



## The Highs and Lows of Fostering

Fostering is one of the most rewarding experiences you can have. We couldn't save as many lives as we do without the dedication of our foster parents. When you think of fostering, what are you interested in taking home? Will you want a mom with her kittens, or older kittens that are not big enough for the adoption floor?

**Is fostering right for you and your family? Please go over this with your whole family.**

- Do you live in or near Orange County? We accept foster homes outside of Orange County as long as you are able to transport kittens back and forth to the shelter for vaccines and medical issues.
- Are you aware there is a great deal of clean-up time and there is always a possibility of damage to your home? Mother cats and kittens can be very messy with the litter box, their food bowls, water dishes, etc.
- Are you able to separate your foster cats/kittens from your own animals? Foster kittens must have their own room whether you have resident animals or not. Even though we conduct intake examinations of our foster cats/kittens, they can harbor illnesses that do not immediately present symptoms. Therefore, it is important to keep your resident animals separated from them for at least 14 days. After that time, you can introduce them to your foster cats/kittens as long as they are indoor-only and current on their vaccines. Your foster cats/kittens must have also received a FVRCP at least five days prior to an introduction.

*Introductions can pose a risk to your resident animals. If your pets get sick from your foster kittens, Orange County Animal Services will not cover their medication or vet visits. Please keep this in mind before introducing the two together.*

- It is important to keep your foster room clutter free – no special knickknacks. You should start your kittens in a bathroom or other non-carpeted room to ensure they are not harboring any illnesses and using the litterbox well. After a quarantine period, you can move them to another room that allows more space if you have it available. Please be aware that mother cats can scratch at doors or carpet to get out of a room and may jump on any surface they can access.
- Are you and your family emotionally prepared for the death of an animal? As badly as we wish otherwise, death can occur. Not all animals

are born to live. In feral colonies, moms will have large litters, hoping to keep at least two kittens alive. Unfortunately, some kittens are born with congenital birth defects that we cannot see. Others are just too weak to survive. Because you will feed high-quality food to your foster kittens, house them in a warm, safe place, and provide them with preventative care treatments, their chances of survival are high. The death of a kitten can be emotionally difficult, but most of the time, they are not the result of your fostering skills or abilities.

- Will you and your family be able to give up your foster kittens at the end of the foster period? Foster families can become attached to their foster kittens and sometimes find it difficult to give them to their permanent families or return them to the shelter.

You can adopt one of your foster kittens, but you will need to go through the same process as anyone else. You will pay the adoption fee, but you do first rights to adopt. Kittens will be made available for adoption in a manner in which all members of the public will be able to adopt them. If there is interest from multiple parties for a particular kitten(s) at the same time, we will use a lottery method to determine who has the opportunity to adopt.

- Will you and your family be able to spend quality time with your foster cats/kittens? Socialization is as important as feeding and keeping them clean. We ask that you spend quality time with your kittens. We want you to play with them so they learn hands are not toys. We also want you to snuggle them. Socialization is a big part of fostering. You are training these kittens to be super cats when they grow up. We are hoping that your kittens will not fear humans. Sometimes this does not always work out, but kittens that run to the front of the cage will get adopted first.
- Are you prepared to work with our veterinary system? Will you be able to bring your kittens to the shelter when they need to be seen? We specialize in shelter medicine and know what medications will treat illnesses we see in the shelter. Moreover, treatment at our shelter is free to you and cost effective to Orange County Animal Services. As you do not legally own these cats, you cannot legally seek outside treatment for them.
- Do you feel comfortable telling people that these kittens are not your animals and can only be adopted through Orange County Animal Services' adoption procedures? You may need to remind family, friends, and neighbors that you are a volunteer for Orange County Animal Services and cannot take your foster kittens out of your home for "playdates" or adopt them outside of Orange County Animal Services.
- Are you aware there may be some financial obligations? We provide medical care and vaccines, but you will need to purchase food, litter,

toys, scratchers, litterboxes, food/water bowls, cleaning supplies, etc. However, we will work with you should you need assistance with supplies.

- Foster cats/kittens are your responsibility. We ask that you check on them at least three times per day - once in the morning, again after work, and then before bed. You should also closely monitor their health and behavior. Close observation helps us better treat health issues and find appropriate permanent homes for them. Are they all playing? Is one sitting in the corner? Are they all feeling well? Is everyone pooping, peeing, eating, etc.?
- All cats and kittens must be kept strictly indoors. If your resident cats go outside, your foster kittens must be isolated from your cats to avoid the transmission of disease. Your foster kittens cannot go outdoors unless they are in a secure crate and going to the shelter.
- Supervise all interactions between your foster kittens and children under 10 years of age. This is not an exact requirement, as some children under 10 may be able to safely handle kittens and may not require supervision. Use your best judgement.
- Your own animals must be spayed/neutered and current on vaccinations and veterinary care.

### **Rewards of foster care – Saving lives!**

- You are saving animals.
- Children learn about the responsibility of caring for animals. It is a great way to help children understand what it takes to have a pet. How else can children learn about the wonder of birth, and the same time, be responsible animal guardians?
- There is no greater joy than watching kittens at play, or nursing a sick kitty back to health! Having foster kittens in the home can also foster quality family time.
- Knowing that you are making a difference is a nice feeling inside.

If you do not feel comfortable with our procedures and guidelines, we want you to know that we understand fostering is not for everyone. If at any time your situation changes, please feel free to contact us again in the future.