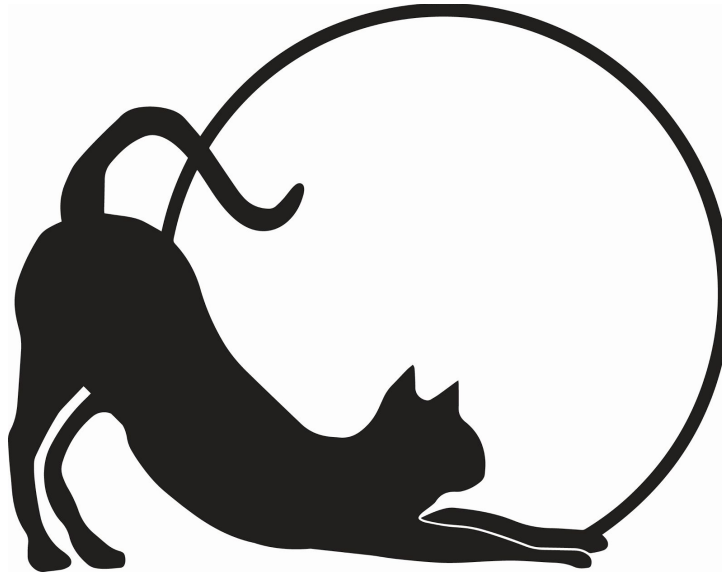


**Town Cats of Morgan Hill  
Foster Manual**

# TOWN CATS OF MORGAN HILL



## Foster Care Manual

Town Cats of Morgan Hill  
P.O. Box 1828  
Morgan Hill, CA 95038-1828  
(408) 779-5761  
info@towncats.org  
[www.towncats.org](http://www.towncats.org)

Foster Coordinator - Elena Bauske Khalar

**Town Cats of Morgan Hill  
Foster Manual**  
elena.bauske@towncats.org

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**WELCOME TO FOSTERING**

Thank you for your interest in becoming a Town Cats foster parent! Together we can save more lives! Our goals are to provide the best possible environment for the cat; love, care for, and socialize him to ensure good health and development; and find the best adoptive family for the rest of his life. Being a good foster family is crucial to achieving these goals.

**WHO WE ARE**

- Town Cats is a private, volunteer-based, 501(c) 3 nonprofit organization dedicated exclusively to the welfare of cats. We sponsor innovative programs to help cats and serve as a community resource in Santa Clara County. We educate the public on cat issues and we promote the spaying/neutering of all companion animals and the TNR of community cats. We are a highly motivated team of passionate, compassionate animal lovers seeking to do as much good as we possibly can. Town Cats has deep roots in the community. We are a grassroots collective of cat-loving people brought together by common goals and our mission. The work of Town Cats is supported entirely by the generous hearts and hands of individuals and private foundations.
- We have a network of foster homes for home care of cats, particularly kittens but also special needs cats and seniors/hospice care. Our foster volunteers open their hearts and homes to do this lifesaving work, bottle-feeding pre-weans and giving friendly/healthy homeless cats the time and space they need so that they can be adopted into a forever home. We hold weekend adoption fairs at our adoption center sites with the support of our pet food store partners; we strive to secure loving, permanent homes for the companion cats in our care.

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- Town Cats receives numerous requests daily to take in cats. Unfortunately, we simply cannot humanely take in every stray, abandoned, or unwanted cat, including injured that a member of the community wants us to accept. We have limited resources and limited space. The plea for help and the number of unwanted cats saddens us and strengthens our resolve to empower members of the public to work with us to solve cat-related issues in our community. Kitten season—the birthing season of spring and summer—is a particularly challenging time, as people reach out to us with litter after litter of helpless, orphaned kittens that they have found and want to surrender to us.
- It is not easy for us to say no to a request for help and turn a person in need and a cat in need away; however, when our adoption centers are full and when we do not have an available foster home, sadly we have no safe place to house an additional cat or litter of kittens and we must say no. We must protect and do right by the animals already in our care. Overcrowding causes stress and sickness and it is inhumane. We strive to provide the best care possible for our resident cats and foster cats; we want the cats in our care to thrive and we will not overcrowd them.

There are six common reasons cats/kittens are in foster care:

1. The kittens are too young and/or underweight to be placed up for adoption
2. A mother cat and her nursing kittens need a home environment where they can feel safe and receive proper socialization and love
3. Cats may need time to recuperate from an illness or injury
4. Cats may need socialization or behavior modification
5. A senior cat or severely ill cat may need hospice care in their final days
6. Town Cats is out of space in our own facilities to care for an incoming cat

### **SKILL LEVEL**

- It is important to be honest with yourself when assessing your skill level in working with foster cats. Please do not accept a cat that requires more care than you're experienced with, or more time than you have available. The general categories are 1) pre-wean kittens (still nursing or must be bottle-fed if no mother cat is available), 2) weaned/ self-feeding kittens (no longer nursing), 3) adults, 4) semi-feral cats/kittens that can be tamed down.
- Pre-wean kittens without a mother cat require round-the-clock care, just like human newborns. You will need time, energy, and stamina to devote to them until they can eat and use the litter box on their own (about 4-5 weeks). Another major consideration is whether you can administer medications and handle issues like diarrhea, sick kittens and potential loss of a kitten.
- Weaned/self-feeding kittens are a bit easier but also present challenges as they frequently have diarrhea or get sick with upper respiratory disease (runny nose, eyes). You must be able to handle treating the kittens when they get sick, administering oral medications, keeping them warm, dry and hydrated.
- Semi-feral kittens that can be socialized offer additional challenges. We will give you tips on how to socialize these kittens and make them into adoptable animals.

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## TIPS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

1. Always get preauthorization before going to the vet and use a vet from our list.
2. Always notify the Foster Coordinator whenever a cat dies or escapes, any other comings/goings of cats/kittens and especially if any medical issue arises.
3. Check in regularly with the Foster Coordinator.
4. Be diligent about your cat/kittens medical appointments.
5. Ask for advice if your cat/kitten has stopped eating or hasn't gone to the bathroom. Kittens crash fast, ask early if their behavior changes.
6. Check your sick cat/kitten for hydration - they should be drinking water, using the litter box, have loose elastic skin tone, and a moist mouth.
7. Never use clay clumping litter for kittens under six months of age.
8. Wash your hands and change your shirt after handling sick animals to prevent spread of illness.
9. Never let your cat outside; guard against escapes.
10. Never give a cat to an adopter without seeing the completed adoption paperwork, before spay/neuter surgery has been done or without approval from the Adoption Coordinator and/or Foster Coordinator.

## FOSTER PARENTS

- Foster parents are individuals who are helping by volunteering to foster kittens for Town Cats.
- Foster parents must complete a Foster Care Application so that we can register your contact information into our database. If you move or change your contact info, please email [elena.bauske@towncats.org](mailto:elena.bauske@towncats.org).
- Cats will be assigned to you by the Town Cats Foster Coordinator based on your request.
- Foster parents must sign an Agreement upon intake at the San Pedro Shelter. The contract states that the kitten is the property of Town Cats and that the foster person agrees to foster the kitten until it can be adopted or placed with another Town Cats foster.
- **Intakes are not considered valid unless they are approved and done at the San Pedro shelter.** Any kitten/cat will be considered the full responsibility of the Foster person if they did not go through the proper intake procedure.
- All Foster cats/kittens must be spayed and neutered before they get adopted. Foster parents must also have all of their personal cats/kittens over 3 months of age, spayed/neutered and fully vaccinated.
- Foster parents will allow Town Cats volunteers or staff to make home visits at any time. Foster parents must agree to allow Town Cats to take the fostered Town Cats' kittens/cat at any time for any reason.
- If you happen to fall in love with your foster and can't bear to have someone else adopt him/her, you are more than welcome to adopt. Please contact the Foster Coordinator and inform them of your decision.
- Kittens over 8 weeks of age that are being fostered by the Foster parents are required to attend regular pet adoption fairs *at least* two times per month. If the Foster parent fails to do this then the kittens/cats may become their owned pets.
- Kittens and cats being fostered by Foster parents belong to Town Cats until adopted.

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- The Foster parent must bring the kittens/cat to pet adoption fairs and allow Town Cats Adoption Counselors and/or Foster Coordinator make decisions on the adoption even if that means that kitten pairs may be split up in order for them to be adopted. If the Foster parent does not want the kittens/cat attending pet fairs or to stay at the adoption centers, or interferes with the adoption process, then they must either adopt the kittens/cat themselves, or Town Cats will find another foster home for the cats.
- Some kittens die for no apparent reason despite our best efforts. This is a sad fact of rescue.

### **INTAKE PROCEDURES**

- All cats and kittens must go through the **San Pedro shelter first** before becoming Town Cat's animals. This means that all foster people must bring any cats or kittens to the San Pedro Shelter for intake assessment before the cat/kitten will be considered a Town Cat's cat. An appointment must be made before a kitten/cat is brought into the shelter.
- Intake consists of: vaccinations, internal and external parasite medications, microchipping (if over 6 weeks of age), photograph, weight and health assessment, general information about the animal (sex, age, color, breed), where found/how obtained, name and information about the foster person. All this information will be put into our computer system (Shelterluv) so that the cat/kitten can be tracked by Town Cats. **Any cat/kitten that doesn't go through Intake will not be considered a Town Cats animal.**

**MEDICAL RECORDS:** Upon completion of the intake process, you will be given a copy of the medical record---this will include all the vaccinations, parasite control drugs and microchip #. The original medical record stays at the San Pedro shelter through our computer system (Shelterluv); a copy will be given to the adopter via email or hard copy. It is very important to track the medical history of each cat and document all conditions found, vaccinations given, treatment done, etc., on the medical record. You should document any personality traits you discover that would help place him in the proper adoptive home, such as he doesn't like other cats, is nervous around children, gets along with dogs, loves constant attention, etc. This can be put into the cat/kitten's record as well. When the kitten is ready to be made available for adoption, you will be asked to write a biography on it outlining its personality, likes, dislikes, habits, etc.

- Intake appointments must be made in advance---**please do not just show up.** Town Cats volunteers and employees will not be able to assist walk-ins without an appointment. To make an appointment, please contact the Foster Coordinator. The veterinarian is at Town Cats only selected days during the week.

The Foster Coordinator will inform the foster parents if there will be a vaccination clinic held at one of our adoption centers.

Your foster kittens **MUST** adhere to our vaccination schedule for their health and safety! Please see the attached recommended vaccination and deworming schedule.

If you feel your foster cat/kitten need to be seen by a Vet, please contact your Foster Coordinator. If it is after regular clinic hours and you feel it is an emergency, contact your Foster Coordinator to get

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advice before taking the cat/kitten to emergency. Your foster coordinator can provide an emergency veterinarian's number if the issue cannot wait until the morning. Please be sure to follow up with the Foster Coordinator and provide an update on your foster cat/kitten.

### **VETERINARIAN CONTACT NUMBERS**

**\*All veterinarian visits must be PRE-approved by Town Cats\***

- Silicon Valley Vet Specialists, 7160 Santa Teresa Blvd, San Jose, (408) 649-7070
- South County Animal Hospital, Morgan Hill, (408) 779-6867 (No Spay/Neuter)
  - VCA Blossom Hill Animal Hospital, 955 Blossom Hill Road, San Jose, (408) 227-3717—Good for Spay/Neuter

**TOWN CATS' OFFICE:** (408) 779-5761 (message line) for non-critical comments/questions. Use this number when referring people with cat situations to TC. You'll often get the recorder since our staff is normally taking care of the cats. Leave a message, and they'll return your call.

### **GETTING YOUR CAT/KITTEN READY FOR ADOPTION**

#### **Is your foster kitten ready for adoption?**

If you are fostering kittens, they must weigh two pounds and have been altered, vaccinated, microchipped and treated for internal and external parasites in order to be adopted. Kittens usually reach two pounds between nine and ten weeks of age. They must be completely healthy and have not had any symptoms of illness for at least one week prior to adoption.

#### **Is your foster cat on our website?**

Once you have spent some time with your cat and have gotten to know its personality, find out if its picture is already posted on our Website. Adults are often put on the Web site prior to getting sick and going into foster care. You can check yourself at [www.towncats.org](http://www.towncats.org), or you can check with your Foster Coordinator. If its picture is already on our website, you should write a new story about the cat's personality (biography of the cat/kitten). A good story makes a big difference in the number of calls the cat gets, so be descriptive. Try to include things like if the cat likes to be petted; held; is a lap cat; purrs easily; is affectionate; is vocal or quiet; active and playful; calm; good litter box manners; uses a scratching post; if it's had any experiences with other cats, dogs, children, strangers, and how it reacted to those situations; is it outgoing and friendly, or shy. Of course, any other cute things that it does or anything you want to point out about its fur or appearance is good as well. It can be as long as you want, but the typical description is a paragraph.

#### **How do you get your foster kittens photo on the web?**

If your cat's photo is not yet on the website, then there are several options for getting photos taken and posted. If you have access to a digital camera and would like to take the pictures yourself, you are welcome to do so. Please e-mail them to [elena.bauske@towncats.org](mailto:elena.bauske@towncats.org) in a jpg format with your story (see above for story tips).

#### **Arranging to have your foster(s) at a fair**

Contact the Foster Coordinator and inform them that your cat(s) are ready for public fairs. The

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Foster Coordinator will then arrange a location and time for your foster to attend the fair. In some cases your foster may stay at that location longer than the weekend in order to maximize their visibility and potential for adoption. In other cases you will be asked to pick up for foster at the end of the weekend if he/she has not been adopted. These decisions will be made by the Foster Coordinator based on the availability of space at any given fair location.

### **What Your Cat/Kitten Needs**

#### **Why Deworm?**

All kittens are born with roundworms because roundworm eggs are passed from the mothers to the kittens through the placenta. Roundworms can sap the kittens of the energy and nutrition they need resulting in debilitation and increased susceptibility to illness. Kittens should receive deworming medication every 2 weeks starting at about 3 weeks old through about 12 weeks of age, then at annually after that for roundworms.

#### **Why Vaccinate?**

Orphaned kittens are especially vulnerable to many infectious diseases because they may not have received any protective immunity from their mother. Luckily there are good vaccines available that can help to protect them. Vaccination for FVRCP (distemper) should start at 5-6 weeks of age then every 2-4 weeks until they are **at least** 16 weeks old. At 3 months/3 pounds, they should get their rabies vaccine.

#### **When Your Kitten Needs It!**

Kittens need a check up every 2-3 weeks until they are 16 weeks old. At each appointment kittens will receive FVRCP vaccination and deworming. Once kittens are healthy and over 8 weeks old, spay/neuter surgery is scheduled. After 12 weeks of age kittens get a rabies vaccination from the veterinarian.

#### **Adult Cats -**

The FVRCP and Rabies are annual at first, but then are every 3 years thereafter (as long as there is previous vaccination history). Deworming will occur at intake and no need to repeat.

### **Conclusion**

Thank you for joining the team at Town Cats. Your dedication, compassion, love and hard work make all the difference in the world to these orphaned cats in need. Together we will rescue and save the lives of homeless cats. Thank you for caring about cats in our community.

By joining our network of foster homes, you are required to comply with the policies of the shelter and the expectations of the foster program. Signing this manual acknowledges that you have read and understood everything in the document. Your signature also states that you agree to abide by the policies and procedures of Town Cats. Failure to do so may result in termination from the foster program.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: Submission by email will serve as signature agreement