



CAT HAVEN
every cat matters

Foster Carers Handbook

Cat Welfare Society Inc trading as Cat Haven. Licensed Charity 17686

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Introduction to Foster Care

Since its inception as a formal program in 2008, Foster Care has become an ingrained and integral part of the work that we do here at Cat Haven. Initially targeted primarily at caring for young orphaned kittens/queens with feeding kittens, the scope of the program has grown immensely to include cats of all ages and backgrounds.



“Foster carers save lives!!”

Each year, the lives of more than 1200 cats and kittens are saved by the Foster Care program and, as such, it has been a major contributor to our declining euthanasia and increasing re-homing rates. Just stop and think about that for a moment – twelve hundred little lives, saved thanks to our dedicated foster carers. Even if you just foster one animal, you will have been a part of that and have saved a cat's life.

We always appreciate the addition of new foster carers to our team and, as you will learn from this handbook, there are many different animals that need fostering and almost all homes will be suitable for at least one type of cat or kitten. Some foster parents are never without a cat or kitten, literally returning one foster animal to the shelter and taking another home with them; while others have just two or three litters of kittens each year. We can work with you to make almost any situation mutually successful.

Our busiest time of year by far is 'kitten season'. This occurs over the warmer part of the year, usually from late October/November through till the end of April. From November to March alone, we receive in excess of 3,000 kittens, many of whom require foster care. Over this busy season, foster care enables us to greatly expand our capacity with as many as 500 cats and kittens often in care at any one time. In the quieter winter period this drops as low as 100 or less.

Fostering is obviously, immensely beneficial for the fostered cats themselves, and Cat Haven as an organisation, but it is not one-sided. It is for the most part a joyful, up-lifting and enjoyable experience for the foster carers and we always aim to keep fostering positive. All our foster parents are Cat Haven ambassadors and we hope that you will share your positive experiences with as many people as possible in the hope of making Cat Haven's foster program more widely known. We endeavour to provide as much ongoing support as you need whilst fostering and we never want you to feel alone with your foster cats. If you ever have questions or concerns, the Foster Care Coordinator and all other Cat Haven staff will be here to support you. So please read on, and...

....Happy Fostering!!

The Settling In Period

It is generally recommended that (at least in the initial stages) fostered cats and kittens be kept confined to one room or a small section of the house. This will give them an opportunity to start finding their feet and growing used to their new environment without being over-whelmed by having a whole house to run around in. It is beneficial for you too, particularly if you have a whole litter of kittens – those tiny things can be easy to lose behind washing machines, under beds, inside wardrobes and in any other space you can think of. At least it narrows things down a bit if you know they're restricted to one area!

"Provide them with one room to start with, just until they settle in and get used to you. This will be less overwhelming and will also leave less chance for escape!"

If you have pre-existing animals in your home, refer to the 'Introducing Cats to other Pets' hand-out supplied. It is important to remember that in the initial stages, no one is likely to get on particularly well. You may have hissing/spitting/other aggressive behaviour, or straight up fear and hiding, from either the foster cats or your own. Bear in mind that the cats/kittens you are caring for may well never have seen other animals and in addition to everything else going on in their lives, it can be pretty terrifying. Simply take things slowly and have faith that it will work out in the end.

"After a few days and once your foster cat has settled in you can then, very slowly, introduce them to your animals."

Some foster carers prefer to keep their fostered cats/kittens in one room or area for the whole duration of the fostering period. There is nothing wrong with this at all, as long as they are getting lots of love and attention of course. Bear in mind, particularly in the case of adult foster cats, that they are likely to have been cooped up in a small kennel or cage for some time, so even having a whole room to run around in will feel like a luxury. Alternatively, if your foster babies and permanent family members seem to get along okay with each other (or if you don't have existing animals at home at all) you may choose to let them have the run of the house. This is perfectly fine, though may make litter training something of a struggle for little kittens.

**** Most importantly, all foster cats are to remain indoors AT ALL TIMES!! ****

Finally, it is very important to remember that foster animals need to stay inside the house 100% of the time as the likelihood that they will become lost if let outside is very high considering that fostered cats are not completely familiar with you and your home, and have probably had a great deal of changes and upheaval in their lives recently. If a foster cat does get out of the house, please contact the Foster Care Coordinator immediately.



Feeding Guidelines

Cat Haven feeds and recommends a primarily dry food, premium quality diet for all cats and kittens. Our product of choice is Hills Science Diet, though in some cases other premium quality brands such as Advance, Royal Canin or Eukanuba may be used. It is important that all fostered cats are fed the diet we have recommended and provided you with; chopping and changing of food will cause stress and tummy upsets (and consequently is likely to equal vomit and diarrhoea for you!)

“Only feed your foster cat the food that has been supplied!! If you have any concerns about this please speak with the Foster Care Coordinator prior to adjusting any diet.”

Food will be provided to you when you collect your fostered animal(s) and you are welcome to come and collect more of what you need at any time (we are open 7 days). If any particular diet is recommended for a medical reason this will be outlined, for example Hills Prescription ID may be fed to cats who have sensitive stomachs, or Hills Prescription RD for those who have some extra kilos to shed. If you have concerns or queries about what your foster cats are eating, or if you find they are reluctant to eat what we have provided, please contact the Foster Care Coordinator or anyone at Cat Haven to discuss this before changing their diet yourself. It is quite common for cats to be picky and/ or refuse food when they are stressed out and in a new environment. If a cat that is otherwise healthy and in decent body condition doesn't eat for a day or two, it is very unlikely to cause them any serious health concerns. 'Tough love' is usually the best way to go – don't give them any other option, and they will eventually eat what you are offering.

Please remember to bring your food container when collecting more biscuits as we often run short.

Kittens, or queens with kittens still feeding from them, will need to be fed kitten food only. We would still recommend that the majority of their diet be dry food as this is substantially better for them and will help them grow much more quickly than tins/wet food. (Keep in mind that tinned food is about 80% water and therefore has a lot less of the calories and nutrients that small growing kittens need). If small kittens are struggling to eat the biscuits, they can be soaked in warm water and mixed to a softer consistency to enhance their palatability.

How much food a cat needs will vary greatly from one animal to another. Of course growing kittens and young adults will require more food to keep them healthy, sustained and getting bigger every day, whilst an adult cat won't need all that much.

Kittens up to 8 weeks:	approx. 1/4 cup dry food per day
Kittens 8 – 16 weeks:	approx. 1/3 cup dry food per day
Kittens 16 weeks – 1yr:	approx. 1/2 cup dry food per day
Lactating queens:	approx. 1/2 to 1 cup of food per day of kitten food
Regular adult cats 1yr & up:	approx. 2/3 to 3/4 cup dry food per day

This is based on a quality food diet such as the Hills Science Diet Range.

Fostering Mother and Kittens

Raising a litter of kittens can be a big job, and a LOT of work. That's why we often suggest, at least for your first couple of times, it can be much easier for you to foster a family with mother cat aswell. That way, she will do a lot of the work for you, leaving you the responsibility of humanizing (aka playing with and cuddling!) her babies.

Most of the mums with kittens who come to Cat Haven have been found by concerned members of the public. Often a stray cat will start hanging around someone's house and they will put food out for her, not thinking too much of it, then after a few weeks she rewards them with a litter of babies and they realize they really can't care for so many cats. We receive kittens of all ages with their mums, from newborns right through to 4 and 5 month old kittens. Of course it is just those under 8 weeks of age who will require time spent in foster care, growing fat and healthy, and ready to leave their mum.

When you collect a foster family, you will be given an approximation of their age and you can use the Growth and Development chart on the back of your 'foster cat info sheet' to track the kittens' progress. It is of course important to remember that (just like human children) kittens will all grow at different rates so don't be too concerned if you notice that there is a bully or a runt (or both) in the litter, as these kinds of dynamics are quite common. You will be attending weekly weigh-ins/check-ups with your little family, which will offer us the opportunity to make sure there are no serious concerns with how they are progressing. If at any point you are worried that one or more of your kittens is unwell or simply failing to thrive, contact the Foster Care Coordinator or ring Cat Haven directly to chat to a staff member or make a veterinary appointment.

As mentioned, many of the mother cats we receive have been living on the streets for a period of time prior to their arrival at Cat Haven. Producing milk to feed 4 or more hungry little ones is pretty draining in itself – compound this with the fact that mum may have only been getting food sporadically and what she is getting is likely to be poor quality – and you have a recipe for a very malnourished cat. The majority of mum cats we receive are only 12 or 18 months of age themselves and haven't finished growing before they find themselves pregnant and losing much of their nutrition to their growing babies. So there is a good chance the cat you are fostering will be thin and malnourished; and often, no matter how much food is provided or how good quality it is, whilst she is still lactating she will struggle to regain any condition at all.

In cases where the lactating queen is particularly underweight, we will recommend strategies to try to bulk her up as much as possible. Offering powdered cat milk to both the mother and kittens is a great idea – this is high nutrient/high calorie and will help mum to gain condition as well as stimulating her to produce more milk of her own, whilst offering it to the kittens will reduce the amount of time they spend suckling. Feeding wet food can offer similar benefits in this scenario, though very underweight mums can have a tendency to 'guts' their food, making themselves ill in the process, so it may be necessary to feed them small meals often.

Weaning is not a process that should be forced in cats – it occurs naturally at anywhere



between 3 and 7 weeks of age and will depend on numerous external factors. Generally, an average to large litter of kittens (4 or more) will start to wean between 4 and 5 weeks of age, while single kittens or litters of 2 or 3 can often wean later because there is simply more milk available. Some mum cats are particularly over-protective and will prevent their kittens from weaning (this is particularly common for those who have had just 1 or 2 kittens) and you may need to step in and encourage the kittens to try solid food, beginning with wet food, dry food that has been soaked in warm water, or even milk formula (just to get them drinking from a dish rather than suckling). It can be a good idea to start the process by putting a small amount of wet food or a bit of milk formula on the skin between your thumb and forefinger and then hold this in front of the kitten – it will likely try to suckle the food off you initially, but will soon start actually chewing.

If a mother cat is unwell, particularly thin, or running out of milk for another reason, forced early weaning may be necessary. If you are concerned that your fostered kittens are receiving insufficient milk from their mum, but are not really old enough to start weaning, contact the Foster Care Coordinator for advice.

Handling is very important for young kittens. Particularly if the mum-cat you are fostering seems to be at all nervous or skittish, her little ones will need as much human socialization as possible from a very early age, to ensure they don't pick up any bad habits. It is safe and acceptable to hold and touch kittens from as young as a few days, though the really important stage starts at about 10-14 days, when they start really wanting to move around, explore their environment etc. This is generally the easiest and most enjoyable aspect of fostering, so don't hold back – invite neighbours, family, friends around to see your foster family and expose them to men and women of all ages so that they receive as much exposure as possible. Even by 8 weeks of age there is a marked difference between kittens who have had a lot of socializing and those who haven't – and which ones do you think will be the easiest to re-home? The most well-adjusted, confident, and therefore easily re-homeable kittens are those from foster families with dogs, kids, vacuum cleaners and all the other household noise you can imagine.

Toileting is an interesting experience for little kittens. Until they begin to wean, kittens will be stimulated by their mother to go to the toilet. This means she licks their genitals to stimulate urination/defecation and then ingests everything that they pass. So you won't have any little tiny poos or wees to clean up until weaning time, when kittens start to copy mum and use the litter tray. (As a result of ingesting all their babies waste, mum-cats do the biggest poos you've ever seen. Don't say we didn't warn you!) In some cases, queens who have been living entirely outdoors with their little ones may not be familiar with using a litter tray. A great way to encourage them can be to replace the kitty litter with regular garden soil, as this is much more familiar. If they are happy to use this, you can then try mixing progressively increasing amounts of kitty litter with the soil until they are happy using just litter.

Aggression in mum cats is uncommon, but does certainly occur. In some instances, females will be particularly protective of their little ones and may show this in one of several ways. The primary thing you are likely to see is mum moving her kittens around, hiding them from you or just choosing a 'nest' that she considers more suitable than whatever you have provided. (Why would she want to keep her babies in that luxurious pet bed, when she can stash them behind the bookshelf??) We have had numerous calls from panicked foster carers who have 'lost' their litter of kittens in this way – but they always end up being hidden in the strangest places. Sometimes, a mum cat will be aggressive towards you – hissing, spitting, swiping or biting if you try to approach/handle her kittens. This is likely to only be in the initial day or so that you have them at home. In the vast majority of cases if you offer her 24 to 48 hours of quiet time and then begin slowly, gently approaching her and the kittens whilst offering her food as a distraction, you should find that she soon comes to trust you and allow you to handle her little ones. If there is an on-going problem with human-directed aggression from a mum cat please contact the Foster Care Coordinator for advice.

It is important to note, as mentioned above, that kittens are very receptive to the behaviour patterns of their mum. If the female cat you are fostering has any aggressive tendencies, or is excessively timid or tries to hide her babies continually, this will make it all the more important that you handle and socialise the kittens as much as you possibly can, even if this seems counter-productive to what the mum wants, as you need to try to prevent them picking up negative behaviours.

A more common scenario you may face is aggression from mum cats that is directed towards existing animals in your household. Many females have absolutely no issue with having other animals around; I recall a beautiful female named Phoebe who would lie in the middle of her foster carer's kitchen floor, with her 6 tiny (under 2 week old) babies hanging off her feeding, whilst two large male cats looked on. Recently, a foster mum made best friends with a Rottweiler, almost favouring his company to spending time with her kittens! So don't feel that having other animals at home precludes you from fostering mums with kittens.

On the flip side are the cats who simply cannot tolerate having other animals anywhere near their kittens. A cat by the name of Anna gained herself the nickname 'Screamy' due to the horrific noise she produced any time she came within a couple of metres of another

cat. She only lasted at her foster carer's home for 24 hours, having attempted to violently attack an existing male cat through a fly-screen door when she felt he was threatening her and her babies. She was placed with an alternative carer who had no other cats, and did a beautiful job of raising her kittens but never once did she direct any aggression at the people in this foster home; anyone could touch or play with her kittens.

These scenarios show the two extremes – in reality, most cats fall somewhere between. One regular foster carer always starts off with their mum and kittens in a large second bathroom. There is a very gradual introduction period, where the whole little family will be exposed to the cats and dogs that live in the home permanently. If mum is happy with the animals, she will be free to roam the house. If not, she is kept in the bathroom and her kittens are allowed the run of the house for part of the time then put back with her – this means that they get that very beneficial early experience with other animals, whilst mum is kept happy.

Surrogacy is undertaken fairly regularly over the busy kitten season. We often receive orphans who really are far too young to survive on their own and we will try to find a lactating mother to act as a surrogate or wet-nurse for them. Sometimes just one or two kittens come in, in which case we try to integrate them in with a litter of kittens of similar age. Other times, a whole litter of tiny bubs will be surrendered and we seek out a female who is still lactating but not feeding any kittens of her own. Attempts at surrogacy are overwhelmingly successful and it is a real joy to watch a mother cat eagerly cleaning and offering milk to a new little kitten. In some cases, surrogate mothers may run out of milk earlier than usual due to the additional pressure that has been placed on them, or existing kittens may be dominating and push a surrogate out of the way at feeding time, so extra attention and care may be required. You will always be informed if the mum and kittens you are fostering is a surrogacy situation and of course you can contact the Foster Care Coordinator if you have concerns.



Fostering Orphan Kittens

Cat Haven receives literally thousands of young kittens without their mums accompanying them. In many cases people find a 'nest' of kittens (e.g. in a shed, beneath a shrub etc.) and bring the kittens in to us as they are concerned for their safety; when in fact, they had been left by their mother while she went out hunting, with every intention of returning. People often bring their own cats kittens to us for re-homing but often they are too young and need extra care before going up for adoption. Often, as you can see, these kittens are separated from their mother in one fell swoop, meaning that they will have to endure a forced weaning rather than the gradual process that would be ideal.

It is common for kittens to lose weight/fail to grow in their first week away from mum so if this happens, don't panic! We regularly have kittens return for a first weigh-in to find that the number on the scale is not larger but smaller, but rarely does this cause long-term problems. In this situation, we generally recommend offering milk formula, wet food and dry food soaked in milk formula or water. Once the initial shock of the change is over, kittens usually begin to grow and thrive. It can also be normal, in association with the change in diet and circumstances, for kittens to have diarrhoea for the first few days or week in foster care – refer to the accompanying info sheet on diarrhoea. As always, if you are concerned about a kitten you suspect is losing or failing to gain weight, or has protracted bouts of diarrhoea contact the Foster Care Coordinator or ring Cat Haven to make a veterinary appointment.





Handling Just like for kittens with their mum, handling is incredibly important for little orphans. Kittens who have been stray for the first 4 or 5 weeks of their life are likely to have had limited or no contact with people at all and may be utterly terrified. It is your job to teach them that we are a kind, loving species that will take care of them. You may need to provide a very quiet, calm environment to start with before gradually introducing more new people and experiences. It is normal to be hissed at! The beauty of young kittens is that they are as malleable as a piece of clay; you can shape their personalities with the experiences you offer them and this will literally mean the difference between them growing into friendly, well-adjusted kittens or remaining shy and withdrawn. Unfortunately of course, in some cases, kittens who have had a particularly traumatic and terrifying start can be almost impossible to win over so don't ever feel that you have failed. There are plenty of people out there who are more than happy to adopt a more quiet and shy kitten; not everyone wants the one climbing the door of the kennel.

Toilet training can be as easy as pie – or rather more difficult. Covering their waste is a natural instinct for all cats, including young kittens, so if a litter tray is supplied, they will generally have no problem using it. However, plenty of other things can be good for covering waste – damp towels/bedding being a favourite! So it's important that kittens are regularly reminded where the litter tray is, simply by picking them up and placing them in the tray, and even holding their front paws in your hands to make them dig; the litter can be useful. Doing this especially after they have just woken up, just eaten, or just finished a particularly strenuous play session is a good idea.

If kittens have an accident once, they will likely go back to the same place time and time again. The best thing to do is clean up the mess as thoroughly as you can and then wash the area with a specifically targeted cleaning product such as Pet GOE or Urine-Off. You can buy these at City Farmers or your vet clinic, or in the Cat Haven shop. Even once you can't smell their scent anymore, the kittens probably still can – these cleaning products eliminate the odour to minimise the likelihood of a repeat offense. If the kittens are doing their poos outside the tray, actually pick-up the waste and place it in the tray then put the kitten in there, to show him or her that this is where you go to the toilet!

Socialisation with other animals and with lots of people is really important for young orphaned kittens. Many foster carers find that existing cats (both male and female) can show previously unseen mothering instincts when foster kittens are brought into the home – grooming, playing with and gently offering guidance to little kittens are all behaviours that sometimes manifest (and can be quite joyous to witness!) Young kittens are unlikely to be in any way threatening to your existing animals and whilst they may show some aggressive behaviour such as hissing, they can't do a lot in the way of following through! It is still necessary, however, to make sure any introductions are slow and controlled (refer to your 'Introducing Cats to Other Pets' handout) to ensure everyone's safety in the long run.

Bathing of kittens is not necessary as a general rule. As you will know, cats generally do a fairly good job of keeping themselves clean; young orphans can be an exception to this however, as they may have been separated from their mum before they learned how to groom themselves properly. This is a skill they will develop in their own time, but in the interim period you may need to wash them to help them out. Very fluffy kittens in particular often need regular "bottom baths," particularly if they happen to have any diarrhoea. Bath them in warm water using a specified gentle puppy and kitten shampoo or a flea shampoo if necessary. It can be a two person job, as they generally don't enjoy the process much! It is important to get kittens thoroughly dry as soon as possible. You can use a hair dryer on the lowest setting but be careful as the noise can sometimes scare them.

Inappropriate suckling is a fairly common problem in kittens separated from mum too early. These kittens can suckle on clothing, bedding, toys, people and parts of themselves or other kittens in the litter; whilst it can seem quite adorable in a young kitten this is something you need to try to break as soon as possible. A four week old kitten who suckles your neck is cute, but having an adult cat do it is not such a nice experience. I recall a 12 month old male who would suckle the end of his tail for hours, to the point that he had formed an open wound there. Sometimes kittens will choose one of their siblings as a 'surrogate mum' and suckle on their side or belly – this is not too problematic and usually ends when the kittens are old enough to be re-homed separately, however, something to look out for is kittens suckling the genitalia of male siblings. This can cause terrible disfigurement and life-long problems and I have seen it lead to the death of a kitten that developed a urine blockage as a result. If you have one or more foster kittens that are in the habit of inappropriate suckling, please contact the Foster Care Coordinator for suggestions on how to deal with this.

Bottle-feeding is an intense and often difficult task, particularly for very young kittens. Cat Haven only fosters out kittens that require bottle feeding to people who are already experienced in this.

Fostering Adult Cats

Adult cats are placed into foster care for a number of different reasons. For the most part, fostering adults is rather a lot easier than having small kittens as they are so much more self-sufficient and less dependent upon you for constant care and attention. For people who work/study/find themselves out of the home a lot, fostering an adult cat can be a much better option. We also often foster adults in pairs, particularly if two cats have come to us from the same home – this option is easier still, as they will have company and stimulation whilst you are out of the house.

Unlike kittens, adult cats will already have a fairly set personality and are not the malleable little creatures kittens are. In most cases, we will have a decent amount of information about an adult cat's background, or will at least know some of its more prominent personality traits, before sending it to foster care. This means that we can match a foster cat to the right kind of home (or at least try to) so that fostering is as mutually enjoyable and beneficial as possible. The more information you are able to share about the type of home you have and what you are hoping for in a foster cat, the better!

“No room at the inn” is a situation we find ourselves in often, primarily over the busy kitten season when re-homing older cats is a slow and tedious process. We are physically restricted in the number of cats we can house in the kennels but people don't stop surrendering cats because we are full up. In this situation, foster care is literally the only alternative to euthanasia. The key factor here is that it is usually urgent and last minute because if we don't have anywhere to house the cat, we need it collected, straight away. In this case we generally will choose a cat that has already been looking for a home for a considerable amount of time and give them a break out in foster care, with a newly arrived cat then having the option of going into that kennel.

Re-homing adult cats directly from Foster Care is, as mentioned above, particularly beneficial for very timid or easily stressed cats, however, it is not limited to these personality types. Adult cats that are in foster care can be advertised via the Cat Haven website as well as other on-line re-homing services, on Cat Haven 'Adopt Me' posters and at the shelter itself. Often a foster family will have a much more accurate view of a cat's personality than shelter staff, having interacted with him or her in an actual home environment, and can consequently be very helpful in finding the right kind of home.

Many adopters would prefer to visit a cat in a private home, rather than facing the heartbreaking sight of many needy animals in a shelter. Of course this is entirely up to you and if you are not comfortable with potential adopters coming to your home we can arrange a meeting time for you to bring your foster baby to the shelter. If time is passing and we are having no interest, in most cases we will ask you to return the cat to us, to give it the opportunity to be re-homed directly from the kennels.

Other Reasons Cats/Kittens Require Fostering

Cat flu is the number one reason we send older cats into temporary foster care. One of the most important things to know is that cat flu is not, in the majority of cases, a big deal! Approximately 85% of cats in the general feline population are carriers of cat flu and when placed in a highly stressful situation such as a shelter they can develop symptoms of being unwell. Of course when lots of animals are kept together in reasonably confined quarters, regardless of extremely stringent hygiene protocols, illness and disease are still common and so dealing with cat flu it is an on-going battle at any cat shelter. The best way we have found is to remove affected animals from the kennels for a period of at least 6 to 8 weeks, so they have time to fully recover in a comfortable home environment before returning to go up for adoption. It is imperative that cats be completely symptom free for a period of at least three weeks before returning to the kennels.

It is really just like us getting a cold or flu (but definitely not transmissible to humans) and the best treatment is lots of TLC. Some strains can be particularly nasty and particularly young kittens that are affected can become extremely ill and even pass away. However, in the majority of cases it is a mild illness. If you have other cats at home there is a possibility they may pick up flu from a foster cat – however, don't forget that they have an 85% chance of already being a carrier of the virus. It is always advisable that existing cats be up to date with vaccines before you foster and common sense is necessary at all times with regards to hygiene.





Ringworm is a type of infectious fungal disease involving the hair, skin and nails/claws. It is quite common among stray cats/kittens or cats from multi-cat households and unfortunately we just don't have enough foster carers on board that are willing to foster cats/kittens with ringworm. Due to this shortage of helpers the only other option for these animals is sadly euthanasia. This is something we are trying very hard to change but without the support from willing foster carers we are not going to get very far.

Ringworm is a zoonotic disease, which means that it can be transmitted to humans. Exposure to the organism does not necessarily result in infection however there is an increased risk of developing infection in people that are immunosuppressed, very young or very old. Ringworm is not life threatening nor will you end up in hospital because of it. Ringworm can be treated quite easily in both humans and cats, it just may take a little while. Please remember the only alternative to this is to euthanise the many gorgeous cats and kittens that come through our doors with ringworm. If you are able to become one of our most precious foster carers of all contact the Foster Care Coordinator today.

Other health conditions may necessitate a cat being placed in foster care. For example a cat that has had major surgery may need somewhere warm and comfortable to recover. Some other scenarios include fostering out cats that are emaciated/in very poor body condition or those who are excessively over-weight and require their very own diet and exercise plan!

Timid cats can benefit enormously from spending time in a loving foster home. Many cats that in the home environment are happy and friendly become terrified, withdrawn and virtually impossible to re-home when placed in the shelter setting. A foster home that is gentle and loving, but where they will be forced to socialise to some extent, is ideal. In many cases, we take the opportunity to advertise these cats for adoption whilst in care with the aim to re-home them directly from the foster home to avoid the trauma of returning to a kennel.

Options for Adoption

Returning to Cat Haven - Once your foster cat is comfortably big enough for adoption or they are no longer showing signs of being unwell and have finished shedding their illness they may be ready to return to Cat Haven and go up for adoption. Although the adoption rates from Cat Haven are still overwhelmingly successful there may also be other ways in which we try to find them loving permanent homes.

Adoption from Foster has increasingly become a very effective way to find that new 'forever home' for our cats. Many of the cats and kittens in foster care are there because for one reason or another they were not suitable to go into the pens with the other cats and many may not be able to return even after some time in foster.

External Adoption Centres - The EAC Program is the most significant addition to Cat Haven's arsenal of re-homing options in recent times. At the present moment, Cat Haven is working with a number of "Pet Barn" stores and pet shops across the Perth metro areas who act exclusively as Cat Haven adoption centres, that is, they re-home only Cat Haven cats and kittens. The term pet shop has a pretty nasty reputation among the animal rescue community but this is something we are working to change, because they're not all bad! Cat Haven EACs purchase cats and kittens from us, paying not just for the kitten but for the vet work it has received – all animals transferred to EACs are pre-sterilised, micro chipped, vaccinated, vet checked and flea/worm treated. EAC staff are briefed by Cat Haven on the important points to remember to discuss with new owners. These Centres are clean and well-maintained, housing for the animals is reasonable-sized and comfortable, and importantly is not in the front window. We also maintain a strict policy of not dealing with any pet shop that supports puppy farming. The pet shops we work with source their puppies from local breeders or rescues.

Many people choose not to come to Cat Haven to adopt. This may be because of physical distance, lack of knowledge that we exist as a re-homing facility, people's reluctance to come and choose from a shelter environment due to the emotionally confronting nature of the experience or a variety of other reasons. Putting Cat Haven kittens out far and wide across Perth means that we are effectively making Cat Haven and our animals more available and more likely to be re-homed.

This hopefully gives you a clear idea of why we think our External Adoption Centres are excellent. Now, we want the kittens that go to our EACs to be the healthiest, friendliest, cutest kittens we can find. And where do you think those kittens come from? Foster Care, of course! To show the community that Cat Haven has beautiful, healthy, friendly kittens, all the little ones who go to EACs are effectively "ambassador kittens" for us so we choose the ones who have been to our wonderful foster homes, who are confident, happy, healthy and socialised – you should feel very proud to see your kittens playing this important role in the community as part of their re-homing. A number of foster carers have expressed concerns about the possibility of their kittens being re-homed from pet shops but I sincerely hope I have now allayed your fears and concerns.

Testimonials

'It was a pleasure and a complete breeze to foster two kittens and their mum. Fostering a mum with the kittens meant toilet training was hassle and accident free. They settled in to our home so quickly and became so beloved by all of us.'

Ashe

'I really loved fostering – it was so rewarding to take in a timid kitty that would usually hide under the couch for three days and have them turn into a purring affectionate ball of fur that followed me around the house by the time I handed them back!'

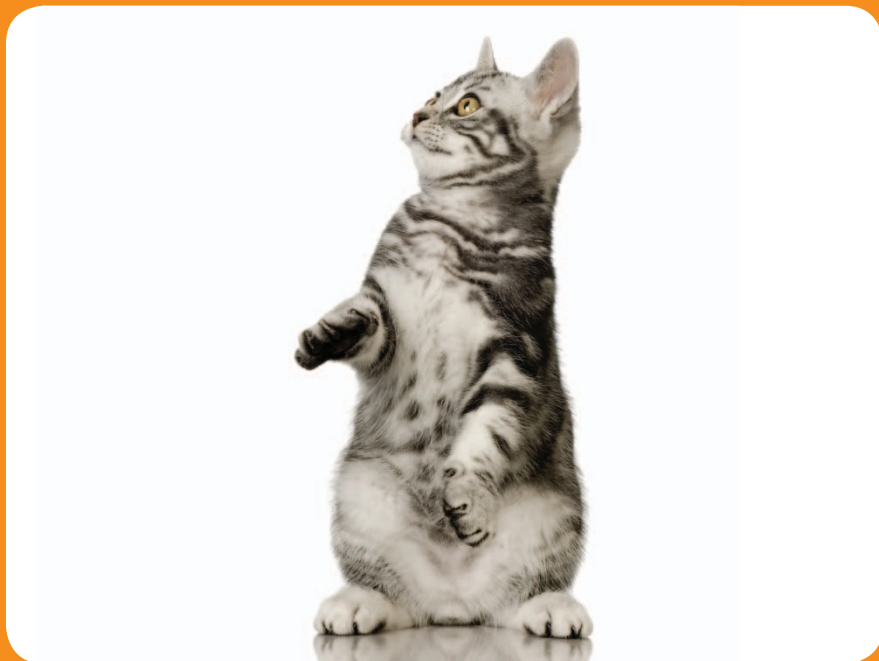
Jemimah

'...it was a great experience and my daughter in particular really enjoyed playing with the kittens and learning about how to care for them.'

Tamsin

'Having foster kittens is one of the best things I've ever done. They're beautiful fluffy little bundles of fun who keep us entertained for hours on end. They're very easy to care for, and our 1 year old cat Rusty always takes on the role of "Dad", playing with the kittens and teaching them how to be a real cat (sometimes I think he has more fun than the kittens do). It's always sad giving them back once they're old enough, but I always feel better once I hear they've found their forever home. I'd recommend fostering to everyone, give it a go and I'm sure you'll love it!'

Cat



'I love to foster kittens because they are cute, cuddly, warm and lovable.'
Jessica G (age 8 years)

'I wasn't sure how my two 6 year old male cats would take to becoming "foster brothers", but I was really surprised to find Trouble becoming a complete Mother Hen, washing the kittens, and Jaffa liked nothing more than to tease the kittens by flicking his tail, whilst maintaining an air of complete disinterest. The thing I love most about fostering is being able to give the kittens a good start in life, and give them the experiences they need to become a great family pet. The mummy cats I've looked after have been quite nervous around humans, and its lovely to be able to gain their trust.'

Ruth

'To the foster carers visiting from overseas the cats give you a real family feeling and some kind of home far away from home! As did Miss Fizz when she hid under the Christmas tree. Its never easy to bring them back to Cat Haven but as soon as you get the news that they've been adopted you know you did the right thing and gave the cat a good start to a new life!'

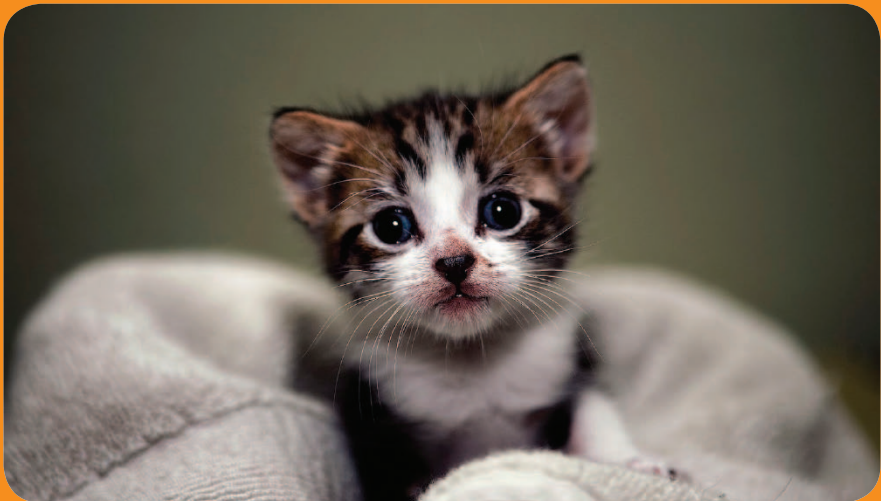
Madeleine

'Fostering is a rewarding experience because you know you are helping not only these cats and kittens but also others by making room for them in the shelter. I enjoyed every minute...'

Holly

'We have been fostering for a few years now. It has been very rewarding to watch tiny little kittens, struggling and frail, become strong and healthy again. Then when they get adopted and go to a new home, it's like a happily ever after story. There is a great sense of satisfaction in the knowledge that we helped save a precious little life.'

Karin



If you sat and read that in one sitting, I congratulate you! There is a distinct possibility you are feeling somewhat overwhelmed at this point in time but we feel it is imperative to empower you with as much knowledge as possible to ensure your fostering experiences are positive and that you hopefully have a long and rewarding relationship with Cat Haven as a foster parent.

Any feedback you wish to offer on any aspect of the Fostering Program is always gladly received and if you need anything at all you can always contact the Foster Care Coordinator or call Cat Haven reception.

Thank you from the bottom of our hearts for your life-saving work as a foster parent!

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it to a cat-friendly friend.

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