

## **Whatcom Humane Society**

### **Tips and Tricks for Cat TLC (by volunteers for volunteers)**

- 1) Always read both the cover sheet and the volunteer notes green sheet before interacting with a cat, especially if you are not familiar with that cat . Even if you have interacted with the cat before, always check to see if the other volunteers have noted any behavior changes since your last visit.
- 2) Listen to your gut. If you are not getting a good feeling from a cat, move on!
- 3) Introduce yourself **slowly**. Upon opening the kennel, let the cat sniff you by putting your hand on the edge of the kennel. Don't push your hand in their space. Wait & see if the cat is receptive, curious, shy, not interested or agitated. A shy cat will often lean forward a bit and may put its head down for pets. An agitated cat may back up into a corner, have its ears flat, flick its tail aggressively and sit on its hindquarters; all signs to leave kitty alone.
- 4) If the cat's eyes follow your hand as you try to pet or if they cringe, avoid petting them overhead. Try a gentle chin or cheek rub. If they are not receptive, try a wand toy or laser light for some play. Otherwise, come back for a visit later.
- 5) Do not lean into the kennel with a cat you do not know well. Be respectful of their space.
- 6) Do not stare directly into a cats eyes. Use slow blinks to communicate friendliness.
- 7) A cat treat may be used to coax a cat to the front of the kennel. Only 1-2 treats per cat. Although the treats seem very small, one treat is like giving a child a candy bar. Please remember a cat maybe getting treats from other volunteers the same day you are here.
- 8) **Do not use your hands/fingers as toys or "hand-wrestle"** - especially with kittens.
- 9) Don't hold a cat close to your face. Instead, hold the cat on your side **like a football** with the cat's spine parallel to the floor and back feet tucked under. This will prevent serious injuries if the cat gets startled.
- 10) Be cautious when petting/scratching at the base of the tail. This is a sensitive area for some cats.
- 11) Always record **any** sensitive body areas a cat might have or actions the cat objected to on the green sheet.
- 12) Whether spending time with a cat in the Colony Room, the GA Room or their kennel, your observations are important for the staff and potential adopter to know more about what the cats likes, how they respond and what toys they prefer. Please be diligent about using the volunteer visit forms!
- 13) Do not be offended if a cat is not responsive to you. They may be tired, over stimulated or you may not smell good to them! Some cats may need a longer time to feel comfortable & accept TLC.

- 14) Most cats are receptive to a gentle grooming. Let the cat sniff & rub the brush or comb before & during brushing to get their scent on it. Some cats will want to play with the brush after they are finished being groomed.
- 15) If petting is acceptable to the cat, it is best to do your petting, brushing, etc. **before** playing with wand toys or lasers. They are sometimes too stimulated afterward to allow pets.
- 16) Remember grooming tools are only used on one cat; please clean hair out of tools and put on right side of sink.
- 17) Cat nip: A small pinch on a toy is sufficient! Do **NOT** give to Red Dot Cats. Cats can be overwhelmed and/or overstimulated very quickly.