



FOSTER CARER GUIDE





Furry Friends Animal Rescue Queensland

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1.Introduction

Thank you for choosing to help Furry Friends ARQ Inc by becoming one of our valued foster carers. We are a small, friendly rescue group that makes a big impact on the lives of kittens and cats.

Each kitten season (October to May) Furry Friends ARQ Inc receives communications about thousands of homeless, unwanted cats and kittens in need of care and we could not rehome them without the assistance of good people like you. An integral part of their rehabilitation is providing a safe and loving home. Your work will include the basic needs such as feeding, cleaning and socialisation of your foster cats and/or kitten/s. You will be required to observe their health and for small kittens this may include regular weight checks and monitoring them for signs of ill health. Our Foster Carer Coordinators and the fostering network in the Facebook Foster Forum will be there to help you along the way.

Once you have some experience there will be ongoing opportunities to assist with advanced care of mother and baby cats, kittens with behavioural challenges, veterinary rehabilitation and neonatal care (bottle feeders).

By familiarising yourself with this instruction manual and following instructions provided by our Foster Coordinators and/or veterinarians you will ensure your foster cats and kittens receive the very best of care on their journey to a new loving home.

Thank you for your commitment and helping Furry Friends ARQ Inc deliver a second chance.





2. Before You Start

Before you commence fostering your first kitty we need to ensure you are set up correctly and have a broad understanding of your role. Foster Carers must:

- Have completed the on-line registration form.
- Sign the Foster Care Agreement.
- Sign the COVID Safe Agreement that will be emailed to you
- Completed the [Home Tour Information](#)
- Familiarise themselves with the content of this information manual.
- Be able to commit to the nominated foster period for each animal in its entirety.
- Provide a safe (and potentially isolated) environment for your foster kitty and ensure they remain INDOORS or in an approved outdoor cat enclosure.
- Ensure that animals arriving from pounds are kept quarantined as instructed by your Foster Carer Coordinator.
- Provide a loving environment and spend quality time with your foster animal/s.
- Administer care needs in accordance with the Foster Care Plan provided by our Foster Carer Coordinators and/or veterinarians.
- Be able to bring your foster animal/s to veterinary appointments.
- Stay in contact with our Foster Care Coordinators.
- Provide safe transport for animals.
- Ensure all of your own animals are up to date with their vaccinations and worm treatments and are in good health.
- Be prepared for the commitment and emotional investment that comes with fostering.
- Be prepared to transport your foster pets to PetBarn Ipswich for rehoming.

3.Types of Foster Care

We will start you with basic care of healthy and age appropriate cats and kittens. As you advance your knowledge you might like to try taking care of cats or kittens in need of extra care.

Foster Type	Approx. Age	Foster Period	Care Needs
Neo Natal	1-4 weeks	Up to 8 weeks	Bottle Feeding Assistance with toileting Observation Daily weighing Cleaning Grooming
Juvenile Weaned	5-10 weeks	Up to 4 weeks	Feeding Observation Weighing Cleaning Grooming Socialisation



Mother Cat & Kittens	0-5 weeks	Kittens up to 9 weeks	Feeding Observation Weighing Cleaning Weaning
Behavioural	4-10 Weeks	6 Weeks	Feeding Observation Weighing Cleaning Socialisation Grooming Training
Veterinary Care	4wks - 18 years	Determined on a case by case basis	Per Care Plan Feeding Observation Weighing Cleaning Grooming Wound care Administer medication

4. Equipment and Consumable Needs

You will need the following equipment and consumables for your foster kittens/cats. Our charity may be able to assist with these needs depending on availability.

[Dry and wet food](#) (as advised by Furry Friends ARQ Inc)

[Flea and/or Worm products](#) (as advised by Furry Friends ARQ Inc)

Food and water bowls (small and accessible for a kitten)

Bedding (small soft blankets or towels)

Litter tray (low sided for easy access)

Litter (as recommended by Furry Friends - never use clumping litter for kittens)

Enrichment toys and scratch pads

Grooming brush

Transport pen

Scales that can weigh a kitten up to 1.5 Cat Carrier





5. Home

Before bringing your foster pet home, you should have a designated area ready for it.

The designated area should be:

- **safe and secure**

- no risk of escape through doors/windows (e.g. check flyscreens are secure)
- block access to hiding spots beneath/behind large objects (e.g. washing machines)
- remove any unstable, heavy, or valuable items (these may cause serious injury if knocked over by adventurous kittens/cats)
- ensure electrical cords are inaccessible (kittens/cats may get electrocuted if they chew on these)
- ensure medications and toxins are stored securely (particularly bathrooms and laundries)
- ensure any plants/flowers in the environment are safe (eg NO lilies)
- prevent access to potential foreign bodies (elastic bands, hair ties, shoe-laces, ribbons, sewing materials, blind cords etc.)
- keep the toilet seat down if housing your foster in a bathroom

- **comfortable environment**

- young kittens, sick cats and cats recovering from recent anaesthetic/surgeries have difficulty regulating their body temperature and cannot tolerate extremes of environmental temperature. For this reason they should be kept in an environment between 19-22°C or provided with a safe external heat source (microwavable heat pad, hot water bottle, electric heat mat with concealed wiring)
- no draughts at night - young kittens without a mum to keep them warm are very susceptible to hypothermia
- ventilated in humid weather – cats (like dogs) have a very limited ability to thermo-regulate through sweating and lose body heat by panting. Panting becomes less efficient as humidity increases
- remember that bathrooms and laundries are typically the coldest rooms in winter and the warmest rooms in summer

- **minimally stressful**

- best in a quiet area of the house with minimal 'foot traffic'
- free from other pets (cats & dogs) and young children

To achieve all the above, fosters may need to be kept in enclosures (e.g. crates) until they are ready to be introduced to a larger environment. In this instance, your fosters should be allowed to exercise and play in a larger secure area outside of the crate at least 2-4 times a day.



6. Set Up

Create areas for sleeping, eating, toileting and playing. No other pets should have access to this space.

a. Litter Trays

- Cats and kittens do not like to eat where they toilet so litter trays should be placed away from the feeding area.
- Depending on the size of the litter tray and the type of litter used, you may need multiple litter trays. We recommend 1 tray per cat plus one extra that is cleaned at least twice daily. This is to reduce the risk of 'accidents' and future 'inappropriate-toileting' habits.
- Some kittens may be very small so make sure you buy a tray that is low sided and easy to climb into.
- Use a paper-based litter such as Breeders Choice or shredded paper. Other types of litters can be harmful if ingested.

b. Sleeping Area

- Your cat carrier crate is an ideal place for cats/kittens to sleep in. Place a small blanket or towel in the bottom of the carry crate and leave the door open.
- A cardboard box also makes a good sleeping area.

c. Play and Enrichment Space

- It is important to provide plenty of amusement and stimulation for the cats/kittens. Cats/kittens love to play, chew things and fight with each other. Provide lots of toys (things like ping-pong balls, toy mice, toy balls etc.) make sure that the toys are safe. Never give the cats/kittens toys like balls of wool, string or even long pieces of elastic that they could swallow as this can result in problems with these items becoming stuck in the intestines.
- 'Cativity stations' can be made using cardboard boxes with small holes cut in them. Balls and other toys can then be placed through the holes so the cats/kittens can reach their paws in and play with them. These simple toys can provide hours of entertainment for the cats/kittens.
- A Radio playing soft music can help calm your cat/kitten/s.

d. Eating Area

- Use shallow bowls for food and water. If you have a litter of kittens make sure you have enough bowls so they don't have to fight or compete for food. For every 2 kittens, we recommend 1 double-bowl (double-diner) for wet food and 1 singular-bowl for dry food and 1 singular-bowl for water.

7. Collecting Foster Animals

Furry Friends ARQ Inc communicates the need for foster carers via a text, email or phone call. On receipt of a message you can express your interest in taking a foster animal/s with a reply.



a. Individual Care Plan

The Foster Carer Coordinator will contact you to discuss the care details and arrange a time for collection.

We will send you an email with a treatment plan attached. This will advise you of your pets diet and the medications required. It will also provide you with an approximate date for vaccinations and the date your pet/s will go to Petbarn for adoption.

You will also receive an email in a few days with a link to a profile information template. Please complete this ASAP so we can start to build a profile and start promoting your foster pet/s.

- It is assumed that you will follow all basic care needs as listed in this manual and the treatment plan .

b. Transport

- We recommend purchasing a cat carrier.
- Bring your cat carrier to the shelter when collecting cats/kittens.
- Never leave your cats/kittens unsupervised in the vehicle on a warm day.

Tips to reduce stress during travel

- place a blanket that the animal is already familiar with inside the carrier
- cover the cat carrier with a dark but breathable sheet/towel
- secure cat carrier properly in the car to avoid tumbles during braking
- drive thoughtfully (i.e. NO loud music)
- do NOT place food/water in carriers during travel (the exception may be extended travel), as cats typically will NOT eat or drink when they are stressed – this often just results in wet/soiled kittens that then require bathing = more stress!

8. Introducing Foster Animals to Your Home

Moving from the shelter to another place can be stressful for your cat or kitten/s.

8.1 Acclimatisation

To make the transition into the new environment as minimally stressful as possible cats and kittens should initially be confined to one room of the house. This is to allow the cat(s) to acclimatise to the new environment and to facilitate toilet-training in young kittens and previously untrained cats. Cats/kittens should be confined to the designated area until they are displaying normal behaviours including eating/drinking, grooming, toileting and willingness to play or investigate their environment further. For most cats this will take at least 2 days, however it is not uncommon for some cats and kittens to take longer than this, particularly if they are timid.



Fostering can sometimes involve the whole family and we want everyone in your household to enjoy the experience. Gentle interaction between children and kittens is encouraged but we ask that children are appropriately supervised. Young children should not carry kittens around in case the kitten struggles and is dropped.

Interact with your cat/kitten in their quiet room frequently and encourage them to get to know you and members of your family. Providing toys and novel palatable foods (small pieces of cooked chicken) are good ways to build a bond.

Once acclimatised your foster cat/kitten can begin to explore the rest of your home, but for their safety they should always be returned to the designated area when they cannot be supervised (e.g. at night-time or when you are out of the house).

8.2 Stress

It is normal for most cats to show some degree of 'stress' during the acclimatisation stage. It should be acknowledged that the cause of stress (stressor) can vary greatly from one animal to the next. Common 'stressors' include the following:

- auditory (foreign sounds and/or excessive noise – e.g. vacuum cleaner, dryer, washing machine, loud music, loud people)
- olfactory (foreign scents, familiar scents – e.g. scent of another cat/dog)
- visual (other animals including cats/dogs or particular people or objects)
- tactile (vibrations, handling of unsocialised animals)
- psychological (separation anxiety)

Stress may manifest itself in several different ways, but commonly observed signs of stress include the following:

- reduced appetite/anorexia
- reduced activity
- failure to display normal behaviours (grooming, playfulness)
- displaying undesirable behaviours (aggression, inappropriate toileting, destructive behaviour, excessive meowing)

As stress can have a negative impact on a cat's health (particularly with regards to cat flu) it is important to monitor for any potential signs of stress as early as possible, so that any potential stressors can be identified and minimised.

Some methods for helping to reduce stress include:

- providing a 'safe' hiding place (igloo) or covering the enclosure (crate)
- providing an elevated surface as cats feel more secure up high
- keeping the environment quiet
- talking to and handling the cat/kitten calmly
- playing soft music
- offering highly palatable foods (e.g. cooked chicken (no bones), tuna)
- Feliway (feline facial pheromone) - best for olfactory stressors/environmental change
- Calming collar (maternal pheromone) - best for separation anxiety/social status insecurities
- Cat Nip (natural herb) – best used for attracting cats to objects (e.g. scratching poles, toys). Young kittens (<8 weeks) typically do not respond to catnip.



8.3 Litter training

Cats are instinctively clean and can be litter-trained as soon as they learn to walk (~ 3 weeks). Most cats/kittens when provided with a litter-tray containing a suitable litter substrate will begin to use it without any direct assistance. To facilitate the learning process, provide a generous amount of litter in the tray so that the kitten can scratch around and dig into the litter. Repeatedly placing very young kittens into a clean litter tray and gently making them perform scratching-actions in the tray can help to promote toileting in the tray.

Initially, it is best to select a litter that is light and easy for the animal to scratch/dig in and that possesses a natural odour. It is also best to avoid scented litters. Use a paper-based litter such as Breeders Choice or shredded paper. Other types of litters can be harmful if ingested. If you prefer to use a different type of litter in the longer-term, wait until the cat/kitten is using the litter-tray routinely with the current litter, and then gradually begin to mix the desired litter into the litter-tray. For older cats which have grown-up outside (and have never been exposed to a litter-tray before) that are not showing any interest in using the litter-tray, sometimes beginning with a small amount of fresh soil or tanbark in the litter-tray can help.

Placement of the litter-tray is equally as important as the type of litter used. Litter-trays should be positioned in quiet areas, against walls or in the corners of the room, where the cat/kitten feels more secure and 'interruptions' are less likely to occur. This is to avoid the development of a 'litter-tray aversion', which could lead to long-term inappropriate toileting.

Very young kittens are prone to having toileting 'accidents' and will commonly urinate and/or defecate in the first place they feel comfortable, typically on beds/blankets, in concealed places (under the couch, behind the TV), and in the corners of the room. To minimise the risk of this happening, it is important to keep kittens confined in their designated room/enclosure until they have used their litter-tray twice for both urine and faeces. This is to distinguish a 'learnt' behaviour from a 'chance' event. Once the kittens have demonstrated this learnt behaviour, it is just as important not to allow the kittens out of their designated area for extended periods, as this increases the likelihood of kittens finding an 'alternative' toileting spot. Most kittens will typically need to urinate and/or defecate within ½ an hour of eating, so keeping them confined for at least 1 hour after feeding can greatly reduce the risk of accidents.

In the event that previously untrained cats/kittens do not use the litter-tray, it should be deemed an 'accident' and not 'inappropriate toileting'. Inappropriate toileting is when a previously litter-trained cat chooses not to use the litter-tray. It is important when an 'accident' does occur not to discipline the cat/kitten as this is likely to generate unnecessary stress and/or anxiety which is unlikely to facilitate the litter-training process. Rubbing an animal's nose into the site of an accident serves no useful purpose. What may increase the likelihood of a cat/kitten using a litter-tray after an accident, is to transfer a small amount of the urine and/or faeces from the site of the accident into the litter tray (a syringe or eye-dropper can be used to aspirate some urine). The most important action to take after an accident has occurred is to ensure that the soiled area is cleaned thoroughly.



Cats have a far more sensitive sense of smell than humans, so clean soiled areas until you can no longer detect any odour and then clean them at least one more time. This is to remove any odour that may act as a future 'trigger' for the animal to repeat toileting at the same spot. Using an enzyme-based cleaning product to clean the soiled site is generally more effective than trying to 'mask' the odour with fragranced products. It is important to avoid using ammonia-based cleaning products as normal urine contains ammonia and cats are more likely to urinate at sites where they can still detect ammonia odours.

9. Introducing Foster Animals to Your Pets

Once your fosters have acclimatised to their new environment and are familiar with all the two-legged members of the household, you may consider introducing them to the four-legged members.

It is important to remember that some health conditions of your fosters and your own pets may be contagious. Ensure your pets are fully vaccinated, wormed, flea treated and in good health before introducing them to your foster kittens. If you are unsure of the health status of your fosters it is best to delay any introductions until they have been examined by a veterinarian.

We are happy for your cat kitten to interact with the family dog/s if there is a good history of appropriate behaviour. Your dog may have seen cats but small kittens may trigger prey drive so be attentive at all times and particularly during the first few meets. **All interactions with dogs must be closely supervised.**

We recommend following a 3-step introduction process with your fosters and only one of your own cats or dogs at a time. This may take days to weeks to complete safely and successfully depending on the individual temperaments of all animals involved and their previous exposure (if any) to other animals. It should also be accepted that not all animals are socially compatible and that despite best efforts to introduce animals, in some cases it simply does not work.

Step 1 - Sensory Introduction

This step involves familiarising each animal to the other one's scent before a physical introduction. Repeated exposure to each other's scent will help to desensitise each animal to the other, reducing stimulation and potential fear when they first meet. Dogs in particular get very excited by new scents and will often sniff new cat/kitten extensively when they first meet. Prior exposure and/or desensitisation can help to reduce this initial excitement which can often be overwhelming and intimidating to cats/kittens, who then may react due to fear aggression.

- After your fosters have been isolated for a few days it is recommended to swap their beds/blankets with your pet's bed/blanket.
- Observe each animal's response to the other animal's bed/blanket closely.
- If the animal sniffs the blanket and does not display any 'negative' behaviours this is a good sign, and you may repeat this step a couple of times to ensure a consistent response before proceeding to Step 2.
- Negative behaviour include any of the following:
 - hissing/growling/barking at the bed or surroundings
 - avoiding the bed
 - inappropriate toileting on or near the bed
 - referred aggression to the owner or other previously socialised pets if approached during exposure to the bed or shortly after exposure



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- If however, either animal displays signs of negative behaviour, you can try to 'pair' this scent with a positive experience. This can be achieved by placing the animal's food bowl (with fresh treats or a 'novel' food inside) onto the bed and repeating this process until the negative behaviour abates.
- If the negative response to the bed/blanket does not abate with repeated exposure it is best not to proceed any further.

Step 2 – Visual Introduction

This step involves allowing the animals to see each other from a distance but not allowing them to get close enough to physically meet. Each individual animal's response during this step can give an indication as to how they may react when they do physically meet. This step involves 2 people, time, patience and discipline.

- Start with the existing animal in a calm relaxed environment (possibly resting on or beside you on the couch).
- Sit with/near your pet and have some treats on hand. Dogs should be kept on lead.
- Allow the second person to enter the room from a distance with the introduced animal.
 - Social/friendly cats/kittens may be held during this process
 - Scared/timid cats/kittens should be safely confined in a cat carrier as they may bite or scratch to get away if they become fearful during this step.
- If the existing animal does not show a negative reaction to the introduced animal, then it can be rewarded with pats and treats. This will help the existing cat/dog associate a 'positive experience' with the sight of the introduced animal.
 - If a negative reaction is not observed, this step can be repeated, progressively bringing the introduced animal to approximately within 1 metre of the existing animal. If there are still no signs of a negative reaction, proceed to Step 3
- Negative reactions include:
 - hissing/growling/barking at the introduced animal and/or owner
 - dilated pupils or avoiding eye contact
 - ears flat (cats), lip-licking (dogs)
 - 'Possum-tail' (cats) or 'hackles up' (dogs)
 - running away from the room in which visual introduction is being conducted
 - aggressively trying to approach the introduced animal
 - referred aggression to the owner during the visual exposure or shortly after
- If negative reactions are observed during this process then it is best to stop and try again on a different day, as once some animals are upset they need time to calm down.
 - It is important not to rush animals through this process if they are showing signs of stress, as this will likely reduce the chance of a positive outcome
 - It is also important not to reward the existing cat or dog whilst it is displaying these signs of stress as this will only positively reinforce their negative reaction.
- When the existing animal has calmed down, repeat the process but start by rewarding the existing animal with pats and treats immediately before the introduced animal enters the room and cease rewarding the instant the existing animal begins to display any negative reactions again.
 - If no negative reactions are observed, then continue to repeat the above process until both animals are within 1 metre of each other without any signs of stress, before proceeding to step 3.



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- If there are still obvious negative reactions to this, then desensitisation can be attempted by allowing the existing animal to approach the introduced animal whilst it is safely contained in its carrier or through another secure barrier (e.g. flyscreen, glass door)
 - This may be 'safe' for the introduced animal but can be very stressful as the introduced animal may feel threatened and 'trapped' in the carrier. It is best to place the carrier on a stable elevated surface (chair/coffee table) as cats feel safer off the ground.
 - If any negative response is observed from the existing animal, it is best to offer a distraction (toy or noise) and not to scare/discipline the animal as this may heighten the animal's negative reaction. The exception would be for trained dogs who could be instructed to 'sit' or 'wait'.
 - If there is no progressive improvement in response do **not** proceed to Step 3

Step 3 – Physical Introduction

This is the final step and involves letting each animal approach the other on their own terms. If the above steps have been successful then it would be expected to go relatively smoothly; any animal showing negative reactions to the preceding steps should not proceed to this step.

Dogs should be kept on a lead attached to a secure collar or harness. At least 2 people are required for this step to help separate animals safely if they are becoming stressed or aggressive. If large/strong dogs are being introduced it is advised to have enough people to suitably restrain the dog if it decides to try to chase the cats. Animals must be constantly supervised during this step.

The very first time the introduced animals meet physically it is not unusual for there to be some minor negative reactions. This is particularly the case when 2 cats meet for the first time as they often need to establish a 'hierarchy'. Due to their young age and small size, kittens are more likely to 'submit' to an existing adult cat, but this may change as the kitten develops and becomes bigger and more confident. A kitten may also attempt to challenge its social status within the hierarchy as it sexually matures and is exposed to reproductive hormones. For this reason, it is recommended not to attempt to socialise sexually mature cats. Once established, if the hierarchy is not 'challenged' then there should not be any ongoing issues.

To assist with the physical introduction, it is best that it is conducted in a quiet environment without any obvious possible stressors (e.g. loud noises, young children). It is also recommended to have some distractions on hand (toys, food) which can be used if tensions build. If the cats are getting in close proximity of each other but are not bonding, the following can be attempted:

- apply something palatable (tuna juice, kitten wet food) to back of the kitten's head/neck
- often the older cat will lick this off the kitten, which simulates a mother cat's grooming behaviour which often calms the kittens
 - this process is often not suitable for introducing kittens to dogs, as many dogs get excited in the presence of food and may inadvertently bite the kitten trying to remove the food from its coat
- the adult cat is also getting rewarded for its own behaviour and positively reinforcing this interaction
- at the same time, the adult cat is leaving its saliva on the kitten which may help with future recognition the next time they are physically introduced.
 - this process can often be used when trying to 'cross-foster' orphaned kittens onto lactating queens.



If the physical meet is successful, then it is important to allow frequent interactions to strengthen the bond as extended periods of separation may result in loss of recognition and the need to start over. This is also true for cats that have always lived together that are then separated and then return home smelling differently (hospital stays or segregation during boarding periods).

If the physical meet is still not successful, it is ok to retry a number of times on different days provided the negative reactions being observed are minor. However, if there are moderate negative interactions it is best for both animals not to persist, as this may affect their future sociability.



10. Food

The type and volume of food required depends on the life-stage and disease status of the cats/kittens.

In general,

- All cats/kittens are obligate carnivores and require a source of animal protein in their diet
 - Vegetarian and vegan diets are not suitable for cats/kittens and can result in nutritional deficiencies resulting in serious disease.
 - S7 of the Code of Practice for the Private Keeping of Cats (Vic) states the following,
Cats are carnivores and must not be fed a purely vegetarian diet
- Meat-only diets are not balanced, particularly for growing kittens, pregnant and lactating queens
 - Although meat is a good source of protein for growing kittens, it is severely calcium deficient when fed as a sole diet and can lead to serious health issues
 - Meat-only diets can also contribute to the development of constipation
 - S7 of the Code of Practice for the Private Keeping of Cats (Vic) states the following
Cats must not be fed a diet consisting purely of fresh meat (including fish)
- Raw meat should be **avoided** in very young kittens
 - Their immune systems are still developing, and they are at greater risk of becoming systemically unwell from various infections (Toxoplasma, Salmonella, E. Coli, Intestinal worms)
- All heavily pregnant and nursing queens should be fed kitten food until all kittens are weaned
- All kittens up to the age of 12 weeks (including those with nursing queens) should have access to food;



- This is to facilitate healthy growth (as well as allowing efficient attainment of surgery weights)
- This may decrease the likelihood of the development of food obsession
- If fed a balanced diet, kittens do not require milk past 12 weeks of age.
- If milk is required, avoid cow's milk as most cats are lactose intolerant.
 - Use a commercial animal milk replacer (low-lactose) or lactose-free pet milk.
- Fish should be avoided in kittens under 6 months of age (and some cats indefinitely)
 - Fish is not a natural protein source for cats and typically causes diarrhoea in developing kittens.
 - The exception would be using small amounts of fish (particularly tuna) to stimulate the appetite of a stressed or sick cat.
 - Check the ingredients on the back of the food as often the flavour on the front does not exclude fish being contained in the food.
- Avoid gravy-based wet foods (e.g. mince/casserole)
 - Most cats will lap up the sauce/gravy and leave the 'chunks'
 - Gravy-based foods stick to the teeth and promote the development of plaque
 - The gravy tends to be rich in carbohydrates and can promote the development of diarrhoea
- Feed dry food kibble that is an appropriate size for the kitten
 - The size of the kibble should increase as the animal grows to promote more crunching and chewing and healthier teeth and gums

11. Basic Care for Your Weaned Orphaned Foster Kittens – 5 to 10 weeks

The type of care you need to provide will depend on many factors including age, weight, health and behaviour. This manual is intended to provide you with a basic outline of care needs. If more information is needed for your individual pet's needs please contact any of the Foster Carer Coordinators.

11.1 Feeding

Kittens should be allowed free access to good quality wet and dry kitten food at all times.

- Recommended dry foods are Black Hawk, Advance, Ivory Coat, A La Cart, and for veterinary prescription foods, Royal Canin, Hills Science Diet..
- Recommended wet foods are Royal Canin, Hills Science Diet, Advance, Felix, and Fancy Feast.
 - Remember to avoid fish and gravy-based wet foods to prevent diarrhoea.

Kittens should also be provided with fresh, clean water daily

- Provided kittens are eating a good quality balanced kitten food they do not require milk
- If milk is provided, ensure it is lactose-free. Alternatively, you can mix some kitten milk formula/powder into the wet food.

It is important to monitor how much each kitten is eating. This can be difficult with larger litters so observe them at mealtimes. If one of your kittens appears to be eating less than the others you may need to segregate it at feeding time or supplement their diet with a high energy wet food or kitten formula mixed with food.



11.2 Cleaning

Bedding does not need to be regularly washed unless it has been soiled. Kittens like their familiar scent left on their bedding.

Food bowls should be cleaned after feeding and water changed at least daily and whenever the water appears tainted.

- Inspect dry food bowls carefully for moist/stale pellets at the bottom of the bowl

Kittens can defecate up to 3 times a day if their stools are normal, and more often when they have diarrhoea. As kittens can be reluctant to use a soiled litter tray, you must regularly inspect the trays and clean them as required.

- If using 1 litter tray per 2 kittens (as previously recommended) you should be emptying the litter tray and cleaning it thoroughly at least twice daily.
- To prevent kittens having accidents whilst the litter tray is being cleaned, it is helpful to have at least 1 spare tray so that the kittens are never without access to a clean tray.

Bowls and litter trays should be cleaned by immersing in hot soapy water and scrubbing them to remove any visible matter. Place cleaned items in the sun to dry.

- Some chemicals can be dangerous to your kitten's health so please only use a PH neutral detergent.
- However, if the litter trays are heavily soiled or your fosters are suffering from a gastrointestinal infection, it best to use dilute bleach to disinfect the trays. For example, for Giardia cysts
 - 1:32 dilution is effective within 1 minute, whereas
 - 1:100 dilution can take up to 10 minutes to be effective
 - Be sure to rinse the bleach off thoroughly before re-using

11.3 Weighing

On collecting your kittens please weigh them and make a post in the foster forum telling us their weights so we can check against their age/milestones and add to their record in Shelter Manager.

Kittens of all ages should be growing constantly every day, but fluctuations can be experienced throughout the day depending on the timing of the weight measurement (before/after eating/toileting). To provide an accurate assessment of the weight, kittens should be weighed roughly at the same time every time.

How often you need to weigh your kittens depends on their age. Please refer to the table below for more specific details. Try to avoid weighing kittens twice a day as this creates both confusion and anxiety due to the rapid fluctuations throughout the day.

Age	Weighing Frequency
1 week	Once Daily
2 weeks	Once every 2nd day
3-4 weeks	Twice a week



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5 weeks and above	Once a week
Any cat with poor appetite or lethargy	Daily

Healthy kittens should gain at least 10-15grams/day (some even up to 20grams/day). Most kittens should gain at least 100grams/week (some up to 150grams/week).

- **Kittens that are losing weight or failing to gain weight should be examined by a veterinarian immediately** as kittens have very little energy reserves and can decline rapidly.
- Any kitten that has reduced weight-gain should be monitored for up to 48hrs provided they still have a good appetite and do not have any clinical symptoms of disease.
 - During the 48hr monitoring period, the kittens should be offered additional/novel foods like cooked chicken (no skin or bones), a/d and nutrigel.
 - If weight gain is still reduced after this time, these kittens should also be examined ASAP.

Based on the average birth weight of 100grams (range 80-120grams) and the minimum expected weekly weight gain, an estimated age for kittens can be determined using the following table.

Age	Weight		Other Features
1 day	100 grams	0.10 kg	Umbilical cord present for 3-5 days
1 week	200 grams	0.20 kg	Eyes open at 7-10 days
2 weeks	300 grams	0.30 kg	Kittens starting to walk
3 weeks	400 grams	0.40 kg	Kitten incisors and canines erupt
4 weeks	500 grams	0.50 kg	
5 weeks	600 grams	0.60 kg	Kitten premolars erupting
6 weeks	700 grams	0.70 kg	Kitten premolars erupted
7 weeks	800 grams	0.80 kg	
8 weeks	900 grams	0.90 kg	Iris changes from blue to adult colour
9 weeks	1000 grams	1.00 kg	

Please note this is for healthy kittens in good body condition and allowances have to be made for sick, underweight kittens. These kittens will often have 'compensatory' weight gain (greater than average) once their underlying health issues have been addressed.

11.4 Grooming

Juvenile kittens should be able to keep themselves reasonably clean. Sometimes you may need to give them a little help, particularly long-haired kittens around their face and bottom. This can be done using warm soapy water and a well wrung face washer. Alternatively, fragrance-free baby wipes can be used.

We do not want kittens to be bathed unless necessary but if this is required an appropriate pet shampoo should be used. Kittens should not be bathed late at night or on very cold days.



Bathe kittens in a small tub with warm water, keeping the kitten always secure. Only wet the areas that require cleaning. Thoroughly dry the kitten with a towel and ensure it is kept in a warm place and away from drafts. Some kittens will tolerate a hairdryer, but most are scared by the noise. A heat pad will help to keep them warm.

A small soft brush can be used for grooming and is a good inclusion to your daily routines. Long hair cats will require daily brushing to avoid matting and skin lesions.

11.5 Socialisation

Socialisation is essential to a young kitten's development and is the "fun part" of being a foster carer. Lots of handling and exposure to different situations helps a young kitten become a well-adjusted cat.

Your kitten/s should be handled regularly particularly if it is a singleton (at least two to four times per day for 15-20minutes per session). Gently and repeatedly touching sensitive areas such as the paws, chest, belly, mouth, ears and tail are a great way to desensitise your kitten.

We recommend "scruffing" your kitten regularly. Scruffing involves grabbing the loose skin at the back of the neck to stop it from moving away. While this may seem a little harsh, it is something quite natural for a kitten as this is how their mums would carry them. It can have a calming effect when done correctly. Start by patting your kitten around the head and neck and occasionally grab the loose skin on the back of their neck as close to the ears as possible and then release. The best method is to use a thumb and index

finger to firmly hold the loose skin at the back of the neck (below the base of the head and above the shoulder blades). This should NOT be a forceful action and the scruff should **always** be held parallel to

the spine of the kitten. If planning to carry a kitten by the scruff, the weight of the kitten should **always** be supported with the opposite hand placed beneath the hind legs. The only exception to this is with very small kittens (less than 500g).

To facilitate the development of the scruff response in young orphaned kittens it is important to handle them regularly using this method. This includes when picking them up initially and when carrying them from one place to another. To promote a cat remaining responsive to being scruffed throughout life, it is important NOT to perform painful procedures whilst scruffing a kitten and to avoid 'over-scruffing'.

Over-scruffing refers to any of the following:

- grasping too much skin
 - this tightens the skin over the front of the neck, making it more difficult for the kitten to swallow and breathe
- twisting the skin
 - this can induce a pain response in the kitten being scruffed
- holding the kitten by the scruff for an excessive length of time

These techniques will help veterinary staff and future owners when examining or restraining the kitten.

We want our kittens to meet as many people as possible so please introduce your kitten/s to visitors. Allow your kittens to be a part of the family as much as possible. This does not require great effort. Having a kitten in your lap while watching TV is simple and effective. See section 8 & 9 regarding interaction with young children and other pets.



Once they feel safe in your home allow them to explore and experience different things. Exposure to noise is beneficial but be careful not to introduce loud scary appliances such as vacuum cleaners straight away. For example, try vacuuming outside the door of your kittens' room first to allow them to adjust and increase the interaction over time.

Kittens love to play together and will display behaviours such as climbing, perching, hiding and playing with toys. We recommend you provide lots of interesting things to knock around and explore. There are some great cat toys on the market, but you can also provide simple toys such as a ping pong ball, cork or toilet paper tubes. Do not give the kitten any home made toy that could present a digestion hazard.

Avoid rough play as this could lead to future behavioural problems and do not let kittens scratch or bite you. Use toys for play rather than hands and feet. Remember, this cute little kitten will grow up to be a 5-10KG cat with sharp claws and big teeth. There is nothing funny about being bitten on the hand by an adult cat so stop the problem behaviours early.

Another normal behaviour for kittens is to scratch (usually your furniture). This is a behaviour we want to discourage. We recommend having a scratch pole on hand. If the kitten begins scratching in an inappropriate area, remove them and place them on the pole. In time they will learn this is the place to scratch.

If you are observing problem behaviours, please speak with your Foster Carer Coordinator about solutions.

11.6 Timid Kittens/Cats

Some cats/kittens will be under socialised and display behaviours from shyness to extreme timidity. When dealing with these cats/kittens you will need to apply a different approach.

- Provide a safe place for them to hide such as their crate or a box in an accessible area. Do not house cats/kittens in a space that provides unwanted hidey holes such as behind fridges, furniture etc.
- Feed cats/kittens by hand or as close to you as possible.
- Wrap the cat/ kitten in a towel or soft blanket when holding it.
- Do not make sudden movements or loud noises when cats/kittens are in your vicinity.
- Use toys that reach distance and encourage them to come out of their safe space to play.
- Keep interactive sessions short and positive.
- Feliway diffusers and sprays may assist in alleviating anxiety.

If you don't see gradual improvement in social skills, please speak with your Foster Carer Coordinator.

12. Care for Mother and Kittens

12.1 Care of Mother Cat

Care of the mother cat will be along the lines of other everyday adult cat care needs with a few additions.



- A quiet space will be needed for your mother cat and kittens.
 - The nursing box should be big enough to allow the queen to stretch out on her side comfortably to provide access for all kittens to suckle.
 - The nursing box should also be setup such that there is no 'dead space' that wondering neonates can get trapped in
- Delivering basic needs to the mother such as feeding, cleaning and health observation.
 - Lactating queens should be fed kitten wet and dry food whilst feeding kittens.
- Some nursing queens will have a high protective instinct and will hiss at humans or other pets
 - Do not allow other pets to have access to the mother and kittens.
 - When interacting with the mother and kittens, wear clothing that will protect you from a bite or scratch and move slowly and quietly.
 - A treat for the mother cat may help calm the situation.
 - If you are unable to deliver the level of care necessary, please contact your Foster Carer Coordinator to seek instruction.
- It is important to make sure that the mother cat is eating well and not losing too much weight or condition.

Nursing mothers may also experience mastitis, which is an infection of the mammary glands. Causes include abrupt weaning and trauma caused by kittens such as scratching and biting of the nipple. Regularly observe the mother cat for signs of mastitis such as firm, swollen, red, warm, abscessed or painful mammary glands.

12.2 Care of Kittens

For the first 3 weeks of life the mother cat will provide everything the kittens need.

- During this time, the mother and kittens should be subjected to minimal stress to avoid disruption to the mother's nursing routine
- Some nursing queens are quite social and happy for their kittens to be handled from the day they are born. If this is the case, it is a good idea to get the kittens used to being handled from as early as possible. If handling the kittens, remember to pick them up gently by the scruff.

12.3 Maternal Neglect

Some cats are more maternal than others. In the first few weeks you need to check daily that the mother cat is feeding and grooming her kittens regularly. She should be spending most of her time with the litter and if her kittens cry and she does not adequately respond you should seek advice from your Foster Carer Coordinator.

12.4 Weaning

To promote healthy development, kittens should be kept with mum until at least 8 weeks of age. If necessary, kittens can be weaned earlier, from 5-6 weeks of age, but this is not ideal. Most kittens will start experimenting with mum's wet food from as early as 4 weeks but will not be eating enough independently to sustain themselves without mum.



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.Once they are eating wet food you can start to introduce kitten dry food. Prior to completely weaning the kittens from mum, it is essential to confirm that each individual kitten is eating an adequate amount of food. Weighing the kittens will help to determine this.

For very small kittens or those that are starting to wean from mum, placing food on a flat saucer can make it easier for them to access their food until they are big enough to eat from a standard cat bowl. (This can be messy as most kittens will walk through the food and sit in the middle of the saucer whilst eating)

From this point follow all care instructions as outlined in Basic Care for Your Weaned Foster Kittens. You will need to contact your Foster Carer Coordinator to discuss the return of the mother cat for Spey and adoption.



13. Neo Natal Kittens

Kittens less than 4 weeks old and without a mother will require expert care delivered by experienced foster carers.

13.1 Feeding

Depending on their age, bottle-feeders will require feeding at different intervals with different volumes throughout the day and night. When bottle-feeding, it is important to ensure a good attachment to the nipple of the bottle to prevent the kitten from taking in too much air when drinking. Never bottle-feed a kitten with it laying on its back.

The following table gives a guide as to how much and how often kittens should be bottle-fed.

AGE	VOLUME/FEED	FREQUENCY	FEEDS PER DAY	VOLUME/DAY
0-7 days	2-4 mls	2 hrs	12	24-48 mls
1-2 weeks	4-8 mls	3 hrs	8	32-64 mls
2-3 weeks	8-12 mls	4 hrs	6	48-72 mls
3-4 weeks	12-16 mls	5 hrs	5	60-80 mls
4-5 weeks	16-20 mls	6 hrs	4	64-80 mls

Kittens that are feeding well should be quiet and content, feel warm and be snuggled in with their littermates.



- These kittens will often spend most of the day sleeping, and typically only start to stir when they are hungry.

Kittens that are not feeding well will usually be quite restless, stir very easily and are often constantly crying for food.

- These kittens are typically in poor body condition, feel cold, and may be sleeping apart from the rest of the litter.

13.2 Toileting

At this age they will also require stimulation of their bottoms to help them toilet. This is done by gently and repeatedly rubbing the anogenital region in the same direction with a dry cotton ball or something similar. This is to simulate the mother cat's grooming action, who would normally be licking the kittens frequently. It is best to toilet kittens before feeding, and if not successful repeat after feeding.

13.3 Grooming

Young kittens are unable to groom themselves so you will need to keep them clean. Using a soft damp cloth, clean the kittens as often as needed. Do not bath the kittens as this may cause a dramatic drop in body temperature.

13.4 Weighing

You **MUST** weigh kittens daily and record their weights to ensure they are gaining (and not losing) weight. If you notice weight loss contact your coordinator.

14. Fading Kitten Syndrome (FKS)

Bottle fed kittens are at high risk of illness and sometimes fatality. They can quickly deteriorate (commonly referred to as fading kitten syndrome or crashing). Fading Kitten syndrome (FKS) is a set of symptoms that cause a neonatal kitten to fail to thrive. While (FKS) is not a disease, it is a series of life-threatening symptoms in which the kitten's health quickly declines and may lead to death without quick medical attention.

Kittens under 6 weeks old are extremely fragile. Their body temperatures needs to stay warmer than you may think and can drop very quickly. They are tiny and extremely susceptible to a multitude of illnesses and diseases, and they can become very sick very quickly if they are not eating or especially getting enough fluids.

It is important to recognise the symptoms and know the steps to take when you are faced with a fading kitten.





Know the Signs:

- Lethargy – not getting up, unable to stand or move, limp
- Cold to the touch – cold ears, cold body, cold feet (especially the bottom of their feet)
- Unresponsive – very young kittens will still respond to touch and stimulation when they are healthy and thriving
- Gasping for breath
- Crying out in a way that seems like the kitten is in pain or struggling
- Pale Gums – a healthy kitten's gums should be bright or dark pink – if they turn pale or even white, you need to move fast
- Dehydration
- Loss of weight
- Decreased interest in food
- Looking generally gaunt

What to do if things go wrong:

Step One: Contact Furry Friends ARQ Inc for advice (see contacts on last page).

Step Two: Get the Kitten Warm - Even though you have provided your kitten with a heat source, you must now apply additional heat for this kitten – remember to never apply a heat source directly to the kitten's body as this can cause serious burning and even overheating.

The best thing you can do in this situation is called a "Burrito Roll." Take a heating pad, place a blanket or towel over the pad, place the kitten on top of that (with the kitten's head near the edge) and wrap the kitten up in your double layer "burrito" so that the kitten is completely rolled up in the heating pad and blanket. You want to make sure it is not too tight so that the kitten can breathe, and that the kitten's face is easily accessible for your next step.

If you do not have a heating pad you can warm blankets or towels up in a dryer and wrap your kitten/s.

Step Three: Get the Blood Sugar back Up - A cold kitten should not be given food or started on this third step. Once their body is no longer cold to the touch, their ears have warmed up, or the pads of their feet are no longer cold, you can start step three. Apply a small amount of honey or syrup to the gums, once the kitten has licked it off repeat until the kitten becomes more active and alert.

15. Veterinary Checks & Desexing Appointments

The Care Plan will be emailed to you when you confirm that you have collected your foster kittens/cats and they are in your care.

Please ensure that the cat/kitten is kept free of parasites and notify your coordinator when you think that it/they are ready to be desexed or if any illness is observed.

Our vet nurse is contactable via the foster forum and will discuss any ill health concerns and determine if a vet visit is needed. If it is required, then the booking will be made in consultation with you so a suitable day/time can be arranged.



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To book routine desexing appointments once the pet's weight is over 1.2kg please use [this online form](#).

Male cats take about 24 hours to recover from castration. They need to be kept quiet during their recovery time. Female cats take about 10 days for their wound to heal after spaying and may have stitches that don't dissolve so require a check up visit at 10 days post surgery. This visit is free of charge and the carer can call the vet directly to organise the post surgical check up. Please let your Coordinator know when the check up is completed.

If after surgery you see any of the following, please IMMEDIATELY contact us as your foster pet may have an infection and require urgent medical assistance;

- swelling of the wound site
- burst stitches enabling view of inside of cat's abdomen
- cat pulling at stitches and redness of the site
- smelly pus oozing from the site
- intestine hanging out of burst wound
- bleeding
- Cat hiding, withdrawn and doesn't want to be touched near belly.

15.1 When to Call your Foster Coordinator

If you are worried about any aspect of your kitten/s health you should contact our administrators for general advice. Concerns may include (for one or all kittens):

- Have stopped gaining weight.
- Have diarrhoea or vomiting which has lasted longer than 12 hours.
- Have stopped eating.
- Seem tired, lethargic or in any way unwell.
- React badly to a vaccination.
- Have started frequently sneezing.
- Are discharging mucus.
- Have conjunctivitis (crust around the eye)

16. Vaccinations, Worming & Flea Treatment

Due dates for worm or flea treatment will be advised on your care plan, received shortly after your kitten or cat arrived into your care.

16.1 Vaccination

Furry Friends provides ONE vaccination and any further boosters are the responsibility of the adopter. When funds allow and Volunteer Vaccinators are available, Furry Friends may provide booster vaccinations] to kittens in our care.

Kittens are administered their first F3 vaccination by our Vaccination Volunteers from 6 weeks of age. Please post in the foster forum if you want to check that there is a Volunteer Vaccinator in your area. If there's no Volunteer Vaccinator in your area, the vaccination will be provided when the cat/kitten attends the vet clinic for desexing.



Vaccinations can occasionally cause a kitten to feel a little off colour. They may seem quieter than usual and less interested in food. They may be less comfortable with handling. Most kittens will return to normal within 24 hours but occasionally some react more severely and may need veterinary attention. If symptoms extend beyond 24 hours or the kitten/s seems to be highly unwell you should contact the clinic immediately.

16.2 Worms

After treating kittens or cats with worm tablets, you may see dead worms in their stools post worming and this is quite normal. Your kitten may not have been wormed prior to collection and signs of worm presence may include:

- A pot belly
- Poor coat condition.
- Blood or mucus in the stool.
- Pooing or vomiting live worms

If your kittens show the above signs please contact us for instruction.

16.3 Fleas

You are required to flea treat your kittens while in foster care. If you notice evidence of live fleas, please contact your Coordinator and seek advice. Do not administer flea treatment to your kittens as incorrect dosage can be fatal in young kittens.

17. Illness & Zoonosis

Zoonosis is a term used to describe diseases that can be transferred from animals to humans. Most cat diseases only affect cats but can affect people. Before cats and kittens are placed in foster care, they are carefully checked for any signs of these diseases however, it is possible for symptoms to appear after you take them home.

People at increased risk for zoonotic diseases include:

- People with HIV or Aids.
- Pregnant women.
- People on chemotherapy or radiation therapy.
- Very elderly or very young people.
- People who have had organ or bone marrow transfusions.
- People with chronic diseases.

We advise people in these increased risk categories to speak with our vet nurse before taking cats or kittens into their care.





You can mitigate zoonotic risk by:

- Wash your hands after contact with kittens and again before eating.
- Cover wounds or broken skin with a band aid.
- Using gloves when cleaning litter and clean daily.
- Keep litter trays away from kitchen and food storage areas.
- Dispose of litter in a way that does not create dust or airborne particles.
- Avoid touching your mouth while handling kittens.
- Do not kiss kittens.
- If you are scratched or bitten immediately wash the area with soap and water. Treat with an appropriate anti-bacterial such as Dettol.
- If you are concerned about any illness speak with our Shelter Cattery.

The most common zoonotic diseases are explained below:

17.1 Ringworm

What is Ringworm?

Ringworm is a fungal infection of the skin, caused by a fungal organism that unfortunately lives just about everywhere, but particularly in warm, humid environments. The microscopic spores live in the soil, so when outside, the spores can attach themselves to skin, fur, hair, even clothing and then set up shop in hair follicles. The fungus gets its nutrients from keratin (which is a protein found in hair, skin, and nails), so these are the areas they most attack.

***Note: Ringworm can affect humans as well as cats and dogs**

How to Spot Ringworm?

Ringworm comes up on the skin as a circular reddish rash about the width of a worm (hence “ringworm”), so that’s the first sign to look for. The skin around the infected area also becomes dry, itchy, and flaky, so if your cat is scratching frequently and for a long period of time, check the spots they are scratching for the reddish ring. Ringworm also causes hair loss, so check for bald patches, or even dull and stubby patches within your cat’s fur.

So, the signs of ringworm to look out for are:

- Reddish ring on the skin (though a ring doesn’t always appear!)
- Over scratching in the same areas
- Rough and bumpy feeling skin
- Bald patches in the fur
- Dull and stubby patches of fur

How to Treat Ringworm

Thankfully, ringworm is not life threatening and is easily treatable. Here are the steps:

1. Carefully place the cat into a tub, bucket, or sink up to their neck in warm water.
2. Take the kitty out of the water and with gloved hands rub the liquid ‘Malaseb’ all over their body, making sure to get every inch of the cat (including in between their itty bitty kitty toes). *Note: ‘Malaseb’ is a very toxic substance designed to kill the fungus, so DO NOT let your cat lick themselves while covered in it!
3. Wrap the cat tightly in a towel and sit holding them for 10 minutes. Try to calm them down if they’re feeling anxious.

4. Unwrap the cat and place them under warm running water to rinse all of the 'Malaseb' off. We recommend gently rotating them under the water to make sure every inch of their body has been rinsed clean. Again 'Malaseb' is incredibly toxic, so please make sure all of it is completely washed off of your cat.

5. Dry the cat using a DIFFERENT towel to the one you used before.

6. Drain away the 'Malaseb' water, and thoroughly clean the area where you washed the cat. Make sure to also wash your hands thoroughly in case any 'Malaseb' ended up on them despite the gloves.

***Note 1: steps 1-6 will need to be repeated in one week's time.**

***Note 2: You should repeat this process for any other cat in your household even if they don't have any signs of ringworm, as they could be a carrier of the spores.**

7. Keep the infected cat in isolation (one room) for 2 weeks, or until there is evidence the ringworm has gone. In particular, keep them away from your other pets.

8. Unfortunately, it's not just the cat that will need a deep clean. Ringworm spreads incredibly quickly and can attach itself to almost anything, so you will also need to thoroughly clean any areas of the house the cat has been. Basically, vacuum the carpets and any other fabric areas, bleach any surface that can be bleached, and wash things like blankets, sheets, pillows, mats, cat beds, and fabric cat toys in a wash with 'Canesten' to kill any fungi hiding in the house.

9. After the 'Malaseb' wash, you will need to give your cat a dosage of 'Terbinafine' once a day for 7 days to kill off any remain infection. 'Terbinafine' is an anti-fungal tablet requiring a script from a vet to get the dosage right. You can also use a 'Terbinafine'- based cream called 'Ilium' to soothe the ringworm infected areas.

10. Keep a close eye on your cat in isolation to see if any ringworm signs re-appear. Also, keep an eye on the rest of your household (both animal and human) for any signs of ringworm on them.

If you notice any thinning of the hair or crusty/flaky skin (particularly around the ears and face) take some clear photos of the affected area on the cat then contact our Furry Friends Cats Team / Foster Coordinators immediately.

17.2 Giardia

Giardia is an intestinal parasite that can be found in numerous species including cats. It is spread through contaminated food and water with infected faecal matter. Common symptoms of Giardia infection in both pets and humans include diarrhoea, flatulence, abdominal discomfort, nausea, vomiting or infected individuals may be asymptomatic.

Prevention of infection when around felines is to cover up sandpits for children, wear gloves in the garden, and don't eat or put your hands near your mouth when handling felines (to prevent faecal oral transmission) and to wash hands thoroughly with soap after contact and drying completely afterwards. Self-contamination can be further reduced by wearing gloves and cleaning out and disinfecting litter trays with bleach and by not kissing animals, sharing food or allowing them to lick you.

If you are taking care of a feline and it has been diagnosed with giardia then it is important to keep the feline confined so that you can control and clean the surfaces that the animal has contact with regularly, including toys, bedding and food bowls, to prevent spread. Be mindful that Giardia survives longer in cold and wet environments so it will last in the environment longer in winter than summer.



17.3 Toxoplasmosis

Toxoplasmosis is an intestinal parasite of felines which is shed into the faeces of infected individuals. Felines contract the parasite through the eating of raw meat, hunting, scavenging or faecal-oral contact.

People can become infected with toxoplasmosis by eating undercooked meat, contact with contaminated soil/sand or through direct contact with cats.

Prevention of infection when around felines is to cover up sandpits for children, wear gloves in the garden, and don't eat or put your hands near your mouth when handling felines (to prevent faecal oral transmission) and to wash hands after contact. Wearing gloves and cleaning out and disinfecting litter trays daily prevents development of the oocysts that are shed in cat faeces from becoming infected.

Pregnant women should avoid any and all contact with faeces and litter trays and should wear gloves if gardening or handling raw meat.

17.4 Scratches & Bites

It is not uncommon that felines will bite and scratch in the name of play, fear and aggression. It is important to be aware of the influence of your interactions with the fostered animal to reduce the chances of any serious injury and to be mindful of the behaviours the feline is displaying and adjust your actions accordingly. Children and males in their mid to late twenties are statistically more likely to be bitten, so careful supervision and understanding of feline behaviours is desirable to prevent confrontation and injury.

If scratched or bitten it is important to clean the area with soap and water and then irrigate the wound thoroughly with an appropriate anti-bacterial such as Betadine. This must be done even with minor wounds in the immunocompromised person. Bite wounds, especially when deep, can become infected and as such become swollen and painful. It is important to seek medical attention promptly as antibiotic therapy is often needed and in some cases hospitalization required.

18. Escape or Death of a Foster Animal.

18.1 Escape

If you think your kitten may have fled but did not see it escape - do not panic. As a starting point check all doors and windows to exit points are closed. If there is an obvious escape route to the outside, start your search immediately. Be sure to approach your search in a calm and quiet way. If you have other animals, contain them inside. If your kitten/cat escapes and you are unable to find it straight away, please contact our Furry Friends Cats Team / Foster Coordinators immediately.

If it is unlikely the kitten has escaped, check areas such as wardrobes, behind appliances, under furnishings etc. If it cannot be found, try to entice the kitten/cat to food or look at night when things are a bit quieter. It is not uncommon for kittens/cats to hide for a lengthy period.



18.2 Death

It is rare that we lose a pet however there are occasionally kittens or cats who sadly do not make it. Should this occur, separate the deceased kitten from the litter, wrap it in a towel and contact our Furry Friends Cats Team / Foster Coordinators or Foster care Coordinator for advice and support.

18.3 Desexing of Foster Kittens

Once the smallest kitten in the litter is 1.2KG you can use the [appointment request form](#) to book them in for desexing. Kittens should not be fed 12 hours prior to surgery.

Post desexing : if your foster pet is bleeding or has any signs of pus, or infection please let us know immediately. Female cats must be checked 10 days after surgery and have any remaining stitches removed.

18.4 Contacts, Opening Hours & Emergencies

Our preferred operating hours are:

Furry Friends ARQ Inc Any time you see us in the Foster Forum.

As we are a small charity with no clinic, Furry Friends ARQ Inc isn't able to provide 24-hour veterinary care but we do use affiliated vet clinics. It helps us if you can please reach out to our team members during waking hours as soon as you have any concerns for your foster pet so we can assess and decide if a vet visit is needed. Furry Friends ARQ Inc does not cover foster carers for any out-of-pocket veterinary expenses incurred at other clinics or emergency centres.

18.5 Connect with other Foster Carers

If you are on Facebook, you can join the [Furry Friends Foster Forum](#). Here you can discuss your cats/kittens progress, seek general advice and share your experiences and photos with other foster carers.

19. Partner Stores - Petbarn Ipswich

Furry Friends ARQ inc is partnered with Petbarn Ipswich store and we place foster pets into that store to increase their chances of finding a forever home. Your foster pet may be reserved upon arrival to be placed into the store. This will be mentioned on your care plan or a coordinator will contact you to let you know if your plan is changed so that your foster adult cat is suitable to go to the store.

