

Kitten Foster Care Manual



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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of foster care is to place into temporary care those animals that are too young to be desexed, do not cope well in a shelter environment, are long term residents not currently available for adoption, or to relieve the shelter of animals for disease control and space control reasons.

The fostering of animals is an important and rewarding part of work that RSPCA ACT volunteers and staff undertake and gives those animals a wonderful start to life before moving to suitable, lifelong homes.

This manual will assist potential foster carers to decide if they can commit to becoming a foster carer and if they can abide by the conditions and requirements outlined in this manual.

2. GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

Only approved foster carers (registered RSPCA volunteers and staff) are permitted to foster animals. The fostered animals remain the property of RSPCA ACT and the fostering program is conducted under the direction of the Volunteer Coordinator.

All fostering from the RSPCA must be approved by the Animal Care Manager or the Volunteer Coordinator.

It is the role of the Animal Care Manager to organise, monitor and record the fostering of animals in accordance with these guidelines and procedures and to ensure that a high standard of safety is maintained for both carers and animals and that all carers are provided with adequate support and information

To become a carer for RSPCA you must complete and sign the foster carer application and agreement forms. You will be given these forms at the same time as this manual. Read this manual carefully and fill in the application form if you wish to continue in the process of becoming a foster carer.

Before applications are approved, carers must undergo an interview with the Animal Care Manager and / or the Volunteer Coordinator and obtain a working with vulnerable people card. The interview is to discuss any questions you may have and for the coordinator to seek any further information required from the potential foster carer.

There are different types of animals for which you can become a foster carer:

- Pregnant animals or animals with litters
- Orphaned kittens requiring to be hand reared (neonates)
- Animals that are too young for re-homing
- Animals that have behavioural problems that require socialisation or other types of behavioural modifications
- Injured or sick animals receiving treatment

Foster kittens remain the property of RSPCA ACT at all times. The Society reserves the right to refuse permission to foster kittens and to remove kittens from foster care at any time should it be necessary to do so.

RSPCA ACT Foster Carers Network on Facebook

A Facebook page has been set up for current foster carers to share photos and good news stories regarding their foster kittens. To be a part of this group you must agree to abide by RSPCA ACT's Social Media Policy and Code of Conduct.

Please be aware that this page is not for you to get medical advice - this must only be given by the RSPCA Veterinary Clinic. RSPCA staff do monitor the forum but as we are not on this site 24/7 do not expect urgent responses from staff or rely upon Facebook as a means of communicating with staff. RSPCA staff may delete posts that are not relevant to the care of your foster kittens or are in breach of RSPCA policy.

3. IMPORTANT QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

Before you decide to foster for RSPCA...

- Are you able to get to us quickly in an emergency? This means you must have transport readily available.
- Will you be able to spend quality time with the animals?
- On average, it is best to spend at least 2 hours a day with your foster animals. Socialisation can be as important as feeding them and keeping them clean.
- Will you be able to commit to appointments ranging from once a week to every three weeks whether or not they are ill?
- Are you aware that there is a great deal of clean-up and even possible damage to your home when you take a foster home? Foster animals can ruin new drapes, carpets and clothing. RSPCA will not be held responsible for any damage incurred while fostering an animal.
- Are you willing to work with our veterinary care system? Please understand that only our vets can treat foster animals free of charge.
- Can you commit to spending the entire foster period with the animal? If something unexpected happens, you will need to call 02 6287 8100 to inform us of an early foster return.
- Do you feel comfortable explaining to friends and family that these animals are not yours to adopt out and that they must go through the regular adoption process at RSPCA? RSPCA will not hold an animal at a foster carer's request.
- Will you be able to bring the animal back at the end of the foster period? It can be difficult to let go once you have become emotionally attached.

- Are you emotionally prepared to handle the death of one of your foster animals? This can be very difficult, but the sad truth is that it sometimes happens. In this event, RSPCA should be contacted immediately.

4. FOSTERING REQUIREMENTS

We look for a safe, secure home environment with lots of love, attention and handling so our little ones return happy and well socialised and ready to go to a new home. Carers need to be aware that socialising is as important as keeping animals healthy.

Foster carers don't need to be home all day to look after their four legged charges. However, they do need to provide love and companionship for at least a few hours a day so that they return to us well-socialised, and have the best chance of finding a forever home.

We recommend that kittens be contained in smaller spaces and in areas that are tile e.g. spare bathrooms, laundries or studies etc. and, as already mentioned, if the carer is able to spend a few hours a day with these babies it is sufficient. Tiled rooms are much easier to clean for disease control.

If you have your own animals and prefer them not to interact with your visitors, yes, you can still foster. Some carers allow their charges full run of the house and this certainly helps with their socialising - remember though that carpeted areas are difficult to disinfect. However, not everyone is able to provide this - some resident pets will not tolerate visitors in their territory and others may stress too much. Don't think you can't foster if this is you. If you are able to provide a safe, restricted environment for little ones then it is still possible for you to foster.

If you have pets of your own, they must be fully vaccinated.

For foster families with children, we encourage sensible child involvement, but parents must assume responsibility

By fostering a kitten, you can make a huge difference in the life of that cat. Fostering is one of the most rewarding experiences you can have as an animal lover. It offers the best of both worlds to you - the love, affection, and gratitude of an animal without the lifetime of emotional and financial commitments. They will provide you with love, joy, and the satisfaction of having saved a life.

5. TIME AND COMMITMENT

A lot of commitment and effort is required in caring for foster animals. Many of the animals that require fostering have already been through stressful changes, so the carer may be faced with a period of adjustment where the animal, particularly older ones, may be unresponsive or afraid. This is usually overcome with time and patience.

It is important, especially for very young animals, to spend time interacting and playing with people and being cuddled. People who work full-time can foster animals, providing they are willing to spend quality time socialising their charges. You will also need time to feed young animals a minimum of three times each day. Cleaning can also be considerable!!

It is in the animal's best interest to stay with the same foster carer until they are permanently rehomed; transferring between foster homes is not ideal, so we appreciate that you carefully consider that you have the necessary time before committing to foster caring.

In some cases, due to unforeseen circumstances, it may be necessary for you to return an animal to the shelter. If this is to occur the Animal Care Manager should be notified as soon as possible so a replacement carer can be found. If you know you will be unavailable at any time during kitten season (eg: going on holidays) please advise the Animal Care Manager.

Caring for an animal means that an attachment will be formed. Giving them up, even when you know they are going to loving homes, can be difficult and an emotional experience. Make sure that you discuss this aspect of fostering with your family before making a commitment.

The fostering period can be anywhere from one week to ten weeks - each situation is different. Mums with new born babies rely on finding special foster homes. These carers should be prepared to keep all of them together for five weeks, at least, until mum can return to us for desexing and rehoming while her babies grow on solid food and learn some independence. Kittens need to weigh at least 1kg before returning to us to be desexed. The kittens will be booked in for the desexing appointment at the time of their 800g vaccination.

The table below gives an indication to the time commitment which may be required.

Type of foster	Time period required	Hours per Day
Weaned kittens	1-5 weeks	2 hours
Mother Cat and Kittens	2 - 8 weeks	2 hours
Orphaned newborn or unweaned kittens	4-10 weeks EXPERIENCED CARERS ONLY	5 hours
Cats with flu	1-3 weeks	3 hours
Cats / kittens with behavioural problems	1 - 12 weeks but this can vary greatly depending on the problem EXPERIENCED CARERS ONLY	2+ hours
Sick or injured cats / kittens	1-12 weeks depending on type of illness or injury	2+ hours depending on type of illness or injury

6. PREPARING TO FOSTER

Preparing Your Own Pets: If you have pet cats in your home, review their veterinary records and update any vaccinations that may have lapsed (proof will be required). Your pets will also need to be desexed, up to date with worming and flea free.

If your own cat is under current veterinary treatment then you may not be allowed to participate in the foster program, depending on the circumstances.

Preparing Space for Foster Kittens: Foster kittens are to be kept indoors or in a secure outdoor enclosure at all times. They are not allowed to go free-roaming outside.

Outdoor enclosures must be escape proof, sufficiently warm, provide adequate shelter from the elements, and have a covered bed, litter tray and free access to fresh clean water. They should also be sufficient size for cats to move freely about in. Outdoor enclosures are not suitable for kittens under 6 weeks of age.

When keeping cats indoor they should be confined to one room of the house until they become familiar with it. Their litter tray and water bowls should also be kept in this room. When they start to venture into the house they will have a familiar “safe” room to return to should they become frightened or stressed. All windows in the rooms that the cats have access to should be kept secure.

The flooring should be made of a material which is easy to clean and disinfect, such as hard wood, ceramic tiles, linoleum, or smooth concrete.

The kitten room needs to be “cat friendly” and “kitten-proofed”:

- Everything in the room should be easy to wash and disinfect or replaceable
- Remove anything that might fall on a kitten (even a book can cause serious injury)
- Be aware that kittens can climb into tiny holes and crevices and get stuck
- Remove any chemicals or cleaning agents
- If using the bathroom ensure the toilet seat is closed
- If using the laundry, ensure that the cupboards, washing machine lid and clothes drier are kept closed and that disinfectants and detergents are not able to be accessed by the kittens
- It should contain everything the kittens will need to eat, drink, eliminate, sleep and play
- Have at least one bowl for water, one for wet food, and one for dry food. It is best to provide more bowls if you have several kittens so no one has to compete for access to food
- Put the litter trays as far away as possible from food, water and bedding. Be sure to provide enough trays so that each kitten has a clean place to eliminate - one tray for every 2 kittens

- A secure sleeping area, such as a cat carrier with the door removed or a box on its side, will help the kittens feel safe—this is especially important for shy kittens
- Provide safe, disposable or easily sanitised toys to entertain the kittens when you are not with them, such as ping pong balls.

What We Will Provide: Foster parents receive Hills Science Diet food from RSPCA to feed to their charges as well as worming treatment and any medication they may need. For each new litter, you will also receive bedding, toys, litter and litter trays, tips for caring for your foster animals, identification collars and weight charts. You can also contact RSPCA for advice. Please note the RSPCA does not cover the cost of carpet cleaning if foster parents decide to give their kittens access to carpeted areas. Also available to carers is a Veterinary Clinic service which is available 9.00am - 5.00pm 6 days a week should there be any health issues which occur during the foster period - please call for an appointment.

What you need to bring: 1 Litre container for kitten milk formula (if caring for neonates); 2 Litre container for Science Diet Kitten Dry food; 10 Litre container for kitty litter.

7. PICKING UP FOSTER KITTENS

Usually fostering of only one litter at a time is permitted. Mixing litters of animals and overcrowding increases the risk of disease and can lead to stress, which in turn can lead to disease problems such as cat flu.

Very young animals cannot be fostered out by carers who cannot make arrangements for the animals to be cared for whilst they are at work; very young kittens require frequent feeding throughout the day - at least every 2 - 3 hours. These animals are at risk of contracting disease if homed at the shelter and it is in their interest to be fostered.

Carers who are unable to have someone attend to very young animals should take adult animals or older kittens that are more able to last through the day without frequent feeding.

When we have kittens available for foster care, the Animal Care Manager will contact all appropriate foster carers to see if they are available to take these kittens.

Kittens need to be placed in foster homes as soon as possible, so please respond as soon as you can - even if it is to say “No”.

Whoever contacts the Animal Care Manager first will foster the kittens. It is necessary to make an appointment for a specific time to collect them during RSPCA business hours.

If you are picking up foster kittens for the first time, be prepared to carry the supplies. The foster program will provide a box for you to transport the kittens in.

Introducing a Foster Animal into your home

Introducing a new animal to your home where you already have pets can take a bit of planning. Make sure that you have an area in which to separate animals if there is a problem. Some key points are:

- Newly introduced animals should not be left alone together unsupervised for the first few days.
- Never leave adult animals with kittens unsupervised
- Make sure your own dogs have some basic training. This way you will have some control over them if there is a problem.

8. RETURNING FOSTER KITTENS

Saying goodbye to foster animals can hurt. But most foster parents also say that the rewards of giving animals another chance in life far outweigh the pain of parting. And of course, there are always plenty of other kittens and cats waiting to fill their space!

Fostered animals must be returned at the agreed time to the shelter to be made available for rehoming. Following are some indicators for when an animal is ready to be rehomed:

- What was the agreed date on the Foster Care Form to return the kittens for desexing? If a date has not been organised, please call the RSPCA Veterinary Clinic on 6287 8100.
- Have the kittens reached their required weight of a minimum 1kg? If not please call the RSPCA Veterinary Clinic to re-schedule.
- Has the animal recovered from its illness/injury?

Make sure they have their ID collars on.

When you return the kittens, they are not immediately made available for adoption. First they must undergo a health check. During the health check, RSPCA examines the kittens to see if they look healthy and to ensure they have reached the required weight for desexing. Please be aware that if the kittens have not reached desexing weight you may need to keep them in your care for a little while longer.

Please fill out the return form (this can be done in advance) so we have extra information to give potential adopters and facilitate the adoption process. You can use one form for all kittens or if there is specific issues for each kitten separate forms can be used.

If you plan on continuing to foster, hold on to the food and kitty litter supplies but return all bowls, litter trays, toys, blankets and bedding so that they can be thoroughly disinfected. New supplies will be given to you with the next lot of kittens.

Please remember to thoroughly disinfect the room in which the kittens were contained before taking more foster kittens home. Start by removing everything the kittens slept on, ate from, played with and eliminated in. Scrub everything the kittens could reach (don't forget the walls) with a bleach solution (1 part bleach to 32 parts **cold water** – you should always mix the bleach with **cold water** to reduce any harmful vapours). Throw away any non-cleanable materials. This should prevent any new litters from catching anything that the previous kittens contracted.

RSPCA ACT retains ownership of the fostered animals until the animal has been rehomed. The rehoming of animals will be conducted in accordance with the shelter's policy for adoption.

9. KITTEN CARE

Daily Monitoring

It is important to monitor a kitten's health and weight daily. We recommend you have a "daily foster journal form" where you should record each kitten's weight, eating habits and overall health.

- Look over your kitten every day for any changes or potential medical problems.
- Check body and fur.
- Look closely at eyes, in mouth and ears.
- Check collars are not too tight or too loose.
- Weigh kittens and record weight on supplied record forms.
- Check energy levels.

Weighing Your Kittens

You should weigh your kittens at the same time every day and keep track of their weight gain/loss in the chart provided. Keep this log current, as it will be the easiest way to tell when you have a serious problem and need to seek help for the kittens! Ideally, your foster kittens should be gaining 10-15 grams a day. **If your kittens are not eating and are losing weight you must contact the RSPCA Veterinary Clinic and you may need to bring the kittens in right away.**

Feeding

You will be provided with Hills Science Diet Kitten food from the shelter when you collect your foster kittens. Hills are the sponsors of RSPCA shelters all over Australia and feeding other brands of food is in breach of our contract with Hills. Hills Science Diet is a premium food and a complete diet so dietary supplementation is not required.

Ensuring that the kittens are being fed Hills Science Diet whilst in your care will give them a good start in life. When the kittens are returned and adopted, we can

recommend to their new owners that they keep them on the diet that they are used to, which will mean less risk of developing diarrhoea.

The kittens should have access to Hills Science Diet dry food and fresh water at all times. Cow's milk should not be fed as it is too high in lactose for kittens and can cause diarrhoea.

If your foster kittens refuse to eat the food you were given, contact the Animal Care Manager or RSPCA Veterinary Clinic. The person you talk to will help you determine whether this is a medical problem or a preference issue, and will advise you of the next step to take. Do not attempt to make this decision yourself.

Points to remember:

- Kittens should be fed at least 2 times a day. Dry food can be left with them.
- Pick up dirty wet food dishes.
- Monitor appetites.
- Do not give them cow's milk.
- Fresh water should be available at all times

Cleaning Schedule

Litter trays must be provided at all times for toileting. Cats are fussy with their toilet habits so make sure that:

- The kittens can get easily in and out of the litter tray
- There is one tray for every two kittens
- The trays are to be completely emptied then cleaned in hot water and detergent on a daily basis. Dry the litter tray in the sun when possible. All faecal material should be removed as soon as possible (2 - 3 times a day).
- Keep litter trays well separated from food and water bowls.
- Clean all "accidents" well with enzyme cleaners - do not use ammonia based cleaners as this will encourage the kitten to go back to that spot.
- Monitor for diarrhoea.

Playtime & Mental Stimulation

- Kittens should receive a minimum of two play sessions daily with interactive toys.
- Remember to discourage play with hands.
- Interactive toys should not be left unattended with kittens.
- Safe solo toys such as ping pong balls should be left out at all times.
- Change up the environment in small ways (eg cardboard boxes, move things around in the kittens' room).

Socialisation & Handling

Emotional and physical closeness to you is as important to a kitten as food and warmth. Handle the kittens often, letting them snuggle. You'll be surprised how this early cuddle activity will stay a basic instinct as the cat grows into an adult. Playing with the kitten with a variety of toys is also important; this will help them develop motor skills and also help them bond to you.

Socialisation is extremely important for well adjusted kittens. Introduce the kittens to other animals as soon as possible. Obviously never put any animal at risk of danger. Remember, when other animals are present, you must talk to and where possible touch them as much as possible.

While the kittens are with you, gradually expose them to all aspects of normal household living - children, other pets, visitors and noises such as televisions, vacuum cleaners and the like. Take them for little outings into different areas of the house whilst keeping them secure and protected in a cat carrier.

There is a trade-off between the risk of infection and the need to socialise a kitten. Ensure that all animals and humans who come into contact with the kitten are healthy (cats must be vaccinated). A poorly socialised kitten makes a poor pet and may be unable to be homed.

- Socialise kittens a minimum of 2-3 20-minute visits daily.
- Under-socialised kittens 3-4 20-minute visits daily.
- Encourage affectionate behaviour.
- Kittens should meet new people a few times weekly if possible.
- Medium or long-haired kittens especially may benefit from daily exposure to brushing in very small amounts.
- Gently handling paws in preparation for nail trimming.
- Exposure to being picked up.

10. HEALTH & HYGIENE

Veterinary Health Assessments

When kittens first arrive at the shelter they are examined by veterinary staff, weighed and wormed and if old enough they are given their initial vaccination.

If worming or other medication is prescribed whilst the animal is in care, the foster carer will be provided with the appropriate medication and must record the administering of the medication. Only give kittens medications which are prescribed specifically for them by the RSPCA veterinarians.

Animals fostered through RSPCA ACT will receive free veterinary treatment at the RSPCA Veterinary Clinic which has staff available 6 days a week. The RSPCA ACT will not reimburse foster carers for veterinary bills for procedures or services that have been performed by outside veterinary clinics unless authorised by the

Director of Animal Welfare. To obtain permission, the Director of Animal Welfare can be emailed on: jgregor@rspca-act.org.au.

We understand that some emergencies do occur and you may need to take your foster animal to a veterinarian prior to receiving authorisation - these circumstances will be reviewed on a case by case basis to determine whether reimbursement will be given. The Director of Animal Welfare must be notified as soon as possible in these circumstances.

If you have any health concerns with your kittens, please contact the RSPCA Veterinary Clinic on 6287 8100 for advice.

When you come in for medical appointments, please make sure to have identifying collars on the kittens and that they are contained in a secure carry cage.

Monitoring for Signs of Disease

Due to the shelter environment and the fact that these kittens have very fragile immune systems, kittens are prone to catching colds and other sicknesses. These illnesses range from mild to life-threatening in nature. Treatment depends on the type of disease, the welfare of the animals, and the time required for recovery.

Because of their age, their unknown histories and small body size, if a foster kitten becomes sick they will usually deteriorate at a rapid rate (i.e. they can be normal one day yet become very sick in a matter of hours).

Healthy kittens have a lot of energy when they are awake. They are playful and will only spend a short time in your lap. The eyes and nose should be generally free of any discharge. The stool will be firm and well-shaped. Kittens eat a lot, but the amount they drink depends on how much wet food they consume (the more wet food, the less water). Kittens may sneeze occasionally. They may also scratch a little. These are normal kitten behaviours. It is not always obvious when the kittens are sick. In nature, cats will hide any sickness so they don't appear vulnerable.

Signs of impending illness include:

- Lethargy - not wanting to come out for attention, sleeping a lot, hiding
- Inappetance or reduced food and water intake of more than 24 hour duration
- Diarrhoea
- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Drooling / excess salivation
- Open mouth breathing
- Weepy eyes - clear, green or yellow
- Closed eyelids
- Nasal discharge - clear, green or yellow

- Lameness or unwillingness to move about freely
- Any lumps or painful regions on the body and/or legs
- Scratching anywhere on the body
- Areas of hair loss
- Any other signs which appear to be unusual for the kitten

If you notice any of these signs then you must contact the RSPCA as soon as possible. If veterinary care is required out of RSPCA Veterinary clinic hours, approval must be given by the Director of Animal Welfare for you to attend another veterinary clinic if you wish to be re-imbursed. RSPCA (ACT) is not responsible for any accidents that may occur in the foster carer's home or if you attend another veterinary clinic without approval. This is at the expense of the foster carer.

Diarrhoea – There are 3 types of cat stool: normal, soft and diarrhoea.

Normal stool will be firm and well-shaped. When you first notice soft stool, you should drop off a faecal sample. If it continues or gets worse, make a veterinary appointment and bring a faecal sample with you to the appointment. Diarrhoea is completely liquid. It may appear that the kitten is excreting plain water or there may be some colour to it. Either way, make an appointment (02 6287 8100) and bring a faecal sample (get what you can) with you. Monitor the kitten, as diarrhoea can lead to dehydration and become serious rather quickly, even fatal.

Coccidia is a disease more common in kittens especially when there is overcrowding. These parasites burrow into the lining of the intestine causing vomiting, especially in the mornings; offensive diarrhoea, often blood stained; anaemia and unless treated, the kittens become increasingly listless and may die. Kittens with this disease need to be isolated, treated daily and kept as clean as possible to stop them re-infecting themselves with the contaminated faeces.

Giardia is a common protozoan that lives in the small intestine of all animals. Clinical signs can be unapparent, continuous, or persistent with diarrhoea and weight loss. Several examinations are sometimes needed to identify the organism. Treatment is with oral medication to all exposed pets.

Worms (roundworms & tapeworms) are common in kittens. Generally, kittens are de-wormed when they first come in to the RSPCA.

Roundworms look like spaghetti, and will come out in the litter box or in vomit.

Tapeworms are white and segmented. Occasionally you will see the whole worm, but more often you will see what looks like dried rice stuck to the kittens' hindquarters.

If you see any worms, please speak to one of the veterinary staff.

Vomiting is not serious unless it happens more than once. If your kittens keep vomiting, call the Veterinary Clinic (02 6287 8100) right away. If the kittens ingested something poisonous, the faster it is treated, the better the outcome.

Eye Discharge – It is normal for kittens to wake up with a little dark crust in their eyes. If you notice that the kittens have yellow or green discharge coming from their eyes all the time, make a veterinary appointment. You can treat the symptoms of the eye infection by wiping the eyes with a warm, wet towel until it is time for your appointment.

Sneezing/Nasal Discharge – Occasional sneezing is quite common in small kittens. If the sneezing becomes frequent, examine the discharge coming from the sneeze. If it is clear, the infection is probably viral and medication may not be needed but it is important to monitor the kittens in case the problem gets worse. If the discharge becomes coloured (e.g. green or yellow), it is time to make a veterinary appointment because the kitten may have a bacterial infection. Be sure to monitor the kittens' breathing as well. If the kittens seem to be struggling to breathe or are breathing with their mouths open, call the veterinary clinic immediately (02 6287 8100) for advice. Also, be sure that the kittens are still eating, as a kitten won't eat what he or she can't smell.

Lethargy – Healthy kittens are normally active when they are awake. Sick kittens may have low energy and want to just sit in your lap. Each kitten is different, depending on their socialisation level, but if you notice a drop in the kitten's individual energy level, it is best to make a veterinary appointment. Some under-socialised kittens will have a tendency to move less because they are frightened, so it may be difficult to monitor their energy level. If you are not sure whether your kitten is lethargic or just being quiet and still, please call RSPCA (02 6287 8100) for advice. If a kitten can't be roused or seems weak, this is an emergency!

Fleas, lice, & ear mites – Many of the kittens we receive in the foster care system were born outdoors so they may come to us with fleas. If fleas are noticed at time of veterinary examination, the kittens receive a flea treatment. Kittens with fleas will scratch themselves a lot. If you see fleas on your foster kittens contact RSPCA (02 6287 8100) so that we can organise treatment for your kittens.

Lice are a different matter. You will not see the actual adult lice. Instead, you will see white dots on the kittens' fur. If you can brush the dots off, it is dandruff. If you cannot remove the dots, then it is probably lice. Make a veterinary appointment and the veterinarian will treat the lice. Lice are species-specific, and you cannot catch them.

Kittens with ear mites will scratch their ears and shake their heads a lot. Inside the ears you will see a dark discharge resembling coffee grounds. Make a veterinary appointment to get the kitten treated.

Ringworm – Normally the fur around the lips, on the eyelids, and on the ears is a little thin. This is nothing to worry about. However, if you notice hair thinning or completely coming out in patches, please make a veterinary appointment. Fur loss is the first indicator of ringworm, which is a fungus that can be spread to humans and other household pets. The young, the elderly, and people and animals with suppressed immune systems are most susceptible. While it is not fatal, ringworm is itchy to people and very hard to get out of your home. Wash your hands and any clothing that you wear in the fostering room with the kittens before touching your pets.

Unfortunately ringworm can take months to treat and kittens can become potential carriers of this zoonotic disease. Kittens with ringworm must be returned to the RSPCA immediately and you will not be able to foster kittens for the rest of the season. RSPCA will not cover costs for treatment of your family or other pets if they contract ringworm from foster kittens.

Toxoplasmosis is a disease caused by a parasite which is specific to cats. It is of particular concern because of the risk to pregnant women and their unborn child. Because of this risk, pregnant women are not allowed to participate in the kitten foster care program.

Litter boxes should be cleaned daily as this reduces the risk of transmission. Always wear gloves when handling cat litter trays.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Each day all food and water bowls, feeding utensils and litter trays should be cleaned in hot water and detergent. Wash food and water bowls and feeding utensils separately from litter trays. It is advisable to wear gloves when cleaning out litter trays.

Between batches of kittens it is very important to return all bowls, litter trays, bedding and carry cages so that they can be properly disinfected. You will receive new items for your next batch of kittens.

Personal Hygiene

Below is a list of important hygiene practices which you are advised to follow to ensure your own health and safety:

- Ensure that you have a current tetanus vaccination
- Wear old, protective clothing that may be thrown away when dealing with sick animals
- Wear gloves when changing litter trays and when cleaning up faeces, urine or vomit
- Wash your hands after handling kittens and before preparing and eating food
- Do not allow kittens to lick your face or mouth

- Do not allow kittens to eat or drink off utensils used for serving food to humans
- Regularly clean bedding, sleeping areas etc. with disinfectants.
- Change and disinfect litter trays daily
- Disinfect scratches and bites thoroughly and seek medical advice. Seek assistance when handling animals whose dispositions are questionable
- Report any bites/scratches to the Volunteer Co-ordinator

11. Fostering a Mother Cat with Kittens

A foster carer who wishes to foster a mother cat with kittens must have a quiet room where she can be contained away from the hub of daily activity. A home with no other pets is ideal, but if you do have pets, you should be able to prevent your pet from going up to the door of the private room. Mother cat fosters are not recommended if you have a dog, unless it is a very mellow and quiet dog or if your home environment is loud and/or active, such as with young children.

You will need to have the room set-up before you collect your foster mum and babies from the Shelter. The room needs to have one or two larger “safe spaces” (nests, boxes, etc) lined with towels or blankets as mum will want to choose somewhere nice and safe for her babies.

When you first let mum out, do not pat her or make too many advances, leave her alone with the kittens and let her have some time to explore her new home. Adult cats can take a while to adjust to new places, sometimes they may need a few days before coming out of hiding.

Proceed slowly with the mother cat as some can be very protective of their babies - let her come to you for pats and stop at any signs of discomfort such as swishing tail, tensing up, moving away, hissing or growling.

For the first few weeks of life the mother cat should do everything necessary for the kittens but that should not stop you from starting their important socialisation process - as long as mum is happy with you handling the kittens.

As soon as you notice the kittens showing interest in mum’s food (at about 3 weeks of age) you can start offering them either canned Hills Science Diet Kitten food or you can soak the dry biscuits. This should be offered to them 3 - 4 times a day. By about 5 weeks of age they should be having no problem with eating dry biscuits. At this stage the mother cat should be returned to RSPCA for re-homing.

Fostering a mother cat and kittens is a very exciting and rewarding job as you will get to see intimately how a mother cat cares for her kittens and the stages of development in their relationship. We do not like moving a mother cat and kittens around from carer to carer if at all possible so you must ensure that you are available for the entire period if you wish to take on this responsibility.

When to Separate Kittens & Mum

If all members of your feline family are healthy and well-socialised, we recommend that the mothers stay with their kittens until they are about 5 weeks of age and eating solid food. It is suggested by removing the mothers at this age it reduces the chance of mother cats passing on cat flu to their kittens if they are a “carrier” cat. However, sometimes there are medical or behavioural reasons to separate mom from kittens earlier. These include:

- Mum is not taking care of the babies. Work closely with foster and medical staff to determine this; warning signs include not nursing, not responding to the kittens’ crying, staying away from the babies that are under 5 weeks, and not grooming the babies.
- Mum is under-socialised or has other behaviour concerns, and is not readily handleable by people. Mum may also prevent kittens from being handled if she has maternal aggression, or if the foster parent is scared to approach. We do not want kittens picking up on this behaviour pattern (imprinting) so we will want the babies separated from the mum as soon as medically advisable. We also may want to get the mum back to the RSPCA earlier so cat behaviour staff can work with her behaviour issues.
- Mum is taking care of the babies, but there are medical concerns for the mum, or the babies, which warrant separation. This is not very common; our veterinary staff will alert you to this if it is necessary.

Maternal Neglect – About 8% of kittens die from inadequate maternal care. The deaths are usually due to hypothermia if the kitten strays away and is not retrieved, or improper/inadequate nursing at birth and after. Maternal neglect has several causes—some cats seem to lack maternal instincts. In some cases, it is nature’s way: if kittens have birth defects or are otherwise weak at birth, the mum may ignore them, or as discussed below, cannibalise them. In many cases, it seems that environmental stress plays a role, and thus it is very important that the environment be kept quiet, calm and with few visits. Cats should primarily be left alone the first 2 weeks postpartum except to feed, clean, and check in on the babies a few brief times a day.

You will need to watch daily for signs that a mother is neglecting her young, especially in the first few weeks. Call us if:

- The mother spends all her time away from the kittens.
- She does not groom or nurse them frequently.
- The kittens cry and she seems not to respond.

Maternal Aggression towards other animals – Aggressive behaviour towards cats or dogs is very common in mum cats, as they are trying to protect their young. Please do not try to introduce these foster cats to other animals. This can be very stressful and offers no advantages. Please block any avenues they may

have for seeing other cats or dogs, and strictly enforce separation from your resident pets.

If, for some reason, the mum cat sees another animal and is upset, quickly remove the source of anxiety (cover up window, etc.) and leave the room. Do not attempt to comfort or reassure the mum cat or babies. Come back in 20 minutes or so to check on them.

Maternal Aggression towards people – Occasionally, mother cats have strong protective instincts against humans as well. They may hiss, growl, or strike out if you approach the kittens. At the RSPCA, we try to screen for these behaviours but sometimes they will develop down the line. If faced with this situation, move very slowly around the mum cat and the nest. Wear a long sleeved sweatshirt to protect yourself as you clean around her. Try to bribe her with tasty treats such as chicken baby food. Speak in a soft, reassuring voice, and try not to react if the mum cat hisses or growls. **DO NOT** correct the cat by spraying her with water or undertaking other types of correction. Remember, she is acting out of a natural instinct to protect her young, and if you act in a threatening manner, her behaviour may escalate. Call RSPCA at the first sign of maternal aggression for individual advice and evaluation of your situation. In some cases, we may advise the return of mum and kittens, or just the mum, depending on the age and health of the kittens.

12. GENERAL CRITERIA FOR EMERGENCIES

Emergency situations include:

- Continuous weight loss
- Continuous diarrhoea
- Continuous vomiting
- Bleeding of any kind—nose, urine, stool
- Any trauma—hit by a car, dropped, limp, stepped on, unconscious
- Difficulty in breathing/blocked airway
- Lethargy
- Dehydration
- If the animal has vomiting or diarrhoea, but is still active, eating and drinking, it can probably wait until the next day to receive help. However, if the animal is lethargic and shows no interest in food or water, it is wise to seek emergency help at the time.
- Coughing or sneezing should pose no immediate problems unless accompanied by blood or symptoms such as lethargy or dehydration.

Please contact the RSPCA Veterinary Clinic immediately on 02 6287 8100 if your kitten exhibits any of the above signs.

13. KITTEN CHEAT SHEET

SITUATION	WHAT TO DO
Kittens are losing weight, not very energetic and/or are having diarrhoea	Make a veterinary appointment to have the kittens seen AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. Kittens are so small that any weight loss is significant.
Kittens are having liquid diarrhoea for more than 12 hours	Make a veterinary appointment to have the kittens seen right away. Bring a stool sample if possible. Diarrhoea can cause dehydration which can kill your kittens. If the kittens are having liquid diarrhoea, are not eating well and are not energetic, this could be an emergency.
Kittens are not eating, don't seem interested in food but are energetic	Call RSPCA for advice. Do not give kittens any food that is not supplied by the RSPCA Foster Program.
Kittens are having very soft stool but are eating and energetic	Collect a faecal sample and drop it off at the veterinary clinic. The fresher the sample, the better, and if you are unable to bring the sample in immediately, please place it in the refrigerator. If there are any parasites, a veterinarian will call you and have you come in for medication. If you don't hear from anyone but the kitten continues to have soft stool, make a veterinary appointment and bring in a faecal sample.
Kittens are not losing weight, but are not gaining weight	If the kittens are energetic, eating well and not having diarrhoea, keep monitoring the kittens and if they do not gain weight in 24 hours or if their appetite or energy level drops, call the veterinary clinic.
Kittens are sneezing and having thick or yellow/green discharge	Make a veterinary appointment. Warm up the wet food, if kittens can't smell the food they don't eat.
Kittens eyes look weepy and are red or having green/yellow discharge	Make a veterinary appointment. In the meantime, use a cotton ball or soft cloth to gently clean the eyes (don't rub!) of any discharge and apply a warm compress for a few minutes once or twice a day.
Kittens are due for vaccinations	Kittens are due for vaccinations at 4 weeks (400g) and 8 weeks (800g). Please call the RSPCA Veterinary Clinic to make a vaccination appointment.

Appendix 1 – Kitten Ageing Chart

ONE - FOUR DAYS

- Eyes & Ears Closed
- Pigment bright pink
- Umbilical cord present
- No gag reflex
- Weight 100 - 130g



FIVE - SIX DAYS

- Eyes Closed
- Ears beginning to open
- Pigment bright pink
- No gag reflex
- Weight 130 - 140g



SEVEN - EIGHT DAYS

- Eyes Closed
- Hearing some sounds
- Begin crawling, unable to hold full body weight
- No gag reflex
- Weight 140 - 160g



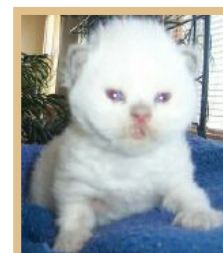
NINE - ELEVEN DAYS

- Eyes begin to open
- Hearing some sounds
- Crawling
- No gag reflex
- Weight 160 - 190g



TWELVE - FOURTEEN DAYS

- Eyes opening
- Hearing some sounds
- Crawling
- Weight 190 - 210g



FIFTEEN - SIXTEEN DAYS

- Eyes open with some sight
- Hearing natural sounds
- Walking Begins
- Weight 210 - 245g



THREE WEEKS

- Vision nearly normal
- Hearing
- Walking
- Begin introducing canned food
- Social play begins
- Begin grooming
- Incisor teeth begin erupting
- Weight 330g



FOUR WEEKS

- Vision normal
- Hearing
- Walking
- Eating canned food
- Introduce dry food 24/7
- Social play
- Begin grooming
- Eye color may begin changing
- Canine teeth erupting and/or present
- Weight 430g



FIVE WEEKS

- Eating canned food
- Introduce dry food 24/7
- Social play, stalking, pouncing
- Begin grooming
- Eye color may begin changing
- Lower pre-molars present
- Weight 540g



SIX WEEKS

- Eating canned food
- Introduce dry food 24/7
- Social play, stalking, pouncing and good eye-paw coordination
- Grooming
- Eye color changing to adult color
- Introduce to other species
- Weight 650g



SEVEN WEEKS

- Eating canned food
- Introduce dry food 24/7
- Social play, stalking, pouncing and good eye-paw coordination
- Grooming
- Eye color changing to adult color
- Introduce to other species
- Weight 775g



EIGHT WEEKS

- Eating canned food
- Introduce dry food 24/7
- Adult motor skills
- Grooming
- Adult eye color present
- Adult sleeping patterns
- Adult social skills
- Adult Body Temperature
- All deciduous teeth present
- Weight 900g



Appendix 2 – Kitten Foster Application Form

Volunteer & Foster Carer Application Form

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with the RSPCA ACT.

We rely on the community to continue to provide care for the thousands of animals that come to our shelter every year. Our volunteers provide invaluable assistance in many different areas and are an integral part of our organisation.

Steps to Becoming a Volunteer

Working with Vulnerable People Registration

All volunteers are required to hold Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) registration. WWVP Registration involves a background check and is free for volunteers to obtain. Please go to Office of Regulatory Services website (www.ors.act.gov.au) for detailed instructions about the process and to submit your application online. Alternatively, you can contact the Office of Regulatory Services on 6207 3000, or email (wwvp@act.gov.au) to have a paper application sent to you, or you can visit any of the Canberra Connect shopfronts. Processing generally takes up to three weeks. Once your application has been processed you will receive your WWVP card in the mail.

Volunteer & Foster Carer Application & Resume

Please complete this Volunteer & Foster Carer Application form and return it to me via email or post with a copy of your WWVP card (front and back) attached along with a copy of your current resume. If you wish to become a foster carer, the entire form must be completed. If you are interested in volunteering but not in foster care, please complete the initial two pages of the form.

Interview

Once you have returned your application you will be contacted to arrange an interview to discuss your volunteering options.

RSPCA ACT Membership

All volunteers are required to hold RSPCA ACT membership. Membership will be discussed at interview and will need to be obtained after acceptance into the volunteer program. To find out more about RSPCA ACT membership, please visit our website (www.RSPCA ACT-act.org.au/get-involved/membership).

Volunteer Induction

Attendance at a Volunteer Induction provides a great overview of the RSPCA ACT and important information about volunteering with us. This is a general induction which all volunteers must attend and will be followed by further orientation and training relevant to the department you will be volunteering in and the roles which you will be undertaking.

Role Specific Induction and Training

Specific training and induction requirements will vary depending on the roles which you are interested in and will be discussed at interview.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions. I look forward to hearing from you.

Bethany Flanagan

Volunteer Coordinator

E Bethany.Flanagan@rspca-act.org.au P 62878127

PO Box 3082, Weston Creek ACT 2611 Australia

Personal Information				Date			
Given Names			Surname				
Date of Birth			Gender				
Home Address			Suburb		Postcode		
Email Address							
Contact Numbers		Home		Work		Mobile	
Are you an RSPCA ACT member?							Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Emergency Contact Details		
Name	Contact Number	Relationship to you

References		
Please include the details for one referee.		
Name	Contact Number	Relationship to you

Working with Vulnerable People (WWVP) Registration			
Please complete the details below and include a copy of your card (front and back) with this application.			
WWVP Registration No.		WWVP Expiry	

Availability						
What is your work status?		Full time <input type="checkbox"/>		Part time <input type="checkbox"/>		Casual <input type="checkbox"/>
		duties <input type="checkbox"/>		Student <input type="checkbox"/>		Home
Please indicate your volunteering availability below.						
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
How many hours would you like to volunteer?		Per week		Per month		

Interests, Skills and Experience

Why have you decided to volunteer with the RSPCA ACT?

Is there a particular area/volunteer role which you are most interested in?

What skills and experience will you bring to volunteering? (Please provide a copy of your resume.)

How do you think you will cope knowing that in some situations, when it is in the animal's best interest, they might need to be euthanised by the RSPCA ACT?

Medical Information

Please note that we are unable to engage pregnant women as volunteers due to the nature of the volunteer roles and the fact that our volunteer insurance cover does not extend to volunteers who are pregnant.

Please include information about any health related issues (including any physical or psychological medical condition, disability, allergy or past injury, as well as any medication which you are taking or medical treatment which you are undergoing) which might affect you during your time spent volunteering. This information will help us to take responsible action to assist you should you become unwell while volunteering for the RSPCA ACT.

Do you currently suffer from any allergies and/or medical conditions or injuries? Yes No

If yes, please provide details.

Are there certain tasks which you are unable to safely undertake? Yes No

If yes, please provide details.

When was your last tetanus vaccination?

Foster Care		
Are you interested in fostering dogs or cats in your home?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Cats <input type="checkbox"/> Dogs <input type="checkbox"/>
Please complete the following only if you are interested in foster caring.		
Personal and Household Details		
Please List all members of the household including their ages.		
Who will be working with the foster animal(s)?		
How many hours per day do you have to spend with your foster(s)?		
Do you have prior experience with foster care? If yes, please provide details.		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Are you interested in having an experienced foster carer as a mentor (someone you can call with questions or for advice)?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Is anyone in your household pregnant?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Is anyone in your household immune-suppressed?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Do you feel emotionally capable of returning your foster(s) to the RSPCA ACT when the foster care term has ended?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
When are you available to start fostering?		

Residential Details		
Do you live in a:	House <input type="checkbox"/> Townhouse <input type="checkbox"/> Unit <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) <input type="checkbox"/>	
Are you a:	Home owner <input type="checkbox"/> Renting <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify) <input type="checkbox"/>	
Where in your home will you keep your foster(s)?		
On a scale of 1 - 5, what is the activity level in your home? (1 = very quiet, 5 = very active)		

Other Animals		
Do you have pets of your own? If yes, please provide details about the type and age of all pets below.		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Are your own pets allowed in the house?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Are you able to keep the foster(s) separate to your own animals?		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Are your pets currently vaccinated?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Are your pets desexed? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Do your pets have any medical conditions? If yes, please provide details.		Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Fostering Cats	
Please complete the following section if you are interested in fostering cats	
Please indicate which of the following fosters you'd be interested in.	
Mother cat with nursing young - mother will need to be kept with young until they are weaned at four to five weeks of age.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Neonatal kittens - orphans under four weeks of age requiring intensive hand rearing and four to six weeks of care.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Juvenile kittens - four to eight weeks of age requiring two to four weeks of care.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Injured or sick animals - will probably require medications or special housing conditions	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Are you able to keep your foster(s) safe at all times (inside your house with secure fly-screen doors and windows or in an outdoor enclosure)?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Fostering Dogs			
Please complete the following section if you are interested in fostering dogs			
Please indicate which of the following fosters you'd be interested in.			
Puppy	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Small	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Adult	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Medium	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Senior	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>	Large	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
How big is your yard?		Is your yard fully enclosed?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
What material is your fence made of?			
How high are your fences?		Is the fence in good condition?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
If you aren't currently a dog owner, have you previously owned a dog? If yes, please provide details.			Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
What experience do you have in dog behaviour and training?			

If you have any other information or comments you would like to share, please do so below.

Thank you for completing this application. Please return it to Bethany Flanagan, Volunteer Coordinator.

Email - Bethany.Flanagan@RSPCA ACT-act.org.au

Post - PO Box 3082, Weston Creek ACT 2611 Australia

Appendix 3 – Volunteer Agreement

Volunteer Agreement

Declaration

I _____ understand and agree:

- that the tasks I undertake for RSPCA ACT are voluntary in capacity;
- that I must abide by RSPCA ACT policies and may request at any time to be provided with copies of relevant policies;
- that I am not permitted to share photos or videos taken at RSPCA ACT's shelter or at RSPCA ACT events on personal social media pages, or comment on RSPCA ACT related stories on social media or external websites;
- that the training required for me to become a valuable volunteer constitutes significant input of resources from RSPCA ACT, and I therefore commit to volunteer for at least a 6 month period;
- that no employment relationship exists between myself and RSPCA ACT and I will receive no remuneration for my volunteer services;
- that RSPCA ACT reserves the right to release a volunteer at any point if, for any reason, the volunteer is deemed unsuitable;
- that my hours of volunteer work are at the discretion of RSPCA ACT;
- that RSPCA ACT may change or cancel any part of its volunteer program as it sees fit;
- that I will be covered by RSPCA ACT's voluntary workers' insurance while on approved RSPCA ACT volunteer duties;
- that I will be subject to the supervision of paid staff and supervising volunteers of RSPCA ACT;
- that the terms and conditions of this Volunteer Agreement apply even if I am engaged as an employee for RSPCA ACT as well as a volunteer;
- that if I am provided with access to information considered confidential by RSPCA ACT (or which is obviously so) I will not use or disclose any of the information to anyone without clear consent from management;
- that I will not remove any property, including electronic information (for example logos) without clear, written consent from management;
- that I will inform RSPCA ACT immediately if any health issues or otherwise arise which could affect my ability to continue to volunteer.

Name of Volunteer	
Signature	
Volunteer Coordinator Signature	
Date	

Volunteer Photo and Video Release

Permission to use photographs and video footage

Please complete this section of the form if you consent to any photographs and video footage taken of you to be used by RSPCA ACT.

- I grant to RSPCA ACT, its representatives, volunteers and employees the right to take photographs and video footage of me and my property in connection with the volunteering program.
- I authorise RSPCA ACT, to copyright, use, publish and display the same in print and electronically.

Name	Signature

Appendix 4 – Foster Kitten Agreement Form

Kitten Foster Care Agreement

Thank you for volunteering your time with the RSPCA ACT Foster Program.

The rules listed below are designed to help you nurture and support kittens that are too small or sick to be adopted into their forever homes.

Declaration

I, _____, agree to foster cats/kittens for RSPCA ACT and to care for them as directed by the RSPCA ACT.

I have received and read the RSPCA ACT Kitten Foster Care Program Manual and agree to abide with the guidelines as explained in the document.

I understand that fostered cats/kittens remain the property of the RSPCA ACT and that they will be returned to the Society when requested to do so.

I agree that I will not attempt to arrange the adoption/sale of any cat/kitten fostered to me, nor will I seek to adopt any such cat/kitten myself unless authorised by the Director of Animal Welfare or the Animal Care Manager.

I understand that the RSPCA ACT is not responsible for any damage caused by the foster cats/kittens to any person, person living in my home, animal, animal living in my home or property (including damage to me or my home).

I also agree to the following:

- To allow inspection of the cats/kittens and the area in which they are kept at any time;
- To provide clean, dry, comfortable housing and bedding and adequate space to accommodate all cats/kittens without overcrowding;
- To keep cats/kittens indoors or in a contained outdoor enclosure and to keep them safe at all times;
- To feed the cats/kittens and maintain their hygiene in accordance with the Kitten Foster Care Program Manual guidelines;
- To return the cats/kittens for their scheduled Vet check appointments and to return them at the end of the foster period;
- To monitor the cats/kittens for any signs of illness or injury and to contact the RSPCA ACT Veterinary Clinic as soon as possible;
- To notify the RSPCA ACT Veterinary if my foster cats/kittens haven't eaten for more than 24 hours;
- To notify the RSPCA ACT Veterinary if my foster cats/kittens are experiencing diarrhoea for more than 24 hours;

- To give my foster cats/kittens only medications prescribed by the RSPCA ACT Veterinary Clinic;
- To return to the RSPCA ACT Veterinary Clinic any cat/kitten which requires veterinary treatment;
- To return to the RSPCA ACT Veterinary Clinic any cat/kitten which dies in my foster care;
- To abide by the decisions of the RSPCA ACT Veterinary Clinic, Director of Animal Welfare or the Animal Care Manager:
- To use an approved carrier to transport my foster cats / kittens to and from the RSPCA;
- That I will not give the care of my foster cats/kittens to anyone else at any time if I am unable to care for them but to return them to the RSPCA;
- To clean and disinfect all supplies used by my foster cats/kittens before using them with a new group of fosters;
- To clean out and disinfect my designated cats/kittens space before introducing a new group of fosters (this is extremely important to keep your fosters healthy).

I hereby acknowledge that I have read and fully understand the importance of the above rules. I agree to all parts of the RSPCA ACT Foster Agreement. I have also read and agree to follow the rules set out in the Foster Carer Facebook Page Guidelines. Should I have questions, I will contact the RSPCA ACT for clarification.

I understand and agree that I will return the animal(s) on the scheduled date or on demand whichever is sooner. I understand that any and all placements will only be made through RSPCA ACT Adoption Centre and are subject to the same guidelines as any other adoption.

If I am unable to comply with this agreement, I understand that it may lead to a termination of my fostering with the RSPCA ACT.

Foster Carer Signature		Date	
Animal Care Manager/Director of Animal Welfare		Date	

Appendix 5 – Foster Kitten Carer’s Record

FOSTER KITTEN – CARER’S RECORD

Animal’s Details

Carer’s Name: _____

Kitten ID Numbers: _____

Estimated length of foster care needed: _____

Veterinary Record

Vaccination and Worming Schedule (weight guide is for when kitten is due for treatment)

		Weight Guide	Date Given	Product	Actual Weight	Initials (Staff or Carer)
Vaccination	1 st	400g				Vet clinic staff only
	2 nd	800g				Vet clinic staff only
Worming	1 st	200g				Can be given by carer
	2 nd	400g				Same time as vacc
	3 rd	600g				Can be given by carer
	4 th	800g				Same time as vacc

Unscheduled Vet Check Visits

1 st	Reason and date	Initials	4 th	Reason and date	Initials
2 nd	Reason and date	Initials	5 th	Reason and date	Initials
3 rd	Reason and date	Initials	6 th	Reason and date	Initials

Medications Dispensed

Date	Reason for Medication	Type, Amount and Dose of Medication Dispensed	Date completed

Date booked in for desexing (1000g): _____

Appendix 6 – Kitten Foster Carer Return Information Sheet



Animal ID(s): _____

KITTEN FOSTER RETURN INFORMATION SHEET

Instructions

Please fill out this return form (this can be done in advance) so we have extra information to give potential adopters and facilitate the adoption process. You can use one form for all kittens or if there is specific issues for each kitten separate forms can be used.

Information

How long did it take for your foster kittens to adjust to your home?	
How many kittens were fostered together?	
Where did you keep your kittens?	
How did your kittens handle being confined?	
Do they have places they liked / hated to be scratched / patted?	Liked Hated
Were your kittens exposed to other pets or small children? Explain the situation and reactions	
Was there any noise / situation that made your kittens uncomfortable?	
Are your foster kittens completely litter trained? If not explain where they were going.	
What makes these kittens special? Any endearing habits?	

Check all that apply:

- Very vocal
 Sedate / mellow
 Very active
 Shy of strangers
 Wants lots of attention
 Likes to be held
 Likes to be groomed
 Playful
 Lap cat
 Doesn't like to be picked up
 Outgoing
 Frightened by loud noises
 Nips if handled too long


Other Comments:

Appendix 7 – Quick Reference Guide

Important contacts

- For any medical concerns or advice, call the RSPCA ACT vet clinic: 6287 8100
- For after-hours authorisation for medical treatment, email: Jane.Gregor@rspca-act.org.au (before 9pm)
- Kitten birth notifications, email: Jane.Gregor@rspca-act.org.au or Simon.Yates@rspca-act.org.au
- Volunteer Coordinator: Bethany.Flanagan@rspca-act.org.au

Timeline

- 
- Birth to 2 weeks (weight at birth approx. 100g) - *Neonates*:
- Orphan bottle feeding: Divetelact only every 2 - 3 hours
 - Orphan kittens must be stimulated to eliminate
 - Email RSPCA ASAP after the birth to advise number of kittens born. Sex of kittens is not required at this stage (ID numbers will be sent to you for the kittens)
 - Kittens need to be weighed daily (weights recorded on chart provided)
 - First worming treatment (Felex paste)
- 3 weeks old (weight approx. 300g):
- Introduce wet food and dry food soaked in warm water and/or Divetelect, then mashed
 - Orphans: continue Divetelact but reduce number of feeds
 - Water available at all times
 - Toilet training begins (carers need to collect litter and trays from cattery)
- 4 weeks old (weight approx. 400g) - *Juveniles*:
- Eating wet food, introduce dry food
 - Orphans: finish Divetelact
 - Due for first vaccination and worming
- 4 weeks old & up:
- Socialisation must begin for normal behaviour in kittens to develop
 - Supervised exposure to dogs, other cats, small animals, children, and strangers
 - Introduce kittens to various foods such as raw chicken wings, kangaroo mince, chicken mince, sardines, tuna etc to prevent fussy eaters. These foods should not make up more than 10% of their diet
- 5 weeks olds (weight approx. 500g):
- Further socialisation such as supervised & secure outdoor time, more time around children
 - By end of week 5, mothers are ready to leave kittens and return to the shelter
- 8 weeks old (weight approx. 800g)
- Due for 2nd vaccination and worming
 - To be booked in for desexing for 1 - 2 weeks time when 1kg
- CONGRATULATIONS** your foster kittens are off to their forever homes! Please ensure your kittens have their collars with ID numbers on when returned to RSPCA.

Potential indicators of an unhealthy kitten

Foster carers with young kittens should keep an eye out for the following symptoms, as these may be an indication of underlying illness (treatable or otherwise) or failure to thrive. It is important for foster carers to get their kittens checked by a veterinarian as soon as any of the following signs are noticed so that they can be examined and treated accordingly (early detection generally results in more favourable outcomes for the animal/s concerned):

Non-specific signs of illness:

- Failure to gain weight over a few days
- Stunting (failure to reach body sizes that are appropriate for age)
- Loss of weight over a couple of measurements (weighing daily is important)
- Persistently thin, ribby condition
- Inappetence - not eating or poor appetite
- Excessive and persistent weakness or sleepiness (a low-energy, listless kitten)
- Sudden death of one or more of a litter - should indicate an issue with the litter in general
- Excessive thirst (kittens in a litter excessively seeking water)
- Vomiting or diarrhoea
- Bloating of the belly and/or abdominal pain

Cat flu signs:

- Sneezing or coughing.
- Clear, watery or thick yellow / green discharges coming from the eyes and/or nose
- Ulcers on the mouth or tongue
- Difficulty breathing or heavy breathing
- Failure to feed or poor feeding (often trouble suckling)
- Fading - kittens losing weight over days (often a poor sign with very young babies)

Signs of gastro-intestinal problems (including parasitic disease):

- Diarrhoea (watery or custard-consistency faeces)
- Blood in the droppings
- Mucus (jelly-like substance) in the faeces
- Weight loss
- Straining to pass faeces
- Bloating of the belly
- Abdominal pain
- Redness and scalding of the anus-region
- Worms seen in the droppings (especially tapeworms)
- Excessive thirst

Other things that need checking:

- The eyes not opening properly when they should be open
- Deformity of the body or legs
- Sudden weakness, lameness or non-use of one or more legs
- Scalding and redness of the urinary (penis/vulva) or faecal (anus) area
- Redness or scabbing of the skin on the body or hair loss
- Seizures or incoordination - suggestion of neurological (nervous system) disease
- Faecal or urinary incontinence (releasing urine or faeces without apparent control)

Appendix 8 – Neonate Kitten Record Sheet



Kitten ID# and Name: _____

NEONATE KITTEN RECORD SHEET

Kitten Weight Chart																															
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
400																															
380																															
360																															
340																															
330																															
320																															
310																															
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140																															
130																															
120																															
110																															
100																															

Daily Monitoring Record

<i>day</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
<i>date</i>															
Eat															
Drink															
Urine															
Feaces															
Worm															
F3															
Vet Check															
Meds															
Carer Notes															

<i>day</i>	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
<i>date</i>															
Eat															
Drink															
Urine															
Feaces															
Worm															
F3															
Vet Check															
Meds															
Carer Notes															