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Preparing For Your Foster Kitten

THANK YOU FOR FOSTERING! We are incredibly grateful to you for opening your home and your heart for these kittens in need and giving them the appropriate place to grow up, socialize, and learn about their world. Here are some important ways that you can help your fosters feel comfortable and stay safe while staying with you, as well as preparing yourself!

Keep your fosters separate from your personal animal companions. Quarantine period is 10 days, at minimum. Young kittens are not fully vaccinated and are particularly vulnerable to illness and parasite exposure. Exposing them to home companions is a major risk to both parties. Ensure that your animal companions are up to date on their vaccines, as well as flea, tick, and heartworm prevention. This will protect your pets from any exposure to illness or parasites from your foster pet.

Prepare to commit to bringing your foster kittens back to HSWM for vaccine boosters every 2 weeks as well as keeping them socialized, enriched, and happy the entire time they are with you! Feed only the “diet appropriate” food or formula given by HSWM.

Also be prepared to commit assisting with your foster’s adoption by providing photos and personality information throughout the foster pet’s time with you. Please send these items to the Foster Coordinator so you can help your fosters find the perfect forever homes! At the end of the manual there will be tips on how to best provide content!

_Above all--enjoy all of the laughter and smiles your foster pet provides!

Supplies

You will be provided the following items at the time you pick up your foster:

- Blankets
- Bed
- Dry food
- Canned food
- Treats
- Toys - various textures
- Food and Water Bowls
- Scale
- Litter
- Litter box
- Litter scoop
- Something to scratch
- Cat dancer or a cat wand
- Catnip
- Medications, if any
- Weight chart
If you decide to buy your own supplies, we will not be able to reimburse your purchase. Rather, it is treated like a donation, which we appreciate!

Setting Up Your Space to Foster

Now that you are taking on a foster animal, you need to figure out where you can keep them separate from the rest of the house. This is especially important for shy cats as if you introduce them to too much space too quickly, they can become overwhelmed and their socialization progress can reverse. They also often find, and use, the smallest, hardest places to reach as hiding spots, which makes it difficult to monitor and socialize them. So please, do not give access to the whole house right away, even if they are insisting on coming out after a day. They can still become very overwhelmed, not realizing how big the space is outside their room.

Prepare a safe, warm space for your foster. A spare bedroom or bathroom will do well! This will help you clean up after them and disinfect the area as needed. Offer plenty of “nap nooks”, toys, and soft bedding. Remove any hazards such as cords, objects that can be knocked over, plants, garbage cans, etc..

Keep in mind that they may take their time warming up, especially if they are coming to your home due to being undersocialized. Several, accessible hiding options should always be provided. Allow them to interact on their own terms when they are ready, unless you are given a separate socialization plan.

Adding calming elements to their space is highly beneficial for decompression! These items include: Feliway, Relax My Cat Music on Youtube, classical music, decreased noise level, natural sunlight, and reading aloud to them at their level.

Bringing Your Foster(s) Home

Start slow and allow for decompression from the shelter. Moving is stressful for everyone, and moving into a new home with new people will likely cause even the most social cats a bit of stress. Go slowly on your first few days and let them explore at their own pace. If they are undersocial, remember to start small in the area you’re keeping them. Do NOT give them access to your whole house until later.

**Decompression time:** Your new foster is going to need quiet time in your house before doing anything else. Basically, they need to CHILL OUT, which we call “decompression time”. You should have the quiet area for your new foster to decompress in already set-up by the time they come home with you and get let out of their carrier. If they don’t want to come out, let them stay in their carrier until they’re ready to! Make sure the foster is provided with lots of ways to be stimulated mentally (toys, food puzzles, interactive toy games, etc). You can also have music
playing in the room, specifically the classical music listed above.
Daily Care

Whether they are completely adjusted to their new foster home or not, your foster pet needs daily care! Their level of comfort will determine what type of enrichment they receive, but all foster pets still need their basic needs met, regardless of their level of socialization.

Feeding

They need fresh food provided daily, both wet and dry if that is the food that was provided to you. Please only feed the appropriate diet that was given to you. Kittens should have dry food always available, especially if they are younger. The younger the kitten, the smaller their glucose storage is, so the more they need to eat. Having dry food out for them can help them supplement themselves between canned food meals and keep their glucose up. We usually do ¼ cup of dry food per kitten.

For canned food, they should get canned food offered at least twice a day, more frequently if they are younger kittens or underweight. We offer ½ a 5oz can per kitten, or 1 whole 3oz can per kitten at each feeding. So if you have 4 kittens, you'll feed either two whole 5oz cans or 4 whole 3oz cans per feeding of wet food. If you feel wet food is going to waste (most times it won't for kittens), you can adjust the amounts given as long as they are continually gaining weight. If they are staying the same weight or losing, something is wrong and needs to be looked into with the Foster team.

You will likely find kittens eat canned food more than dry, which is totally okay! Canned food is a higher valued food than dry, and helps kittens stay hydrated the best. It also is typically the next step of food for them when they weaning from the bottle, though some do skip canned and go straight for dry. As long as they are always gaining weight, they can eat whichever food they prefer.

Offer multiple different bowls for multiple kittens to ensure they all have access to their food and aren’t fighting over food with each other. Lastly, some animals are more sensitive to food changes. Try to keep the food to the same brand when possible to avoid GI upset like diarrhea or vomiting. If either of these occur in your kittens, please let us know as soon as possible so it can be addressed. The younger they are, the sooner it needs to be addressed to avoid dehydration and other potential deadly complications.
Cleaning
Their litter box needs to be scooped at least once a day. This may need to be done more often if you have a large litter of kittens, or if they’re having diarrhea. No one wants to get into a dirty, stinky box! Ensure they have easy access to the litter box at all times. Their box should be placed as far away from their food and water as possible.

Your kittens will make messes. This can include spilling food everywhere, kicking litter and/or fecal matter out of the box, soiling their blankets with bodily fluids, or their water bowl if that’s near their bedding. Please make sure their environment is clean and comfortable everyday, by washing their soiled bedding and sweeping up litter and food they’ve kicked around. If the litter box has fecal matter stuck up the walls, please let us know! We can do a litter box swap and give you a new, clean box and take the dirty one back to clean and sanitize inhouse. If a box is too dirty, that can deter kittens from using it and may cause them to go outside of their box in cleaner areas. Again, no one wants to use a dirty, stinky box!

Monitoring
During times of feeding, cleaning, and any other interactions with them, you should always be making mental notes about how your kittens are doing. You need to monitor their wellbeing, whether they have any signs of illness, if they are eating enough, and what their general attitude is. If your feline is normally social and outgoing, but now seems more reserved and is hiding, this can be a sign of distress in a feline and needs to be looked into as soon as possible. They are excellent at hiding pain and discomfort!

Weight Monitoring
All kittens must be weighed at least once daily up until they are two months of age. If they are older, they can be weighed every other day or every third day just to ensure they are still growing. Kittens should ALWAYS be gaining weight - they are growing little felines after all! If they are ever plateauing in weight for more than 24 hours or losing weight, the Foster Veterinary Technician needs to be notified. Weight loss or stall is almost always the first sign of illness so when it’s noticed, something is wrong and needs to be looked into. Neglect to notify the vet tech or to weigh your foster kittens on a regular basis can and will result in foster disciplinary action.

Playtime and Enrichment
Your kittens will need playtime and enrichment every day with you, especially while they are quarantined their first couple weeks! Normal, healthy kittens should always be exploring and playing, running around and pouncing on and chasing each other or their toys. While they can keep
themselves entertained while you’re gone with each other, they need socialization from you, their people, as well!

What exactly is enrichment?

Enrichment are activities that provide stimulation to the brain and allow for species typical behavior (including foraging, scratching, using their nose, etc.). It provides relief and a distraction, adds quality to their space, and the opportunity for play if they want it.

Kittens naturally want to play, as most know! They want to run and sprint, tumble and wrestle with others, and explore. They can find entertainment by playing with each other, but it is still important to provide playtime with people. They should have at least two play sessions a day with you, especially while quarantined. Slither a wand toy around like a snake, roll noisy balls around, or toss or hide mice around the room for them to find. Most kittens will quickly engage in play with people, which helps continue to socialize them with us and build positive experiences with us. Between 2 weeks of age and 12 weeks of age, the kittens are in their prime to be socialized to all different experiences, environments, and species. It is incredibly important to help socialize your kitten if you are fostering this age!

### Scent Enrichment*

- Toys infused with various scents (like vanilla, valerian, lavender, catnip)
  - *Do not use essential oils*
- Silvervine chew sticks
- Scents placed on paper balls, soft toys, or cotton balls

### Visual enrichment

- Bird feeders on windows
- Cat TV (10-15 minutes)
- Hanging mobiles
- Motion toys
- Feather wand toys

### Touch enrichment

- Zoom Groom
- Brushes
- Toothbrushes as a brush
  - *This reminds kittens of a mother’s tongue*
- Leaves in a cardboard box to play in
- Different textures
  - *Carpet remnants, cardboard, sticks, leaves, etc…*

### Taste (food) enrichment**

- Tuna or wet food in a toilet paper roll
- Egg carton with a treat or food in each space
- Lickable treat sticks
- Chicken baby food on a spoon
Sound enrichment

- Music
  - Relax My Cat music
  - David Teie music with purring
  - Calm, classical music
- Bird sounds
- Reading aloud to a cat, especially a shy cat

Foraging enrichment

- Treats hidden in a paper ball
- Treats in a treat egg
- Food puzzle
- Shallow tissue box with treats and small, different texture ball toys inside
- Cat grass
- Bottle caps with a dollop of tuna inside

*Full list of appropriate scents: Valerian (can also have a lasting, calming effect), lavender, vanilla, coffee, silvervine, almond, catnip and some cats enjoy rosemary, oregano, and parsley. Do not use essential oils, and check to make sure your valerian doesn’t include essential oils if using a diffuser.

**Lick mats are available upon request - these are used to put spreadable wet food or treats on so the cats can work on licking it off the mats

***Snuffle mats and food puzzles are available upon request - you can use these to hide treats in and encourage their natural, foraging behavior.

Feel free to mix up enrichments! If you do only one enrichment, it can quickly become boring and the kitten can become disinterested. If you change what enrichment you do every day, it will continue to engage and stimulate them both mentally and physically. It’s a long list so you’re bound to find at least one thing that your foster may like. If they just want to sit and snuggle, especially when they can come out of their quarantined area, that’s okay to provide as well!
Behavior

Socialization: How To for Kittens
The prime socialization time period for kittens is 2-12 weeks old. This isn't just socialization with human adults. This includes to other cats, dogs, and children. Yes, children have their own category! They are their own species in a kitten’s eyes. 2-14 weeks old is when they are starting to discover their world and learn “how to be a cat”, which is why it is essential to socialize them. This is the time to handle them, let them learn how to play with each other as well as us, and make every new experience they have a positive one! They startle easily during this age, but recover quickly, which is a very important trait to work with while they have it.

Start Small
Too much new territory is overwhelming for most cats so it’s important to set them up in one small room in the beginning. A bathroom may be best for specific socialization cases because bedrooms are likely to have more hard to reach hiding spots. If using a bedroom, you may need to block off the area under the bed. While hiding spots can help your kittens feel safe, you also need to be able to interact with them even when they’re hiding. A cardboard box on its side makes for an ideal hiding spot for your kitten. A large dog crate mostly covered with a blanket and set up with their supplies inside also works. If you can keep the large dog crate off the ground and higher up, that would be the most ideal situation!

We always say “don’t force interactions” or “allow them to approach at their own pace.” However, confining them to a cage means forcing it a little bit at first. The more space to you that you give undersocial cats, the longer it will take to socialize them - they will want to stay as far away from you as possible - so getting close enough to introduce play therapy or bring a spoonful of food to their face may be impossible when there is too much space. It is essential to watch their body language to see how much you can push it before you exceed their threshold for what they’re comfortable with. If you exceed their threshold, go back to the previous step you were working on.

Give them at least 24 hours to decompress when you first bring them home, and have food always available during this period. During daily care and cleaning, before you even start any play therapy and socialization, drop treats for them so they can start associating you with yummy food.

Be Patient
It may be hard to resist petting the cute little fluffs, but please do not touch them until they are comfortable being near you. Too much stimulation too soon can “flood” the kitten and cause adverse effects. Once your kitten is confined and has had time to adjust to their new space, you can start introducing socialization
techniques and therapies. If you are unsure what techniques or therapies to use, please don’t hesitate to ask for help developing a plan! If you were already provided a plan, please stick to that and make small adjustments as needed as you go.

**Eating in your presence**

Starting to offer canned food only during these sessions can help in motivating them to eat in your presence. Offer the food to them and sit near them, but be aware of your own body language! You should sit on the floor at a distance they’re comfortable with (across the room if you have to!), move slowly, have your body angled to the side with your elbows in and your voice quiet. Don’t touch, stare, reach, or crowd them.

If they do not want to eat in your presence, even if you are across the room, they may not be ready for this step. Instead, to help them become more accustomed to your presence first with food, you can spend some time in the room with them by reading aloud in a soft voice. You may also gently toss them some treats (we’ve found that most cats enjoy the Temptations brand) during this time. Or, finding a higher valued food to them like warmed baby food can be a better food motivator while in your presence.

**Additional notes**

- Do not use this method on growing young kittens that constantly need canned food available or frequently, like 2 months and younger

**Play Therapy**

Never force your foster out of hiding. Simply get as close as they’re comfortable with and dangle a string toy or Cat Dancer from side to side or in front of them. They might just want to watch it move for the first few sessions and that’s okay! Them simply watching the toy is a positive interaction between you two. A session of play therapy should last only a few minutes. Aim for at least three sessions daily.

Follow interactive play sessions with a treat! Turkey or chicken flavored Gerber baby food seems to be the socialization tool of choice among kittens. In the beginning, mix the baby food with a little warm water to enhance the smell and make it irresistible, then offer it on a spoon. In the cat world, reaching out with an appendage is usually done in aggression, so reaching out with a spoonful of really good food can help desensitize cats to human arms and hands.

**Additional notes:**

- Do not fling the string toys or cat dancer at the cat! They may just want to watch it at first and that’s okay!
Introducing Touch

You can start introducing touch while they are comfortable eating in your presence. Doing an activity they love in your presence - so eating a tummy treat - helps them start associating the positive experience with touches. Rather than reaching over their head, sneak your hand up behind them and pet gently along their back or shoulder area. If they draw back, stop petting but continue feeding so the interaction ends on a positive note. Try again next time! Gradually increase the time you pet them with longer treat times. When they are done eating their treat, stop petting them until you have another treat to offer.

Another time you can introduce touch is during play therapy. If your cat engages with the toy, you can start using it to slowly “pet” the cat’s cheeks from a safe distance. Once the cat learns that being “petted” by the toy feels good and they start leaning into it, slowly offer your closed hand. Once they investigate your closed hand, extend your index finger and allow them to sniff it. If they growl or hiss, or shy away from the hand, they need more time. If they appear relaxed, go ahead and pet them slowly on the cheeks and chin.

A final training technique you can use once your foster pet starts to initiate contact with you, is by feeding them a treat every time they touch their nose to your finger. Sitting on the floor, offer food on your finger. Once they are eating off your finger, offer your finger without food. Every time they touch your foodless finger, give them a tiny reward of their favorite food or treat.

Additional notes:
- Don’t pet along their body until they start coming out of hiding or show relaxed, soft body posture during petting.
- Use the pads of your fingers on their cheeks and chin while petting, using short, light pressure strokes.
- Reward them every time they let you touch them!
- Always monitor their body language and stop what you are doing if they show signs of becoming uncomfortable.
- High value treats: Kong Liver Spray, whipped cream, baby food, canned tuna, and cooked chicken

Picking up and Holding

Some cats don’t like to be picked up or held and never will, no matter how much we work with them or how old they are. If they don’t want to be picked up or have this skill worked on, don’t push it! Please email us if you would like to work on them with being picked up and held.

Socializing with Others

The more friends and family who can help socialize, the better! If it’s only you doing
the socializing, the cat will warm up to you but may regress in new environments or around new people. When introducing a new person, have them start from square one like you did - don't let them go right to petting unless the kitten approaches them first looking for pets! Please ask the Foster Coordinator about introducing them to other cats and dogs for additional socialization or if you need help on how to go about socializing to others.

**Scratching**

Scratching is part of a cat’s nature, and their nails are part of their wellbeing! HSWM never recommends declawing as it is an inhumane and unnecessary procedure. Cats play with their nails, regulate their mental wellbeing through their claws, mark their environment through pheromones on their paws and depend on them to move about normally. Cats need to be able to scratch something!

They should have multiple scratching options of different textures and sizes whenever possible. Without this, they will find things to scratch that you don’t want them to scratch. It is important to put out the scratching items you have been provided in your foster supplies. They also need the ability to stretch while scratching. If you have a scratching post, that would be perfect! Otherwise, a scratching pad laid out on the floor that is large enough for them to stretch out onto with their nails is a great substitute. If they are scratching inappropriate surfaces, do not punish them as this damages your bond with them and only makes them scared of you. Instead, gently redirect them to appropriate surfaces and praise them for scratching them. This is especially important for young kittens learning what is the right and wrong thing to do. They don’t scratch what they’re not supposed to simply out of spite! Using catnip spray or feliway spray on scratching surfaces can also help them learn what’s appropriate to scratch by being attracted to the item by the smell.

If gentle redirection is not working on getting them to scratch the appropriate items, or stop scratching inappropriate items, please email the foster team for guidance on next steps.

**Inappropriate Litter Box Usage**

More often than not, inappropriate litter box usage (going outside the box) has a possible medical issue creating the desire to not use the box. The most common example is a urinary tract infection, which makes them associate pain with using the box so they stop using the box. If this is noticed, please contact the Foster Veterinary Technician.

Once medical issues are ruled out, this becomes a potential behavior issue. Here are some possible problems and solutions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Possible Solution</th>
</tr>
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| Litter boxes are too dirty                | ● Replace the whole box  
|                                           | ● Replace the litter  
|                                           | ● Scoop more than once a day                                                     |
| Too many cats and not enough boxes        | ● Add more litter boxes (rule of thumb is 1 per cat + 1)                           |
| Litter texture/smell                      | ● Use a fine grain litter  
|                                           | ● Use unscented litter                                                           |
| Location of the litter box                | ● Change where the litter box is placed                                          |

If you think your cat is not using your litter box due to a household stress (conflict with other animals in the home, kids in the house, too loud of a household, etc.), please email the Foster Coordinator as it may be best to find another foster home for them to stay in with less stressors.
Veterinary and Medical Care

Whether your kitten is healthy or sick, there will be routine medical care required. If you are fostering healthy kittens, you should expect to return every 2-3 weeks with your kittens for the

Even with thorough medical screenings and exams prior to the foster time, we CANNOT guarantee your foster won’t break with an illness after you take them home. This is why it is so important to follow the required quarantine protocol! Doing so helps to catch any illness that arises in those 14 days, and will keep any personal pets in the home safe. It is also just as important to notify us immediately when medical concerns arise. Please see the Common Non-Emergency Medical Concerns section for symptoms and illnesses to look for.

NEVER give medication to your shelter foster pet, at any time, that has not been prescribed by the HSWM Veterinarian! This is ILLEGAL to do!

Routine Medical Care

Foster parents are responsible for getting their foster kittens scheduled for their vaccine boosters. At your foster pet’s pick up, you will be alerted when your kittens will need their vaccine booster. To schedule this, you go to hswestmi.org, foster tab, foster resources and then there is a link to access the vaccine calendar. Pick a time and slot to schedule them for and it will schedule on the foster vet tech’s calendar.

Please be mindful about being on time, as you likely aren’t the only appointment for the day! We try to avoid making appointments back to back, but sometimes it’s unavoidable, especially if the previous appointment runs longer than anticipated due to an unforeseen medical concern that requires more time. To respect everyone’s time and to prevent appointments running into each other, it is best to be early rather than late. If you are early, you may ring the doorbell on the Foster Doors, but please be patient as the Foster Vet Tech may be in another appointment, helping the vet team with a procedure, or preparing for your appointment. Don’t worry, we haven’t forgotten about you! We will be out to see you at your scheduled time.

If you are 15 minutes late to your appointment, we reserve the right to reschedule for a different time.
Medical Care Timeline
Kittens can receive their first vaccines and additional preventative care when they reach 1 pound. It is then expected that they come back every 2-3 weeks for their booster vaccines until they have reached 20 weeks old.

Medical Timeline Details
- 0-4 weeks - Deworming, weight check, physical exam
- 4-8 weeks - FVRCP vaccine and boosters, deworming, flea prevention, weight check, physical exam
  - Starting at 8 weeks, if your foster kittens are a healthy 2 pounds, the Foster Vet Tech will schedule them for surgery.
- 12-20 weeks - FVRCP vaccine booster, Rabies vaccine, flea prevention (if due), weight check, physical exam

Surgery
All animals are altered before they leave our building for adoption.

Surgery Scheduling
Kittens can be fixed starting at 8 weeks of age and once they reach a healthy 2 pounds. Once they have reached that goal weight, or are anticipated to reach that goal within a given timeframe, the Foster Vet Tech schedules the surgery. These procedures are scheduled the week following them leaving for foster at the beginning of the week at the earliest. You as the foster parent are responsible for keeping track of this date. Once they are scheduled, you can find the date on hswestmi.org, foster tab, foster resources, and appointment scheduling. The second half of the page is our surgery section, with a link to the spreadsheet containing their surgery date. You will need to request viewing access the first time. Once you have access, find your name on the appropriate tab. Once you find your foster’s surgery date, please email the Foster Vet Tech that you can or cannot make the surgery date. If you are unable to make the date, a new one will be offered. Once surgery is confirmed, and the follow up confirmation of the animal staying at the shelter for adoption post-surgery or returning back to foster is discussed, their surgery date and time are a-go. You can find all surgery day instructions as well as post-surgical instructions below the surgery spreadsheet link. Please make sure to read these so you know what time to arrive and pick up if you are doing so, as well as what to do the morning of surgery prior to coming in.
Day of Surgery

The following instructions are linked under the surgery spreadsheet link in PDF form.

Please remember if you want to adopt your fosters, you need to let our Adoptions team know by the end of the day the day PRIOR to surgery! Their email is adoptions@hswestmi.org.

If you are running late, please email Sabrina and our Vet Staff at vetstaff@hswestmi.org with your anticipated arrival time.

★ If you have kittens or puppies, you do not need to withhold water or food for surgery.
★ If you have adult cats or dogs, please refrain from giving breakfast the morning of surgery to avoid upset stomach during anesthesia. Water is okay. Administer any prescribed medications as normal.

★

Drop off

1. Arrive between 7:30-8am to our Admitting doors unless a different time was discussed at time of scheduling. Please ring the doorbell labeled “Preop” once you arrive - our admitting doors are locked in the morning and ringing the bell alerts our team you are here. One of our Vet Techs will meet you in the lobby inside these doors to take your animal(s).

2. If your foster is not returning home with you after surgery, please bring back your supplies at this time and place them outside of our Foster doors in the Foster Drop-Off bin. Please don’t place them in the pick up shed!

3. Please be patient as there may be others dropping off at the same time.

Pick up

1. If you are picking up your foster to be adopted from foster via Zoom, or you are adopting them yourself, the pickup time is between 4-4:30pm from the Admitting doors again unless a different pick up time was previously discussed.

2. There should be someone in Admitting at your time of pick up (unless it is Monday). Let them know who you are picking up and a vet staff member will bring out your foster animal(s). You will be given their postoperative pain medications at this time. The post-op medication is given by mouth once
daily, starting the day after surgery as they got their first dose already prior to surgery that day. **THIS MUST BE ADMINISTERED AS PRESCRIBED - NO EXCEPTIONS**

3. Please be patient as there may be others picking up at the same time.

**Additional Surgery Notes:**

- If something comes up that complicates your ability to make the surgery date or scheduled time, please email the Foster Veterinary Technician ASAP to discuss rescheduling as needed.

- It is important to keep your animals as mellow and relaxed as possible, especially females, after surgery to avoid post-surgical complications.

*Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns in regards to surgery or post-surgery!*
Post Operative Instructions for Foster Cats and Kittens

The following is information regarding post-operative care for your foster animal. If you have any questions or concerns about the surgical procedure or recovery, please email the Foster Veterinary Technician, at sanderson@hswestmi.org.

Most cats will self limit their activity following this abdominal surgery. Some may also be slightly groggy due to the anesthetic/pain medication given for the rest of the day.

You are being sent home with oral pain medication to start the day after surgery.

Monitor appetite - some cats will have little or no appetite following surgery. Some may vomit as well. If either of these symptoms persist past 24 hours, please let us know.

Keep the incision dry - no bathing or swimming should be done for 10 days.

Monitor the incision - for any pain, heat, redness, drainage or excessive swelling for 7-10 days. If any of these symptoms are observed, please email the Foster Veterinary Technician a picture of the incision.

Discourage licking at the incision - If your foster is licking or chewing at the incision, they must be fitted with an E-collar (aka “cone”). This should remain in place at all times when they are not being directly supervised until the incision is completely healed. We can provide a collar, or you can get one at a pet store. For smaller animals, a paper plate can be crafted into a cone (please see next page for instructions).

Try to discourage running, jumping or strenuous activity - for 5-7 days post surgery for females, and 3-5 days post surgery for males. Increased activity may cause post-op complications and delayed healing. Keeping your foster pet confined to an area that limits strenuous activity post-op is highly recommended.

Do not give your cat Aspirin, Tylenol, Advil, or any other over the counter pain medication - these substances are very toxic to cats and can be fatal, especially when combined with the pain medication sent home with you. If your foster pet is in excessive pain, please let us know and we can prescribe additional pain relievers.
How to make an e-collar out of a paper plate

1. Cut from outside of the paper plate or paper bowl towards the middle.

2. Cut a circle out of the middle that is big enough to fit around the cat or kitten’s neck.

3. Take both ends of the outside of the plate where you cut inwards, and fold them towards each other to form a cone shape around their head.

4. Once it is secure enough on their head and you can fit two figures between the neck and cone, tape the sides of the plate together to finish securing it around their head.

5. Ensure they can eat and drink past the edge of the paper plate, but cannot lick or chew at their incision site, and there are no sharp edges poking or scratching them.
Common Non-Emergency Medical Concerns

When to let us know
We may not need to do anything right away, but we need to be made aware of these medical issues when they occur. Please email the Foster Veterinary Technician at sanderson@hswestmi.org if any of these things are observed within the respective time frame given.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Neonate Puppies and Kittens</th>
<th>Puppies and Kittens under 5 months</th>
<th>Adult cats and dogs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>URI Symptoms - sneezing, congestion, discharge</td>
<td>As soon as it’s observed</td>
<td>After 24 hours of showing symptoms</td>
<td>After 48 hours of showing symptoms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conjunctivitis/Eye swelling/redness</td>
<td>As soon as it’s observed</td>
<td>After 24 hours</td>
<td>After 24 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vomiting</td>
<td>As soon as it’s observed</td>
<td>After 24 hours</td>
<td>After 48 hours, or 24 hours if frequent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diarrhea - soft to liquid consistency</td>
<td>As soon as it’s observed</td>
<td>After 24 hours - As soon as it’s observed if there is blood</td>
<td>After 48 hours - after 24 hours if blood is continually present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constipation - zero stool output</td>
<td>After 24 hours</td>
<td>After 24 hours</td>
<td>After 48 hours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased Appetite</td>
<td>As soon as it’s observed</td>
<td>As soon as it’s observed</td>
<td>After 24 hours of decreased appetite OR after 12 hours for zero food intake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weight loss or weight plateau (primarily kittens)</td>
<td>As soon as it’s observed</td>
<td>After 24 hours</td>
<td>After 72 hours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following items are less common non-emergency medical concerns:
- Frequent trips to the litter box, straining to urinate, difficulty eliminating
- Itchy skin or ears.
- Blood in stool
- Frequent and excessive water intake
- Decreased activity – not lethargy

If any of these are noted, please contact the Foster Vet Tech.
Feline Panleukopenia, a.k.a “Panleuk”

What is Panleuk?
Feline Panleukopenia is an extremely hardy virus that is very contagious to unvaccinated or freshly vaccinated cats and kittens. Without early intervention it can be a devastating, as well as deadly virus as it enters into the environment from the animal before they even display symptoms. It is hard to kill, lives a long time in the environment, and is easily spread. Thankfully, this virus cannot go between species and affects only felines.

What are the symptoms of Panleuk?
If kittens stop eating or become less interested in eating, that is typically the first sign of Panleuk. Other symptoms include decreased activity to lethargy, diarrhea, diarrhea with blood, and vomiting. Sometimes symptoms are glaringly obvious, but sometimes they are more subtle.

Situational examples of symptoms:
1. **Attitude/Activity change:** They can go from running around your house to just meandering around, or simply just not running around as excitedly.
2. **Appetite loss:** They scarf down a bowl of food that morning or the night prior but their next meal they only eat half the bowl, if at all.
3. **Stool change:** Stool is even becoming softer and darker in texture, or they seem to be uncomfortable while going to the bathroom. Or, their stool suddenly becomes diarrhea with an odd, sweeter smell to it.

*It’s important to monitor your kitten’s daily health, note any changes and report them as soon as they are noticed.*

I have cats at home!
If your cats get their yearly distemper vaccine on time, which protects them from Panleukopenia, and have a good track record of their vaccines throughout their life, they will likely be fine! Regardless, everything should be cleaned appropriately, including any carpet or items with fabrics, like couches, that your kittens came in contact with. All fabric items must be discarded and all hard surfaces sanitized appropriately.

If your own pet is not vaccinated, or is coming up on being due on their vaccine, please email the Foster Veterinary Technician and we can further discuss what to do to help your pets stay safe and how we can assist with that. If your animal were to test positive for Panleuk, you must seek treatment with your primary veterinarian, as we will not be able to provide treatment.
Indirect spread of Panleuk
You and your home can be a fomite for Panleuk. A fomite is an object or material that can carry infection. This includes clothes you wear and furniture the felines have come in contact with. For example, if a panleuk kitten is shedding the virus but not showing symptoms yet, and you pet them and then go into another room and touch other items or sit on a couch, the virus can shed from you onto the couch or the other items you touched. If that happens, then there is a chance that the virus is now waiting on your couch or other objects for the next unvaccinated feline to come around, touch it, and get infected with it. This is why we recommend not having any unvaccinated felines in your home for at least 6 months after fostering a Panleuk positive feline.

Monitoring and Reporting
It is extremely important to report any symptoms of Panleuk you see in your fosters, especially kittens, including any changes in their attitude. We want to intervene as soon as possible! The sooner we are able to intervene, the better the outcome for all of the cats involved. We would rather check your foster pet and have it turn out to be nothing serious, versus holding off and seeing them when it is too late.

If you have been informed that another kitten in the same litter as your kitten tested positive, or your feline has been exposed to the virus, be on high alert for symptoms. If you notice the slightest change in attitude, appetite, or appearance in stool, please let the Foster Veterinary Technician know immediately.

If your feline has tested positive for Panleuk, they will have treatment start at the shelter. Depending on the veterinary’s discretion, the feline may need to stay at the shelter for further care or monitoring or be asked to return home with you for closer monitoring and care at home. If they have to stay, they may be able to return home the next day, or it may sometimes be a week later. It all depends on the severity of their illness and their response to treatments. The sooner we can catch it, the better and quicker the recovery in most cases. If you are willing to take your Panleuk feline back, please know you may need to visit multiple times in a week if they decline. They may need to come in for a night stay, or may just need a short visit to get a couple extra supportive treatments, and then go back home with you.
Crashing Kitten Protocol

A crashing kitten, AKA Fading Kitten Syndrome, is a life-threatening emergency in which a kitten, sometimes one that was previously seemingly healthy, “crashes” and begins to fade away. This can happen with any feline, but most commonly kittens. Immediate intervention must happen to give a crashing kitten a chance of survival.

Symptoms
- Low body temperature – the kitten feels cool or cold to the touch
- Sudden or extreme lethargy – not getting up, unable to stand, not responding to touching/petting
- Gasping for Breath – meowing/crying out
- Pale gums and/or tongue
- Seizures
- Other behavior changes like circling, head pressing, and acting agitated or confused

Most common, immediate causes for crashing
- Hypothermia – being too cold
- Hypoglycemia – blood sugar is too low - can be sudden

WHEN THIS HAPPENS, IT IS VITAL THAT YOU TAKE THESE STEPS IMMEDIATELY AND BE FOLLOWING THE EMERGENCY GUIDELINES AT THE SAME TIME AS THIS IS AN EMERGENCY!

Get them warm
1. Immediately wrap the kitten up in a towel or blanket, warm if possible, like a burrito, leaving only their face exposed. Their whole body - tail, ears, and paws included - should be in the towel with only nose and mouth exposed. As tempting as it is, DO NOT take the kitten out of the towel to adjust them, check on them, etc. Every time you take them out you will make them cold again, even if it is only for a second.

2. Get a warming device
   a. **Warmie** - Microwave until warm but not scalding. This is the best option but use what’s readily available and make sure a blanket or cover is between the kitten and the direct warmie if you are not given a warmie cover.
   b. **Rice sock** - Can cool quickly. Microwave until warm but not scalding.
   c. **Bottled water** - Fill bottles with warm but not scalding water.
d. **Heating pad** - Can turn off on own, make sure it stays turned on and not scalding

3. Place the warming device(s) in a carrier

4. Place the kitten in the carrier on warming device(s), unwrapping them enough to place them closer to the warming device and rewrapping them and the device with only their face exposed.
   
   a. **NOTE:** Never leave an unresponsive or lethargic kitten unsupervised while on a warming device - they cannot move away from the device if they feel it starting to burn them.

5. Cover most of the carrier to prevent any cold drafts from passing through and to trap the heat being emitted from the warming device(s) but leave a spot you can watch them without uncovering the carrier each time.

6. Check temperature frequently, careful not to let out heat while doing so. Readjust the kitten to warm all parts of the body, especially if unresponsive.

**Some warming device notes**

- If you are using rice socks or water bottles, shake the items to distribute the heat evenly.

- If you are using yourself or a warm towel while another device is being warmed up, this is temporary. Once that item is ready, use that instead of yourself.

- Rubbing them can stimulate their body to make blood start flowing and also help warm them up while you wait for the warming device.

**Get their blood sugar up**

1. Get one of the following items:
   
   a. Karo syrup
   
   b. Sugar water
      
      i. Get a bowl or tupperware container and put a few tablespoons of sugar in hot water. Stir so that the sugar dissolves – you want the mixture to be thick but still runny
2. Use an oral syringe, q-tip, or your finger to put a small amount onto their gum line every 3 minutes until completely responsive. If they are unresponsive and/or not swallowing, take extra precautions to not get it down their throat.

3. Set a timer to make sure that you are doing this at least every 3 minutes. Every 5 to 10 minutes is too long and they will continue to crash.

**Notify the foster team**
Submit a JotForm per the emergency guidelines that you’ve started the crashing protocol for your foster.

If during open hours (Monday-Friday, 7am to 5pm), bring them into us directly. If during closed hours, bring them to the ER, following your emergency guidelines.

It can take hours for kittens in this condition to improve and stay stable. You should continue to monitor them for any recurrences very closely as it’s not uncommon for a relapse, especially if we don’t know the cause of the crash. We will still schedule them in for an exam with the medical team if you get them stabilized at home to make sure everything is still functioning as it should as when they crash, their body starts to shut down organs. We also want to see if there is a diagnosis that can be done that caused the crash.

Keep in mind that even with all the love, attention and treatment, some kittens still will not make it. Try not to blame yourself during this difficult time. Any foster kitten that you have cared for was given a second chance at life BECAUSE OF YOU. Their chances at survival are much higher with you than they are left at the shelter. The Foster Team knows that you do everything you can for every kitten in your care.
Death

We know it's not fun to talk about, and we do everything in our power to avoid it, but in this line of work, deaths sometimes happen. This typically happens with younger kittens and can often happen unexpectedly, unfortunately. If this ever happens to you, we want you to be prepared.

It will take a toll on you emotionally, no matter how often you foster, and even if you're expecting it as a possible outcome. If a kitten passes away in your care, please bring them to HSWM and also submit an emergency JotForm so we are aware of the passing. We always have staff on site from 7am to 5pm, so we will have someone that can take them from you, but the JotForm submission lets us prepare a staff member on site to be ready for your arrival if the foster team is not in office the day it happens.

Not every pet will make it, no matter how hard we try to save them all. We know you tried your absolute best and did everything you possibly could do. Please know it is NEVER your fault and always let us know how we can support you through the loss. We can't kill them, but we can and will try our hardest to save them!
Diarrhea in Shelter Animals

Diarrhea is one of the most common issues we see at the shelter. It can be uncomfortable for the animals, and possibly for you, but we have the resources to help resolve it!

What causes diarrhea?
The most common causes of diarrhea in shelter animals are stress from their current environment, or from moving locations (i.e. going from the shelter to a foster home). The other primary causes of diarrhea in the shelter are parasites and food change.

Preventing diarrhea
All canines and felines receive dewormer on intake to start killing common parasites. Once you establish a food they enjoy, keep them on that food when at all possible. If you must change food, do a slow transition from old to new food over 7 days.

My foster animal has diarrhea, what should I do?
Let us know! Follow these guidelines for notifying us if your foster has diarrhea:

- Neonates: Immediately if looser than toothpaste consistency, or if blood is present
- Puppies/Kittens older than 1 month: Within 24 hours, or immediately if blood if present
- Adult: within 48 hours, or within 24 hours if blood is present

If you notice severe diarrhea with significant blood, please follow the emergency protocol!

What information is helpful to staff

- Is there blood?
- Are you able to take a picture of the stool?
- When did it start?
- How is their activity level?
- Are they eating and drinking?
- Was there new food or treats introduced?
- What does it look like?
  - Consistency? Is there blood? What color is it?
- Can you bring a fecal sample in?
- Is it possible they got into something that upset their stomach?

I have been asked to bring a stool sample in, how do I do that?
We only need about a spoonful of fecal matter to run tests. If you have received a fecal sample tube in your foster kit, you can scoop the sample directly into the tube to bring in. If not, you can put it in a dog poop bag, sandwich bag, or another container you don’t mind parting with. Litter or grass in the sample is okay! The obtained sample needs to be as “fresh” as possible, less than 24 hours old. Please write the date and the name of the foster animal on whatever contains the stool.
What will happen if I report diarrhea?
After we have asked some questions, a couple of things may happen.
1. We may first prescribe a probiotic and possibly a bland diet for a few days.
2. We will ask for a fecal sample to be brought to us to check for screening
   a. If positive, we will send home appropriate medication(s). Another fecal sample will likely need to be taken 24-48 hours after completion of the medication to make sure that there are no lingering parasites.
   b. If negative, we may send home medication to help resolve the diarrhea.
   c. We may ask for the pet to come in if the diarrhea is persistent or worsens, for a wellness exam by our veterinary staff and appropriate medication.

What do the parasites look like? Do all parasites cause diarrhea?
There are many parasites that can cause diarrhea, but not all are visible to the naked eye and must be viewed under a microscope. The most common parasites you can see at a glance are roundworms (which resemble a spaghetti noodle) and tapeworms (which resemble a grain of rice).

Can the parasites be passed onto me?
Technically, yes, but it is very hard to be passed onto people. As long as you aren’t directly eating the fecal matter and taking the proper cleaning precautions when handling animal waste, (washing hands, cleaning and disinfecting surfaces the fecal matter touches, etc.) the risk is minimal.

Can my own animals get infected with parasites from my foster animal?
Yes. Like humans, they have to ingest the eggs of the parasite to become infected, so proper cleaning helps minimize the risk. Most diarrhea due to parasites will show up during the 10 day quarantine your foster animal(s) goes through. If your personal animal becomes infected and starts having diarrhea, you will need to go to your primary veterinarian for care and treatment.
Upper Respiratory Infections in Shelter Animals

What is an Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)?
Also known as URI, it is a common shelter illness that, while primarily affecting cats, can affect many different species. It is a viral or a bacterial infection that targets the upper airways (nose and throat) and is similar to a common cold. In most cases, a round of medication will address the illness, but in more severe cases your foster pet may need additional treatment. URIs are commonly passed through saliva and nasal discharge via direct contact (grooming, coming nose-to-nose with sick animals, etc) and indirectly (sneezing, eating from the same bowls, touching a surface that has discharge on it, etc).

What are the symptoms of URI?
The most common symptoms of URI are frequent sneezing and coughing, nasal congestion, and colored (yellow or green) nasal discharge. Conjunctivitis (inflammation of the membranes lining the eyelids) can also occur with colored ocular discharge. Depending on the severity of the URI, they may have bloody nasal discharge (though this is less common), drooling, nausea, mouth sores, decreased or total loss of appetite, and decreased activity levels.

My foster is showing signs of URI, what should I do?
The occasional sneeze here and there is perfectly normal and not cause for concern, as animals sneeze like humans do to expel foreign matter from the nasal passage. If you notice persistent or worsening symptoms, please notify us within 24 hours for animals under 5 months, and within 48 hours for adults. In order to avoid the added stress of coming back to the shelter, we may ask you to send us a video of their sneezing and/or breathing, or pictures of the eyes if ocular discharge, swelling, or squinting of the eyes is noted.

How is it treated?
We prescribe an oral antibiotic that is to be given once daily. If they also have conjunctivitis with their URI, we prescribe an eye medication to be put onto the affected eyes every 12 hours for 7 days. If they still are sneezing and congested after their oral meds are finished, we may do another round of medication(s).

If their noses are raw or plugged up with nasal discharge, a warm, wet wash cloth can be used to gently wipe their noses and help them breathe better. You can also take them into a steamy bathroom to help clear up their sinuses.
How can I give the oral medication?
See your “How to Administer Medications” section for more help. You can also email our Foster Veterinary Technician directly at sanderson@hswestmi.org, if you are still struggling with administering the medication.

My foster animal was healthy when I took them home, why are they getting sick now?
The virus can incubate in animals for 2-10 days before they develop symptoms. Stress, such as changes in the environment, the busy shelter, traveling in a car, or surgery, can cause them to be more susceptible to the URI, and we often see them break with illness after these events. If they had a recent visit to the shelter, like a vaccine booster appointment, it’s also possible to be exposed during that appointment as well, despite our efforts to clean thoroughly between each animal.

I have my own animals at home. Are they at risk for getting sick too?
When you bring foster animals home, we ask you to quarantine them in a room away from your personal animals for 10 days. If the foster animal has an underlying illness, chances are they will show symptoms within those 10 days. If your animals are up-to-date on vaccines, it decreases their chances of getting sick, but does not make them completely immune to all strains of the URI illnesses. As long as your animals are kept separate from foster animals and you practice good hygiene, sanitation, and hand washing, the risk of getting your personal animals sick is minimal. If your personal animal(s) get sick, you will need to go to your primary veterinarian for an exam and possible treatment.

Can I catch this illness?
No- it cannot be passed onto humans or between species!
Conjunctivitis in Shelter Animals

What is conjunctivitis?
Conjunctivitis is inflammation of the conjunctiva, the mucous membrane lining an animal’s eye. It commonly occurs along with upper respiratory infections, but can occur by itself as well. It is most common in cats, but can show up in all species.

What are the symptoms of it?
Redness/irritation of the eye(s), squinting, watery eye(s), swelling of the eye(s), colored (yellow/green/cloudy) ocular discharge, cloudy eye(s), and raising of the third eyelid.

What should I do?
Let us know! Email a picture to the Foster Veterinary Technician at sanderson@hswestmi.org to help us evaluate if it is conjunctivitis, or a different eye issue. Providing details of the symptoms you’re seeing will be helpful and expedite the process. If you are unsure if you are also noticing URI symptoms, please refer above to the “Upper Respiratory Infections in Shelter Animals” section.

How is it treated?
Conjunctivitis is treated with an ointment that is applied to the affected eye(s) at least every 12 hours for 7 days. If the eye(s) clear up before the instructed time, it is important that you do not stop the medication. If symptoms persist after treatment, please email us so we may further evaluate your foster pet.

How do I apply the eye medication?
Please see the “How to Administer Medications” section for help. You can also email our Foster Veterinary Technician at sanderson@hswestmi.org if you need further assistance with administering medication.
Ear Mites vs. Ear Infections

What are ear mites?
Ear mites are tiny mites that live in the ear canals of animals. While they can affect a variety of species, we typically see them appear more often in cats in a shelter environment. Ear mite debris appears dry and dirty, similar to a coffee ground consistency. Ear mites are confirmed via microscopic examination.

What are symptoms of ear mites?
The most common signs of ear mites are dirty ears and itching. These are usually accompanied by shaking of their head/ears, redness on their ear pinna/flap, and intense scratching of the ears.

How are ear mites treated?
All cats receive Revolution upon intake, which is a flea and tick prevention that is also effective against ear mites. Occasionally, some cats may need additional care or treatment.

What’s the difference between mites and an ear infection?
An ear infection is the result of the overgrowth of yeast or bacteria in the ear. Similar to ear mites, symptoms of an ear infection include itching, redness, and shaking of the head. They may also have an odor or be painful depending on the type and severity of the infection. The main difference is what is in their ear. Ear infections present with a varying consistency of colored ear debris (light yellow to dark brown) but it usually is a softer, more waxy consistency.

Ear mites

Ear Infection
How are they diagnosed?
You will be asked to bring your foster in for an exam, or bring in a swab sample of the ear debris. We will look at the sample under a microscope looking for mites or bacteria. If any are present, they will be prescribed an ear medication for one or both of the ears.

How do I get a sample?
The easiest way to get a sample is to use a Q-tip. It is best to get a sample right before you plan to drop it off to prevent it from drying out. Be gentle while acquiring the sample and don’t be too forceful with the Q-tip in the ear. Animals have an extra turn in their ear canal so it’s harder to hit their eardrum, unlike humans, but you can still hit it if you’re being forceful in their ear.

1. Gently hold their ear flap in your fingers and bend it towards the center of their head to open their ear up for easier access. Locate the ear canal.
2. Take one Q-tip and insert into the ear canal. Move the Q-tip around against the walls of the ear canal to pick up any debris inside the ear. Repeat for the other ear, using a new Q-tip.
3. Take the Q-tip used to acquire the LEFT ear sample and bend it into an L, or mark it another way to signify the sample is the left ear. This will help determine which ear needs medication, if necessary.
4. Put Q-tips in a sealed bag and bring in as directed by the Foster Veterinary Technician.

How are ears treated?
If your foster is diagnosed with an ear infection, they will be prescribed the appropriate ear ointment or drops. Most commonly these are given for 7-10 days, depending on the severity of the infection. Approximately two weeks after the medication is started, another ear sample will need to be brought in to check if the infection is still present.

If you are comfortable doing so, you will be provided ear cleaning supplies to clean out your foster's ears if deemed necessary by the veterinarian. This process is similar to obtaining a sample (see above) with the addition of a medicated solution.

How do I give ear medications?
Please see the “How to Administer Medications” section for help. You can also email our Foster Veterinary Technician at sanderson@hswestmi.org if you need further assistance with administering medication.
How to Administer Medications

In general, though particularly for cats, it's best to have two people helping to administer medications. However, you may be by yourself at some point and will need to medicate your foster pet on your own.

*Always read the label of your medication for: method to administer, amount to administer, how often to administer, and for how long*

NEVER give medication to your shelter foster, at any time, that has not been prescribed by the HSWM Veterinarian. IT IS ILLEGAL TO DO SO.

Please do not STOP or WEAN medications without discussion first.

Liquid medications

When giving a cat any medication, it is best to have their butt against something, whether it be your lap, or another object, so they can’t back away. Some cats will let you place your hand on the side of their face to administer medications, others you may need to hold their head gently but more firmly to administer the medication.

1. Gently place your hand on top of their head with your fingers under their cheekbones, tilting the head up slightly.
2. Wiggle the syringe in the side of the mouth, between their premolars and canines. Most times they will open their mouths on their own.
3. Push plunger to administer medication into the mouth, being careful not to shoot it directly into their throat.
4. If they are a good eater, you can do the “meatball method” if you are confident they will eat all of it. Hide the medication in a small amount of wet food and give them more plain food without the medication after.

Tip: If your medication has a foul taste (like Metronidazole or Doxycycline), you can suck up some extra water, tuna juice, baby food or chicken broth into the syringe. Pull the plunger back and forth a few times to mix in the syringe. Doing so helps make it much less offensive and medication time a bit easier.
Pill and capsule medications
Hiding pills for cats can be trickier than it is for dogs, as they tend to eat around them. You can try hiding their pills in:

- Small meatball of wet food
- Pill pockets
- Deli turkey/ham
- Tuna/chicken
- Baby food
- Cheese spray
- Liver Kong Spray

If they eat around it, you can crush the pills and hide them again in wet food or a Kong spray like Liver or Cheese to make it harder to spit out the pill. **Please ask for approval for this method, as some medications cannot be crushed!** Some pills have a bitter taste when crushed and can make it more difficult to mask the taste of the medication as well.

We recommend direct pilling as a last resort as it can be very stressful to the cat if you aren’t experienced in doing so. If possible, use a pill pusher as pictured below:

1. Put the pill/capsule in the tip of the pill pusher.
2. Gently place your hand on the top of their head with your fingers by their cheekbones.
3. Lift their head up slightly and wiggle the pill pusher into the side of their mouth between their canines and premolars. Most cats will open their mouths as there is a small gap in that area.
4. Push the pill pusher all the way to back of mouth, as far as the cat will allow
5. Push plunger to shoot pill down the cat’s throat.
6. If unsure they swallowed right away, close and hold their mouth shut gently. Watch for swallowing. If the cat spits the pill out, repeat the process.

Eye drops and ointment
Having your foster cat’s butt against something like yourself or another object will make eye drops and ointment easier to apply, as they cannot back away.

1. Place your thumb below the eye and pull down gently to lower the lid
2. Place the hand holding the medication on top of the head. Place a finger (like your pinky) above the eye and pull up slightly to raise the upper lid
3. Squeeze bottle above eye, being careful not to touch the tip to the eye, to administer drops or ointment.
Ear drops and ointment

Having your foster cat's butt against something like yourself or another object, will make ear drops or ointment easier to apply, as they cannot back away. The goal is to get the medication into the ear canal, not on the surface of the ear flap.

1. Gently hold their ear flap in your fingers and bend it towards the center of their head to open their ear up for easier access.
2. Locate the ear canal (towards the base of the ear).
3. Take your medication and place the tip into the ear canal. Squeeze the bottle to administer the medication.
4. Massage the base of the ear. Repeat for the other ear, if needed.

Tip: The label will tell you how many drops to administer in each ear canal. Prior to administering, you can practice without your foster pet by squeezing the bottle onto a cloth to see how much pressure you need to apply to administer the correct amount.

Additional tips and tricks:
If your cats are being very wiggly, or like to throw their paws around trying to get you to stop handling them, you can try the towel method and make them into a cozy “purrito”!

1. Place your cat on a towel or blanket
2. Take one side of the towel and wrap it around the top of their body, leaving their head exposed.
3. Pull the corner of the towel currently in your hand the rest of the way around the cat to wrap around their chest. It can be tucked under their chin and secured on the side of their head with your hand.

4. Take the other side of the towel and fold up and over their body. If you have enough length, wrap around their chest like you did with the first wrap.

5. Now they are burritoed snugly in a towel and ready to be medicated, and you don’t need to worry about their nails getting you!

Make it positive! Always give them treats after getting their medication!

Be patient! It can be frustrating medicating a difficult animal. If you have to come back to try again a bit later in the day, that’s okay. We want to make the experience as positive as possible for the animal, and safe for you. If you are having difficulty medicating after trying the things suggested in this packet, please email the Foster Vet Tech at sanderson@hswestmi.org for more help and alternatives.
Adoption Process,
From Foster to Forever Home

If your animal is healthy, behaviorally assessed, and at least 2 months of age, they can become available for adoption even if they are still waiting on a medical procedure. This can happen within a few days of them being in your foster home!

Building an Adoption Profile
The first step to getting your foster adopted is building their adoption profile! To do this you'll need pictures, pictures, and more pictures! Gathering photos and “About Me” information for your foster pets is both fun and extremely important in helping your pet find their loving furever home. The combination of quality photos and creative bios are essential to creating an appealing online profile, which in turn will encourage adopters to apply to adopt your foster pet! Nearly everything you send us will eventually be visible on their profile on our website, so the more you give us to work with, the better! Building a great profile for your foster pet could look like one of the examples at the end of this manual. Plus, it is part of your foster agreement to help build this profile.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photography Provides:</th>
<th>A Good Photo:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Increased Adoptions</td>
<td>• Is in focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased Engagement</td>
<td>• Uncomplicated, uncluttered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increased Awareness</td>
<td>• At the animal’s level, ideally with the pet looking straight at you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Well lit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Dark fur? Use light background</td>
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Writing a bio: A good story can be an invaluable tool for emotional connection. Stories can bring aspects of a pet’s personality or their history in vivid detail. Qualities that potential adopters might be looking for, such as great social skills with other pets, or having an easygoing or affectionate purrsonality, are often illustrated in any number of small actions that a pet performs every day. Tell us all about what makes your foster pet special and what you love about them! If the content is funny or sweet and relatable--even better! When your foster pet does something positive that affects you emotionally, make a note of it so we can share that with adopters!

Take Multiple Photos: Some fosters tell us, “I am an awful photographer”, but no one takes the perfect selfie on the first try! Take lots of rapid-fire photos all at once and odds are you’ll snap something you can work with! Whether you’re an ace photographer or not, taking multiple photos increases the chances of getting
something really great, and helps show off your adorable foster pet to potential adopters!

**Use Photos to Showcase Personality:** We want potential adopters to get a feel for our foster pet's personalities, so use photos in a way that does just that! Take photos that capture different aspects of your pet's personality. When viewed together, adopters get a much more accurate picture of who they are, and what makes your foster pet unique and loveable!

**The Adoption Process from Home**
Once they are cleared to go up for adoption, your foster pet will be made available in our adoption system, which makes them viewable on the HSWM website. **Since adopters can't view your pets by visiting our shelter, it is ESSENTIAL that we make them an appealing online bio, since it is their only way to get to know them!** This is why it is so important to help the Foster Coordinator build their profile with pictures, bios, and descriptions! These details will become visible on the website for interested adopters to see, along with their gender, age, sex. If they are interested in adopting the animal, they can put in an application for them directly from their online profile.

Once an application has been approved, our Adoptions Department will reach out to both you and the potential adopter to coordinate a meeting. Once an agreed date and time is coordinated, the meeting is set with you and the animal(s), the potential adopter, and the Adoptions Department typically via Zoom. Here, the adopter can meet the animal and ask any questions they may have about your foster pet. At this point, as the foster, you will know more about their personality than anyone!

If they decide to go through with the adoption, a transfer of care is then coordinated at the shelter. Transfer of cares can not happen anywhere but the shelter unless otherwise approved by a HSWM staff member. Once that date and time is set, all that’s left is to wait for that date to arrive! Once that day comes, you will show up at the designated time and place with your adopted foster pet(s). You can either help facilitate the transfer and meet the adopter with a customer service member, or you can simply drop off the animal to the customer service team, and they can handle the transfer from there. If all your fosters have been adopted, your foster supplies can be brought back to us and be dropped off outside the foster doors at this time as well. Please feel free to send any favorite toys, blankets, or beds home with your animals!

*And you are officially done! Congratulations, you have gotten one more animal to their forever home!*
Profile Examples
The bios and profiles provided here are examples only. Included on the last page are some photos of our HSWM foster pets, taken by HSWM foster caregivers!

Bio example: Sir Harley and Connecting with Humor

After some time with Harley in foster he has made it abundantly clear that he is a gentleman, and as such, will henceforth be known as Sir Harley.

Sir Harley has manners! We were worried he had an infection when he didn't pee during his first 24 hours with us, but as it turns out, he simply prefers not to urinate in the presence of a lady. We also learned he has a bladder of steel.

Sir Harley is grateful. He is so expressive in his gratitude; in fact, he has an injury called "happy tail." Breakfast? GRATEFUL. Pets? GRATEFUL. Walkies? GRATEFUL. Nap time? GRATEFUL. Eye contact? GRATEFUL.

Sir Harley makes everyone feel welcome! As a one-dog welcoming committee, there is no door greeter as wiggly as Sir Harley. If retail stores had Sir Harley mascots, the American economy would be repaired in a matter of days.

Sir Harley does not beg. He understands that "no means no" and he will not push the issue on that pint of Ben ‘N Jerry’s. Bonus: He won't shame you for eating it all in one sitting either. He knows you are beautiful at any size!

Sir Harley rolls with the flow. You wanna sleep all day? So does he. You wanna party outside? So does he. You wanna have an existential crisis because life is an illusion? Sir Harley knows you will calm down if you rub his belly, and he will offer it to you gladly. Sir Harley will make some man or woman very lucky when they welcome this class act gentle giant into their home! #adoptsirharley

Bio Example: Snoopy, Telling a Story about Personality

This is Snoopy, but you can call him Velcro Lite, Splooter (his sploots are unparalleled. Truly) or Snoop Dogg (but that’s kind of a given). I brought Snoopy home for an overnight foster and he instantly took to my boyfriend and me like a baby takes to his parents. His primary objective all day and night was to please, and he did. You could call him from any room in the house and he’d come running with that giant smile on that mammoth head of his to sit at your feet and
look up at you so adoringly you couldn’t help but feel guilty for being loved this much.

Snoopy is the rare dog who wants to be by your side always, but also has a natural understanding of personal space. If you’re on the couch, he is gonna climb right up on there and sploot (lay with his legs back, like a frog) next to you - close enough for scritches, but not so close that you’re strapped in for a 12-hour Netflix marathon.

His two states of being are "overjoyed" and “asleep,” and that goofy smile will follow him into both. He is a natural couch potato but is versatile in his ability to go from “sploot” to 60 and back again depending on what it is you wanna do.

Though people keep letting him down, Snoopy holds onto his spirit with a big, heart-melting grin. This boy loves with his whole body and the person who welcomes him into their family will have a lifelong best friend!

**Bio Example: Ruby, The Gut-Puncher Story**

In the shelter, Ruby can appear stoic due to her shyness and fear; this may be a reason she’s been overlooked for so long. I hope someone takes a chance on her, because they will be greatly rewarded! My prediction is once someone earns her trust, Ruby will love them so completely that it will surprise them both!

On our overnight, I saw sure signs of her emerging trust in so many ways: the way she looked back at me while walking to make sure I was with her, how, by morning, she was so in tune with me that she needed only for me to quietly say, “this way” when walking to ensure she was turning or stopping right next to me. How, when something frightened her, she would walk closely behind me because she knew I would protect her. Initially, she was afraid to walk down the stairs - she stopped, wide-eyed, and after some coaxing she walked down so close to me that she was touching my heels. By the end of the trip she was going up and down the stairs with confidence.

The hardest part of my overnight with Ruby was seeing the stress return when I brought her back to the shelter. The second she heard the dogs barking in their kennels and realized where she was, I could literally see her steeling herself. Like a boxer trying to pump themselves up, she let out a series of huffs, and she began to scan her surroundings for threats. Putting her back in the kennel broke my heart.
Ruby was the perfect overnight guest. She followed directions immediately, was quiet in the room and had no accidents. She ate well, slept right next to me in the bed, and I’m pretty sure she would have slept in if I hadn’t gotten her up early to take a walk and get breakfast. I took her into the kitchen and though I could tell the smells were tempting her, she didn’t jump up on the counter or pull on the leash. She rode in the car like a dream. Someone is going to think they’ve won the lottery when they adopt her!

**Bio Example: Gus, Telling a Story of Growth**

Gus spent the last few months demonstrating for the shelter’s staff what a complete emotional breakdown looks like in a cat who has lived much of his life outside. By all accounts, he was feral, so shelter life was terrifying for him.

When we took him into foster care, both my husband and I expected him to be a challenge. Looking at him the first night, unhappily crouched behind a laundry basket, my husband asked, “Did you ask for the hardest cat in the shelter or something?” We had no idea that less than 30 minutes later, he’d be in my lap, kneading and purring!

Gus clearly just needed a quiet home with a stable environment that we were able to help provide. Shyer cats often need time and patience to adjust to new sounds and smells, and after he had decided our home was safe, and we were here to help him, we saw Gus become a completely different cat! It may seem a bit intimidating at first to adopt a shy or undersocialized cat, but the moment you earn their trust and they open up and love you, it’s one of the most rewarding things you’ll ever experience! Give Gus a chance, and he’ll remind you how grateful he is to have a warm, safe home every day of his life!
Here are some examples of great photos taken by our HSWM fosters!

Whether it’s glamor shots, snuggle sessions, a full themed photoshoot, or just your foster(s) being cute, these photos, much like a dating profile, are essential for adopters to fall in love with them!