KITTEN COLLEGE AT
RICHMOND ANIMAL LEAGUE

Foster Care Manual

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Welcome to Kitten College

Richmond Animal League, Kitten College would like to welcome you to the Foster Care Program! As a foster volunteer, you will have the opportunity to open your heart and home to those animals most in need. Many of the animals that come into our shelters are too young, too ill, or too under-socialized for general adoption. With limited space and the potential for sick animals to expose healthy animals to disease, we don't have the internal resources or infrastructure necessary to care for them all. **Our solution: Save Lives Through Foster Care!**

When you open up your homes to pets in need, you help RAL to expand our reach and impact outside of the walls of our small building. With the help of wonderful volunteers like you, these animals are given the opportunity to be raised in a loving home until they are old enough and healthy enough to be adopted into their forever families. On behalf of the staff and the many residents here at RAL…

THANK YOU!!



Phone Numbers and Contacts

Chanel Moses, Feline Foster Manager

804.461.1651

chanel@ral.org

In Shelter Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 10a-7p

Ciera Jenkins, Senior Manager of Feline Lifesaving

804.921.8187

ciera@ral.org

foster@ral.org

In Shelter Hours: Sunday - Thursday 10:00am-7:00pm

Larissa Jacubec, Shelter Veterinary Care Coordinator

804.980.0727

larissa@ral.org

Richmond Animal League

Foster Text Line: 804.446.0076 (text)

Adoptions Text Line: 804.446.0004 (text)

Shelter Main Line: 804.379.0046 (call)

Clinic Main Line: 804.379.9725 (call)

During the peak of kitten season, we may have as many as 250 kittens in foster care, which translates to about 150-200 unique foster families. To ensure everyone gets the help they need, include all the pertinent information when you text, email, or leave a message.

We have a private Facebook group for our feline foster parents. It's a space for our Kitten College volunteers to share ideas, photos of cute kittens and to reach out for the support of other foster parents. Please note - any medical, behavioral, or procedural questions should be directed to your mentor or foster staff.

Emergency numbers:

If you are having a severe medical emergency please call Chanel at (804) 461-1651. Emergency numbers may change due to vacations, personal emergencies, or other reasons. If you are unable to reach Chanel, continue to call down the line to Larissa.

ALL EMERGENCY VISITS to offsite vet clinics and hospitals MUST BE APPROVED IN ADVANCE! We do not offer reimbursement of any kind for veterinary visits outside of our emergency protocol.

RAL staff will call ahead to the emergency vet to let them know that you are on the way with a foster pet. RAL covers all costs of pre-approved vet visits.

Local Emergency Vet Hospitals:

Virginia Veterinary Center, Richmond
Open 24/7
4300 Greybull Dr,
Henrico, VA 23233
804.353.9000

Virginia Veterinary Center, South
Monday-Friday 6pm-8am
Saturday-Sunday 24hrs
12077 Hull St Rd.
Midlothian, VA 23112
804.744.9800

River Run Animal Hospital
Weekdays Hours 8am- 8pm
Weekend Hours 8 am-5pm
1403 Anderson Hwy,
Powhatan, VA 23139
804.794.4105

Veterinary Referral & Critical Care
Open Hours:
Monday 8a-Satruday 6 pm
1596 Hockett Rd,
Manakin Sabot, VA 23103
804.784.8722

BluePearl Pet Hospital
Open 24/7
5918 W Broad St,
Richmond, VA 23230
804.716.4700

Greenbrier Emergency Animal Hospital
Mon-Fri 6p-8a
Sat, Sun, and Holidays 24 hours
370 Greenbrier Dr, Suite A2
Charlottesville, VA 22901
434.202.1616

Kitten College Class Levels

Freshman: Freshman fosters will handle healthy kittens that weigh less than two pounds and just need time and love until they are ready for their forever home. Pregnant or nursing moms are also freshman-level fosters.

Sophomore: Sophomore fosters will handle kittens that are just being weaned. Kittens who may need daily meds to treat lingering upper respiratory infections, etc. and smaller kittens than our freshman fosters. *Rising Sophomores will be able to take healthy bottle babies preparing to wean.*

Junior: Junior fosters will handle bottle babies one week and over, be adept at handling recognizing minor medical issues. They will be able to give oral meds and eye drops.

Senior: Senior fosters will be able to handle the youngest of bottle babies, they will be able to administer all meds including subcutaneous fluids and they will be able to recognize and stabilize developing medical issues.

Deans List: Fosters on the Deans List will be able to handle all kittens 0-6 weeks. They will also be able to tube feed fading kittens, administer subcutaneous fluids, and administer all prescribed medications.

1. Before You Bring Your Foster Home

1.1 Make sure that your pets are in the best possible health.

While it is our policy that owned companion animals are to be kept separate from foster animals during a quarantine period, some illnesses are easily transmitted even when following precautions. If your pet is on any type of medication, ask your veterinarian about concerns regarding your pet's immune system, even temporarily. If your pets have not had a veterinary exam in the last year or are overdue on vaccines, please have them checked prior to bringing home foster kittens.

1.2 Set up a quarantine area (or "safety zone") to house your foster animals for the first two weeks.

Each animal entering our shelter receives a basic physical examination. Cats and kittens could have a compromised immune system and may also have been exposed to illness and disease prior to transfer to RAL. Even if they appear healthy, keep foster kittens isolated from owned pets in a quarantine area for the first 14 days unless instructed otherwise by RAL staff. This area should also be used after the quarantine period when your kittens are not under direct supervision.

The following are suggestions for the setup of the quarantine area. The primary concerns in choosing the area are safety and disinfection. Always check carefully for small openings or cracks into which a one-pound kitten could crawl. For disinfection purposes, the area should ideally be a tiled floor room, free of fabric and wood. If the area where a foster is to be kept is a carpeted room, take measures to cover and protect the carpet from any potential contaminants.

Bathrooms:

Bathrooms often receive natural light and are easy to disinfect, Bathtubs can make great nap areas if you line them with comforters or blankets, or great play areas if you throw in some ping-pong balls! The bathtub is also ideal for moms and nursing kittens. Mom will easily be able to jump out of the tub when she wants time to herself while still having a safe place to care for her babies.. Cover all drains and plugs at all times and always keep the toilet seat down.

A large wire crate or kitty condo:

These containment systems are ideal for foster parents who don't have a room that can easily be closed off. The wire crate is the same type that one would purchase for a large breed dog. (We recommend a wire crate for kittens over 5 weeks old, not a plastic Vari kennel, so that the kitten will be exposed to the sights and sounds around them.) Both the crate and the condo should be spacious enough to provide room for a litter box, toys, and food/water bowls. Depending on the size of your kittens, you may need to weave a towel or newspaper in and out of the bottom bars to prevent little paws and heads from getting caught.

The drawback to crates and condos is the cost. If we have appropriate items donated, we can loan them to you. These must also be cleaned through, best if done outside in a sunny area. We can provide Rescue to help you get the best disinfection of the kennel.





1.3 Make sure you have all your supplies ready!

Supplies are available by request at pickup. If you run out of supplies you can contact us for refills. We are able to provide you with supplies as donations come in. If you have any questions about any of the items, proper household set-up, or are finding it difficult to provide the necessary supplies please text 804.446.0076.

We are not able to reimburse you for your expenses. However, expenses you incur on behalf of fosters are tax-deductible. Please keep your receipts so that we may record your donation appropriately.

Litter box: choose a box with sides low enough so a kitten can easily crawl in and out. For tiny kittens, the cardboard boxes that canned food come in work great! Generally, enclosed litter boxes are too difficult for kittens to access. If fostering a litter or a mom with kittens, more than one litter box is needed.

NOTE-Do not return litter boxes to RAL. If re-using litter boxes at home, properly clean and disinfect between litters of kittens. If they are not able to be sanitized easily bc of scratches, etc, please dispose of them.

Kitty Litter: We recommend using basic unscented clay litter for kittens under 8 weeks. Do not use anything labeled "scoopable" or "clumping." We will provide you with non-clumping litter. If your kittens are old enough for clumping litter we might occasionally have this available.

Toys: Play is very important to kitten development. They should have small lightweight toy balls or mice that they can carry around and attempt to "disembowel" and balls or interactive toys that will move so that they can run and pounce. Choosing toys can be difficult because kittens can easily choke on small pieces or feathers. Inspect all toys carefully to see how well attached all the pieces are and save the toys that are on the end of a wand or rope for when you are there to hold the other end. Check all toys daily to make sure they are not becoming too worn and can still be considered "kitten-proof."

Bowls: Choose glazed ceramic or stainless steel dishes that will not easily tip over. Water bowls need to be shallow enough that a kitten cannot drown. The number of bowls should be appropriate for the size of the litter. No plastic bowls should be used with cats/kittens. Paper plates can be used for food.

Bedding: Old t-shirts, sheets, etc. Bedding should be warm and cozy without surfaces where a kitten could get their nails stuck. Young kittens are not able to retract their nails and are at risk for broken limbs if they struggle when stuck. Terry cloth towels are not recommended for kittens.

Scratching Post: A variety of scratching surfaces is preferred, but disposable corrugated cardboard posts will suffice. If using an upright post, be sure that the post is sturdy enough and that the kitten can stretch their body length without concern of the post toppling. Local Dollar Tree stores have small scratchers for a dollar each. You can also glue many pieces of cardboard together for a DIY scratcher.

Heating Pad or **SnuggleSafe Disc**: young kittens under 4 weeks are not able to regulate their body temperature so they require external heat sources. Older kittens may appreciate a warm bed but do not need this.

Small Kitchen Scale: regularly weighing your kittens is the best way to monitor their health. You will be able notice small changes that act as early warning signs of a bigger issue.

Blue Dishwashing Detergent: brand does matter with this one. Unscented is best.

Other Items that can be helpful to have on hand:

- Digital Thermometer (oral/rectal is best)
- Humidifier - helpful for kittens with stuffy noses
- Karo Syrup - to rub on the gums of kittens not eating well to keep their blood sugar up
- Baby food (Chicken or Turkey flavors) - great for picky kittens of all ages
- Canned Pumpkin - good for diarrhea
- Rice Cereal - good for diarrhea in bottle babies

- Unflavored Pedialyte - a replacement for water when making formula to help with diarrhea and hydration in bottle babies

Time to bring kittens to the foster home!!!!

2. Clean Break and Disinfection

To prevent the spread of disease and illness the quarantine area must be thoroughly cleaned between new fosters. At RAL, **RESCUE** is used to disinfect our cages and supplies. RESCUE is an accelerated hydrogen peroxide. A Safety Data Sheet for RESCUE is conveniently located here. We can provide you with RESCUE wipes or spray to sanitize between fosters. An alternative is using fresh bleach and water solution at 1:32 ratio.
DO NOT use quaternary ammonia (lysol) or phenol (pinesol) products around felines.

Even though you are sanitizing your quarantine area thoroughly between litters, an instance may come up when kittens come down with a contagious illness such as ringworm or panleukopenia. In that case, the quarantine room will need what we refer to as a clean break. Everything the kittens have been in contact with must be disinfected or thrown away (porous items). We will provide you with A HIGHER concentration of RESCUE (1:16) for clean break purposes or you can use a 1:10 bleach/ water solution. When disinfecting your foster room, the following practices must be adhered to:

- All exposed bedding, toys, brushes, litter boxes, etc. should be discarded when possible.
- Non-porous items (i.e. bowls) and surfaces can be disinfected by covering them with RESCUE at a 1:16 dilution for 10 minutes of contact time.
    - Pre-clean by removing any visible organic material prior to disinfecting.
    - Swiffers are great for removing hair and spores from a ringworm contaminated environment
- Porous items (i.e. bedding)that cannot be disposed of can be washed in very hot water with detergent and dried in a hot dryer.
    - Be sure to remove all visible organic material from bedding prior to machine washing.
- All heating and cooling vents should be vacuumed or filters replaced (ringworm exposure only).
    - It is not usually necessary to have ducts commercially cleaned.
- Clothing and shoes that were worn when in contact with the kittens should be washed in hot water with detergent then dried in a hot dryer.
- Carpets and furniture can be cleaned but cannot be disinfected.
    - Exposed carpets and furniture should be vacuumed daily for one week, and the vacuum cleaner bags discarded daily (ringworm exposure only).

The contaminated area MUST be properly sanitized before new kittens can come into your home!

3. “Bottle Babies”

3.1 Basics

Kittens under three weeks old are not able to regulate their own body temperature and need an artificial heat source. If they were still with mom, they'd be huddled up next to somebody with a body temperature of 101-102 degrees. We replicate this as best we can by giving them a stuffed animal to snuggle with and a heating pad.

Recommended ambient temperature and humidity settings:

0-1 week: 87-90°F & 60% humidity
1-2 weeks: 85-87°F & 60% humidity
2-3 weeks: 80-85°F & 60% humidity

Reptile tank thermometers can be a cheap and easy way to monitor ambient conditions

The kittens should be kept in an incubator or carrier in a draft-free room where you will have easy access to them and will be able to hear them if they start to cry. If the kittens can crawl, put the heating pad underneath only half of the carrier so the kittens can move away from the heat source if needed. Keep the heating pad on a low to medium setting underneath the carrier, so that there is no risk of a kitten climbing onto the direct heat source and getting burned. Regulate the temperature and check it often.

Make sure the heating pad you're using doesn't turn off automatically.

If siblings start to suck on one another, put a stuffed animal between them to keep them separated. Sucking is a natural, normal behavior, but kittens can unwittingly do severe damage to each other particularly dangerous if the area they are sucking happens to be a sibling's eye or genitals. If they continue to suck on one another despite your attempts to separate them, temporarily put them in separate carriers. Contact your foster supervisor if this is occurring.

For helpful videos and detailed instructions on how to care for and feed bottle baby kittens, go to https://www.maddiesfund.org/orphaned-kitten-care-how-to.htm , or check out The Kitten Lady on Youtube: Caring for Bottle Babies https://youtu.be/zr0jVNeLavs

3.2 Appearance

Kittens that do not yet have their eyes open should feel warm to the touch and look plump. They will lie on their stomachs and generally sleep quietly unless it is feeding time. If they have siblings, they will remain close to each other unless they have intentionally been separated. Their gums and mouths should be pink. Their eyes will generally open at 7 to 10 days of age. Watch for any swelling or colored discharge from the eyes that could indicate infection. Kittens should not feel cold to the touch, continually try to wander away from their siblings or their "surrogate" teddy bear, fret constantly, look thin, or have a poor appetite.

3.3 Feeding

As of 2026 we use the Shelters Choice brand kitten formula. It is the same as Breeder's Edge formula and is gentle on the stomach of babies.

Kittens that don't have their eyes open will need to be fed every 3-4 hours around the clock. Let them dictate how often they want to be fed rather than forcing them onto a particular schedule. The older they get and the closer they are too solid food (around 3.5 to 4 weeks), they may prefer their feedings every 5 to 6 hours. More frequent, smaller meals are easier to digest than several large meals. If kittens are eating well, gaining weight and have no other medical issues there is no need to wake up or wake them up to feed throughout the night.

We will provide you with powdered Kitten Milk Replacement, baby bottles, and miracle nipples. Instructions or recommended use: One part Formula with two parts water. Watch your kittens' stools carefully. If you start to see diarrhea or stool that is very yellowish in color, you may need to add more water. For dehydrated kittens, kittens that are having diarrhea, or kittens that are poor eaters, you may substitute the water for unflavored Pedialyte. Do not use mixed formula older than 24 hours as it can harbor harmful bacteria that can cause diarrhea in kittens. Only mix enough formula powder for one day of feeding.

Warm formula to approximately 101 degrees Fahrenheit. It should feel warm, not hot when dripped on the inside of your wrist. We recommend heating the formula by submerging the bottle in a mug of warm water until it is the correct temperature. Do not put formula directly into the microwave. Store unused powder in the refrigerator and thoroughly clean bottles and nipples after each use with warm soap and water. Kittens are extremely sensitive to bacterial infections and it is important that all supplies be kept clean.

Make sure that the bottle's nipple is clean, warm, and intact without any chew holes prior to trying to use it.

The easiest way to position kittens for feeding is to sit with them on your lap with your knees slightly lowered. This way the kitten is on its stomach looking towards you, with their front paws slightly elevated from their back paws, but with all four feet firmly on the ground so that gravity is in your favor. **Never feed a kitten lying on his or her back!** This can cause the kitten to choke or aspirate milk into its lungs and potentially die.

Gently insert the nipple into the front of the kitten's mouth. Your kitten may be reluctant at first, and you may need to trickle just a drop into their mouth so that they get used to the taste. At this point, some kittens will respond immediately, grab the bottle and start to suckle. Others take longer, and you may find that you have to keep placing tiny amounts in their mouth until they get the idea. If you are only able to feed tiny amounts, try more frequent feedings regardless of their age. In general, kittens will not overeat and can be fed as much as they want in each feeding. However, if they are trying to guzzle an entire bottle in one sitting, it can be an indication that they need to be fed more frequently. In older kittens, this may mean they will soon be able to start moving onto something a bit more solid.

If your kitten is starting to chew on the bottle, it is time to start weaning! Chewing on the bottle can be dangerous since small rubber pieces can be easily swallowed.

Kitten Bottle Feeding and Stomach Capacity Chart

Estimated Kitten Age (weeks)	Kitten Weight (lbs, oz)	Kitten Weight (grams)	Daily Caloric Requirement*	Amount of Formula Per Day (ml)**	Amount Per Feeding (ml)*	Approximate Number of Feedings Per Day***
< 1 week	2 oz	57 g	11 kcal	15 ml	2 ml	7
	3 oz	85 g	17 kcal	23 ml	3 ml	7
	4 oz	113 g	23 kcal	31 ml	5 ml	7
1 week	5 oz	142 g	28 kcal	38 ml	6 ml	7
	6 oz	170 g	34 kcal	46 ml	7 ml	7
	7 oz	198 g	40 kcal	54 ml	8 ml	7
	8 oz	227 g	45 kcal	61 ml	9 ml	7
2 weeks	9 oz	255 g	51 kcal	69 ml	10 ml	7
	10 oz	283 g	57 kcal	77 ml	11 ml	7
	11 oz	312 g	62 kcal	84 ml	12 ml	6-7
3 weeks+	12 oz	340 g	68 kcal	92 ml	14 ml	6-7
	13 oz	369 g	74 kcal	100 ml	15 ml	6
	14 oz	397 g	79 kcal	107 ml	16 ml	5
	15 oz	425 g	85 kcal	115 ml	17 ml	5
4 weeks+	16 oz (1 lb)	454 g	91 kcal	123 ml	18 ml	5
	1 lb, 1 oz	482 g	96 kcal	130 ml	19 ml	4
	1 lb, 2 oz	510 g	102 kcal	138 ml	20 ml	4
	1 lb, 3 oz	539 g	108 kcal	146 ml	22 ml	4
5 weeks+	1 lb, 4 oz	567 g	113 kcal	153 ml	23 ml	4

3.4 Weight Gain

Kittens should double in weight from the time they are born to the time they are one week old. After that, they should be gaining approximately 100 grams a week or an average of 14 grams per day. Please weigh your kittens regularly and record their weights on your medical chart. Healthy kittens gain weight every day. Any weight loss or the same weight for more than one day may be an indication of an underlying problem, Contact foster manager so they can arrange for the kitten to be seen by medical staff. Food scales can be provided if we have them in stock. If you only foster kittens investing in a human baby scale is a good idea.

3.5 Stimulating Your Kittens and Litter Box Training

Kittens are not able to eliminate waste on their own until they reach two to three weeks of age and will need stimulation. Use a moistened cotton ball to gently stroke the genital area after feeding. You can also use unscented baby wipes for this. You will know whether or not you are successful by the presence of urine or feces. You may find that some kittens want to be stimulated right after waking up. Stimulate your kittens to urinate/defecate prior to feeding. Kittens on a liquid diet will often have stool that is softer and lighter in color than you would normally expect. You may not see stool for a couple of days, but don't panic! If your kitten seems bloated and uncomfortable or is having diarrhea, contact your foster manager or 804.446.0076.

To avoid having kittens urinate on one another and risk having them lie in wet bedding, we recommend stimulating them after feeding past the two-week mark. Once they are at the toddling stage, you can start stimulating them while their feet are in the litter box so that they become accustomed to the idea of using the litter box. Place a small, shallow litter box (a paper plate will suffice) in their carrier when they are approximately three weeks old. Don't expect them to be perfect, and check the bedding regularly to make sure it doesn't need to be changed. By the time your kittens are four weeks old, they should have access to a clean litter box at all times.

3.6 Weaning

ITS A PROCESS!!!

When your kittens are approximately 3.5 to 4 weeks old, it is time to start introducing them to solid food. You will know that they are ready when they begin chewing on the bottle and acting insatiable. Gradually change their diet by mixing the formula with canned kitten food, making a pudding-like consistency. Spoon the food with your finger from the bowl into the kitten's mouth and then back to the bowl several times so the kitten gets the idea that they should eat from the bowl. Don't be surprised if their first inclination is to walk through the bowl rather than eating from it.

Some kittens wean faster than others, don't despair if your kitten isn't eager to give up their bottle! If your kitten doesn't want to give up their bottle, but you're worried their teeth are puncturing the nipple, try one of the following:

- Wait a little longer and try again in a few days or so to see if they're ready.
- Offer a dish of formula/canned food gruel to a hungry kitten prior to offering the bottle.

- Hand-feeding- try putting just a tiny piece of canned food in your kitten's mouth and see how they respond. Repeat several times to get them accustomed to the taste and texture. The best time to try this is when a kitten is hungry before offering the bottle.
- Mix canned food with the formula in their bottle to accustom them to the taste.
- Try an intermediary step and introduce them to chicken or turkey flavored human baby food. (Kittens tend to love baby food; we just don't recommend it as the first option because it can be hard to wean them away from.) Read the ingredients carefully. Some baby foods contain onion or garlic powder and these can be toxic to kittens. If you just see the word "gravy" listed under ingredients without any explanation, don't use it! Gerber makes a safe Chicken and Chicken gravy product that consists only of finely ground chicken, water, and cornstarch. Chicken and turkey products are easiest for kittens to digest, do not use beef or ham!
- Try warming the food you are trying to tempt them with.
- Try offering small pieces of steamed or boiled (unseasoned) chicken

Don't give up! Some kittens will not wean until they are seven weeks old. As long as they are healthy, happy, gaining weight, and not in danger of choking on their nipple, they'll be just fine!

Once your kittens are eating the gruel, you can gradually decrease the amount of formula.

You may introduce the kittens to dry kitten food during the weaning process. You may need to mix the canned food with dry food to get them to eat it at first. If they really love their formula, soaking the dry food in the formula can also be helpful. At 4-5 weeks of age, they should always have dry food available even if you are still having to supplement them with canned food or formula.

3.7 Grooming and Bathing

Bottle babies can be messy, the weaning process is even messier. It is extremely important that you keep your kittens as clean as possible as they are prone to bacterial infections. You can bathe your kittens at any point you feel that they need a bath, be careful that they don't become chilled, and be sure to dry them thoroughly. Most shampoos on the market are not designed for kittens this young. The safest product to use is diluted original formula Dawn dishwashing detergent since it is designed to lather up quickly, rinse off without leaving a residue, and is gentle enough for us "to eat off the plate." Don't feel that you need to use soap every time that you bathe them either. If they are making such a mess that you have to bathe them every day, just using warm water or spot cleaning the messiest places is fine! Unscented baby wipes can be used for this process as well.

To warm your kittens after a bath you can use a blow dryer on a low setting.

Just be very careful to monitor your kittens carefully! If you're using a blow dryer, keep your hand between the heat and the kitten at all times so that you know right away if it's getting too hot. Make sure that they still have a heat source in their living area for after baths as well.

For regular grooming of bottle babies, you can use a soft toothbrush. Grooming can be a great way to stimulate a kitten with a poor appetite, and most kittens really enjoy it! After bottle-feeding, you can also use a

toothbrush to get rid of any dried milk left in the corner of their mouth (or you can use a warm, damp cloth.) It is important to make sure that no residue is left because hair loss around the mouth can result.

3.8 Challenge of Bottle Babies

A word about the survival rate of bottle babies: Bottle babies are the most difficult, require the most resources, and are the most time-intensive foster animals to care for, and the younger the kittens, the more difficult they are. For many bottle babies, the prognosis for survival may not be in their favor, and it is not uncommon for even the most experienced and seasoned foster parents to lose kittens through no fault of their own. Always remember that you are doing the best you can and have given these kittens their best chance at survival.

4. Kittens That Are Eating on Their Own (~4+ weeks)

4.1 Basics

Kittens at this age are adorable, but they are growing fast mentally and physically and have a lot of places they want to go and see. They will put everything and anything in their mouth and will climb anywhere they are able to reach. Therefore, it is extremely important that you keep them in their safety zone unless they are under direct supervision. Kitten proof carefully and leave nothing to chance!

DANGEROUS HOUSEHOLD ITEMS:

Electrical cords
Rubber bands
Washing Machines
Christmas Trees
Clothes Dryers
Holiday Decorations
High balconies
Ribbon
Trash Cans
String
Plastic bags
Shoe Laces
Cigarettes
Snail Bait
Fireplaces
Pesticides
Rocking Chairs
Anti-Freeze
Skateboards
Table Scraps
Wheelchairs
Doors
Open Cupboards
Aspirin
Soaps
Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin)
Uncovered Toilets
Windows
Stairs
Houseplants
Other Animals

Your kittens should have access to food, water, toys, and a clean litter box at all times. Keep them in a confined area, large enough that they can still play but not too large a territory at this age. They are still learning to use their litter box, and if they have too many options available, they may find another place that they find more appealing! Make sure that your food and water bowls are not next to your litter boxes.

Kittens in this age range can maintain their own body temperatures, but still prefer things to be warm. Keeping the room temperature in the mid-’70s is ideal. If you are fostering in the winter months or if you like to keep your home air-conditioned, give your kittens access to a heated bed. You can place a heating pad underneath

your cat carrier, remove the carrier door and place a cozy blanket inside. Kittens can choose to be on the heat if they want to but are not in any danger of accidentally getting trapped inside.

4.2 Feeding

Kittens have a high metabolism, once they are fully weaned it is important that they always have food available. If your kittens love dry food and are perfectly healthy, you may not need to use canned food at all. However, if you have kittens that have poor appetites, or are recovering from an upper respiratory infection and are having difficulty smelling the dry food, you may need to rely more heavily on the canned.

Watch your kittens carefully to make sure that they are able to approach the food bowl. Sometimes, a bully kitten does not want to share with the group. You may need to add more bowls or move existing bowls further apart. In severe cases, you may need to separate the kittens either permanently or several times a day.

As with the bottle babies, it is important to weigh your kittens regularly to ensure that they are getting enough nutrition. They should be gaining approximately 100 grams or a quarter pounds a week. Please note their weights on a regular basis.

5. Mother Cats and Kittens

Be extra patient with mother cats.

We try to screen mother cats to ensure they will adapt to a foster home, but some adjust faster than others. When you initially bring home mom and her kittens, please set them up in their “quarantine zone” and leave them to adjust. If mom doesn’t want to come out of her carrier, prop the door open and allow her to come out at her leisure.

Keep visitors and household activity to a minimum while mom adapts to her new environment. Make sure that the room is “cat-proof” and does not have screens that she can pop out of the window or unsafe places where she can hide. Provide enough space that mom can get away from the kittens if she wants to (a simple perch or windowsill will suffice) but not too much space.

Once your mom cat is comfortable in your presence and fully adjusted to her living area, you can start spending more time with her and her kittens. Wait for her to solicit attention before overwhelming her.

Since your mom cat will be the primary provider for her family, her health and well-being is paramount. Mother cats need extra fat and protein in their diet, she should have access to high-quality kitten food and fresh water at all times. Lactating mothers need to defecate more than usual, set up more than one litter box to ensure cleanliness.

Check the family regularly to ensure that the mom cat is providing enough nutrition to her kittens. Weigh the kittens daily. Remember that kittens should double in weight from the time they are born until they are one week old. Afterward, they should be gaining 100 grams a week or a little over 14 grams per day. If the mother cat doesn’t mind, gently touch her nipples to make sure that she is lactating.

If you suspect that the mom cat isn't lactating or if you hear the kittens crying incessantly, begin supplementing the kittens with a bottle and contact RAL immediately. Mother cats will frequently cease lactating if they are ill or malnourished themselves. If you notice any signs of illness or loss of appetite in the mother cat, please contact 804.446.0076.

Mom cats can come back into heat when their kittens are as young as four weeks old. If you suddenly see your mom cat being overly demonstrative in her affections towards you, rolling around on the floor, rubbing against household items, or being unusually vocal, she maybe coming back into heat. Make sure all windows are secure and family members know to be extra careful when entering her room, as she will have a strong desire to leave during this period.

Ideally, mom cats should have an opportunity to wean their kittens and cease lactating before being spayed. Mother cats will usually begin weaning their kittens between 4 and 6 weeks of age. You will often see that this takes little effort on her part, kittens will naturally start to eat her food. (You can assist, by making sure that there is a frequent supply of soft food available and tempting the kittens yourself) Occasionally you will see mother cats lose patience with their kittens or decide they've had enough of parenthood altogether. If you see the mom cat starting to get rough with her kittens, give her some time to herself in a separate room. If she wants nothing to do with her kittens and you are unable to keep her separated from them, text 804.446.0076.

Every mother cat is a unique individual and we want to do what is best for her physically and emotionally. Some mother cats bond very strongly with their kittens and will do best if they can be returned to the shelter at the same time as their kittens. Others need more time to recuperate and would benefit from more time in their foster home. Others need separation from their kittens and may be returned to the shelter or transferred to another foster home.

6. Things to look out for

6.1 Emergencies: Kittens may need to be seen ASAP. If you find your kitten with any of the below symptoms, call Chanel/Ciera immediately for your next steps.

- Stool that is white, light yellow, dark brown/black, contains mucous or has a lot of blood in it.
- Streaming diarrhea where the kitten has no control at all.
- Temperatures over 103 degrees
- Extreme dehydration- if you pinch the skin on its back, and the skin remains tented for 5 seconds. The eyes may appear to be sunken in. The gums will feel dry or tacky.
- Excessive vomiting or vomiting blood or green or yellow bile.
- Vomiting combined with diarrhea
- Difficulty breathing or very shallow or labored breathing
- Extreme lethargy where the kitten is barely moving or not moving at all.
- Eyes that have swelled shut
- Prolapsed rectum
- If you have reason to believe that your kitten has ingested something toxic
- Swollen or broken limbs

- Anything else that makes you think your kitten is in pain or in danger of passing away.

6.2 Non- Emergencies that Require an Appointment with our Medical Staff:

Contact the Foster Google Voice for any of the below issues! Texting works best 804.446.0076.

- Kittens that are not gaining weight
- Continued diarrhea after the protocol has been administered
- Eyes that are red, inflamed, or have a colored discharge
- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy
- Temperatures under 100 degrees or over 102.8 degrees
- Vomiting (unless it is only undigested food and the kitten shows no other symptoms and the vomiting does not reoccur.)
- Congestion
- Raspy Breathing
- Sneezing (unless it is a dry, infrequent sneeze with no signs of a colored discharge and the kitten is still active, eating, and shows no other symptoms of illness.)
- Any change in behavior that causes alarm (ex: suddenly not using the litter box)
- Straining in the litter box
- Constipation
- Swollen rectum
- Limping
- Hovering about the water bowl, but not drinking
- Dehydration
- Pale gums
- Ear-mites
- Worms (Tapeworms look like grains of rice while Roundworms look more like spaghetti)

7. Common Illnesses

7.1 Common Illnesses

Kittens and their mothers may suffer from a wide variety of illnesses. Fortunately, a great many of them are treatable with basic medications and care. Below is a list of common illnesses you may encounter with your foster and the steps to take should these occur.

Upper Respiratory Infections

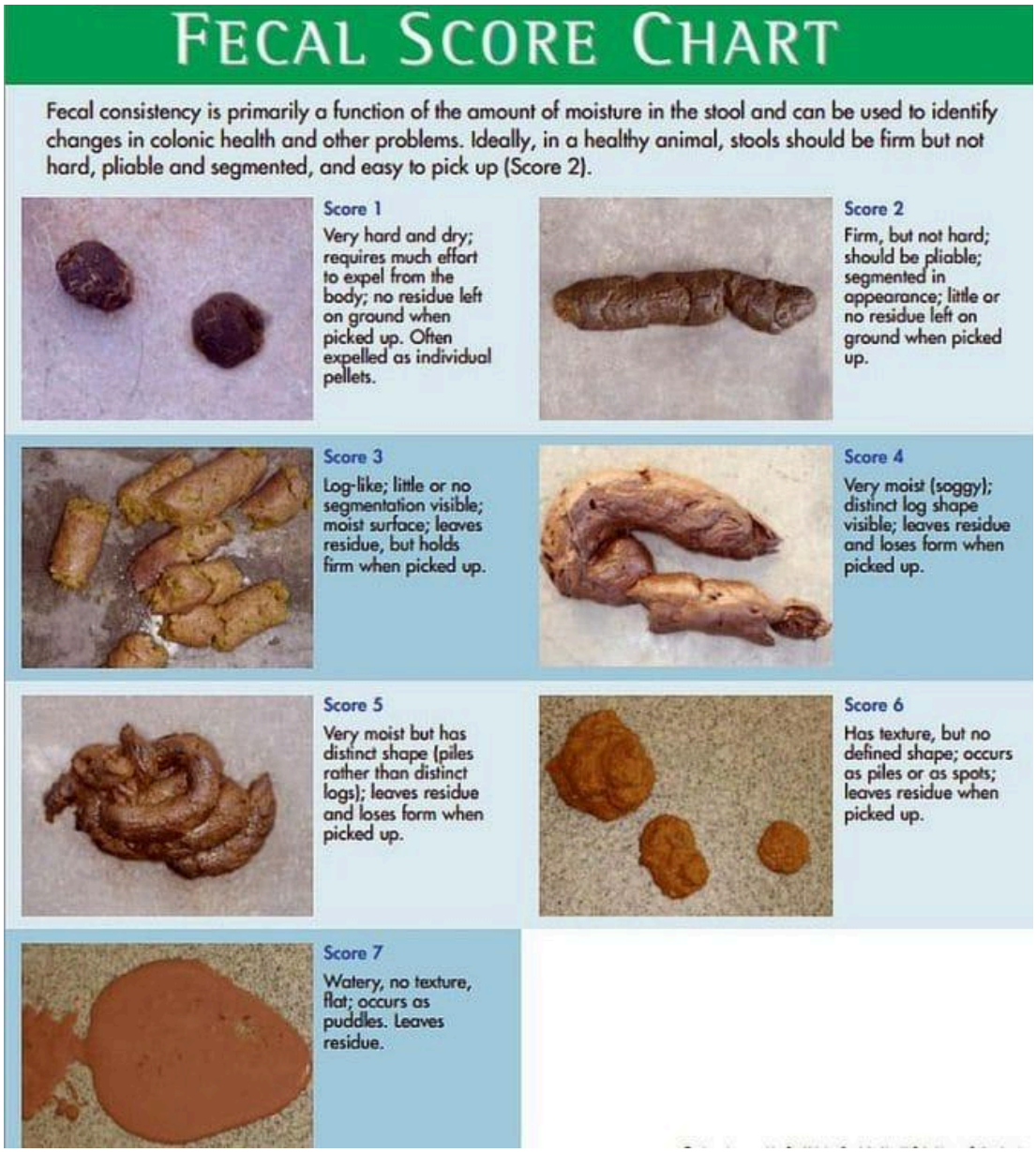
Kittens in a shelter setting are bound to pick up colds. Sneezing, runny eyes, and congestion are all symptoms. Many of the upper respiratory infections we see are viral and will not respond to antibiotics directly, our veterinarian may prescribe antibiotics to fend off secondary bacterial infections. You can help by ensuring kittens have access to a heated bed, running a humidifier, and warming their food. If you don't have a humidifier, try bringing the kittens into the bathroom while you are taking a hot shower to relieve some of the congestion.

Eye Infections

The eyes are a very sensitive and painful area, it is important to treat eye infections quickly. If the eyes develop clear discharge, keep them clean with warm damp gauze or tissue. Email a picture and we can advise on the next steps.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea is a frequent condition in kittens often caused by parasites such as worms, Coccidia or Giardia. Viruses such as panleukopenia may also cause diarrhea. It's common for kittens to have loose or runny stools within the first 24-48 hours of coming home. If diarrhea continues after this time frame, we'll start treatment. If your kittens are eating and acting normal, we can get them started on medication.



Ear Mites
Ear mites are tiny parasites that live in the ear canal. An infected kitten will shake their head or scratch at their ears a lot.

Ringworm

Ringworm isn't actually a worm, but a fungus. It will usually appear as hair loss in areas where the skin is thin: around the nose, ears, eyes, and feet. In severe cases, it can look scaly and may resemble a burn. Ringworm is contagious to humans and other animals, and if the spores get into your carpet fibers it can live there for up to a year or more. If you suspect ringworm, it is important to handle your kittens with gloves and keep them in their quarantine area until you can have them examined by our medical team.

Panleukopenia
Panleukopenia is a highly contagious, often fatal virus. Symptoms include diarrhea, lethargy, fever, loss of appetite, dehydration, and fever. An affected kitten may isolate themself and appear to be in pain. Because the symptoms of panleukopenia are like so many other ailments, please try not to panic. However, if you suspect panleukopenia, keep your kittens in their quarantine area and contact us immediately.

Panleukopenia is a hardy virus and can live in the environment for over a year. If your foster kittens test positive for Panleukopenia there needs to be a completely clean break between litters.

FIP (Feline Infectious Peritonitis)

FIP is a confusing and often fatal disease that is difficult to diagnose because it can take on many forms, and there is no easy pre-mortem test for a definitive diagnosis. Symptoms may include loss of appetite, lethargy, weight loss, recurrent respiratory infections, a distended abdomen, high fevers, eye disease, neurologic changes or labored breathing. Fortunately, a medication is finally available to veterinarians for treating FIP. It is a very long treatment with a fairly good success rate.

Feline Leukemia (FELV)

FELV suppresses the kitten's immune system and allows other illnesses to develop. FELV can be transmitted through saliva, through the mother's milk, or in utero. We currently test for FELV at surgery. Since we do not test kittens before surgery it is recommended that you keep kittens separate from your personal cats if concerned about FeLV.

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)

FIV is an immunodeficiency virus transmitted through bodily fluids (blood, urine, saliva, milk). Cats and kittens with FIV can live for a long time if their immune systems are kept strong and they are not exposed to other illnesses. The test for FIV is not accurate in kittens, so there are some risks that foster kittens can be carriers. Many kittens that are FIV positive will not show any symptoms. We do not test for FIV anymore. Cats with FIV can live full lives with other cats.

7.2 Death

Contact Chanel at (804) 461.1651 or Ciera 804.921.8187.

If a foster kitten dies while in your care, please wrap up the body and place it in a box or Ziploc bag. Write the kitten's name and ARN on the box and bring the kitten into the shelter as soon as possible. If you need to keep the kitten overnight, place the box in your freezer. If you would like to bury the body at your home please let us know and we can see if that is an option. Sometimes we will need the body back for medical purposes.

Please remember that if a kitten died you did everything that you could and provided the best care possible.

We are always here for you in times of grief and we can offer counseling.

8. Socializing Your Foster Cat or Kittens

Remember that your goal is to raise friendly, outgoing, easy to handle happy, well-adjusted kittens! Their behavioral well-being is just as important as their physical health. Kittens learn through association. You have the advantage of being able to use every feeding as a lesson in love.

Most kittens love canned food. By sitting in the room with your kittens when you feed them, they will associate your presence with a positive experience. For kittens that are very shy, try gradually working up to hand-feeding them canned food (just be sure that you pick up a large enough chunk that they don't accidentally bite your finger.) Once they are eating comfortably from your hand, try stroking them while they are eating. Eventually, you want to be able to hold them while they are eating. If the canned food doesn't work, try small pieces of steamed or boiled chicken, small pieces of turkey, or commercial cat and kitten treats.

If your kitten does not appear to be overly food motivated, try seeing what toys they like. Most kittens will respond to a "cat dancer" or cat wand. These are toys at the end of the wand that you can move along the floor for your kittens to chase. They are wonderful toys for exercising rambunctious kittens and for drawing shy kittens out of their shell.

It's common for your cat or kittens to hide in a safe spot within the first 24 hours of coming home, but you should be able to pick up and handle your foster animal without any issues.

Try to ensure that your kittens do not bond solely to you by inviting people over to spend time with the kittens. Load your friends up with your kittens' favorite treats or toys and let them play!

If young children are handling the kittens, supervise at all times. Kittens are very impressionable at this age and very fragile and can be easily injured by accident. The best way to have young children and kittens interact is by asking the children to sit on the floor and giving them a toy such as a cat dancer to gently move across the floor. You may place the kitten in the child's lap, but don't force the kitten to stay, and do not allow the child to chase the kitten.

8.1 Mouthing & Biting

The following suggestions are for kittens only.

Kittens learn proper bite inhibition from their littermates. Single kittens that have been raised by themselves or that have relied primarily on humans for socialization often bite harder than they should. While this behavior may appear “cute” coming from a tiny kitten, it can become dangerous as the feline matures. Aggression towards humans is a reason that the cat will either return to the shelter or be forced to live outside. Please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Stop moving your hand and remove attention completely away from them by not petting or handling them.
- Have an adequate supply of toys on hand at all times. Toys such as the “cat dancer” or cat wands are wonderful because they create distance between the toys and your hands and encourage play with appropriate items.
- Throw toys! Some kittens like to fetch or carry items around!
- Provide the kitten with a stuffed animal that he or she can kick, bite!

Never swat, blow on, or scruff a kitten for mouthing. These actions are ineffective and confusing. You will only agitate the kitten further.

If your kitten does bite you and breaks the skin, notify the Foster Team as soon as possible. By law, we need to document and report the incident to Animal Control. In most cases, we can arrange for the kitten to serve his or her “quarantine” period in your home.

8.2 Litter Box Aversion

Most cats and kittens instinctively use the litter box. If your fosters are having difficulty, consider the following:

- Accidents can be a result of bladder or urinary tract infections.
- A kitty with diarrhea may not be able to make it to the box quickly enough. This is usually the case with a kitty that has used the box in the past and is suddenly having trouble.

If we have ruled out a medical condition, please:

- Make sure the litter box is accessible. Are the sides low enough for the kittens to easily walk in and out? Is it in a quiet, low-traffic area?
- Clean the box more often.
- Add litter boxes, especially if you have a litter of kittens. Many kittens do not like to share with several other animals.
- Move the litter box; maybe there is a draft, a smell, or a sight that is causing that kitten to avoid the area.
- Put a mat under or in front of the box. Many cats have surface preferences.
- Use an enzyme cleaner to clean up accidents.
- Dump the entire box regularly if just scooping isn’t enough.

- Rinse the entire box out with an enzyme cleaner and hot water.
- Put the food or water bowl in the place where accidents occur.
- Try to identify which kitten is having the accidents. He or she may need to have a litter box of his or her very own or may need to be contained in a smaller area. If your kittens are in a small room already, you may need to confine them to a kitty condo or large kennel.

8.3 Kittens and Dogs

Never leave your dog unsupervised with a foster cat or kittens, make sure the area where you are keeping kittens is completely dog-proof. Positive interactions between your kittens and dogs will be very beneficial for the kitten, especially if adopted into a home with a resident dog

9. Medical Charts and Vaccinations

Daily weights for kittens are very important. Please keep a chart handy to track their growth.

Commonly used medical terms:

- FVRCP - Routine vaccination, will need to be updated every two to three weeks

- Pancur(fenbendazole)/Toltrazuirl/Pyrantel - General deworming, pyrantel needs to be re-dosed every week until surgery.

- Intake Exam: A vetting exam happens for all pets when they arrive. Unless they are born in care and then it is as needed for medical concerns or at 4 weeks.

- Revolution Plus - Flea, tick, ear mite, heartworm, and roundworm prevention.

Stay on top of getting your kittens in for their routine vaccinations.

Foster Vaccine Appointment

https://RAL.as.me/vax

Vaccine reactions are not common, but they can occur. Plan on bringing your kittens in for vaccines on a day when you have time to monitor them. Reactions include high temperatures, lethargy, loss of appetite, and vomiting.

10. Spaying and Neutering

All of our pets are sterilized prior to adoption. If your foster pet was not already sterilized prior to you picking them up, you will need to bring them in for their surgery.

Please do remember that our Clinic also performs surgeries for public clients and other rescues and they should not be the first contact for medical concerns.

Due to the high number of surgeries we performed at The Loving Spay and Neuter Clinic at RAL, there may be a backlog of appointments available for foster kittens.

Before the Surgery

After you pick up your foster, the Foster team will determine a target date for your foster.

> The Foster staff will schedule your foster as close to this date as possible but appointments are dependent on the clinic's surgery schedule and your availability.

Foster staff will contact you with a date and provide additional details regarding the appointment.

> If this date does not work for you, they are willing to work with you to find alternative drop-off and pick-up times or a completely different day if needed.
>
> If you need to reschedule your foster's appointment, please give the Foster team as much notice as possible.

To have surgery, a pet must be at least 1.7lbs, 2 months old, and healthy.

> It is good to monitor your foster's weight (kitchen scales work well for kittens!) to ensure they will be able to have surgery and also to monitor for signs of other issues.

If your foster does not qualify for surgery for whatever reason, another appointment will be scheduled.

If you have a nursing mother, she should stay with her offspring to prevent engorgement of her mammary glands.

A week before your foster's appointment, please submit pictures and bios to foster@ral.org. See the Adoptions section of the handbook for more information.

Day of Surgery

All cats can have a small meal before 6 am the morning of surgery but no food or water after 6am.

You do not have to fill out any paperwork but you will be asked for a brief update on your fosters.

Check-in time begins at 7:30 am. It can take up to half an hour to check-in everyone; please plan your morning accordingly.

Pull around the building in a counterclockwise direction and take a parking space in front of the glass windows. If no space is available, remain in line. Do not exit your vehicle until you are asked to

Cats must be in a secure, clean carrier labeled with your last name and your foster's names.

> Kittens may come in one carrier but you may be sent home with additional ones depending on how they are feeling after surgery.

Check-out for cats is at 5:00 PM.

> Please let us know as soon as possible if you need to arrange a late pickup.

After Surgery

Your foster kitten will receive a four-day, transdermal pain medication at surgery. They will not come home with medication for general spay/neuter surgeries.

Unless otherwise noted, all sutures are under the skin and will dissolve. You will not need to come back for a recheck or suture removal. Your foster pet's incision was sealed with surgical glue.

Your foster will also have a small green tattoo near the incision site to mark that they have been sterilized.

Normal

Your foster pet was under general anesthesia and will likely **be sleepy for the rest of the night**.

They may act differently. Particularly with cats, they **may seem agitated, wobbly, or jerky and aggressive towards littermates**.

Slight swelling or bruising at the incision site is okay. This is the body reacting to the suture and this will disappear as the sutures dissolve.

Not Normal

Pain or discomfort.

Blood, pus, or fluid leaking from the incision site.

Panting or **labored breathing**.

Lack of appetite, vomiting, or difficulty urinating.

Lethargy (sleepiness) that lasts more than 24 hours

Do

Do keep your pet in a **quiet, warm area** to rest. Some cats may need a dark area to sleep off the remaining anesthesia.

Do offer a **small amount of food and water** later this evening.

Do keep your foster **as quiet as possible for the first seven days** after surgery to allow the incision to heal and minimize the risk of infection.

Do **check the incision daily** for swelling, leakage (blood or pus), or bruising. Do remember that **your foster is made available for adoption** after their surgery.

Don't

Don't let your foster **lick their incision site**. If your foster pet is licking their incision, we can provide you with a cone (Elizabethan collar).

Don't **give your pet a bath** or allow them to swim in water for 7-10 days after surgery.

Don't **attempt to clean or apply ointment to the incision.**

The Adoption process is still changing as the world changes with COVID. Most of our cat/kitten/puppies are virtual only meet and greets. Dogs can have an in person meet and greet request. You must contact the adopotions team to set up meet and greets that need to happen at the shelter for dogs only so that time and space can be made available.

11. Adoptions

All applications are processed in the order that they are received. If you or someone you know are interested in adopting your foster pet, fill out an adoption application on our website immediately, and notify a staff member as soon as

possible. Fosters do not have the right of refusal, so if you fail to notify RAL Adoptions Staff that you want to adopt, we will have to honor the application processed first.

Pictures & Bio

Our pets in foster care have a huge advantage over our shelter pets when it comes to their adoptions. They have you! You know them better than anyone. You know their quirks, their favorite spot to be scratched, where they hide their toys, and all the cutest photos of them. We ask that you send us a few pictures to post to our website, but we also encourage you to post them on your social media and encourage your friends and family to share or adopt.

We will not make pets visible on the website without a minimum of one picture. To get your fosters on the website please send up to three photos to foster@ral.org. Your email should include the name of your foster, their ARN (this can be found on your foster form), and a short bio.

The only way for pets in foster to be seen is on the website. Great photos of your foster pet in the home with a strong, catchy bio will help your foster pet shine and stand out to potential adopters.

Please send separate emails for each kitten to prevent pictures from getting confused.

A bio is just a few sentences telling the world about your foster. Include notes on their personality, energy level, favorite toys or activities, or how they do with other pets and people of all ages. We do reserve the right to edit bios for length and clarity. You can also use this survey as a guide, which your foster coordinator will receive: https://forms.gle/M3doCJme6ii7jFws7.

Phrase everything in a positive light!

Here are a couple of links for tips on good bios for pets.

https://heartsspeak.org/getting-shelter-pets-noticed-with-better-bios/

https://www.aspcapro.org/sites/default/files/aspcapro-dog-bios-afh.pdf

https://www.aspcapro.org/sites/default/files/aspcapro-dog-descriptors-afh.pdf

https://resources.bestfriends.org/article/pet-profiles-how-write-adoptable-animal-bios

Here are a few good examples:

Dog

Indy -Mark/Caron Paniccia

Hi I'm Indy, and my foster dad says I'm sweet, reserved, friendly, playful, timid, an explorer, and a snoozler. I get along great with my foster sister who's taught me a lot, like what toys are, and how to sit for treats. I know how to sleep in my crate, go for a car ride, walk on a leash, and leave human food alone. I'll need someone who's gentle and patient, and who will take the time to build trust with me. It'd be great if they had a dog, so I could continue to work on my confidence. Would you like to meet me?

Cat

The Sunbeam Kid -Crystal Kinspel

The Sunbeam Kitten is a sweet boy who loves to look out of windows, bask in the sun, and find new places to hide and explore. One thing he really enjoys is paper bags, he darts inside and makes a fort he defends against his sibling invaders! He's also very smart, being the first kitten to figure out how to use the catwalk and winning a couple of games of tag until his brothers finally figured out the trick. Soft and silky, I just love to stroke his fur and hear his very quiet purr. He enjoys attention on his terms, so while he loves to crawl into my lap for a snuggle he rarely stays if I pick him up and put him there myself. If you would like to see more videos and photos and this sweet playful boy, you can find them on our foster page...

Your three photos should ideally include a clear “headshot” picture to act as the first impression picture that will draw adopters into your pet’s profile.

Tips:

https://heartsspeak.org/10-tips-for-great-foster-pet-photos/

Try holding a feather, treat, or a squeaky toy to get them to look at you and *maybe* hold still for a fraction of a second.

The other two photos can be of your foster just being cute! Ideally something that shows their personality. They can be playing, snuggling a littermate, napping in your arms, or whatever would tug at your heartstrings.

If you have two kittens that you think would be best adopted together this is the best place to highlight this! Send pictures of them snuggled together and talk about other things they do together. We unfortunately cannot require pets to be adopted together but we often have adopters looking for two kittens so guiding them to an existing pair is very helpful.

Some fosters will include seasonal props (such as pumpkins, holiday decor, etc.) or a very bright background to draw attention to their fosters.

Application and Adoption’s Process

Available Pets

All of our current available pets are listed on our website for people to view and read bios. If you take home a pet that is already sterilized, that isn't under a medical or behavioral hold or some other reason that would prevent them from being readily adoptable, they are available to receive applications at any time. All of our applications are processed on a first-come-first-serve basis, meaning that we process the applications in the order that they are received.

We are still not requiring in person meet-and-greets for the majority of our pets. Our adoptions team will reach out to you when your pet gets an application and give you the contact for the potential home. You will then reach out to that person(s) to set up a virtual meet and greet. Use Zoom, Facetime, Facebook or other video streaming service to help a family get to know your foster pet and vice versa; exchange texts, emails, pictures and videos to facilitate an introduction between person and pet.

Some in-person exceptions at the shelter may be made to certain pets but that all needs to be scheduled with our adoption team prior to set up. Unnecessary travel is stressful on felines and their immune systems, and cats generally won’t behave “normally” for an adopter right after a change in environment such as from foster home to shelter. At the

private discretion and consent of BOTH the foster parent and applicant, fosters may invite applicants to their home to meet the pet in-person, but this is not required of the foster nor of the applicant. **Under NO circumstances should a foster pet be brought to someone else's home for a meeting.**

After the virtual meet-and-greet has taken place, please notify the Adoptions team and offer your feedback. If the applicant decides to proceed with the adoption, you will all coordinate an Adoption Appointment that will take place at the shelter to transfer ownership of the pet from RAL to their adopter! Congratulations!!

Unavailable Pets (Unsterilized, Underage, and Medical Holds)

Applications will not be accepted for these pets unless the applicant is the foster, or a personal friend/family member of the foster.

Applications cannot be submitted by ANY individual on any pet younger than 5 weeks of age.

For an application to be accepted on an unavailable pet, we require a written referral for that person from the foster

Referrals can be informal emails identifying the adopter, acknowledging your relationship to that person, and confirming your support of the adoption.

Once a pet is cleared for adoption (sterilization surgery or medical restriction lifted), the adoption must be processed within five days of the pet's release. This includes meeting the pet and finalizing the adoption contract.

Adoptions FAQs

I am fostering a pet. Do I still need to fill out an application?

Yes! We still need all the same paperwork so we keep everything hunkydory. Our application is a simple Google form that can be found on our website and filled out on any device.

Can we require two of my kittens to get adopted together?

We do not typically label cats as "bonded" or require them to stay together. We do encourage all adopters to adopt pairs so they can entertain each other and provide social enrichment. Not everyone is in a place to take on a pair of kittens and we your foster could miss out on the perfect home if we require them to stay together. Exceptions are considered on a case-by-case basis and are rare.

My adopters are not responding to me. What should I do?

Please let us know if you are having difficulty contacting an adopter. Our Adoptions team will follow up with any adopter that is nonresponsive; it could be something as small as a mistyped digit or they may have reconsidered adoption. Let us know as soon as possible though as your foster may have additional applications behind this adopter and we do not want to delay them finding their new home.

What do I do if an adopter asks me a question I do not know?

We are here to answer their questions (and yours) so please direct them on to us! "I don't know" or "Let me check on that" are never bad answers. Focus on what you know that we don't - you know who your pet is. The big no-no is passing on medical advice to the potential adopter. Adoptions staff will relay the pet's full known medical history to the adopters during the adoption appointment and answer any questions they might have.

What if I don't like an adopter?

We understand that you have probably developed a close bond with your foster animal and want to make sure they go to the best home and we want to hear your concerns. If you have any apprehension about a potential adopter, even a person seeking a referral, please let a staff member know immediately. Your comments are all confidential.

An adopter is contacting me after adoption with concerns or needs to return the pet. What should I do?

Our Kennel Director must approve all returns to our care so please direct any adopters contacting you back to RAL staff. If your foster is returned for any reason we will often reach out to see if you are interested in fostering them again.