

## WHAT TO CONSIDER WITH CAT ADOPTION: 20 tips and tricks

### Indoors versus outdoors

Foxhill Fosters tip: Cats live safer, much longer, and healthier lives when kept indoors. Cats that venture outside should be with a human on a leash with a GPS collar, or kept inside a large, supervised daytime catio with food, water and shade. Prescription flea treat if the cat spends time outdoors; over the counter flea treatments are not regulated and can cause toxic/fatal reactions.

### Location, number and type of litter boxes

Foxhill Fosters tip: One, high-sided litter box per cat, plus one extra is recommended. Litter boxes should be placed on each level of a home, and in quiet, different spaces; cats are territorial and need to scent mark. Pine pellet litter offers superior moisture/odor control. It's also cost-effective at only \$7/40 lbs at Fleet Farm or Tractor Supply. How to use: scoop off scat into a lined litter bucket after you see/smell the cat uses the litter box; full sift of pellets every other day. To transition, offer both clay/other litter and 1 pine litter box, and then wean off the clay. *Note:* some cats will not use pellets; this is especially true if the cat is older and used to only using clay litter.

### Food bowls

Foxhill Fosters tip: Use metal or ceramic bowls only, to prevent chin acne. Use a raised feeding station to prevent vomiting or indigestion, and wash bowls daily.

### Food type and amount

Foxhill Fosters tip: No free-feeding, to prevent obesity-related issues e.g. diabetes, thyroid. Wet food is healthier and has lower crude fat. Ideally, feed (1) 3 oz. can (or 1 5.5 can split) of wet food twice daily, but consult with your vet for specific guidance. Small amounts of dry food can be put into an activity board or enrichment snack ball to keep healthy weight. Use a melange of different dry cat foods as a variety snack (hairball/dental/healthy weight etc.)

### Water access

Foxhill Fosters tip: Cats don't see well a foot in front of their faces, including bowls of still water. Water fountains provide superior access to plenty of water and a hydrated cat is a healthier cat, with less risk of UTIs and kidney issues.

### Multiple cat scratching posts

Foxhill Fosters tip: Provide scratching posts on each floor, or in at least two locations. One post should include a high perch "safe zone" for when cats need a social break.

### Toe claw trimming

Foxhill Fosters tip: It's important to trim cat claws monthly. Polydactyl cats need extra care. Follow the steps here, and wrap the cat in a towel if necessary: <https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/trimming-cats-claws>

## **Slow introductions to home**

Foxhill Fosters tip: 3-3-3 rule: 3 days to decompress, 3 weeks to learn your routine, 3 months to feel at home. Take your time, and start out in a small room first before opening up exploration to the whole home.

## **Animal pairing and resident animal introductions**

Foxhill Fosters tip: Slow and steady wins the race with cat introductions. Follow gradual introduction techniques using recommended steps: <https://icatcare.org/articles/introducing-cats> and have Feliway plug-ins in place around the home. Most adult cats do best in pairs; *avoid single kitten syndrome by adopting kittens in pairs*. First, start in a small room. Second, exchange rooms to introduce new cat scents. Third, allow a controlled peek between cats, with food fed on each side of the door. Fourth, try a brief and supervised introduction, followed by longer times together. Fifth, cats are comfortable together when they are in the same room and grooming, or using the litter box in close proximity of each other. It can take 1 week or up to 6 months for full integration, depending upon the temperaments of the cats. In some cases, cats may need to live on separate floors or in different rooms, with a gated separation.

## **Exercise and enrichment activities**

Foxhill Fosters tip: Have plans to allay boredom—especially when humans are away from home. Turn on a free TV nature program and set the volume to low. Change-up toys periodically. Play with cats using teaser wands before meals and before bedtime. Do not use hands for play because this often turns into unwanted play aggression for the cat; hands are for petting and holding.

## **Understanding the behavioral nature of cats**

Foxhill Fosters tip: Cats are not a traditionally domesticated animal. They do not respond well to punishment; they will react with fear or dislike the punisher. Use redirection or brief “time outs” (10 minutes) in a quiet room with a litter box. Be aware of how displaced aggression works in cats. Most cats do not like to be picked up, held like a baby, or put onto their backs; these are vulnerable positions. Best book on cat behavior: “Decoding Your Cat” by the American College of Veterinary Behaviorists.

## **Understand declawing**

Foxhill Fosters tip: Declawing is the horrific surgical amputation of a cat’s toes and must never be done. Cats are physically designed to walk in “high heels” and declawing guarantees a lifetime of pain. It typically leads to litter box problems, debilitating arthritis, aggression, and is illegal in many cities and countries. Learn more here: [pawproject.org](http://pawproject.org)

## **Best cleaning products**

Foxhill Fosters tip: Resolve Urine Destroyer is the best product for urine marking or accidents. Never use cleaning products with ammonia in them, which cats are naturally attracted to for marking. Resolve Pet Expert works well for scat accidents or hairball/vomiting.

## **Potential dangers**

Foxhill Fosters tip: watch for hot stoves/ovens, sharp objects, loose window screens, poisonous plants, and keep toilets closed (especially for kittens.) Consider your space like a toddler will live there.

## **Good vet clinic that is reasonably nearby**

Foxhill Fosters tip: Keep up with vaccinations and yearly exams for best health, and preventable issues long-term. Do periodic dental cleanings. Pay attention to signs of pain: <https://www.foxhillwayzata.org/understanding-pain-in-cats>). Hiding or errant urination may be behavioral, or signs of illness.

## **What to do if your cat is missing**

Foxhill Fosters tip: Microchips are one of the best investments for a cat owner. If your indoor cat is suddenly missing outdoors, put familiar blankets and toys outside of the house doors; cats have an excellent sense of smell. Immediately alert neighbors, ask friends to help look, and provide a good color photo of the cat for reference. Put up flyers in your area. Post the cat on [pawboost.com](http://pawboost.com) [nextdoor.com](http://nextdoor.com) and Facebook pages: Lost & Found Pets MN: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1214583558585910> and Lost/Found Cats MN: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/273805289790701> Check with animal control, local shelters and rescues to see if any cats have been relinquished with your cat's description.

## **Plans for cat care if incapacitated**

Foxhill Fosters tip: Cats can live up to 20 years; make sure the cat is a reasonable age match. Indoor cats end up outside on the street, euthanized, or relinquished to rescues every day due to unexpected hospitalization or incapacitation. If raised indoors, cats do not know how to immediately survive and find food in an outdoor environment. Have a plan, known to trusted family and friends, and provide funding for care in your will.

## **Reasons for returning a cat to a rescue, or rehoming**

Foxhill Fosters tip: Plan for a potential loss of employment or home; have savings set aside for cat food/care/vet bills. Are behavioral issues due to physical issues (urinary infection? dental pain?) Would a baby or grandchild be supervised around the cat? Young children often do not perceive vocal or physical cues that cat may give, which may lead to poor interactions.

## **Rescue returns/rehoming**

Foxhill Fosters tip: If all of the steps have been followed and it's clearly not a match for the household, or no one can care properly for the cat, the rescue will take the cat back for rehoming. They can also work with you to personally rehome, if preferred.

## **Updates and Volunteering**

Rescues and foster caregivers love to see how cats are doing in their adoptive homes; updates and photos from adopters are always welcome. If even two hours are available to spare each week, volunteering is a wonderful way to enjoy a variety of cats as they seek a new home.