



## Foster Family Educations Series: Medical Fostering

**\*\*\*Remember that medications work best when given at consistent regular intervals. This keeps things like antibiotics at a steady level in the body so they will work most efficiently. Also, if you patient is receiving pain control, giving it regularly will keep us ahead of the pain, making the patient more comfortable and less stressed, in turn helping them to heal faster.\*\*\***

### Some Notes on Cats

#### Behavior

Healthy cat behavior: playful, curious, spicy, more active in the evening, sleepy during the day.

Painful cats: quiet, hide, crouch away from people

When to call the clinic:

- Difficulty breathing
- Not eating/drinking for more than 24 hours
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Lethargy lasting for more than 24 hours (some pain medications may cause sedation, but if you are concerned, please call us)
- Any seizure-like behavior (profuse salivating, becoming rigid, falling over, unable to walk)

When in doubt, if you see something that startles you, please call the clinic or shelter staff. We can assess the behavior or symptoms and make a plan to help the animal.

#### Handling

Less is more! This means that you want to use the least amount of restraint possible which will minimize their stress.

The best angle for medicating in most cases is from the back. You may be able to gently grasp the head and do what you need to do.

More than likely, they will never want you to hold them and force medication in their eyes, ears or mouth. So when we need to do this, we want to do it as quickly, kindly and effectively as possible. Cats catch on very quickly to our methods and will be try to sabotage them!

You can use a towel or blanket to wrap around them like a burrito and hold them firmly but gently against you. This will give you access to the parts you need while attempting to avoid the scratchy parts.

You can scruff a cat, but they like it much better if you do not.

### **Administering Eye Medications**

Eye meds come in liquids, ointments and gels.

1. Remember to work from behind the cat
2. Tilt the head up as high as possible
3. Do not let the applicator touch the eye. (It can cause damage or scratches to the cornea AND can contaminate the applicator with bacteria.)
4. For ointments and gels, some find it easier to apply it to their finger and then use their finger to apply it to the eye.

### **Cleaning Ears**

Use only the ear cleaner and gauze provided. Do not use Q-tips!

1. Pour a generous amount into the ear canal.
2. Massage the base of the ear as long as you can – a minute is good if your patient will tolerate it
3. Allow the animal to shake its head – but close your eyes so you don't get anything in them!
4. Wipe the ears with gauze so that you can remove as much of the residue as possible.

## **Administering Ear Medications**

Ear meds are usually in liquid form.

1. When the applicator is inserted into the ear, you can't tell exactly how much you are administering.
2. In this case, you cannot precisely tell if you are instilling 3 drops or 0.5ml. Use your best guess. Try to see how fast the medication comes out before you actually put it into the ear.
3. Once you have put it into the ear, massage the base as you would for cleaning. Allow the animal to shake its head (and remember to close your eyes or look away – you do not want to get medication in your eyes)
4. It is important not to clean the ears once medication has been applied. Sometimes ear medications work in the ear for a week or longer, but only if they are left in the ear. If we give you an animal that has recently received ear medication, make sure to check with us before cleaning the ears.

## **Administering Oral Medications**

Oral medications could be in liquid or tablet form.

If you are giving liquid medications, make sure that you know how measure them as needed in an oral syringe.

If you are giving tablets, make sure they are halved or quartered if they need to be. Most often if the label instructions say to give a half of a tablet twice per day, we will give them to you already split.

Make sure you know if the medication should be refrigerated or not.

Make sure that you thoroughly shake the medication to mix it if instructed.

Some medications must be given with a meal.

Some medications have side effects. We will go over them with you, but if you are concerned with the cat's reaction to any medication, please call us.

1. Hold the head firmly.
2. Place the syringe into the side of the mouth and push.

3. Sometimes they will spit some out or turn their head as you are shooting it. Don't be concerned if they don't get a little bit as long as they get most of it.
4. With pills, toss it into the back of the mouth and use a syringe in the side of the mouth to wash it down. This can be tricky. You will be surprised how quickly a cat can spit out a pill!
5. If you are both getting stressed out, give it a break for a little while and go back and try again.
6. Don't panic, your technique will get better every time you do it.

Most medications taste awful. They may salivate/foam a lot after receiving their medication. You can try to wash it down with more water.

### **Subcutaneous Fluids**

Fluids are given when an animal is dehydrated. You will be given a bag of fluids with an IV line and needles. **Always use a new needle.**

1. Mark the bag with a piece of tape so you know where you are starting. Hang the bag before you start. The higher you hang the bag, the better the fluids should flow, because GRAVITY!
2. Fluids are generally given between the shoulder blades.
3. Make a skin tent by pinching the skin.
4. Insert the needle into the middle of the skin tent under the skin. Sometimes you need to position the needle (move it a little from to the left or right) so that it will flow better. You can do this without actually removing it from the skin.
5. Release the clip on the line and the fluids will flow.
6. It makes a camel hump under the skin.
7. Once you have administered the prescribed amount, clip off the line to stop the flow and remove the line.
8. Pinch and hold the place on the skin where the needle was injected. This will help keep the fluid from leaking back out.
9. Fluid may take a while to be absorbed by the body. The fluid bubble may also move (GRAVITY) to the side of the cat. It will eventually be absorbed.

## Diabetic Cats

Very stressed diabetic cats can lead to unregulated diabetes.

We place them into foster care to help minimize stress.

Cats can sometimes go into diabetic remission. This means that they may be able to maintain their blood sugar on their own at some point. However, they can also come out of remission. Do not stop giving insulin unless you are directed by medical staff.

We do frequent blood-glucose curves on diabetic patients to see how effectively their insulin is working. We will arrange a date for these tests and have you bring the cat in for the day. It is very important to keep these appointments.

Insulin must be kept in the refrigerator.

When you are ready to use it, take it out of the refrigerator and roll it gently in your hand. DO NOT SHAKE!

You will be given specific needles to use based on the type of insulin. Insulin syringes come in U40 or U100. We will tell you exactly how many units to give at each dose. It is a very small amount. Be sure to measure carefully.

Usually it is given after a meal.

Tent the skin and inject into the skin fold.

Signs of low blood sugar:

- Disorientation
- Confusion
- Tremors/shivering
- Low energy
- Loss of consciousness

\*\*\*This would be cause for immediate concern. You can administer maple or Karo syrup to the patient's gums, but call the shelter/clinic so that we can determine the next steps.\*\*\*

## **Post-operative Care**

Instructions are on a case by case basis. You may see cases like amputees, eye removals, ear surgery, major dental procedures.

Often require multiple medications, bandage changes and clinic appointments.

They may have complications.

They will require careful monitoring of pain, urine output, bowel movements, appetite, water consumption.

The animal may have surgical drains place to keep infection from building. Normal drainage would be clear, slightly pink. Anything that looks like puss, thick, foul-smelling would be cause for concern. Please call the clinic.

The animal may have an E-collar on. Please keep the collar on for the prescribed amount of time, usually 7-10 days. This keeps them from licking the infected site and causing infection.

Most often, bandage changes will be done at the clinic so that we may check the progress of healing of the surgical site or remove sutures/staples.

Any specific treatments, we will go over in the clinic with you.