**Contact Information**

Dessin Animal Shelter: 138 Miller Drive Honesdale, PA 18431. Phone number: 570-253-4037. Website: [www.dessinshelters.com](http://www.dessinshelters.com)

Marie Sinisgalli: Manager, 570-253-4037. Email is [dessin@ptd.net](mailto:dessin@ptd.net)

Available Position: Foster Coordinator

Wallenpaupack Vet: 2425 Route 6, Hawley. Phone number: 570-226-2212

Carbondale Veterinary Clinic: 198 Canaan Street, Carbondale. Phone number: 570-282-0744

Northeast Veterinary Referral Hospital for emergencies: 242 South River St, Plains. 570-208-8877

**Top Tips for Foster Parents**

* Always notify the Coordinator whenever you pick up a new foster cat or adopt one out.
* Check in regularly with your Coordinator. She's available to answer any questions you may have. Let her know of any problem that may arise: as in your Foster is not eating, has diarrhea, runny nose, etc.
* Ask for advice if your cat/kitten has stopped eating.
* **Kittens crash fast, so alert the Coordinator and Manager early if you see behavior changes!!!!**
* If your cat seems sick, check immediately for hydration – they should be drinking water, using the litter box, have elastic skin tone and a moist mouth. Take a pinch of skin around the shoulders and gently pull it up. If the skin does not snap back quickly the animal is dehydrated. You can use an eyedropper to slowly give water, if it is severe notify the manager or coordinator!
* Never use clumping litter for kittens under 6months of age. The shelter will provide litter, food, medication.
* Wash your hands and change your shirt after handling sick animals to prevent spread of illness.
* Never let your cat run loose outside; guard against escapes.

**Health & Wellness**

**URIs**

Upper respiratory infections (URIs) are very similar to human colds. The cat is often congested and cannot smell her food. Tempting your foster cat with smelly canned cat food, baby food (no onions in ingredients), chicken broth or even tuna in water (last resort as too much can cause diarrhea) will often get her eating again.

You may have to coax to eat by using your fingers, and even smearing it on their lips. If your foster cat has not eaten for more than two days, let the Coordinator and/or Manager know – feeding with a syringe may be necessary. If you don’t know how to do this, we can describe this or show you how. We also have experienced fosters to guide you. Nutracal is a calorie- and nutrient-dense supplement that even sick cats will often accept when not otherwise eating. This can be picked up at the shelter.

Steam from a vaporizer or hot shower often helps clear the nasal passages. Keep the nose and eyes clear of discharge using a warm, damp cloth. A cat who doesn’t feel well appreciates some extra petting and quiet time in your lap. If you can coax your foster cat to eat, and she’s drinking water, the infection will usually run its course and no additional treatment is necessary.

**Dehydration**

Watch carefully to see if your foster cat is drinking water. You may have to monitor the level of the water bowl and keep track of litter box activity. You can check for dehydration by pulling the skin up just a little lower than the back of the neck. It should be taut and snap back down. If it stands up or takes some time to go back down, the cat may be dehydrated.

A lethargic cat is often dehydrated. If your cat is dehydrated, subcutaneous fluids may be necessary. Please contact us right away if you think your cat is dehydrated. We may arrange a home visit, direct you to the shelter for fluids or to one of the local veterinarians who bill the shelter directly. **If your foster cat is extremely lethargic, has a fever (over 103 degrees F, rectally, constitutes a fever), and/or a bacterial infection, let your Coordinator and/or Manager know immediately.**

If nasal discharge is thick and yellowish-green (vs. clear and watery), this may be an indication that a bacterial infection has set in, and antibiotics may be necessary. In this case, we will direct you to take your foster cat to the vet.

**Other Common Issues**

Let your Coordinator and/or Manager know if you notice any of these:

* Loose stool or diarrhea, usually caused by parasites that may or may not be visible in feces; these can sometimes be treated with wormer picked up at the shelter or a vet visit.
* Continual vomiting or occasional vomiting that lasts more than a day or two.
* Extreme lethargy for more than 2-3 days.
* Eyes that are red and inflamed or have an extreme amount of discharge and swelling, vs. small amounts of discharge, usually in both eyes (common with a URI). This can often be treated with eye ointment picked up at the shelter, but may need a vet visit if the infection doesn’t respond within a couple of days.
* Any crumbly wax-like substance in the ears (possible ear mites). Ear mite medicine can be picked up at the shelter.
* Fleas or flea dirt (black pepper-like substance in the fur). Age and health permitting, the cat or kitten was treated for fleas upon arrival at the shelter.

**Veterinary Visits**

**All vet visits must be pre-authorized unless you are willing to pay for the visit yourself. Check with the Coordinator and/or Manager first.** All authorized vet visits are paid by the shelter. We work with a number of vets in the area. They bill the shelter directly so there are no out-of-pocket vet costs to a foster parent.

**Authorization to foster parents for vet visits can be given for any of the following:**

* Fever (103.5 or above, rectally), respiratory distress (choking, wheezing, open-mouth breathing, shortness of breath); green secretions and/or bad odor from nasal area; not eating or drinking for more than a few days; extreme lethargy for more than a day or two; obvious distress, pain or pronounced behavior changes.
* For kittens less than 2-3 weeks, open mouth breathing, not nursing or taking the bottle, and crawling away from the litter/mother are bad, often hopeless signs. Call your Coordinator and/or Manager immediately.
* Seek only in cases when symptoms are lingering, diarrhea is lingering, or secretions are green. It can also be considered when the lingering symptoms seems to be the only thing delaying a kitten otherwise ready for adoption.

**Medical Supplies**

The shelter may have the following medicines, please call the shelter before buying them from the veterinary clinic. **Any unapproved vet visits and purchases at veterinary clinic will not be reimbursed.**

* Advantage (for fleas)
* Droncit (for tapeworm)
* FVRCP vaccination or boosters
* Nutracal
* Otomite or Acarexx (for ear mites)
* Pet Tinic
* Strongid-T (routine wormer, mainly for roundworms)
* Teramycin antibiotic eye ointment
* Triple antibiotic eye ointment

These items may also available at the shelter, but you may accept from a vet clinic if you don't know how to give subcutaneous fluids:

* Fluid bags (Lactated Ringers or Normosol)
* Tubing and needles for fluid administration

**Betadine/normal saline** in a 1:20 solution can be used as an eye drop and nose drop in cats/kittens with URI and/or eye inflammation. This home remedy may reduce the severity of URI symptoms and the need for veterinary care, as well as other medications. **Pet Tinic ("lixotinic")** may be available from the shelter. Please ask if you need this vitamin and iron supplement for a debilitated and/or flea-bitten kitten/cat. Please save the bottles that this is dispensed in for later refilling. All oral or injected antibiotics require a vet visit and prescription, as well as other eye ointments or drops other than the two mentioned above.

**Allergies**

Cats, like people, can have allergic reactions to medication. Most medications are not given first at the vet office. If some sudden, adverse reaction happens after giving a new medication, such as wheezing or eyes being more inflamed, do not give any more medication and call the veterinarian.

**Spay/Neuter**

All of our animals are spayed and neutered prior to being adopted. The Foster coordinator or manager will make the appointment but only when they weigh more than 3 pounds. Once they weigh 3 pounds or more, please let us know. We use Carbondale vet and Wallenpaupack vet. Carbondale likes to have the animals at their Clinic the evening before the surgery. Wallenpaupack vet is Same Day Surgery. Drop off is 8 a.m. and pick up time is by 12:00. Keep the cat or kitten activity free for the next couple of days.

**Vaccination & Worming**

"FVR" stands for feline viral rhinotracheitis, a disease that causes sneezing and discharge from eyes and nose (the URI symptoms often seen).

"C" stands for calici virus, which causes oral ulcers and symptoms similar to, but less profuse, than FVR. Calici virus sometimes progresses to a type of pneumonia.

"P" stands for panleukopenia (aka "feline distemper"); this usually deadly disease attacks rapidly dividing cells and causes loss of appetite, bloody diarrhea and/or vomiting, extreme lethargy and collapse.

Kittens should be started on vaccines at six weeks of age. By this age the maternal antibodies (from the mother’s first milk) are beginning to fade. Boosters need to be given every three weeks until 16 weeks of age. Most kittens have had some vaccinations and worming before you take them home. They will have had routine tests as well. Always ask when they are due for their next shots and worming when you pick them up from the shelter. Kittens should be started at 6 weeks and then they will be given another set 3 weeks later. You will be responsible for bringing them to the shelter for the vaccinations. Worming starts at 1 lb which is usually around 5 weeks of age. Second dose will be 10 days to two weeks after the first dose. Ask the shelter when they were wormed when you pick them up, it is important to give doses at proper intervals.

**Socialization**

The ideal time for socializing kittens is from two to seven weeks of age. As soon as their eyes and ears are opening, socialization opportunities begin. Socialization after this age range is still possible, but becomes more difficult. Attempting socialization after 12 to 14 weeks of age will have more limited success.

Cats and kittens are individuals and each will respond differently to socializing techniques. Some cats can be genetically friendly but feral by experience.

Try to avoid raising solo kittens. Not only do we want them to socialize them to humans, but also they learn how to be a cat, gain a social identity and are likely to tolerate feline companions later if raised with a sibling or littermates. Even if kept as an only cat in adulthood, a solo-raised kitten is more likely to display undesirable behaviors to his human companions.

Eye contact should be quickly broken. Staring at a kitten is threatening. When fearful or stimulated, a cat’s eye will dilate. Be aware of the eyes, since you may see them dilate as a first (fear) reaction, but as the kittens get familiar with you, the pupils will quickly return to a normal size. Keep the kitten in a room with no inaccessible hiding spots. Making frequent visits to the room and just sitting gets kitty used to your presence. When bringing home a new foster, it is very helpful to confine them to a small room until you bond with them. They will be easier to pick up and handle. Many cats/ kittens are frightened and need a small and safe area until they know you. If they are very shy, try and prevent areas they can hide in. It forces them to interact with you. Spend as much time as you can with them and handle them often. Once they trust you, you can integrate them into your home! It is a good idea not to mix them with your pets until they have had all of their first and second shots. Then you can slowly introduce them to your pets.

**Showcasing Your Foster**

**Web Presence**

If their picture is already on our Web site, you could write a bio about the cat’s personality. A good bio makes a big difference in the number of calls the cat gets, so be descriptive! Try to include things like:

* Whether the cat likes to be petted or held
* Is your foster shy or outgoing?
* Purrs easily
* Is your foster vocal or quiet?
* Is active and playful or calm
* Has good litter box manners
* Uses a scratching post
* Has experience with other animals and children, etc.

Of course, any cute things they do or anything you want to point out about their fur or appearance is good as well. It can be as long as you want, but the typical description is a paragraph or two.

If the cat has some bad habits, this can be mentioned in the bio. While we want to generate interest, and not turn people away, we don’t want to mislead people; however we really try to focus on the positive. Please e-mail pictures and the bio to us at dessin@ptd.net

Check the Web site a day or two after you have sent your info. You know the cat best and will catch any errors on the site. If you don’t see the cat listed or if there are mistakes, just send an e-mail with any corrections.

**Photos**

If your cat’s picture is not yet on the Web site, then there are several options for getting pictures taken and posted. You could take the pictures yourself. Please e-mail them in .jpg format to the Coordinator. If a volunteer or staff member is available, you're welcome to take your cat to the shelter for a photo shoot.

**Getting to Adoption**

Once pictures and stories are posted, calls are funneled through the shelter where a pre-screening of potential adopters is done. You will be provided the names and numbers of potential adopters. Call and discuss the cat and further screen them as you like. If they sound like suitable adopters, you will arrange a meeting with them, usually at your home. If you're not comfortable with people coming to your home, a meeting at the shelter can be arranged. Notify the manager when you have a meet and greet set up. The process for adoption should then be followed if things work out.

**Adoption Events**

Monthly adoption events are held to promote adoptions and to give the shelter and foster program publicity. Feel free to ask if any events are coming up. All cats and kittens attending monthly adoption events must be already altered and have their surgery done at least one week prior to the event. Fosters are required to attend/have their foster animals attend 2 events per month.

**Showing in the Shelter**

Foster cats may be shown in the meet and greet room by appointment only. To find out more about adoption room availability or to schedule a time slot, contact the shelter.

Shelter staff and other volunteers ask that we observe the following guidelines:

It is a shelter rule that all potential adopters must fill out an application and talk to a shelter employee before they handle any cat, including foster cats.

Please avoid bringing extra family members as our meet and greet room gets crowded very easily. Also, please don't bring children and leave them to roam about the shelter.

**Screening Potential Adopters**

Friends, co-workers and relatives may want to adopt your foster cat. If they are approved adopters, we are more than happy for that to happen. The Managers will do a final screening and have the final say to approve/deny adoptions. Just remember, your opinion matters greatly because you know your foster the best! You are also welcome to adopt your foster cat, following the same procedures as everyone else.

Foster parents are encouraged to screen potential adopters at adoption events or elsewhere. Ask open-ended questions about plans for adding a new feline to the household. Please remind them that cats can live over 20 years, and that this is a lifetime commitment! What will they do if they move? Travel? If the cat gets sick?

Statistics show that the lifespan of an indoor cat is doubled. If adopters plan on letting their cat outdoors please remind them of the many dangers of being outside, including cars, wildlife, poisonous substances, troubled people, etc. Also, no adopter should plan on letting a small kitten outdoors for quite some time, unless it's on a leash and harness. These are just a few suggestions. If you are not comfortable interviewing potential adopters, feel free to refer them to the Coordinator and/or Manager.

**The Adoption Process**

**Kittens must weigh 3 pounds to be adopted. They must weigh that much to be spayed/neutered, which must be done prior to going to their new home. There are no exceptions!!**

Once the family's adoption application is approved by the shelter staff, you will set up a meet and greet to see if your foster is a good match. Should it be a match, with the help of the Coordinator and/or the Manager, the adoption contract will be read/signed by the family. Payment will be collected. The family will leave with the cat/kitten, their medical records, and a copy of the adoption contract along with the shelter contact information. It is your choice to provide your personal contact information to the family should they have questions. You did a great job and changed the life of an animal for the better so contact the Coordinator or Manager for another foster ❤❤