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Topics Discussed During the Adoption Process

- License/ID _____
- Microchip brand _____
- Upper respiratory infection
- Health waiver / surgery site
- Introduction to resident animals
- Keeping your cat safe
- Returned cats must be taken to the PAWS Animal Shelter in Lynnwood
- 24PetWatch Pet Insurance

Contact PAWS

425.787.2500
 Shelter Managers x803

PO Box 1037
 15305 44th Ave W
 Lynnwood, WA 98046
 paws.org

More Resources

A wealth of information is available at **paws.org**: Under the “Cats and Dogs” tab, choose “Resource Library.”

Section 1: **New Beginnings**

Thank you

Thank you for adopting your cat from PAWS. We hope you will be very happy with your new companion. In this adoption packet you will find a variety of helpful hints and materials, including important documents about your new companion and the adoption process. We encourage you to keep these documents in a safe place along with your other important papers.

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. So we again thank you for giving your cat a loving home, and we hope you will encourage others to consider adopting a cat from PAWS or another shelter, so they too can experience the joy of finding a new best friend.

In a few weeks we'll ask you to visit paws.org/follow-up.html to take an adoption survey. We hope that you will take a few moments to complete it, and we encourage you to send along pictures and to tell us how your cat has settled in at home. We have a growing community on Facebook and we welcome your posts: facebook.com/PAWSWashington.

PAWS is a resource for success

If you have immediate questions about your new cat, we encourage you to look through your adoption paperwork. Most common questions—such as what vaccines your cat has received—can be found in your cat's paperwork. If you have questions that aren't answered in this packet, please call the shelter managers at 425.787.2500 x803. PAWS 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 over 141,000 families with companion animals, we have extensive experience and information to help new guardians with their cats. PAWS' online library of cat behavior fact sheets, as well as information on other topics including co-existing

peacefully with wildlife, can be found at the PAWS website at paws.org. Most of the common issues such as litter box use, appropriate scratching, and proper confinement are addressed, along with a variety of other behavior and training topics. Our website also includes steps you should take if your cat ever gets lost.

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 to make your relationship work. Please don't hesitate to contact us to share your concerns.

We invite you into the PAWS family

We hope the adoption process has made you feel like a member of the PAWS family, and encourage you to explore other ways to become involved. PAWS offers a variety of fun opportunities to participate in helping animals. You may want to join us by volunteering for a weekly shift, becoming a foster care provider or participating in one of our events such as PAWSwalk, the Wild Night Gala, or Catio Tour. You can learn more about these events on our website and more about programs for youth at paws.org/kids.html.

Section 2: **Your Cat's Health and Safety**

Medical care for your new cat

PAWS is committed to the health and welfare of the animals in our shelter, and provides high quality care in an effort to place animals who are healthy. Because cats and dogs are living beings and are therefore constantly changing, we cannot guarantee their health or behavior. In a large-scale cattery environment, whether it is a boarding facility, breeder, retail outlet or a shelter, a number of transmittable illnesses can be passed among animals within a common living area. 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

he or she may require. Additionally, PAWS 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.

We provide medical information to the adopter when it is available. However, PAWS provides a safe haven for many stray animals who arrive without a medical history. Please see your cat's paperwork for details on the diseases he has been tested for and the medical treatment he received while at PAWS. If your animal recently underwent spay or neuter surgery or some other procedure at PAWS, you'll need to follow the instructions found in your cat's medical records to ensure your cat is healing properly. Be sure to keep exercise to a minimum for five days and keep the incision site clean and dry for 10 days.

According to the American Pet Products Manufacturers Association, the average annual cost for veterinary bills are between \$516–\$785 per animal, so we encourage you to prepare for the expenses your new companion may require. To help with unforeseen and annual expenses, you might consider enrolling in a pet health insurance plan. Some plans are specially designed for newly adopted animals.

Visiting the veterinarian

PAWS and VCA Animal Hospitals have teamed up to provide your pet with the following:

- A complimentary overall wellness exam (must be performed within 14 days after adoption)
- Complimentary 14-day follow-up care for the diseases listed on the Healthy Start certificate, at any of the participating VCA Animal Hospitals
- This offer from VCA can be worth \$250 in discounted care for your new pet. Vaccines, emergency and specialty services are not included.

VCA will contact you to schedule an appointment or you can reach them via the Healthy Start certificate included in the adoption packet for details and a list of hospitals.

Or you may choose to use the complimentary Free Health Exam courtesy of the Certificate for Washington State Veterinary Medical Association that covers the cost of the first visit within seven (7) days of adoption, but not any additional charges that may apply for treatment. Either way, you should make an appointment for your new companion within five (5) days of adoption with a veterinarian.

When visiting the veterinarian for the first time with your new cat, take the medical records provided by PAWS 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. PAWS gives cats the basic FVRCP vaccine combination and a dewormer, as well as testing for Feline Leukemia (FeLV). Some cats will have a rabies vaccine but we do not test for heartworm or Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) (unless specifically noted in the animal's paperwork). If you travel to other parts of the country, your veterinarian may recommend additional parasite prevention treatments or testing. Please speak to your veterinarian about an appropriate vaccination schedule for your new cat.

Other important ways to keep your new cat healthy are providing routine medical care, including flea and parasite prevention, good nutrition, proper grooming, exercise and socialization.

If your cat is not feeling well

When your companion animal is not feeling well, she may show signs such as loss of appetite, lethargy, loose stool, hiding, or vocalizing. These symptoms could indicate an illness, such as upper respiratory infection (URI), or may mean that your cat is simply adjusting to his new surroundings. It is always best to consult with your veterinarian if your cat appears to be unwell.

What is upper respiratory infection (URI)?

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 URI. Common symptoms include sneezing, lethargy, irritated eyes that have discharge, and coughing.

Cats with nasal discharge can have difficulty smelling their food and therefore may not want to eat, so keep an eye on their food intake. In rare cases, URI can progress to pneumonia. Signs such as difficulty breathing, increased nasal discharge, or fever could indicate worsening illness. It is important to monitor your cat closely for any of these signs and take him to the vet immediately if they appear. It is important to monitor these symptoms and behaviors closely. In a home setting, most cats recover from URI within two weeks. Antibiotics can help prevent secondary bacterial infections and can be prescribed by your veterinarian.

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. If other cats in your household develop sneezing or other signs of URI, consult your veterinarian. Remember, PAWS cannot pay for medical care for either your adopted animal or other pets in your household.

Proper nutrition

Proper nutrition will keep your new friend healthy and will make your life easier by not having to attend to an upset digestive system. PAWS encourages you to seek guidance from your veterinarian and specialists at local pet supply stores for information on available brands of food, and to purchase the highest quality food you can afford. A general rule of thumb is: the higher the quality of food, the better your cat will digest it and the less waste will be produced. Since a variety of food is given to animals at PAWS, it is not uncommon for them to experience some changes as their digestive system gets used to the new diet provided in your home. Kittens

in particular may experience more digestive upset as their food is adjusted. Kittens should be fed a high quality food specifically designed for a growing kitten. These foods are higher in fat content and are designed to give your kitten proper nutrition since they are growing quickly and are usually very active.

The importance of microchipping and identification

PAWS registers all 24 PetWatch microchips.

There are several common brands of microchips on the market that can be easily scanned by animal control, shelters or veterinary clinics so that lost cats and dogs can be reunited with their family. Your new cat has been microchipped and staff will explain how to register it. ***We ask that you contact the company one week after the adoption to confirm that your personal contact information has been accurately entered into their database. Refer to the front of this packet to determine your cat's microchip brand.***

- 24PetWatch: 1.866.597.2424
- AKC: 1.800.252.7894
- AVID: 1.800.336.2843
- Banfield: 1.877.567.8738
- PetLink: 1.877.738.5465
- HomeAgain: 1.888.466.3242
- Found Animals Registry 1.855.738.2447

It is imperative to update the registration if you move, change phone numbers or other pertinent contact information. A microchip is only useful if the registration is kept up to date! (A registration fee may be required to update information for some brands of microchips.)

While having a microchip is important, you should also provide other forms of identification for your cat that can easily be read without the use of a microchip scanner. This includes a license and identification tag. PAWS sells pet licenses for residents of Brier, Mountlake Terrace and Seattle, as well as residents of King County and the communities that use the King County license. Licenses for other areas can be purchased through your local government. If you did not

purchase a license at the time of adoption you will need to do so within 30 days in order to comply with most local laws.

Fitting your cat with an appropriate collar is another important step to keeping her safe. Be sure your cat's collar is a snug fit, without choking her. You may want to consider a break-away collar available for purchase at PAWS or your local pet store to ensure an appropriate fit that can be easily gotten out of if your cat becomes entangled. Remember a growing kitten will need his collar monitored and a new one purchased as he grows.

Emergency plan

Your new cat is now a part of your family, and needs to be included in your emergency plan. Please assemble a disaster kit with the essentials your cat will need. You'll find helpful information about disaster kits for cats on the PAWS website. It's important to watch where your cat hides when she is frightened, so you'll know where to look for her in case of an emergency. Also, ask a friend or family member to be an alternate caregiver in case you are unable to provide immediate care to your cat in an emergency.

Section 3: **Settling In**

Provide supervision

Think "safety first" as you help your new cat settle into your home. When transporting your new cat, properly secure him inside the main vehicle compartment using a cat carrier. Do not let him travel loose inside the vehicle.

Once you arrive home, help your cat settle in as smoothly as possible by providing close supervision. Many cats will be nervous when they first arrive at the new home. They may want to hide under furniture for hours at a time. Be patient and do not force your new cat or kitten to come out. Be sure food, water and a litter box are nearby. See "Litterbox—Prevent Problems" on the PAWS website for additional tips. If they

appear unsure about eating, it is best to provide them with plenty of water and have dry meal out for them to nibble on throughout the day.

It is vitally important to monitor the cat when she is in the presence of infants or children, and when being introduced to resident pets. Please refer to PAWS' website for our fact sheets on cat behavior and home life.

Each cat will react differently to his new surroundings, thus, adjustment periods will vary a great deal. Adjustments to your new family or resident animals may take some cats a few days, while taking others several months. Patience during this process is vitally important. Keep cats confined to a safe room of their own while slowly introducing them to your resident animals. Never force or rush a meeting. If you are introducing your new cat to a resident cat, let them sniff each other under doors, let your new cat explore your home while the resident cat is confined. You can also swap bedding, letting each cat get accustomed to the smells of the other. If a fight breaks out between the two cats, throw a blanket over one of them or use a squirt bottle full of water to gently break it up. Hissing and standoffs are to be expected, but your patience will ensure few or no fights. For their health and safety, it is generally better to introduce only cats who are already spayed or neutered, have been fully vaccinated, and are in good health. Often, cats of the opposite gender will get along better, but most cats can interact comfortably with both genders. Keep in mind that a cat who is sick, injured, geriatric, or recovering from an illness or injury is less likely to feel comfortable and interested in playing with other cats.

If your family includes a dog, keep him leashed during any introduction periods to ensure he cannot chase or harm your new cat. Introductions should always be done while supervised and new cats should never be left alone with resident dogs until a consistently safe relationship has been established. Create a safe area for your cat where a dog cannot follow. Tall cat trees or baby gates will help give your cat a safe place to hide if she feels overwhelmed by the dog. Be sure the cat's food, water and litter box are in an area that is safe from dog interruptions.

Check PAWS' website for additional details about introducing your new cat to your resident animals and how to help them adjust to living together. All introductions should proceed gradually and as with other cats in the household, it may take several months for your new cat to accept a resident dog.

Hidden hazards

Now is the time to check for potential hazards that you normally wouldn't think about. For instance, many common household plants are poisonous to animals, and should be put high out of reach or removed completely from your home. The ASPCA Animal Poison Control Center has a comprehensive list of poisonous plants that can be found at ASPCA.org.

You should also check your home for possible escape routes, including damaged screens or screen doors. Kittens can fit into surprisingly small places, so don't dismiss anything. They can easily become stuck behind a refrigerator or climb into cabinets while you are not looking, or slip through a crack in the wall. Kittens are curious by nature and will play with many things left lying around, including items such as pens, tacks or pieces of paper. Phone and electrical cords can be particularly dangerous if a kitten becomes entangled. Be sure to secure loose cords and pick up any small things your kitten may be able to swallow. Before leaving your kitten alone, conduct a "kitten check" to make sure she has not been accidentally locked in a closet or empty room. See "Aversives for Cats" at paws.org for tips about discouraging your cat from a particular action or place.

Keep your cat safe and happy at home

For cats, the great outdoors is anything but great. Whether they live in the city, in the suburbs, or in the country, outdoor cats face a multitude of risks. They are exposed to contagious diseases, most of which are fatal. Traffic takes a huge toll on free-roaming cats, and while many people believe their pets are street-wise, no cat looks both ways when being chased by another animal. Further dangers include poisons, leghold traps, pet

theft, and inhumane treatment by cruel people. The best way to safeguard your new companion against these perils is to keep him indoors and supervise any outdoor visits. Surprisingly, some cats can be trained to walk on a leash, and outdoor enclosures provide safety while allowing cats time outside. See the Resource Library or detailed information about successfully living with indoor cats.

Indoor cats lead long, happy, healthy lives when given plenty of toys and outlets for their energy, as well as plenty of attention and affection. Play time is an important element in an indoor cat's life. By encouraging play indoors, you will reduce your cat's desire to explore the outdoors and increase his overall life expectancy. The amount of play time needed will depend on your cat's age, general health, personality and breed type—some cats will need several play sessions every day. Most cats enjoy the mental stimulation gained from a variety of toys. Many cats will enjoy the indoors if you enrich the space with a variety of things: toys, scratch posts, videos made for cats, and perches they can use to watch the world from the safety of the window in your home

Cat toys are available at your local pet store, however, many can be made from common household items. Shower rings, ping-pong balls, paper bags with the handles removed, and empty cardboard rolls from toilet paper or paper towels are ideal toys for cats, and very inexpensive. Try hiding favorite toys throughout the house when you leave, giving your cat something to do while you're gone, and rotate them often.

By giving your cat safe, fun and interesting toys she will be more likely to burn excess energy, maintain a healthy weight, and live more happily indoors. PAWS has many ideas about how to make your cat's indoor environment more fun and enriching. Please visit paws.org and view our Cat Home Life sheets. It is also important to note that most communities have laws in place to protect you, your cat and your community, and require cats to be confined to your property. Please respect these laws for the safety and well-being of your new companion.

Continuing a pattern of success

Just like dogs, cats are returned to shelters when they have developed undesirable behaviors such as scratching home furnishings, or aggression to other cats or people. In many cases, these behaviors are caused by the cat not being provided with enough exercise and mental stimulation or being introduced to other cats too quickly. It is up to you to prepare your new cat for success. This includes providing him with proper toys, play time, exercise and socialization.

Stalking, pouncing and other natural, instinctual predatory behaviors are often mistaken for aggression which can be redirected and addressed by offering proper toys and play time. Cats may also bite or scratch when they are over-stimulated, feel cornered or are trying to get away. These behaviors can occur during a particularly energetic play-session or when they have seen something that stimulates them, such as a bird or another cat. Remember that cats are nocturnal and will often need a play-session before bedtime to help settle them down for the night.

Scratching

Scratching is a natural and important behavior for cats that helps them stay limber and healthy. While kneading with their paws and stretching, they both strengthen and relax the muscles of the feet, forelegs, backbone and shoulders. To accommodate this essential scratching behavior in your cat, it will be important to practice patience and provide proper areas for your cat to scratch.

Cats can learn to use a scratching post at almost any stage in their life. Positive reinforcement will help teach your cat to use the scratching post instead of the furniture. When choosing a scratching post, think about what your cats already like to scratch. Some prefer sisal or rope covered posts, while others prefer wood or corrugated cardboard scratching posts. In addition, cats may have a preference about a vertical or horizontal orientation of the

scratching posts. Observe your cat's behavior when he is scratching to see what he finds the most comfortable or enjoyable. An easy way to eliminate damage to your furniture or to you during very active play is to simply clip your cat's nails. You should consult with your veterinarian about when and how to properly trim your new cat's nails.

Declawing

Since cats can be taught to scratch on a variety of appropriate objects, PAWS strongly opposes declawing them. It is an extremely painful procedure that has long-lasting effects. Declawed cats can no longer perform their natural stretching and kneading rituals, can experience early onset of arthritis in their backs and shoulders, and cannot defend themselves if they are in a dangerous situation. Some cats who have been declawed may find it painful to scratch in the litter box and will therefore stop using one altogether. Additionally, on our website you'll find helpful information in the Cat Behavior section. If you become frustrated with your cat's natural need to scratch, you can speak to one of our shelter managers at x803.

Inappropriate elimination

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 her part to communicate with you that there is something physically wrong or something she does not like about the litter box. The solution could be as simple as moving the box to a new, quieter environment or changing the type of litter to one that appeals more to your cat. In some cases the litter box may need to be cleaned more often or in multi-cat families it may be necessary to add an additional box. Many cats prefer to have two boxes even if they are the only cat in the home, or if the home has several floors they may need a box on each level. It is also important to check the cat for health problems such as a urinary tract infection that may be causing him to avoid the litter box. Some cats will spray or mark when they feel the need to protect or establish

their territory. Watch for the stimulus that is causing the cat to feel concerned such as seeing other cats outside, being unsure about resident cats, or other animals that are sharing the household. They may also mark over areas where other animals have soiled.

Please consult your veterinarian for assistance and refer to our website for more guidance on how to avoid these issues or how to address them if they have begun.

Be patient and “try, try again”

Some behavior problems experienced by adopters occur when the cat has become more comfortable in his new home. Of course you want your cat to feel at home, but some cats start to “push their boundaries” once they feel established. Younger cats, up to about two or three years of age, may also display some behavior changes or start to “act up”—the feline equivalent of teenage years! If you adopted a kitten, please refer to the facts sheets about Kittens and Cat Behavior found at paws.org.

It is a good idea to periodically review with your household how to positively reinforce your cat’s good behavior, help change her less desirable behavior, and manage inappropriate behaviors. If you have let some rules slip, you will need to patiently reinforce those rules. Most cats do best when there is consistency, so check in with other family members to make sure that everyone in the family is asking the same thing of the cat.

If your cat is exhibiting a behavior that causes you great concern or creates a dangerous situation, take immediate steps to create a safe confinement area for the cat and contact your veterinarian or a certified animal behaviorist for assistance. Sudden changes in behavior may indicate a health problem, so it is important to rule this out before working with a behaviorist. You may call PAWS’ shelter managers at 425.787.2500 x803 or x804..

Returning your cat to PAWS

If it is absolutely necessary to re-home your cat, please contact PAWS at 425.787.2500 x803 or x804. PAWS accepts owned animals, including those adopted from us, by appointment only. Animals with scheduled appointments should have a completed Cat Surrender form* and available medical records with them at the time of their surrender. ***Animals must be brought to the Lynnwood shelter, including those adopted from Cat City in Seattle. (Cat City is an adoption-only facility and WILL NOT ACCEPT surrendered animals.)***

*A Cat Surrender form can be submitted at paws.org/cat-surrender-form.html.