



Cat Handling for Feline Friends

Madison . North Branch . Mt. Olive . Noah's Ark

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INTRODUCTION TO CAT HANDLING

Volunteers come to St. Hubert's with a love for animals. Many feel comfortable with their handling skills after housing pets of their own. It is important to remember that animals in a shelter will not act like the pets in your home. Shelter animals come in to a brand new environment with no familiar smells, people, or noises. It takes time for cats to adjust to new faces, new smells and the new sounds of a shelter with other cats.

It's important to know the signs of stress and fearful behavior to insure that volunteers remain safe, while the animals are kept as comfortable as possible.



BITE PROTOCOL: Animal bites are always a risk while volunteering in a shelter. With caution and proper training most bites are preventable. If a bite or scratch that breaks the skin does occur follow the guidelines below.

- 1) Report the bite immediately to a manager.
- 2) Clean out the wound and seek additional medical care, if necessary.
- 3) Fill out an incident report with staff; include details leading up to the bite. Forms are at the adoption center front desk.

The animal must be placed on a 10 day bite hold as required by New Jersey State law.



CAT BODY LANGUAGE

Cats' signals are often overlooked, causing bites and scratches that appear to have come out of nowhere. It's important to notice these subtle signs to insure happy shelter cats and safe volunteers.

A HAPPY CAT: Is not always as obvious as a smile



- ◆ Purring *Also self comforting
- ◆ Tail has a long slow swish
- ◆ Greets you with a lowered head
- ◆ Walks towards you with a raised hind end
- ◆ Tail carried straight and upward
- ◆ Scent mark you with its face

A FRIGHTENED CAT: Fear often leads to aggressive behavior due to a feeling of having no other resort

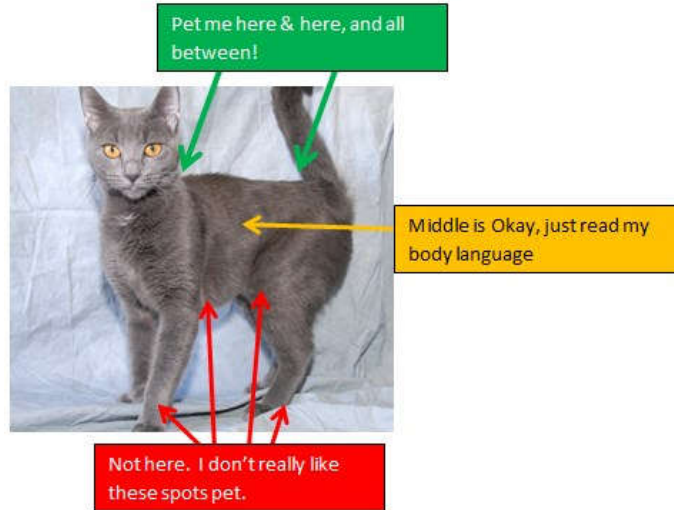
- ◆ Tense or frozen in place
- ◆ Hide in its litter box
- ◆ Crouched body posture
- ◆ Ear flattened back to the head
- ◆ Carries tail low
- ◆ Roll over in last defense, exposing all 4 paws/claws
- ◆ Bristled tail, bristle fur on the back
- ◆ Displays defensive and aggressive attributes if frightened cat continues to be scared, including scratching and biting.



CAT BODY LANGUAGE

Cats signals are often overlooked causing bites and scratches that appear to have come out of nowhere. It's important to notice these subtle signs to insure happy shelter cats and safe volunteers.

*A lesson from
stop light
kitty.*



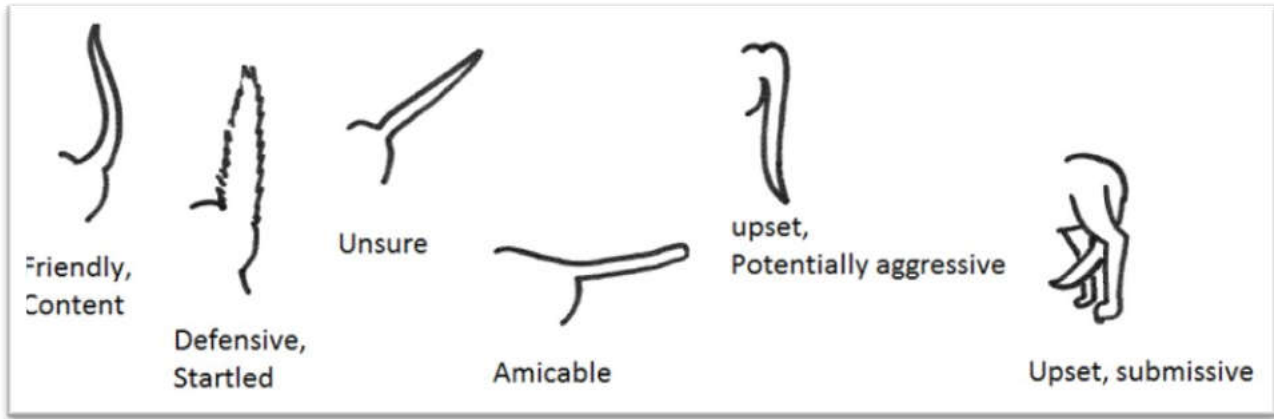
A DEFENSIVE CAT: is warning you to step away

- ◆ Hiss or spit, displaying fangs
- ◆ Fur along the back on end
- ◆ Flatten ears
- ◆ Arched back, laying or standing
- ◆ Sideways stance to appear larger

A POTENTIALLY AGGRESSIVE CAT: Often a last resort when all earlier signs have been ignored

- ◆ Hiss or spit, growl
- ◆ Lunge
- ◆ Bite and scratch
- ◆ Low tail, swishing rapidly
- ◆ Before actively lunging, the cat will appear with similar body language as a defensive cat.

A CAT'S TAIL HAS SO MUCH TO SAY!



- ◆ Approachable cats have raised non-bristled tails and welcome your attention.
- ◆ As the tail lowers, the cat is becoming increasingly uncomfortable most often and it's best to give the feline its space.
- ◆ The wag of the tail also has meaning which will be observed in the free roaming room.

A CAT'S EYES AND EARS



Happy

Angry

Playful

Content

Frightened

How would you approach the following cats?



Image 1



Image 2



Image 3

ST. HUBERT'S ALUMNI



Image 4



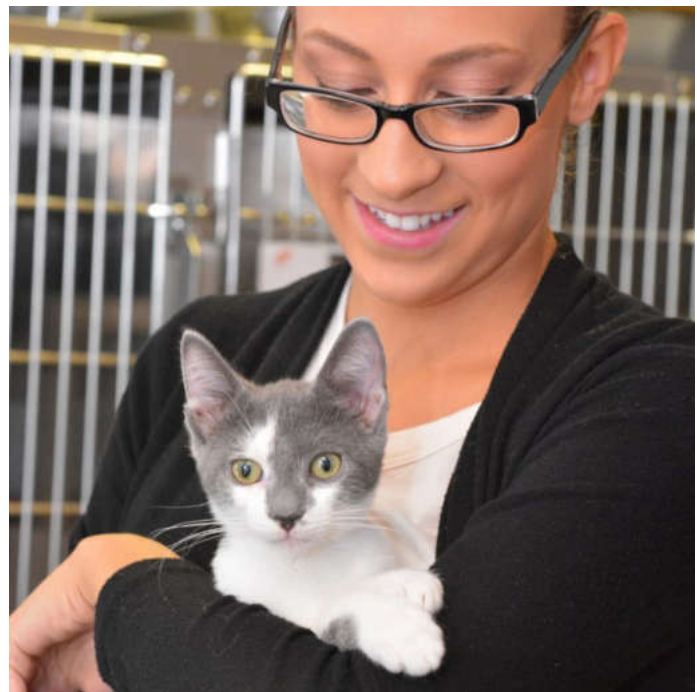
Image 5



Image 6

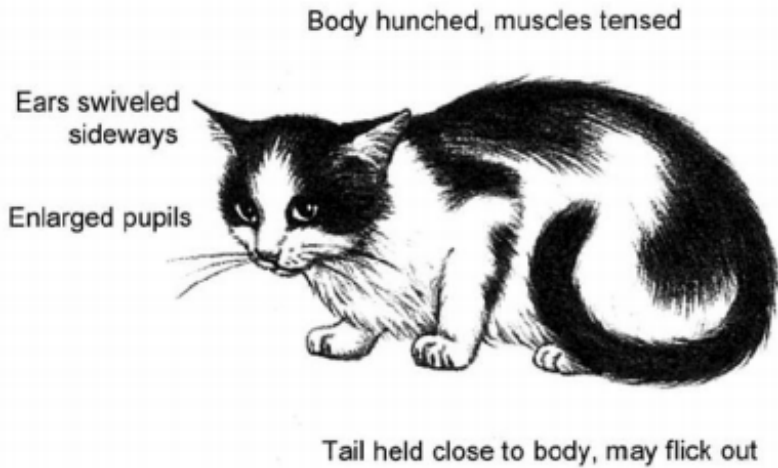


Image 7



It's important to look at the person
and the cat's comfort level

CAT BODY LANGUAGE SAMPLES

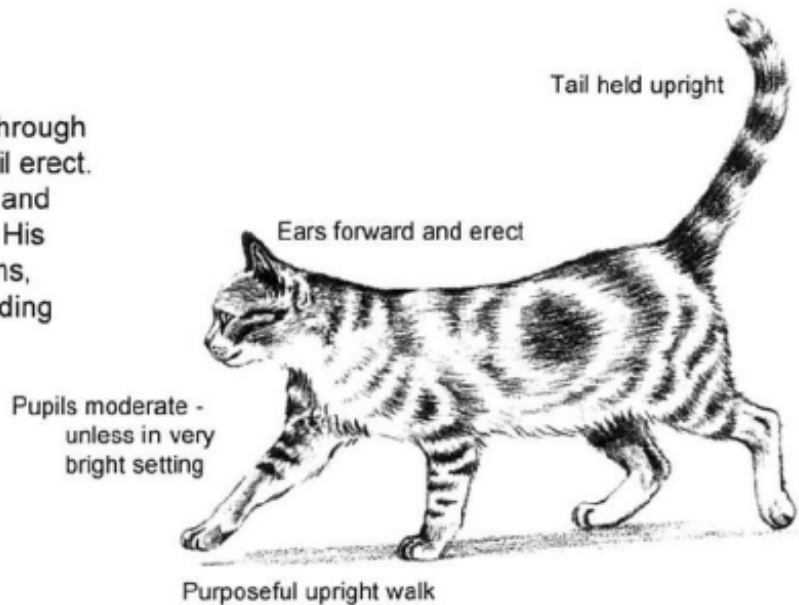


the anxious cat

When a cat becomes anxious, he crouches into a ball, making himself appear smaller than usual. Muscles are tensed and the cat is poised to flee if necessary. The tail is held close to the body, sometimes wrapped around the feet. The head is held down and pulled into the shoulders.

the confident cat

The confident cat purposefully moves through space, standing straight and tall with tail erect. He is ready to explore his environment and engage those he meets along the way. His upright tail signifies his friendly intentions, while his ears are forward and erect adding to the cat's alert expression.



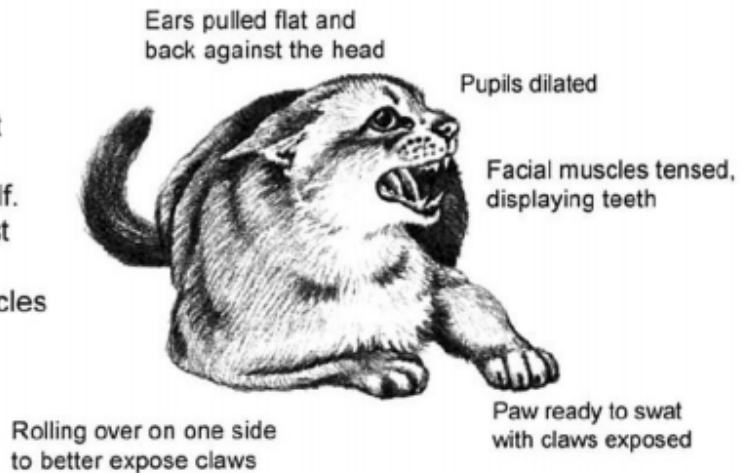
body posture

MYM
MEET YOUR MATCH®

CAT BODY LANGUAGE SAMPLES

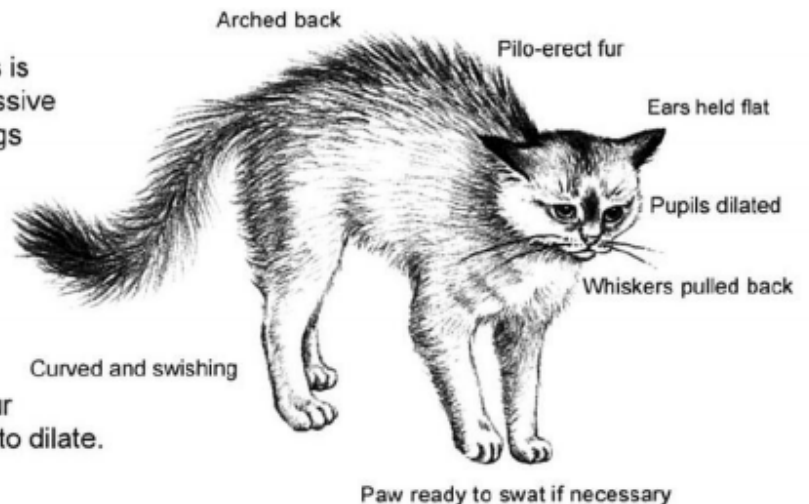
defensive aggression

The pariah threat is another distance-reducing posture. When a cat determines that he cannot escape an unwanted interaction with a more dominant animal, he prepares to defend himself. The ears are pulled back and nearly flat against the head for protection and the head and neck are pulled in tight against the body. Facial muscles tense, displaying one weapon - the teeth. The cat rolls slightly over to one side in order to expose the rest of his arsenal - his claws. He is now ready to protect himself.



distance-increasing behaviors

The goal of distance-increasing behaviors is to keep others from coming closer. Aggressive interactions are avoided when the warnings are heeded. Conflicted cats lack the confidence to stare down and charge others. Instead, they assume a defensive threat posture, warning others away by appearing as formidable as possible by arching their backs, swishing their tails, and standing sideways and as tall as possible. Fear and arousal causes their fur to stand on end (pilo-erection) and pupils to dilate.



body posture

MYM
MEET YOUR MATCH®

CAT BODY LANGUAGE SAMPLES

Tremendous flexibility allows cat to groom nearly entire body



the groomer

Cats spend 30 to 50 percent of their waking time grooming. Backward-facing barbs on the tongue act as a comb to loosen tangles and remove some parasites. Beyond maintaining the cat's coat, grooming also relieves tension and promotes comfort. Licking also facilitates cooling off in warm weather.

Backward-facing barbs on tongue

Low to the ground, muscles tensed

Ears forward



May shift weight between back feet, readying to pounce

the predator

Even when fed two meals a day, cats are still predators. The predatory sequence is stalk, pounce, kill, remove, and eat. When stalking prey, a cat may stealthily move forward or lie in wait, shifting his weight between his hind feet. When movement is detected, the cat pounces on his prey and delivers a killing bite. He may then take the fresh-killed prey to a quiet place to eat – or a female may take it to her kittens. Even cats that don't hunt for their meals still enjoy chasing moving objects, including toys and, in some cases, human body parts.

body posture

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GREETING A NEW CAT

WITHIN CAGES

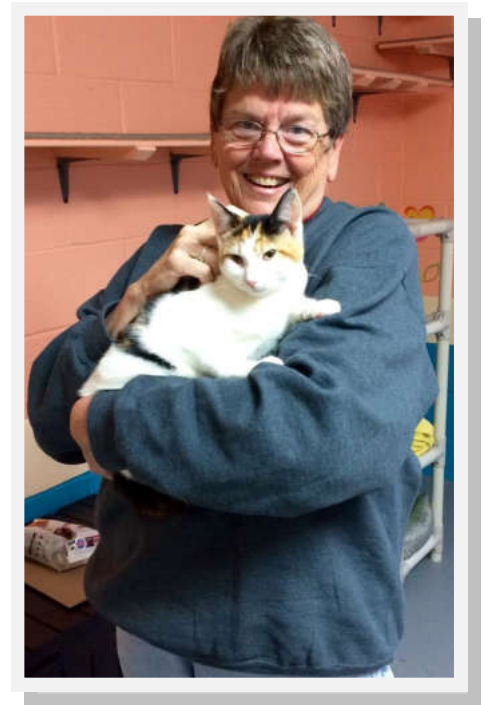
Cats in a cage need additional consideration and attention because they can not walk away when they've had enough. Your ability to accurately read the cat's behavior is crucial to keep it comfortable and you safe.

OBSERVE the cat in its cage

- ◆ Let the cat adjust to your voice, smell, presence
- ◆ Open the door to the cage
- ◆ Extend your knuckles for scent marking
- ◆ Take a moment to scratch the cat's head, and ears. Observe the reaction to continue, or leave while the cat shows the early stages of asking for space.

If the cat is against the back of the cage

- ◆ Do not go into the cat's safe zone
- ◆ Allow the cat the option to approach you in the front of the cage
- ◆ Do not pick up or try to corner a cat who chooses to remain in the back of their cage



WITHIN FREE ROAMING ROOMS

Within the free roaming rooms, cats have the option to be in open or hidden spaces. Cats are able to approach you and request attention. Cats also have the option to shy away. It's important to read the body language and be sure that you are socializing with a cat who is happy to have you here at that moment.

- ◆ Let the cat smell your fist, adjust to your voice, smell, presence
- ◆ Pet the cat who allows, being sure to keep your eyes on the cat you are petting
- ◆ Continue to watch the cat's body language

WORST CAT-SCENARIO

RUN AWAY CAT!

First, ALERT STAFF! Cat escapes are possible with doorways that open for staff, volunteers and potential adopters to come in and out. Follow these steps if a cat escapes.

- Let potential adopters know to remain calm. Fast jerky movements or chasing a cat will only chase them further away.
- Coax the cat to you with treats or a soft noise.
- If the cat is comfortable and approachable, pick up the cat and return to the correct room.
- If the cat is not easily approachable, notify a staff person.
- If you are unsure which room the cat came out of, notify a staff person before placing into a room.



*Remember,
Keep calm and carry on*

CAT FIGHTS

When a cat fight occurs, never put yourself between the cats. A loud noise will often separate the cats. Try clapping or speaking loudly. When a new cat is being introduced to a community room, there will be a crate that gives the cat an area to retreat to, if it prefers. Be sure there are areas that cats can spend time alone within the free roaming rooms. If a cat fight does break out, notify staff.

CARRYING CATS

HOW TO HOLD A CAT

Volunteers have the benefit of only having to handle the cats who wish to be handled. Trained staff will socialize any cat who may not be comfortable with volunteers. Some cats do best with staff who see the cat daily, building trusted relationships.



CATS IN CARRIERS

Cats are placed into carriers to transport the animal throughout the building. This could be to clean cages, provide medical attention, or leave the shelter once adopted! Carriers can be stressful for cats but a quick and safe entrance into the carrier will make the experience easier.

- Place the carrier with the opening facing the top
- Secure the cat with two hands, one below the hind legs, one below the front legs.
- Gently lower the cat into the carrier
- Secure the carrier door
- Gently place the carrier onto its side. Being sure the cat has time to adjust to the flooring.

WHAT TO AVOID

No one is to hold a cat by the scruff of its neck.

Never pick a cat up by its legs.

STEPS TO A HAPPIER SHELTER CAT



Turn that Frown.... Upside down!

- Provide dark and **cozy hide outs**.
- **Let me get to know you**. Let the cat adjust to your presence.
- **Keep it quiet**. Cats have sensitive ears and are startled by sudden loud noises.
- **I love consistency!** Cats thrive on routine; deliver meals on schedule, replace bedding to the same corners.
- That bed is mine, right? Make sure there are **enough comfortable places for all** the cats within a room to lie on.
- All sleep and no play makes a dull day. **Provide enrichment** and socialization.
- I need challenges that **stimulate my mind!** Toys, puzzles, stuffed mice, wand toys are terrific! Catnip for cats over 1 year old.

PURR-SONALITIES OF CATS

Just like people, cats have a range of personalities. It's important to know a cat's personality to both make their time within the shelter more enjoyable and to make a more suitable adoption match. Here are some broad categories a cat may fall under.

BEST FUR-FRIENDS FUR-EVER!

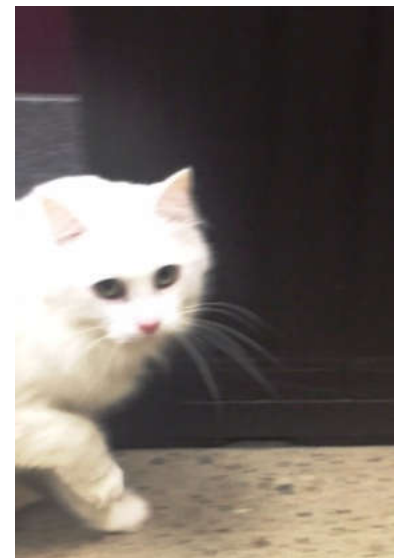
Well hello volunteers! Thanks for coming into my room! Don't mind me while I rub against your leg, act a little vocal, and crave your attention like I haven't eaten in days! Don't let this fool you though, I was fed this morning by the nice people.

AN INDEPENDENT COMPANION

Well hello again, volunteers. I must say I do enjoy you being here time to time. I may not approach you but I will take in a few pets when you come my way. Once I'm done, I will let you know.

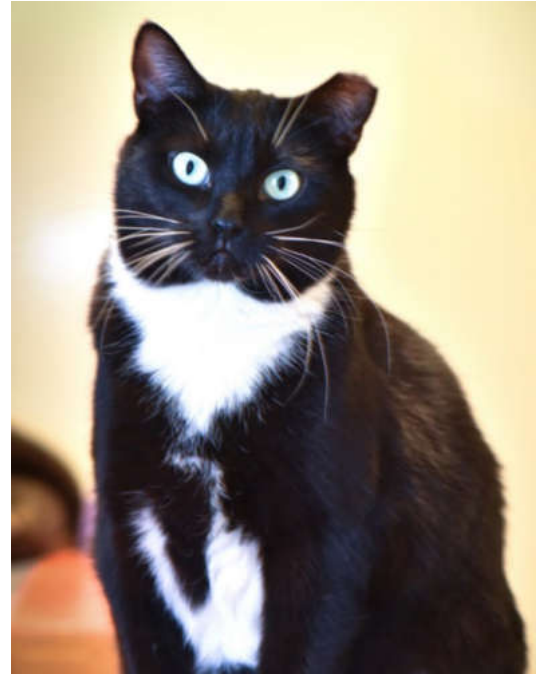
GOTTA GET TO KNOW YOU

Ah well, I'm not like those other cats. I won't go spreading around my affection to just anyone, only that special someone. Some say it may be why I stay at the shelter longer, but I won't replace quantity for quality time from the select few. If I warm up to you, this will be a beautiful relationship.



BARN BUDDIES

- Barn Buddies are independent cats who like indoor/outdoor environments like backyards, garages, and barns. These cats do not wish to live out their days on your lap and will not succeed as an indoor house cat.
- Adopters provide food, water, and access to shelter; the cats provide excellent rodent population control!
- All Barn Buddies are spayed/neutered and vaccinated.



FIV POSITIVE CATS

Feline Immunodeficiency virus (FIV) positive cats are positively adoptable!

HOW IT'S SPREAD: Spread between cats during reproduction or coming in contact with infected blood, bite wounds.

SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS: While they usually don't require any special medical care, they typically have a weaker immune system and are more prone to contracting certain ailments when exposed to them. They should be kept indoors, fed a balanced diet and have routine health exams by a veterinarian.

Can FIV+ cats live with non FIV+ cats? Yes! If all cats are spayed/neutered and get along with one another.



CAT ENRICHMENT

Cat enrichment is an important part of volunteering. It's important to keep a cat's mind stimulated and its need for affection met. To insure all cats receive the enrichment necessary a code system is used.

OVERLOOKED CAT BOOK COLOR CODE



ACTION: 30 days in the shelter



PICK ME: 60-99 days in the shelter.



OVERLOOKED: 100+ Days in the shelter

The length of stay does not determine if I'm a good or misbehaved cat, it simply means the right home for me has not been found.

RECORDING CAT INTERACTION

The more information recorded about individual cats, the better we are able to place them in homes. Whether it's a favorite toy, or a quirky dislike, this information is valuable for a successful transition into forever homes.

CAT-TIVITIES

What you did with the cat during your volunteer time.

Cats name: *Mr. Fluffy*

Date	Initials	Details
12/21/15	JL VOL	<i>Petting on lap, treats given, wand toy</i>



CAT-TRIBUTES

What characteristics the cats show that we can pass along to the potential adopter

Cats name: *Mrs. Fluffy*

Date	Initials	Details
12/21/15	JL VOL	<i>Mrs. Fluffy did not like being picked up. Enjoyed being pet instead!</i>

SHY AND SASSY CAT ENRICHMENT

Overlooked cats may have a longer length of stay due to shy or sassy behavior. Meaningful volunteer interactions with these animals can better their lives and improve their chances for a timely adoption.

SUCCESS WITH A SHY CAT

- Offer a calm and predictable setting. These cats need time to build connections and enjoy interactions with calm people.
- Don't force interaction; extend a closed fist to allow for sniffing. If the cat is interested it will approach.
- Stop if the cat becomes stressed.
- Keep your interactions short, yet frequent. Staying with a shy cat for too long may cause added stress.



SUCCESS WITH A SASSY CAT

- Sassy cats can make for great play dates. It's important to use toys for play, avoiding drawing the cat's attention to your hands. Sassy cats may bite, scratch, bite, and pounce.
- Keep all sassy cats playing with toys and wands.
- Only pet if the cat solicits your attention.



CLEANING PROCEDURES

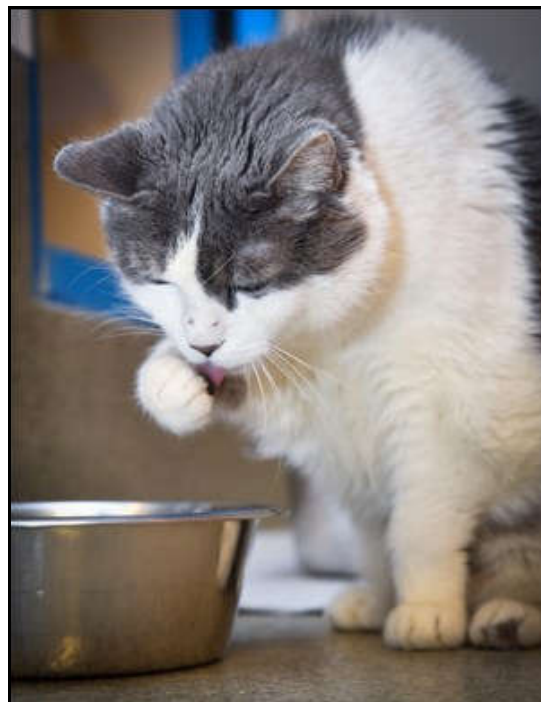
It is important to follow the staff member's lead on how cleaning is conducted at your location. Below are some general truths about cat cleanings at St. Hubert's.

SPOT CLEANING: Cats thrive with routine and consistency. Moving a cat's bed can increase stress let alone moving everything daily for cleanings. Spot cleaning lowers periods of stress in shelter cats while keeping things sanitary. Litterscoops do not go into the sink at the same time bowls are being washed.

BE OBSERVANT: While you are cleaning, look at the cats, their litterboxes and their cages for signs of illness. Note if any cats are sneezing, or have diarrhea and tell the medical tech by using the medical alert form.

FEEDINGS: With guidance from staff, prepare food and feed cats. Every cat/kitten gets 1 tablespoon of wet food. Check cage cards for 'no wet food' signs before feeding. Kittens and thin cats receive a second feeding at 2PM. Some cats are on special diets, i.e., grain-free etc.

DEEP CLEAN, SCRUB DAY: On certain days staff may ask you to assist with additional roles to help clean. Cats will be removed from the rooms and cages so all walls and windows may be scrubbed down as well. Follow the staff member's guidance on what your role is on these days. Unplug water fountains and any other electronics.



CATTERY THROUGHOUT THE DAY

Feline friend volunteers begin socializing cats at Noon when morning cleanings have been completed. If you would like to volunteer before 12:00PM sign up for Kennel Attendant—Cattery.



MORNINGS

Volunteers arrive at 8:30AM for morning cleanings.

In the mornings, all bedding is pulled, fresh water given and the morning feeding follows.



AFTERNOONS

- 2PM, feed all kittens and any thin, sick or old cats their second feeding of canned food.
- Check all cages to see if they need water.
- If cats spilled their water, replace bedding and paper as needed.

EVENINGS

- Check all cages to see if they need more water.
- If cage is dirty, spot clean as necessary.
- Give cats/kittens additional enrichment items - cottonballs with Feliway, kitty kongs, etc.
- Unplug water fountains and radio.

STAFF-ONLY TASKS

On occasion you may see a fellow volunteer contributing in a staff-only role. These volunteers have shown great commitment and have undergone additional training. Please remember that the following roles are staff only.

- ◆ Cat meet and greets with a potential adopter
- ◆ Interacting with cats who are owned and within the lobby awaiting intake
- ◆ Interacting with cats who are in ring worm, URI, or ISO labeled rooms.
- ◆ Interacting with any cats who show signs of aggression or fear.



CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEP

Congratulations! You have completed the classroom portion of the cat handling course.

- 1) Take the next 15 minutes to try out reading the behavior of cats in the cattery.
- 2) Receive your cat handling nametag
- 3) Sign up for Feline Friend Volunteer shifts
- 4) Begin volunteering to socialize the cats of St. Hubert's!



*I would like to thank
the A-CAT-demy.*



Thank you to the staff and volunteers who contributed through being in or by taking photos for this handbook. A special thanks to Mark Lovretin for his photography.

