

A NEW PARENTS' CAT GUIDE

Congratulations on your adoption! We'd like to thank you for adopting from Friends for Life. We are available for any questions and comments that you may have regarding your new companion, our level of service, and any other concerns or questions you may have. We hope to assist you with anything that may come up over the next few weeks as you and your new friend are getting to know each other. Our aim is to make every adoption as successful as possible, so don't be afraid to call us! You have not only saved one life by adopting your companion from us, but you've saved another life by opening up a space at our shelter that's badly needed by another cat that is still out on the streets! Give yourself a pat on the back for adopting a rescued animal and committing to caring for your new cat!

Bringing home your new family member is an exciting time. However, details may arise that you have not considered. The following information is designed to help make the transition to your home as smooth as possible for your cat. Whether you are a veteran "cat person" or are new to the world of felines, these suggestions may prove helpful.

- ♥ Upon arrival home, provide your new friend with a litter box, food, and fresh water. If possible, keep the box apart from the food and water.
- ♥ Moving to a new place is stressful for cats, who are creatures of habit and security. In response, she might spend a couple of days under the bed. You also can leave the carrier out with the door open and a blanket or towel inside for her to have a familiar place to hide. Let your cat set the tone. Don't rush up to her or force her to be held. She'll come to you when she is ready and then you can respond with gentle play. The more you talk to your cat, the more she will talk with you. You can have some pretty interesting conversations this way!
- ♥ Do you have another feline friend at home? To ease the nerves of both animals, place the new cat in a secure room (with the litter box, food, and water) apart from your existing cat for a few days. Let them get to know each other by exchanging their bedding. The next step is to put the resident cat in the secure room and let the new cat roam the house. Finally, let them meet through a cracked door. When they are calm in each other's presence, let them meet briefly and extend the visiting time until they are full-time buddies. This process may take a short or long time, depending on each cat's personality. Be patient and watch them closely throughout. It may be hard, but only give the new cat attention outside the presence of your current feline until they are friends. Kitty needs special attention and reassurance. Soon, they should be good friends.
- ♥ Friends for Life cats have been given their initial vaccinations, tested for Feline Leukemia, and spayed or neutered; cats over six months also are tested for FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus). However, it is still important to make an appointment with your vet as soon as you get home. And remember, although your

cat has been vaccinated, she may need booster shots. Take the medical record with you so your doctor is up-to-date with your pet's progress.

- ♥ Don't be surprised if kitty has loose stools on the first day. Again, moving and being handled by different people is stressful. To help out, provide your cat with high quality food, like she has been eating at Friends for Life.
- ♥ Kittens and cats love to play. Spend quality time each day discovering your pet's favorite toys and games. One of the most popular toys is the "cat dancer" type, which is a pole with string and a toy attached. You can hang out on the couch while engaging them in this one. Play with this toy should be supervised, as should all toys with string. If your feline friend eats the string, the material can become entangled in the intestines, causing great harm and, possibly, death.

Also fun are balls of all types (foam, bouncy, etc.), balled up aluminum foil, and the center from a toilet roll. You don't have to spend a fortune for kitty to have a good time. Beware of dangerous toys. They include the mice with real fur (their eyes are stuck on with tacks), rubber bands, yarn or string, bells, etc. These objects can be swallowed and cause serious medical problems.

- ♥ Be sure to have a scratching post on hand. This will help to prevent unwanted scratching on furniture. The type with sisal rope is popular. When kitty does scratch, firmly say no or shake an empty soda can with pennies in it. She will grow to associate the negative noise with the action. Then, put her next to the post and praise her for being there. This type of discipline only works when immediately following the behavior. Another good method to discipline cats is to use a spray bottle of water. Gently squirt your cat with water from a distance.
- ♥ Believe it or not, many cats are social animals. You can foster this behavior by talking with your cat, engaging in playtime, and showing affection. Cats who are ignored become depressed and may start to exhibit negative behaviors. So, when you get home, relax from your hard day with kitty. Not only will your feline feel better, but you also will!
- ♥ If you already have a dog at home, please take the following advice. We've tried our best to ensure that kitty likes dogs and that your canine is safe around cats, but there are many factors involved in the relationship between cats and dogs. Sometimes cats are scared of new dogs, the chemistry is bad, or a dog likes to play with cats and the kitty is not interested in interacting with the new companion. To safely adjust your new companion to living with a dog, please take your time. Let kitty have his own room, just like when introducing her to a home with another feline. When first introducing them, have Rover on a leash and be ready for some fireworks between the two. If the cat runs away, do not allow Rover to chase him or bark at him. Rover may be reacting to the cat's natural instinct to fear dogs and may get excited that he was able to get a rise out of the feline.

It's best for the first few weeks that all interactions between your cat and dog are supervised closely. Completely separate the two animals while you are not home or are unable to monitor their actions. Relationships are not built overnight and it will take awhile for everyone to learn how to get along, sharing the same home. You may consider allowing them to interact only when supervised as instinct may come to the surface when least expected.

♥ Just like with people, diet is very important to your new friend. Making a decision on the brand of food you feed is difficult, but well worth the trouble. Most premium foods can be found at PetsMart or PetCo and there are several home delivery companies available as well. By purchasing a lower quality food, you are not saving money in the long run! Many lower quality foods that are available through grocery stores will lead to more trips to the vet and upset stomachs. Many of our cats have come from rescue situations and may not have had the proper nutrition prior to coming to Friends for Life and will need the extra nutrients that a premium quality food would offer. Your adoption consultant is available for discussion regarding the foods that would be best to get kitty on the right track and keep him there. Here's a list of some of the foods that our shelter recommends: Iams, Nutro, Avo Derm. Kitties actually eat less food when it is premium food, so you not only will save money this way, but also in fewer vet bills.

♥ We've worked hard to make sure that the cat you adopted from us is healthy and well cared for. We do recommend that within the first few weeks of his new life with you, that you make a trip to the vet with him for a general exam. It's a good time for your vet to meet your new companion and check him over. Your first trip to the vet also is a good time to discuss dental care. Many kitties have tartar problems that can result in gingivitis and extensive cleaning and tooth extraction. Speak to the vet about brushing the cat's teeth and feeding tartar control food and treats.

If you should need help in finding a veterinarian in your area, please feel free to call our office for assistance. We work with many wonderful vets around the Phoenix area and would be happy to refer you.

♥ When adopting a cat, especially a young one, it's best to go through your home and "kitty proof." Make sure that electrical cords are well hidden, houseplants are put up (especially the dangerous ones!), anything breakable is put away for now, the miniblind strings are hidden (and all other string-type objects), and bottles of cleaning agents (such as bleach, drain openers, and laundry soaps) are out of her reach. Check the garage for dangers as well. Make sure anti-freeze, oil, sharp or dangerous items, more cleaning agents and anything breakable are all put away out of the cat's reach. Cats are naturally curious about their environment and tend to explore things with their mouths. They will chew or drink anything that they find and it's best if they just are unable to come in contact with anything that may cause them harm!

♥ A lot of new cat owners ask about declawing their new friend. This can be a sticky topic with various opinions. People sometimes justify the procedure by saying that they have new furniture, the cat does not use the scratching post, or they feline scratches them. All of these issues can be resolved without surgery. For example, try a new type of scratching post near the furniture and keep the nails trimmed. Shaking a can with some pennies in it will startle the cat if done during the behavior and help to train him not to do it. A little explanation of the process of declawing further demonstrates how tragic the procedure is. Declawing a cat is comparable to amputating the first knuckle of every finger on a human hand. Some cats experience medical problems after the surgery and many have a heightened sensitivity in their toes. These issues also may become more serious as the cat ages. Personality changes also are a possibility after declawing. Parents should investigate every possible option when scratching is a problem or fear. An alternative to declawing can be found.

IN CLOSING

Again, we thank you for adopting a cat from our shelter. Our volunteers have worked very hard! There have been many wonderful people involved with her and we all have tried to do our very best to ensure the happiness of you and your new friend. Your new kitty has touched and been touched by many, from the time that we saw him scraping out an existence on the street, to the many hours possibly spent by the volunteers during his rescue. There have been volunteers seeing to it that he was taken to and from the veterinarian to care for his medical issues. Many hours have been spent by our volunteers seeing to it that he was safe, comfortable, well fed, and nicely groomed in our care. We have spent time with him learning his habits, personality traits, and abilities. Your adoption consultant worked very hard in hopes of making a good match between your new companion and your family. All of the volunteers with F4L wish you and your new companion many happy years ahead. We all greatly admire your decision to adopt an animal that at one time had a very bleak future and thank you for giving him a second chance for a wonderful life.