

# FOSTER

## WITH SWEET PAWS RESCUE

\_\_\_\_ SAVING PEOPLE. \_\_\_\_  
ONE DOG AT AT TIME.™



WELCOME  
TO OUR  
FOSTER FAMILY!



Thank you so much for your interest in fostering cats for Sweet Paws Rescue. By opening up your home to foster, you're not only helping to save lives, you're providing the individual attention and love these cats desperately need. Although fostering is a lot of work, it is a very rewarding experience. By participating in this program, you are saving lives and helping many different types of cats find the families they deserve. Through fostering, we can work together to find caring and loving forever homes.

### **FOSTER FAMILIES ARE ASKED TO PROVIDE:**

- A healthy and safe environment for their foster cats
- Transportation to and from the isolation facility and all vet appointments as needed
- Socialization and cuddle time to help teach the cats about positive family and pet relationships
- Introductions to your cat's new family in your home
- Lots of exercise and positive stimulation to help them develop into great cats

### **PREPARING FOR YOUR CAT**

When you take your foster cat home, he may be frightened or unsure about what's happening, so it's important not to overwhelm him. Prepare a special area for the foster cat to help ease his adjustment into a new home environment. Sometimes it is better to confine the foster cat to a small room, such as a bathroom, at first, to let him adjust before giving him free rein in your home. Equip the room with food and water dishes and a litter box. Another reason that we recommend a small room is because cats will typically hide in new environments. It is not uncommon for a foster cat to hide underneath a bed or in a dark, quiet place for the first couple of days. Isolating your foster cat

when you first take her home allows you to know what room she is in and helps you to monitor her eating, drinking and bathroom habits more closely. We request that all foster cats be housed indoors only. A garage, backyard or outdoor enclosure is not a suitable accommodation for a foster cat.

During the first couple of weeks, minimize the people and pet introductions to your foster cat, so that she is only meeting immediate family and your personal pets. If you have other pets at home, it is especially important to give your foster cat a space of her own where she can stay while getting used to all the new sounds and smells. Don't leave your foster cat unattended in your home with your personal pets until you are comfortable that all of the animals can interact safely.

### **SUPPLIES YOU'LL NEED**

Sweet Paws Rescue will provide you with all the supplies you will need to help your foster cat make a smooth transition to living in your home:

- At least one bowl for dry food and one for water: Stainless steel or ceramic work best.
- A supply of dry cat food: All cats are fed dry food unless a special diet is needed.
- A soft place to sleep: Old towels or blankets work well if you don't have a cat bed.

- Uncovered litter box: Make sure the box is an appropriate size for the cat.
- Litter: Please use clumping litter, unless you're given other instructions.
- Scratching posts or trays: Try different types to see which the cat prefers.
- Cat treats: Giving treats is a good way to help train and build a positive relationship with your foster cat.
- Cat toys: Make sure the toys are durable and safe (without bits that will be harmful if swallowed).

### **CAT-PROOFING YOUR HOME**

Before bringing home a new foster cat, you'll want to survey the area where you are going to keep the cat. Remove anything that would be unsafe or undesirable for the cat to chew on, and latch securely any cupboards that the foster cat could get into. Cats like to climb up on shelves or bookcases, so you'll want to remove anything that can be knocked down. People food and chemicals can be very harmful if consumed by cats, so please store them in a place that the foster cat cannot access.

Never underestimate your foster cat's abilities. Here are some additional tips for cat-proofing your home:

- Make sure that all trash cans are covered or latched and keep them



inside a closet. (Don't forget the bathroom trash bins.)

- Keep the toilet lids closed.
- Keep both people and pet food out of reach and off all counter tops.
- Move house plants out of reach. Many house plants are toxic to cats and they like to chew on them.
- Make sure aquariums or cages that house small animals, like hamsters or fish, are securely out of reach of your foster cat.
- Remove medications, lotions or cosmetics from any accessible surfaces.
- Move and secure all electrical and phone wires out of reach. Cats may chew on or get tangled in them.
- Pick up any clothing items that have buttons or strings, which can be harmful to your foster cat if consumed.

## CAT INTRODUCTIONS

If you have personal pets who are cats, you'll need to introduce them to the foster cat. Even if you know the cat you are fostering is good with other cats, you'll want to do the introductions gradually. So, before bringing your foster cat home, create a separate "territory" for her. This area should be equipped with food, water, a scratching post, a litter box, access to natural sunlight, and comfortable resting places. Your other cats should have their own separate territory.

Over a one- to two-week period, let the cats smell each other through a closed door, but don't allow them contact with one another. Exchanging blankets or towels between the areas will help them get used to each other's smells. The next step is to allow them to see each other through a baby gate or a door that is propped open two inches. If the cats are interested in

each other and seem comfortable, allow them to meet. Open the door to the rooms between the cats and observe them closely. If any cat shows signs of significant stress or aggression, separate them again and introduce them more slowly. It's a good idea to have a broom or squirt bottle on hand to deter any fights. Never try to separate cats who are fighting with your hands or body parts. Dog introductions

If you have a personal pet who's a dog, you'll need to make the introduction to the foster cat carefully and safely. Start by keeping them separated at first. As mentioned above, before you bring your foster cat home, create a separate "territory" for her and equip it with food, water, a scratching post, a litter box, and comfortable resting places.

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

After a week or two, do the face-to-face introduction. Keeping your dog on leash, allow your foster cat out in the same area. (If you have more than one dog, introduce one at a time.) Do not allow the dog to charge or run directly up to the cat. Try to distract the dog as best you can so that the cat has the chance to approach without fear. Watch the body language of each animal closely and don't continue the interaction if either pet becomes

over-stimulated or aggressive. The idea is to keep the interactions positive, safe and controlled. Finally, never leave your dog unsupervised around the foster cat.

## CHILDREN AND CATS

Since we don't always know a foster cat's history or tolerance level for different types of people and activities, please teach your children how to act responsibly and respectfully around your foster cat. We will do our best to place you with an appropriate animal for your home situation, but you should still supervise all interactions between



children and your foster cat. Key things to remind your children:

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

## SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

Foster cats must live indoors. If your foster cat seems very curious about going outside or is constantly at the door waiting for the right moment, please take extra precautions to ensure that he or she doesn't accidentally sneak out when you are coming or going. Remember, if your personal cat has access to the outdoors, he or she cannot interact with your foster cat. You'll need to keep their living quarters separate. Finally, please do not let your foster cat ride loose in a car. Use a carrier at all times to transport your foster cat to and from appointments.

## MEDICAL AND EMERGENCY PROTOCOLS

When you pick up your foster cat, please pay close attention to any medications your cat may be on. If you are fostering a cat who is on medications, please make sure that he/she gets all prescribed doses. Do not end medication

early for any reason. If your foster animal has not responded to prescribed medications after five days (or in the time instructed by a veterinarian), please contact the foster coordinator.

## VETERINARY CARE

Sweet Paws Rescue provides all medical care for our foster animals at our approved veterinary clinics. Because we are ultimately responsible for your foster cat's well-being, our staff must authorize any and all treatment for foster cats at our approved veterinary partners. If your foster cat needs to go to the veterinarian, please notify the foster coordinator by email or phone. The foster coordinator will schedule the appointment and will communicate to you when the cat's appointment is. Remember, foster parents will be responsible for payment of any medical care if they take their foster animal to a veterinarian without authorization from the foster coordinator or adoptions manager.

## SIGNS OF ILLNESS AND WHAT TO DO NEXT

Cats generally do a good job of masking when they don't feel well, so determining if your foster cat is under the weather will require diligent observation of the cat's daily activity and appetite levels. It's a good idea to keep track of these levels in a journal. You'll also want to record any of the following symptoms, which could be signs of illness. Please reach out to the foster coordinator if you witness any of the following symptoms in your cat: eye discharge, sneezing and nasal discharge, loss of appetite, lethargy, dehydration, vomiting, pain or strain while urinating, diarrhea, or hair loss.

Sweet Paws Rescue would like to thank you again for opening your hearts and homes to a foster cat. We could not do this important work without your help and support.

## WHEN YOUR FOSTER CAT GETS ADOPTED

When your foster cat has been medically cleared, he will be available for adoption. If you would like to adopt your foster cat, please notify the foster coordinator immediately. If you are not planning on adopting your foster cat, then an adoption counselor will get in touch with you when there is an approved adopter for your foster cat. You will then work with the adoptive family to arrange a time for them to meet your foster cat and eventually take their new feline companion home!

**Sweet Paws Rescue would like to thank Best Friends Animal Society for their guidance in creating this manual.**

