

WHAT TO CONSIDER WITH CAT ADOPTION

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 XL 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 litter offers superior moisture/odor control. It's cost-effective at only \$7/40 lbs at Fleet Farm or Tractor Supply for pine pellets. *Note:* some cats will not use pine *pellets*; this is especially true if the cat is older and used to only using clay litter. In that case, shaved or ground pine works well.

Litter issues

Foxhill Fosters tip: If there is marking outside of the litter box, it's a sign of anxiety or illness. First, check at your vet for a UTI. If it's behavioral, considering using anti-anxiety treat supplements or tinctures that can be put onto wet food (Jackson Galaxy, Kity, Chewy etc. offer products.) Cats aren't "bad" when they mark; it's a sign that they are out of balance. Use Resolve Urine Destroyer to neutralize any issues; never use products with ammonia.

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.) Resolve Pet Expert works well for hairball/vomiting/scat accidents.

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. Wash fountain every two weeks and replace filter. If you are gone for more than a day, also put out a water bowl in case of a power outage.

Exercise and enrichment activities

Foxhill Fosters tip: Avoid boredom—especially when humans are away from home. Turn on a 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; this often turns into unwanted play aggression for the cat; hands are for petting and holding. Do not leave adult (6+ months) cats home alone for more than 24 hours, 4-5 months for more than 12 hours, or 8 weeks-3 months old for more than 4 hours.

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 use an e-collar and/or wrap the cat in a towel if necessary if they are nervous about trims: <https://www.humanesociety.org/resources/trimming-cats-claws>

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

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. Save money in an account just for vet car or consider pet insurance.

Potential dangers

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

Landlords and renting

Foxhill Fosters tip: Consider these questions before adopting: Does your rental property allow animals? What are the initial and monthly fees? Can you afford the costs of food/litter/toys? Is your living space large enough for pets? Do you have available pet sitters when you are traveling or not home? Save money to pay for pet sitting services.

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 *Optimum* 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. 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 separate floors or to be in different rooms, with gated separation. Great pressure-mounted gates when needed for cat separation on Amazon: <https://a.co/d/0fIGRAuj>

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.

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.

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. How many hours a day are you home to play with, interact, and show affection to a pet? Anyone with allergies? Are behavioral issues actually 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.

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 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.

Updates/volunteering

Foxhill Fosters tip: foster providers love updates! Consider becoming a volunteer/foster.