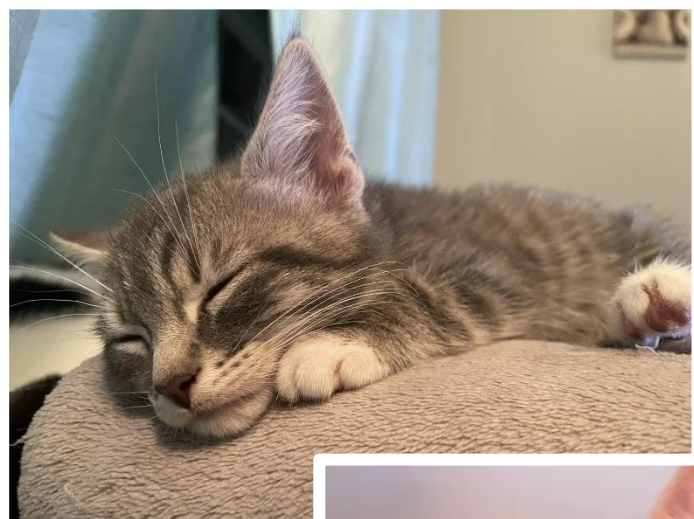
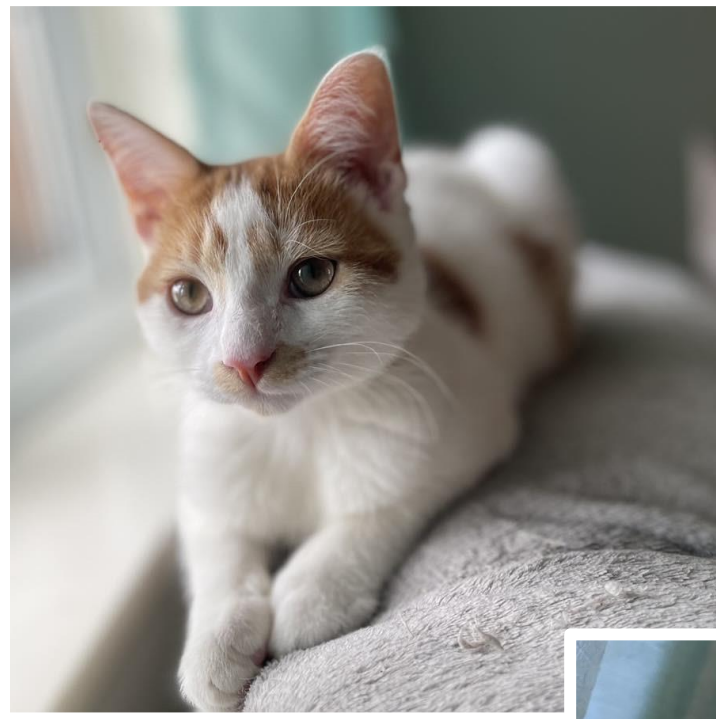


FOSTER HANDBOOK



<https://avidsangelscatrescue.co.uk>

07833 740133



COMPASSION IN ACTION



FOSTER HANDBOOK

Avid's Angels Cat Rescue (AACR) is always looking for fosterers to offer temporary homes to the stray and abandoned cats we take in each week. Although the rescue has six full-sized cat enclosures, we continue to receive a lot of calls and messages each week concerning cats in need. We rescue as many as we can, but there is a limit to what we can accomplish with the space and limited resources we have. Quite simply, fostering can save the lives of cats and kittens that we would otherwise have no choice but to turn away.

Cats come into Avid's Angels for a wide variety of reasons. Some of them come from vulnerable or difficult situations, such as those who have been abandoned, abused, or have health issues. Others are surrendered due to a change in their owner's circumstances (for example, a relationship breakdown, moving house, a family member's allergy, death of owner, move into a care home, etc.) Some cats are simply unwanted or may be found wandering as strays. There are also those cats who have never lived with people and are feral or semi-feral.

Welcome to our Foster Handbook!

By opening your heart and home to foster cats, you are playing a vital role in saving and improving the lives of cats in need.

This guide will provide you with the necessary information and guidance to ensure a successful fostering experience.

Thank you!

From the Avid's Angels Cat Rescue Team

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION TO CAT FOSTERING

- 1.1. Why foster cats?
- 1.2. The importance of fostering
- 1.3. What to expect as a cat fosterer

2. PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR A FOSTER CAT

- 2.1. Creating a safe and cat-friendly environment
- 2.2. Setting up a 'foster space'
- 2.3. Supplies you'll need

3. BRINGING YOUR FOSTER CAT HOME

- 3.1. Welcoming your foster cat
- 3.2. Introducing your foster cat to the rest of your home
- 3.1. Introducing resident pets
 - 3.1.1. Cat Introductions
 - 3.1.2. Dog Introductions
- 3.2. Managing multi-cat dynamics
- 3.3. Children and cats

4. SOCIALISATION, TRAINING AND ENRICHMENT

- 4.1. Bonding and building trust
- 4.2. Establishing routines and providing enrichment
- 4.3. Socialising shy or fearful cats
- 4.4. Positive reinforcement training
- 4.5. Behaviour support

5. DAILY CARE AND HEALTH MANAGEMENT

- 5.1. Feeding and nutrition
- 5.2. Litter tray maintenance and training
- 5.3. Grooming and hygiene
- 5.4. Veterinary care and vaccinations
- 5.5. Preventing parasites and disease
- 5.6. Monitoring health and medical care
- 5.7. Safety requirements

6. HEALTH AND EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

- 6.1. Signs of illness and what to do next
- 6.2. Medication
- 6.3. Criteria for emergencies

7. UNDERSTANDING CAT BEHAVIOUR

- 7.1. Body language and communication
- 7.2. Recognising stress and anxiety in cats

8. ADOPTION AND TRANSITION

- 8.1. Facilitating the adoption process**
- 8.2. Ensuring a successful transition**

9. SAYING GOODBYE

- 9.1. Letting go of your foster cat**
- 9.2. Coping with farewell**
- 9.3. Celebrating successful adoptions**
- 9.4. Reflecting on your foster experience**

10. SUPPORT AND RESOURCES FOR FOSTERERS

- 10.1. Regular communication with AACR**
- 10.2. Foster support group**

11. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do I get to choose the cat I want to foster?

Can I foster if I already have pets of my own?

Can I foster if I have a full-time job?

I have young children - can I be a fosterer?

Will the foster cat be able to go outdoors?

How much time do I need to spend with my foster cat?

How long will I be fostering the cat for?

Do I need my own transport?

What happens if I have travel plans and will be away from home?

Can I let my foster cat play with my personal pets?

What if I want to adopt my foster cat?

What if I know someone who's interested in adopting my foster cat?

What if I become too attached to my foster cat?

What if my foster cat is not working out?

12. CONTACT DETAILS

Please Note

This Foster Handbook is specifically designed for fosterers working with Avid's Angels Cat Rescue. It aims to provide comprehensive information and guidance on fostering cats, ensuring their wellbeing, and successful placement of cats in forever homes. Remember to seek assistance from our experienced volunteers when needed. Your dedication and compassion make a significant difference in the lives of these cats in need.

1) INTRODUCTION TO CAT FOSTERING

1.1. Why foster cats?

Cats in shelters or rescue organisations often face overcrowding and limited resources. By fostering a cat, you provide a temporary home and help alleviate the burden on these facilities, allowing them to save more lives.

1.2. The importance of fostering

Cat fostering plays a crucial role in saving and improving the lives of cats in need. By opening your home to a foster cat, you provide them with a safe and loving environment where they can heal from past traumas, receive socialisation and behavioural support, and develop trust in humans. Your commitment and care improve their chances of finding a forever home and frees up space for more cats in need.

1.3. What to expect as a cat fosterer

As a foster parent you will provide shelter, love and care to a cat temporarily until a permanent home is found. You will be acting as a bridge between Avid's Angels Cat Rescue and potential adopters, helping to socialise and prepare the cat for a successful adoption. You may encounter various situations, including medical needs, behavioural challenges and the joy of watching a cat grow and thrive.

Fostering a cat can be a rewarding and fulfilling experience. It offers numerous benefits, including:

- Knowing that you are helping a cat in need by providing the necessary care and attention needed in a loving, comfortable and safe environment while they wait for a permanent home.
- It can be a very rewarding experience.
- You get to enjoy the companionship and affection of a furry friend without the long-term commitment of ownership.
- You will be making a difference in your local community by helping to reduce the number of cats in rescue shelters.
- Your role will be crucial in the adoption process by providing valuable information about the cat's personality, behaviour and needs, which helps potential adopters find the perfect match for their lifestyle and home environment.
- Learning more about cat behaviour, care, and training.



2) PREPARING YOUR HOME FOR A FOSTER CAT

2.1. Creating a safe and cat-friendly environment

Prepare your home to be a welcoming and safe space for your foster cat. Cats are curious animals and love to explore. It's essential to cat-proof your home to prevent any accidents or injuries. This includes securing cabinets and drawers, covering electrical outlets and removing any poisonous plants or chemicals. Please ensure that windows and doors are secured, and provide appropriate hiding spots and perches. Consider potential stressors, such as loud noises or other pets, and find ways to minimise their impact on the foster cat. Create designated spaces for cats to eat, sleep, play and use the litter tray.

2.2. Setting up a 'foster space'

Designate a specific area in your home as a 'foster space' for the cat – a spare room is ideal initially as this helps to provide a controlled and comfortable environment for the foster cat to settle in. This area should be easily accessible, quiet and provide the necessary amenities such as food and water bowls, litter tray, comfortable bedding, toys and scratching posts to keep your foster cat healthy and happy. Having a separate space helps the cat to adjust and provides a sense of security.

Another reason that we recommend a small room is because cats will typically hide in new environments. It is not uncommon for a foster cat to hide underneath a bed or in a dark, quiet place for the first couple of days. Isolating your foster cat when you first take him/her home allows you to know what room s/he is in and helps you to monitor eating, drinking and litter habits more closely.

2.3. Supplies you'll need

AACR will provide you with any supplies that you may need. However, we greatly appreciate any help that you can provide in supplying items for your foster cat.

Gather all the essential supplies you'll need to care for your foster cat.

These include:

- A supply of high-quality cat food (we will let you know if a special diet is required)
- Litter and litter tray
- Food and water bowls
- Scratching posts
- Cat toys
- Grooming tools
- Bedding
- A carrier for vet visits
- Cleaning supplies

Having these ready in advance ensures a smooth transition for the foster cat.

3) BRINGING YOUR FOSTER CAT HOME

3.1. Welcoming your foster cat

When you bring your foster cat home, s/he may be frightened or unsure about what's happening, so it's important not to overwhelm him/her.

It's essential to give the cat a warm welcome and show them that they are safe and loved. Speak to them softly and calmly and allow the cat to explore its new surroundings gradually. Start by confining him/her to the designated 'foster space' initially, gradually allowing him/her to explore the rest of your home.

Provide hiding places, comfortable bedding and a familiar scent to help ease their transition and feel safe.

3.2. Introducing your foster cat to the rest of your home

After your foster cat has had time to adjust to their new surroundings, it's time to introduce them to the rest of your home.

Allow them to explore gradually and provide them with plenty of positive reinforcement and treats. Provide gentle interaction, patience and reassurance. Gradually introduce them to new experiences, people and other pets, ensuring their comfort and wellbeing throughout the process.

During the first couple of weeks, minimise the people and pet introductions to your foster cat, so that they are only meeting immediate family and your personal pets.

If you have other pets at home, it is especially important to give your foster cat a space of his/her own where s/he can stay while getting used to all the new sounds and smells.

Don't leave your foster cat unattended in your home with your personal pets until you are comfortable that all the animals can interact safely.

3.3. Introducing resident pets

3.3.1. Cat introductions

If you have personal pets who are cats, you'll need to introduce them to the foster cat.

Even if you know the cat you are fostering is good with other cats, you'll want to do the introductions gradually. So, before bringing your foster cat home, create a separate 'foster space' for him/her. Your other cats should have their own separate territory.

Over a one to two-week period, let the cats smell each other through a closed door, but don't allow them contact with one another. Exchanging blankets or towels between the areas will help them get used to each other's smells.

The next step is to allow them to see each other through a baby gate or a door that is propped open a couple of inches. If the cats are interested in each other and seem comfortable, allow them to meet. Open the door to the rooms between the cats and observe them closely.

If any cat shows signs of significant stress or aggression, separate them again and introduce them more slowly. Monitor their behaviour and intervene if any signs of aggression or stress arise. Supervise initial meetings and gradually increase the duration and proximity of their interactions over time. Seek guidance from Avid's Angels Cat Rescue if needed.

3.3.2. Dog introductions

If you have a personal pet who's a dog, you'll need to make the introduction to the foster cat carefully and safely.

Start by keeping them separated at first. As mentioned above, before you bring your foster cat home, create a separate 'foster space' for him/her and equip it with food, water, a scratching post, a litter tray and comfortable resting places.

Over a one to two-week period, let the dog and cat smell each other through the door, but don't allow them contact with one another. Exchanging blankets or towels between the dog's area and the cat's area will help them get used to each other's smells.

After a week or two, do the face-to-face introduction. Keeping your dog on lead, allow your foster cat out in the same area. (If you have more than one dog, introduce one at a time.) Do not allow the dog to charge or run directly up to the cat. Try to distract the dog as best you can so that the cat has the chance to approach without fear.

Watch the body language of each animal closely and don't continue the interaction if either pet becomes over-stimulated or aggressive. The idea is to keep the interactions positive, safe and controlled. Never leave your dog unsupervised around the foster cat.

3.4. Managing multi-cat dynamics

If fostering multiple cats, observe their interactions and ensure they have enough resources, such as litter trays, food bowls and resting spots.

Watch for any signs of tension or bullying and address any issues promptly.

Provide equal attention and individualised care for each foster cat.

3.5. Children and cats

Since we don't always know a foster cat's history or tolerance level for different types of people and activities, please teach your children how to act responsibly and respectfully around your foster cat.

We will do our best to place you with an appropriate animal for your home situation, but you should still supervise all interactions between children and your foster cat.

Key things to remind your children:

- Always leave the foster cat alone when s/he is eating or sleeping. Some cats may nip or bite if bothered while eating or startled while sleeping.
- Do not tease the foster cat.
- Don't chase the foster cat around the house as it may scare him/her.
- Pick up the foster cat only when an adult is there to help. Cats can become scared when picked up, and they sometimes scratch with their sharp nails, even though they don't mean to cause harm.
- Be careful when opening and closing doors so as to not accidentally let the foster cat outside.

4) SOCIALISATION, TRAINING AND ENRICHMENT

4.1. Bonding and building trust

Building a bond with your foster cat is essential for their wellbeing and future adoption. Spend time playing with them, petting them and talking to them. This will help them feel comfortable and loved. Engage in gentle play, grooming and positive reinforcement. Respect their boundaries and allow them to approach you on their terms.

Building trust takes time, but it will help to create a strong foundation for their future. Patience and consistency are key in building a strong bond and helping them feel secure.

4.2. Establishing routines and providing enrichment

When you first take your foster cat home, take care not to overwhelm him/her with too many new experiences all at once. Moving to a new environment is stressful for many cats, so keep introductions to people and animals to a minimum during the first couple of weeks after you bring your foster cat home. It also helps to establish a daily routine of regularly scheduled feedings and play times.

Play time provides stimulation, encourages socialisation and releases excess energy, so try to provide your foster cat with at least one or two play sessions per day. The length of the play sessions will vary, depending on the cat's age and health. Try a variety of toys (balls, squeaky toys, feather toys, etc.) to see which ones your foster cat prefers. Cat toys don't have to be fancy or expensive. Cats often enjoy playing with something as simple as a paper bag (remove the handles for safety) or a box with holes cut in the sides.

Providing enrichment activities, such as toys, puzzles and scratching posts, will keep them mentally stimulated and physically active. Rotate toys regularly to prevent boredom.

4.3. Socialising shy or fearful cats

If your foster cat is shy or fearful, gradually expose them to positive experiences and social interactions. Use treats, gentle handling and calm environments to help build their confidence. Give them the option to retreat to safe spaces when needed.

4.4. Positive reinforcement training

One of your goals as a foster parent is to help prepare your foster cat for living successfully in a home. We ask that you help your foster cat to develop good habits and skills through the use of positive reinforcement, which builds a bond of trust between you and your foster cat. The basic idea is to reward desirable behaviours and ignore unwanted behaviours.

We ask that you do not punish a cat for a behaviour that you find undesirable; this is because punishment is ineffective at eliminating the behaviour. If the cat is doing something undesirable, endeavour to distract him/her before the behaviour occurs. It is also important for everyone in the foster home to stick to the rules established for your foster cats, which will help them to learn faster.

Train your foster cat to respond to important cues, such as their name or a recall command, to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

Teach basic commands, such as 'sit' or 'come', using positive reinforcement methods. Reward desired behaviours with treats, praise and play.

Training not only helps your foster cat become more adoptable but also strengthens the bond between you and enhances their mental stimulation.

4.5. Behaviour support

Some foster cats may have behavioural issues, which we are aware of at the time of their rescue. Some of these behaviour challenges are fearfulness, house soiling or aggression toward other animals.

We will only place cats with behavioural issues with a fosterer who feels comfortable working with the cat on his/her particular issues. We will provide the fosterer with all the necessary information so that proper care and training can be given to the foster cat.

If you feel unable to manage any behaviour that your foster cat is exhibiting, please contact AACR to discuss the issue. We will guide you and help in every way that we can.



5) DAILY CARE AND HEALTH MANAGEMENT

5.1. Feeding and nutrition

Provide a well-balanced diet suitable for your foster cat's age, health condition and any dietary restrictions. Consult with AACR to determine the appropriate food and feeding schedule. Ensure fresh water is always available and monitor their eating habits to detect any changes in appetite or behaviour.

You can give your foster cat treats of any kind (unless s/he has known allergies, of course); giving treats helps you and your foster cat to bond with each other. Keep in mind that some human foods and house plants (which cats like to chew on) are poisonous for cats, so remove any plants or food from areas that your foster cat can access.

5.2. Litter tray maintenance and training

Set up litter trays in a quiet and easily accessible area. Scoop the litter trays daily and perform a thorough clean regularly. When you clean the litter box, use a mild soap (such as dishwashing soap), not strong-smelling detergents or ammonia.

If your foster cat requires litter tray training, provide a separate litter tray and gradually guide them to use it. Use positive reinforcement and praise when they use the litter tray correctly.

If your foster cat is not using the litter box, please notify AACR so you can work on resolving the issue before not using the box becomes a habit. Keep in mind that a cat may miss the litter box if s/he has a medical issue like diarrhoea or s/he may avoid the box if s/he has a urinary tract infection, which causes pain when urinating.

If your foster cat has an accident, don't discipline or punish him/her. It will only teach him/her to fear and mistrust you. Clean up all accidents with an enzymatic cleaner. Nature's Miracle and Simple Solution are two products containing natural enzymes that tackle tough stains and odours and remove them permanently.

5.3. Grooming and hygiene

Regular grooming helps to maintain your foster cat's coat and overall hygiene. Brush regularly to remove loose hair and prevent matting, especially if s/he has long hair.

If you feel comfortable, you can trim his/her nails, but please be careful because you can cause pain and bleeding if you trim the nails too short.

It may also be necessary to clean ears and teeth.

Introduce grooming gradually and make it a positive experience using treats and praise. AACR is happy to provide guidance on grooming and hygiene if required.

Cats don't generally like being bathed, so please don't give your foster cat any baths.

5.4. Veterinary care and vaccinations

AACR provides all medical care for our foster cats at our approved veterinary clinics. We will schedule regular veterinary check-ups for your foster cat to monitor their health and address any concerns.

For any required vaccinations, neutering or other medical needs, AACR will book vet appointments and, where possible, we will work around your availability.

Please use a carrier to transport the foster cat to and from vet appointments.

5.5. Preventing parasites and disease

Maintain a clean and hygienic environment for your foster cat by regularly cleaning their litter tray, bedding and living area.

Please only use flea and worming treatments provided by AACR to ensure the cat stays healthy and protected against common diseases.

Please keep records of flea and worming dates so these can be logged by AACR.

Practice good hygiene yourself, such as washing your hands before and after handling the cat.

5.6. Monitoring health and medical care

Observe your foster cat for any signs of illness or discomfort.

Monitor their behaviour, appetite, litter tray usage and overall appearance.

Report any concerns to AACR promptly.

Follow AACR's guidelines for vaccinations, flea and tick prevention, worming and scheduled veterinary check-ups.

5.7. Safety requirements

Foster cats must live indoors at all times.

If your foster cat seems very curious about going outside or is constantly at the door waiting for the right moment, please take extra precautions to ensure that s/he doesn't accidentally sneak out when you are coming or going.

Please do not let your foster cat ride loose in a car. Always use a carrier to transport your foster cat to and from appointments.



6) HEALTH AND EMERGENCY SITUATIONS

6.1. Signs of illness and what to do next

On a daily basis, be aware of your foster cat's appetite and energy level.

If s/he is not eating well or seems listless, something may be wrong medically.

You might want to record your observations to make it easier to notice any health issues.

Any of the following symptoms, which could be signs of illness:

Eye discharge

It is normal for cats to have some discharge from their eyes when they wake up and some may have more than others, depending on the breed. But if your foster cat has yellow or green discharge, or swelling around the eyes (making it hard to open his/her eyes), or the third eyelid is showing, you need to contact AACR to schedule a vet appointment.

Sneezing and nasal discharge

Sneezing can be common in a cat recovering from an upper respiratory infection. If the sneezing becomes more frequent, watch for discharge coming from the nose. If the discharge is clear, the infection is probably viral, and medication may not be necessary.

If the discharge becomes coloured, contact AACR to schedule a vet appointment because the cat may have a bacterial infection. Be sure to monitor the cat's breathing. If the cat starts to breathe with an open mouth or wheeze, inform AACR immediately.

Also, once you notice nasal discharge, monitor the cat's eating habits more closely to ensure that s/he is still eating.

Loss of appetite

Your foster cat may be stressed after arriving in your home, and stress can cause lack of appetite. If the cat hasn't eaten after 24 hours, please notify AACR. Also, if the cat has been eating well, but then stops eating for 12 to 24 hours, please make AACR aware. Please do not change the cat's diet without contacting AACR as an abrupt change in diet can cause diarrhoea, which can lead to dehydration.

Lethargy

The activity level of your foster cat will vary depending on age and personality. Keeping an activity log and journal will help you notice whether your foster cat is less active than s/he normally is. If the cat cannot be roused or seems weak and unable to stand, it's an emergency and the cat needs immediate veterinary treatment.

Dehydration

Dehydration is usually associated with diarrhoea, vomiting and/or loss of appetite. To test for dehydration, gently pinch the cat's skin around the scruff area. If the skin stays taut, the cat is dehydrated. Please contact AACR to book a vet appointment.

Vomiting

Sometimes cats will vomit up a thick tubular hairball with bile or other liquids. This is normal, but please notify AACR if the cat has out-of-the-ordinary vomiting that does not occur in conjunction with a hairball. Don't worry about one or two vomiting episodes as long as the cat is acting normally otherwise: eating, active, no diarrhoea.

Pain or strain while urinating

When a cat first goes into a foster home, s/he may not urinate due to stress. If the cat hasn't urinated in more than 24 hours, however, please contact AACR. Also, if you notice the cat straining to urinate with little or no results, or crying out when urinating, please contact AACR immediately because it may be indicative of an infection or a urethral obstruction, which can be life-threatening.

Diarrhoea

It is important to monitor your foster cat's pooping habits daily. Soft stool is normal for the first two or three days after taking a cat home, most likely caused by stress and a change in food. If your foster cat has liquid stool, however, please contact AACR so that a vet appointment can be booked to ensure that the cat doesn't need medication. Keep in mind that diarrhoea will dehydrate the cat, so be proactive about contacting AACR. If your foster cat has bloody or mucoid diarrhoea, please contact AACR immediately.

Frequent ear scratching

Your foster cat may have ear mites if s/he scratches his/her ears often and/or shakes his/her head frequently, or if you see a dark discharge that resembles coffee grounds when you look in the ears. Ear mites can be treated by a veterinarian – please notify AACR so we can book a vet appointment.

Swollen, irritated ears

If your foster cat has irritated, swollen or red or pink ears that smell like yeast, s/he may have an ear infection called otitis. It's more common in dogs, but some cats do get it. If you see these signs, please contact AACR.

Hair loss

Please contact AACR if you notice any hair loss on your foster cat. It is normal for cats to have thin fur around the lips, eyelids and in front of the ears, but clumpy patches of hair loss or thinning hair can indicate ringworm or dermatitis. It is important to check your foster cat's coat every day.



6.2. Medication

If you are fostering a cat who is taking medication, please make sure that he/she gets all prescribed doses.

Do not end medication early for any reason. If your foster cat has not responded to prescribed medication in the time instructed by a veterinarian, please contact AACR.

6.3. Criteria for emergencies

If your foster cat displays any of the following symptoms, please call Jenny **immediately** on 07399 407987.

Be prepared to take the cat to our **emergency vet** which is:

Armac 24-Hour Veterinary Clinic

147 The Rock

Bury

BL9 0ND

0161 764 4618

- Not breathing or laboured breathing
- Signs of extreme dehydration: dry gums, weakness, vomiting, not urinating, skin tenting (when the skin is pulled up, it stays there)
- Abnormal lethargy or unable to stand
- Unconsciousness or unable to wake up
- Cold to the touch
- Broken bones
- Any trauma: hit by a car, dropped, stepped on
- A large wound or profuse bleeding that doesn't stop when pressure is applied
- Loss of appetite for more than 24 hours



7) UNDERSTANDING CAT BEHAVIOUR

7.1. Body language and communication

Learn to interpret feline body language and communication signals to better understand your foster cat. This includes observing tail positions, ear positions, vocalisations and facial expressions.

Cat body language involves various postures, movements, and vocalisations that cats use to communicate their feelings, intentions, and needs. Understanding their cues will help you respond appropriately and build trust with the cat in your care.

Here are some common cat body language signals:

Tail Position

Upright and straight: Indicates a friendly, content, and confident cat.

Low and tucked between the legs: Sign of fear, anxiety, or submission.

Puffed up tail: Suggests aggression or extreme fear.

Ears

Forward and upright: Shows attentiveness and curiosity.

Slightly back or flattened against the head: Indicates fear, anxiety, or aggression.

Eyes

Dilated pupils: Could mean excitement, fear, or aggression.

Half-closed or blinking slowly: Indicates relaxation and trust.

Staring with unblinking eyes: May be a sign of aggression or an attempt to assert dominance.

Body Posture

Relaxed, with a loose body: Suggests a calm and content cat.

Arched back, bristled fur, and sideways posture: Indicates fear, aggression, or defensiveness.

Crouched posture with tucked legs: Indicates submission or fear.

Vocalisations

Purring: Usually signifies contentment and relaxation.

Meowing: Can indicate various needs such as hunger, attention, or discomfort.

Hissing, growling, or yowling: Signs of fear, anger, or aggression.

Facial Expressions

Slow blinking or squinting: Often a friendly gesture indicating trust and relaxation.

Stiff facial muscles, wide eyes, and open mouth: Indicates fear, aggression, or stress.

7.2. Recognising stress and anxiety in cats

Cats may experience stress and anxiety when transitioning to a new environment. Learn to identify signs of stress, such as hiding, excessive grooming, aggression or litter tray issues. Implement stress reduction techniques, such as providing hiding places, creating a routine, and using pheromone sprays, to help ease their anxiety.

8) ADOPTION AND TRANSITION

8.1. Facilitating the adoption process

At AACR we take the rehoming process very seriously, and our adoption process helps to ensure that our cats are placed in safe, loving, permanent homes.

To achieve this goal, we have a thorough adoption process that helps to match potential adopters with the right cat for their lifestyle and needs.

We ask that you do not rehome any cat yourself; all cats must be rehomed through Avid's Angels Cat Rescue only, using the established procedures. All home checks will be arranged by the rescue. Please pass on any persons' details who may be interested or ask them to email the rescue directly.

A key responsibility of being a fosterer is to promote the foster cat for rehoming as much as possible. This is important to maximise rehoming opportunities and to ensure that cats do not stay in foster care longer than necessary. The promotion of cats should be a collaboration between the fosterer and the rescue to ensure the best rehoming prospects.

Please keep helpful records for new adopters, to include type of food eaten and what times the cat eats, whether the cat is litter-trained, etc.

We would appreciate it if you can take photographs of your foster cat and share them with AACR. Any photos you provide may be used by AACR to promote your foster cat for adoption, as well as in other marketing or promotional materials. This could include local media, websites and social media.

8.2. Ensuring a successful transition

To support AACR during the transition period, please provide essential information about the cat's routine, preferences and any medical or behavioural considerations so that the rescue can pass this information on.

Provide a transition pack with a familiar blanket or toy to comfort the cat in their new environment. AACR will offer post-adoption support to ensure a successful integration into their new home.



9) SAYING GOODBYE

9.1. Letting go of your foster cat

Saying goodbye to your foster cat can be emotional, but remember that you have made a positive impact on their life. Recognise that by letting them go, you're creating space for another cat in need. Trust that you've prepared them for a loving and forever home.

9.2. Coping with farewell

Coping with the farewell of a foster cat may involve a range of emotions. Seek support from fellow fosterers, friends or support groups (such as AACR's Foster Group) who understand the unique challenges and rewards of fostering. Take time to reflect on the positive experiences and the lives you've touched.

9.3. Celebrating successful adoptions

Celebrate each successful adoption as a testament to your dedication and care as a fosterer. Share success stories, photos and updates with AACR to inspire others and encourage more adoptions.

9.4. Reflecting on your foster experience

Take the time to reflect on your foster experience and what you've learned. Assess your strengths and areas for growth, and consider fostering again in the future. Remember the impact you've made in saving and improving the lives of cats in need.



10) SUPPORT AND RESOURCES FOR FOSTERERS

10.1. Regular communication with AACR

Maintain open and regular communication with AACR. Update the rescue on the foster cat's progress, behaviour and any concerns or questions you may have. Seek guidance and support whenever needed.

10.2. Foster support group

Connect with other fosterers via AACR's 'Foster Group' on Facebook Messenger:

<https://www.messenger.com/t/6388868344522923>

Share experiences, seek advice and offer support to fellow fosterers. Building a network of like-minded individuals can be invaluable in navigating the challenges and celebrating the joys of fostering.

11) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do I get to choose the cat I want to foster?

We tend to match foster cats with carers based on each cat's individual needs and personality. We are interested in your preferences however, particularly in regard to whether you are open to fostering kittens, pairs of cats, long-term stay cats or cats on daily medication.

Can I foster if I already have pets of my own?

We welcome fosterers with pets, however it's important to consider the dynamics between your resident pets and the foster cat. It very much depends on the individual foster cat and its needs. Proper introductions and gradual integration are key. Some of our cats will live quite happily with another cat and even a dog, however some foster cats will prefer to be the only animal in the home.

Can I foster if I have a full-time job?

Yes! We endeavour to match you with the best cat for your needs and your current schedule. Adult foster cats can usually be left for a working day, unless their individual requirements dictate otherwise. We recommend that kittens are not left alone for more than 4 hours in any one day as they need to be fed frequently.

I have young children - can I be a fosterer?

We ask that any children in the foster home are over the age of 5 years. Only foster cats who have been assessed to live safely with young children will be placed with you.

Will the foster cat be able to go outdoors?

No, all cats in foster care must be kept indoors. This is to minimise the chances of the foster cat being involved in an accident or getting lost. Extreme care must also be taken to keep windows and doors closed to prevent escape.

How much time do I need to spend with my foster cat?

As much time as you can. With that said, the amount of time will vary depending on the energy level and needs of the cat you are fostering. It is ideal to spend around two hours a day socialising and playing with your foster cat to ensure that s/he receives adequate attention and stimulation.

How long will I be fostering the cat for?

The length of time varies and depends on the individual cat. Generally, cats are placed in foster until they are rehomed, and we don't always know how long this could take; some cats may find their forever homes within weeks, while others may take several months. However, we do only ask you to foster a cat for as long as you are able to and, providing you give us appropriate notice, we can arrange for an alternative carer. AACR will do their best to provide you with an estimate based on the specific circumstances of each cat.

Do I need my own transport?

Having access to your own transport is very beneficial for trips to the vet or to collect supplies from our donation shed. Should you be unable to transport the foster cat to an arranged veterinary appointment, AACR will endeavour to arrange a transport volunteer to collect the cat and drop back off to you.

What happens if I have travel plans and will be away from home?

If you have travel plans while you are fostering a cat for AACR, we ask that you try to give us at least 4 weeks' notice of any planned holidays. Do not leave the foster cat with an unauthorised person or pet sitter – please contact us to make alternative arrangements for the period you are away.

Can I let my foster cat play with my personal pets?

There are a few guidelines that we ask fosterers to adhere to regarding their personal pets. While foster cats playing with other pets is often fine, we advise that you consult with your veterinarian before fostering to ensure that all your personal pets are healthy and up-to-date on all vaccines. If, for any reason, your personal pet becomes ill while you are fostering an AACR cat, we cannot provide medical care for your personal pet.

What if I want to adopt my foster cat?

Some fosterers do become very attached to their foster cat and, inevitably, become a 'failed fosterer'. We ask that you communicate your desire to adopt the foster cat to us as early as possible to avoid causing disappointment to another prospective adopter. Standard adoption processes and procedures will apply.

What if I know someone who's interested in adopting my foster cat?

If someone you know is interested in adopting the foster cat, please ask them to complete an Adoption Application Form on our website at <https://aidsangelscatrescue.co.uk>.

What if I become too attached to my foster cat?

It's common for fosterers to become attached to their foster cats, as they invest time and care into their wellbeing. While it can be difficult, remember that the ultimate goal is to find the cat a loving forever home. If you find it challenging to say goodbye, remind yourself of the positive impact you have made in their life and focus on the joy of helping them find a permanent family. Take solace in knowing that by letting go, you can open your home to another cat in need. Seek support from other fosterers who can relate to your experience.

What if my foster cat is not working out?

Please be reassured that AACR is always here offer a wide range of help, advice and guidance, so do not hesitate to contact us.

You are not required to continue to foster the cat if you feel it's not working out. However, please be aware that we may not have an immediate alternate foster home, so please provide us with 14 days' notice if you wish the foster cat to be removed. We will work on removing your foster cat as soon as is possible, but kindly ask for your understanding and patience.

12) CONTACT DETAILS

Avid's Angels Cat Rescue will stay in contact with you for the duration of your fostering period. We will provide regular support and contact with our team via a social media group, phone and/or email.

Our contact details are as follows:

Jenny Herriot: 07399 407987

Rescue Phone: 07833 740133

Email: admin@avidsangelscatrescue.co.uk

AACR Foster Group on Facebook Messenger:

<https://www.messenger.com/t/6388868344522923>

This Foster Handbook will hopefully equip you with the knowledge and tools necessary to be an effective foster parent. Your dedication and compassion are essential in providing temporary care and love to cats in need. Remember, your role as a fosterer directly contributes to their successful rescue and adoption.

Each foster experience is unique, and it's important to know that you can reach out to AACR for specific guidance and support. We are always here to answer your questions, address concerns and provide assistance throughout your foster journey.

Thank you for making a difference in the lives of these deserving cats!

