



CARING HEARTS CAT RESCUE & SANCTUARY

RESCUE • REHOME • SANCTUARY

Foster Handbook

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Welcome to fostering!

Thank you so much for opening up your heart and home to Caring Hearts foster cats!



As a volunteer with Caring Hearts Cat Rescue and Sanctuary, we would like to thank you for joining a small group of people dedicated to the rescue of homeless cats and kittens in Thunder Bay. This organization runs entirely on volunteer staff. As a “no kill” rescue, we believe that every cat should have a chance. We rely entirely on donations, grants, and revenue from adoptions to support Caring Hearts Cat Rescue and Sanctuary.

The care and love that our cats receive with you means that they will go to their forever homes healthy, well socialized and happy. This is a gift of life for these kitties. While your foster kitties are with you, we encourage you to make them part of the family – it’s practice for their forever home.

When you agree to take on a foster kitty, we cannot guarantee the length of time you will have with kitties in your care, as each case is different. Older kitties sometimes take longer to adopt. Kittens are available for adoption at 8 weeks of age and may go immediately or be with you for a longer period, depending on the time of year. The kittens must be fully litter trained, with no accidents, before they can be adopted.

Supplies

CHCR provides all the supplies, litter, equipment, toys and medical care for the foster kitties. This is for two reasons: So that we control the quality of care that they are getting, and to ensure that foster kitties are not a burden to their foster families. Some fosters would like to contribute to the cost of care for their fosters. Please remember, scratching posts, toys, blankets, etc. CHCR receives by donation. Anything you or your friends and family can donate is appreciated. Thank you so much for opening your home to foster cats.

Meet your CHCR Support Team

In the course of fostering, you will interact with a number of volunteers with specialized roles. We are all volunteers, so please respond promptly to any requests. Here's are the people you are likely to encounter:

Role	What this person means to you
Foster Coordinator & Supply Coordinator Jan Thompson @807-621-6162	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First point of contact for all questions • Manages the placement of foster kitties in your home • First point of contact for food and litter • Will coordinate pick up or delivery (if required) • Please text orders by end of day Saturday & delivery will be Monday or Tuesday of that coming week (of course emergency situations are different)
Health Coordinator Cathy Gordon © 807-621-0235	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compiles and records all veterinary Records • Books all veterinary appointments • Ensure that your foster kitties are vaccinated, de-fleaed, de-wormed and either spayed or neutered once they are 6-7 months old
Adoption Coordinator Amber Raine © 807-476-6559	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Will contact you to set up viewings of your cat/kitten. • Will contact you to bring fosters to adoption fairs • Contact point for bios and photos

Emergencies

In all cases of emergencies, your first point of contact should be a foster coordinator.

If they are not available your next point of contact will be the Health Coordinator.

Vacations

If you are planning a holiday, please let your foster coordinator know the dates as soon as you can. For short periods of time you may leave foster kitties to be cared for by friends or neighbours, however, you must first get the approval of the foster coordinator. For longer holidays, we may transfer the kitties to another foster home.

Screening for illness and disease

The background and health of the CHCR cat/kitten(s) is not always known. CHCR cats are tested for Feline Leukemia & FIV when age appropriate.

CHCR cats are not tested for Feline Infectious Peritonitis or any other condition, illness or disease. They do, however, receive FVRCP vaccine (for Chlamydia, Calici, and Rhinotracheitis) if over the age of 9-10 weeks, and are treated for medical conditions as they arise. If you decide that you would like to mix your cats, then you must do so with full understanding of the risks involved. Please advise your foster coordinator if you are mixing kitties. Remember, this is your cat's home and sometimes they do not like to share.

CHCR is not responsible for any costs that may occur if your cat gets ill during mixing of kitties. That includes medication and vet costs.

Matching you with your foster cat

During your foster application and interview, you may have indicated your preference for the type of cat you'd like to foster (kittens, pregnant moms, etc.) Your foster coordinator does her best to match you with a kitty that reflects your desires and your experience. While the thought of bottle-feeding kittens is very romantic, it's a special skill. And unless you're willing to get up every two hours for weeks on end, feed the kitties and then (ahem) help them excrete, it might not be for you.

We also are rescuing an increased number of lost and abandoned tame cats. They are usually with us for a while as we work with them to get them back into health. Can you consider opening your heart to one (or two) of them? We always want you to be happy with the kitties that you foster, so provide feedback at any time to your foster coordinator.

Necessary paperwork

You will be given an “intake form” when receiving your kittie(s). This form is to record all medical information on each cat: worming dates, spay/neuter date, vets, medical information and medication. It is your responsibility to make sure all medications and vaccines are entered on the form.

This form goes with kittie(s) to foster homes until adoption. Please return the intake sheet to your foster coordinator as a permanent record of care. Keep this very important form in the plastic envelope supplied. Attach the envelope to the transport kennel for easy reference if kitty is transferred to another foster. Our phone numbers for emergencies are on the form. If you do not have this form when you receive your kittie(s) then notify your foster coordinator immediately.

Medications

Depending on the age and condition of your kitty, you may also get worming and ear mite medications. Check with your foster coordinator if medication is required and confirm instructions on how to apply it.

Where to keep your foster kittie(s)

When you first get your kittie(s), keep them in a small, secured area, like a bathroom, until you are confident they are litter trained and socialized. This includes older kitties. Some scared or younger kitties should be kept in the bathroom or a secure room while the foster is away from the home. They should only be let out when under supervision. You may gradually allow more space as they get more familiar with the area.

If kittie(s) hide or have an accident outside the litter box, please contact your foster coordinator and be sure to return the kitten to the small space immediately. Urine Off or Nature’s Miracle may be used to clean up pee or poop, as the cats can smell it and return to the same spot. Watch for “accidents” in areas behind furniture or on laundry. Kitties love feather comforters. We do not recommend rooms with beds that kitties can hide under or pee on. Peeing on furniture and comforters is the most common problem for kitties being turned in to shelters. Please make sure you follow instructions and notify your foster coordinator immediately of any problems. Please let us know if your kitty is hiding. We will advise you on what to do. Sometimes a trap is required if a kitty will not come out.

Training good behaviour

It is very important for the kittens to learn good manners while at your home. Even if you don't mind scratching at carpets or furniture, the new home may not like those habits. Climbing up on tables or counters must be discouraged, for the kittens as well as mom cats. If the kittens or mom are displaying bad behaviour, grasp them by the scruff of the neck gently, push down, and growl at them loudly. Be persistent and use a spray bottle, if needed.

Use a wand and toys to play with, not hands. Do not allow them to bite or scratch. Absolutely no climbing up on your pant leg!

Please notify your foster coordinator right away if there are any problems with litter training or persistent bad behavior.

Training good behavior is very important to the future of your foster cat. Problems with bad behavior that cannot be controlled should be reported to your foster coordinator. This is one of the most common reasons that kitties are returned and we must deal with any problems while they are in the foster home.

How much should my kitty eat?

CHCR supplies the food for your foster cat. Here's an approximate expectation of what your foster kitty should eat. If they want more, give it to them. If they are not eating at least this amount, notify your foster coordinator.

IF YOUR KITTY IS	THEN THEY SHOULD BE EATING.....
LESS THAN 6 WEEKS OLD	They should be on mother's milk or being bottle fed
6-12 weeks	Typically a kitty at this stage will eat approximately 1/4 can at each of 4 daily meals - so total of a can a day
12 weeks to 1 year	Depending on the kitty, somewhere between 1/2 to 1 can daily spread over 4 meals
1 year or older	1/4 can twice a day - so a total of 1/2 can daily. Larger cats may eat more.

Litter Box Care

Scoop the litter box at least twice a day, add more fresh litter as needed. Clean the area around the box to keep the cat's feet clean of bacteria and infection. Cats and kittens are generally easy to litter train and should be trained by 5 weeks of age.

As bad litter habits are hard to break, the easiest way to maintain good habits is to keep the kittens contained in a small area until they are having absolutely no accidents.

Blockading a corner so that kittens stay in and mom can hop in and out is great. Another suggestion is putting up a barrier that mom can jump over at the bathroom door.

We provide you with litter: put enough to fill the bottom of the litter box, scoop out the poops twice daily, and then change the whole litter box to fresh litter whenever necessary, depending on the number of kittens. If the kitten has an accident, wipe it up with a tissue and put the tissue in the litter box, so the kitten knows where she/he should go. If the kittens are just learning and are very tiny you can dampen the litter slightly to soften it. Clumping litter is dangerous to very young kittens as they may ingest it, please do not use it. Once kittens are comfortable using litter box, clumping litter is fine.

Cleaning Between Foster Placements

The following require cleaning between foster placements AND when returning supplies to the rescue.

Litter box & scoop

Dishes

Cat carrier

Wash with warm water & dish soap, rinse (this removes dirt, food etc)

Then clean to disinfect using strong disinfectant cleaner or bleach solution (bleach concentration ratio: ¼ c bleach to 2 ¼ c water) then rinse well.

Note: for cat carriers using spray bottle of disinfectant or bleach solution makes it less awkward. Then rinse.

Bedding, towels, etc wash on hot cycle in washing machine.

Toys, fabric ones can be washed, rest are fine.

NOTE: if foster cat or kittens is diagnosed with serious disease, then all supplies would be thrown out and NOT reused.

Treatment Milestones	
6-8 weeks old	Ear Mite treatment <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kittens get Revolution once a month• Mom cat gets revolution once a month• Deworming• Kittens get Milbemax (yellow) based on weight and another 15 days later• Adult cats get red Milbemax (Adult) based on weight and another 15 days later.
9-10 weeks	First Vaccination FVRCP
Treatment Milestones	
12 weeks	FVRCP Booster and Rabies

6-7 months

- Cat should be spayed or neutered
- You will be asked to take the kitty in to Highview Animal Clinic. Drop off is between 8:00 - 8:30 a.m.
- No food after 10 pm the night before surgery. Can have water.
- Pick up is after 3:00 p.m. the same day
- Expect that your kitty might be a little grumpy afterwards. A few days of being safe at home, a little extra attention, and a few treats never hurt. If you see any unusual behaviour, such as lethargy or not eating, please contact your foster coordinator immediately.

TIP

It is our policy to get kitties fixed at 6 months unless the kitty has a health condition or has just had kittens and we are waiting for her milk to dry up. Occasionally, cats with kittens go into heat before we get the opportunity to have them spayed. Signs of this are excessive affection, yowling, and elevating the rear quarters. Please contact your foster coordinator immediately if you are concerned with any behaviour, and be extra careful about escape routes, as she will be extremely determined to get out.

Signs of Illness: What to watch out for

- **Lethargy** (especially in a once active kitten)

Adult cats can also show lack of energy when ill. Please notify your foster coordinator immediately

- **Stinky/runny poop**

Several years ago we had a lot of coxycydia in kittens and cats that had been living outside. Even if kittens are nursing, the mom passes it on to them. All poop is stinky, but if coxycydia is present the smell can clear the room! Contact us right away if this is happening. We will give medication right away that should start clearing it up in one to two days. Clean the litter box often and thoroughly.

- **Loss of appetite or energy**

This is very important, as a cat should never go more than a day without eating. If you notice this, it is urgent you contact us at once. It is, however, very common for a new cat or kitten to not eat its first day in your home. This is nothing to panic about. Try putting a bit of tuna juice on their food to make it more appealing, but don't try any other food than what we've suggested.

- **Drinking excessive amounts of water**
- **Sneezing**
- **Gummy eyes**
- **Ear mites (coffee ground-like substance visible inside the ear)**
- **Constant scratching**
- **Residual fleas Worms: thin thread-like worms in feces or rice-shaped deposits around the anus.**
- **Constipation or bloating (hard tummy)**
- **Diarrhea**
- **Rough spots on skin or missing patches of fur**

Pictures and Bios

While a cat is in your care, they may be in either “available” – meaning they are ready for adoption - or in “available soon” – meaning that they do not yet meet all the criteria of being adoptable.

As soon as you get your foster kitty, you will be asked to either create a new bio with pictures (if it doesn't exist) or update their bio and pictures. Pictures and bios should be sent to caringheartscatrescue@gmail.com

Send in 2-3 digital photos of your kittens around 6 weeks of age or as soon as your kitty arrives. Try to get an individual, close-up head shot and a couple of the whole body. Action shots, sleeping, etc. are just as important as posed shots. Please do not crop the pictures, as the person putting pictures on our site will make any necessary adjustments. No pictures taken outside! If you have a mom cat, please take a picture of her alone and with the kitten she hangs around with most (preferably a male). If you don't have a digital camera, or can't borrow one, please let your foster coordinator know.

If your kitty is already on the website www.caringheartscatrescue.ca then check their profile for updating. They grow very quickly and this makes a difference when getting adopted. For older cats, it may be necessary to completely rewrite the bio and have new pictures taken. A “makeover” for older kitties has been shown to be very successful.

Adoption Process

One of the most frequent things we are asked is: how can you give them up? It is not easy, but it's impossible to keep them all and we need you to take care of more kittens for us, as it seems to be a never-ending stream. But you can take satisfaction in knowing that if it weren't for you, these kittens would have met a terrible end instead of going off to a safe, loving home.

Adoption Application

It is not up to you to find homes for the kittens, but if you know of someone who would like to adopt, please have them fill out an application on-line mentioning which kitty and who is fostering it. (<http://www.caringheartscatrescue.ca>)

All applicants are carefully screened.

Never, ever promise a cat or kitten to any of your friends and family. They must first fill out the application and be approved to adopt – and we may have a waiting list. We adopt in strict order of application date. Remind them that the kittens go to indoor homes only. By leaving this part up to our Adoption team you stay out of it and any bad feelings if we turn them down.

How does the adoption process work?

All people wanting to adopt from us must fill out an application on-line. Adoption applicants are screened by the Adoption Coordinator and a home inspection is scheduled.

1. An email or text message will be sent to you to notify you that someone would like to view your kitty.
2. You arrange with the potential adopter for a mutually convenient time.
3. You host the potential adopter for a “play date” where the adopter can be introduced to the kitty and decide whether or not they want to adopt.
4. If we send you someone who wants to adopt and you feel it is not the right match, tell them they need to think about it and get back to you the next day. Email or text the Adoption Coordinator right away and let us know what is wrong.
5. If you feel good about the match, then ask the person viewing if they plan to adopt.

After the kitties have been viewed the adopter still needs to pay the adoption fee. This will be arranged by the Adoption Coordinator.

6. Once the adoption has been finalized you will be contacted by the Adoption Coordinator to make arrangements to pick up the cat. Do not release a kitten unless you have been contacted by the Adoption Coordinator. Kittens must go in a proper carrier. Do not allow a kitten to go home in a cardboard container.

Periodically we hold special events to promote adoptions in pet stores, fairs, or other venues. Just before the event, the Adoption Coordinator will send out a call for adoptable kitties that would be okay in a busy, noisy environment. Some kitties aren't suitable, but the ones that are will be hugged and smooched for a few hours that day. All you need to do is bring your kitty to the event at the appropriate time. Everything else – setup, supplies, volunteers – will all be arranged by CHCR.

If you are interested in participating, that would be great. Talk up your kitty and see if you can get him or her adopted!

After your kitty has been adopted

Kennels and boxes, plus food and litter are the property of CHCR and must be returned to us in good, cleaned condition after fostering. Do not give any of these items to an adopter unless you are specifically instructed.

Notify your foster coordinator of your immediate plans. If you are going to dive right into fostering again – terrific! But if you are taking a break, please ensure that your foster coordinator knows. If you have any questions during the adoption process, please call your Adoption Coordinator

Any issues regarding health and welfare of the kitten/cat are to be discussed with CHCR Foster Coordinator or designate. It will be the responsibility of the rescue to schedule any veterinarian appointments. The foster is not to take it upon themselves to bring a foster cat to a veterinarian unless approved by CHCR.

Fostering with Caring Hearts Cat Rescue and Sanctuary can be a heartwarming and rewarding experience, knowing that your foster care of the animal has made a huge difference in that animal's life by making him or her adoptable.

Thank you once again for opening your heart and home to a kitty in need. Without fosters, there can be no rescue!