

Keeping your FeLV foster healthy

FeLV cats thrive best in stress-free environments, as they're more prone to stress-induced illnesses like URIs, UTIs, decreased appetite, GI upset, and other signs of chronic stress that can flare up issues with their immune system. In order to make your foster comfortable, we'd recommend the following tips:

Setting up your space

All FeLV fosters must be kept **indoors only**. Your foster is still part of APA! and our care, so it is safest for them to remain inside so that they do not escape, get sick, or develop behavioral issues all of which can be associated with trying to run outside. To keep fosters comfortable in your home, we recommend:

- Starting them in a bathroom for the first 5-10 days to decompress, monitor food intake and litter box output, and get used to the routine of your home
- Doing a slow intro with all other pets in the home during their decompression period
- Giving them plenty of covered hiding spots around the house until they feel comfortable
- Keeping their litter and food consistent as they transition to your home, and then slowly changing to any new brands of either over a 5 day period (increments of 20% of the new brand per day)
- FeLVs **cannot eat raw diets** due to their immune system not being able to filter out bacteria in their GI tracts, but they can eat high-protein diets and wet food is always recommended
- Providing them with extensive enrichment options in their space
- **Do not move them excessively in under a 2 week period**, as this can trigger several illnesses

Introducing fosters to other pets

To introduce FeLVs to other pets in the home, we would always encourage a *slow intro over at least the first week*, but **ideally 7-10 days**. This would involve separating the pets into designated spaces like a bathroom, bedroom, spare room, walk-in closet, etc., so that they don't directly interact. From there, you can spend that time doing *indirect* contact with some of the following options:

- Scent swapping their blankets and toys, or anything plush that holds scent. Doing this with your own clothing in their spaces will also help prevent any territorial guarding of *you* specifically
- Letting them sniff each other under the door
- Letting one pet roam the house for 1-2 hours, then separating them again while the other pet roams and smells their scent on everything, and alternating this several times with each separate room
- Having the pets meet through a glass door, screen door, or baby gate
- Feeding pets on opposite sides of a door to prevent food/resource guarding

Monitoring stress

Using the [Fear Free scale for cats](#), you can monitor the fear, stress, and anxiety (FAS) levels in your foster while they adjust to your home. This will help you identify patterns and triggers that cause stress, and can be documented on the FAS log on the previous page with scores 1-5. Monitoring FAS can help keep your foster safe, healthy, and advocated for so that you know what situations and triggers they don't do well with, which can later be relayed to potential adopters, other fosters, babysitters, and marketing—whether it be stress triggered by other pets, moving to a new location, loud noises, or any other incidents.

Enrichment activities

Providing enrichment helps keep your foster's brain stimulated and energy expended in a positive way. Some of the options below would provide great enrichment to keep your FeLV healthy and happy:

1. [Various types of interactive toys](#) (we may have some wand stands in our foster shed)
2. Sprinkling catnip around the room to redirect attention
3. Various [puzzle feeders](#) or [stim toys](#)
4. Brain-stimulation games like [wrapping cat treats/kibble in a towel](#), rolling it up, and letting cats unwrap it. This can also be done with tossing treats into a [cardboard box with crumpled paper inside](#) of it
5. If short on time, try [people-free wand toys](#)
6. Letting cats chase an ice cube across the floor
7. Freezing ice cubes onto a licki mat so that they have 2 layers to work through (the ice cubes can be frozen Churu or wet food on top of a frozen licki mat of other textured food)
8. Mental stimulation from [high-five training](#) or ['touch' training](#) can help redirect away from attacking your hands/legs, and that mental energy being used can wear them out. This is also great if you know of any particular treats that they loves and will respond to it
9. Getting a [bird/squirrel feeder](#) that attaches to the window so that they can sit and watch what's going on, and burn off energy by trying to tap at them from the window
10. If you have a cat tree, hide snacks and catnip around the levels of the tree for them to find

Getting your foster adopted

The more photos, videos, and info that we get about them, the better! Promptly answering questions from our marketing team is key. You'll also want to answer emails from potential adopters **within 48 hours**, but sooner is better! All foster cats must have a meet-and-greet either virtually or in-person before a potential adopter is eligible to apply for adoption, and you must receive a confirmation email that your foster was adopted **before handing off** to the new adopter.

What if I need a sitter or new foster?

The key to keeping FeLVs healthy is not moving them around a ton, but if you need a sitter or new foster, please let us know *as soon as possible*—ideally with **at least 10-14 days' notice**. We often operate with no extra space onsite, so we need time to find a new placement for your kitty. If you have friends or family who would like to help babysit, that is also acceptable as long as they're able to get in contact with us for emergencies and potential adopter inquiries.

If your requested sitter dates are under 14 days in length, you are also eligible to have drop-in sitters who stop by your house to check on, feed, and medicate your cat, but this saves them the stress of moving around for a short duration. These sitters will be other APA! fosters, and this method is entirely optional.

Medical symptoms

If you notice the following symptoms in your foster, please contact our [Foster Case Manager](#) and [medical reception](#) with photos/videos for each category:

- **Upper respiratory infection (URI)**
- **Respiratory distress/labored breathing**
 - Abdominal effort while breathing (flanks visibly moving)
 - Difficulty breathing in general
 - **Please email videos for assessment**
- **Not eating (inappetence)**
 - Eating less than 50% of normal portions for 48+ hours
 - Needs to be hand-fed or coaxed into eating, but continues to eat less than 50%
 - If you suspect your cat has not eaten in 24 hours, offer different kinds of dry and wet food, and begin monitoring with photos/notes of their progress (if any)
- **Lethargy**
 - Inability to lift head
 - Can't get up (different from *won't* get up)
 - Hiding when they previously did not
 - **Please email videos of energy levels and movement**
- **Urinary tract infection (UTI)**
 - Vocalizing while urinating or attempting to urinate
 - Posturing in the litter box with no urine output
 - No urination in over 24 hours
 - Inappropriate urination outside of litter box
 - **If you have a male cat, a UTI can be fatal, so it's crucial for you to keep track of their urine output and contact us via phone immediately**
- **Dehydration**
 - Can have symptoms similar to lethargy and anemia
 - [Perform a skin tent](#) on your foster to verify
 - **Please email videos of the skin tent test for assessment**
- **Fever**
 - Fever over 103 lasting for 1+ hour
 - May be present with lethargy and/or not eating
 - **Please email photo of [temperature reading](#) for assessment**
- **Eye abnormalities**
 - Abnormal pupil dilation (*anisocoria*): a common FeLV-related occurrence, not always indicative of medical urgency. If no other symptoms, just monitor
 - Red tinting in/through eyes
 - **Please email photos for assessment**
- **GI lasting over 72 hours**
- **Lymphoma or other cancers**
- **Anemia**

Giving your foster their meds

In keeping with a low-stress lifestyle for FeLVs, we have the following Fear Free and Force Free handling + Cooperative Care tips for any cats who require medication:

- Seeking out resources from [Fear Free trainings](#) or [certified techs](#), or [full webinars](#) from Fear Free professionals ([Tabitha Kucera](#) has worked with APA! previously)
- Trying [force free, light-restraint](#) handling methods [for med time](#)
- Try [cooperative care for oral meds](#)
- For toweling and cat burritos: try sprinkling catnip on the towels/blankets beforehand to make them more appealing
- Utilize positive reinforcement for the meds, going to the vet, before/after medical handling, and en route to the vet. Doing this will help with overall enrichment and association between these stressors, that way they gradually become easier to perform over time with consistency
- Try stress-reducing tactics [for trips to the vet](#)
- Look into [Fear Free Happy Homes](#) to keep life consistently stress free
- Carrier training (at home):
 - Take your carrier apart and place only the bottom of the carrier in your space
 - Place a fleece or other comfortable material inside
 - Play with them in and around it, place treats in and around it
 - Set up a treat station (ex: mason jar with treats nearby for easy access), reinforce when the cat happens to lay in the carrier, but can also reinforce verbally
 - Once they're reliable with staying in the carrier, you can also try to give meds in it with all of these other techniques. This will make it easier to do vet exams from their carrier to reduce stress in the vet office
- [Syringe training](#) is a good thing to do BEFORE they need meds, so they're already conditioned
- Try the [1-2-3 medication game](#) for smooth interaction and positive reinforcement (this can also be done 2-3 times a day for additional trust building, you'd just replace medication with something small like a Temptations treat)

FeLV diets & restrictions

As stated above, FeLVs **cannot eat raw diets** due to their immune system being unable to regulate their GI tract against the potential bacteria in raw foods. In addition to using [quality probiotics](#), serving [high protein diets](#) and wet food are always encouraged:

Higher budget	Lower budget
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tiki Cat (wet is better for protein)• Nulo• Ziwi Peak• Open Farm• The Honest Kitchen• Fussie Cat• N&D cat food	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purina ONE grain-free pate• Fancy Feast classic pate• Merrick• Wellness Core+• The Honest Kitchen's dehydrated pate• Weruva (and Weruva BFF)• Nacho

* Including supplements like probiotics and [Alaskan salmon oil](#) are also fantastic for their health and GI tract

Wet food supplements

If your cat is on a wet-only diet or needs help with water intake, you can also try to supplement this with [cat-specific](#) broths and gravies (not human ones from the grocery store, as those usually have onions or too much sodium for cats). [Open Farm](#), [Nulo](#), [Nacho](#), and [Friskies](#) all sell bone broths, Tiki Cat sells [broths](#) and [mousse](#), and The Honest Kitchen makes both a [probiotic goat milk powder](#) for hydration and a [dehydrated](#) food that becomes an instant soup pate when mixed with water.

Contact Us

If you need us for the following categories, please reach out to:

- felv@austinpetsalive.org: info on fostering, behavior, adoptions, or scheduling help
- foster-case-manager@austinpetsalive.org: general medical questions
- medicalreception@austinpetsalive.org: refills, appointments
 - If no response from clinic in 24+ hours, please reach out to clinic via phone
- **Medical Emergencies:**
 - **Main clinic phone: (512) 466-0720** (9am - 7pm)
 - **ER/overnight phone: (737) 384-2994** (7pm - 9am)
 - *Emergencies include lethargy, not eating or drinking for 48+ hours, trouble breathing, unstoppable bleeding, unconsciousness, vomiting blood, males with UTI blockages, fever lasting 1+ hour, or signs of severe anemia*

If you have additional questions that are not answered in this foster packet, please reach out to the FeLV Team directly so we can get you answers!