

Foster Handbook and Guidelines for Cats



Fostering Saves Lives



Animal Services
DEPARTMENT of GUILFORD COUNTY

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CAT LANGUAGE



Basic Cat Body Language Infographic by Lili Chin www.doggiedrawings.net

About Guilford County Animal Services

Welcome to the Guilford County Animal Services Foster Program! Our mission at Guilford County Animal Services (GCAS) is to help our county be a safe, compassionate, and healthy place for people and animals. We work to control the loose animal population, as well as increase the positive outcomes for homeless animals in the county. GCAS is the only open admission shelter in Guilford County. As we expand our life-saving programs, working collaboratively is more crucial than ever, both in the shelter and outside of our front doors.

Guiding Principles

The staff members at GCAS deeply appreciate a Foster Family's service and dedication to help save the lives of animals in Guilford County. Together, our work is guided by the following values and principles:

Lead with Innovation: Develop, promote, and collaborate to create new ideas geared towards better life saving techniques and increasing the quality of life for all animals.

Demonstrate Empathy, Compassion, and Kindness: By understanding and respecting each other, we can collectively identify how we can become a voice for those who cannot speak for themselves.

Provide Success through Support: Ensure that every animal and person is set up for success by providing information, training, and assistance with appropriate dialogue.

Safety through Transparency: Provide open and honest communication to ensure all humans and animals thrive within a safe environment.

Positive and Forward-Thinking: Look towards challenges with an open and positive mind-set, as well as creative solutions.

By working together within these principles, we can impact everything from the animals in the GCAS's facility, to the individuals who take them home.

Foster Program Description

A Foster Home is a temporary living arrangement for animals in our Foster Program through placement with individuals, Foster Parents, in the community of Guilford County. As a Foster Parent with GCAS, you are a volunteer and part of a massive life-saving mission to help prevent animal homelessness and overpopulation. The animals in our Foster Program need a temporary place to recover from medical procedures, relax away from the stress of the shelter, grow large enough to enter our adoption program, wait their turn to be transported to a shelter in another area, or mature as a pet. We see you as a part of our team and with that we have expectations that must be met to ensure a positive fostering process.

Anti-Harassment Policy

GCAS's anti-harassment policy expresses our commitment to maintain a workplace that is free of harassment, so our employees and guests can feel safe and happy. GCAS strives to create and maintain a work environment in which people are treated with dignity, decency and respect.

In accordance with all federal, state, and local laws, GCAS expressly prohibits discrimination or harassment based on race, color, religion, creed, gender, pregnancy, age, national origin, ancestry, physical or mental disability or handicap, citizenship, marital status, sexual orientation, military or veteran's status, or any other protected classification. GCAS expressly forbids and will not tolerate any actions (e.g., words, jokes, comments, or gestures) that unreasonably create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. GCAS will take appropriate and immediate action in response to complaints or knowledge of violations of this policy. For purposes of this policy, harassment is any verbal or physical conduct designed to threaten, intimidate, or

coerce an employee, co-worker, client, volunteer, or any person working for or on behalf of GCAS.

Anyone engaged in sexual or other unlawful harassment will be subject to release from the Foster Program with GCAS. If a Foster Parent or any other individual who is associated with the foster parent ("Foster Parent Affiliate") believes they are the victim of harassment or have witnessed harassment of any kind, immediately notify the GCAS staff contact with the Foster Team.

GCAS will not tolerate any retaliation, harassment, or intimidation of any GCAS employees or volunteer(s) who makes a complaint under this policy or who assists in a complaint investigation. Any retaliation, harassment, or intimidation by a Foster Parent may result in termination of the Foster Parent's Relationship with GCAS.

Investigation of reports of harassment will be conducted, and these investigations will be kept as confidential as is practical. Following the investigation, the Foster Parent who filed the complaint will be informed of the findings and the action taken. If, because of the investigation, GCAS determines that an employee of GCAS, a Foster Parent, an Affiliate, or volunteer has engaged in harassment or illegal discrimination in violation of this policy, GCAS will take appropriate corrective measures. Such action may range from counseling to immediate termination of employment or release from the Foster Parent's relationship with GCAS, or possible legal action.

Working with Guilford County Animal Services

As a Foster Parent of GCAS, we expect that you understand and agree to the following:

- You have not been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment, and will notify GCAS should you be convicted at a later date.
- If you take an animal that is the property of GCAS into your care, GCAS reserves the right to check on the welfare of said animal. This may include a home visit or welfare check of your property. GCAS may also request the animal leave the dwelling at any time and for any reason be returned to the facility.

Procedures

Contacting the Foster Coordinator

Foster Coordinator	Foster/Rescue Admin	Vet Tech	Vet Tech Supervisor
Stephani Crandall 336-937-1867 scrandall@guilfordcountync.gov	Erica Marion 336-471-2054 emarion@guilfordcountync.gov	336-279-4944	Katie Bivona 336-803-2710

Understanding Your Manual

This handbook summarizes many of Guilford County Animal Services' policies and procedures, including the ones that you, as a Foster Parent, must follow. A Foster Parent's failure to comply with the policies and procedures contained in this handbook may result in a termination of the relationship between a Foster Parent and GCAS. All GCAS staff members are responsible for administering the policies described in this handbook. We are happy to provide further information or clarification on this Handbook if needed. Please note that GCAS managers and their designees may modify, rescind, delete, or add to the provisions of this handbook at any time. If any changes are made, GCAS will notify Foster Parent(s) as soon as possible.

Legal Guardianship of Animals

All animals in the foster program are the legal property of GCAS until the adoption paperwork has been

processed.

Confidentiality Policy

Working with GCAS, all Foster Parents are responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of all proprietary or privileged information, including but not limited to history or prior owner information of an animal. Failure on a Foster Parent's part to comply with GCAS Confidentiality Policy, may result in termination of the Foster Parent's Relationship with GCAS.

Conflicts of Interest

As a supporter of and volunteer for GCAS, a Foster Parent should avoid any outside activity that could negatively affect the independence and objectivity of your judgment, interfere with timely and effective performance of your duties and responsibilities, discredit GCAS, or conflict/appear to conflict with GCAS' best interest. The success of GCAS rests on its reputation and the goodwill of the community. Unless expressly authorized, no outside activity should involve the use of GCAS assets, funds, materials, facilities, etc. Violations of this policy may result in release from the Foster Parent's relationship with GCAS. If a Foster Parent is asked to take part in an activity that conflicts with the vision and philosophies of GCAS, or if a potential or actual conflict of interest arises, please reach out to the Foster Coordinator.

Foster Parent Expectations

- Abide by policies and procedures that are outlined in the GCAS Foster Manual.
- Maintain regular access to email and/or your phone and provide updates to contact information when necessary.
- Ability to provide transport to and from GCAS when necessary for an animal in your foster care.
- Provide a clean, safe and caring environment with food, water, enrichment and proper shelter.
- Appropriately socialize with foster pets and treat them like a household pet while they are in your care.
- Monitor and communicate any medical and/or behavioral concerns.
- Follow guidelines and policies for adoption outlined in our "Getting your Foster Adopted Section".
- Have up-to-date rabies and age-appropriate vaccinations and have for all animals in your home.
- If your resident animals are not currently spayed/neutered (unaltered), you will only be able to foster animals who have been spayed/neutered (altered). If your animals alteration status changes in course of fostering, please provide the Foster Coordinator with spay/neuter records from your vet so that we can update your foster profile.

Adoption Prices and Receiving Payment

Found an adopter for your foster animal? Congratulations! A few things need to happen before you can officially hand them off. First, as with any adoption, the adopter will need to fill out an online application with the shelter. Please let the Foster Coordinator or Front Desk know when the adopter has completed the online application. Once the application is approved, if the animal has already been spayed/neutered, the front desk can send the adopter a link to pay the adoption fee via text message. The front desk will also mail the adopter the foster animals rabies certificate, microchip, and adoption information. If the animal has not already been spayed/neutered, the animal will need to be scheduled for surgery and stay in the foster parent's custody until the animal has their surgery and then the adopter can proceed with the adoption as stated above.

If the adopter is wanting to pay cash for their animal, they will need to come into the shelter and give the money to a GCAS employee and finalize the adoption at the shelter. Foster Parents are not allowed to take payment of any kind on behalf of GCAS or solicit money from potential adopters for any reason.

Lost Foster Pet

Sometimes, despite your best efforts, your foster pet may escape from you or your home. If this should happen, please contact the Foster Coordinator immediately with the following information:

- The animal's Animal ID (EX: A012345) and Name (this can be found on your foster pet's paperwork)
- Last known location
- Date and time of escape
- What the situation was when escape occurred (opening the front door, walking the foster pet, etc.)

We suggest that you put up fliers around your neighborhood and place ads on local lost and found websites, Facebook pages (including your personal page and the GCAS page), Pawboost, the Nextdoor app, and Craigslist.

Should the animal be picked up by an Animal Control Officer of GCAS, the Foster Team will be notified and will contact you immediately. The Foster Team can request that an officer be sent out to survey the area if the animal was lost within Guilford County. Always keep the Foster Coordinator informed with any updates.

Stolen Foster

If you believe a foster pet is stolen while in your custody, please contact the Foster Coordinator immediately. We also ask that you call 911 and create a police report to give any information that you might know about the situation. In addition, follow the same steps that are outlined above in the "Lost Foster" section.

GCAS will also consider an animal stolen if we have been unable to contact you, the Foster Parent. The Foster Team will send out communication during the fostering process periodically. If at any point during this, we believe you as the Foster Parent have become unresponsive, we will make every attempt to reach you. If at 30 days in the foster home we have been unsuccessful in making contact, GCAS staff will proceed by releasing the animal as missing or stolen in the GCAS Database. This could prohibit you from being able to foster or potentially adopt from GCAS in the future.

Deceased Foster Animal

It is never easy to lose an animal and it affects each of us differently and personally. As a Foster Parent, it is important not to blame yourself for any loss that may occur. Please understand that sometimes we are operating against unknown illnesses or, especially in the case of neonatal animals, fragile populations. Due to this, we understand that accidents or a decline in health can occur. Remember that everything you do for these animals is in the efforts to create a positive outcome and to save a life. The Foster Team at GCAS is always here to assist you in case an animal in your care passes.

If an Animal Passes in Foster

1. Make sure the animal has passed. In some cases, especially with neonates, a very cold, hypoglycemic kitten/puppy can appear to be deceased but may not be.
 - a. If the animal has not passed, please contact the foster coordinator immediately. If the shelter is closed, or if you cannot get in touch with the Foster Coordinator, please proceed to the emergency clinics authorized for the shelter (Carolina Veterinary Specialists or Happy Tails). See contact information for emergency clinics on last page of handbook or separate handout with the same information.
2. Contact the Foster Coordinator immediately via the contact information in your handbook
3. Wrap the animal in a cloth and place it inside of a zip lock bag or a bag that is size appropriate
4. With a Sharpie, write the animal's name and A# on the outside of the bag. This is very important as all deceased animals must be accurately reported in GCAS records
5. After you have gotten in contact with a GCAS Foster Team member and you have placed the body in an appropriate bag with identification, come to GCAS and a staff member will further assist you

6. If you are not able to immediately bring the animal to GCAS, or it is overnight, the animal may be stored in its appropriately sized bag in a refrigerator until you are able to do so.

Suspected Mistreatment of a Foster Pet

If there is suspected mistreatment of a foster pet, GCAS will take appropriate measures to investigate. If you are found to have mistreated an animal, either as a Foster Parent or before joining the program, you will be immediately suspended or terminated from our Foster Program. The Foster Coordinator will contact you if there are any concerns.

Returns to the Facility

There are multiple reasons why your animal will need to return to GCAS. Whether you are returning your animal to the main shelter for the end of the designated foster period or returning due to your foster pet not being a good fit for your foster home, we ask that you always contact the Foster Coordinator. If the return is not an emergency, we will set up an appointment for you to bring your foster animal back to the shelter. If you are attempting to schedule your animal for a medical appointment, please see our "Medical Appointment Section" for more details.

If you need to return your foster pet due to an emergency that is after-hours and it is urgent, please call Animal Control Dispatch (336-641-5990). If Dispatch is unavailable, you can try calling Metro 911 non-emergency number (336-373-2222). For true emergencies, call 911.

Bites

Please alert the Foster Coordinator if you are ever bitten by a foster animal. It is **extremely important** to document an animal's behavior and ensures that GCAS can continue to make sure all foster families have a safe experience. North Carolina law requires any animal that bites and breaks skin to undergo a 10-day rabies quarantine under the supervision of a veterinarian. *Failure to report any bites will result in immediate termination from the foster program.*

For minor bites, please contact the Foster Coordinator during regular business hours. If the bite happens after hours and is severe and/or requires medical attention, please contact Animal Control Dispatch (336-641-5990). If Dispatch is unavailable, you can try calling Metro 911 non-emergency number (336-373-2222). For true emergencies, call 911.

Preparing Your Family, Pets and Home for a Foster Pet

Pre-Treating Your Dwellings

North Carolina is home to several common viruses carried by wildlife and domestic pets that are found on most ground surfaces in our backyards. The warm climate, minimal freezes, and rainy springtime can allow highly contagious illnesses, such as parvovirus, to have longer gestation times outdoors than other states. Even if your backyard is fully fenced, wildlife can spread viruses through possible contaminants in your yard.

You can pre-treat hard surfaces, such as your patio or deck, with a bleach: water mixture of 1:10 (of 5.25% - 6.15% household bleach) on any surface. With this pre-treatment, you should be able to safely let underage puppies out onto these locations. Puppies under 6 months of age should not go out onto the grass or dirt that you cannot pre-treat until they have had 2 rounds of booster vaccinations. Adult dogs that have been vaccinated are much less susceptible to contract these viruses and, in most cases, can go out into your fully contained yard onto the grass or dirt without the need for pre-treatment. We do always recommend pre-treating your dwellings if you are unsure of the tenant history.

If you have had a personal pet become sick with a virus in the past year, we recommend cleaning places that you can with a bleach: water mixture of 1:10 (of 5.25% - 6.15% household bleach). This will ensure any foster pets you bring home will not catch the same virus.

Prepping for First Day: Items and Expectations

Here is a good list of items for you to have the first time you bring home a new foster pet.

GCAS will provide:

- Food
- Veterinary Care
- Litter Pans
- Formula and Bottles/Syringes
- Crates/Carriers/playpens
- Bowls for food and water
- Beds/Blankets
- Foster Supplies via donation as they are received

You will need to provide:

- Fresh water
- Warming devices
- Cat Scratchers/ enrichment
- Treats (if not on a special diet)

Housing Requirements

When fostering a pet for GCAS, you are expected to provide a secure and caring housing environment. Cats and kittens must always be housed indoors.

Additional Renter Information

Some apartment complexes and home rental managers have restrictions on having pets. Check with your management to see if you have any type of pet deposit that must be paid in order to foster pets. As a Foster Parent, GCAS expects that you have done this research prior to taking an animal into your home. GCAS does not require you to provide renters agreements or leases prior to fostering. By taking an animal into your home, you are acknowledging that you will accept the risk of taking an animal home.

Health and Temperament

GCAS does not guarantee any health or temperament of an animal entering your care. By taking an animal into your home, you are acknowledging that you will accept the risk of taking an animal home with unknown or limited history. All medical and behavioral information will be divulged at the time of pick up. It is the responsibility of the Foster Parent to ensure they are following the proper protocols for keeping their foster pet and family safe. We highly recommend familiarizing yourself and family with the prospective foster pet before taking them into your home.

Decompression Period

Remember that this is more than likely a confusing time for your new foster pet. They have just left the busy environment of the shelter and are bound to be feeling a little overwhelmed. It can take days to several months for an animal to become comfortable in your home and with your routine. Be patient and allow for them to have some time to decompress.

You should plan to create a quiet space for your foster pet with a [crate setup](#) that is “den like” or give them a room like an unoccupied bathroom. If the foster pet you bring home appears stressed out or shut down, allow them to have a space that is entirely theirs. Allow your foster pet to relax before immediately subjecting them to social situations.

For cats, starting with a small space can make them feel much more comfortable about their new dwellings. Often, they will want a place to hide and make sure the environment is safe to move in. Allow them to have a space that belongs to them without intrusion from other pets. As they begin to get more comfortable, you can allow them to have more free roaming time.

Please also note that all animals are individuals; they all have different adjustment and decompression periods.

Foster Pet Isolation

A 7-10 day minimum period of isolation is recommended for the safety and protection of your personal animals. We can give no guarantees about the health and behavior of an animal coming from our facility into your home. Animals receive a medical evaluation upon intake when arriving at GCAS, but it is always a good idea to be on the safe side when it comes to your personal animals. Please note that some diseases will not always appear within the first 24-48 hours of arrival to the shelter or your home and can incubate in the body for longer than that time frame.

Getting Started as a Foster Parent

Commitments as a Foster Parent range from just a couple of days to several months, so you can choose an option that fits your lifestyle. It is through this vital and supportive role for GCAS that we can provide more lifesaving opportunities to and create a safety net for the animals that have come into the shelter facility. Our staff will do their best to match you with your perfect fit based on experience level.

Opportunities for a Foster Parent

Our large-scale foster program is all encompassing and provides a variety of different avenues. We encourage all Foster Parents through GCAS to help us on our lifesaving mission.

Opportunities currently are:

Behavioral Fosters

The Foster Team and Foster Parent will stay in touch to determine how long the foster animal will stay in the home for. We are looking to see if behaviors in the new home environment are improving, staying the same, or declining. This will help us get more information on how the animal will adjust to a home life when adopted.

Medical Fosters

The time stayed in the home will depend on the medical issue at hand. Upper Respiratory infections (or URI's) will generally be a shorter stay and will be reevaluated after the medications are complete. Animals that have had surgeries may need to stay in the home for longer periods of time depending on the recommendations from the Medical Team.

Underage/Neonatal Animals

Neonates and babies need to stay in the home until they are at least 8 weeks of age and 2 pounds. This amount of time will depend on how old the kittens or puppies are when you receive them, but the time should not exceed two months. Mothers with babies are included in this type of foster.

In the Home with a Foster

Feeding Guidelines

GCAS will provide food for your foster animal. This will be Hill's Science Diet or Hill's Prescription Diet depending on the animal's dietary needs. The animal(s) should be kept on this diet unless they are not eating. If this should happen, contact the Foster Coordinator to see what else should be done before switching to a different brand of food. You should never give your foster pet food intended for people, nor should you feed them scraps off your plate. Certain types of human food can be toxic to animals and cause symptoms from allergic reactions, lethargy, organ failure, and even death.

Keep the number of treats to a minimum; treats should only be about 1% of their daily diet. Make sure treats are labeled safe for appropriate age for your foster pet. Never leave your pets and foster pets with unattended treats. Never give treats to a foster animal on a specified diet unless approved by the Foster Coordinator or medical team.

Can My Foster Eat This?



Marketing Your Foster

Foster Parents are strongly encouraged to let others know that their foster pet is available for adoption using resources such as friends, family, work colleagues and social media networks like Facebook, Instagram, and Nextdoor. GCAS can help market your pet for fostering and transports when you send updated photos and videos of your pet. A good photo is bright, clear, and happy. Getting photos that are well-lit, in focus, and that give the viewer a window into a pet's personality can be tricky, but we have some ideas that can make this much easier for you.

Always Have Your Camera Handy

Without a camera handy, you may not be able to capture those intimate moments that will help your pet make an emotional connection, like when your foster cat is finally comfortable enough to be petted.

Take Photos with People and/or Other Animals

Photographs taken with people and/or other animals are great because they not only feature the pet, they give information as well. A photo of a cat and a small child implies that the cat is safe with children. Keep this in mind when creating marketing material for your foster pet. Please note, that any photo you share on social media, can be used to market the animal on various online platforms. If you are taking photos of others with your foster pet, please ask them first and make sure they are ok with their picture being used to market said animal. We can always blur out faces, but please, get permission before sharing photos of others.

Take Multiple Photos

Whether you're an ace photographer or not, taking multiple photos increases the chances of coming up with something good!

Make Sure the Pet Is Looking into the Camera

The eyes are the window to the soul, so it follows that eye contact is helpful in establishing an emotional connection, even if it's just from a photograph.

Use Photos to Showcase Personality

We want potential adopters to get a feel for our foster pets' personalities, so use photos in a way that does just that. Take photos that capture an aspect of a pet's personality. When viewed together, one gets a more accurate picture of who they are.

Videos

Great videos can give the best idea of who your foster is. Videos have the power to make a connection before an official meet-and-greet happens. Make sure to hold the camera horizontally unless taking a video with Facebook Live. You also want to make sure to keep the videos 30 seconds or less. Attention spans are short, so make sure your video is fast-paced and clearly expressed.

Getting Your Foster Adopted

Responding to Adopters and Scheduling Meet and Greets

Fosters are instrumental in finding the animal the right home – and it can be a tough job! Letting go of an animal that is basically a member of our family can be an intense experience sometimes. As the foster, you are not obligated to adopt out your foster pet to the first person who wants them. You are always allowed to “screen” your potential adopters by asking appropriate questions to ensure your adopting household understands and is comfortable in adopting your foster pet. After all, who knows the animal better than you? Do not let anyone rush you or intimidate you. If it doesn't feel right, move on to the next potential adopter.

With your main priority as a foster being to find an adoptive home, we set expectations that you will need to answer any incoming inquiries within 72 hours. Until the Foster Team has received adoption paperwork for your foster animal, it will remain active on the website, and you will continue to receive inquiries that will need to be responded to. Failure to respond to Meet and Greet requests could affect your ability to foster with GCAS.

Meet and Greets and Discussing Your Foster with Adopters

Inquiries for your foster animal will be sent to you through via text message, phone call, or email, so it is important to ensure that it is up to date. When you receive an inquiry through us and decide to move forward, it's best to do this where the pet is most comfortable. It's best that the first meeting starts off with only the humans of the household before adding any other animals, especially if there are children involved.

During the meeting, we strongly encourage you to listen to the way people discuss their animals, and not focus on any factors such as wealth or status. Have an open and honest discussion about what the adopter is looking for and how well it matches your foster pet. Do trust your instincts; if you don't feel good about the adopter then that's okay. It also just might not be the right fit.

Here are some standard questions that you might ask with a potential adopter:

- Have you had any pets? If so, how are they doing?
- Is this pet for you or someone else? Does that person know a pet is entering their life? **We do not restrict adoptions of pets as gifts, but we do encourage the potential adopter to understand the species, size, and activity level.*
- What drew you to this pet?
- Do you have other pets at home?
- Do you know if this type of pet is allowed in your residence? Are there breed or size restrictions where you live? **We do not restrict renters or ask for copies of leases, but the potential adopter should always check on their pet policy just to be sure they would not have to unexpectedly return.*
- What is your lifestyle like – Active/Couch potato/Active on Weekends/etc.? How do you see that changing with this animal?

Handing the Animal to the Adopter

Until the animal has been fully processed in the GCAS system, meaning the adopter has signed all paperwork and the animal has been spayed or neutered, the animal is still the property of GCAS. This means that the animal cannot go to the adopter's household. Once paperwork has been processed, a Foster Parent can either bring the animal to GCAS or meet the adopter at another location to transfer ownership. Remember, if you do not get the approval from the GCAS Foster Team, the animal is not eligible to leave the foster home.

Important Medical Information

GCAS can make no guarantees about the health of an animal entering your home. During pick up, the Foster Team will review your foster pet's medical notes and do a quick visual observation for any obvious signs of illness or injury. You will also be given a copy of the most current medical file for the foster pet, as well as any medication that they might be on. Please speak to a Foster Team member directly with any questions regarding your foster pet's medical history.

Please contact the Foster Coordinator first. If you are unable to contact the foster coordinator, please contact the Vet Tech phone or Vet Tech Supervisor. If an emergency arises outside of our normal business hours, please contact Happy Tails Emergency Veterinary Clinic or Carolina Veterinary Specialists. If it's nonurgent please contact the appropriate number at 8 AM the following day. If an emergency should arise during our regular business hours from 8 am to 5 pm, please call the Foster Coordinator or Vet Tech phone to schedule an appointment as soon as possible.

Happy Tails Emergency Veterinary Clinic

336-288-2688
4525 Lawndale Drive
Greensboro, NC 27408

Carolina Veterinary Specialists

336-632-0605
501 Nicholas Road
Greensboro, NC 27409

If you need to go Happy Tails or Carolina Veterinary Specialists, please bring your foster paperwork with you and tell the staff you are a foster parent for GCAS. GCAS will cover all medical expenses if an emergency occurs. Once an animal is taken to the clinics, GCAS will resume care of the foster animal and contact you at a later time to discuss if the animal needs to return to foster care.

Scheduling an Appointment with the Medical Staff

If your foster pet is showing signs of illness or injury, they will need to come to the shelter for a medical appointment. This includes booster vaccines! See "Mandatory Vaccinations and Preventatives" for more information on booster vaccines for your foster.

A medical appointment needs to be collaborated with the Medical Team, and therefore it is incredibly important that this is appropriately scheduled. This can be done by calling the Foster Coordinator or the Vet Tech phone.

Due to the busy schedule of our Medical Team, we ask that you plan to arrive 10 minutes before the scheduled appointment. If you are late for your appointment, you may be asked to reschedule. Please note that an emergency in the shelter can always occur. In this case, we will either ask that your foster animal stays with us until a member of our Medical Team can examine the animal or ask that we reschedule the appointment time.

Medical Emergency and Contact Information

An emergency can be described as:

- Trauma –sustaining a severe injury or suspected poisoning or burn
- Difficulty breathing –struggling for breath, gasping, or shallow breathing
- Seizures
- Deep cuts and gashes that will not stop bleeding with pressure
- Extreme lethargy and the animal is not able to waken or move
- Extreme instability or falling over
- Liquid diarrhea with blood and vomiting
- Rectal temperature 104.5 or above.
- Pale and tacky gums paired with slow capillary response time (CRT)

Sick or Injured Foster Pets

The symptoms listed below are not always indicative of an issue, but you should alert the foster team if you notice any of the following:

Ears

- Dark, flaky debris, especially in cats
- Dark, waxy discharge accompanied by yeasty smell
- Painful when rubbed or cleaned
- Consistent scratching at ear

Nose

- Yellow, green or heavy oozing discharge
- Excessive sneezing with discharge

Eyes

- Yellow or green discharge
- Uneven pupils
- Swollen or bloodshot eyes, including 3rd eyelid

Stomach (Internal)

- Loss of appetite past two meals
- Multiple Vomiting episodes – either heavy gagging with bile or phlegm

Mouth

- Trouble eating or chewing
- Ulcers or lacerations on gums or lips

Fecal/Urination Issues

- No bowel movement for more than 48 hours
- No urination for more than 24 hours, especially in male cats

Gait

- Sudden lameness that does not improve with rest within a day
- Animal exhibits pain or stiffness upon walking or handling

None of these symptoms should be considered an emergency. However, if you have concerns, please contact the Foster Coordinator.

Mandatory Vaccinations and Preventatives

All cats will receive:

- Rabies Vaccine – will receive if the animal is over three months
- Dewormer
- Age appropriate flea/tick prevention
- FIV/FelV Test - Must be over 6 months of age
- HCP-1 Vaccine - given every three weeks until the pet is over four months old OR two vaccines have occurred

The Foster Coordinator will alert you when your foster pet will need to come in for vaccinations. All medical treatment will be provided through GCAS or through Happy Tails Emergency Veterinary Clinic or Carolina Veterinary Specialists in the case of an after-hours emergency. GCAS does NOT allow Foster Animals to be taken to private clinics unless otherwise stated by the medical team.

Scheduling Spay and Neuter Surgery

All animals under two months of age will have their spay/neuter surgeries scheduled when they reach 2lbs AND reach 2 months of age. If you have small kittens or puppies, please always be sure to weigh the animal the night before surgery and contact the Foster Coordinator if the animal weighs less than 2lbs. The Foster Team can always reschedule an animal if it has not reached the proper weight for surgery.

If you need to reschedule a surgery day for any reason, please contact the Foster Coordinator immediately before the scheduled day. All animals that are adopted through GCAS MUST be spayed or neutered.

Please let the Foster Coordinator know if you will be coming back for your foster after surgery or if we will need to find kennel space for them at the shelter.

Surgery Complications

Complications can sometimes arise with your foster spay/neuter surgery. If you notice an issue with your foster pet after surgery, contact the foster coordinator to schedule an appointment for a medical evaluation.

Common Medical Terms and Conditions

Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)

The term “upper respiratory infection” is used to refer to any illness that affects an animal's upper respiratory system; it is basically a cold. URI's are common in shelter animals that can cause symptoms such as sneezing, runny nose and/or eyes, fever and loss of appetite. The symptoms of this virus are typically treated with antibiotics. Be certain to keep animals warm until they have recovered from a URI. URI's are contagious to other animals of the same species through direct contact and can also be airborne.

Fleas

Fleas are bloodsucking parasites that are easily treated with a monthly preventative. On a mature animal, fleas are not particularly serious, but young animals do not have that much blood and they are virtually defenseless if they get fleas.

- Flea prevention that is for dogs can cause severe injury and/or death if used on cats. Only use flea/tick prevention that is given by GCAS.
- Over-the-counter flea treatments are not used because they are not effective and are much more toxic than what our veterinarians use
- Flea treatments that are meant for adult cats can kill a kitten, so if you find fleas or flea dirt on kittens of any age, we'll need to get them off! Since most flea treatments are too strong, we give warm Dawn baths. Do not use any flea shampoos or soaps other than Dawn dish soap to get rid of fleas as these products could be potentially harmful to kittens.

Roundworms, Tapeworms, and Hookworms

Intestinal parasites affect the digestive system and are common. You can sometimes see these “worms” in or around an animal's rectum; you may see a long worm or what looks like rice protruding from its anus. Indications of worms are a large belly, diarrhea, and an inability to gain weight even when eating well. If you see signs of worms, alert the Foster Coordinator. There are various medications given to the animal, depending on the type of worm, that easily take care of the problem. Worms can sometimes be passed through the feces to other animals.

FeLV and FIV

Feline leukemia virus (FeLV) suppresses the immune system and can cause cancer or other serious illnesses in susceptible cats. FeLV is fatal and the life expectancy of a mature, infected cat is 2–4 years; most FeLV+ kittens do not survive to maturity. FeLV is transmitted through saliva and nasal secretions, as well as through urine, feces, and milk from infected cats. The virus can also be transferred through a bite wound, mutual grooming, shared use of litter boxes and feeding dishes, sexual contact, and from a mother cat to her kittens while in utero or during birth. FeLV does not survive long outside of the cat's body, probably less than a few hours, so carefully adhering to established protocols should limit the possibility of transmission.

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) is a virus that can cause a multitude of health problems in cats due to reduced immune system function; it is also known as feline AIDS. FIV is contagious, but only to other cats—people cannot get AIDS from their cats. Most cats with FIV live a normal life despite the virus and can live well with other cats if there is no aggressive fighting. Cats living indoors in a stable social structure have little chance of passing the disease to other household cats. Transmission occurs most commonly through deep bite wounds; less commonly, it is transmitted by an infected mother cat during birth or through sexual contact. FeLV and FIV+ kittens and cats are adoptable.

Panleukopenia

Panleukopenia, also known as “panleuk,” is a viral infection that most commonly affects kittens and young

cats. It is transmitted through direct contact with saliva, vomit and feces. An infected mother cat can also transmit panleuk to her kittens at birth. Left untreated, it is almost always fatal. This illness can be frustrating and difficult to deal with because the virus is very durable, can survive in the environment for up to a year, and is highly transmissible. This means that other unvaccinated cats can become infected with panleukopenia simply by coming into contact with places where an infected cat has been. Testing for panleukopenia is not routinely done during intake since the test will not show positive until the virus is shedding. The test also does not have a high accuracy rate, and if the mother cat has been vaccinated, then the kittens will test positive. Vaccinated cats and kittens will sometimes have a false positive from the parvo test. Symptoms of panleuk include vomiting, diarrhea, loss of appetite and lethargy. Symptoms can take 3–10 days to present once a kitten has been infected.

Ringworm

Contrary to its name, Ringworm is not a worm at all but a fungus – a lot like “Athlete's Foot.” In fact, most ringworm is the exact same fungus as “Athlete's Foot.” When this fungus grows anywhere other than the bottom of the foot, it is called ringworm. The fungi live on the surface of the skin and in the hair follicles. Ringworm is HIGHLY contagious, so please be diligent and cautious if you suspect your foster cat or kitten may have ring worm and contact the Foster Coordinator right away to get them tested.

Appearance

The usual symptom is a round hairless lesion. However, the characteristic “ring” that we see on humans doesn't always appear as a ring on animals. This lesion will grow and often become irregular in shape. Ringworm is commonly found on the face, ears, tail and paws. The lesions are scaly, and the skin may be reddened. The spots may or may not be itchy.

Transmission

Transmission can happen by direct contact with another infected animal or person. It can be passed from cats to dogs and vice versa and from pets to humans and from humans to pets. A ringworm infection in a person typically occurs after a person has pet an infected or carrier cat, but it can also occur after simply handling items that were used by an infected cat.

Can Humans Catch Ringworm from Animals?

Yes, humans can contract ringworm by handling an animal with the condition or sharing a living area with them. Immunocompromised individuals, such as the elderly and very young, are more prone to contracting ringworm.

Ringworm Diagnosis and Treatment

If you see ANY hair loss on your foster animal, please immediately inform the Foster Coordinator. Depending on the photos, they might instruct you to bring your foster pet in for a vet examination. If your pet is found to have ringworm, you will have the option to continue treatment in your home or leave your foster pets at the shelter. The Foster Coordinator will give you more information on treatment options for your foster should you decide to continue.

Coccidia and Giardia

Coccidia and Giardia are common protozoa that invade the digestive system and cause diarrhea. These are highly transmissible and can be spread through feces to humans and other animals. These parasites are easily treated with oral medications. Parasites can cause digestive problems as well as diarrhea. Diarrhea can be dangerous for a young animal and should be treated as soon as it shows up.

Deciphering Your Foster Pet's Fecal Matter

It might not be the most pleasant, but we can often find out an ailment from the consistency of your foster's bowel movements. There are several typical causes of diarrhea in our shelter animals. The most common reason why an animal might have diarrhea is due to a change in diet, such as changing brands, or adding an extra stinky treat. Changes in diet are sometimes necessary to ensure a consistency to an appropriate food. If you find your foster has a sensitive tummy, or is prone to gas/diarrhea, you can always add a small amount of plain canned pumpkin to their food. The best way to alleviate diarrhea is to keep your foster on a consistent diet. Some mild diarrhea will usually clear up on its own, however, if you find that your fosters are consistently having diarrhea a few days past a food change, there could be another issue going on. Please contact the Foster Coordinator if the diarrhea remains after a few days.

Additional reasons we see diarrhea might be:

- Stress/excitement
- Coccidia or other parasites
- Viral (corona, panleukopenia, etc.)
- Failure to keep an animal and/or living space free from filth.

The Importance of Cleanliness

Keeping the animal's body and living space clean is crucial to having a healthy and successful experience.

- Make sure the animal's face, mouth and genital areas are always clean from food and/or organic matter.
- If you are fostering an animal that uses a litter box, the litter must be emptied daily and replaced with fresh non-clumping litter. Clean the litter pan once a week.
- Remove ALL organic matter before cleaning/disinfecting any area.
- Consider yourself 100% contaminated if you came into contact with a contagious disease.
- Unvaccinated or partially vaccinated animals should not be allowed to interact unless purposely housed together.

The faster we can identify the causes and type of poop in an animal, the quicker we can get a treatment plan in order. Just when we think an animal might have a parasite infestation, we could be looking in the wrong direction! It is crucial to keep in mind that there are various reasons for diarrhea, and it is important to be able to understand why. If you are seeing diarrhea consistently after the first 48 hours from taking the animal home, please contact the Foster Coordinator so the animal can be treated accordingly.

Common Behavioral Tips for Cats

Using/Not Using the Litter Box

Most cats will instinctively gravitate towards using a litter box from an early age, however, inappropriate elimination outside of the litter box can occur for many reasons creating stress between you and your foster cat. Here are some important basics to know about the litter box, and tips for addressing inappropriate elimination.

1. Placement makes Perfect! When you are placing the litter box, it should be in a location that can give your cat a bit of privacy. Avoid placing it next to your cat's food or water dish, and/or loud or suddenly startling noises (such as the washing machine or dishwasher). If you have a young kitten, we recommend starting them off in a small room with their box until you see them consistently using it.
2. One box per cat, plus one: Have you ever had to share your bathroom with a less than ideal roommate? Your foster cat may enjoy the company of their fellow friends, but sharing their box is a different matter. To keep the peace, we recommend having one litter box per cat, plus one more. This means that in a house with two cats, we recommend at least 3 litter boxes in various locations of the house.
3. Keep the box clean: No one likes a filthy toilet, and your cat will agree. Solid waste and clump should be scooped daily, and a complete wash of the box should happen at least once a month.

4. The Cat chooses the Litter: We suggest using a litter that is plain and unscented, but the choice is ultimately up to your cat. If you have a cat that is used to a certain type of litter, we recommend sticking with it.

Cats prefer a routine and stability and changing the type of litter can cause stress and inappropriate elimination. If you are struggling with litter box issues, there could be several factors at play. We recommend doing the following:

1. Rule out illness: The first step to take if you notice your cat is not using their litter box is to discuss this with a veterinarian to rule out medical issues as the underlying cause. Contact the Foster Coordinator to schedule a medical appointment.
2. Clean up all messes: Any area that has been soiled should be cleaned properly with an enzyme-based cleaner. Cleaners that have this will break down the urine/stool traces in areas that you might not be able to see, but the cats can smell.
3. Prevention & Redirection: If you are still in the process of housetraining, or if you have already followed the above steps, make sure you limit the access of the house. This could mean a large crate or a small easily cleanable room (such as a bathroom or laundry room) to help retrain the cat to use the litter box.

Managing Inappropriate Scratching

Cats like to scratch. They scratch during play. They scratch while stretching. They scratch to mark territory or as a threatening signal to other cats. And because cats' claws need regular sharpening, cats scratch on things to remove frayed, worn outer claws and expose new, sharper claws. All this scratching can cause a lot of damage to furniture, drapes and carpeting!

What to Do About Your Foster Cat's Scratching Habits

The best tactic when dealing with scratching is not to try to stop your foster cat from scratching, but instead to teach where and what to scratch. An excellent approach is to provide appropriate, cat-attractive surfaces and objects to scratch, such as scratching posts. The following steps will help you encourage your cat to scratch where you want them to:

- Provide a variety of scratching posts with different qualities and surfaces. Try giving your cat posts made of cardboard, carpeting, wood, sisal and upholstery. Once you figure out your foster cat's preference for scratching, provide additional posts of that kind in various locations. Keep in mind that all cats want a sturdy post that won't shift or collapse when used.
- Encourage your foster cat to investigate posts by scenting them with catnip, hanging toys on them and placing them in areas where they'll be inclined to climb on them.
- Discourage inappropriate scratching by removing or covering other desirable objects.
- Put plastic, double-sided sticky tape, sandpaper or upside-down vinyl carpet runner (knobby parts up) on furniture or on the floor where your cat would stand to scratch your furniture. Place scratching posts next to these objects, as "legal" alternatives.
- Clip your foster cat's nails regularly.
- If you catch your foster cat in the act of scratching an inappropriate object, you can try startling by clapping your hands or squirting with water. Use this procedure only as a last resort, because your cat may associate you with the startling event (clapping or squirting) and learn to fear you.

What NOT to Do

- Do not hold your foster cat by the scratching post and force them to drag claws on it. This practice could seriously frighten your cat and teach them to avoid the scratching post completely.
- Do not throw away a favorite scratching post when it becomes unsightly. Cats prefer shredded and torn objects because they can really get their claws into the material. Used posts will also appeal to your foster cat because they smell and look familiar.

Is Declawing an Option?

Despite the term "declaw," it is important to understand that this surgery involves more than claw removal. The last bone of the digit must be amputated to make sure the claw does not grow back. Some people decide to declaw their cats to prevent or resolve a scratching problem. We are strongly opposed to declawing cats and will not provide any cats with a declawing surgery unless medically necessary. Declawing has not been proven an effective method for improving behavioral issues, including aggression towards people or other cats. It can also cause arthritis. It should never be used as a behavioral remedy or as a preventative measure. The only circumstances in which the procedure should be considered are those in which all behavioral and environmental alternatives have been fully explored, have proven to be ineffective, and the cat is at grave risk of euthanasia.

Important Contacts

Guilford County Animal Resource Center
336-641-3400
980 Guilford College Road
Greensboro, NC 27409
AS_CustomerService@guilfordcountync.gov (email is best)

Stephani Crandall Foster Coordinator
336-937-1867 (texting is the best way to reach
scrandall@guilfordcountync.gov

Erica Marion, Foster/Rescue Administrator
336-471-2054 (texting is the best way to reach)
emarion@guilfordcountync.gov

Vet Tech:
336-279-4944

Katie Bivona, Vet Tech Supervisor
336-803-2710

After-Hour Emergency Contacts:

Happy Tails Emergency Veterinary Clinic
336-288-2688
4525 Lawndale Drive
Greensboro, NC 27408

Carolina Veterinary Specialists
336-632-0605
501 Nicholas Road
Greensboro, NC 27409

For Animal Control emergencies, questions or comments, call (336) 641-5990.

If you need to return your foster pet due to an emergency that is after-hours, you may first attempt to contact the foster coordinator. If you are unable to reach the foster coordinator and the situation is urgent, please contact Animal Control Dispatch (336-641-5990). If Dispatch is unavailable, you can try calling Metro 911 non-emergency number (336-373-2222). For true emergencies, call 911.

Important Links

Foster Luv QR Code:



Cat Foster Facebook Chat:

