**How to Select Litters to Take into the Foster Program**

**From the Public**

* **Do they have the mother cat or just the kittens?** 
  + If they have the mother cat, do they want to keep her or bring her in with the litter?
    - If they want to keep her, they will need to have her altered before the kittens come in for intake.
  + All kittens must come in. They cannot give any of them away. If they plan to keep a kitten, it must be altered before you take the litter. Surgery and intake appointments can be made on the same day.
* **Once you know who is coming, find out their sexes, colors, ages, health and temperament.** 
  + If they are not healthy, do you have a foster family who can do medications?
  + Is your shelter already filled with sick cats?
    - If so, consider sending the medications home with the owner to treat (at their expense) and return when they are healthy.
  + Are they social?
    - If not, have the owner work with them until they are social unless you have a foster home that can socialize them.
    - Remember that taming kittens takes up both time and resources, and you want to use your resources in the best way to save the most lives. This should only be done when kitten season is light.
* **Send out an email to the foster parents’ Google group to find a foster home.**
* **Once a home is found, set up the foster intake appointment.** 
  + Ask the owner to cover the cost of the FIV/FeLV snap test and a donation. Work with them if they cannot afford the snap test.

**From Another Shelter**

* **Ask for an email with descriptions on each litter.** 
  + They should tell you how many are in the group, if there is a mother cat, the sexes, color, and temperament, including health.
* **Send an email to the foster parents’ Google group to see how many can be placed.**
  + Let the foster parents know the transport date.
* **Once the litters are claimed, email the foster parents’ Google group.**
  + This allows everyone to know which litters are claimed and which litters still need a home.
* **Email the source shelter with updates so they can start to process them for transport.** 
  + You can do this in individual emails or in one summary email. This will depend on the preference of the source shelter.
* **It is very important to have an agreement with the source shelter so that they will not euthanize or place into foster care the kittens that they are offering you.** 
  + It prevents unnecessary hardship on your foster parents and ensures you are not wasting time.

**Additional Considerations**

* **When you start to get full with kittens, it is important to make sure that you will be able to get everyone through surgery in a timely manner.** 
  + Check your kitten list each week to see how many litters will turn 9 weeks at the same time.
  + Know or anticipate how many kittens will go through surgery each week so that you can determine if you should take more litters, and if so, how old the litters should be (i.e. 2 week old litter vs. a 6 week old litter).
  + Don’t just fill your homes because you can. There will be more kittens offered than space in foster care. Strategize the best way to care for all of them.
* **Colors of your litters. Know what your adopters love to adopt.** 
  + Do you adopt orange kittens the fastest? Then take them in. Do your black kittens sit the longest? Then consider taking in fewer all black litters. *Remember there will be more than you can help.*
  + Foster parents will also foster again more readily if their litter of kittens goes quickly.
    - Foster parents often feel sad for their kittens if they aren’t adopted quickly.
    - If they are keeping them, and taking them to an offsite adoption center each weekend, you will want their kittens to be adopted quickly so that the foster home will be ready for a new group faster. Think big picture.
* **Mother cat or no mother cat?** 
  + If your shelter is full of adult cats, you will need to ensure that they are ready for another mother cat to return to the shelter.
  + If you have 6 moms returning each week, they will take up space from other cats coming to the shelter and you need to coordinate these efforts.
  + Sometimes our foster parents will take their kittens and mother cat to an offsite location each weekend.
    - They will then work with the offsite coordinator to take the mother cat once she returns to the shelter for altering.
    - If you can make this happen, it will keep your offsite locations filled, and the mother cat won’t take up a cage at the shelter for more than a few days.

**Physical Intake at the Shelter**

**From the Public**

* **If the mother cat and kittens have not been tested, and kittens are large enough to test, they will need to be tested for FIV/FeLV at intake.** 
  + Take the snap tests out of the refrigerator 30 minutes prior to the appointment. Have your heparinized syringes ready, rubbing alcohol, gauze squares, etc.
* **When they arrive take one out at a time.** 
  + Note description including color, sex, and any unusual marking in case there are several that look similar in the litter.
  + Check the eyes, ears, and body for overall condition.
    - Is the kitten sick? Covered in fleas? Scabbing or ringworm found?
  + Weigh the kitten.
    - Does the kitten seem to be the appropriate weight for its age?
  + Perform a Wood’s lamp test to check for ringworm.
  + Draw blood for FIV/FeLV blood test.
* **Repeat above with each kitten and mother cat (if there is one).**
* **Once all tests are finished and negative you can have the owners leave** and continue with the intake process.
  + **NOTE**: It is best to have the owner say goodbye before you take the kittens back for their medical care so that you don’t have to take them back to the kittens again.
* **To finish the intake process, watch the kitten walk and feel the whole body.**
  + Make sure nothing feels or looks abnormal.
* **Vaccinate, de-worm, apply flea treatment, clean ears and treat if needed.** 
  + At this time, doanything else that is age appropriate and needed to get them ready for foster care.
* **Put all of your notes into the software program and print the charts.** 
  + Make two copies. One for the shelter records and one for the foster parent.
  + **NOTE**: If you have a litter of all one color, it is best to mark their collars with their kitten name so that the foster parent knows who is who. If they are too small for collars, you can use a sharpie pen and mark a dot in their ears. You can also use fingernail polish on the tips of their ears.
* **Get a carrier for them to travel to the foster home.**
* **Get a baby bag, assign it to them, and place it on top of the carrier**.
  + Put the medical records with the personality profiles, collars, and foster drop off info sheet in the baby bag as well.
* **Send kittens home.**

**From Another Shelter**

* T**ake each litter and put them in their own cage.**
  + Separate vaccinated kittens from unvaccinated kittens in two separate rooms if you can.
  + Label each kennel with their names and place records in corresponding hanging files.
* **Take each kitten out individually.**
  + Note description including color, sex, and any unusual markings.
  + Check the eyes, ears, and body for overall condition.
    - Is the kitten sick? Covered in fleas? Scabbing or ringworm found?
  + Weigh the kitten.
    - Does the kitten seem to be the appropriate weight for its age?
  + Perform a Wood’s lamp test to check for ringworm.
  + Draw blood for FIV/FeLV blood test.
  + **NOTE**: you should ask the other shelter to do as much medical for you as they can. This will shorten the amount of time it will take to process each litter and therefore will allow you to take in more litters of kittens each day.
* **Repeat above with each kitten and mother cat (if there is one).**
* **To finish the intake process, watch the kitten walk and feel the whole body.** 
  + Make sure nothing feels or looks abnormal.
* **Vaccinate, de-worm, apply flea treatment, clean ears and treat if needed.**
  + At this time, doanything else that is age appropriate and needed to get them ready for foster care.
  + **NOTE**: It is best if this can be done at the other shelter prior to transport.
* **Put all of your notes into the software program and print the charts.**
  + Make two copies. One for the shelter records and one for the foster parent.
  + **NOTE**: If you have a litter of all one color, it is best to mark their collars with their kitten name so that the foster parent knows who is who.
    - If they are too small for collars, you can use a sharpie pen and mark a dot in their ears.
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* **Get a carrier for them to travel to the foster home.**
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**Assigning Foster Families**

* **Placing litters.** Typically most groups are pretty straight forward and you will email the foster parents’ Google group and ask for volunteers to claim a group.
  + However, there will be times when a litter of kittens is not appropriate for everyone.
    - In these cases, you will either need to disclaim the issues regarding the litter so only appropriate foster parents respond or call the appropriate foster parents for help.
      * Make sure you are not overwhelming these foster parents.
  + If you don’t have an appropriate home then deny the litter admission to your shelter. This will be hard, but it is better to keep your foster parent for years then to lose them to a difficult litter. Think big picture and take care of your foster parents. They will thank you in the long run.
* **One litter or two?** 
  + Some foster families will want to take more than one foster litter at a time. We do not allow this with new foster parents.
    - This is only allowed if the foster family has been approved by their mentor to take another group. This would mean that they have time, and the ability to do a good job with two litters.
      * Once approved they can take only one group under 6 weeks of age.
      * At all times there needs to be one group that has been vaccinated for 5 days or more before they take in a group that cannot be vaccinated.
      * **NOTE**: Do not make exceptions to this rule. If one litter has panleukopenia then you will lose both groups. Don’t put the foster home through that pain.
* **First litter assignments.** Try to set up a first time foster parent with an easy group (healthy, social).
  + Ideally, you would want to give them an older group so they can get their feet wet for a short period of time and enjoy what they have done.
    - In the beginning of kitten season, this will not be possible, so make sure they are getting the best litters available.
  + **NOTE**: Do not send home a foster litter until the foster parent has gone through foster training.
    - As much as this can be tempting, don’t do it. If they decide after training that they don’t want to follow the rules or foster at all, you will have to rehome the foster litter which can be very stressful for the kittens.

**Foster Training**

* **If someone is interested in becoming a foster parent they will need to start by contacting the foster coordinator to make sure there is a foster mentor who can take them.**
  + If there is a volunteer who can take them, they may attend volunteer orientation and complete a volunteer application. The volunteer manager will then send them the Highs and Lows of Fostering document to review.
    - If they are still interested in fostering, the foster coordinator will invite them to the next foster training.
* **For foster training, try to keep the groups small when possible so people feel like they can ask questions.**
  + Have spouses and children come if the children are old enough.
* **Have everyone wear a name tag.**
  + Have them tell you why they want to foster (keep this short).
* **Arrange the chairs so everyone can see the PowerPoint presentation and you.**
* **Invite them to the foster parents’ Google group after training.**
* **NOTE**: foster training can be done by another foster parent or another volunteer. It does not have to been done by a staff person although the foster coordinator(s) should know how to deliver foster training for fill in. Most foster coordinators want to do the training so they know the families well.

**Communication from Foster Parents**

* **Have your foster parents communicate the following via the Preventative Care Google Form:** 
  + **Vaccines** given and the date
  + **Strongid** and other de-worming and the dates
  + **Medications** 
    - What and how long?
* **Have your parents communicate the following to the foster coordinator:** 
  + **Names of kittens** if they are only MommaK1 at 6 weeks of age
  + **Kitten birth details (if they take a pregnant cat):** 
    - delivery date, sexes, colors and weights the day they are born
  + **Offsite location visits**
    - Where and when?
  + **Anticipated mother cat return**
    - Date when they would like to return the mother cat to shelter for adoption
  + **Surgery dates**
    - They should also communicate whether or not they plan to take kittens home after surgery or leave them at the shelter

**Mother Cats Returning from Foster Care**

* **Place the cat on the intake schedule.**
* **Pull the foster file the morning the mother cat arrives.**
  + Combine it with the foster parent’s copy, ensuring it is updated and accurate.
* **Move her to the hospital for surgery or intake room for re-intake exam.**
* **Afterward, move her to adoption floor.**
* **Change her location in the computer.**
* **If she does not have alter surgery the day of her arrival, schedule her for surgery.**

**Ringworm Kittens in Foster Care**

* **If a foster group is found to have ringworm by an evaluation at the shelter or hospital, there are two choices.** 
  + The foster family may take the litter back home for treatment or
  + They may leave them at the shelter in ringworm isolation.
    - This is only available to groups who are 6 weeks and older and is not encouraged at all. They will not receive the socialization that they need.
    - If they chose to take them home and treat them, they will have to thoroughly clean before taking another litter.
* **If the kittens are housed in a room with carpet, it needs to be vacuumed at least once a day.**
  + Everything needs to be removed from the room except what is essential to the kittens.
* **If it is vinyl or another surface, it needs to be cleaned with Rescue once a day** (which they can get from the shelter)**.** 
  + The kittens need to be placed in a carrier on the counter or somewhere else in the room.
  + The surface area needs to stay wet for at least 5 minutes.
  + After 5 minutes, the floor can be dried and the kittens removed from their carrier.
* **Vinyl can also be cleaned with warm bleach water once a day.** 
  + The kittens need to be placed in a carrier on the counter or somewhere else in the room.
  + The surface area needs to stay wet for at least 10 minutes.
  + After 10 minutes, the floor can be rinsed and dried, and the kittens removed from their carrier.
  + In order to prevent the spread of ringworm to the rest of the house, never remove the kittens from the room.
* **All hair needs to be removed from the room as soon as possible.** 
  + This is the best defense since hair follicles carry the ringworm spores.
* **They will also need to wash the kitten beds daily in hot water/bleach.**
* **Treatment will depend on what the vet prescribes.**
  + Typically it would be an antifungal and antimicrobial shampoo (like Malaseb) or an accelerated hydrogen peroxide shampoo (like Rescue) and oral medication.
* **Foster parents should wear protective clothing when they enter the kitten room** and **remove it** **before leaving the room** so they don’t contaminate the rest of the house.
  + They also need to wash with soap and water after leaving the room.
* **Lastly, once the group is gone and the room is thoroughly cleaned, they need to take a culture of the room to ensure it is ringworm free.** 
  + Once it is clear, they can foster again.

**Panleukopenia in Foster Care**

* **Everything in the room must be removed.** 
  + If it is porous, it will need to be thrown away.
  + If it is glass or stainless steel, it can be soaked in Rescue or a bleach water solution for 10 minutes.
* **If there is carpet, it must be removed and replaced if cats will go in the room again.**
* **The walls, floor, and ceiling must be cleaned with Rescue** (which they can get from the shelter).
* **Ceilings can also be cleaned with a lint roller** **unless they can wipe them with Rescue.**
* **The outside of the room must be cleaned as well.** 
  + Lots of vacuuming and lots of wiping the walls.
* **We highly recommend that they repaint the room, but it is not required.**
* **This virus can live in excess of one year without a host and is very hardy.**
  + There is no test to preform to see if the cleaning was thorough enough, so make sure it was done well before sending another group.
* **All foster litters for the next foster season need to be kittens that have been vaccinated for at least 5 days to be safe.**
* **The filter in their heating unit will need to be changed too.**

**Disciplinary Actions with Foster Volunteers**

* I**f there is a concern, it needs to be addressed with your volunteer department.** 
  + If it is only a correction then the volunteer department does not need to be involved.
  + If you are going to do a verbal warning with documentation, written warning, or final warning then the volunteer manager must be informed and a part of the process.