

## **Foster Care Talking Points Checklist – Weaned Kittens/Puppies (template)**

**\*edit talking points to fit specific groups being fostered and to include appropriate procedures for the organization**

**\*Have a staff member cover talking points with foster families, have family initial that they understand next to each point**

Date\_\_\_\_\_

### **Weaned kittens/puppies:**

\_\_\_ WHAT TO FEED: Kittens should be eating kitten food. Puppies should be eating puppy food.

\_\_\_ IF THEY STOP EATING: If kittens/puppies stop eating for more than 12 hours, have problems going to the bathroom, become lethargic, are sneezing, or show signs of any illness, please let us know right away. Babies can become critically ill quickly, so do not delay.

\_\_\_ INDOORS ONLY: Kittens/puppies should not be allowed outside (except for puppies to go potty). This is important as their immune systems are not fully developed.

\_\_\_ LETHARGY: If kittens/puppies go too long without eating or play too hard and have not had sufficient food, they can become lethargic. Karo syrup or maple syrup are good remedies to have on hand. A kitten or puppy that has become lethargic or stopped eating can be given a little bit of Karo syrup on their gums. This immediately introduces sugar into the system, raising the blood sugar level. If this situation arises, please contact the emergency foster phone before giving the syrup.

\_\_\_ SOCIALIZATION: While playtime with siblings is very important to their development, time spent with people—especially a variety of different people who show affection, talk with them, cuddle and play, is the very best preparation for adoption.

### **Puppies only:**

\_\_\_ ADOPTION OF PUPPIES: Dogs are different than cats. While it is fine to adopt feline siblings, puppies adopted from the same litter often bond so strongly that they do not develop full and healthy relationships with people. If you want two dogs, it is best to select one puppy now, bond with that puppy and later add a second dog or puppy.

### **All fosters:**

\_\_\_ PROPER DOSE AND HOW TO GIVE MEDICATION: If kittens/puppies are on medication or have any medical issues, go over the illness and medications.

\_\_\_ PETS AT HOME NEED CURRENT VACCINES: Make sure the foster volunteer's personal pets are current on vaccinations.

\_\_\_ KEEP FOSTER ANIMALS AND PETS SEPARATE: It is important to keep foster pets and personal pets separate to minimize any chance of spreading illness.

\_\_\_ NECKBANDS: Remove neck bands as soon the kittens are settled in at home. It is important that they not become too tight as kittens grow. (You can remove them by pulling on the loose end of the

collar while holding the other side of the sealed sticky area OR by using rounded-tipped safety scissors to carefully cut collar.)

\_\_\_ KEEP BABIES WARM AND DRY: Keep kittens/puppies warm, dry, and in a safe area free of drafts. If you must clean them, use a warm, damp cloth and dry them immediately with a soft towel.

\_\_\_ BARE FLOOR IS BETTER THAN CARPETING: It is best to keep them in a room without carpet if this is an option, as it is easier to keep clean.

\_\_\_ NON-CLUMPING CLAY LITTER ONLY: Use regular clay litter for kittens; avoid clumping litter as kittens can ingest it and become very ill.

\_\_\_ VET CARE FOLLOW-UP FORM: The vet care follow-up form provides additional information on when to bring animals in for vaccinations, spay/neuter, etc.

\_\_\_ ADOPTING FOSTER PETS: If you wish to adopt a kitten or have arranged homes, let staff know (insert procedure for adoption here)

\_\_\_ PHONE NUMBERS: Below is the Foster Emergency Phone Number and other numbers to call during shelter hours for questions, problems, etc.

**Foster Emergency:** (insert phone numbers)

**Clinic:**

**General:**

## Talking Points Checklist – Gruel Kittens/Puppies (Template)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Gruel kittens/puppies (3-5 weeks of age):**

- \_\_\_ **HOW TO MAKE GRUEL:** Gruel is a mixture of pate style wet kitten or puppy food and milk replacer/formula. Avoid fish flavored food as it can upset their stomachs and cause diarrhea. Sometimes if gruel is too thick, the kittens/puppies may become constipated. If this happens, add more water to the formula. A little canned pumpkin can also relieve constipation.
- \_\_\_ **FREQUENCY:** Even though the kittens/puppies are older and starting to eat more solid food, they must still be fed every 3 hours or so. This is a very vulnerable stage for them as many people think they do not need to eat as often, but in fact they need to be fed frequently during this stage of rapid body growth. It is very important that they get enough to eat so that they stay healthy and grow strong. (Review feeding chart.)
- \_\_\_ **SHOW THEM HOW TO EAT:** Sometimes kittens/puppies will need encouragement to eat by placing a bit of food from the tip of your finger on their lips so they lick it off and taste it.
- \_\_\_ **OVER ENTHUSIASM:** Kittens/puppies in this stage are still learning how to eat. It is not uncommon for them to bury their faces in the food and come up coughing. If this happens, quickly clean food way from their nose.
- \_\_\_ **NO COW'S MILK:** Do not feed kittens/puppies regular milk, it can upset their stomachs. Please use kitten or puppy milk replacement.
- \_\_\_ **DIARRHEA:** It is not uncommon for kittens/puppies to experience diarrhea when making the switch from gruel to regular food. However, if it lasts for more than a few days or is watery, call the foster emergency number. Watch for signs of dehydration, such as listlessness. Kittens and puppies can go downhill quickly and need prompt veterinary care.
- \_\_\_ **CHANGING OVER TO DRY FOOD:** Generally, around the 5-week mark, kittens/puppies should be ready and able to eat dry kitten or puppy food and water. You may begin to introduce them to dry food by first mixing the wet and dry together, lessening the set as you go until you are eventually feeding only dry.
- \_\_\_ **FERAL KITTENS:** Please also review the feral kitten sheet.

### **All fosters:**

- \_\_\_ **PROPER DOSE AND HOW TO GIVE MEDICATION:** If kittens/puppies are on medication or have any medical issues, go over the illness and medications.
- \_\_\_ **PETS AT HOME NEED CURRENT VACCINES:** Make sure the foster volunteer's personal pets are current on vaccinations.
- \_\_\_ **KEEP FOSTER ANIMALS AND PETS SEPARATE:** It is important to keep foster pets and personal pets separate to minimize any chance of spreading illness.
- \_\_\_ **NECKBANDS:** Remove neck bands as soon the kittens are settled in at home. It is important that they not become too tight as kittens grow. (You can remove them by pulling on the loose end of the collar while holding the other side of the sealed sticky area OR by using rounded-tipped safety scissors to carefully cut collar.)
- \_\_\_ **KEEP BABIES WARM AND DRY:** Keep kittens/puppies warm, dry, and in a safe area free of drafts. If you must clean them, use a warm, damp cloth and dry them immediately with a soft towel.

\_\_\_ BARE FLOOR IS BETTER THAN CARPETING: It is best to keep them in a room without carpet if this is an option, as it is easier to keep clean.

\_\_\_ NON-CLUMPING CLAY LITTER ONLY: Use regular clay litter for kittens; avoid clumping litter as kittens can ingest it and become very ill.

\_\_\_ VET CARE FOLLOW-UP FORM: The vet care follow-up form provides additional information on when to bring animals in for vaccinations, spay/neuter, etc.

\_\_\_ ADOPTING FOSTER PETS: If you wish to adopt a kitten or have arranged homes, let staff know.

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## Talking Points Checklist – Feral and Semi-Feral Kittens (Template)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Feral and Semi-Feral Kittens:

\_\_\_ WHAT IS A FERAL KITTEN? Kittens are considered feral or semi-feral because they did not have socialization with humans during the first few weeks of their lives.

\_\_\_ CRITICAL SOCIALIZATION PERIOD: If we are able to socialize kittens before they are 8-weeks old, it is very likely the kittens will become friendly and adoptable house cats.

\_\_\_ CHOOSE A QUIET, SECURE ROOM: When you first bring the kittens home, it is best to keep them in a small room where there are very few places to hide (like a bathroom or laundry room). If you place them in a bedroom, they will hide under the bed, dresser, or other location that will make it very difficult to reach.

\_\_\_ HANDLE CAREFULLY AT FIRST: Be careful when you initially pick up the kittens. They will probably hiss, spit, and/or swat at you. If they are very aggressive, it is best to put a towel over them and then pick them up.

\_\_\_ HOW TO SOCIALIZE KITTENS: The more you can handle the kittens, the better. Here are a few things to try:

- The *burrito technique* (wrap kitten in a towel so that only the head is visible) to hold and gently pet their head until they relax.
- Provide a tasty treat, like human baby food chicken or turkey. Feeding a little on a spoon or tip of your finger to the kitten reinforces that people provide tasty treats.
- Play with them using toys on string to lure them near you. (Kittens should only be allowed to play with string toys under supervision so as not to be ingested.)
- Involve other people. The more people handling the kittens, the more social and well-adjusted they become.
- Spend as much time as you can with the kittens—talking to them, handling them, giving them treats. Soon they will begin to associate people and voices with love and food.

\_\_\_ INFO SHEETS ON SOCIALIZING KITTENS: Read the *How to Socialize Feral Kittens* article in the foster packet.

\_\_\_ EXPANDING THEIR TURF: When you feel like the kittens will not hide, it is ok to introduce them slowly to other parts of the house.

### All fosters:

\_\_\_ PROPER DOSE AND HOW TO GIVE MEDICATION: If kittens/puppies are on medication or have any medical issues, go over the illness and medications.

\_\_\_ PETS AT HOME NEED CURRENT VACCINES: Make sure the foster volunteer's personal pets are current on vaccinations.

\_\_\_ KEEP FOSTER ANIMALS AND PETS SEPARATE: It is important to keep foster pets and personal pets separate to minimize any chance of spreading illness.

\_\_\_ NECKBANDS: Remove neck bands as soon the kittens are settled in at home. It is important that they not become too tight as kittens grow. (You can remove them by pulling on the loose end of the collar while holding the other side of the sealed sticky area OR by using rounded-tipped safety scissors to carefully cut collar.)

\_\_\_ KEEP BABIES WARM AND DRY: Keep kittens/puppies warm, dry, and in a safe area free of drafts. If you must clean them, use a warm, damp cloth, and dry them immediately with a soft towel.

\_\_\_ BARE FLOOR IS BETTER THAN CARPETING: It is best to keep them in a room without carpet if this is an option, as it is easier to keep clean.

\_\_\_ NON-CLUMPING CLAY LITTER ONLY: Use regular clay litter for kittens; avoid clumping litter as kittens can ingest it and become very ill.

\_\_\_ VET CARE FOLLOW-UP FORM: The vet care follow-up form provides additional information on when to bring animals in for vaccinations, spay/neuter, etc.

\_\_\_ ADOPTING FOSTER PETS: If you wish to adopt a kitten or have arranged homes, let staff know.

\_\_\_ PHONE NUMBERS: Below is the Foster Emergency Phone Number and other numbers to call during shelter hours for questions, problems, etc.

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## Talking Points Checklist – Bottle-fed Kittens/Puppies (Template)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Bottle-fed Kittens/Puppies:**

- \_\_\_ **KEEP BABIES WARM:** Bottle-fed kittens/puppies need to be kept warm. Use a heating pad on low or a microwavable heat source designed for pets. The animals should not come into direct contact with pad; use a towel or blanket. There also must be space for kittens or puppies to crawl off the heat pad should they become too warm.
- \_\_\_ **FEED AT AN APPROPRIATE FREQUENCY FOR THEIR AGE:** Depending on their age, bottle-fed kittens/puppies may need to be fed as frequently as every 2-3 hours, even through the night. Be sure you know how often they need to eat before leaving the shelter and as they grow, refer to the feeding chart. Set an alarm clock as you most likely will not wake up to them crying.
- \_\_\_ **HOW TO MAKE FORMULA:** To make formula, mix 1 part powdered formula with 2 parts warm water.
- \_\_\_ **KEEP FORMULA REFRIGERATED:** Refrigerate powdered and liquid formula.
- \_\_\_ **MIX ONLY ENOUGH FOR ONE DAY:** Only mix enough formula for 24 hours as it will spoil.
- \_\_\_ **FORMULA MUST BE WARM, BUT NOT HOT:** Warm the milk before feeding, test it on your wrist. Should feel warm but not hot.
- \_\_\_ **FEED BABIES UPRIGHT:** Feed kittens/puppies upright at a 45° angle—never feed them belly-up, on their backs. While human babies eat on their backs, kittens and puppies can get formula in their lungs and become sick or die. (BE SURE THIS IS DEMONSTRATED).
- \_\_\_ **HOW TO KNOW WHEN THEY ARE FULL:** Kittens/puppies may turn their heads away from nipple when full. You may also gently feel their tummy to see if it is full (like a full water balloon).
- \_\_\_ **STIMULATE URINATION/DEFECATION:** Immediately after feeding, the kittens/puppies must be stimulated to eliminate. Use a soft, warm, damp cloth. Using circular or front to back motions, rub their rectal area, the idea is to simulate the mother animal's tongue which will enable them to eliminate.
- \_\_\_ **STAY ALERT FOR HEALTH PROBLEMS, BABIES CAN BECOME VERY SICK SUDDENLY:** Kittens/puppies this young go downhill very quickly. Please call the emergency foster phone (available nights and weekends) or the clinic (during clinic hours) if anything seems out of the ordinary. Common problems include: not eating, not eating enough, vomiting, diarrhea, constipation, or lethargy.
- \_\_\_ Very young kittens /puppies without the benefit of their mother's milk and care have a lower survival rate than those with their mom. Because they are so small and susceptible to illness, it is not uncommon for bottle-fed kittens/puppies to not survive. You are giving them their best chance at life with your TLC.

### **All fosters:**

- \_\_\_ **PROPER DOSE AND HOW TO GIVE MEDICATION:** If kittens/puppies are on medication or have any medical issues, go over the illness and medications.

- \_\_\_ PETS AT HOME NEED CURRENT VACCINES: Make sure the foster volunteer's personal pets are current on vaccinations.
- \_\_\_ KEEP FOSTER ANIMALS AND PETS SEPARATE: It is important to keep foster pets and personal pets separate to minimize any chance of spreading illness.
- \_\_\_ NECKBANDS: Remove neck bands as soon the kittens are settled in at home. It is important that they not become too tight as kittens grow. (You can remove them by pulling on the loose end of the collar while holding the other side of the sealed sticky area OR by using rounded-tipped safety scissors to carefully cut collar.)
- \_\_\_ KEEP BABIES WARM AND DRY: Keep kittens/puppies warm, dry, and in a safe area free of drafts. If you must clean them, use a warm, damp cloth and dry them immediately with a soft towel.
- \_\_\_ BARE FLOOR IS BETTER THAN CARPETING: It is best to keep them in a room without carpet if this is an option, as it is easier to keep clean.
- \_\_\_ NON-CLUMPING CLAY LITTER ONLY: Use regular clay litter for kittens; avoid clumping litter as kittens can ingest it and become very ill.
- \_\_\_ VET CARE FOLLOW-UP FORM: The vet care follow-up form provides additional information on when to bring animals in for vaccinations, spay/neuter, etc.
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## Talking Points Checklist – Mom & Litter (Template)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Mom with litters:**

- \_\_\_ **MOM DOES A LOT OF THE WORK:** Many foster caregivers consider mom and litters to be one of the easiest foster situations as mom will do most of the work (i.e., feeding, cleaning, keeping warm, training).
- \_\_\_ **KEEP AN EYE ON THE SITUATION:** If for some reason, mom is not doing these things, please let us know right away, especially if fostering newborns. Tiny babies are very fragile and can go downhill quickly, so your monitoring is important.
- \_\_\_ **MONITORING THE HEALTH OF MOM:** It is not unusual for moms to experience diarrhea while nursing. Feeding the mom canned pumpkin mixed with her canned food can help. If the diarrhea lasts for more than a few days, please let us know.
- \_\_\_ **HOUSING:** It is wise to keep mom and babies in a single, small room like an extra bedroom. Mom cats like to move their kittens. Keeping them in one, smaller room will minimize the hiding places so you can keep an eye on them. Providing two appealing boxes or beds for mom gives her an alternative place to move the babies.
- \_\_\_ **FEEDING MOM:** The mother animal needs extra nutrition to feed the babies. She should be eating kitten or puppy food the entire time she is nursing.
- \_\_\_ **SOCIALIZING THE KITTENS AND PUPPIES:** Spending time cuddling, talking to, and playing with kittens and puppies is important for them. It makes them friendlier and well adjusted, preparing them for adoption.
- \_\_\_ **HOW LONG DO THEY NEED TO BE WITH MOM?** While kittens/puppies physically only NEED to stay with mom until they are fully weaned (eating solid food on their own), there are many important developmental reasons to keep them with mom for 8 or 9 weeks. Mom teaches the babies many important life skills. The best adjusted kittens and puppies get plenty of time with their mom and plenty of attention and affection from people.
- \_\_\_ **AS TIME PASSES:** It is not unusual for mom to become grumpy towards, or even hiss/growl at the kittens/puppies once they are old enough to eat on their own. This is mom's way of helping the weaning process along. If mom becomes aggressive towards them or is too much to handle, please contact us right away so we can assess the situation.

### **All fosters:**

- \_\_\_ **PROPER DOSE AND HOW TO GIVE MEDICATION:** If kittens/puppies are on medication or have any medical issues, go over the illness and medications.
- \_\_\_ **PETS AT HOME NEED CURRENT VACCINES:** Make sure the foster volunteer's personal pets are current on vaccinations.
- \_\_\_ **KEEP FOSTER ANIMALS AND PETS SEPARATE:** It is important to keep foster pets and personal pets separate to minimize any chance of spreading illness.
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collar while holding the other side of the sealed sticky area OR by using rounded-tipped safety scissors to carefully cut collar.)

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\_\_\_ VET CARE FOLLOW-UP FORM: The vet care follow-up form provides additional information on when to bring animals in for vaccinations, spay/neuter, etc.

\_\_\_ ADOPTING FOSTER PETS: If you wish to adopt a kitten or have arranged homes let staff know.

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## Talking Points Checklist – Feral Moms and Kittens (Template)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Feral moms and kittens:

- \_\_\_ CHOOSE A QUIET PLACE: Cage should be set up in a quiet place with little traffic or open doors/windows. Mom will feel less stressed and therefore continue making milk.
- \_\_\_ SET CARRIER INSIDE OF CAGE AS HIDING PLACE FOR MOM WITH DOOR PROPPED OPEN: The cage should be set up with the carrier (door propped open) inside the cage at the back (mom will want to hide in the carrier). Litter box and food should be placed close to the opening of the cage so they may be reached without placing arm too far into the cage. You can use a stick to close the door to the carrier so you can safely reach in to clean the cage.
- \_\_\_ KEEP MOM IN CAGE: Feral mom should be kept in the cage at all times. Do NOT attempt to socialize the mom.
- \_\_\_ COVER THE CAGE: Keeping cage covered with a sheet or blanket will decrease the feral mom's stress.
- \_\_\_ SOCIALIZING THE KITTENS IS IMPORTANT: Once kittens are mobile, they will move in and out of the carrier and around the cage. Feral kittens will need to be socialized. They need to be handled during their early weeks of life in order to learn to trust people. Be careful of mom when reaching in to pick up kittens. If mom is hiding in the carrier, you can use a stick to close the door to the carrier so you can safely reach in to get kittens.
- \_\_\_ ONCE KITTENS EAT ON THEIR OWN, IT IS TIME TO SEPARATE THEM FROM MOM: Once kittens are eating food on their own, they may be separated from mom. Mom should be brought back to the shelter for spaying. Kittens will remain in foster home until they are 2 lbs.
- \_\_\_ CONTINUE SOCIALIZING KITTENS: It is important to expose the kittens to different people so they will learn to trust people. The more outgoing and friendly they are the easier time they have finding new homes.

### All fosters:

- \_\_\_ PROPER DOSE AND HOW TO GIVE MEDICATION: If kittens/puppies are on medication or have any medical issues, go over the illness and medications.
- \_\_\_ PETS AT HOME NEED CURRENT VACCINES: Make sure the foster volunteer's personal pets are current on vaccinations.
- \_\_\_ KEEP FOSTER ANIMALS AND PETS SEPARATE: It is important to keep foster pets and personal pets separate to minimize any chance of spreading illness.
- \_\_\_ NECKBANDS: Remove neck bands as soon the kittens are settled in at home. It is important that they not become too tight as kittens grow. (You can remove them by pulling on the loose end of the collar while holding the other side of the sealed sticky area OR by using rounded-tipped safety scissors to carefully cut collar.)
- \_\_\_ KEEP BABIES WARM AND DRY: Keep kittens/puppies warm, dry, and in a safe area free of drafts. If you must clean them, use a warm, damp cloth and dry them immediately with a soft towel.

\_\_\_ BARE FLOOR IS BETTER THAN CARPETING: It is best to keep them in a room without carpet if this is an option, as it is easier to keep clean.

\_\_\_ NON-CLUMPING CLAY LITTER ONLY: Use regular clay litter for kittens; avoid clumping litter as kittens can ingest it and become very ill.

\_\_\_ VET CARE FOLLOW-UP FORM: The vet care follow-up form provides additional information on when to bring animals in for vaccinations, spay/neuter, etc.

\_\_\_ ADOPTING FOSTER PETS: If you wish to adopt a kitten or have arranged homes, let staff know.

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## Talking Points Checklist – Fungus Kittens (Template)

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Fungus Kittens:**

- \_\_\_ WHERE DOES FUNGUS COME FROM: The skin fungus these kittens have is one that occurs naturally in the environment and could be picked up by anyone at any time, people or animals. The fungus is very similar to the skin fungus called Athlete's Foot in humans and the kittens are treated with a similar anti-fungal cream.
  
- \_\_\_ MEDICATION FOR THE KITTENS: (insert organization name) will provide all the necessary medications and supplies. Medicated shampoos or sulfur dips are available for kittens if you are willing to use them. If interested, please ask the foster care coordinator. Once a kitten reaches 2 lbs., he or she will be eligible for an oral medication that speeds healing.
  
- \_\_\_ HOW DOES IT SPREAD: All fungus spreads with spores; it can spread from animal to animal as well as animal to person and person to person.
  
- \_\_\_ CHOOSING A ROOM TO HOUSE THE KITTENS: While not required, it is best if the kittens are kept in a bathroom or some room without carpet or fabric. A bathroom is easy to bleach, which kills fungus, where it is not as easy to completely clean rooms with carpet. While carpet and fabric can be steam cleaned, there is no guarantee this will kill the fungus. (Insert organization name) will provide a cage where the kittens can be housed while being treated.
  
- \_\_\_ WEAR GLOVES AND A GOWN: We encourage foster caregivers to wear gloves and gowns and we are happy to provide these. Wearing gloves and/or long sleeves allows a person to handle and play with the kittens without fear of the fungus being spread to them.
  
- \_\_\_ CLEANING: Hands need to be cleaned well with soap and water after handling the kittens. Hand sanitizer will not eliminate the spores. It is important that used gloves and clothing be handled carefully so as not to spread spores.
  
- \_\_\_ KEEP PETS SEPARATE: It is important for fostered kittens be kept separate from any of your personal pets. This will keep your pets safe from being exposed.
  
- \_\_\_ ESTIMATED TIME FRAME: The kittens must stay in foster care and continue treatment until the DTM test comes back negative. Each DTM test requires 10 days for results. Please note, if at any time you are no longer able to foster these kittens, please contact us and we will place them in a new foster home.

We appreciate your compassion for these kittens! THANK YOU!

### **All fosters:**

- \_\_\_ PROPER DOSE AND HOW TO GIVE MEDICATION: If kittens/puppies are on medication or have any medical issues, go over the illness and medications.
  
- \_\_\_ PETS AT HOME NEED CURRENT VACCINES: Make sure the foster volunteer's personal pets are current on vaccinations.

\_\_\_ KEEP FOSTER ANIMALS AND PETS SEPARATE: It is important to keep foster pets and personal pets separate to minimize any chance of spreading illness.

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\_\_\_ VET CARE FOLLOW-UP FORM: The vet care follow-up form provides additional information on when to bring animals in for vaccinations, spay/neuter, etc.

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