

**San Antonio
Feral Cat Coalition**



Adoption Program Policy & Guidance Manual

This manual provides program guidance and policies for adopting out cats and kittens at San Antonio Feral Cat Coalition (SAFCC) adoption events. All volunteers and people who bring foster cats or kittens to adoption events should become familiar with this information before bringing cats or kittens to adoption events.

The first part of this manual presents policies and guidance that apply to all SAFCC adoption events, regardless of the location. The second part presents policies and guidance that is specific to adoption events conducted on the premises of any PetSmart where SAFCC is a PetSmart Adoption Partner.

I. Part 1 - Policy and Guidance for All Adoption Events

Pet Health Policy

Only healthy cats or kittens will be presented at adoption events. At the first sign of illness or aggression, a member of SAFCC will remove or isolate the cat. Cats or kittens that have recently been treated for easily transmittable health conditions (e.g. Upper Respiratory Infections) shall not be brought to adoption events until they have completed a two week isolation in the foster homes and show no signs of being infectious.

Signs of Illness in Cats

The following are signs of illness that foster parents should watch for. If any of these signs of illness are present in foster cats, they will be treated appropriately until the signs are gone.

- No appetite for 24 hours
- No desire to drink water (for a maximum of 12 hours)
- Rough hair coat
- Sneezing
- Vomiting (more than once in a 12-hour period)
- Diarrhea/Blood in stool
- Straining to urinate
- Increased water consumption
- Swollen abdomen

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- Discharge from eyes and/or nose
- Third eyelid visible
- Hyper salivation

Vaccinations and Tests

Cats must be up-to-date on their vaccinations and have tested negative for Feline Leukemia/FIV. All cats or kittens will be vaccinated in accordance with state law, and as stated below, prior to transporting the animals from SAFCC foster homes. **Required vaccinations/tests are:** Felv/FIV combo-test, Feline Viral Rhino, Calicivirus, Panleucopenia, Pneumonitis (FVRCP) (two doses) and Rabies. **Recommended vaccinations are:** Feline Leukemia (FELV), Wormed and Microchip. Dispensing medications or veterinary advice to adopters is prohibited.

Veterinary Records

Foster parents of cats or kittens are expected to bring the original veterinary treatment records with them to adoption events. Copies of these records should also be kept for their backup files. When a cat or kitten is adopted, the original health records will be given to the adopter and the backup copies should be given to a designated SAFCC representative for maintaining in an archive.

Volunteer Participation

Foster parents are volunteers of SAFCC. Foster parents who bring cats or kittens are expected to remain at the adoption event to participate in the screening process of potential adopters who show an interest in adopting the cats or kittens they have been fostering. Foster parents who wish to bring their cats or kittens to an adoption event **must** notify the Adoption Coordinator at least 24 hours in advance to ensure cage space is available at the adoption event.

Adoption Process

Potential adopters will be screened closely for suitability to adopt cats or kittens using screening guidelines. Anyone who exhibits an interest in adopting will be required to complete SAFCC's Adoption Application form. After completing this form, an SAFCC adoption counselor will review the application and further screen the potential adopter, if necessary. Home visits and reference checks may be conducted.

Pre-Adoptions

Pre-adopting an otherwise healthy cat or kitten is allowed if the cat or kitten has not yet been spayed or neutered or is too young to be vaccinated against rabies. In the event a cat or kitten is pre-adopted, the foster parent will continue to foster it until it has been spayed or neutered or vaccinated against rabies. Once a pre-adopted cat or kitten has been spayed or neutered and has completed a recovery period and vaccinated against rabies, it may be released to the adopting individual. This may take place either at the foster parent's home or at SAFCC adoption events.

Completing an Adoption Contract is required before releasing the cat or kitten to the new home (see below).

Successful Adoption

Once the adoption counselor is satisfied with the screening process, the adopter will then need to complete the SAFCC Adoption Contract. Adoption fees will be collected in cash. In the event a cat or kitten is pre-adopted, the adopting individual will be required to pay a \$50 non-refundable deposit with the balance due at the time the cat or kitten is released to them. All adoptions must be completed using SAFCC adoption application and contract forms. No adoption paperwork created by individual fosters or by other organizations will be accepted. In addition, adoption fees are collectible by an SAFCC member of the board or a designated individual only and may not be kept by individuals who have been fostering cats or kittens. Volunteers may not collect and keep adoption fees.

Adopter Not a Good Match

The purpose of the screening process is to determine whether the potential adopter and their home environment would be a good match for our cats or kittens. Sometimes, during the adoption counseling and screening process, there will be indications that there will not be a good match between the potential adopter and a cat or kitten.

Reasons for Denying an Adoption

While not an all-inclusive list, the following are some reasons for denying an adoption:

- The potential adopter has no visible means of providing financial support for a pet (e.g., currently unemployed and no other family members to provide support)
- The potential adopter wants an outside cat (refer to the "Barn Cat Program")
- The adopted cat or kitten will be left alone for long periods
- The potential adopter is determined to have the cat or kitten declawed
- The adopted cat or kitten will be incompatible with another pet in the potential adopter's household
- There is insufficient space or inappropriate situations in the potential adopter's home that would affect the care and welfare of the pet
- The cat or kitten does not bond with the potential adopter

Handling The Situation When an Adoption is Denied

Denying an adoption is a delicate situation that can be fraught with misunderstanding and poor communication. This is why using tact and diplomacy and offering alternatives to the denied adopter is so important. Many people will perceive a denial as a judgment about themselves and their ability as a Pet Parent. Use the following guidelines to help you through this process:

- If an adoption is refused, the adopter may be confused or upset with the Adoption

Representative and may ask for an explanation. The adopter deserves an explanation and the Adoption Representative must provide one. The Adoption Representative must handle any conflict with discretion and professionalism *at all times*.

- If an adopter gets angry and the situation is out of control, the Adoption Representative should calmly call in a third party for help (another representative).
- Most of the time it is not the message, but how the message is delivered that causes the adopter to be upset. Always kindly explain to the potential adopter the reason(s) for the denied adoption – saying “no” is never enough.
- Offer the adopter alternatives or solutions to help him/her understand what he/she needs to change or provide in order to be a responsible Pet Parent for a new pet.

II. Part 2 - Guidelines for Adoptions at PetSmart

Standards for Adoption Setup Outside of the Adoption Center

- Location for setup should not block product aisles or obstruct customer traffic flow
- Adoption cages or crates and the surrounding area are clean, organized and free of clutter
- Bottled disinfectant hand cleaner and paper towels available
- Weekend Adoption Partners are responsible for cleaning their Adoption Area before they leave for the day.

Adoption Table Presentation to Include

- PetSmart Services brochures - Pet Training, Grooming, PETsHOTEL and Doggie Day Camp, Banfield
- Adoption Partner informational brochures - Brochures cannot promote competitive services such as training, grooming, boarding, veterinary care or solicit for fundraising
- Donation Canister
- Adoption Partner's Adoptable Pet Photo Book (if available)
- Volunteers may not eat meals on the sales floor, but are welcome to use the PETSMART associate breakroom

Signage Standards

- Pet Adoption Volunteer Name Tag Lanyards
- NO unauthorized signage posted (for example, pictures of available pets, cartoons, organization banners, organization's upcoming events, "cause related" propaganda)

Information on the Pets for Adoption

(Keep in an organized file folder for all on-site pets)

- Individual pet information - History of the pet, vaccination records, organization's application/agreement
- PetSmart Charities Adoption Folder - Services brochure, Adoption Release Form / Vaccination History Form

The Adoption Process and Customer Experience at PetSmart

The following outlines some basic elements that should be present in most adoption scenarios.

Successful Adoption

The following should take place once a new Pet Parent shows an interest in adopting:

- Give a potential Pet Parent the ***Adoption Process Brochure*** to educate them on adopting a new pet.
- The Pet Parent begins to bond with the pet and decides that they are interested in adopting him/her.
- The Adoption Partner decides it is a good match.
- New Pet Parent must fill out Adoption Partner paperwork and ***PetSmart Release Form***.
- The Adoption Partner explains their policies/procedures should the adoption not be successful or should the pet become ill.
- Adoption Partner staff/volunteer or a PetSmart Store Associate will bring the paperwork to a cashier. The cashier will:
 - **Scan** the adoption release form and enter the group number (#5649)
 - **Scan** the Adopters PetPerks card
 - **Scan** and provide the New Pet & Parent Guide that will be presented to the new Pet Parent. If available, Store Associate will be paged to the front to assist new Pet Parent.
- The new Pet Parent is educated on what they will need for their new family member and PetSmart Services, given store coupons, New Pet Parent folder and guided through the store.

Pet Parent is not a Good Match

- Give a potential Pet Parent the ***Adoption Process Brochure*** to educate them on adopting a new pet.
- The person does not bond with the pet OR the Adoption Partner decides it is not a good match.
- At this point, education is the number one resource to diminish any bad feelings that may

arise out of this situation.

- If there was not a bond with the pet, educate the Pet Parent on other opportunities. If the Pet Parent is looking for a specific type of pet, direct him/her to other shelters/agencies/websites that may be able to help.
- If the Adoption Partner decided the match was not a good one, the Pet Parent needs to be educated on the reason and given other options.

Example: A person wants to adopt a cat and have it declawed because they believe that is what you are supposed to do for cats living inside so as not to claw up their furniture. A solution would be to educate them on alternatives to declawing the cat or to steer them to where they could find an already declawed cat to adopt.

Forms to be Completed in the Adoption Process

The *Adoption Release Form* and *Vaccination History Form* must be completed with every adoption.

Pet Health and Care for PetSmart Adoptions

Pet Health Policy

PetSmart requires that the pet be in custody of the Adoption Partner for 72 hours before being brought to the store to help assure the health of pets with an unknown history. The Store Manager will also conduct a brief check of all pets as they are brought to the store.

Vaccinations, Micro-chipping and Spay/Neutering Vehicles

Under no circumstances should micro-chipping or spaying/neutering take place on-site at a PetSmart store or parking lot. PetSmart does not allow these procedures on-site for two reasons. One is out of concern for the pets' safety and well-being. Secondly, this would be a conflict of agreement with PetSmart's partner Banfield, The Pet Hospital.

Pet Vaccination Requirements

Records of all vaccines / medical treatment a pet receives must be kept with the pet. Give a copy of these records to the Pet Parent at the time of adoption. PetSmart requires that pets be vaccinated before coming to the store as follows:

Cats and Kittens

- A 4-in-1 vaccine includes: Chlamydia, Panleukopenia, Calicivirus, Rhinotracheitis

Kittens: at 6-8 weeks, again at 12 weeks and 15 weeks of age

Cats: Yearly or once every 3 years according to the veterinarian's recommendation

- Rabies: This vaccine must be administered in accordance with state law

Kittens: typically at 15 weeks of age

Cats: every year or every 3 years according to state law

- Feline Leukemia: PetSmart does not require testing for Feline Leukemia but strongly recommends that it be done prior to or at the time of adoption to avoid potential infection of other cats after adoption.

Pet De-Worming

PetSmart highly recommends that all pets be tested for intestinal parasites (fecal examination by veterinarian) prior to coming to the store. If needed, pets should be de-wormed prior to coming to the store.

What To Do If a Cat Is Sick

- If a cat starts exhibiting signs of illness while in the Adoption Center, isolate it away from other pets.
- The PetSmart Store Manager will request that a volunteer return the pet to the Adoption Partner's facility for care - even if that means packing up all of the other pets and leaving if they cannot reach another volunteers.

Pet Incidents/Bites

Occasionally, a pet may get excited and scratch or bite a potential adopter/Pet Parent. Whether the Pet Parent is severely injured or not, the incident requires immediate attention by both the Adoption Partner and a PetSmart manager. Knowing what to do in advance can prevent panic and ensure that the person bitten or scratched receives the appropriate attention.

- If the bite is serious, such as a deep wound that is bleeding heavily, or the bite occurred on a fragile area of the body, such as the face, call 911 immediately.
- Even if the bite does not appear serious, insist the Pet Parent receive medical attention.
- Animal bites, especially cat bites, can become badly infected. A minor puncture bite from a cat can cause the bitten limb to swell to twice its normal size. The only way to avoid this is for the Pet Parent to see a doctor, who may prescribe antibiotics as protection against possible infection.
- All bites must be reported to your local animal control facility for further direction.
- When you call, be sure to include the name and phone number(s) of your organization's contact person.
- Depending on the state, pets that have bitten a person must be quarantined for 10 to 14 days. During this time, the pet will be monitored to see if he/she has rabies.
- If the pet has had a current rabies vaccination, you will need to contain the pet or remove the pet from the store.

Pet Illness after Adoption

Occasionally an adopted pet will become ill after arriving in its new home. PetSmart does not tolerate organizations that knowingly adopt sick pets or those organizations that do not provide the appropriate vaccinations prior to adoption, but we realize that pets of unknown history can be incubating disease despite the best efforts of the organization. If a Pet Parent contacts you stating that the pet they adopted is ill, follow these steps:

- Listen to the Pet Parent's concerns, express concern for the sick pet and apologize for any inconvenience.
- The Adoption Partner will be responsible to follow-up with the Pet Parent.

Pet Death at the Adoption Center

If a pet dies while in the Adoption Center, both the store and the Adoption Partner must follow certain protocols to minimize the impact on people in the store. Whenever a pet's life ends, it is an unfortunate and sad occurrence. When the proper parties are notified of the death and protocols are followed, the stress of such an incident can be greatly reduced for everyone involved.

Pet dies while Adoption Partner representative(s) is in the store

- The Adoption Partner representative will notify the Store Manager as soon as the death is discovered.
- The Adoption Partner is responsible for removing the body from the store in a discreet manner by wrapping it in a cloth, placing it in a cardboard box and remove it for disposal.
- If the Adoption Partner representative is the only person on duty in the Adoption Center, then all the other pets may need to be transported back to foster homes as well.

For all pet deaths

Because of the exposure to other pets in the Center, PetSmart may recommend that a necropsy be performed to determine exact cause of death. A necropsy should be performed any time there is an unexplained death and there are other pets that could be at potential risk for disease. This would not be done if the pet has URI, or if it gets caught in the cage (strangled). However, if the kitten/cat is sharing a cage with others, a necropsy should be done.

Pet Death after an Adoption

Pets may be healthy one day and sick the next. In rare instances, a pet may die after an adoption. Each Adoption Partner must have a procedure in place to handle these rare occurrences. Follow these procedures to assist the Pet Parent with his/her loss and to ensure that everyone is properly notified of the incident.

If the adopter goes to the store first:

- Store manager will listen to the Pet Parent and express your sorrow for their loss. He/she

will communicate to the Pet Parent that he/she wants to help them through this unfortunate circumstance.

- Store manager will immediately call the Adoption Partner and arrange for someone from the organization to meet with the manager and the Pet Parent.

If the adopter goes to the foster home first:

- PetSmart asks that the Adoption Partner report the incident to the store as soon as possible.
- Regardless of the circumstances, Adoption Partners are expected to handle the Pet Parent's questions and concerns in a professional and courteous manner, and follow the guidelines that their organization has developed for these circumstances while meeting PetSmart's standards of providing Unleashed Service to the Pet Parent.

PetSmart does not assume any responsibility for the death of a pet after adoption. If the pet death occurs within 1 – 2 weeks of adoption, a necropsy should be performed. Store Manager will notify the Adoption Partner immediately about the incident. It is PetSmart's expectation that an Adoption Partner representative will contact the Pet Parent the same day that we notify them of the incident. It is also important that the Adoption Partner call any other Pet Parents who adopted from the same litter or on the same day. Store management will review and take action regarding the death of pets on a case-by-case basis.

Pet Returns

Occasionally, a Pet Parent will attempt to return a pet he/she obtained from an Adoption Partner at the Adoption Center to the PetSmart store. PetSmart stores do not accept returned pets. The Adoption Partner and the store must understand the procedures to ensure the process does not confuse the Pet Parent.

- Tell Pet Parents at the time of adoption that all pet returns are to be made at the organization's shelter and not at the PetSmart store.
- If a Pet Parent attempts to return the pet to a store after an adoption, the Store Manager will listen to his/her reasons for wanting to return the pet and contact the Adoption Partner immediately.
- Pet Parents will be told that exchanges or returns do not take place at the store and that he/she must follow up with the adopting organization to return the pet directly to their shelter.
- Store Manager will refer the Pet Parent to the appropriate organization so that the Adoption Partner can advise the Pet Parent on the steps to follow.
- If the Pet Parent is unwilling to bring the pet to the shelter and leaves the pet at the store, the Store Manager will isolate the pet in an appropriate sized carrier until the organization is able to pick him/her up.