



Potential Foster Carers Booklet

Introduction to foster caring

Foster care involves temporarily caring for kittens that are too young to be desexed and are afraid of humans. Becoming a foster carer also means that space becomes available at other Hisses to Purrs premises so that other kittens can be taken in.

Foster care can be a very enjoyable experience. However, it can also be very challenging and will take a lot of time and effort. The following is a short overview of what is involved in fostering for Hisses to Purrs.

Foster caring involves taking in two to four kittens that are under ten weeks old to provide them with a loving home until they are ready to be vaccinated, microchipped and desexed ready for adoption. When fostering kittens, not only do they need to be fed good quality food, they also need to be socialised. Socialising kittens involves handling them, playing with them and providing toys and a stimulating environment. Depending on if you are an experienced foster carer, or completely new to foster caring, there are different types of animals that are available to foster. These are:

- Pregnant cats and cats with litters
- Orphaned kittens requiring hand-rearing (neonates) – experienced carers only
- Kittens too young to be rehomed (weaned kittens)
- Kittens who have behavioural issues and need socialisation – experienced carers only
- Injured or sick kittens receiving treatment

Before becoming a foster carer, there will be an interview held with the Hisses to Purrs team where we can answer any further questions you may have that are not answered in this booklet. Foster kittens always remain the property of Hisses to Purrs. Hisses to Purrs also 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.

Is foster caring for you?

Before you decide to foster for Hisses to Purrs, it is important to ask yourself some questions.

- Are you able to get to the Paws Galore Veterinary Centre in an emergency or bring kittens to our location at short notice?
- Will you be able to spend quality time with the kittens? On average, it is best to spend at least 2 hours a day with foster kittens. Socialisation is as important as feeding them and keeping their environment clean.
- Are you willing to accept any possible damage to your home such as damage to curtains, carpets and clothing? Kittens are like toddlers and can get into everything. Please be aware that Hisses to Purrs will not be held responsible for any damage the kittens may cause.
- Can you commit to spending the entire foster period with the kittens? If something unexpected happens, you will need to contact a committee member to inform us of an early foster return.

- If your family and friends wish to adopt a kitten, are you comfortable with telling them that they are not your kittens and that they will need to contact Hisses to Purrs to arrange an adoption once all vet work is complete?
- Will you be able to hold meet and greets and adoptions from your home (with a committee member present) and let them go at the end of the adoption period? It can be challenging to let go and say goodbye once you have become emotionally attached, but it is also very rewarding.
- Are you emotionally prepared to handle the death of one of your foster kittens? This can be very difficult, but the sad reality is that it sometimes happens. In this event, Hisses to Purrs should be contacted immediately.
- Do you have the space required to separate foster kittens from your household pets for at least two weeks to protect them from illnesses and allow for a proper adjustment period?
- Are you able to handle cleaning procedures such as washing hands after every encounter and cleaning/disinfecting the kittens' environment routinely?
- Are you able to buy all of the required premium food, flea and worming treatments, cleaning products and other supplies needed?

Time and Commitment

A lot of commitment and effort is required in caring for foster kittens. Many of the kittens that need fostering have already been through stressful and traumatic experiences, so the carer may be faced with a period of adjustment while the kittens may be unresponsive and afraid of human contact. This is usually overcome with time and patience.

It is important, especially with very young kittens, that they spend time playing with people and being cuddled. People who work full-time can foster kittens, providing they are willing to spend quality time socialising with their fosters. Foster carers will also need time to feed young kittens three times each day. Cleaning can also take up considerable time!

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

In some cases, due to unforeseen circumstances, it may be necessary for a foster carer to return a kitten to Hisses to Purrs. If this occurs, then the committee needs to be notified as soon as possible so that alternative arrangements can be made. If you know you will be unavailable at any time during the kitten season (e.g., going on holidays) please advise a Hisses to Purrs committee member.

Very young animals cannot be fostered out by carers who cannot arrange for the animals to be cared for while they are at work. Very young kittens require frequent feeding throughout the day – at least every 2-3 hours. Carers who are unable to have someone attend to very young kittens should take older kittens that are more able to last through the day without frequent feeding.

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

The fostering period can be anywhere from one week to ten weeks or more, depending on the situation. Mums with newborn babies rely on finding special foster homes. These carers should be

prepared to keep all of them together for at least six weeks until mum can be desexed and then rehomed while her kittens grow on solid food and learn independence. Kittens need to be eight weeks old before they can be vaccinated and microchipped, then once they weigh 1.1kgs, they can be desexed and start attending adoption days.

The table below indicates the time commitment, which may be required depending on the type of foster situation you choose.

Kitten Foster Time Commitments

Type of Foster	Duration of Foster	Daily Commitment
Pregnant cats and cats with litters	2-8 weeks	2 hours
Neonates (experienced carers only)	4-10 weeks	Up to 8 hours
Weaned Kittens	1-4 weeks	2 hours
Kittens with behavioural issues (experienced carers only)	1-12 weeks depending on the problem	2+ hours
Sick or Injured Kittens	1-12 weeks depending on the type of illness or injury	2+ hours depending on the type of illness or injury

If you have read through this booklet and have decided that foster caring is for you, please contact Hisses to Purrs so we can arrange for you to sign a foster carer contract.

Thank you,

The Hisses to Purrs team