



Humane Educational Society

Foster Team

CAT 1001— Cat Fostering

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Course Description: This is a self-guided course to ensure all cat fosters, both new and seasoned, are familiar with the fostering process and the resources that we provide to support them. The active foster page is a wealth of information and this course serves as a navigation map. There aren't formal tests or essays to hand in, but you can apply these lessons to your foster! The goal is to help the foster caregivers help their foster pets.

The course is broken up into modules, which follow a generalized foster journey from preparation of the foster home to handing the animal off to their forever home. We hope the fosters will refer to this syllabus as needed throughout their foster journey. The primary section will provide you with the bulk of information needed, whereas the supplemental section will include more in-depth additional resources or printable handouts that support the primary section.

The HES Foster Team wants to thank you again for opening your home up to our animals!

Module 1: Preparation for fostering

Module description: This module covers the preparation needed before bringing your foster home. It includes an overview of our policies, poison control info, a body language refresher, and a short free course with best practices for bringing a new cat home.

Primary:

- [Scheduling Appointments Handout](#): This handout explains how to navigate the Active Foster scheduling system and breaks down what kind of appointment is necessary in a given situation.
- [Foster Program FAQ](#): This handout covers many of the common questions we receive about the program.
- [Levels of Urgency Handout](#): This handout covers our Red/Yellow/Green system for foster emergencies and gives instructions for the appropriate contact means.

- [Poison Control](#): This website gives the contact info for poison control and also lists many everyday plants, foods, and household items that are hazardous to animals.
- [Bringing Your Foster Cat Home](#): This short video gives you tips and best practices for helping your foster cat adjust into the home, including how to select and prepare a quiet space for them in your home prior to bringing them in.
- [Feline Communication: How to Speak Cat](#): This is a free course through Maddie's Fund which has many videos to help you understand all the ways your foster may be communicating via body language.
- Petcademy: This is a behavior support service that provides services for HES fosters and adopters. They have trainers ready to help you tackle a lot of common behavioral issues. Text **woof** to 423-888-0461 to get started.

Supplemental:

- [Poison Control Chart](#): A printable version is available on this site.
- [Spectrum of Fear, Anxiety, and Stress](#): This is a printable chart showing the body language associated with varying levels of FAS in cats.
- [Cat Language Chart](#): This is a printable body language chart for cats.
- [How to Cat-Proof Your Home](#): This longer video from Jackson Galaxy gives several tips for catproofing each room of your home.
- [Cleaning and Disinfection in Foster Homes](#): This is another course through Maddie's Fund that goes in-depth into cleaning and disinfecting the foster home. It's highly recommended that you clean and disinfect your foster space in between fosters or before any new animal is brought in.

Module 2: Bringing your foster into the home

Module description: You have your cat and all the supplies in your car, now what? This module covers the things you need to know during your first few days in the home, including how to help them adjust to being in the home, how to start introducing the foster to other members of your family, and how to start some basic training.

Primary:

- [5 Tips for your New Foster Cat](#): This short video from Jackson Galaxy gives you some tips to help slowly integrate your new foster into your home, including more tips for setting up a "base camp" room for them and how to socialize with them when they are shy.
- [Feeding Chart](#): This is the feeding chart that we use at the shelter and goes with the dry kibble that the foster team provides.
- [Litterbox Training](#): Most cats don't need a lot of guidance when it comes to using the litterbox, but this short article gives you an idea of how to properly set up the litter box and gives some troubleshooting tips for common litter box issues.
- [Introducing Cats to Other Cats](#): This short article and video from Best Friends gives you an overview of how to introduce your foster to your personal cats.
- [Cat Enrichment](#): Best Friends has two pages worth of articles with enrichment suggestions for your foster cat, including puzzle ideas, food ideas, and ways to use those leftover Amazon boxes.

- **Only required for homes with dogs* [How to Introduce a Dog to a Cat](#): This document provides three strategies to introduce your foster cat to a dog. This is an extremely slow process, but can be highly rewarding and helps us learn whether the cat could happily live with a dog.

Supplemental:

- [Solving Litter Box Problems](#): This course from Maddie's Fund covers several reasons why a cat might not be using their litter box and helps troubleshoot.

Module 3: Medical

Module Description: While we try to ensure that all cats are healthy before we send them out, or communicate with you if they are recovering from something, adapting to new surroundings can mean that a cat will start showing symptoms of illness such as URI. You may also just be curious about what you see on your foster's medical history. Here are a few resources to help you learn some of the more common parasites and viruses that can come up in shelter settings.

Primary:

- [How to Administer Oral and Topical Medications the Fear Free Way](#): We often send home regular preventatives with our fosters, so here is a guide to giving them their meds!
- [Fecal Scoring Chart](#): There may be times where your foster has just an odd looking stool that can sometimes be a symptom of a medical issue. We use this fecal scoring system to gauge what is and isn't a "good poop."
- [Kitten and Cat URI Scoring Chart](#): Upper respiratory infections are some of the most common ailments our cats face. This helpful chart can help you determine how severe a cat's symptoms are.
- [Feline Leukemia](#): This article explains FeLV and its implications for cats who test positive.
- [Feline Immunodeficiency Virus](#): This article explains FIV and its implications for cats who test positive.
- [Feline Panleukopenia](#): This virus is most common in young kittens or never-vaccinated adults. The FVRCP vaccine protects against it, but it's still helpful to know the symptoms in case your foster catches it.
- [Feline Calicivirus](#): This virus is covered by our intake vaccine protocol, but it is helpful to know the symptoms just in case your foster starts showing symptoms before their second booster.
- [Feline Infectious Peritonitis](#): Also known as FIP, this disease can develop after exposure to certain strains of feline coronavirus. Unfortunately, it's often fatal by the time symptoms start showing and it often seems to "come out of nowhere."
- [Internal Parasites in Cats](#): We have dewormer protocols for all of our animals that starts on intake, but sometimes it can take a couple extra doses to get rid of all parasites. This article includes the most common types of internal parasites and what symptoms to look for (Hint: diarrhea or loose stool is your first clue).
- [Coccidia](#): This is another parasite that commonly causes diarrhea.

- [Ringworm](#): Ringworm is a fungus that can be contagious to people and often presents initially as a circular patch of missing fur.

Supplemental:

- [Levels of Urgency Handout](#): This handout covers our Red/Yellow/Green system for foster emergencies and gives instructions for the appropriate contact means.
- [Poison Control](#): This website gives the contact info for poison control and also lists many everyday plants, foods, and household items that are hazardous to animals.
- [Scheduling Appointments Handout](#): This handout explains how to navigate the Active Foster scheduling system and breaks down what kind of appointment is necessary in a given situation.
- [URI in Kittens and Cats Class](#): This is a comprehensive class on all things URI in cats.

Module 4: Fearful or Timid Cats

Module Description: Fearful or timid cats are often at the top of our “Needs a Foster” list. Taking on a scared cat can seem daunting, but we have several resources available to help you and your foster cat. Sometimes, a little time in foster is exactly what a cat needs to come out of his shell and get more comfortable around people.

It is also important to note that all cats can be fearful or timid while adjusting to new surroundings. Even if you aren’t fostering a specifically fearful or timid cat, it’s crucial to know what behaviors are associated with fear in a cat. The following is a brief overview of body language that can indicate your cat is scared or stressed out. That way, you can start identifying “scary” things and working with your foster to overcome their fears.

Reminder: You may not be able to turn a super scared cat into a perfectly well adjusted “normal” cat, even with the most steadfast, dedicated training. With scared cats, progress is a win. If you get them 10% less afraid of people, that’s a win. If you get them to the point where they don’t shut down completely when someone new is in the home, that’s a win. Being scared does not automatically mean they’re totally unadoptable!

Primary:

- [Cat Body Language 101](#): This short video can help you reinforce your understanding of cat body language, which is helpful for understanding what kind of fearful poses your foster may be exhibiting.
- [Tips for Anxious Cats](#): This article covers some short tips to help understand and socialize your shy cat with strangers.
- [Behavior Modification for Fearful Cats](#): This short handout covers the six steps to help your fearful foster get comfortable around people.
- [Cat Behavior Modification and Counter-Conditioning](#): This article covers some behavioral “training” you can do with your fearful cat to help them become desensitized to the things stressing them out.

Supplemental:

- [Help Your Shy and Scared Cat Gain Confidence](#): This video largely covers the concepts above, but is included because it gives some extra tips on ways to build confidence.
- [Cat Language Chart](#): This is a printable body language chart for cats. This was featured in Module 2.

Module 5: Training for Specific Behaviors

Module Description: Generally, cats are very good and easy housemates once they have adjusted to their environment. But there are sometimes some instinctive behaviors that aren't desirable. This module includes some ways to train your cat to be even better guests and more adoptable!

Primary:

- [How To Get Your Cats to Stop... Everything You Hate](#): In this video, you will learn about the No/Yes method and how to apply it to some common behavioral issues (i.e. jumping on counters, door darting, scratching).
- [How to Help Your Cat's Scratching](#): This downloadable handout from Fear Free gives you an understanding of why cats scratch and how to prevent it.
- [8 Types of Cat Aggression](#): This video can help you identify and understand various types of aggression in cats (i.e. play aggression, redirection, overstimulation, etc) and gives some tips for mitigating it.
- [Teach Your Cat To Go Into A Carrier Without A Struggle](#): This short article gives you some steps to use while training your cat to go into a carrier by building positive associations with it. Depending on how fearful or how food motivated your cat is, this might not be a fast process. However, it'll help make transporting to and from the shelter easier and sets your foster up for a more successful transition into their furever homes.

Supplemental:

- [Behavior Modification for Cats in Shelters and Foster Homes](#): This class recording from Maddie's Fund goes in-depth and explains different types of learning, different examples of training/learning processes, and how to put together a basic successful behavior modification plan.

Module 6: Getting Your Foster Into Their Furever Home

Module Description: Goodbye is the goal, so let's get your foster out! This module will cover ways to market your foster on social media and how to navigate adoption events.

Primary:

- [Pet Personality Form](#): This is the form you fill out after you've had your foster for some time and have a pretty good understanding of their personality. These forms are used to help us match the foster with potential adopters. They also help us write eye-catching bios for our website and social media pages, so make sure you fill it out and include some great glamour shots!

- [Marketing A Foster Pet](#): This course helps you learn how to effectively market your foster pet, including ways to best tell your foster's story.
- [Using Social Media to Help Shelter Pets Shine](#): This course breaks down the best practices for various social media platforms, including Facebook and Tiktok!
- [How to Properly Navigate Adoption Events](#): HES tries to organize several events each month that are open to our fosters. This short video shows you a way to have your foster put their best paw forward at these events and hopefully, find an adopter!
- [Events Page](#): This is the page where the foster team keeps the events schedule. This is also where you sign up to attend an event!
- [Cat Adoption Application](#): This is the application if a friend, a family member, a stranger at an event, or anyone else wants to adopt your foster (yes, this can also be you, but remember.....)
-[Goodbye is the Goal!](#) – This video from the Kitten Lady encapsulates the spirit of our Goodbye Is The Goal philosophy. Saying goodbye to this foster means you'll get to say hello to another one and save another life.

Supplemental:

- [Adoptions Basics Webinar](#): This is a long form webinar that includes an overview of the HES adoption process and the do's and don'ts for pictures and bios.
- [Bonded Cat Form](#): If you've brought home two fosters and suspect they are bonded, fill out this form and email it to foster@heschatt.org so our behavior team can evaluate it.
- [Events Page](#): This is the page where the foster team keeps the events schedule. This is also where you sign up to attend an event! Most of our off-site events aren't geared toward cats, but we always appreciate having help and having folks talk up their fosters at these events.
- [6 Guidelines for Marketing Your Foster Pet](#): This short article shows six ways to get your foster's story out there effectively and drum up some interest in them.
- [The Foster Caregiver Marketing Guide](#): This is a very in-depth guide on marketing your fosters. It has everything: writing bios, making eye catching social media posts, making memes, taking good pictures, "field trip" ideas, and more!

