



Great River Rescue

Foster Packet

Guidelines and Policies for Foster Parents



...IS COMMITTED TO SERVING THE BEST INTEREST OF THE ANIMALS WE STRIVE TO PROTECT.

Congratulations on becoming a foster parent with Great River Rescue. We are so glad that you have chosen to foster a shelter pet. At the same time, being a foster parent is a big responsibility. We've created this brief list of some things you'll need to know to make your experience the best it can be.

1. Keep your foster contract in a secure place where you won't lose it. This is an official document and it lists your responsibilities and dates for future shots and the spay/neuter appointment.
2. Pay attention to the dates of future shots, de-worming, and the spay/neuter appointment. You **MUST** bring your foster pet to the shelter on the dates listed on your foster contract. Unless you have signed a spay/neuter agreement, you **MUST** return the pet on the return date listed on the foster contract.
3. If you are unable to bring your foster pet to the shelter for a scheduled shot, de-worming, or the spay/neuter, call the shelter as soon as possible.
4. Foster pets are to be kept primarily indoors. A foster pet should only go outside on a leash or harness or in a fenced-in area. Lost pets should be reported as soon as possible to Great River Rescue. Foster parents will be responsible for paying the full adoption fee if an animal is lost.
5. Foster-to-adopt parents are expected to provide their own supplies (food, litter, collar, etc.) for the foster pet. Foster parents providing care for pregnant, sick, injured pets, or pets with behavior issues may choose to provide their own supplies, but Great River Rescue will provide any needed supplies upon request.
6. If you are concerned about a health or behavior issue with your foster pet, call the shelter. We can often talk you through any issues, or we may have medications on hand that you can use. Do not take your foster pet to the vet unless it is an emergency. If we aren't currently available try these options:
 - Refer to the Health and Wellness Guide in this packet
 - Check out our resources page at <http://www.greatriverrescue.com/contact/resources>

- Call your local vet. They can offer some great suggestions about how to deal with a wide variety of issues.
7. In the case of an emergency, shelter staff can be notified at **218-308-5661**.
 8. You must contact us prior to taking your animal to the vet. If we approve of a vet visit, you will be charged directly for the service. You may submit the bill for reimbursement within 30 days of the receipt of service to the attention of the Executive Director.
 - Please understand; we must be very cautious when deciding whether or not a foster animal needs to go to the vet, as office visits add up very quickly. Each case will be evaluated individually by what is best for the animal as well as economically feasible for the shelter.
 9. Your foster pet will be available for you to adopt the day after its spay/neuter. If you are not able to adopt your pet on that day, call the shelter and let us know as soon as possible.

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, Hills A/D food (purchased at a veterinarian's office), 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 her to eat by using your fingers, and even smearing it on her lips or nose. If your foster cat has not eaten for more than two days, let Great River Rescue know – feeding her with a syringe may be necessary. If you don't know how to do this, we can describe this or show you how. 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 with warm, damp cotton balls. 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. This is a good skill to learn and you can be buddied up with an experienced foster parent who can teach you. 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 Great River Rescue 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 Great River Rescue 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). Advantage is usually applied if fleas are noticed at the shelter. If you see flea dirt, we will find out if Advantage was already applied.

♥ Share this resource on infection control in the home with your fosters:
ASPCapro.org/infection-control-foster-homes

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

Spay and neuter surgeries are generally done at our clinic at the time of adoption, but any time a cat has to undergo anesthesia for a procedure he should be altered at the same time. The scheduled date of the spay/neuter can be found on your Foster Contract.

Female kittens with umbilical hernias will have this repaired at the time of their spay surgery. Male kittens should have their umbilical hernias repaired at a vet clinic, as it involves an abdominal incision.

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. The vaccine will not trigger the desired response until the maternal antibodies have worn off – and it is impossible to tell when exactly that happens.

Vaccinations should be given even if kittens have URI symptoms.

Great River Rescue uses Pyrantel and Revolution to treat worms in cats and kittens.

Scheduled vaccination and de-wormer dates can be found on your Foster Contract. It is very important that you follow through on these dates or the cat may have to start a routine of shots all over again.

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.

Next, using a stick or dowel with feathers attached to one end, provide visual stimulation and distraction. A second stick or dowel with a soft fabric on it can be used to touch. As kitty gets comfortable with your presence, try moving closer each time.

Do this when kitty eats, perhaps just laying your hand nearby, progressing to being able to hand feed and later to touching kitty. At this point, when you are able to touch, use a finger to make small 1¼-inch clockwise circles all around kitty's shoulders, head and upper back. Make the circles small and quick and leave the body after each time.

♥ **Food is your best socialization tool, so become familiar with these simple techniques:**
[ASPCApro.org/resource/saving-lives-behavior-enrichment/using-food-successful-kitten-socialization](https://www.aspcapro.org/resource/saving-lives-behavior-enrichment/using-food-successful-kitten-socialization)

Great River Rescue FOSTER POLICY

The Board of Directors formulates and approves the Foster policies of Great River Rescue, and delegates administration of those policies to the Director.

Great River Rescue will foster out animals that meet the following terms; medical conditions or concerns that can be better met in a foster home, behavioral concerns (examples; kennel rage, un-socialized), too young to be spayed/neutered. Animals will not be fostered out in exchange for a trial adoption.

Great River Rescue retains all rights of legal ownership of the animal until it returns to the shelter or is adopted. The shelter will be responsible for all medical needs of the animal while in foster care.

Clear and accurate reports showing the number of animals in foster care will be presented to the Board of Directors at each regular meeting.

PROCEDURES

A. APPROVED FOSTER HOMES

1. All foster parents must sign a foster contract each time they take a new foster animal home.
2. All foster parents must be approved by staff at the discretion of the executive director.
3. Foster parents must agree to comply with all federal, state and local laws, regulations and ordinances applicable to this animal.
4. All foster parents must provide a copy of their Driver's license, all contact information and a secondary contact person, and two references.

B. MEDICAL

1. Great River Rescue will pay all medical expenses previously authorized by the director or authorized staff while the animal is in foster care.
2. All unauthorized medical expenses will require a receipt submitted to the director for approval and possible reimbursement. Any bills over \$150 will need board approval for reimbursement
3. Fosters parents that wish to pay for the foster's vet expenses without being reimbursed must provide a copy of the treatment the dog/cat received to the shelter. If this is done with the intent to adopt and then the animal is not adopted the expenses will not be reimbursed.

C. ADOPTING FOSTER

The foster parent has the right to adopt the animal in their care. If the foster parent wishes to adopt their foster they must contact the shelter prior to an adopter requesting to adopt the animal. Once the foster makes a request to adopt the dog/cat in their care they must complete the adoption at such time that the dog/cat is available.

D. SHELTER HOUSING

Great River Rescue agrees to reserve open kennel space for all animals in foster care in case a foster parent needs to return the animal to the shelter for any reason.

Foster parents agree to keep all fosters indoor most of the time. If the fostered cat or dog is outside it must be kept on a leash at all times or dogs must be in a fenced in area.



...IS COMMITTED TO SERVING THE BEST INTEREST OF THE ANIMALS WE STRIVE TO PROTECT.

OUT OF THE AREA FOSTER TO ADOPT PROCEDURES

Definition

Out of the Area – Any foster home that is located approximately 50 miles or more from the city of Bemidji.

Vaccinations

Foster parents may choose to have needed vaccinations done at their local veterinary clinic at their own expense. Vaccination records must be sent to Great River Rescue as soon as possible after each round of shots.

Spay/Neuter Procedure

As a foster parent, you may choose to have the pet you are fostering at the veterinary clinic of your choice. Guidelines for spaying/neutering the pet can be found on the Spay/Neuter Agreement.

If foster parents do not sign a spay/neuter agreement, they MUST return the pet to have it spayed/neutered in Bemidji on the scheduled date. Spay/neuter appointments consist of a date to return the animal to Great River Rescue, the date of the surgery, and the date the animal can be picked up and adopted at Great River Rescue. If a spay/neuter appointment is changed, the foster parents will be informed of the change and still be responsible for returning the animal for the new appointment.

Payment

Foster parents must pay the adoption fee once the pet is spayed/neutered. Payment should be made in-person at Great River Rescue. Checks are not an accepted form of payment for adoptions.

-All other foster/adoption procedures not mentioned above remain in force-

Out of Area Foster Parents understand and accept all of the above procedures and all other adoption/foster policies of Great River Rescue.

Caring for a **Cat or Kitten**

Taking care of a cat or kitten is a big job! Find out what supplies you will need and what responsibilities you will have to take to care for your new pet.

Supplies Needed

- Balanced, brand name food. Make sure it's for the right age. Dry food is better for your pet's teeth. Canned food is more similar to a natural diet for cats, so some of both is probably best.
- Food and water bowls. Ceramic and metal are best. Some pets are sensitive to plastic.
- Cat toys – make sure there aren't any small parts or string that can fall off and be swallowed
- A cat brush
- Cat toothpaste and toothbrush
- "Breakaway" collar and ID tag
- Microchip both indoor and outdoor cats
- Scratching post or scratching pad
- Litter box – one per cat, plus one extra
- Litter – scoopable litter is best. Don't use dusty or perfumed litter
- Cat carrier
- Cat nail clippers
- Optional: Cat condo and bed

Dangers! Never Feed Your Cat/Kitten:

- Alcoholic drinks
- Chocolate
- Coffee
- Grapes and raisins
- Moldy or spoiled food
- Onions, garlic and chives
- Bones
- Tomato plants
- Unripe fruit
- Yeast dough
- Any houseplants –some are poisonous

Feeding Your Cat/Kitten

- Kittens (under 6 months): 3-4 times a day
- Over 6 months : Feed twice a day (amount depends on food type and how active your cat is)
- Training your cat to eat twice a day: When your kitten turns 6 months old, offer food to him/her twice a day only. Leave the food out for ½ hour only. Your cat will quickly learn to eat all of his/her food during the half hour.
- Avoid giving your pet too many treats since cats can become overweight as they age



Caring for a **Cat or Kitten**

Chores

Daily

- Feed and water your cat
- Clean litter box
- Clean water/food bowls
- Play with your cat

Weekly

- Thoroughly clean the litter box using a mild soap and replace litter
- Brush teeth once

Two Times a Week

- Brush hair (gently)

Monthly

- Check to see if nails need to be trimmed

Yearly

- Have your parent or guardian take your cat to your veterinarian for a check-up

Brushing Your Cat's Teeth

It is not easy, but cats are healthier if your brush their teeth. Use cat toothpaste and brush. Start when they are kittens, so they get used to it

Spaying and Neutering

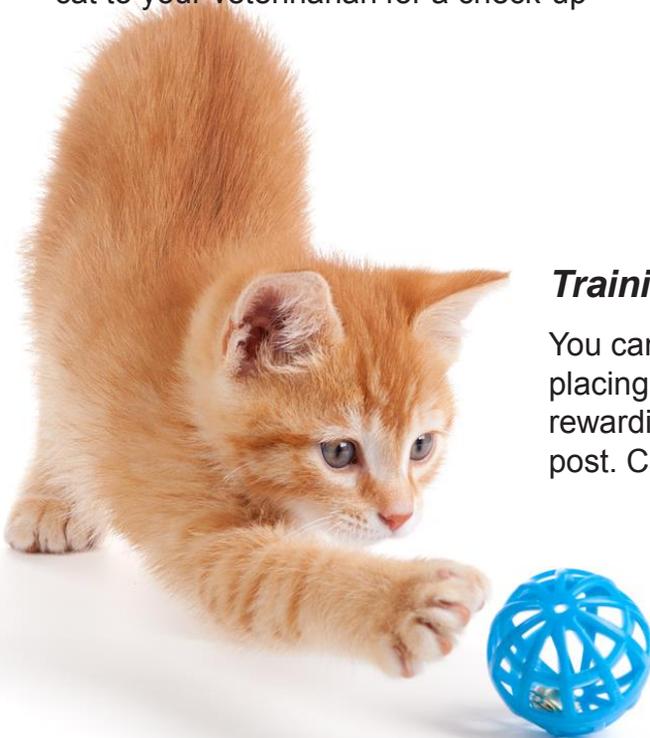
- Female cats should be spayed and male cats neutered by six months old. This reduces bad behavior and some diseases later in life

Finding the Right Veterinarian

- When you get your pet, have your parent or guardian take it to a veterinarian for a check-up
- Your pet should see a veterinarian at least once a year and when you think it might be sick

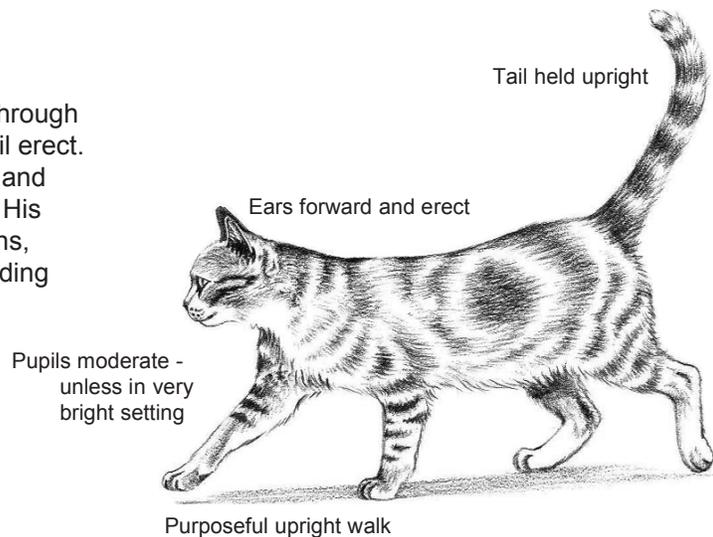
Training

You can train your cat to use a scratching post by placing catnip around the base of the post and rewarding your pet when he/she uses the scratching post. Cats love to scratch!



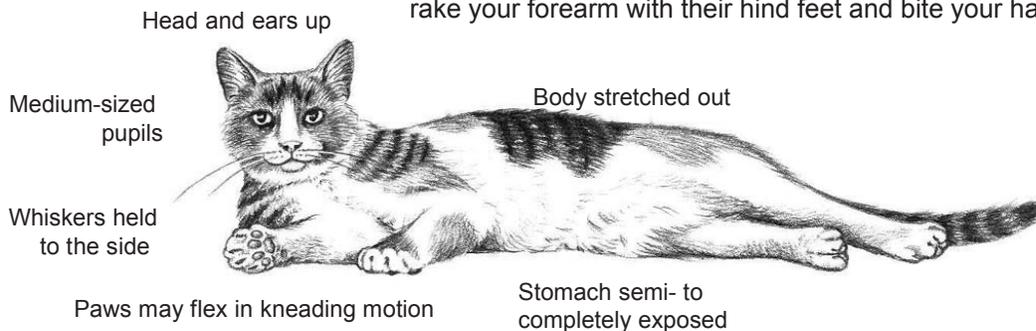
the confident cat

The confident cat purposefully moves through space, standing straight and tall with tail erect. He is ready to explore his environment and engage those he meets along the way. His upright tail signifies his friendly intentions, while his ears are forward and erect adding to the cat's alert expression.



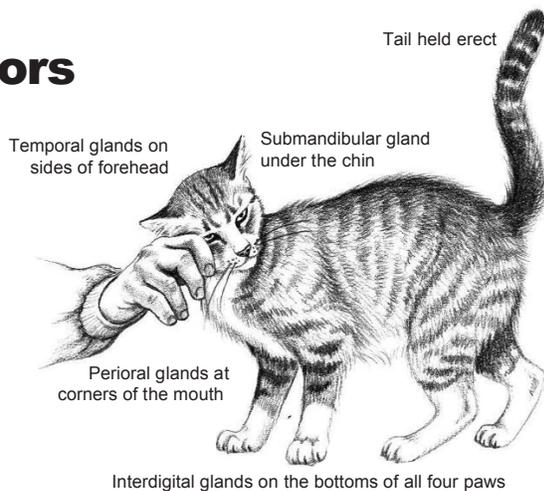
the confident cat at ease

When relaxed, a confident cat stretches out on his side or lies on his back exposing his belly. He is in a calm but alert state and accepts being approached. His entire posture is open and at ease; but beware, not every cat that exposes his abdomen will respond well to a belly rub. Some will grasp your hand with their front paws, rake your forearm with their hind feet and bite your hand.



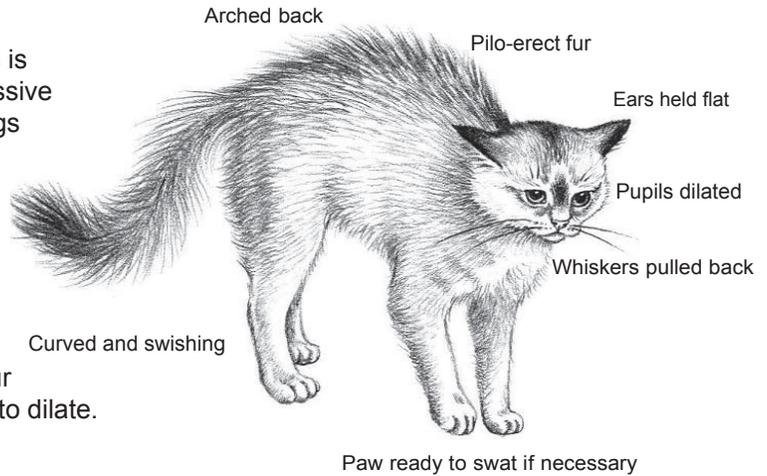
distance-reducing behaviors

Distance-reducing behaviors encourage approach and social interaction and are meant to telegraph to others that the cat means no harm. The act of rubbing against a person's hand or another cat (scent marking) to distribute glandular facial pheromones from the forehead, chin or whisker bed is calming and seems to guarantee friendly interaction immediately afterward. The tail is usually held erect while the cat is scent-rubbing.

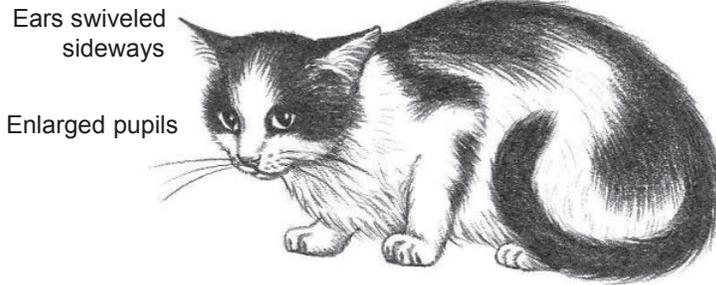


distance-increasing behaviors

The goal of distance-increasing behaviors is to keep others from coming closer. Aggressive interactions are avoided when the warnings are heeded. Conflicted cats lack the confidence to stare down and charge others. Instead, they assume a defensive threat posture, warning others away by appearing as formidable as possible by arching their backs, swishing their tails, and standing sideways and as tall as possible. Fear and arousal causes their fur to stand on end (pilo-erection) and pupils to dilate.



Body hunched, muscles tensed



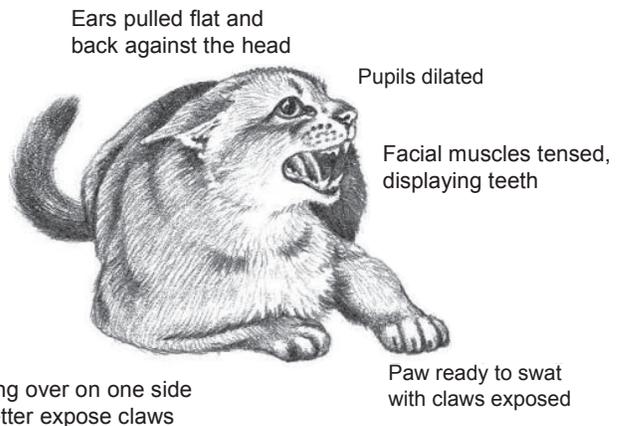
Tail held close to body, may flick out

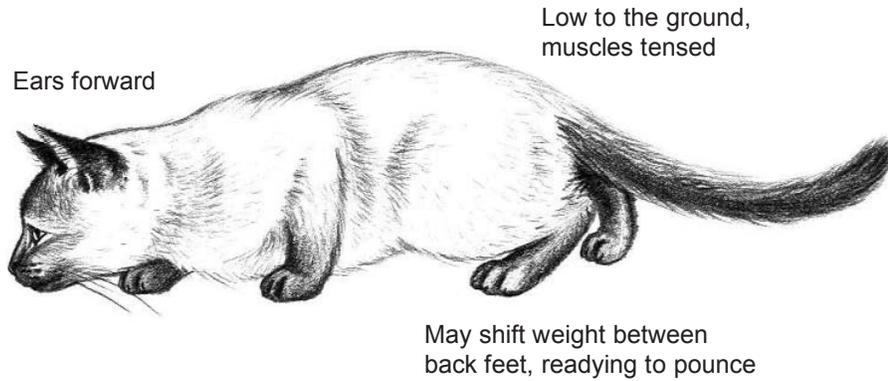
the anxious cat

When a cat becomes anxious, he crouches into a ball, making himself appear smaller than usual. Muscles are tensed and the cat is poised to flee if necessary. The tail is held close to the body, sometimes wrapped around the feet. The head is held down and pulled into the shoulders.

defensive aggression

The pariah threat is another distance-increasing posture. When a cat determines that he cannot escape an unwanted interaction with a more dominant animal, he prepares to defend himself. The ears are pulled back and nearly flat against the head for protection and the head and neck are pulled in tight against the body. Facial muscles tense, displaying one weapon - the teeth. The cat rolls slightly over to one side in order to expose the rest of his arsenal - his claws. He is now ready to protect himself.

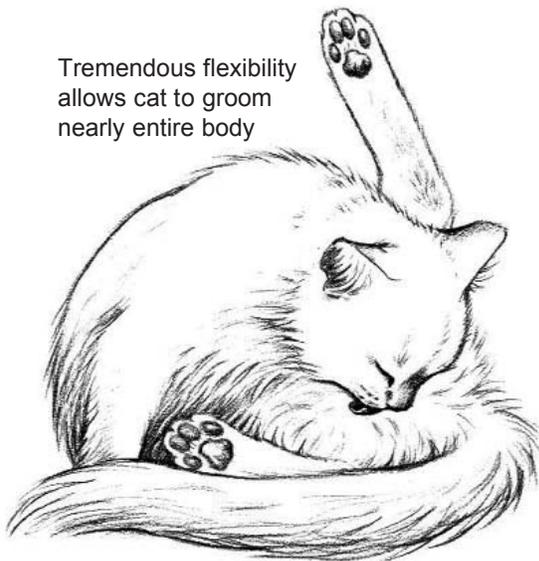




the predator

Even when fed two meals a day, cats are still predators. The predatory sequence is stalk, pounce, kill, remove, and eat. When stalking prey, a cat may stealthily move forward or lie in wait, shifting his weight between his hind feet. When movement is detected, the cat pounces on his prey and delivers a killing bite. He may then take the fresh-killed prey to a quiet place to eat – or a female may take it to her kittens. Even cats that don't hunt for their meals still enjoy chasing moving objects, including toys and, in some cases, human body parts.

Tremendous flexibility allows cat to groom nearly entire body



Backward-facing barbs on tongue

the groomer

Cats spend 30 to 50 percent of their waking time grooming. Backward-facing barbs on the tongue act as a comb to loosen tangles and remove some parasites. Beyond maintaining the cat's coat, grooming also relieves tension and promotes comfort. Licking also facilitates cooling off in warm weather.