you're not forgetting anything

- **Did you cover all the following topics?**
 - Describe ideal cat: energy, affection, age, dealbreakers, Indoor/Outdoor?
 - Adopter's cat experience. Possible allergies?
 - Home situation: size of home, hours away at work, plans of moving soon?
 - Other pets? Type, age, energy, personality, have they been around cats?
 - Roommates or Children? Age of kids and their experience with cats? Allergies?
 - Dealing with scratching?
 - Litterbox plan: type of box, litter, box placement
 - Bringing the cat home -- Set up and introduction plan.
- **CHECK Google Doc.** before giving FTA/adoption agreement to adopter
 - Are there special notes regarding pick-up time or health issues (vet visit needed)?
 - Is approval required from Dawn or Marie? If yes, get approval before continuing.
- **Provide paperwork to adopter**
- While they fill out paperwork, **Check the Medical Binder in CZ2**
 - If cat is in binder, receiving treatment, contact management and ask if the cat needs meds to go home with him or not. Some cats share meds with other cats and we can't send it all home with one of them.
 - If the cat is going home with meds, you need to go over this with the adopter.
- **Check legibility of agreement.**
- **Set pick-up time.** Aim for before or after business hours, or Mon. or Tues., when practical.
 - Shy cats must go home after closing (7pm), or on Monday/Tuesday between 9-1pm.
 - NO mid-day pick ups for cats that are marked in the Google Doc. as "difficult to handle" or "challenging to get in carrier"
 - Only easy, calm cats may be picked-up mid-day, at the very top of the hour.
 - All calm and easy to handle cats are encouraged to be picked up same day no later than 5pm on Sunday closing
 - Stress the importance of *punctuality* if arranging mid-day pick-up. If late, they will have to wait for the next hour.
- **Write Pick-Up time on white board in hall, note if Medication needs to go home w/cat**
- **Make copy of agreement**
- **Place original agreement in INBOX on left side of desk**
- **Give COPY to Adopter with Take Home Packet**

- Select any additional handouts that are needed for Take Home Packet
- **Give Take Home Packet to adopter**
 - Go over proper cat carrier requirements
 - Must be big enough for cat to turn around in
 - Must be secure (no broken zippers, etc.)
 - *NO CARDBOARD carriers & must transport by car (no bus, bike, or BART)*
- **Have Adopter PAY with cashier in cafe.** If the adopter paid for their Cat Zone Reservation, they can apply that reservation-donation to the adoption fee if they wish. Ask adopter, and then confirm with cashier. Cashier may need to refer to the adopters account in the schedule.
- **Text Marie, Dawn, and Cathy when FTA or Adoption is approved, include pick up date and time.** No response needed unless noted in Google Document. Marie: 408-761-0202 / Dawn (510)325-8750 / Cathy: (978)766-0557
- **Move Photo on Magnet Board** to “Cats Who Found Homes This Week” section

Cat Pick-up

- Make sure the cat is in fact scheduled for pick up, listed on the white board in the hall. If they aren't listed, ask staff, or contact a staff person to make sure the cat is okay to go home.
- Make sure the adopter has a car for transport. Buses, BART, and walking down the street are too loud and scary for the cat.
- Retrieve medication if noted on the white board.
- Approve carrier. **NO cardboard carriers allowed.** Make sure the carrier is large enough for the cat to turn around in. Kitten carriers are not acceptable for a full grown cat. Inspect soft/ zippered carrier. Make sure they cannot be opened by a curious or scared cat paw.
- We do not loan carriers unless approved by management.
- **The cat must be placed in the carrier by a Cat Town volunteer or employee. The adopter should wait for you in the cafe and may not help.** Be sure to ask for help if you feel uncomfortable doing putting a cat in a carrier. If a cat is especially difficult, gets loose, or run away from you, take a little break before trying again.

Medical Information and CZ2 Adoptions

Medical Emergency vs. Medical Problem

The list below is a handout posted in the hallway by the white board to help you determine if a cat's medical condition is an emergency or not. The emergency situations are generally incredibly infectious or something for which you would take your cat to the ER on a Sunday.

Clarification note: “Hair loss” refers to ring-worm, which is very contagious. Usually a spot of hair loss on the paws, face or head with *very* clean borders, as if a drop of Nair was on the cat. Patchy hair loss at the base of the tail is likely caused by flea irritation/allergy.

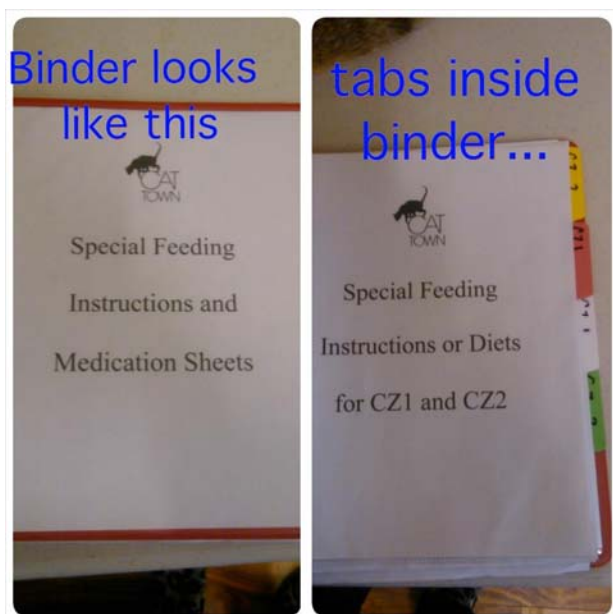
Emergency Medical Conditions

- Repeated vomiting and diarrhea – not able to hold down food or water
- Bacterial infection (gooey snot, very gooey or completely closed eye)
- Lethargic (not really moving)
- Injury (bite/bleeding/not putting weight on a limb)
- Excessive crying
- Going in and out of litter box but not going (and not just playing)
- Repeated coughing or very noisy breathing
- Hair loss (no hair in a spot with clean borders – especially on paws, face or head)

Non-Emergency Medical Conditions

- Squinting or watery eye
 - Sneezing
 - Itching
 - Limited diarrhea or vomiting
 - Not eating
 - Over grooming or spotty hair loss
 - Tapeworms or fleas
 - Sharp claws
- Non-Emergencies are recorded in the Medical Observations Log, which Katie or Marie will check each day.
 - Emergencies should be reported to cleaning staff if they are present; they will then contact Marie. If a Care Attendant is not here, a AC should contact management.

Special Feeding Instructions & Medical Sheets



This binder is divided into Sections

- 1st half is for feeding, divided by zone
- 2nd half is for medication, divided by zone

When a cat gets adopted

- Check to see if cat is in binder
- If yes, contact Katie (Fri/Sat only) or Marie by text to find out if the cat needs to go home with the medication. It may be sharing medication with another cat and we may not be able to send all the medication with the adopted cat.
- If the cat does need the medication to go home with it, please write the name of the medications on the pick up board with the cat, include WHERE the medication is located (drawer/ fridge?)

Returned Cats

- We are trying to check in with adopters and arrange for cat returns ahead of time so it's not a surprise.
- If you're working and a cat gets returned unexpectedly:
 - Text Dawn or Marie
 - Have the adopter fill out a Cat Town Return form, located in a blue folder on top of the medication cabinet, or downstairs in the filing cabinet. This form will help us assess any health concerns and help place the cat in a future home. If the adopter is huffy and unwilling to fill it out, try to ask them the questions and get as much information as possible in the time you have.
 - Put the cat in the designated Emergency Holding Space, which will be labeled. (If not available, call management. Leave cat in carrier until you can get a crate set up.) Make sure the space has a bed, litter box, water, and a bit of dry food.

If anyone ever gets bit by a cat, it's a big deal.

Cat Bites

If anyone gets bit by a cat, and it breaks the skin, it is a BIG deal.

- Try to make the wound bleed by squeezing during washing to flush out any potential toxins. Make sure they wash thoroughly (longer than normal) with antibacterial soap and warm water.
- Provide a bandaid with antibiotic ointment - bandaids and ointment are kept in the CZ hallway.
- Make sure they understand the importance of watching for signs of infection. An infected cat bite can be *deadly*, and they **MUST** take it seriously. Antibiotics will be needed if the wound becomes infected.
 - (From WebMD) Symptoms of infection may include:
 - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness in or around the area.
 - Red streaks leading from the area.
 - Pus draining from the area.
 - A fever.
- **Use the incident report sheet (under white board) to record their contact info, the cat, and date and time of bite.** Put in inbox downstairs.
- We highly encourage them to seek out medical attention.
- Alert management immediately.

Putting a Cat in a carrier:

- Make sure the carrier is the right size. Do not use a kitten carrier for a full-grown cat. Should be big enough for the cat to turn around in.
- Towel method - good for difficult cats
 - Lay towel on floor in front of open carrier. Have an assistant handy to stead carrier and keep door open.
 - Set scruffed cat quickly on towel and wrap towel over the cat while keeping scruffed. This will hold the legs in place (in theory), then slide the cat into carrier, while still scruffed, with towel wrapped around it.
 - Remove hand and quickly close door of carrier. The cat will wriggle free of the towel.

Cat Handling

Please ask Dawn, Marie, or Jay if you need a demonstration.

Here is my attempt to write up the handling guidelines:

- Hold one hand under the cat's sternum, front legs held between your fingers
- Elbow of same arm holds/pins cat's hind legs to your body
- Other hand is ready to scruff, and control the cats head
- Do not scruff and lift the weight of the cat. The scruff is for control. Lift the body with other hand.

- When scruffing, use the full length of your arm to apply controlled pressure along the back of the cat.

“Feral”, Tipped Ears, and TNR programs

Feral: a truly feral cat is a wild animal, like a raccoon or squirrel, whose home is outdoors and apart from people. The word feral is often used to describe any outdoor cat, but I think it is important to differentiate between feral and domesticated cats who happen to be outdoors, perhaps because they have been abandoned or lost. To put it in simple terms, I want to see the rights of feral cats protected, so that they can live safely outdoors, and for there to be intervention for nonferal cats who would enjoy being part of a human family. When feral cats enter the shelter, as an organization, we specifically don't try to socialize them, but instead advocate for their safe return to their outdoor home.

There is a general nervousness that I have observed when people learn a cat came from the street. There tends to be worry that the cat will not be happy indoors and will try to escape, or that there will be litter box issues or spraying. On wanting to go outside, that really depends on the cat. I've seen a lot of cats who want nothing to do with being outside, likely because they felt so vulnerable out there. Others may do best as indoor/outdoor cats, so that depends on the individual cat. As for the litter box, it's important for people to understand that cats instinctively want to dig and bury their waste, so don't need to be trained to use a box. As long as the box is appropriate – uncovered, with unscented litter, and kept clean - the cat will use it. Neutered male cats are unlikely to spray, especially if neutered young.

Trap-neuter-return (TNR): TNR is getting outdoor cats spayed/neutered and putting them right back to where they were found. During surgery the ear is clipped to signify to anyone doing TNR that the cat is fixed. Current practice is a straight line cut of the ear tip; early practice was a v-shaped clip. If both ears are tipped, that typically means the cat is both fixed and tested positive for FIV.

When a cat is outside, or in a shelter cage, it can be hard to tell the difference between a feral cat and one who is just scared. Often, it is after the cat has been trapped and fixed, and the ear tipped, that it becomes clear that the cat isn't feral. Also, many of the resources for free or low-cost spay/neuter require that all cats get their ears tipped, so sometimes the person who trapped the cat knows they are not feral but allows the ear tipping in order to get the surgery done.

The bottom line is that if a cat is at the CTC with an ear tip, it means the cat is not feral, but at some point lived outside and was trapped and fixed through a TNR program. If anyone is interested in learning more, these are the points I would like for people to understand:

- Getting outdoor cats spayed/neutered is ground zero for solving the problem of overpopulation.
- Doing TNR is incredibly hard work and the groups that do it deserve our support (locally: Feral Change, Fix Our Ferals and Feral Cat Foundation)
- Feral cats deserve the same rights and protections as any wild animal
- There are loads of cats on the streets of Oakland who aren't feral and would love to be rescued

- Having lived outside doesn't make a nonferal cat any less likely to be a wonderful companion
- We partner with Feral Change to find homes for the adoptable cats they find outside, so that they can stay focused on getting outdoor cats fixed

Understanding FIV

What is FIV?

FIV stand for feline immunodeficiency virus. It is a lentivirus, the same class of virus as HIV. FIV, which can live in many different tissues in cats, typically causes a weakening of the cat's immune system.

How do cats get FIV?

One of the tissues in which FIV lives is the salivary glands, so the most common route of infection is a deep bite wound from a FIV-positive cat to another cat. It can also be transmitted via blood, in utero and from milk from an infected mother cat. It is very rare for cats to get FIV from just being around infected cats, from sharing food bowls, or from a person touching a FIV-positive cat and then touching a FIV-negative cat.

What are the signs of FIV infection?

There are no specific signs of FIV infection. FIV-positive cats have a weaker immune system so they are more prone to getting infections such as upper respiratory infections, ringworm and dental disease. Other than that, FIV-positive cats tend to live normal lives and have a normal length of life.

How do I know if my cat has FIV?

There are no obvious signs of FIV so the only way to know is to do a blood test. The most common screening test is an ELISA test (often called a SNAP test) done by your veterinarian, which looks for antibodies to FIV. An antibody is a protein made by the cat in response to FIV infection. A cat can test positive as soon as two to four weeks after exposure, but it can take up to eight weeks.

Kittens under six months of age may test positive after having received antibodies from their mothers, either in utero or via milk. It can take up to six months for these antibodies to go away. Thus, it is a good idea to retest a kitten who tests positive after he or she has reached six months of age.

Can FIV be treated?

There are no proven treatments to rid a cat of FIV. Most FIV-positive cats handle the disease well, but it is important to concentrate on treating the secondary illnesses.

What can be done to prevent the spread of FIV?

Cats should be kept indoors so they do not fight with a FIV-positive cat. Depending on where one lives, the rate of FIV-positive cats ranges from 4 to 24 percent. A FIV-positive cat can live with a FIV-negative cat as long as neither cat is a fighter, or the FIV-positive cat has no teeth. (FIV-positive cats commonly have severe dental disease, which often means it is necessary to remove all their teeth.)

There is a vaccine for FIV, but Best Friends does not recommend it because the vaccine does not have the best efficacy and, after a cat is vaccinated for FIV, the cat will test positive for the virus. At this point, no test can differentiate whether a cat tests positive for FIV from the vaccine or from having the infection. If a cat escapes and is picked up by local animal control, and then tested, the cat may be killed because he or she tests positive.

Can FIV-negative and FIV-positive cats live together?

Yes, as long as the cats get along and do not fight. The risk that a FIV-positive cat could spread the virus to a FIV-negative cat can be minimized by having them live in separate rooms until you are confident that they will not fight with each other.

Can FIV-positive cats have a good and long life?

FIV-positive cats can live normal lives both in quality and duration. They do take special care in terms of monitoring them for signs of infection and they do have a tendency to have bad dental disease.

