

## **GUIDELINES FOR FOSTERING CATS AND KITTENS**

The Las Vegas Valley Humane Society (“LVVHS”) selects foster parents who will provide safe, loving and nurturing environments for its rescued cats and kittens (hereinafter referred to as cats). Although the LVVHS maintains ownership of the cats, foster parents are responsible for the health and well being of the cats in their care. Fostering is an enjoyable and rewarding experience. The LVVHS Fostering Guidelines are provided with the best of intentions towards the welfare of the cats in our care. All foster parents must comply with the fostering guidelines as follows:

### **INITIAL CAT CARE**

**Supplies:** The LVVHS will provide medical care and food, while the foster parent provides litter, toys, scratching posts, cat trees, blankets, etc.. The foster parent must inform the LVVHS Coordinator, at least 4 days in advance, of their food needs as these items are ordered in bulk rather than at local stores at a higher cost. Foster parents will most likely be required to go to Adoptions, during the weekend, to pick up the supplies, so plan accordingly.

**Medical Care:** The LVVHS has special arrangements to work with specific local veterinarians, i.e. Sunrise Veterinary Clinic and the Bonanza Cat Hospital, and visits to these clinics are arranged by the LVVHS Coordinators.

**Initial Check Up:** Each rescued cat receives an initial check-up with one of these veterinarians and is tested for FeLV. Prior to accepting a new foster cat into your foster home, be sure to know the health of the new foster cat to prevent spreading illness and disease from a new foster cat to another cat.

The LVVHS strives to provide each foster parent with healthy cats that will not transfer any health problems on to family and personal pets. If a sick cat is given to a foster parent for special care, this cat should be kept in a separate room and environment from other foster cats and personal pets, depending on the specific situation. If this is not possible, inform the Coordinator.

Occasionally, viruses and other sicknesses do come undetected into a foster home. The LVVHS will work with the foster to provide the best protection possible for the foster family and pets, such as instructions for cleaning the home after a sickness, but the LVVHS is not responsible for cleaning costs or for replacing carpet and furnishings.

**Vaccinations:** Each cat receives vaccinations commensurate with its age. Adults typically receive a 3-in-1 and a 3 year rabies vaccinations while kittens receive a 3-in-1 and a 1 year rabies vaccination. Kittens who are too young for traditional shots will receive them intranasal. Some vets require foster cats to be fully vaccinated prior to being spayed/neutered.

**Spay/Neuter:** The Bonanza Cat Hospital performs spays/neuters on Tuesdays with a drop off time from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 a.m. and a pick up time of 6:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. The Sunrise Veterinary Clinic performs spays/neuters by appointment. The LVVHS Coordinator must schedule the appointments as there are a limited number of available slots. Foster parents cannot schedule these appointments on their own.

Follow-up appointments requested by the veterinarian must be approved by a LVVHS Coordinator. Explain the reasons and circumstances for this visit to the LVVHS Coordinator.

**Micro-chip:** Confirm with the LVVHS that the foster cat is to be micro-chipped, and if so, make sure the foster cat is micro-chipped during its spay/neuter appointment.

## **ONGOING CAT CARE**

Foster parents are responsible for monitoring the health of their foster cats at all times. The foster cats must not be declawed, must be kept indoors only, at all times, and never in a garage.

**General Health:** Cats should have clean, shiny coats, clear eyes, a clean nose and ears, a normal appetite, regular urine and solid bowel movements in the litter box (no straining, struggling or signs of pain and, generally, no accidents). Kittens are often active and playful whereas adult cats' personalities will vary; however, no cats or kittens should be listless, lethargic, depressed, sullen or withdrawn.

**Kitten Care:** Kitten foster parents are additionally charged with monitoring the kittens' weight, mental development and growth. The LVVHS provides appropriate canned or powder milk (KMR) food which must be fed to the kittens multiple times a day. If this is not convenient, advise a Coordinator and the LVVHS will switch out the kittens for adult cats. If the kittens don't eat, or start losing weight, immediately inform the Coordinator.

**Common Care:** Cat's nails require trimming every few weeks, kittens every week or so (if unsure how to trim nails, a Coordinator can do so at Adoptions). Play and massage kittens' paws so they adjust to the contact and nail trimming. Long hair cats will require brushing, as will short hair cats, but less frequently. Monitor the cat's teeth for any signs of red or swollen gums, decay, discoloration or pain. Introduce scratching posts to kittens and reinforce the use of them to adults.

**Common Problems:** Cats, and kittens especially, may initially experience diarrhea and/or vomiting. This may be caused by a change in diet, the wrong diet, stress, parasites or some other illness. Contact a Coordinator immediately as kittens can quickly dehydrate. Note signs of ear mites (dark, coffee grind consistency in the ear canal, redness, scratch marks from itching, cats often shake their heads), fleas, ring worm (round, flaky, patchy hair loss areas), worms (often near the anus, size and shape of a grain of rice), upper respiratory infection (discharge from nose and eyes, sneezing, unkept, dull coat) or any other sign indicating the cat does not feel well.

**Signs of Illness:** If a cat shows signs of illness, contact a LVVHS Coordinator immediately. The Coordinators are very experienced and may have an answer, diagnosis and/or medication available within the LVVHS system without the need for a veterinarian visit. If a cat needs professional medical attention, the LVVHS will arrange this as promptly as possible. If a foster parent doubts the Coordinator's advice, then another Coordinator can be consulted with an explanation of the prior Coordinator's initial diagnosis, recommendation, and reasons why the foster parent remains concerned.

**Take Notes:** If a foster cat is ill, keep an accurate log of the details such as the cat's signs, symptoms, and circumstances, when, where, what and how much was eaten, how many meals were skipped, how many bowel movements, the consistency, color, times, what precipitated the vomiting, the color and consistency of any discharge, etc. etc. This information will be helpful to diagnose, treat and monitor the cat's through its recovery. If medication is required, a log is often helpful to keep track of which cats have received their medicine, the dose, the time, etc.

**Semi-Feral Kittens:** Some kittens are timid having had no human interaction. These kittens will require consistent and positive interaction, touch, play and human contact to ensure they become domesticated and not revert to the feral state of those in the wild. These kittens are “special needs” and require an additional level of commitment, so consult a Coordinator for tips on raising these little ones.

## **ADOPTIONS**

A primary goal of fostering is to find a permanent loving home for the foster cat. A foster parent must transport the foster cat to and from Adoptions every weekend. If unable to do so, it may be possible to make other arrangements, but this must be planned in advance. The LVVHS will coordinate which PetCo location to bring the foster cats whose medical paperwork must accompany them.

Kittens grow up quickly, so as soon as they are ready for adoption, they must be brought to Adoptions every single weekend. As kittens become older, they have less of a chance for a quick adoption.

The LVVHS is committed to providing healthy cats for adoption. Cats who are healing from injuries, illness or whose behavioral issues are being addressed may not be brought into Adoptions. The exception is a “Special Needs” cat who will be put up for adoption with full disclosure of the medical or behavioral condition prior to adoption.

All prospective adopters are interviewed, including foster parents and their friends and family who are interested in adoption, fill out paperwork and pay the full adoption fee. The LVVHS reserves the right to turn down any prospective adopter.

Upon approval by the LVVHS, a cat can be put “on–hold” for the first 1-2 hours the cat is at Adoptions on the prearranged day that the friend/family member is to come in to adopt it. The foster must advise the Adoption Consultants of the situation, and a note is put on the cage indicating the cat is not available.

Do not advertise the LVVHS foster cats for adoption on your own as the advertising is done by the LVVHS. Adoption events are the responsibility of the LVVHS and they are held at certain store locations as an agreement between the store organization and LVVHS. Foster parents and volunteers are representatives of the LVVHS and should act accordingly. If a difficult situation arises, refer the matter to an Adoption Counselor. For example, when a prospective adopter is disapproved, the individual may become angry and vocally abusive. The more experienced Adoption Counselors will handle these situations as quietly and safely as possible.

If a foster parent moves, the foster cats must be returned to the LVVHS. If a foster parent can no longer foster, immediately advise the LVVHS as arrangements for a new foster parent takes time. Foster parents must consider the time commitment involved in fostering. The LVVHS strives to provide a stable and continued foster home environment for these cats with as little disruption and change as possible.