

CAT FOSTER MANUAL



Kindness and Care for Animals®



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The Program

Thank you for your interest in becoming part of the MSPCA Foster Family!

Fostering can be a wonderful experience for you and your family. You can feel great knowing that you have made a positive and life-changing difference in a shelter cat's life!

Our foster care program is designed to provide you with all the necessary training and tools to empower you to feel confident in taking animals with a wide variety of needs.

Fosters who complete the orientation process are able to take animals who are too young or too small to be placed for adoption, in addition to taking animals when the shelter is at full capacity. These animals require minimal to no additional care besides basic daily care.

We offer the advancement trainings listed below to fully prepare you for each type of fostering experience. The more trainings you take, the more animals you are able to help!

ADVANCEMENT TRAININGS

ORPHANED KITTENS

(2-3 MONTHS)

Kittens that come into our care without a mom. Can range in age from newborn to 8 weeks old. They are too young to be adopted and depending on age, require bottle feeding or other supportive care (weaning onto solid food, litterbox training).

TEMPORARY CUSTODY

(2 WEEKS+)

Owned cats who come into our care for safe housing until their owners can take them home or cats that have been seized by our law enforcement division and held as evidence while the case works through the court system. It is more comfortable for the cat(s) to spend this duration of time in a home setting.

PREGNANT/NURSING MOTHERS

(2-3 MONTHS)

Pregnant or already nursing cats with kittens that come into our care in need a comfortable place to go until kittens are old enough for adoption. Mom does most of the work but both mom and kittens will require daily care and monitoring.

MEDICAL LEVEL I

(1-2 WEEKS)

Some of our cats and kittens need a bit of time to recover either after surgeries or with medical conditions. Foster animals in this category will require medication to be given orally and to be monitored closely for improvement or worsening symptoms.

FEARFUL FELINES

(3+ WEEKS)

For some pets, a shelter is a stressful place and they are looking for a chance to open up in a practice home. Some pets require more life skills or simply someone to really care and help them adjust to their life changes!

MEDICAL LEVEL II

(UNTIL ADOPTION)

On Occasion, we care for cats and Kittens who have more complex medical needs and will need to remain in our care for an extended period of time. Foster animals within this category will require injectable medication and need to remain in a foster home until they have been adopted.

Our Commitment to Socially Conscious Sheltering

The MSPCA proudly supports the tenets of Socially Conscious Sheltering. We are focused on providing the best outcomes for all animals.

Our Responsibilities:

- Ensure every pet has a safe place to go for shelter and care. We are committed to supporting each animals' access to the Five Freedoms.
- Place every healthy and safe animal. The MSPCA assesses the needs of each animal on an individual basis, providing behavioral support, medical care, foster services, transfer opportunities, and more. We do not euthanize animals due to time or space.
- Assess the medical and behavioral needs of animals and ensure their needs are thoughtfully met. Our expert staff teams of medical, behavioral, and sheltering staff support the unique and individualized needs of each animal in our care, and collaborate to ensure they receive the best possible care.
- Alleviate suffering and make appropriate euthanasia decisions. The MSPCA works together to consider the best possible outcomes for each pet, including euthanasia for animals who are suffering behavioral or medical challenges that cannot be managed, treated, prevent companionship, or are irrecoverably painful. We are also committed to keeping the pets and people of our community safe.
- Align policy with the needs of our community. The MSPCA works alongside our communities, as well as neighboring animal welfare organizations to identify service gaps and support local animals, in addition to our consideration of regional and national transfer partners.
- Consider the health and wellness of each animal and each community when transferring animals. Our robust transfer program makes thoughtful choices to support our neighbors and our partners. We seek to build efficiency in transfer decisions and minimize the stress and impact of transfer on the animals.
- Enhance the connections humans and animals share through thoughtful placement and post-adoption support. MSPCA works hard to find great matches for people and pets and offers supportive care when needed for animals adopted from the MSPCA.
- Foster a culture of transparency, ethical decision making, mutual respect, continual learning, and collaboration. Our teams work across departments, organizations, and communities to ensure questions, and concerns are addressed openly and honestly, accurate information is shared, learning is encouraged, and we evolve to meet the emerging needs of the animals and our community.

We openly report all statistics and reporting, including participation in Shelter Animals Count.

COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

MSPCA BOSTON

350 S. Huntington Ave
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130
617-522-5055

Katie Armour

Foster Care Coordinator
karmour@mspca.org
617-524-5708



MSPCA CAPE COD

1577 Falmouth Rd
Centerville, MA 02632
508-775-0940

Sarah Messeck

Program Coordinator
smesseck@mspca.org
508-775-4112

MSPCA NEVINS FARM

400 Broadway
Methuen, MA 01844
978-687-7453

Naomi Bourque

Foster Care Coordinator
nbourque@mspca.org
978-379-6611



MSPCA NORTHEAST ANIMAL SHELTER

347 Highland Ave
Salem, MA 01970
(978) 745-9888

Jacquie McKay

Foster Care Program Manager
jmckay@mspca.org
978-224-7238



COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

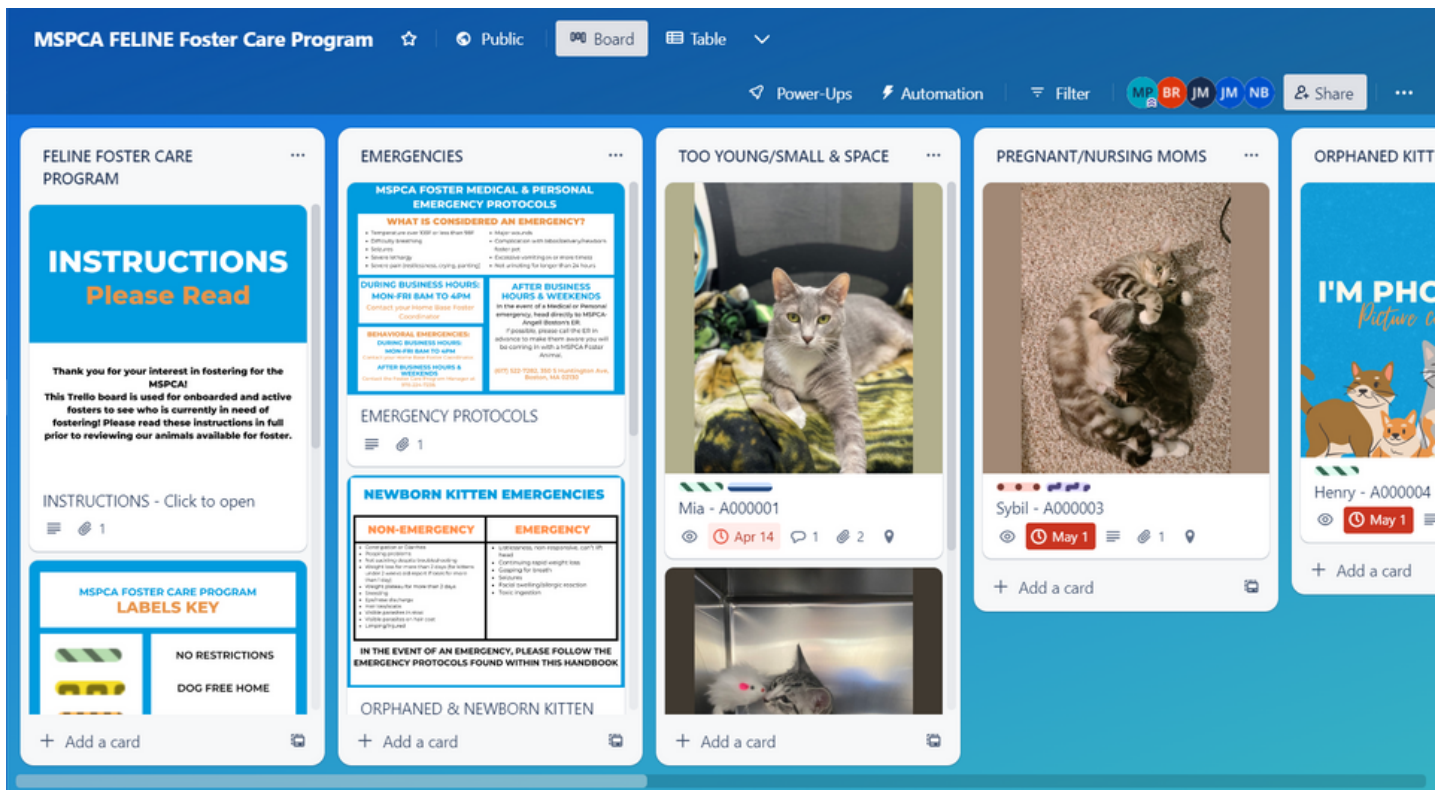
How Does The Fostering Process Work?

Each MSPCA foster caregiver is designated a "home base" shelter once onboarded, which is determined by your home address. However, The Foster Care Program is fully integrated and we share our foster families among our four shelter locations. All of our animals in need of fostering are posted on our Trello board - This allows our foster caregivers the opportunity to review all of the information and requirements for the animal in detail prior to indicating they are interested in fostering. It is important for foster caregivers to keep in mind that for some of these animals, you may be asked to travel to a shelter location outside of your homebase for pick up, but in most cases, you are able to return the animal to your homebase location for medical/behavioral care and adoption.

TRELLO BOARD

TRAINING VIDEO AVAILABLE!

A full training video on our Trello Board & its usage is available on our Foster Resources page of our Website.



SEE AN ANIMAL YOU WOULD LIKE TO FOSTER?

Make a comment on the animal's card and the foster coordinator assigned will contact you to discuss more details about the animal and schedule a pick up appointment!



ARE YOU PREPARED?

GETTING READY

Fostering a pet is a commitment that will affect your entire household. Discuss your plans for fostering to make sure that everyone is on the same page for this life-saving endeavor. Planning things like where a litter box will be, who will be the primary caretaker, and preparing the home beforehand will make the entire process easier!

1. Discuss what kinds of cats are appropriate- young or old, high or low energy- are you prepared to take on a fearful animal, or a pregnant mother?
2. Do you have a separate room in your home that could serve as a "foster room"?
3. Do you have small children that will interact with the foster?
4. How will your current pets adapt to another pet in the home (even one in a separate room)?
5. Are you planning any vacations, hosting parties, or other commitments during the time you may take a foster?
6. How much time every day are you able to devote to a cat? Moms with babies will take less time to care for vs orphaned kittens/bottle babies or kittens in need of socialization.

CAT-PROOF A ROOM!

Walk into the space in which you plan to confine your foster cat and ask yourself:

- Is there room for the cat's litter box?
- Are any aquariums or cages that house small animals like hamsters or mice securely out of reach of the cat?
- Is there anything hazardous that can be chewed on? Are there exposed electrical wires?
- Is there anything in the room that can be easily knocked over? (Food, breakable items, etc.)
- Are there any plants in the space? Consult a toxic plant manual.
- Is my foster space overly perfumey? Plug-ins, candles and air fresheners can be offensive to cat's noses, and even dangerous for them.



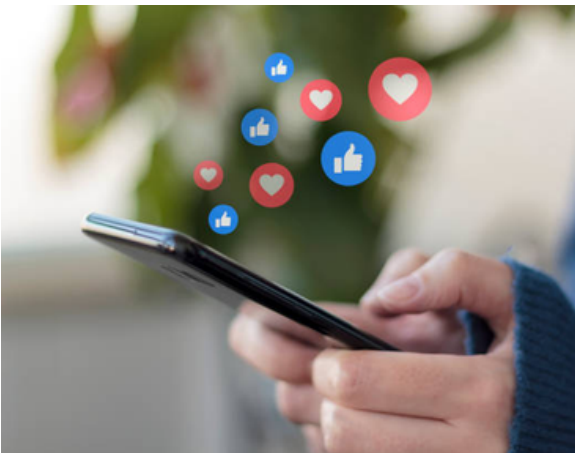
CHECKLIST



Remember, THE MSPCA is happy to supply whatever is needed for our fosters, but if you already have some things at home, be sure to let your Foster Care Coordinator know exactly what you need! Here are some things you should take stock of before bringing home a foster cat or kitten!

RECOMMENDED SUPPLIES

- Bowls
- Food
- Carrier
- Bed
- Scratching Post
- Litter box
- Litter Scoop
- Toys
- Treats



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Social media is a great way to share with friends and family that you are fostering - It promotes both the animals in your care and our program!

However, we ask that the animals below are not shared on social media:

**Any animal under the age of 6 weeks
Animals with a significant health concern
Temporary Custody**

If you are unsure – just ask!

Guide to Cat Body Language

We should always be paying attention to a cat's body language – it is constantly changing! Interpreting it is half the battle – using sound and quick judgement to respond accordingly is equally as important and is our responsibility as caregivers.

It is important to consider the whole picture – everything the cat is saying, and the context in which he's saying it. Attempting to create distance is often overlooked. Let them know you "heard" them by giving more space or relieving some pressure (and not just for fearful cats!)

It is important to remember that even with a cat that is happy/relaxed, their emotional state can change quickly if they become over-stimulated or other factors in their environment change. These changes can be very subtle such as a head whip, flattened ears, or tail flicks. You should always monitor a cat's body language and look for changes which can help predict their future behavior.

Reading your cat's "body language"

Cats use different body postures to communicate their emotions. Below are some typical postures you may observe in your cat. When observing your cat, try to get an idea of its usual attitude when alone and in contact with other animals, including people. As cats become more anxious about their surroundings, they will try to avoid contact with threats. Their score may change very quickly depending on the seriousness of the threat. The highest scores usually are seen only when escape is not possible.

Score	Body Postures	Head Postures
1 Relaxed	<p>Activity – sleeping or resting, alert or active, may be playing</p> <p>Body – lying on side, on belly or sitting; if standing or moving, back horizontal</p> <p>Breathing – slow to normal</p> <p>Legs – bent, hind legs may be laid out; when standing extended</p> <p>Tail – extended or loosely wrapped; up or loosely down when standing</p>	<p>Head – laid on surface or over body, some movement</p> <p>Eyes – closed to open, pupils slit to normal size</p> <p>Ears – normal to forward</p> <p>Whiskers – normal to forward</p> <p>Sounds – none, purr</p>
2 Alert	<p>Activity – resting, awake or actively exploring</p> <p>Body – lying on belly or sitting; if standing or moving the back is horizontal</p> <p>Breathing – normal</p> <p>Legs – bent; when standing extended</p> <p>Tail – on body or curved back; up or tense downwards when standing; may be twitching</p>	<p>Head – over the body, some movement</p> <p>Eyes – open normally, pupils normal</p> <p>Ears – normal or erected to front or back</p> <p>Whiskers – normal to forward</p> <p>Sounds – none or meow</p>
3 Tense	<p>Activity – resting or alert, may be actively exploring, trying to escape</p> <p>Body – lying on belly or sitting; if standing or moving the back of the body is lower than the front ("slinking")</p> <p>Breathing – normal</p> <p>Legs – bent, hind legs bent and front legs extended when standing</p> <p>Tail – close to body; tense downwards or curled forward, may be twitching when standing.</p>	<p>Head – over the body or pressed to body, little or no movement</p> <p>Eyes – wide open or pressed together, pupils normal to partially dilated</p> <p>Ears – erected to front or back</p> <p>Whiskers – normal to forward</p> <p>Sounds – none, meow, or plaintive meow</p>
4 Anxious	<p>Activity – alert, may be actively trying to escape</p> <p>Body – lying on belly or sitting; if standing or moving the back of the body is lower than the front</p> <p>Breathing – normal or fast</p> <p>Legs – under body, bent when standing</p> <p>Tail – close to the body; may be curled forward close to body when standing. The tip may move up and down or side to side.</p>	<p>Head – on the plane of the body, little or no movement</p> <p>Eyes – wide open, pupils dilated</p> <p>Ears – partially flattened</p> <p>Whiskers – normal to forward or back</p> <p>Sounds – none, plaintive meow, growling, yowling</p>
5 Fearful	<p>Activity – motionless, alert or crawling</p> <p>Body – lying on belly or crouched directly on top of all paws, may be shaking; if standing the whole body is near to the ground, may be shaking</p> <p>Breathing – fast</p> <p>Legs – bent; when standing bent near to surface</p> <p>Tail – close to the body; curled forward close to the body when standing.</p>	<p>Head – near to surface motionless</p> <p>Eyes – fully open, pupils fully dilated</p> <p>Ears – fully flattened</p> <p>Whiskers – back</p> <p>Sounds – none, plaintive meow, growling, yowling</p>
6 Terrified	<p>Activity – motionless alert</p> <p>Body – crouched directly on top of all paws, shaking. Hair on back and tail bushy.</p> <p>Breathing – fast</p> <p>Legs – stiff or bent to increase apparent size</p> <p>Tail – close to body</p>	<p>Head – lower than the body</p> <p>Eyes – fully opened, pupils fully dilated</p> <p>Ears – fully flattened, back on head</p> <p>Whiskers – back</p> <p>Sounds – none, plaintive meow, growling, yowling, hissing</p>



Important to Remember:

Bringing Your Foster Home: Many cats are nervous adjusting to new homes. It can take up to a couple weeks for cats to fully decompress. We ask that you confine new foster cats to one room to allow them time to adjust. It is important to have the room already set with everything the cat will need- litter box, food, and water before opening the carrier and letting them out. The carrier should not be opened during car rides or outside the home to prevent accidental escapes.

Indoor Only: MSPCA cats and kittens are not allowed to be outside for any reason. Cat harnesses and leashes, as well as Catios will not be allowed. It is also important to note to secure windows before arrival- cats, if frightened or motivated, can break through screens and become lost.

Cats and Children: Children are welcome to assist in fostering cats and kittens while supervised. It is important to not leave children alone with foster animals. Make sure to instruct your child to be calm and quiet when being introduced to the foster cat. If the cat is uncomfortable, never force interactions. Nervous cats can always scratch or lash out. Dangle toys and laser pointers allow energetic kittens to engage with children without risking needle-like kitten nails.

YOUR FOSTER CAT SPEAKS WITH HER WHOLE BODY

Eyes - The pupils can tell you a lot. Do not pick up your foster cat if the pupils are wide and dilated, as this means the cat is stressed, fearful, or overstimulated.

Ears - When the ears are flattened and pressed onto the head the cat is feeling fearful or defensive. Leave your foster cat alone or sit quietly in the room and let them adjust to their surroundings and your presence.

Tail - A cat that is holding their tail straight up is confident, but if the fur is puffed and raised, this can signal anger or fear. Unlike a dog, a slow wag indicates mild annoyance, but a faster wag shows agitation and anger.



Tips & Tricks!

Litter Box

Place the litter box in a private location that is convenient for you and your cat. It should be in the room that the foster cat will remain in for the majority of the time and away from high traffic areas. At the MSPCA, we use a basic clay litter which we will provide, but certain cats may require a different type. If there are any litter box issues, reach out to the Foster Coordinator, but also pay attention to the type of litter box. Is it covered or uncovered? What type of litter are you using? Fosters should be prepared to switch things up in order to find a solution, but be sure to check in with your foster coordinator before making any changes!

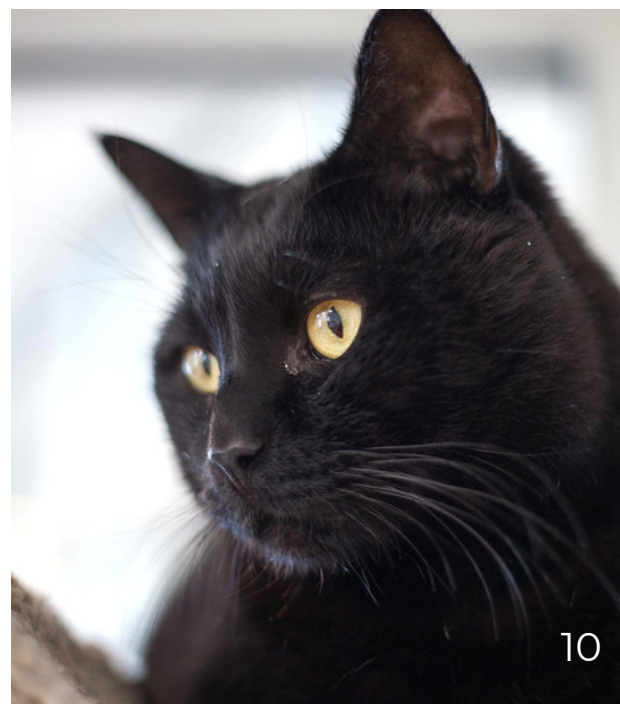
Scratching Post

By providing a scratching post and other toys, it gives your foster cat an appropriate place to do what comes naturally. Scratching not only helps your foster cat shed the sheath of its claws. If you do not have one, MSPCA can provide a temporary one if they are available. You will need to take steps to protect any delicate materials or furniture that will come into contact with your foster cat - draping a blanket or sheet can help or utilizing protective tapes on furniture that you don't want scratched.

Overstimulation

Overstimulation is the swatting or biting behavior that cats exhibit when they receive too much petting or play. Some cats and kittens can demonstrate these seemingly aggressive actions after approaching you for attention. Keep petting and play sessions short if you notice this behavior in your foster cat. It is important to be aware of the foster cat's body language and to look out for warning signs- tail flicking, skin twitching, dilated pupils, head turns, and ears pinned back are often early signs that the cat has had enough for now and needs a break from the interaction. They might not make that decision themselves so it is on the caregiver to end the interaction.

Always feel free to reach out to your Foster Care Coordinator with any concerns or for more tips and tricks!





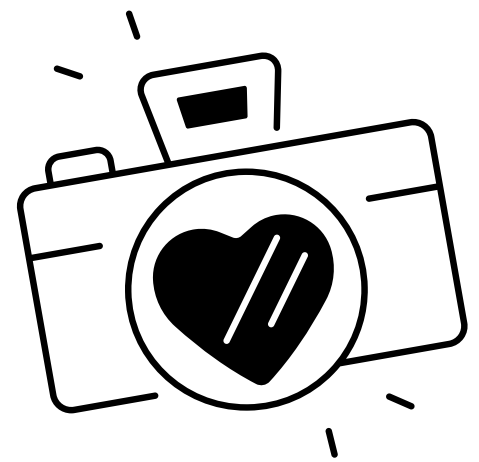
Help get your foster a forever home!

When fostering a cat or kitten for the MSPCA, you can be that pet's advocate! Clear notes and great photographs really help us advertise and promote your foster kitty!

IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS!

You will improve your cat's chances at finding their forever home with just a few key strokes! Your Foster Care Coordinator will send you our foster report card to fill out prior to your foster animal being posted for adoption. We will use this form to add personality details to the pet's record and their website profile!

Share with us what you know about the foster cat. Are they chatty? A snuggly lap cat or more independent? What are their favorite toys? Be honest, but positive when describing your foster cat. It is always helpful to highlight why someone would want to bring the cat into their home.



Tips for Purr-fect Photos

Take a lot of digital pictures. If you don't have a digital camera or camera phone, you can contact the Foster Coordinator to see if a photo shoot can be arranged.

Lighting is important in capturing a cat's detail and coloring. Try to get near windows for some natural light without the flash.

Use treats, jingle toys or make strange noises to make your foster cat face the camera and capture a full-face image.



Zoonotic & Contagious Diseases

There are a variety of conditions that can spread from a foster animal to you or to one of your own animals.

In general, this disease spread can be prevented by using good hand washing techniques and isolating fosters away from your own animals. It is also important to ensure that your own animals are up to date on all vaccines. We do require all foster animals to be kept separate from personal pets. However, if there is accidental or intentional interaction, you are assuming any risk of potential spread of disease/illness and understand the MSPCA will not provide medical care for personal pets as a result. The following is a list of some of the more common problems seen in foster animals, but it is in no way a complete list. If you notice any significant changes in the animal's health (appetite, activity level, bathroom habits, etc.), please contact your Foster Care Coordinator.

Feline Upper Respiratory Infection (URI) – Common Cat Cold

Several viruses are considered to be part of this disease group – feline rhinotracheitis virus, feline calicivirus, and others. All shelter cats are vaccinated against URI, however the vaccine takes a few days for the full immunity to occur. During this time, they are being exposed because URI is so prevalent in a shelter environment. The cat is still susceptible to the virus even after the vaccination is administered.

Symptoms include: sneezing, nasal or eye discharge, anorexia, fever, dehydration, and lethargy. Symptoms can range from mild to severe and the duration of the illness can range from a few days to a few weeks. General treatment involves medication prescribed by the shelter vet, supportive care, and reduced stress (fostering away from the shelter). Often, antibiotics may be sent with your foster to treat or prevent secondary bacterial infections, as indicated by cloudy or greenish-yellow discharge from the eyes and nose. Severe cases may require more aggressive care, including fluid therapy. If you start to see any of these symptoms in one of your foster animals, please contact your Foster Care Coordinator.

The following are some basic things you can do to ensure the health of personal pets in your home if you are fostering a cat with URI.

- Wash your hands after each time you handle your foster animal(s).
- When possible, change your clothes after handling the foster animal(s).
- Keep your own pets separate from your foster animals and make sure they are up to date with vaccines. Remember that vaccines are not 100% effective, so your animals will still be exposed.
- Do not share food/water bowls, litter boxes or bedding with the foster animal and your animals.
- Encourage all members of your household to follow these same steps.

Ear Mites

Ear mites are common in cats especially those who have been living outside. Symptoms for ear mites include: severe itching of the ears, head shaking, head tilt, and dark red or maroon dry debris in ears. Treatment for mites includes cleaning ears every couple days and applying a mite killing medication either Tresaderm or Ivermectin as directed by the shelter vet. Ear mites generally require multiple treatments. Check with your Foster Care Coordinator if you are concerned your foster animal has ear mites.

Fleas and Ticks

While fleas and ticks are not really a disease and more of a nuisance, they can be easily passed from one animal to another and, in some cases can cause allergic reactions in pets. Each animal fostered from the shelter is checked for fleas prior to leaving however no method is 100% effective and you should check your foster animals routinely for both fleas and ticks. We choose from a variety of products to treat fleas/ticks depending on the animal. The treatment is applied at the shelter and typically works in 12 to 24 hours to kill all fleas and ticks on the animal.

Parasites: Intestinal Worms and Coccidia

There are a variety that can affect dogs and cats, which include: hookworms, tapeworms, whipworms, coccidia, and roundworms. The symptoms could include diarrhea, weight loss despite eating, anemia, a “pot-bellied appearance,” dehydration and sometimes, the visible appearance of worms in the stool.

- Tapeworm looks like a piece of uncooked rice
- Roundworms look like spaghetti
- Others such as coccidia are not visible themselves, although the stool may be yellow in color and contain blood and/or mucus

The shelter gives a general dewormer called Pyrantel to all cats and dogs, which should kill roundworms within a 12 to 24 hour period. This treatment may need to be repeated in two weeks. Other dewormers may need to be used if symptoms persist and/or worsen. If any change in stool appearance is noticed, please contact your Foster Care Coordinator; we may request a stool sample to check for other types of intestinal parasites.

For foster homes with young children, you should know that ingestion of roundworms or hookworms may cause serious health problems. It is important to wash your hands after handling any feces from a foster animal. Foster families should know that some parasites can remain in the environment for a year or more.



EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS

MSPCA FOSTER MEDICAL & PERSONAL EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS

WHAT IS CONSIDERED AN EMERGENCY?

- Temperature over 103F or less than 98F
- Difficulty breathing
- Seizures
- Severe lethargy
- Severe pain (restlessness, crying, panting)
- Major wounds
- Complication with labor/delivery/newborn foster pet
- Excessive vomiting (4 or more times)
- Not urinating for longer than 24 hours

DURING BUSINESS HOURS: MON-FRI 8AM TO 4PM

Contact your Home Base Foster
Coordinator

BEHAVIORAL EMERGENCIES:

DURING BUSINESS HOURS: MON-FRI 8AM TO 4PM

Contact your Home Base Foster Coordinator.

AFTER BUSINESS HOURS & WEEKENDS

Contact the Foster Care Program Manager at
978-224-7238.

AFTER BUSINESS HOURS & WEEKENDS

In the event of a Medical or Personal
emergency, head directly to MSPCA-
Angell Boston's ER.

If possible, please call the ER in
advance to make them aware you will
be coming in with a MSPCA Foster
Animal.

(617) 522-7282, 350 S Huntington Ave,
Boston, MA 02130

Having a non-emergency concern?

Go to our Foster Resource Library to fill out our
Foster Concerns Form.

ACCIDENT REPORTING:

Practice safe animal handling. If you are not comfortable then don't do it, ask us for help. Your Foster Care Coordinator will advise you on the best ways to groom, handle, and/or medicate your foster to minimize the chances of being scratched or bitten.

In the event a bite does occur:

1. Clean and flush the wound immediately.
2. See your doctor for appropriate treatment, if necessary
3. Report the incident to your Foster Care Coordinator or Foster Care Program Manager ASAP

Foster Care Program Policies

As a foster parent, you are joining a special network of compassionate and dedicated foster families who are willing to open their homes and hearts to provide a safe space for animals in need.

The MSPCA will provide all necessary supplies, including dishes, crates, food, litter, leash, collar and medication. We supply the diet given in the Adoption Center, so the transition from Adoption Center to foster home and back to Adoption Center is less stressful. Before making any changes to the animal's diet, the foster parent must receive approval from the MSPCA.

While in foster care, all foster cats and small animals must remain indoors, and all dogs must wear their MSPCA collar and ID tags at all times. You agree to keep the foster care animals under your supervision, and to keep foster care dogs on a leash at all times when not safely secured on your private property.

Foster Parents are responsible for providing all daily care to the foster animal, including feeding, exercise, and socialization. Animals placed in foster care may need daily medication. Foster parents are responsible for these treatments for the duration of their prescribed use. If you feel you are unable to attend to the animal's specific needs, please let us know.

All animals have the potential to carry zoonotic diseases (transferable from animal to humans or other animals). The MSPCA does its best to screen animals for health concerns prior to foster care, and will make you aware of any known medical diagnoses associated with your foster animal. However, the MSPCA cannot guarantee the animal will not begin to show signs of illness while in your care.

As a foster parent, you will be responsible for notifying the MSPCA at the first sign of illness (or of sudden death) as soon as possible, so we may assist you. Foster parents are responsible for transportation to and from all appointments at the MSPCA Adoption Centers. If the foster animal needs emergency medical care, foster parents are responsible for following emergency protocols outlined at your foster care orientation. The foster parent understands that if they choose to bring the foster animal to the vet without receiving approval by the MSPCA Foster Care Coordinator, Manager, Supervisor or Director, the MSPCA cannot reimburse medical expenses.

Foster parents must follow specified guidelines of the MSPCA veterinarian and staff. Foster animals must be kept separate from any resident pets in the home unless specifically approved by the MSPCA Foster Care Coordinator, Manager, Supervisor or Director. The MSPCA is not responsible for your family's or pet's health as a result of your foster animal, and cannot pay for medical expenses of resident pets.

The MSPCA may not be held liable for any damage caused by your foster animal during the foster period.

Foster parents need to understand that animals may act unpredictably in any given situation and that they must take precautions to prevent accidents and guard against unpredicted actions by a pet in their care. Bites, scratches or other injuries to humans and other animals may occur as a result of fostering an animal. Massachusetts has very strict laws relating to dog bites where strict liability is imposed on owners and “keepers” (caretakers) of dogs when it comes to personal injury. Given this, it is strongly recommended that you have a current homeowner's or renter's insurance policy which offers personal liability in the event there is an incident involving the animal you are fostering.

One of the most difficult issues a foster parent may face is the possibility that the animal being fostered may need to be euthanized due to poor health prognosis or behavior problems. Foster homes must be aware of this possibility when entering a foster agreement, and respect the MSPCA's decision should that occur.

The foster animal MUST remain in the care of the approved foster home only and cannot be moved from your home to another, including those of family members, friends or potential adopters unless the foster parent has the pre-approval of the MSPCA Foster Care Coordinator, Manager, Supervisor or Director. In the event of an emergency, the MSPCA staff must be notified immediately, so other arrangements can be made for the foster animal.

We love it when our foster families find adoptive homes for their foster animals. However, the animal must not leave your care until the potential adopter has completed the MSPCA adoption process, including application approval by our staff. Foster parents must understand the MSPCA's current adoption process and fees, so that they can accurately communicate this information to potential adopters.

The MSPCA retains all legal ownership of the animal while in foster care. These statements remain in effect for all future foster care arrangements through the MSPCA Adoption Centers.

All foster caregivers are required to be 18 years or older. Children under the age of 18 are allowed to participate in the care of foster animals at the discretion of the MSPCA Foster Coordinator, Supervisor, Manager or Director and must be directly supervised by a trained foster caregiver.

Leaving the Foster Care Program

All foster care providers entering the program are volunteers at will and have the right to leave the foster care program at any time, for any reason. If you wish to be removed from the foster care program, please contact your Foster Care Coordinator and/or the Foster Care Program Manager. We ask that any request to be removed from the Foster Care Program be given in writing and sent to your Foster Care Coordinator as well as the Foster Care Manager. We request that all fosters, prior to removing themselves from the program, return all supplies and borrowed equipment that is considered property of the MSPCA. Any Foster Care attire (ie T-shirts, sweatshirts, etc) or items given as recognition gifts for your service may be kept by the foster care provider, even if you no longer wish to be a part of the program.

Violation of Policies and Procedures

All foster care providers are expected to hold themselves to our organization's standards and follow all policies and procedure pertaining to the foster care program. MSPCA-Angell reserves the right to terminate a foster care provider's service at any time for violation of any of our policies or procedures. For minor offences, a three warnings system is followed in according to the outline below. While this outline is provided for general information, MSPCA-Angell is not bound to follow this outline and may deviate from it depending upon the circumstances of the particular incident. There is, however, misconduct that is of sufficient gravity as to warrant dismissal for the first offense. If a foster is believed to have committed such an offence, their service will be suspended pending an investigation. If management determines that the allegations are substantiated, the foster will be subject to removal from the foster care program.

First Minor Offence

For a first offence, fosters will be given a verbal warning by their Foster Care Coordinator, the Foster Care Program Manager, or Director of Operations. A written description of the verbal warning will be documented and placed into the foster care providers file within our data system and a hard copy will be kept in the Foster Care Manager's Office.

Second Minor Offence

For a second offence of violation of policy or procedures, regardless of if it is of the same nature of the first offence or not, the foster care provider will be given a written warning from the Foster Care Manager. The foster care provider will be emailed a description of the violation, follow up notes and an action plan to prevent the violation from occurring again. The foster care provider will be asked to acknowledge this violation by agreeing to and signing the document. This documentation will be placed into the foster care provider's file within our data system and a hard copy will be kept in the Foster Care Manager's office.

Final Warning or Major Offence

A final warning or major offense of a policy or procedure will come in the form of a meeting with the Foster Care Manager, Foster coordinator and Director of Operations. At this time, a written warning will be issued. The foster care provider will be emailed a description of the violation, follow up notes, and action plan to prevent the violation from occurring again. The foster care provider will be asked to acknowledge this violation by agreeing to and signing the document. This document will be shared with the foster care provider via email. A copy will be placed in our data system and a hard copy will be kept in the Foster Care Manager's Office.

Euthanasia

Our primary goal is to place each animal into a loving home. Unfortunately, that isn't always possible and the decision is made to euthanize animals in our care. It is important to recognize that these decisions are not made lightly. Many factors such as health, age, and behavior are considered when making these tough choices. We are committed to keeping the pets and people in our community safe.

Euthanasia due to behavior is a complex decision making process that involves collecting all the information we can gather about the animal and having an open conversation as staff to determine the best outcome for that animal. We take into consideration the animal's history prior to coming to the MSPCA, behavior evaluation while at the shelter, and behavior throughout time in shelter or in foster care.

We always want you to feel informed and supported. You will be given the opportunity to opt-into information regarding euthanasia decisions for your foster animal. We encourage you to discuss any concerns or decisions with the staff. Please remember, these decisions are complicated and difficult. This is the most heart-breaking aspect of our work. We will always be open and honest with you as to why a particular decision was made.

We will be looking to you for honest feedback on the behavior and health of your fostered animal(s). It is crucial to have accurate information in order for us to place the animal in the right situation for him/her.

Before taking in a foster animal to your home, you should discuss death and euthanasia with your family. It is hard to prepare for this, however an open discussion prior to bringing home an animal is a good idea.

We will do our best to help you and your family cope with your loss. This can be very distressing for you and your family. Many foster caregivers feel guilty because they could not save the animal(s). Our hope is no matter the outcome of any animal, each foster family knows they played an important role in the life of that animal and every animal that comes into their care

Lastly, remember, in the words of one of our most experienced foster caregivers, "The time spent with you may be the best and most loving time they may have ever experienced – your work as a foster parent truly matters."



ADVANCEMENT TRAININGS





ORPHANED KITTENS

What Do Fosters Provide?

Warmth

Kittens under 4 weeks of age can not regulate their body temperature and need supplemental warmth. They are also very sensitive temperature and humidity changes so it is important to be extra mindful of the temperature of their enclosure. Supplemental heat can be supplied via a "Snuggle Safe" reheatable disk or an incubator.



TIPS FOR PROVIDING WARMTH

- Place several layers between kitten and the heat source
- DO NOT use rice bags or hot water bottles, and watch for hot spots
- Enclosure should be big enough for kitten to move away from heat source
- Bedding should always be kept clean and dry



What Do Fosters Provide?

Elimination & Hygiene

Kittens under the age of 4 weeks are unable to go to the bathroom on their own. When mom is present she stimulates the kittens to get them to urinate and defecate - as foster caregivers for orphaned kittens we need to simulate this process.

HOW TO STIMULATE FOR ELIMINATION

- Stimulating for elimination should always be done before each feeding time.
- Using a moist cotton pad or tissue to gently rub genital/anal area.
 - Avoid using rough paper or hand towels.
- Kittens should urinate at each time.
- Kittens should defecate once daily up to every day and a half.
- To avoid urine/fecal scalding, clean the area with a fragrance free baby wipe.
- Pat dry area with soft towel.
 - Watch for chafing/rawness



IMPORTANT TIPS:

- Wash hands before and after handling the kitten
- Always stimulate your foster kitten prior to feeding
- Alert your Foster Care Coordinator of either no bowel movements or more than two bouts of diarrhea

What Do Fosters Provide?

Elimination & Hygiene



IT'S BATH TIME!

Kittens are messy and so is stimulating them to urinate and defecate! Occasionally, you may need to give your orphaned foster kitten a butt bath! Follow these tips below:

- Fill a sink or bowl with warm water and only submerge and soak the area on the kitten that needs to be cleaned.
- Use a tiny amount of baby/pet shampoo to gently wash the area. Avoid eyes, nose and ears.
- Rinse thoroughly with warm water.
- Thoroughly dry your kitten immediately after you have finished rinsing. Can use a dry toothbrush to back comb their fur to fluff it up which allows for faster drying!

POOPING PROBLEMS

Both diarrhea and constipation can be treatable once a cause is found. However, it can be very dangerous for young kittens if not treated quickly. It is critical to report concerns to your foster coordinator following the guidelines below.

DIARRHEA	CONSTIPATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 6-7 fecal score• Kittens under 2 weeks old, report if more than one day• Kittens over 2 weeks old, report if more than two days of diarrhea.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kitten hasn't pooped in 2+ days• Excessive crying or straining when being stimulated or using the litter box• Appears to be bloated or abdomen is firm to the touch• Kitten flinches/cries when the abdomen is gently squeezed between two fingers.

What Do Fosters Provide?

Bottle Feeding

TIPS TO GET YOU STARTED

- Never feed a cold kitten
 - Ensure your foster kitten is warm before feeding
- Kittens should be fed on stomach
 - NEVER feed a kitten on its back



PREPARING KITTEN FORMULA

- Follow instructions on can for premixed formula
- Typically one part KMR with two parts water
- Use a whisk or shaker bottle to avoid clumps
- Powdered KMR **MUST** be refrigerated!
- Make new formula each time
- Formula should be warm but not too hot
 - Heat up formula by warming the bottle in a glass of water
- Always test on inside of wrist to ensure safe temperature
- If it is too hot for you it's too hot for them

BOTTLES UP!

- Squeeze bottle gently to push milk into nipple
- Holding bottle at downward angle, put nipple into mouth
- The kitten should start to suckle and hopefully latch
- Will see a U-shape of their tongue and sometimes their ears will start to wiggle
- DO NOT squeeze bottle, allow kitten to pull from bottle and drink at own pace



What Do Fosters Provide?

Bottle Feeding

BOTTLE FEEDING TROUBLE SHOOTING

- NEVER force KMR formula into kitten's mouth
- Hold the kittens head firmly while placing bottle towards/nipple in their mouth. Sometimes they are too wiggly and need our guidance to locate the bottle!
- If the kitten is not latching on or suckling squirt a small amount into its mouth and make sure that mouthful is swallowed before continuing.
- Place one of your fingers around their throat to feel for swallowing.

RISK OF ASPIRATION

As your orphaned foster kitten learns to feed from a bottle, it is important to know the signs of potential aspiration.

If you notice formula coming out of your kitten's nose, stop feeding immediately and tip them forward so their nose is upside-down and allow them to clear their airway. Be sure you clean the kitten's face before feeding again.

If your foster kitten aspirates more than once discontinue feeding and contact your Foster Care Coordinator immediately.



MIRACLE NIPPLE & SYRINGE

Younger babies might do better with a syringe and a nipple attached to the end vs a bottle.

kitten weight and feeding chart

AGE	WEIGHT	AMOUNT PER FEEDING	SCHEDULE
0-1 week	50-150 grams	2-6 ml	Every 2 hours
1-2 weeks	150-250 grams	6-10 ml	Every 2-3 hours
2-3 weeks	250-350 grams	10-14 ml	Every 3-4 hours
3-4 weeks	350-450 grams	14-18 ml	Every 4-5 hours
4-5 weeks	450-550 grams	18-22 ml	Every 5-6 hours
5-8 weeks	550-850 grams	(weaning; offer ample wet food)	Every 6 hours

RISKS & EMERGENCIES

UNDERSTANDING THE RISKS

As Foster Caregivers, it is important to understand the risks of caring for such a vulnerable population of animals. Unfortunately, the mortality rate for kittens under 6 weeks of age is higher than that of an adult or older kitten. Orphaned kittens have an increased risk of disease and complications as they often arrive at our shelters sickly from lack of care. Internal and/or external parasites, disease, and/or lack of proper nutrition play a major factor in the orphaned kitten's likelihood of survival.

FADING KITTEN SYNDROME

Refers to a kitten's failure to thrive during the vulnerable period from birth to when they are weaned. Fading kitten syndrome can be caused by a number of factors including congenital abnormalities and developmental issues but most commonly the causes is unknown. We will always make the greatest effort to provide medical and supportive care for kittens with fading kitten syndrome. However, some kittens are unable to recover and humane euthanasia is the kindest option.

ORPHANED KITTEN EMERGENCIES

NON-EMERGENCY

- Constipation or Diarrhea
- Not suckling despite troubleshooting
- Weight loss for more than 2 days (kittens under 2 weeks old report if loses for more than 1 day)
- Weight plateau for more than 2 days
- Sneezing
- Eye/nose discharge
- Hair loss/scabs
- Visible parasites in stool
- Visible parasites on hair coat
- Limping/Injured

EMERGENCY

- Listlessness, non-responsive, can't lift head
- Continuing rapid weight loss
- Gasping for breath
- Seizures
- Facial swelling/allergic reaction
- Toxic ingestion

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY, PLEASE FOLLOW THE EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS FOUND WITHIN THIS HANDBOOK

KITTEN CARE & DEVELOPMENT BASICS

AGE	FEEDING REQUIREMENTS	TEMPERATURE REQUIREMENTS	ELIMINATION	DEVELOPMENT
<p>Newborn (Under 1 Week)</p>	<p>Bottle Feeding Required! Kittens in this age range have tiny tummies and big appetites! Feedings should be no more than 2 hours apart and 2-4CC's total volume.</p>	<p>Supplemental Heating Required! Kittens at this age are unable to regulate body temperature Keep kitten's housing area at 80F-90F</p>	<p>Stimulation by foster caregiver required for elimination.</p>	<p>Kittens at this age will still have their eyes shut and ears closed. The umbilical cord may still be attached and they will be smaller than your hand.</p>
<p>1 to 2 Weeks</p>	<p>Bottle Feeding Required! At one week old, Kitten's tummy & appetite are growing! Feedings should be no more than 2 hours apart and 5-6CC's total volume.</p>	<p>Supplemental Heating Required! Kittens at this age are unable to regulate body temperature Keep kitten's housing area at 80F-90F</p>	<p>Stimulation by foster caregiver required for elimination.</p>	<p>Kitten's eye will begin to open but ears will remain closed. They can now crawl around and their first teeth (incisors) start to erupt!</p>
<p>2 to 3 Weeks</p>	<p>Bottle Feeding Required! Once kittens are 2 weeks old, their tummies are able to handle and increased volume of formula. Feedings should be 2-3 hours apart and 10-12CC's total volume</p>	<p>Supplemental Heating Required! Kittens at this age are unable to regulate body temperature Keep kitten's housing area at 80F-85F</p>	<p>Stimulation by foster caregiver required for elimination.</p>	<p>This week, kitten's eyes and ears will be fully open and they will begin walking. They will also continue to get more teeth - Canine teeth will begin to erupt!</p>
<p>3 to 4 Weeks</p>	<p>Bottle Feeding Required! Larger volumes and at lower frequencies (and more sleep for you!) Feedings should be 3-4 hours apart and 15-20CC's total volume. Introduce to solid food.</p>	<p>Supplemental Heating Required! Kittens at this age are unable to regulate body temperature Keep kitten's housing area at 80F</p>	<p>Will Start to eliminate on their own this week. Be sure to introduce them to the litter box!</p>	<p>During this week, kittens will start to show more interest with the world around them! They are able to walk without much wobbling & can now be introduced to solid food and the litter box!</p>

KITTEN CARE & DEVELOPMENT BASICS

AGE	FEEDING REQUIREMENTS	TEMPERATURE REQUIREMENTS	ELIMINATION	DEVELOPMENT
4 to 5 Weeks	<p>NO MORE BOTTLES!</p> <p>At this age, Kittens will continue to be weaned onto solid food. Kittens should be eating and drinking on their own.</p> <p>If you have any concerns about their food or water intake, contact your foster coordinator!</p>	<p>Kittens at this age are able to regulate body temperature and can be kept in a room between 70-75F.</p>	<p>Kittens are now able to eliminate on their own and you should continue to encourage them to use the litterbox.</p>	<p>During their 5th week of life, kittens really start to show their personalities! It is important to introduce them to new people in a positive way and engage with them with proper play frequently!</p>
6 to 7 Weeks	<p>At this age, kittens should be fully weaned onto solid food and should be eating and drinking on their own.</p> <p>If you have any concerns about their food and water intake, contact your foster coordinator!</p>	<p>Kittens at this age are able to regulate body temperature and can be kept in a non-drafty, secure room.</p>	<p>Kittens at this age should be using the litter box regularly.</p> <p>If you have concerns about their litter box usage, contact your foster coordinator!</p>	<p>Continuing to socialize your foster kittens at this age. Be sure to teach them that human hands are not toys!</p>
8 Weeks	<p>At this age, kittens should be fully weaned onto solid food and should be eating and drinking on their own.</p> <p>If you have any concerns about their food and water intake, contact your foster coordinator!</p>	<p>Kittens at this age are able to regulate body temperature and can be kept in a non-drafty, secure room.</p>	<p>Kittens at this age should be using the litter box regularly.</p> <p>If you have concerns about their litter box usage, contact your foster coordinator!</p>	<p>At this age, your foster kittens will soon be ready to return to the shelter for adoption!</p>



PREGNANT & NURSING MOMS

What to Expect When They're Expecting



PREGNANT CAT FACTS!

- Gestation of a cat is 58-67 days
- One of our longer fostering opportunities
- We often are unable to tell exactly how far along a cat is in their pregnancy
 - As an organization we typically only perform diagnostics to determine the length of pregnancy and numbers of kittens if we have a medical concern
 - Due dates are estimated by our vet team

PRE-LABOR

In the days leading up to labor mom will start to display some signs that the delivery day is near! Be sure to closely watch your pregnant foster for the following signs that you will soon have tiny babies in your home:

- About a week prior to birth, mammary glands will increase in size
- Around two days before birth, milk production starts
- Restless
- Loss of appetite
- Persistently licks at abdomen and vaginal area
- Frequent urination
- Vaginal Discharge

Getting Prepared for a Pregnant/Nursing Mom

It is important for the mother to have a safe, separate, quiet, calm room for her to relax in the days leading up to and after the birth. Have the room fully set up and be sure to include a cozy birthing area! A "whelping box" could be a box with a side cut out and made comfy, an airline crate missing the top, or a large cat carrier.

- Be sure to block off any little spaces that the kittens (or mom) could wiggle into and get stuck!
- Allow mom quiet time to investigate and settle into the space
 - The MSPCA can provide a web camera or baby monitor for you to keep an eye on mom
- Avoid using terry cloth towels
- Make sure the birthing area has high sides to avoid the kittens accidentally getting out





LABOR

It's go time!

It's go time! Mom is in labor... now what?

Most moms don't require assistance when they are in labor. It is always best to not interfere with the natural process unless absolutely necessary. Most moms prefer to have their kittens when the home is quiet and will often go into labor in the middle of the night without you even knowing! If you are lucky enough to be home and notice mom going into labor, below are some of the symptoms you may notice:

- Some labored breathing, open mouth panting, yawning, pacing
- Vaginal discharge as labor progresses, colorless at first but then becomes blood tinged
- Contractions begin and become closer together
- When contractions are about 30 seconds apart, mom will begin to deliver her kittens



Labor

When to Intervene

Mom typically will handle all the care of the kittens post birth however in rare circumstances a foster caregiver may need to intervene. **In the event you need to assist mom with the care of the kittens immediately after each birth, the following steps should be taken:**

- Gently remove the sac kittens are born in, be very careful to not pull on umbilical cord
- Gently rub kitten in a soft towel to stimulate breathing
- Tie off the umbilical cord with dental floss and snip the cord leaving up to the 1" still attached to the kitten
- Place the kitten on mom's nipple to encourage nursing

PREGNANT MOM EMERGENCIES

- Gestation for more than 66 days
- Mom suddenly appears to tire before or after the first kitten is born.
 - She will be lethargic and in distress
 - Could be a sign of Uterine Inertia
- Kitten lodged in canal for more than several minutes
- More than 4 hours between kittens
- Strong contractions for more than an hour
- Vaginal discharge odor/bleeding profusely

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY, PLEASE FOLLOW THE EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS FOUND WITHIN THIS HANDBOOK



Post Birth Care

After all the kittens have been born, mom should continue to do all of the work. As a foster caregiver, your responsibilities will involve making sure mom has a constant supply of food and water as well as a clean nesting box. Mom should be allowed plenty of quiet time to bond with her kittens and recover from the birth. Continue to monitor mom and her kittens via a web camera or baby monitor as much as possible.

48 HOURS AFTER BIRTH

- Count the number of kittens and report numbers/colors to your Foster Care Coordinator.
- After a few days you can pick up to visually inspect kitten size/look for any obvious concerns.
- Do your best to keep a close eye on kittens to ensure all are nursing.
- After week one begin to weigh kittens daily and keep monitoring chart. You should see a steady increase of around ½ oz. per day.



CAUTION!

Some moms may become protective over their kittens! If you are unable to touch the kittens, please let your Foster Care Coordinator know.



NEWBORN KITTEN EMERGENCIES

NON-EMERGENCY

- Constipation or Diarrhea
- Pooping problems
- Not suckling despite troubleshooting
- Weight loss for more than 2 days (for kittens under 2 weeks old report if loses for more than 1 day)
- Weight plateau for more than 2 days
- Sneezing
- Eye/nose discharge
- Hair loss/scabs
- Visible parasites in stool
- Visible parasites on hair coat
- Limping/Injured

EMERGENCY

- Listlessness, non-responsive, can't lift head
- Continuing rapid weight loss
- Gasping for breath
- Seizures
- Facial swelling/allergic reaction
- Toxic ingestion

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY, PLEASE FOLLOW THE EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS FOUND WITHIN THIS HANDBOOK



FEARFUL FELINES

Science Behind the Methods

TERMINOLOGY

Under Socialized

When an animal did not have proper introductions (good experiences) with a lot of new people/places/animals as a kitten. This means that they are often nervous or uncomfortable meeting new people or in a new place and can easily become overstimulated.

Socialization

Socialization is careful, intentional intros to new things/people/places and ensuring the animal is having a positive/neutral experiences, then aborting if not.

What it isn't:

Passive, unstructured, more at random exposure to new things/people/places, waiting for the animal to "get used to it" or figure it out on own.

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS



Prior to initiating any of these methods to establish a relationship with your fearful feline foster, we must first ensure the animal has all of its basic needs met. This is best demonstrated by Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Animal caregivers both within the shelter and in foster homes are responsible for providing a safe and stable environment as well as making sure the animal is provided basic daily necessities such as food, water and access to a litter box.

Prior to an animal being placed in foster care, our veterinary staff will evaluate each animal to the best of their ability to make sure they are free from pain, injury, and disease.

Preparing Your Home

Selecting a Room

- Select a space in a quiet area of your home
- Low foot traffic
- Should not need to go into the room for any reason besides to interact with your foster
- Easy to have intentional interactions
- Space should allow you to set up:
 - Web Camera for monitoring
 - Device for soft/white noise.
 - MSPCA can supply noise machine and web cameras



Figure 1

Creating a Safe Space

- It is important to have your space fully set up prior to taking your foster animal home
 - Every cat will be initially housed in an X-large dog crate
 - Whatever room this crate is housed in will be the first room the foster will have access to
- All hiding spaces within the room should be blocked off
- Provide your foster with a controlled location to hide
 - A cardboard box or cat carrier with the opening covered
 - This space should be easily accessible to you

Arrival & Transition Period

Upon bringing your foster animal home, you should bring them immediately into the space you have set up. Place the whole carrier into the dog crate and open it. We recommend leaving the carrier in the space and giving your foster time to decompress. During this transition period, interaction with your foster should be kept to a minimum - only enter their space to provide food & water and to clean. The MSPCA will provide a web camera or baby monitor for you to monitor your foster while they settle into the space. If you have concerns about your foster, please reach out to your Foster Care Coordinator.



FEARFUL KITTENS



FEARFUL KITTENS

Selecting Our Foster Candidates



Candidates are identified based on a combination of the following criteria:

- Exhibits engagement with their environment (ie: hissing, swatting, spitting, eating, drinking)
- Three months of age or younger
- Feline socialization period
- Age range can be flexible based on behavior and other factors
- Healthy
- Has known or suspected strong social skills with other cats
- Able to be separated from other kittens they came in with (if applicable)

INDIVIDUALIZING OUR METHODS

Each animal is an individual and it is important to remember that how they respond to the methods we are recommending can vary drastically.

It is important to enter each fostering experience with minimal to no goals for how quickly you would like your foster to make progress.

Following our instructions carefully will ensure you are setting your foster up for success both in your home and its future adoptive home.



The First 48

During the first 48 hours you have your foster kitten, we ask you to allow them to settle into their new space and only interacting to provide basic care. During this time we will also be asking you to monitor them for some things that will be useful for identifying reinforcers you will use to establish a relationship.

You should be monitoring for:

- What type of food your foster enjoys the most?
- Have they initiated play with toys in their environment?
- How close have you been able to get when cleaning and feeding?

All of these observations should be recorded in your Foster Behavior Monitoring Sheet daily.

FOR STAFF USE ONLY					
Animal Name				Animal #	
Foster Name				Person #	
FOSTER BEHAVIOR MONITORING SHEET					
Date	Body Language	Food Intake	Food Preference	Using Litterbox?	Notes

- Your Foster Care Coordinator or mentor will check in 48 hours after you bring your foster animal home.
- During this check in you will discuss your observations over the last 48 hours.

Using Distance & Food to Establish A Relationship

After your 48 hour check in, it's time to get to work! Your Foster Care Coordinator or mentor will work with you to determine the type of food your foster animal enjoys the most. This food will need to be saved for your interactions with your fearful feline foster. You will also discuss how close you are able to get to your foster animal before they choose to retreat into a safe space, keep this distance in mind as it will be an important part of establishing a relationship with your foster animal.

This food will be used to help establish a predictable routine for your foster in addition to creating the foundation for a relationship.

It is important for you to make sure your foster animal is eating at each session. If you have any concerns, contact your Foster Care Coordinator or mentor.



Distance: Your First Reinforcer

- The first tool you will likely use to establish trust will be distance.
 - Initially you will find that your kitten will consistently retreat from your presence. This tells us that what he/she wants most to is get away from the thing that is frightening (you) in his environment.
 - Our goal is to use distance from us to reinforce an alternative behavior! This will allow us to change his fearful behavior into calm confidence!
- At what distance is your foster comfortable enough to engage with food? Usually this is going to be with you on the other side of the room, start there!
- Offer your foster kitten a bowl of food and give him space to engage with his meal, when he exhibits more relaxed body language retreat further from him or exit the room.
- Soon you will see he begins to engage with food or comes forward more readily, even when you aren't quite so far away.
- Each time he comes forward or exhibits more relaxed body language move further from him!
- Continue this process until your foster kitten is meeting you at the food bowl and no longer retreating when you are present.
 - Once they are doing this, it's time to start auditioning for more reinforcers!

Auditioning for Reinforcers

IMPORTANT!

You should be closely monitoring your foster animals body language throughout this whole process to ensure we are only reinforcing the behaviors we are looking for!

Now that your fearful feline foster is meeting you at the food bowl, it is time to start to explore what reinforcer your foster animal finds most engaging! When auditioning for reinforcers, it is important to only introduce one at each feeding cycle to avoid overwhelming your foster. Be sure to continue to record your observations in the monitoring sheet through this whole process so your Foster Care Coordinator or mentor is able to provide you with helpful insight!

Food

- Food is a very convenient and often readily desired reinforcer.
- It is important to ensure the delivery of food occurs AFTER the desired behavior and is NOT used as a lure
 - Using food as a lure creates conflict for the kitten, they must gauge what is more important to them, accessing food, or avoiding a scary person! We want to be sure to never cause this type of conflict or negative experience for the kitten.
- If your kitten is showing they need more distance, you can consider offering food from a long stick or spoon.

REMINDER

None of these reinforcers should be used as a lure! It can be tempting, but it is important to resist the urge!

Play

- Select a toy the cat has shown interest in playing with
 - Dangly/Wand toys work the best!
 - Save that toy to be played with only when you're around.
- Use movements that catch their attention but don't startle them.
- Play with toys only – never use your hands for play!
- If your foster is interested in tracking the toy with their eyes but not engaging in play, try to block view of yourself.
 - Slowly re-introduce yourself to associate the fun of playtime with humans.



Auditioning for Reinforcers

Touch

- When your foster kitten is consistently choosing close proximity to you, touch can be introduced.
- We have all of our fosters start by using a telescoping back scratcher.
 - Depending on how the kitten responds to the touch of the back scratcher, you can slowly decrease the distance.
 - Once the scratcher is fully condensed, you will start to introduce your hand using petting consent tests
- **Petting Consent Tests:** Move point of contact (hand) close enough to your foster to identify that it is there, but allow them to finish closing the distance.
 - After they have initiated contact, then you can scratch behind their ear.
 - Go to our online Foster Resource Library for video instruction on proper petting consent tests.



TOUCH DOESN'T EQUAL HOLDING!

An animal allowing touch may never result in your foster animal liking being picked up.

Evaluating Their Progress

Signs Our Methods Are Working

Each animal is an individual and may make progress differently than previous fosters you have had. Some indications the implemented methods are working can include:

- No more hissing, shrinking away from touch, or hiding.
- Content/relaxed body language
- Cat purrs during interactions.
- Cat solicits attention

Setbacks can happen!

Don't get discouraged if you hit a roadblock or setback, they can and likely will, happen! It is also not uncommon for kittens to seem to be making no progress one day and then be friendly and social the next! Remember that slow progress is still good progress and to look for a positive trend in your foster animal's behavior!



FEARFUL ADULTS

FEARFUL ADULTS

Selecting Our Foster Candidates



Candidates are identified based on a combination of the following criteria:

- Arrived at the shelter with an unknown history.
- Behaving in a way in the shelter that leads us to believe they could be social.
- Adoption and Behavior teams are unable to make accurate adoption recommendations based off of in shelter behavior.
- History of being very good in home but acting otherwise in the shelter.
- Will explore options to place in office space within the shelter first.

IT'S NOT ALL ABOUT THE CHANGE!

When we chose to place a fearful adult cat into a foster home we are not looking for fosters to work with them using the methods we discussed for kittens. Adult cats will retain their fearful and/or anxious behaviors regardless of using reinforcers to establish a positive relationship with humans. Instead, we are looking for fosters who are able and willing to allow the animal time to settle into their home and do some fact finding for us.

Fosters who take fearful adult cats home, will be required to house a fearful adult cat the same as a kitten and allow them plenty of time to decompress in their home. Fearful adults will most commonly remain in the foster home until they have been adopted.





MEDICAL LEVEL I & II

Fostering For Medical Reasons

Some of the shelter cats are fighting diseases that can be contagious to the other animals in our care. These illnesses can affect cats of all ages and can include upper respiratory infections, ear mites, skin problems or intestinal parasites. Due to these illnesses, the immune system of the infected cat may be compromised and it's important to place that animal in a secure, safe environment in order to fully recover. The MSPCA receives many animals in need of extensive medical treatment. We use a network of our shelter clinics as well as the MSPCA-Angell Animal Medical Center in Boston to treat animals suffering from injuries resulting from being hit by a car, abuse, neglect, or accidents. The foster care period for an animal recovering from surgery may vary depending on the severity of the injuries and treatment plan involved. These animals may require daily medications or special diets, as well as regular check-up visits. Many animals need complete 'bed rest' in order to fully heal and others will require some sort of rehabilitation exercise.

Your own animals may need additional vaccines since you will be bringing other possibly sick animals into your home and should discuss this with your vet prior to taking this type of foster. You will want to house your foster cat in an area that is completely isolated from your own companion animals, such as a spare bedroom, bathroom and prepare to sanitize after interacting with the foster.

Each medical foster placement is different, but some of the reasons we may place an animal in foster for medical reasons are listed below:








Level I Medical (Oral Medication)

- Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)
- Diarrhea
- Post illness recovery
- Contagious disease watch
- Post Surgery recovery
- Hyperthyroid
- Skin/Ear infections



Level II Medical (Injectable Medication)

- Diabetic
- Renal Disease
- B12 injections
- Dehydration

SCORE	SPECIMEN EXAMPLE	CHARACTERISTICS
1		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Very hard and dry · Often expelled as individual pellets · Requires much effort to expel from body · Leaves no residue on ground when picked up
2	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg); font-weight: bold; padding-right: 5px;">IDEAL</div>  </div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Firm, but not hard, pliable · Segmented in appearance · Little or no residue on ground when picked up
3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Log shaped, moist surface · Little or no visible segmentation · Leaves residue on ground, but holds form when picked up
4		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Very moist and soggy · Log shaped · Leaves residue on ground and loses form when picked up
5		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Very moist but has a distinct shape · Present in piles rather than logs · Leaves residue on ground and loses form when picked up
6		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Has texture, but no defined shape · Present as piles or spots · Leaves residue on ground when picked up
7		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Watery · No texture · Present in flat puddles



TEMPORARY CUSTODY

Unique Opportunities

Ways to Help

In recent years, the MSPCA has sought ways to assist pet owners in need and to decrease unnecessary and avoidable pet surrenders. We are working hand-in-hand with our Community Outreach department to meet the needs of pet owners who are struggling and with our Law Enforcement team to assist animals who may have been abused or neglected.

Foster homes are wonderful options for animals who may need a longer stay in the shelter and who could have been through traumatic situations. Though this type of foster may not be for everyone, it's been a wonderful comfort for pets in need and for the people who love them!

TYPES OF TEMPORARY CUSTODY

SAFEPET

Our Safepet program aims to help people & animals in times of medical and personal emergencies, homelessness, and natural disasters. This program has strict guidelines for admittance. The goal is to always reunite the owners with their pet(s).



LAW ENFORCEMENT

Animals in this category have been seized by our law enforcement team and require long-term foster placement while case makes way through the court system. These animals are being held as evidence and may require months to years in foster care.



PREGNANT MOMS

Caring for a pregnant mom can be overwhelming and unrealistic for many families in our community. Rather than having owners surrender their beloved pet when they are unable to care for mom and her babies, we offer temporary foster placement for mom while she nurses her kittens.

Temporary Custody Fosters

What Does the MSPCA Provide?

Foster Animal Receives:	Foster Caregiver Receives:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A full behavioral evaluation• A medical assessment of the animal• Vaccinations, and schedule for boosters• Will assist owners in spay/neuter as needed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An initial timeline for fostering need• All supplies for the duration of time in foster• A discussion on the possible outcomes for foster animal• Updates on status of fostering need• Emotional support when needed

What Do Foster Caregivers Provide?

- A quiet adult-only home
- Ability to display discretion and emotional intelligence in challenging situations
- Ability to provide a safe, quiet, and stable environment
- Ability to provide a separate space for foster animal
- A non-judgmental attitude
- A positivity toward our Community Outreach and Law Enforcement programs
- Resident animals are UTD on vaccines
- Ability to commit to a long-term foster
- Ability to allow home inspections at the request of MSPCA personnel



COMPASSION FATIGUE

What is Compassion Fatigue?

Compassion fatigue can occur when there is an emotional bond between a person and animal who has experienced immense emotional or physical trauma and pain. Compassion fatigue is often accompanied by feelings of distress and helplessness. When caring for animals who come in through our Temporary Custody programs, foster families are a population that have a higher likelihood of experiencing compassion fatigue.

Your Foster Care Coordinator will always share as much information as possible regarding the animals circumstances for requiring temporary foster. It is important to check in with yourself as well as all the members of your household to ensure everyone is equipped to provide the care the foster animal needs. [Always remember, it is okay to say no!](#)

MANAGING GRIEF & BURDEN

We want all foster families to understand that it is normal to be experiencing feelings of stress and anxiety when caring for a foster animal and we are here to support you!

The MSPCA Foster Care Team is here to support both your foster animal and you! If you are experiencing a difficult time and feel you need additional support, please use us as a resource.





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Q. IS IT HARD TO GIVE THE FOSTER CAT BACK?

A. It can be. Think of fostering like babysitting. You know going into it that you can't keep the children you are caring for. Fostering is no different! You can rest easy knowing that you've been a monumental part of their life and they will find a wonderful new home!

Q. HELP! MY FOSTER IS NERVOUS!

A. Allow time for adjustment. While it normally takes 3 days or longer for a cat to settle. This can show in nervous pacing, hiding, and fractious behavior and can make the process feel overwhelming at times. Being patient can allow a cat time to settle and adjust into their environment. If this behavior persists, reach out to your Foster Care Coordinator!

Q. CAN I ADOPT MY FOSTER?

A. Yes, if you decide this is your forever friend, we encourage you to adopt! Let your Foster Care Coordinator know at the earliest time to avoid us posting the pet for adoption.

Q. HOW LONG DOES EACH ANIMAL STAY IN FOSTER CARE?

A. Each situation is different! Our foster needs range from a day or two, or until the pet has been adopted, which can take several weeks. to months.

Q. WHAT IF MY FOSTER BECOMES SICK?

A. The MSPCA provides the foster pet's medical treatment.. The pet must be seen by MSPCA medical staff. Emergency care protocols must be followed. If you have any concern about your foster cat, please contact your Foster Care Coordinator and follow proper protocols.

Q.MY FRIEND/ COWORKER/ NEIGHBOR WANTS TO ADOPT MY FOSTER! IS THIS ALLOWED?

A. Yes. Please contact your Foster Care Coordinator to discuss the adoption process. Please note no guarantees are made.

Other Questions?
Contact your Foster Care Coordinator!



CONGRATULATIONS

YOU DID IT!



Your foster pet has been adopted! They have found a wonderful new home! The staff at the MSPCA greatly appreciate your time, energy, and dedication. You have made such an impact in your foster's life.

Please let us know if there is anything we can do to make fostering easier and more rewarding for you or your family. On behalf of all the pets and staff, we thank you!