



# Cat Foster Manual

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[Revised December 2023]



## Welcome to Our Foster Community!

Thank you for joining us in our lifesaving mission by becoming a foster caregiver. The number of animals we can save depends entirely on the number of people who open their homes and hearts to foster them.

Being a pet foster family has rewards beyond the essential value of helping a pet in need find a new home. For some, it is a chance to have an animal companion without a lifetime commitment, or to try new companions for an existing pet. For others, it is the special challenge of helping an animal recover from an illness or injury, the trauma of losing a beloved owner or home, or to decompress.

No matter why you choose to foster, know that your care and commitment will forever change the lives of those you have chosen to take into your heart and your home.

This manual is reviewed regularly to adhere to best practices.

**Foster Resource Page:** [www.sanantoniopetsalive.org/foster-resources](http://www.sanantoniopetsalive.org/foster-resources)

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**NOTE:** *The purpose of this handbook is to provide a program description, policies, and guidelines for procedures to use while fostering animals for San Antonio Pets Alive! While many of the procedures are proven best practices, the foster team has extensive experience in working with fostered animals and is available at any time to answer questions. The foster team may also suggest procedures different from or not included in this handbook. The foster team acts under the auspices of the rescue, and in partnership with the facility managers. The foster program team is authorized to make decisions regarding all foster participation and practice.*



## Our Mission

Our mission is to provide the programs and services needed to eliminate the killing of at-risk animals due to lack of space, adopter or foster.

## Our Core Values

San Antonio Pets Alive! staff and volunteers are held to high standards to ensure the health, safety and success of the animals we care for. **The following are core values that all staff, fosters and volunteers are expected to uphold when working with SAPA! animals, adopters and members of the public:**

- **Stewardship.** We are caretakers of the dogs and cats we save. Our stewardship also extends to the gifts we receive, our reputation and the goodwill of our community.
- **Integrity.** We believe integrity drives us to be honest and responsible in our actions and communications with our team and the general public.
- **Excellence.** We strive for excellence and efficiency in every program we implement, ensuring the best care for the dogs and cats we save and the families who love and adopt them.
- **Respect.** We treat all animals and people with dignity and kindness.
- **Lifesaving.** We believe that life is precious. We work tirelessly with compassion, care and love to save the lives of dogs and cats and to do what is best for the animals, adopters and fosters.

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## Why Foster?

Foster care provides temporary homes for animals that need a break from life in the kennels. Moving these animals into foster homes not only makes their lives better, but also saves the lives of those who take their place. Fostering a shelter animal is a rewarding experience but requires hard work and dedication.

## What It Takes

The ideal foster care provider will have a basic knowledge of animal care and training, as well as a desire to find their foster animal a safe and caring permanent home. As a foster parent you will provide your animals with care including food, water, shelter, litter, training, grooming and trips to the SAPA! Medical Clinic to obtain medical treatment when necessary. SAPA! will supplement these supplies when possible.

## What You Get

SAPA! will provide basic vet care, as well as adoption counseling and support as needed. Donations of food, treats, toys, and litter are often available for free to foster parents (Availability of supplies fluctuates

with the donations we receive and is not guaranteed).

All foster parents are expected to bring their animals to adoption events hosted by SAPA! Any PetSmart adoption events require that only altered animals attend. If an unaltered animal is brought to a PetSmart event they will be asked to leave as this is a PetSmart store requirement.

## How Long?

Length of foster care varies based on each animal. Some foster animals may only need a couple weeks of care, while others might need months. The length of time can depend on the animal's age, medical issues, or adoptability (The average length of stay for a foster animal is 15-90 days). Foster animals stay in their foster homes until they are adopted out, so marketing your foster animal is an important factor in length of stay!



## SAPA! Facility Contact Information

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### Rescue Center

**Contact:**

placement@sanantoniopetsalive.org

**Address:** 4710 Highway 151 San Antonio, TX 78227

**Hours:** Monday–Friday: 11am–7pm  
Saturday–Sunday: 11am–5pm

### Petco Adoption Center

**Contact:**

petco.ingram@sanantoniopetsalive.org

**Address:** 6001 NW Loop 410 Suite 103, San Antonio, TX 78238

**Hours:** Monday–Friday: 11am–7pm  
Saturday–Sunday: 11am–7pm

### SAPA! Medical Clinic

**Contact:** appointment

@sanantoniopetsalive.org

**Address:** 9107 Marbach Rd. Suite #109, San Antonio, TX 78245

**Hours:** Monday–Friday: 12pm–6pm  
Saturday–Sunday: 12pm–4pm



## SAPA! Foster Support Contacts

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The fostermedical@ email is volunteer based, so please allow up to 24 hours for a response. In case of a critical injury, contact the medical team at [appointment@sanantoniopetsalive.org](mailto:appointment@sanantoniopetsalive.org) or call 210-338-8225.

### Foster Questions and Concerns:

foster@sanantoniopetsalive.org



**Foster Minor Medical Concerns:**

fostermedical@sanantoniopetsalive.org

**Foster Medical Appointments:**

appointment@sanantoniopetsalive.org

**Spay/Neuter Schedule:**

*Your foster MUST be altered if they are over 2 months of age and healthy.*

schedulemedical@sanantoniopetsalive.org

**Adoption Coordination:**

adopt@sanantoniopetsalive.org

**Foster Marketing:**

*Start marketing your foster for adoption within 72 hours.*

fostermarketing@sanantoniopetsalive.org

**Foster Events Information:**

adopt@sanantoniopetsalive.org

**Foster Placement:**

*For transferring from one foster to another.*

foster@sanantoniopetsalive.org

**Paperwork:**

*Lost your foster's paperwork?*

adopt@sanantoniopetsalive.org

**NOTE:** *We are happy to provide whatever support you need while fostering but ask that you weigh the extent of any emergency situation you encounter against the need to call staff or coordinators at home. If it is truly an emergency, feel free to reach out. Otherwise, consider waiting until the next business day, or asking your question via email. Thank you!*

## Emergency Protocol

On occasion, foster animals have medical emergencies that occur outside of normal business hours. In the case of such an emergency, contact the medical team at:

210-338-8225

To expedite your request, please have the animal's ACS id#(A123456) or

SAPA#12345 readily available. An email should also be sent to: **appointment@sanantoniopetsalive.org**

SAPA! has agreements with low-cost emergency veterinary care across the city. With prior approval from the Medical Director, you may be able to utilize one of these medical facilities in an emergency. **Please note that if you decide to take the foster animal directly to an emergency veterinary facility without prior approval from SAPA!,**

**we will not be responsible for any of the costs incurred.**

If your foster animal should pass away for any reason, please contact the foster team immediately with the animal's A# (A123456), Name, Date and Cause of Death. Deceased animals can be dropped off during normal hours at the SAPA! clinic or fosters, with the foster team's permission, can choose to privately cremate their foster, however, this is not a cost SAPA! will reimburse or cover.

## Lost Foster

Occasionally, despite your best efforts, your foster animal may escape from your home. If this should occur, please contact the foster team immediately with the following information:

- o The Animal's A# (A12345)
- o Last known location
- o Date of escape
- o What happened

We suggest that you put up fliers around your neighborhood and place

ads on Petco Love Lost, PawBoost, Facebook pages, Nextdoor, and Craigslist. Should the animal be picked up by Animal Care Services, San Antonio Pets Alive! will be notified and we will contact you immediately.





# IMPORTANT: Cat Bite/Scratch Protocol

Bites or Scratches that break skin are required to be reported by the State of Texas. There is a mandatory 10-day quarantine required when a bite or scratch breaks skin (regardless of rabies vaccine status).

The following procedures should be followed if your foster cat bite/scratch breaks skin on you, a member of your household or anyone else.

- 1) The cat should be immediately moved to a safe environment: a crate or other option that both prevents further injury to the person and provides a calm environment for the cat.
- 2) The incident should be reported **immediately** to the foster team with pictures included in the email.
  - o **SAPA! requires an internal incident report** to be completed by the foster which will be sent to you via email by the foster team.
- 3) The Foster Manager and SAPA! Director will report to the county the incident and determine if the cat should stay in the foster home and/or what behavior modification training is needed.

**PLEASE NOTE:** *Some cases with cat scratches and bites are accidents and related to play. A bite case does NOT mean that the pet will be euthanized or have any negative repercussions. In some counties, animal control will allow animals to be quarantined at home, otherwise at our Medical Clinic for the 10-day quarantine- the foster team will advise on the course of action.*

## **If the bite or scratch resulted in an injury, follow these additional steps:**

- o With the foster team, assess the need for medical care. *(See guidelines below)*
- o The foster staff will verify the status of the cat's rabies vaccination and assist the foster in getting proof, as needed. **Note:** Kittens under the age of 3 months will not have been vaccinated for rabies.
- o Any animal that has bitten or scratched someone, and broken skin (regardless of whether they have been vaccinated) must be contained and then examined by a vet 10 days after the bite occurred. This can take place at the foster's home, our Medical Care Center or at the Animal Care Services Quarantine Building-Hwy 151, per the City of San Antonio's ordinances. If the cat is given a clean bill of health at the end of the quarantine period, it

could not have passed on the rabies virus at the time of the bite (10 days prior). **Please note:** the foster has the option to reclaim the animal and continue fostering as per the agreement.

### **Bite Assessment/Wound Care:**

1. Wash bite wounds with soap and water immediately.
2. Did bite break the skin?
  - a. If no, no further action is required.
  - b. If yes, did it puncture or scratch?
    - i. If scratch, watching for redness or infection should be sufficient.
    - ii. If puncture, will need oral antibiotics. Please see personal physician ASAP to prevent sepsis, loss of function, or even death.
    - iii. If bleeding, stop with pressure. If severe, call 911.

Bites are an extremely dangerous issue and must be reported to SAPA! management. An infected bite can cost well over \$10,000 if not treated immediately and can even cause loss of function. If the animal has rabies, a bite can cause death.

Although SAPA! is not responsible for medical bills associated with bites, we can often direct you on what to do after a bite occurs. If you choose not to seek medical help, SAPA! cannot be held liable for any resulting consequences of not taking appropriate action.

Behavior issues: Bites or scratches that do not break skin should still be reported to the foster team for pet temperament awareness, with the circumstances and details, to help place the pet into a home for the pet!



This list is not meant to be all- inclusive but consists of the basics that will help with cats and kittens. The foster caregiver's best judgment should be used when obtaining supplies. We sincerely thank you for opening your hearts and homes to save a life in San Antonio!

## Picking Up a New Foster Cat

SAPA! will contact a list of potential foster parents by phone, email, or you can watch for our pleas on the [Facebook foster forum](#) when an animal needs foster care. The first foster caregiver who responds to the request and accepts the foster assignment will receive the animal. You **always** have the option to decline a foster assignment.

Once you agree to foster an animal, you will be provided options for arranging pick- up times. For cats and kittens, you will be **required** to bring a secure transport carrier or box.

You will receive the animal's current file, which will be comprised of all known medical & behavioral notes on the animal, as well as any special considerations for care. You will also receive any necessary medications, dispensers, and instructions, if needed.

It is possible that when picking up an animal, they may have just had surgery. Please keep any cones on for 10-14 days. They might still be coming out of anesthesia, so please take caution not to startle and keep them calm so they do not injure themselves. Once you are home, put them in a quiet area so they can recover. If you were given medication, please check to see when they need to be given.



# Pet Proofing Your Home

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It is important to ensure that your home and foster room are safe.

- o All cleaning supplies and medications should be kept out of reach, locking cabinets preferred.
- o Place all small chewable items out of reach (socks, shoes, etc.)
- o Block off all small areas and hiding places. Cover all trash cans securely.
- o Wires, mini blind cords, draperies, and shower curtains should be placed out of reach...
- o Count your foster animals when opening and closing closet doors.
- o Keep household plants out of reach
- o **Never** allow a foster cat or kitten to go outside
- o Use sheets, tarps, and newspaper to protect carpet and floors.
- o Keep breakable items off counters

## Toxic Plants for Cats



Lilies



Rhododendron



Hyacinth



Azaleas



Tulips



Dieffenbachia



Sago Palm



Cyclamen



## Bringing Your New Foster Home

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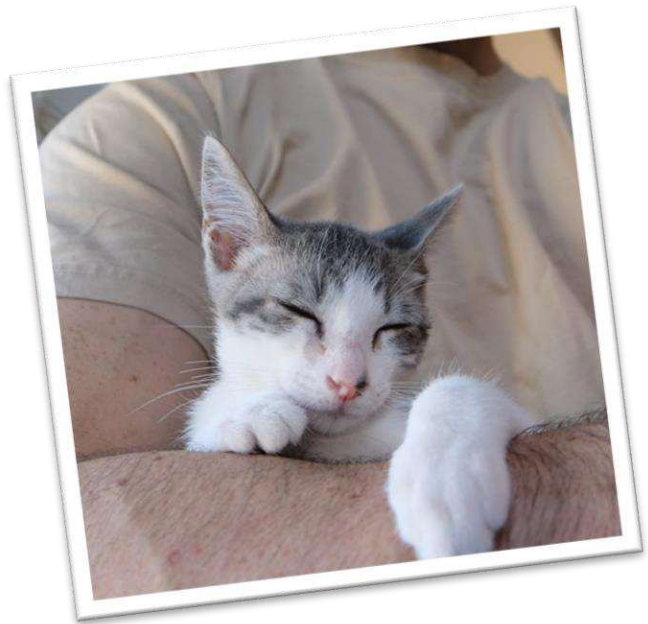
Set up the area where your foster animal will be staying **before** you bring your foster home.

New foster animals should be kept separate from your existing animals for a period of 10-14 days. This quarantine period protects both your own animals, as well as the foster animal. Small kittens do very well in crate, bathroom, or spare bedroom.

Introduce your foster animal to one room of the house at first. Have homecoming be a quiet experience.

Cats and kittens should have a crate that is large enough for them to stand and turn around comfortably in a circle without touching the top or sides. Allow your new foster quiet time to adjust to their new environment, as this can be a stressful time for them. Introduce all cats and kittens to the litter box and provide them with a bed for comfort.

**NOTE: SAPA! foster cats and kittens are not permitted to be outdoors.**



## Introducing Your Current Pets

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Use your own discretion in deciding whether to introduce your adult cats to your foster cats and kittens. Some cats have difficulty adjusting to new animals in the household and may exhibit inappropriate behaviors such as urine marking.

If you choose to introduce your adult cat to a foster cat or kitten, the introductions should always be done gradually. Observing the 10-14 day waiting period will greatly facilitate this.

**Always supervise interactions with your personal animals.**



# Common Medical Conditions

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## Upper Respiratory Infection

URI's can infect both cats and kittens. A URI is basically the same thing as a common cold in humans. Symptoms for cats and kittens include sneezing, coughing, discharge from the nose or eyes, lethargy, loss of appetite, and fever. Treatment is the same as with a human with a cold: rest, fluids, and comfort. **SAPA! will provide medication.**

## Diarrhea

Healthy feces are brown and well formed. Diarrhea is loose, watery, discolored, and can be a symptom of illness, parasites, or overfeeding. If your foster develops diarrhea that lasts more than 1 day or contains any frank (red) blood, please email the Medical Care Center Team at [appointment@sanantoniopetsalive.org](mailto:appointment@sanantoniopetsalive.org). Feed a tiny amount of organic pumpkin to add fiber to bulk up the stool. Due to the stress of a new environment, your foster may experience diarrhea for the first day or so.

## Dehydration

Animals with diarrhea can quickly become dehydrated. To check for dehydration, pull up gently on the skin at the scruff of the neck. If it bounces back quickly when you let go, hydration is fine. If it does not go back or goes back slowly, your foster animal is dehydrated and needs medical attention.

## Fleas

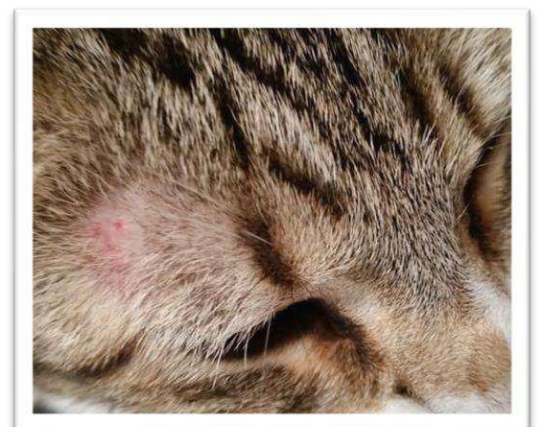
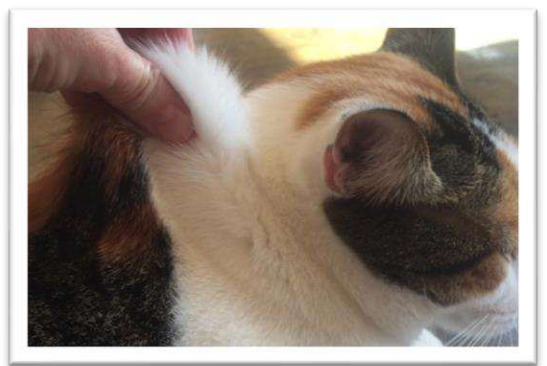
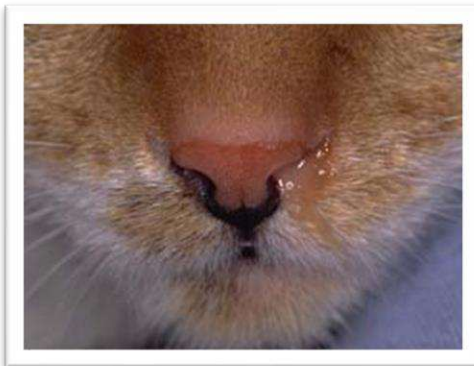
A foster cat with fleas will be given a general flea treatment prior to leaving the SAPA! facility. Kittens can be given flea baths with Dawn dish soap and warm water. Do not use any over the counter flea treatments on your own. If you notice fleas within a week of having the animal in your home, email the medical clinic. All animals are required to be on flea and tick preventative while in foster care. Preventative can be obtained at the SAPA! Medical Clinic during open hours.

## Worms

Worms are very common in shelter animals. Your foster will have been treated for the most common worms before coming to your home, and the treatment will continue throughout their stay with you. If you detect worms in your foster's stool, or your foster's stomach appears distended, contact the medical clinic to decide treatment. It is important to note that animals being treated often show dead or dying worms in their stool. There is no need to be alarmed, but please ensure that you are removing all feces from the environment after elimination, as some worms are contagious to people and other pets through fecal/oral contamination.

## Ringworm

Ringworm is a skin infection caused by a fungus, not an actual worm. Ringworm is transmitted in a variety of ways, although physical contact with an infected animal is the most common. Dry scaly spots will appear after one to two weeks and are usually confined to the hairier regions of the scalp, forearms and face. Hair will break off at the roots, creating bald spots. If you suspect your foster cat or kitten has ringworm, contact the Medical Care Center.



# Severe Medical Conditions

## Herpes Virus & Calici Virus

Herpes virus and Calici virus are common and cause upper respiratory infections. Kittens can be affected by both viruses at the same time (and often are). Both viruses make kittens susceptible to bacterial infections, which usually means lots of greenish yellow mucoid discharge from the eyes and nose.

Herpes Virus causes watery eyes and nasal discharge with sneezing, and may also affect the eyes more severely, causing eye ulcers. If eyes are crusted shut, clean with a warm saline solution and gently pull open. Calici Virus causes similar upper respiratory symptoms and also sometimes mouth sores but can be more serious and affect other parts of the body and/or be deadly. Symptoms often start with upper respiratory issues and may also include not eating or change in eating habits due to ulcers in the mouth that make it painful to chew or swallow.

## Coccidia

A hard-shelled parasite that cannot be killed by bleach. Throw out paper towels after wiping surfaces down. May see clear or raspberry jam like substance in stool or diarrhea. Wipe kittens clean and dispose of cloths.



## Giardia

A water-borne parasite that causes diarrhea. Can be life threatening. If not caused by a change in the type of formula (from canned to powder), it will not go away on its own and needs to be treated by a veterinarian. May require probiotics, fluids, anti-parasitic medications, etc.

## Feline Panleukopenia (Feline Distemper) Virus

Especially dangerous to orphaned kittens, and is very contagious, so proper hygiene and isolation of the newborns from other cats is essential. Symptoms may include serious, life-threatening diarrhea, vomiting, dehydration, fever, septicemia, and shock. Kittens born to infected moms can have nervous system damage that results in a staggering walk, tremors, and balance problems, but these kittens can still be adopted and live relatively normal lives

## **Fading Kitten Syndrome**

Sometimes a kitten can be doing well and then become sickly a few weeks after birth. This may happen no matter how well they have been cared for. See SAPA!'s Fading Kitten Protocol for further instructions.

## **FIV ("Feline AIDS")**

To prevent infection of your cats and foster animals, your resident cat(s) and foster cats or kittens must also be tested and determined to be negative of this virus. FIV is usually transmitted by deep bite wounds.

## **Feline Leukemia (FeLV)**

Your resident cat(s) must test negative and be kept current on Feline Leukemia vaccinations at all times. Foster cats and kittens will be tested and found to be negative before being sent into the foster home. Feline Leukemia is transmitted between cats via fluids. This normally occurs through licking and shared litter boxes.



## **Follow Up Treatment**

Your foster animal may require follow up treatment for an existing condition, or for vaccinations that require them to be of a certain age or weight. Kittens will have their follow up information in their file, you are required to follow it. Although in many cases they can be marketed for adoption at that time, kittens must weigh, at minimum, **2lbs.** to be spayed/neutered.

Please be prepared with the following information when you bring your foster animal for a follow-up exam:

- o All foster paperwork, including kennel card and medical history.
- o Is the animal eating regularly?...
- o Is the animal drinking regularly?
- o Any diarrhea?
- o Activity level?
- o Date of last medications given?
- o When were the last signs of illness observed?



# Routine Medical Care

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You are responsible for ensuring that your animal receives routine and preventative medical care. However, if the team has not contacted you and you know that a vaccine or other medical need is due, please contact the Medical Care Center at [appointment@sanantoniopetsalive.org](mailto:appointment@sanantoniopetsalive.org).

## Foster Cat Vaccine Schedule

SAPA! vaccinates for FVRCP (Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, Panleukopenia) and Rabies. In addition, all cats receive flea/tick preventative). Cats and kittens are dewormed. **Please Note:** Rabies vaccines are not given until 12 weeks and only by a licensed vet.

### Medical Protocol by Age:

Reference the following table for scheduling your foster cat's vaccines and care.

	2 Wks.	4 Wks.	6 Wks.	8 Wks.	10 Wks.	12 Wks.	14 Wks.
Strongid	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Frontline			X		X		X
FVRCP			X	X	X	X	X
Rabies						X	
FelV Test			X				
Spay/Neuter				X			

After the first 5 months (20 wks.) of age, your foster cat will require the following regular preventatives and vaccinations:

- o **Frontline**(flea/tick): Monthly
- o **Rabies:** Every 1 Year
- o **FelV Test:** Every 1 Year
- o **FVRCP:** Every 1 Year
- o **Strongid:** Monthly

**Note:** Adult cats receive the following upon intake (unless we have documentation that they have already received these): Strongid (dewormer), FVRCP, flea treatment, and rabies. Two weeks later they receive their second Strongid and FVRCP. In most cases, the FeLV test and microchip are included with the spay/neuter surgery.

The SAPA! medical team provides all medical care to our foster cats. **SAPA! WILL NOT** reimburse foster parents for any medical expenses incurred without pre-approval by the SAPA! Medical Clinic.





# Spay/Neuter Surgery

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Barring any medical issues, your adult foster must be spayed or neutered within **30 days** of picking them up.

Kittens are spayed or neutered at **8 weeks** of age unless they are under 2 lbs., malnourished, ill, or are generally not healthy enough for surgery. Older cats are spayed or neutered as soon as they are medically ready. Nursing moms can be spayed after their kittens have been weaned and the mom's milk has dried up (normally 4-8 weeks after birth).

Due to the limited number of surgery slots, it is **vital** that you keep your scheduled appointment. If your animal is ill, or you cannot keep your appointment, please email us at [schedulemedical@sanantoniopetsalive.org](mailto:schedulemedical@sanantoniopetsalive.org) as soon as possible.

**Your foster animal's surgery will be scheduled at one of these locations:**

- o Animal Care Services Clinic (4710 Highway 151, San Antonio, TX 78227)
- o Marbach Clinic (9107 Marbach Rd #109, San Antonio, TX 78245)

- o SA Wellness Spay and Neuter Clinic (4922 S Zarzamora St., San Antonio, TX 78211)

**NOTE: The location of your foster's surgery is determined at the time of intake and cannot be selected or changed.**

## Pre-Surgery Instructions

Do not feed your foster animal after midnight the night before surgery. Water is permitted.

If your foster animal has undergone treatment for illness, or is currently experiencing any symptoms such as sneezing, diarrhea, coughing, lethargy, lack of appetite, hair loss, vomiting, nasal or eye discharge, etc., please contact the medical coordinator as soon as possible. If your animal is showing signs of illness when you drop off, you may be turned away.

## Post-Operative Care

Your foster animal will likely be groggy when he/she gets home. This might include dilation of the pupils, stumbling, whining, disorientation, fear, hallucinations, etc. This is all completely normal and should wear off after a couple of hours.

Your foster may receive an e-collar (cone); it must be worn for 2 weeks. Your foster may receive sutures that need to be removed in about 2 weeks. You can bring your foster animal to the SAPA! Medical Clinic for this procedure during open hours.

Check the incision regularly. If it is swollen, hot to the touch, extremely red, has a lot of discharge, or is bleeding, please contact the medical clinic immediately.

If the incision gets dirty, you may clean it with hydrogen peroxide and a cotton ball or clean rag. **Do not use** Neosporin, bandages, or any other cleaners on the incision.

Your foster animal will typically receive pain medication following surgery. Do not administer any other pain medications to your animal as they may be toxic if given in conjunction with the medication already received.

**Do not bathe** your foster animal or allow it to swim for 7 days following surgery unless otherwise instructed by the SAPA! medical staff.

Restrict activity for adult males, adult females, and female kittens for the first 5-7 days. Attempt to keep your animal from running, jumping, rolling, or excessive playing during this time. Male kittens may resume normal activity levels following surgery.



# Administering Medications

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## Administering Pills to Cats:

If the pill can be given with food, try hiding in a soft piece. A small amount of butter, tuna, cream, cheese, liverwurst, canned food, hot dogs, or semi-moist food can often work well. If your cat will not take the pill in food or cannot have food with the medication:

- o Have the pill out and in a convenient place.
- o Bring the cat to the place you will give the pill, while talking in a happy, light voice.
- o Ask to be shown how to correctly “scruff” a cat.
- o Sometimes it is helpful to wrap the cat in a large towel so just the head is sticking out.
- o Place the cat between your knees.
- o Hold the pill between your thumb and index finger of your dominant hand.
- o Using your other hand, gently but firmly grasp the cat’s head from above with your thumb on one side and your finger on the other.
- o Tilt the cat’s head back so he or she is looking at the ceiling. The lower jaw will drop a bit.
- o Place one of your free fingers between the lower canine teeth (long front teeth) and push down.
- o Quickly place the pill as far back in the cat’s mouth as possible, making sure it is over the hump of the tongue. Do not place your hand too far into the cat’s mouth because it might gag.
- o Close the cat’s mouth. Hold it closed, lower his or her head to a normal position and gently rub or blow on the cat’s nose to stimulate swallowing.
- o Talk softly to and stroke the cat or give another type of treat.

## Administering Liquid Meds:

Start with the burrito wrap. Insert the dropper or syringe between the cheek and teeth while tilting the chin upward. Slowly dispense the medication, remembering not to give it faster than the cat can swallow. The quicker you do this, the more cooperative the cat will be.

Pills can also be administered by crushing them up, mixing with water, and dispensing as described

above. If using this method, all of the liquid must be taken in by the cat.

**Note:** Refrigerated medication must be kept in the refrigerator.





# Care of Kittens

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Kittens younger than 4 weeks who do not have their mother may be fostered with experienced neonatal fosters at the discretion of SAPA! staff.

With kittens younger than 4 weeks, it is important that you be observant, as a kitten's condition can change very quickly.



- o If you have a litter of kittens, it is important that you can identify them. Make a list of their names and distinguishing marks so that you can keep a record. Remove all paper collars before they become too snug.
- o Kittens will have their first medical appointment at about 2 weeks of age if no problems have arisen.
- o The area where you keep your foster kittens must be clean, dry, warm and free of drafts. Kittens younger than 2-3 weeks cannot maintain their own body temperature and can die if they become chilled. Be sure to use a heating pad or rice socks to keep your foster animals warm.
- o Kittens with mothers should be kept separate from other animals in the house. The mother may be protective and can attack other animals or people if she feels that she or her kittens are in danger.
- o Use towels or blankets for bedding. Bedding should be changed daily (or more frequently if necessary). The mother will try to keep the area clean, but that can be a difficult chore, especially with a large litter.
- o The mother will take care of the babies' elimination needs by frequently cleaning and licking them. Kittens begin eliminating without stimulation from their mother at about 3 weeks of age. Fosters are required to assist with elimination up until 2-3 weeks of age when a kitten can begin learning to use a litterbox.

# Care of Kittens - Feeding

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## kitten weight and feeding chart

AGE	WEIGHT	AMOUNT PER FEEDING	SCHEDULE
0-1 week	50-150 grams	2-6 ml	Every 2 hours
1-2 weeks	150-250 grams	6-10 ml	Every 2-3 hours
2-3 weeks	250-350 grams	10-14 ml	Every 3-4 hours
3-4 weeks	350-450 grams	14-18 ml	Every 4-5 hours
4-5 weeks	450-550 grams	18-22 ml	Every 5-6 hours
5-8 weeks	550-850 grams	(weaning; offer ample wet food)	Every 6 hours

Nursing mothers should be fed dry kitten food mixed with some wet food. They need to be fed more often and in larger quantities than usual. Starting at about 3-4 weeks of age, most kittens will begin trying to eat on their own from their mother's dish. At that time, make sure the dish is large enough for the litter to gather around or use multiple dishes.

- o Mix ground dry kitten food with water and a small amount of canned food to make a semisolid mixture.
- o Some kittens may need to be introduced to the food. Place a small amount on your finger and allow the kitten to lick it off or place a small amount on their lips. Slightly warming the food makes it more palatable.
- o It is important to make sure that each kitten is eating. If it appears that one or more kitten is not making its way to the dish, set up another dish away from the first and closely monitor that kitten's intake.
- o Do not feed cow's milk to a kitten.



- o Remove the mother during kitten feeding times so she will not eat their food. It is also helpful to remove the mother 12 hours prior to feeding time to stimulate the kittens' appetites.
- o Kittens will continue to occasionally nurse during this time.
- o Kittens without mothers will need to be bottle-fed up until their teeth begin to form and they are ready to wean. Kittens require specialized kitten formula – or kitten milk replacer (KMR) – as well as wet kitten food when they begin to wean.
- o Kittens transitioning from the bottle to wet food can be eased into the transition by mixing formula with the wet food into a mixture known as “gruel.” This allows their stomachs to gradually adjust to the wet food and slowly ease off of the formula.

## Care of Kittens – Litterbox Training

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- o By about 3-4 weeks of age, kittens are ready to begin using the litter box. Make sure you have a low sided litter box for the kittens to get in and out of easily.
- o Start off by putting them in the litter box and scratching the litter with their paw. While they are learning to use the litter box, put them in it several times a day for a couple days if necessary.
- o Use unscented, non-clumping clay or shredded paper litter for young kittens as ingesting the clumping litter will cause illness.
- o Several litter boxes may be necessary depending on the size of the litter. Litter boxes must be kept clean.
- o Make sure the kittens can easily locate their litter box by keeping them in a small room or bathroom.
- o Kittens are very messy when first learning to use a litter box. At this time, it is especially important to keep all surfaces clean and covered.

## Care of Kittens – Kitten Behavior

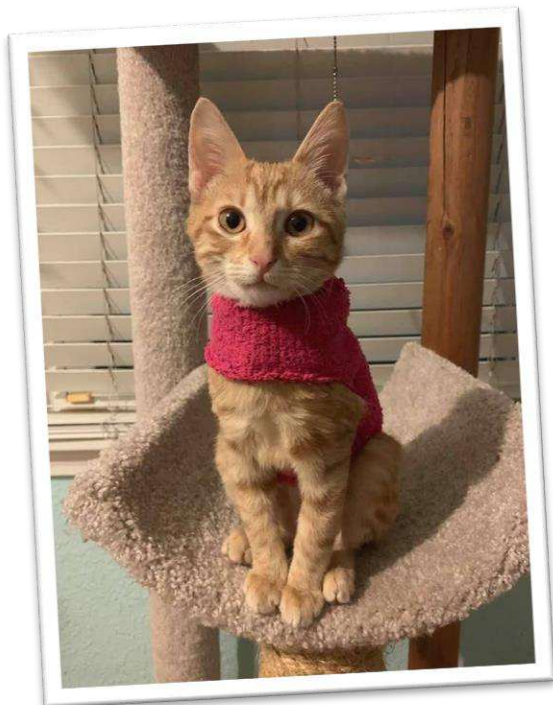
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Kittens are very curious and like to run, jump and climb. Remove all breakable and dangerous items from their reach and supervise playtime on large cat trees or other climbing equipment.

Kittens love to play with toys of any kind. Even a crumpled piece of paper can provide amusement.

A single kitten will likely cry a lot the first couple of nights. Make the kitten's area as cozy as possible by providing a blanket and a pet safe stuffed animal.

**Kittens should not be allowed outside under any circumstances.**



## Care of Kittens – Socialization

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Beginning at 3 weeks of age, it is important to begin handling kittens frequently. Make sure each kitten is handled and played with regularly.

Gradual exposure to new and different things and people, sights, and normal household sounds is important to ensure that your foster kitten is well adjusted.

Kittens learn to play by wrestling with their littermates. If you are looking after only one kitten, consider adding one more or transferring the kitten to another foster who has a kitten of the same age.

Never play with a kitten with your hands and fingers as this can encourage biting habits to form. Use an appropriate toy instead.

Please refer to the “**Introducing Your Current Pets**” section (See Page 11) on introducing foster animals to others.

## Care of Adult Cats – Feeding

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Dry food in an appropriate amount (2/3 of a cup for up to 10 lbs.) should be available at all times.

- A serving of canned food can be given once or twice a day.
- Milk should NEVER be given to cats.
- Fresh water should always be available.
- Cats should be fed away from their litter box.

## Care of Adult Cats – Behavior

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Cats can be skittish and fearful when entering a new home environment. Do not introduce your foster cat to the whole home all at once. Allow them to decompress in a bathroom or other small room to cut down on the stimulation around them. Cats may take longer than dogs to acclimate to their new surroundings. Do not attempt to cuddle or comfort a cat who is fearful or you or their new environment as this can cause scratches and bites. Allow them to come out on their own terms. Once they are comfortable in their initial surroundings, you can then expand their “territory” to other areas of the house.

- Cats should be provided with a scratching post or other suitable surface to scratch.
- Give your foster cat a variety of toys to play with. Rotate them periodically so they do not lose their novelty. You can try hiding your cat’s favorite toys before leaving in the morning and create a sort of “treasure hunt” for him or her (make sure he or she sees you hiding a few of the toys).
- **Cats should never be allowed outside under any circumstances.**

Contact the Foster Manager for suggestions and advice about specific behavior issues, but please keep in mind, that some cats may never fully open up in certain homes or situations.

# Sanitizing Your Home

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You must thoroughly clean areas where a foster animal has stayed to prevent disease and parasites in your home. The period between foster assignments is a good time to do this.

- o Wash bedding in hot water, detergent and bleach.
- o Discard non-washable surface toys.
- o Disinfect washable surfaces with a mild bleach and water mixed together (bleach/water ratio of 1:32 or 4 oz of bleach per gallon of water is recommended). Mixtures with bleach should be prepared as needed because they lose their strength after 24 hours. Bleach is inactive in the presence of organic matter so clean up dirt, hair, feces, etc. before using bleach to disinfect. Bleach solution must stay in constant contact with

the surface being sanitized for at least 10 minutes to be effective.

- o Vacuum all carpeted areas.
- o Soak toys in bleach water for 20 minutes and scrub and bleach crates, carriers, scoops, food bowls.
- o Clean any urine or feces soiled areas with an enzyme cleaner immediately to avoid residual odor (Nature's Miracle Stain and Odor Remover works well).
- o Regularly clean up all waste in the yard to decrease the risk of spreading disease.



# Quarantine Periods

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Sometimes an animal is sent into a home before evidence of a serious disease has manifested which can result in the foster home becoming contaminated for a period of time. The following quarantine periods are used to allow infectious diseases to die off after contaminating a home environment. This protects future foster animals from being infected with the virus or disease.

Specific quarantine periods are as follows:

- o Feline Leukemia/FIV – **3 days**
- o Sarcoptic Mange – **1 week**
- o FIP/Distemper – **3 weeks**
- o Ringworm – **3 months**
- o Parvovirus – **6 months**

If a foster animal is infected with one of the above illnesses, the foster parent will not be allowed to bring another foster into the home for the designated quarantine period.

# Getting Your Foster Adopted!

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Finding a permanent home for a foster animal is a collaborative process between SAPA! and the foster parent. Foster homes are required to market their animal on their own and all adoptions must be completed using SAPA! adoption procedures with an employed SAPA! Adoption Counselor. This valuable resource is available to you at any of our facilities during open hours.

As soon as you pick up your foster animal, you will want to begin the process of getting them into their forever home. If the kittens are under 6 weeks of age, you will not be able to complete any adoptions for the animal, but it doesn't hurt to get the word out that the animals will be available for adoption once they're of age and spayed/neutered!

If your foster animal did not come with a name, you will want to give them one! Carefully look over the paperwork you received with the animal. Do the breed and age descriptions match accurately? If not, please correct this information when you send the animal's information to the Foster Marketing Team.



## **Marketing:**

Within **72 hours** of receiving your foster cat or kitten (6 weeks old), fosters are **required** to email the Foster Marketing Team: **fostermarketing@sanantoniopetsalive.org** so that SAPA! can begin marketing your foster for adoptions. The information you provide will be placed on the San Antonio Pets Alive! website, Petfinder, and other avenues to help get the word out so that your foster can find their forever family.

Please include the following information when contacting Foster Marketing:

- o Name
- o Species
- o Color
- o Gender
- o Medical Issues/Special Needs
- o Good with Dogs  
(y/n/unknown)
- o Up to 4 photos and/or a video
- o Pet's Animal ID Number  
(A#####) (SAPA-A-#####)
- o Breed
- o Age
- o Good with Kids?  
(y/n/unknown)
- o Good with Cats?  
(y/n/unknown)
- o Biography of the animal  
(traits, activity level, etc.)

**Remember**, when developing your biographies for your foster, you are trying to market them, rather than providing adoption counseling. By using "Stop" language such as "No Kids," or "No Dogs," you are driving away potential adopters who may find another cat to fit their needs when they inquire about yours.

Save specific issues for the adoption counselor to go over or for you to explain during a meet-and-greet.





## When Can My Foster Be Adopted?

Cats and kittens can be adopted out from your home when they are 8 weeks of age and have been spayed or neutered. We offer Pre-Adoptions and a Foster-to-Adopt program for unaltered animals.



If your animal is injured or needs extra care, you can still begin marketing your animal to find it a forever family. Provided that the adoptive family is capable of providing continuing care, and the foster family and SAPA! believe that the animal will be a good fit for the family, you may proceed with the adoption and decide when would be a good time for the adoptive family to take possession of the animal.

Fosters needing assistance when assessing adopters are welcome to contact the foster team.

## What Are My Responsibilities in the Adoption Process?

**Phone and Email Inquiries** – Fosters are required respond to all inquiries (via phone or email) within 24 hours and schedule the meet and greet within 72 hours. Since you know your foster best, it's important that potential adopters hear about the animal directly from you.

Be careful immediately telling your potential adopter that your foster is still available. In order to avoid an uncomfortable situation, you can tell potential adopters that another application is pending, and they will be contacted if the adopter falls through.

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**Meet and Greets** – Once you have scheduled your meet and greet with the potential adopter, you will want to determine whether the potential adopter is a good fit. If you have concerns, do not proceed with the adoption.

If you are fostering a kitten under 8 weeks of age, it is recommended to have the meet and greet in your home or in a neutral location outdoors with the kittens securely in a crate or playpen. Do not allow kittens to wander outdoors due to danger of predators.

**Approving the Adoption** – When you are comfortable with the potential adopters of your animal, you will need to complete the SAPA! adoption paperwork at a SAPA facility or with an approved SAPA! adoption counselor. Both you and the potential adopter must meet with the adoption counselor to complete the paperwork. Be sure to bring all of the animal's paperwork and let the adopter know that the fee must be paid in cash or with a credit/debit card.

Still have questions? Email us at:  
[adopt@sanantoniopetsalive.org](mailto:adopt@sanantoniopetsalive.org)

### Adoption Fees

Animal Type	Fee
Kittens – 6 months & under	\$100
Cats – 7 months & over	\$75
First “Foster Fail”*	50% Off Regular Fee

*\*Foster “failing” is when fosters adopt the animal they are fostering. SAPA! provides a discount for those fosters “failing” for the first time. Regular fees apply for all foster adoptions after that.*



### What if the Adopter is Unable to Keep the Animal?

First, get as much information about the potential return as possible. Adopters will need to make every effort to find a new home for the cat. If a new home is found, SAPA! should be quickly notified of the new owner's information so that we can update our database.

At this point, if all options have been exhausted, the adopter must email [returns@sanantoniopetsalive.org](mailto:returns@sanantoniopetsalive.org). If the previous foster is able to take the cat back into their care, that is the preferred option. Please note, the adopter must always email the returns team, fill out the owner surrender form and pay the owner surrender fee before transferring back to you. If the foster is unable to take the animal back into their care, then we will work on getting them back into our care. When space does become available, the owner will be responsible for paying a **\$50 return fee**. The adoption fee is non-refundable.

## Foster Events

Adoption events are a great way to get your foster animal adopted. These are often held at local pet stores or animal friendly events in the community.

Typically, we have at least one foster event every Saturday. They are sometimes held on Sundays. Animals do not have to be altered, but they can only be pre-adopted or foster-to-adopted. You can also choose to sit at our Petco adoption centers and market your cat or kittens there. All adoptions must be completed by an adoption counselor.

**Please keep in mind that while visiting Petco locations that all fosters must abide by the rules put in place by the store managers.** SAPA!'s ability to continue having these events relies on fosters adhering to their policies and rules and cleaning up after themselves and their foster pets when visiting.

To see or sign up for foster events, join the SAPA! Foster Forum on Facebook:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/sapafosterforum>

Your foster is required to meet all the following SAPA! health requirements to attend events:

- o Must be at least 8 weeks of age with at least 2 sets of vaccinations
- o Must be symptom-free of any illnesses and not on any medications
- o Must have rabies vaccination if 12 weeks or older
- o Must be human-friendly

Please keep in mind that cats and kittens are not always suited or able to handle appearing at events. **Use your best judgement when bringing cats and kittens to events.**



### What do I need to bring?

- o A kennel or play pen
- o A small litter box that fits inside of the kennel or playpen, as well as litter, if necessary, to replace soiled litter
- o Crinkle toys or other cat/kitten appropriate toys (*label the items if you want to ensure they are returned to you*)
- o Water, food, and a towel to cover the kennel if the cats or kittens become overwhelmed
- o Copies of the kennel card, copies of proof of rabies (if over 12 weeks of age) and/or all medical records.

**Cats and kittens should never be allowed to wander at events outside of a contained space.**



### More Adoption Resources

Still looking for ways to set your foster up for success? Check out the following resources:

#### **Maddie's Fund –**

Foster Caregiver Marketing Guide:

<https://www.maddiesfund.org/assets/documents/foster-resources/MF-foster-caregiver-marketing-guide.pdf>

#### **Kitten Lady –**

Advertising Kittens

<http://www.kittenlady.org/advertising>

#### **Digital Photography School –**

9 Tips for Taking Better Photos of Cats

<https://digital-photography-school.com/9-tips-taking-better-photos-cats/>





## Thank You!

Our ability to save a cat often relies solely on our ability to find a foster within a short time frame. Your quick response to a foster plea can literally mean the difference between life and death for these animals. Bringing a strange animal in to your home may not be the easiest thing you have ever done but it just might be the most rewarding!

If you ever need anything while fostering or have any questions, please feel free to email us at **[foster@sanantoniopetsalive.org](mailto:foster@sanantoniopetsalive.org)**. We are dedicated to making sure you are as happy with your animal as the animal is in your home.

Thank you again for volunteering to foster animals with San Antonio Pets Alive! Fostering is often challenging, but it is also tremendously rewarding. There is no substitute for the feeling of nurturing your foster dog so they can move on to a new life in their forever family – and none of that would be possible without you!

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