

# Companion Animal Alliance Cat Adoption Packet



## Congratulations

Thank you for choosing to adopt from Companion Animal Alliance! We hope you will be very happy with your new furry family member. In this adoption packet you will find a variety of helpful hints and materials. We encourage you to utilize this document as a resource and let us know if there is anything else we can do to help you!

When one of our cats leaves the shelter to start his or her “new beginning” we feel great happiness for the cat and his or her new family. We again thank you for giving your cat a loving home and hope you will encourage others to consider adopting an animal from CAA or another shelter, so they too can experience the joy of finding a new four-legged friend.

## Contact Information

If you have immediate questions about your new cat, we encourage you to look through your adoption paperwork as many of the most common questions- such as what vaccinations your cat has received- can be found in your cat’s paperwork. If you have any questions that aren’t answered in this packet, please utilize the following contact information. CAA appreciates the opportunity to keep in touch so we can continue to help you with the bond you’ve established with your new companion. As an organization that has matched thousands of families with companion animals, we have extensive experience and information to help new pet parents and their cats.

We want your new relationship to be successful, so if problems arise, we hope you try the resources we offer as well as other professional resources in the community in order to make your relationship work. Please don’t hesitate to contact us to share your concerns.

Companion Animal Alliance  
2550 Gourrier Ave, Baton Rouge Louisiana  
10:00am-5:00pm daily  
(225)408-5360

Adoption Questions/Client Services  
[adopt@caabr.org](mailto:adopt@caabr.org)

Scheduling Medical Appointments  
[adopt@caabr.org](mailto:adopt@caabr.org) , (225)408-5360 ext:

Returns by Appointment  
(225)408-5360 ext: or [intake@caabr.org](mailto:intake@caabr.org)

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## Adjustments

*Bringing A New Cat Home*- When you adopt a cat, it is important to set everyone up for success – your family, your pets and your new cat! Remember to go slowly and allow everyone time to adjust. Your adopted cat may need time to transition from shelter life to home life – we call it “decompressing.” Other family members and pets in the home may also need time to adjust. Patience is key! Adopting a cat or kitten is a long term commitment! Indoor cats have an average lifespan of 10-15 years, but some cats can live much longer! Your commitment to being a responsible cat guardian during the duration of your cat's life includes:

- Providing food, clean water, medical care, a safe and comfortable environment, appropriate exercise, and training for your cat.
- Complying with state and local ordinances related to keeping a cat.
- Providing a collar and ID tag with your name and phone number(s) for your cat to wear, and ensuring his/her microchip is registered with updated contact information
- Addressing all behavior and health issues that may arise in a humane and timely manner

On average, it can take cats 2-6 months to become fully acclimated to their new home life. During this time, you should expect there to be some adjusting and boundary testing from your new cat. It is important to establish what the house rules are in advance before bringing your new cat home so that everyone is on the same page! If you have more than one person living in your home, everyone should agree on a set of rules. Inconsistency among members of the household can lead to a confused and inconsistent cat. For example:

- Is the cat allowed on the sofa or the bed?
- Will the cat be confined to a room when you are away?
- Where do you plan on keeping the litter box area?

*Giving your new cat a shutdown period.* This allows them to catch up on sleep, bond with their new family, and get to know their environment and schedules. If possible, try to limit visitors and outings during this adjustment time. If you do have visitors over, remember to give your new cat a break before becoming overwhelmed.

*Keep your schedule as consistent as possible* This is to give your new cat structure and security. Scheduled meal times will help with monitoring your cat's weight and health. The more structure and consistency you can provide your cat, the more confident they will feel in their new world. The more frequently we reward behaviors that we want, the more often our cats will offer those behaviors.

*Limiting your cat's access to their new home* This prevents their world from quickly becoming large and overwhelming. Baby gates, spare bedrooms, and bathrooms are a great way to ease a cat into a new environment and can help with litter box training. Even litter box-trained cats will need time to adapt to new schedules. As your new cat adjusts, you can begin to give them more freedom

*If you have other pets at home* Please remember to give them time to bond and adjust to each other as well. Whether initial meetings occurred at the shelter or at home, you will want to set each cat up for success when bringing them home. You can use baby gates or spare rooms to give breaks when needed. Remember, it may take your other animal some time to realize that this new cat is not just a playmate, but also a roommate. Providing enough feeding stations and litter box stations can help prevent any disagreements while your cats get to know one another.

## Fear Free Happy Homes

### *What is Fear Free?*

Founded upon the mission of preventing and alleviating fear, anxiety, and stress in pets, Fear Free® provides online education to veterinary professionals, pet professionals, animal welfare communities, and pet owners. Our programs equip professionals and pet lovers with the knowledge and tools to look after both a pet's physical and emotional wellbeing.

Fear Free Happy Homes is just for you—the loving, doting pet owner. We're here to give you full (and completely FREE) access to the most cutting-edge content and education that will enable you to help your pets live their happiest, healthiest, fullest lives at home, at the vet, at the groomer, and everywhere in between.

Adopters can go to the Fear Free Website and learn how to adjust with their adopted animals to provide the smoothest transition into their home and learn more about their pet's physical and emotional wellbeing.

## Safely Interacting With Cats

Cats are complex animals that may display a variety of different behaviors in any given situation. Any cat- from your best friend to the stray cat on the street- will react differently, and possibly unexpectedly to people, places, and other animals.

Animal behavior can shift from moment to moment, so it is important to constantly be aware of changes in the cat's behavior and in the environment. The cat's personality plays a major role in how it will interact with, or react to, situations and people. Because there is such variation with each cat and environment, it is important to understand how to interact with cats in as safe a manner as possible in any situation.

Approach the cat in a safe manner

Cat Proofing your Home

- Look around your house first, at high shelves and low cabinets. Do you see anything the cat might break, or harmful substances they may ingest?
- Fold and secure your window blinds cord with a rubber band out of the cats reach so they don't become tangled/injured.
- Always keep the door to your clothes dryer closed and double check inside before using it. Cats like to find dark, warm places to sleep.
- Keep cabinet and dresser drawers securely closed. Cats can find all kinds of mischief inside, and can be injured if you close a drawer and they are behind it.
- Make sure there are no household plants poisonous to cats in their reach.
- Cover electric cords

Based on cat communication signals, it is important to know when to back off and when it is OK to continue

- A change in the cat's behavior from loose postures to a tense body, pinned ears, fluffed out tails, wide eyes, etc.
- Sudden changes in the environment (loud noises, lighting changes, another animal approaching, etc)

## Microchip Information

*Is my pet microchipped?* All animals leave Companion Animal Alliance microchipped! If a microchip was implanted at Companion Animal Alliance it will be automatically registered to 24PetWatch when the adoption is completed. If an animal came to Companion Animal Alliance with a pre-existing microchip, adopters will need to contact the microchip company to update the contact information associated with the microchip.

*Do I need to pay an annual or registration fee for my pet's microchip to be registered?* No! Your adoption fee includes lifetime registration with 24PetWatch. 24PetWatch offers a fee-based annual membership with enhanced benefits that you may wish to purchase, but basic membership (included with adoption) is all you need to make sure your pet can be traced to you. There is no annual fee for basic membership.

How do I update or verify that my pet's microchip information is current?

Visit [www.24PetWatch.com](http://www.24PetWatch.com)! On their main page the top toolbar has "Microchip Registration" as an option! On the drop down menu you can select "Change My Contact Details". This should be changed anytime you move or your contact information changes! This is the only way a finder will be able to trace your pet's microchip to you.

*What if my pet has a non-24PetWatch microchip?* If your pet came into CAA with a non-24PetWatch microchip, you will be notified during the adoption process. The original chip company will not have your contact information unless you give it to them. If your adopted pet goes missing, anyone scanning that microchip will contact the previous owner. Therefore, you must call that chip company and give them your contact information. The company may charge a fee to update the information, CAA is not responsible for that fee.

## Shopping Lists

- ❖ Food
  - CAA will provide a starter bag of food your cat has been eating at our shelter (based on availability). While you may feed your cat any nutritious food you choose, you should transition your cat gradually from our food to your new brand of food.
  - To transition any cat to a new food, start with a ratio of  $\frac{3}{4}$  current cat food to  $\frac{1}{4}$  new food for several days. Increase the amount of new food in the ration daily to slowly transition your cat and hopefully avoid gastrointestinal upset.
  - All cats at CAA are fed either Purina Cat Chow or Purina kitten formula.
  - Cats are fed once a day at CAA in the mornings, but adopters should follow the recommended guidelines of food based on their cat's age and weight. The recommended guidelines can be found on the back of the cat food bag.
- ❖ Food/Water Bowls (stainless steel is recommended but there are many options)
- ❖ Carrier (choose one that is sturdy, easily accessible, and is size appropriate)
- ❖ Collar ( breakaway collars are recommended)
- ❖ Identification Tag (always keep this information current, include cell phone numbers)
- ❖ Litter Box (hooded or high sided recommended) and litter scooper
- ❖ Litter
- ❖ Nail Clippers/Grooming Brush
- ❖ Toys/Treats (toy mice, crinkle toys, feather wands, etc)
- ❖ Scratching Areas

## Litterboxes

The best way to introduce your cat to its new home is to confine them to one room or area- their safe haven. A further benefit to this approach is that it helps prevent litter box problems. However confident and ready to explore your cat is, keep them confined to the safe haven area until they have used the litter box at least once.

- ❖ Ensure you have enough litter boxes. You should have at least one litter box per cat.
- ❖ Experiment to find a litter that your cat likes: clumping, non-clumping, pellets, unscented, etc.
- ❖ Keep the litter box as clean as possible- cats are less likely to use a dirty litter boxes
- ❖ Place the litter box in a quiet, more private area away from their food and water bowls
- ❖ Try to stay away from scented litters. Perfumed smells tend to repel cats.
- ❖ Don't get a box that is too small. Your cat needs space to turn around, dig, and cover.
- ❖ Try not to place the litter box near anything noisy, like a washing machine or furnace.
- ❖ If you have a multi-story house, have litter boxes on each level, especially for kittens.

If your cat is showing signs of inappropriate elimination such as spraying, marking, or not using the litter box consistently, this may be an attempt on their part to communicate with you that something is physically wrong or there is something they do not like about their litter box situation. More information on litter box issues can be found on our website under the pet behavior help section.

## Pet Behavior Help

Companion Animal Alliance offers basic training advice. Some of the main things every cat owner should know are located in this packet. Other information on basic cat training tips for commonly seen issues can be found on our website at <https://www.caabr.org/pet-behavior-help>. These issues include preventing and solving litter box issues, managing scratching behavior, keeping cats off the counter, etc.

## Socializing

The greatest window of learning in a cat's life starts around 3 weeks of age and starts closing between 16 and 20 weeks. This period allows kittens to be exposed to a wide variety of sights, sounds, smells, and sensations without becoming fearful. Kittens who miss out on these experiences may have a harder time learning to be comfortable around unfamiliar things, paving the way for anxiety, fear, and aggression later on in life. Working on socializing your new cat as soon as possible will help you and them! Follow these steps to give your kitten the best start possible:

*Handling-* Young kittens should be cuddled and handled daily by as many different people as possible. Keep the contact gentle and pleasant for the kitten. Hold the kitten in different positions, gently finger their feet, rub their muzzle, stroke their back and sides, look in their ears. Older cats should also be handled as often as possible, but you may need to take a slower and more cautious approach to see how your cat will react.

*Sounds-* Acclimate your cat to lots of different sounds, being careful not to overwhelm them with too much noise too fast. Expose them to kitchen sounds, telephones ringing, children playing, sportscasters yelling on TV, radios playing, buses moving by, and so on.

*Teach your cat to be alone-* Cats and kittens should learn to tolerate being completely separate from other people and animals every day to avoid developing separation anxiety! Scheduling daily alone time with neither people nor other pets nearby is critical to prevent future separation anxiety. You can use a baby gate or crates to prevent your cat from shadowing you constantly when you're home such as in the kitchen cooking, or place them in a separate room while you are showering. You can also ask a friend to pet sit for an hour regularly so your cat becomes familiar with new environments and people!

*Introduce your cat/kitten to new people-* Introduce your kitten to several new people every day, keeping the interactions pleasant and unthreatening.

*Introduce your kitten to new animals-* Introduce your kitten to other animals it does not live with after it has received all of its vaccinations! There are lots of ways to do this: cat parks, play groups, play dates with friends' cats, and simple leash walks can all help accomplish this. Without this experience, cats can lose their ability to know how to behave appropriately around other cats.

*Preventing biting-* Provide appropriate toys to redirect your kitten's biting. When your kitten bites too hard during play, make a sudden noise ("Ow!") and end the game to help them learn to use his mouth gently. Never squeeze your kitten's mouth shut, yell at them, or hold them down. This will frighten them and likely make biting worse. Note that while kittens under five months tend to explore the world with their mouths, cats past this age are considered adolescents and should no longer be play biting.



# Initial Introductions

## Introducing cats

Cats are solitary and highly territorial creatures that often require weeks or months to adjust to changes in their environment and lifestyle. For that reason, first impressions are extremely important when meeting other household pets. Cats that are introduced too quickly and fight may never learn to coexist peacefully.

- ❖ Create a sanctuary room for your new cat. When you bring your new cat home, confine him to one room with his own litter box, bed, food, and water for a week, or at least until he has been examined by your vet.
- ❖ Feed them on opposite sides of the same door. At the next meal, place the two cats' bowls on either side of the door to that room. The aim is for the cats to associate the pleasurable activity of eating with the presence of the other cat. Gradually move the bowls closer with each feeding. When they can eat calmly with both bowls directly across from each other, open the door a crack — for just a few seconds — so they can see each other as they eat.
- ❖ Let your new cat explore. Once the new cat seems comfortable in his new surroundings, is eating well, and using his litter box, confine your resident cat in another room and let the new cat explore the house. This allows the new cat to come in contact with the resident cat's scent without direct contact. Another option is to exchange the cats' bedding for a night.
- ❖ Monitor the cats' first encounter closely and limit the time they spend together at first. Some display of fearful or aggressive behavior (crouching, hissing, ears back) is to be expected, but you want to avoid letting them establish a pattern of aggressive or fearful behavior, which may be difficult to change. If these behaviors intensify, separate the cats again and go back to step one.
- ❖ If they fight, distract and separate. If an actual fight breaks out, throw a towel over them (to distract them) or make a loud noise to separate them. Lure the new cat back to his sanctuary room (don't pick him up while he's still aroused) and give them a few days to calm down. Do not hold either cat in your arms during introductions: if either one reacts aggressively to the other cat, you could be scratched or bitten.
- ❖ Continue to provide supervised encounters with both cats, watching closely for signs of tension or aggression. If one cat appears to be freezing, staring, or fixating on the other cat, have some treats or fun toys nearby to direct them away from each other. This will also continue to teach them that good things happen when the other cat is near.

Be sensitive to what a big change this is for your resident cat. Give him the security of his usual routine and his own special time with you.

Keep in mind that “success” doesn't necessarily mean your cats will be best buddies. Some cats become bonded to one another while others spend the rest of their lives avoiding and hissing at each other. Realize that either of these scenarios might happen. Your goal in facilitating introductions is to set the stage for the cats to peacefully share their living quarters, but understand you simply cannot “make” them like each other.

This process takes time: count on 2-4 weeks if integrating a kitten and an adult, and 4-6 weeks (or longer) if integrating two adults.

While following this protocol will maximize your chances of success, know that some cats simply never learn to coexist peacefully. If you have followed the introduction process and do not see any improvement after a month's time — especially if one cat is terrorizing or injuring the other — long-term success may be unrealistic. Rehoming one of the cats or keeping them permanently separate may be necessary for everyone's safety

## Introducing Dogs and Cats

Despite the stereotype, many dogs and cats learn to live together peacefully. Be patient and take the introduction process slowly, but know that whether or not your pets get along will also depend on their individual personalities. Follow these steps to maximize the chances of success.

*Getting Started* -Make sure the cat has access to a dog-free sanctuary at all times.

- Sanctuary rooms can be any size but must have a secure door and ceiling.
- The space should include a litter box, scratching post, water, food bowl, and toys.
- Make sure to cat-proof the space by removing any poisonous plants, medicines, fragile knick knacks, and hiding or tying up cords.
- You might also set up some hiding places or tunnels to help the cat feel safer.

Be prepared to manage your pets' interactions for the next several weeks, if not longer. Ideally, your living spaces will have multiple high areas, like shelving or furniture that your cats are allowed on so they can easily escape the dog if needed.

*Keep the pets separate at first*- Keep the pets separate for at least the first 3-4 days. Prevent any contact until your new pet has had his vet checkup and been cleared of illness. Confine your new pet in a sanctuary room with the door closed or a separate floor of your house. The goal is to allow the pets to get used to each other's presence without face-to-face contact. Even if they can't see each other, they can hear and smell each other.

*Begin Face-to-Face Meetings*- Once your pets can smell each other through the door, conduct meet and greets in a common area of the house. Don't use either animal's sanctuary area. Keep the first few sessions short and calm. Keep the dog on a leash and let the cat come and go as he wishes. Do not restrain either pet in your arms, as injury could result if either pet behaves aggressively. Ask the dog to sit and reward them with small tasty treats for calm behavior. Give your cat treats as well. If either pet demonstrates aggression, calmly distract and redirect them. Toss a toy for the cat to lure them from the room, or call the dog's name and reward his attention. Return the pets to their confinement areas.

*Repeat Sessions Daily*- Repeat these face-to-face sessions daily. Save your pets' favorite treats for when they are together. If the cat attempts to leave the room, allow them to do so, and do not let the dog chase them. Try to end each session before either pet shows stress or aggression.

*Allow Pets Loose Together*- When the animals appear to be getting along well, allow them loose in the room together, keeping the dog's leash attached and dragging on the floor so that you can step on it and prevent them from chasing the cat if he gets excited. If tension erupts, go back to the earlier introduction steps and repeat the process. Make sure the cat has access to a cat-proof sanctuary room at all times.

*Proceed with Caution*- Continue to separate the pets when you are not there to supervise.

## Poison Free Homes

Cats have a way of getting into things that aren't good for them. Pet parents should do their best to pet-proof their homes. The first step to pet-proofing your home is to know what to look out for! Below are some of the most common, but not all, poisonous food and plants that could be harmful to your kitten.

### Poisonous Essential Oils

Cinnamon Oil	Citrus Oil	Clove Oil	Eucalyptus Oil
Oil of Sweet Birch	Pennyroyal Oil	Peppermint Oil	Pine Oils
Tea Tree Oil	Wintergreen Oil	Ylang Ylang Oil	

### Poisonous Foods

Alcoholic Beverages	Avocado	Chocolate	Coffee
Garlic	Grapes	Macadamia Nuts	Onions/Onion Powder
Raisins	Salt	Xylitol	Yeast

### Poisonous Plants

All bulbs	Cyclamen	Hurricane Plant	Poinsettia
Amaryllis	Daffodil	Indian Rubber Plant	Poison Ivy
Apple Leaf Croton	Devil's Ivy	Janet Craig Dracaena	Poison Oak
Autumn Crocus	Dianthus	Japanese Snow Lily	Pothos
Azalea	Dieffenbachia	Jerusalem Cherry	Precatory Bean
Baby's Breath	Dracaena Palm	Kalanchoe	Primrose
Bittersweet	Dragon Tree	Lacy Tree	Red Emerald
Bird of Paradise	Dumb Cane	Philodendron	Red Princess
Branching Ivy	Easter Lily	Lily of the Valley	Red-Margined Dracaena
Buckeye	Elaine	Madagascar Dragon	Rhododendron
Buddhist Pine	Elephant Ears	Marble Queen	Saddle Leaf Philodendron
Caladium	Emerald Feather	Marijuana	Sago Palm
Calla Lilly	English Ivy	Mexican Breadfruit	Satin Pothos
Castor Bean	Fiddle Leaf Fig	Miniature Croton	Schefflera
Ceriman	Florida Beauty	Mistletoe	Silver Pothos
Clematis	Foxglove	Morning Glory	Spotted Dumb Cane
Cordatum	Fruit Salad Plant	Mother-IN-Laws-Tongue	Stargazer Lily
Corn Plant	Geranium	Narcissus	Striped Dracaena
Cornstalk Plant	German Ivy, Glacier Ivy	Needlepoint Ivy	Sweetheart Ivy
Croton	Golden Pothos	Nephtytis	Swiss Cheese Plant
Cuban Laurel	Hahn's Ivy	Nightshade	Taro Vine
Cutleaf Philodendron	Hops	Oleander	Tiger Lily
Cycads		Oriental Lily/Peace Lily	Tobacco
		Plumosa Fern	Yew

## Declawing

Since cats can be taught to scratch on a variety of appropriate objects, CAA strongly opposes declawing cats. Declawing involves surgical amputation of the first joining on a cat's paw and is most often done to prevent the cat from scratching furniture or people. It is an extremely painful procedure that can have long-lasting negative effects. Declawed cats can no longer perform their natural stretching and kneading rituals, can experience early onset of arthritis, and can not defend themselves if they are in a dangerous situation. Some cats who have been declawed may find it painful to scratch in the litterbox and therefore will have litter box issues or stop using one altogether.

Instead of declawing, there are many options available to you to prevent negative scratching behavior! Scratching is a normal behavior that cats will need to express somehow. Taking the following steps to ensure your cat is scratching in an acceptable place will hopefully keep you and your furniture scratch-free!

- ❖ Give your cat as many scratching posts as you are able to. Cats prefer a variety and your cat may have a preference to a particular type of scratcher. Ideally, try to have one scratcher that is flat on the ground and one that is vertical. Avoid using scratchers that are a similar material to upholstery in your household.
- ❖ Put the scratchers in areas your cat likes to spend time in. Position them in obvious areas at first or areas that your cat has scratched before.
- ❖ Praise your cat for using the appropriate scratching post. Put treats on it, rub it with catnip, and attach fun toys to make it more attractive and interesting.
- ❖ If your cat is scratching on inappropriate surfaces, make the surfaces unappealing. Some simple methods of doing this are spraying a citrus scent to the area, sticky sheets produced to prevent cat scratching, or placing tin foil on the furniture/area.
- ❖ Get your cat's nails regularly trimmed. If you have a kitten, begin trimming their nails on a regular basis as soon as possible. Keeping nails trimmed will reduce your cat's need to scratch as much and will reduce the damage that can be caused by the scratching.

## Inside Vs. Outside

Cats can live a healthy, happy life both indoors and outdoors. If you do decide to let your cat outside, follow these guidelines to keep them safe:

- Wait until the cat has been in your home or acclimated to your home for a period of time before allowing them free outside.
- Young kittens are especially vulnerable as their bodies and minds are still developing, so wait until your kitten is older before letting them out sooner. They are not able to protect themselves from predators, are not as savvy as older cats, etc.
- Keep your cat up to date on vaccinations and flea control.
- Make sure your cat is wearing a break-away collar with an ID tag and keep your cat's microchip information current.
- East Baton Rouge Parish has ordinances regarding loose animals, so be sure to abide by these laws.

Just because a cat is indoors only does not mean that their life has to be boring- but can be safer! Cats can have enriched and fulfilling lives as indoor companions. Stimulating your cat's mind and providing them with enriching experiences will entertain them and strengthen your relationship.

## Animal Health

Companion Animal Alliance is committed to the health and welfare of the animals in our shelter. However, cats are living beings who are forever changing and we can not guarantee their health or behavior. In a large-scale kennel environment (whether it is a boarding facility, kennel, breeder, or a shelter), a number of transmittable illnesses can be passed among animals. Some animals may not exhibit symptoms during their stay at the shelter and may only show signs of illness once they have been placed in a loving home. By adopting, you have committed to providing your new cat with any medical care they may require. Additionally, CAA is prohibited by law from providing medical care to owned animals once they leave our care, so all medical expenses are the responsibility of the adopter after the 7 day window.

**If you notice any health concerns with your adopted cat within 7 days after the adoption, an appointment can be made with CAA to have our Veterinarians examine the animal. This does not include traumatic events such as being hit by a car, ingesting something in the new home, etc. Appointments must be made with CAA staff and are available Sunday-Friday from 2:30-4:00 pm. If you seek veterinary care from a personal or emergency veterinarian within the 7 day window CAA will not reimburse those costs.**

CAA provides medical information to the adopter when it is available. However, CAA provides a safe haven for many stray and owned animals who arrive without a medical history. CAA recommends that you visit a full service veterinarian within 10 days of adoption. Any medical or care fees are the adopters sole responsibility.

If your animal recently underwent spay or neuter surgery or some other procedure at CAA, you need to follow the instructions found in your cat's medical records to ensure your cat is healing properly.

## Veterinarians

CAA strongly encourages that you take the opportunity to visit a local veterinarian and establish a lifelong relationship for you and your new pet. While CAA strives to adopt out pets in good health, many animals come to us with unknown medical histories and can develop illnesses that may not be evident until they are in their new home environment. Baton Rouge has many wonderful veterinarians available to you! To find a full list of these, please visit our website to see the names and contact information for available vets.

When visiting the veterinarian for the first time with your new cat, take the medical records provided by CAA with you. Check your adoption packet for additional health waivers or inserts that may have been provided as well. This will alert the doctor to any vaccines, parasite treatment, surgery or other procedures that were performed. CAA gives all cats the basic FVRCP vaccine, heartworm and flea preventative, and dewormer.

## Upper Respiratory Infections

Upper Respiratory Infection, or URI, is an illness that affects the upper respiratory tracts of cats. It is primarily caused by viruses, but bacteria can also play a role in URIs. Common symptoms include sneezing, lethargy, irritated eyes that have discharge, and coughing.

It is important to monitor your cat closely for any signs such as difficulty breathing, increased nasal discharge, or fever and consult your veterinarian if they appear. In a home setting, most cats recover from URI within two weeks. Antibiotics can help prevent secondary bacterial infections and can be prescribed by a veterinarian, but are not always necessary.

URI is transmitted in ways similar to the common cold in humans- via sneezing, eye discharge, or direct contact. For this and other reasons, it is best to keep your new cat separate from any resident cats in your household for the first few days. This will not only help ensure a smooth transition into the family, but will help keep all resident cats healthy.

## Intestinal Parasites

There are many types of intestinal parasites that can affect cats. Cats can contract intestinal parasites from drinking contaminated water, eating feces, flea and mosquito bites, etc. Intestinal parasites are contagious to other animals and humans and can be passed in the feces. The infective larvae then inhabit the soil around the feces, leaving other animals and children, vulnerable to accidental ingestion and subsequent infection. To help prevent human infection, always pick up thoroughly after your pet uses the restroom, do not go barefooted where animals use the restroom, always wash your hands and areas of contact after handling your pet. CAA always recommends following up with your veterinarian about future screening tests and continued deworming.

## Heartworm Disease in Cats

*What is heartworm disease?* Feline heartworm disease develops when a cat is bitten by an infected mosquito. Due to the infection, cats can develop HARD (heart-worm associated respiratory disease). Unlike in dogs, in which heartworms develop to maturity most of the time, adult worms are found in cats only occasionally. Unfortunately, even a single heartworm can have fatal consequences in a cat. Even indoor cats are at risk of infection because mosquitos are often found inside homes in Louisiana.

*Signs of Heartworm-Associated Respiratory Disease-* Signs of HARD can mimic common diseases of cats, such as hairballs, asthma, or pneumonia. Signs can range from mild and subtle to severe and life threatening. Signs of disease can include loss of appetite, sluggishness, intermittent vomiting, coughing, wheezing, and respiratory distress.

*Detecting Heartworm Infection-* Two blood tests are available to assist in diagnosing heartworms. CAA currently does not perform heartworm testing on cats prior to adoption, so this can be followed up with your personal veterinarian.

*Prevention-* Various heartworm preventatives are available for cats given once a month. These products are highly effective, safe, easy to administer, and relatively inexpensive. All heartworm preventive medications for cats work by killing heartworm larvae acquired during the previous month and do not continue to protect cats from future infection without continued monthly dosing.

*Treatment-* Unfortunately, no medications exist currently for the safe treatment of adult heartworms in cats. In some circumstances, surgical removal of heartworms has been successful, however this surgical procedure is difficult and risky. The best option is the routine use of heartworm preventatives to inhibit development of infection.



## FIV (Feline Immunodeficiency Virus)

*What is FIV?* FIV is Feline Immunodeficiency Virus, a viral infection that infects only cats. People and other species of animals can not get this virus. All cats and kittens adopted out by CAA are currently tested for FIV and FELV. We recommend follow up testing with your personal veterinarian 6 months after initial testing.

*How is FIV Transmitted?* Fortunately, the virus itself is very fragile in the environment and is hard to catch. The majority of FIV cases occur via cat fights, passed by a penetrating bite wound or scratch. Mother to kitten infection is also possible, also less likely to occur. Many kittens who initially test positive for FIV do not have the disease, they have antibodies from their mother. Retesting these kittens over the span of months is important to determine if they are actually positive or negative for FIV. FIV is unlikely to be transmitted via friendly contact between cats (nose-to-nose contact, mutual grooming, sharing toys, sharing food/water, etc. It will not be spread via particles on your clothing or shoes.

*What does FIV look like?* Clinical signs for FIV are not always present. Cats can go many years without being symptomatic. FIV positive cats are more likely to have dental and other oral tissue disease. Common diseases, wounds, and infections can be more severe in positive cats than in negative cats. FIV positive cats may have a shortened lifespan (succumbing ultimately to infections they can't fight off, cancers, or organ failure), but in a controlled environment many will live a happy, mostly normal life!

*What does my FIV+ cat need from me?* FIV cats don't need anything much different than FIV negative cats! They need a controlled indoor environment, good and consistent nutrition, regular preventative health care, and a low stress environment.

*Can my FIV+ cat live with other cats?* This depends on the personality and attitude itself much more than the disease. FIV+ cats can live with healthy FIV- cats with little risk of disease transmission as long as the cats are friendly to each other and introduced properly. Transmission occurs when there is serious fighting/bite wounds.

## FELV (Feline Leukemia Virus)

*What is FELV?* Feline Leukemia Virus is one of the most common infectious diseases in cats. It is a retrovirus that only affects cats. People and other species of animals can not get this virus. All cats and kittens adopted out by CAA are currently tested for FIV and FELV. We recommend follow up testing with your personal veterinarian 6 months after initial testing.

*How is FELV Transmitted?* FELV is shed in saliva, nasal secretions, urine, feces, and milk of infected cats. Cat-to-cat transfer can occur from a bite-wound, during mutual grooming, and (rarely) through the shared use of litter boxes and feeding dishes. Transmission can also take place from an infected mother cat to her kittens, either before they are born or while they are nursing.

*What does FELV look like?* FELV adversely affects a cat's body in many ways. During the early stages of infection, it is common for cats to exhibit no signs of disease at all. Over time, (weeks, months, years), an infected cat's health may progressively deteriorate or he/she may experience repeating cycles of illness and relative health. Signs can include loss of appetite, progressive weight loss, poor coat, enlarged lymph nodes, fever, inflammation of gums, etc.

## FIP( Feline Infectious Peritonitis)

*What is FIP?* Feline Infectious Peritonitis is a viral disease of cats caused by certain strains of a virus called the feline coronavirus. Most strains of feline coronavirus do not cause significant disease. About 10% of cats infected with this can have viral mutations leading to FIPV. FIPV can lead to the development of FIP. Once a cat develops clinical FIP, the disease is usually progressive and almost always fatal. There is currently no definitive test to diagnose FIP.

*How is FIP Transmitted?* Any cat that carries the FECV is potentially at risk for developing FIP, but younger cats are at greater risk. The most common mode of transmission of FECV is believed to occur when infected queens pass the virus to their kittens.

*What does FIP look like?* Cats that have been initially exposed to FeCV usually show no obvious symptoms. Some cats may show mild upper respiratory symptoms such as sneezing, watery eyes, and nasal discharge, while others may experience mild gastrointestinal signs such as diarrhea. In most cases, these mild signs are self-limiting. Only a small percentage of cats that are exposed to the FeCV develop FIP, and this can occur weeks, months, or even years after initial exposure to FeCV.

There are two major forms of FIP, an effusive, or "wet" form and a noneffusive, or "dry" form. Regardless of which form they ultimately progress to develop, cats infected with FIPV usually first develop nonspecific signs of disease such as loss of appetite, weight loss, depression, and fever. It is also important to note that cases of the effusive form of FIP can evolve into the non-effusive form and vice-versa.

## Ringworm

Dermatophytosis (also known as ringworm) is a skin, hair, and nail condition caused by a fungal infection that is very common in cats and kittens. There are multiple types of ringworm, ranging from highly contagious to unlikely to be contagious. Cats and kittens going up for adoption are screened for physical signs of ringworm via physical exams and Woods lamp testing, followed up with a culture test called a DTM if necessary. In most cases, ringworm causes circular or patchy pattern hair loss in dogs and cats and can cause itching and sores. In humans, it typically appears as circular areas of redness and may be itchy or uncomfortable.

Ringworm is contagious to humans and other animals. It is usually spread by contact with an infected animal or human, but some types can be acquired from the environment. Be sure to wash your hands well after contact with the animal. Do not allow children, elderly, or immunocompromised individuals around your pet until your veterinarian and/or physician has approved.

Ringworm is very stable in the environment. Bleach and some other disinfectants will kill the spores. Any bedding a suspected ringworm animal is in contact with will need to be washed with soap and bleach on the hot cycle with the hot dryer cycle. The area where the animal stays should be cleaned with a bleach solution or other product recommended by your veterinarian.

## Post Adoption Follow Ups/Alumni

*We Invite you into the CAA family-* We hope the adoption process has made you feel like a member of the CAA family, and encourage you to explore other ways to become involved. CAA offers a variety of fun opportunities to participate in helping animals. You may want to join us by volunteering, becoming a foster family or participating in one of our events such as Cap City Beer Fest or FurBall. You can learn more about these events and programs for young kids at <https://www.caabr.org/> under our “Get Involved” tab! In addition to this, we always appreciate receiving updates on our adopted animals. Updates can be sent to [adopt@caabr.org](mailto:adopt@caabr.org)!

Follow us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/companionanimalalliance>

Follow us on Instagram: @caapets

*You adopted your best friend from CAA, now what?*

It's important that an adopter's involvement at CAA doesn't end at the time of adoption. That's why the Companion Animal Alliance Alumni Association was created in February 2021, giving adopters an opportunity to stay connected with our animal-loving community post-adoption. For an annual fee of \$75, members have access to resources, Alum merchandise and events exclusive only to those within the association – think a Dog Days of Summer BBQ and Dog Park LSU Tailgate.

As an Alumni Association Member, you have the opportunity to help further CAA's mission of caring for the lost, abandoned and abused animals of East Baton Rouge while also experiencing the community that comes with being a CAA Alumnus.

## What if it's not the right fit?

Sometimes, unfortunately an animal won't be the right fit for you or your family! CAA recommends giving a proper period of time to adjust, for both the animal and yourself. If it is necessary to return your animal, please contact CAA. CAA accepts owned animals, including those adopted from us, by appointments. Appointments can be made on our website! If the animal adopted is not suitable for you and/or your household, CAA allows "exchanges" within two weeks of the original adoption. The adoption fee originally paid will go towards the second animal adopted. No monetary refunds will be provided and adopters will need to pay any additional differences in fees. If it is out of the two week period, we will always accept our animals back and help you find a new animal that may be a better fit, it just will not be considered an exchange! Animals do not have to be returned to CAA if you are able to safely rehome the animal yourself, we just ask to be notified so we can update our information! Always ensure microchip information is up to date.

*What You Should Expect-* Companion Animal Alliance is the only open intake facility for East Baton Rouge Parish, meaning that we can never turn away an animal in need. We care for more than 7,000-8,000 animals annually. We can not provide positive outcomes for every animal that is brought to our shelter- but we can immediately start offering support and assistance through our Project Safety Net programs. We want to prepare as much as possible for each animal coming into our shelter, therefore we take in owner surrendered animals by appointment. We charge a modest owner surrender fee for cats and dogs, which will be applied to the costs we will incur providing care to the animal. If you do not have the funds to pay a surrender fee, please share that information with our staff.

*How the Process Works-* Each day, Companion Animal Alliance Admissions staff works to take in appointments and make the transition into the shelter as smooth as possible for our shelter staff, you, and your animal. We are typically unable to accept same-day appointments, but we do our best to keep the surrender process moving quickly.

*How to Prepare-* Email [intake@caabr.org](mailto:intake@caabr.org) to speak with an Admissions counselor about the surrender process, and when appropriate, set an appointment. Admissions Appointment requests will be made through our website after speaking with our staff. If you are unable to communicate through email, call (225)408-5360. We receive a high volume of phone calls daily, which are returned in the order received. Send all veterinary records to [intake@caabr.org](mailto:intake@caabr.org) as soon as possible.

*What to Do When You Arrive-* Upon arrival, an Admissions staff member will confirm your appointment with you and bring you and your animal into our lobby. An Admissions staff member will begin filling out the documents to take an animal into our care. Companion Animal Alliance requires the owner's signature in order to relinquish the animal to us. If the animal will be brought to the appointment by someone other than the owner, please let our Admissions Department know in advance. At this time, we will ask you to fill out an Animal Personality Questionnaire for each animal being surrendered (if you have not already done so). Your surrender fee will be collected if applicable. Accepted forms of payment are cash or credit/debit card