

Table S1. Overview of a mixed methods survey completed by kitten foster parents titled *Kitten fostering experiences and practices.*

START AND CONSENT

INCLUSION QUESTIONS

If you have read the above information and agree to participate in this study, please select “Yes”.

Yes

No

(If No is selected, Skip to End of Survey)

(Mandatory to answer)

Are you at least 18 years of age?

Yes

No

(If No is selected, Skip to End of Survey)

(Mandatory to answer)

Have you fostered kittens (8 weeks of age or younger) within the last 2 years?

Yes

No

(If No is selected, Skip to End of Survey)

(Mandatory to answer)

We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed many people’s lifestyles and routines, and this may have impacted how we interact with foster kittens as well. Please answer the following questions considering the **normal** (i.e., pre-pandemic) state, behaviour, and management of your foster kittens. At the end of the survey, we will ask you about how these practices may be different during the pandemic or if you have only fostered kittens during the pandemic.

Please note there is no word limit for open-ended questions.

Previous experience

How many years have you been fostering kittens?

Less than 1 year, 1, 2, 3, 4...20+ *(dropdown list)*

Approximately how many litters of kittens have you fostered in total (over your entire life)? This can include groups of kittens from multiple mothers.

1, 2, 3, 4...20+ *(dropdown list)*

On average, how many litters of kittens do you foster per year? This can include groups of kittens from multiple mothers.

1, 2, 3, 4...20+ *(dropdown list)*

How many different shelters or rescues have you ever fostered for?

1, 2, 3, 4...20+ *(dropdown list)*

Briefly, why do you foster kittens?

(Text box for open-ended response)

Have you ever held any of the following positions related to companion animal health and behaviour? Please select all that apply.

None

Cat or Dog Trainer or Behaviour Consultant

Veterinarian

Veterinary Technician, Assistant, Nurse, or Student (or other position within a veterinary clinic setting)

Shelter Worker or Volunteer (or other position within a shelter setting)

Groomer

Animal Behaviour/Welfare Researcher or Student

Other, please describe _____

Please answer the following questions thinking about the kittens you have fostered over the past 2 years who were 8 weeks of age and younger. Please note there is no word limit for the open-ended questions.

Aside from foster kittens, have you had other animals living in your home during this period? Please select all that apply.

No other pets

Cats

Dogs

Rabbits

Small mammals (e.g., hamsters, guinea pigs, mice, rats)

Reptiles/amphibians (e.g., frogs, lizards, turtles, snakes)

Birds

Fish

Other, please describe _____

(If "No other pets" is selected, skip next question)

On average, how have you allowed your foster kittens interact with other animals in the home? Please select all that apply.

Free interacting or play (i.e., unsupervised)

Controlled, supervised interacting or play only

Feeding in the same room

Visual access only (i.e., separated by a barrier but still within visible range)

They did not interact

Other, please describe _____

Socialization practices

The following questions are about the socialization practices and techniques you typically use with your foster kittens and how your kittens respond. Socialization includes exposing your kittens to new people, environments, things, and situations and how this exposure is conducted. Please answer the questions about your kittens' experiences and behaviours during their first 8 weeks of age (e.g., if the kittens are still in your care when they are 10 weeks old, please only answer about them when they were 8 weeks of age and younger).

On average, how much time in a day have you or other people in your household spent actively playing or interacting with your foster kittens?

- 0 to 1 hour
- 1 to 2 hours
- 2 to 3 hours
- 3+ hours

Did you give names to your foster kittens?

- Yes
- No

Did your foster kittens get access to any of the following while they were in your care? Please select all that apply.

	Yes	No	N/A
Small toys (e.g., balls with bells, furry mice, crinkle balls, stuffed toys)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interactive toys (e.g., feather wands, string toys)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Explorative items (e.g., boxes, tunnels, paper bags)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Puzzle feeding devices (e.g., puzzle feeders, food hiding toys)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Elevated platforms (e.g., perches, cat tree, furniture)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Designated scratching materials (e.g., scratching post, horizontal scratching mat, designated floor/carpet areas)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Hiding areas (e.g., covered beds, boxes, underneath furniture)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Scent stimulation (e.g., catnip, silver vine)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Visual stimulation (e.g., view of a window, aquarium, TV/tablet screen)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Training (e.g., to do tricks or respond to commands)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supervised outdoor access (e.g., fenced backyard, patio, catio, on leash)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unsupervised outdoor access (i.e., free roaming)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other, please describe _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Did you expose your foster kittens to any of the following while they were in your care? Please select all that apply.

	Yes	No	N/A
Transportation (e.g., cat carrier, car rides)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Noisy household objects (e.g., vacuum, broom, plastic bags, blow dryer, pots clanging, blender)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Movement opportunities (e.g., climbing over an obstacle, climbing stairs)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Different surfaces (e.g., wood, metal, carpet, elevated, wobbly)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Auditory stimuli (e.g., doorbell, phone ringing, alarm ringing, children playing/screaming, music, sirens, construction, fireworks)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Handling (e.g., picking up, petting, grooming, clipping claws)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mimic vet visit (e.g., gently opening eyes/pressing nose/opening mouth; hold and “examine” body, head, paws, limbs; gently pinch skin to mimic vaccine; wipe and cover with towel; hold on countertop/raised surface)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unfamiliar people (e.g., members of other genders, different facial hair, people with hats/jackets, children, different ethnicities)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Unfamiliar animals (e.g., friend’s pet coming into the home, neighbour pet)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other, please describe _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you had the kittens’ mother with you in foster care, did you alter how you provided any of the above exposures or socialization practices?

I have never had the kittens’ mother with me in foster care

No, I did not do anything different

Yes, please describe _____

Please describe your approach to providing socialization to a kitten who is reacting fearfully to a new exposure.

(Text box for open-ended response)

On average, which weeks of age do you focus on for providing your kittens with socialization? Please select all weeks that apply.

Week of age

0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

At what approximate age are your foster kittens typically available for adoption?

Younger than 6 weeks, 6 weeks, 7 weeks, 8 weeks, ...20 weeks+ (dropdown list)

Does the shelter(s) you foster for provide guidelines or recommendations for kitten fostering and care?

Yes

No

I don’t know

(If Yes is selected, prompt the next 5 questions)

Do the shelter guidelines or recommendations include information specific to socializing your foster kittens (i.e., exposing your kittens to new people, environments, things, and situations and how this exposure is conducted)?

Yes
No
I don't know

Please describe aspects of the shelter's guidelines or recommendations you feel are the most important for successful and long-term adoption (i.e., keeping kittens in their adoptive home with high adopter satisfaction).

(Text box for open-ended response)

Why do you feel these guidelines or recommendations are the most important?

(Text box for open-ended response)

Please describe aspects of the shelter's guidelines or recommendations you feel may reduce success of long-term adoption (i.e., could make kittens less likely to stay in their adoptive home, and could reduce adopter satisfaction).

(Text box for open-ended response)

Why do you feel these guidelines or recommendations may reduce the success of adoption?

(Text box for open-ended response)

When thinking about successful and long-term adoption in general (i.e., keeping kittens in their adoptive home with high adopter satisfaction), please rate the following characteristics in terms of enhancing or reducing the success of adoption.

Enhancing = the characteristic helps kittens get adopted, makes it easier for kittens to stay in their adoptive home, and can enhance adopter satisfaction

Reducing = the characteristic reduces kittens' chances of getting adopted, makes it more difficult for kittens to stay in their adoptive home, and can reduce adopter satisfaction.

CHARACTERISTIC	Very reducing	Somewhat reducing	Neither reducing nor enhancing	Somewhat enhancing	Very enhancing
Active/energetic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bold	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Playful	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Affectionate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Impulsive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reactive/sensitive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aloof/reserved	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Submissive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Aggressive	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Attention-seeking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Intelligent	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sociable with other animals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sociable with people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fearful of other animals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fearful of people	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fearful of new objects or environments	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protective of people/caretakers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Protective of objects/food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other, please describe _____	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Please describe the types of assistance or resources (e.g., educational resources, phone support) you feel are essential for you to feel supported by your shelter to conduct the best socialization for your kittens.

(Text box for open-ended response)

Please describe any challenges or barriers you feel reduce your ability to conduct the best socialization for your foster kittens. If no challenges or barriers, please say None.

(Text box for open-ended response)

Do you have anything else you would like to add about your kitten fostering experience, the socialization period, best practices for foster kittens, and/or kitten characteristics you feel are important for adoptability?

No

Yes, please describe _____

Demographics

What is your age (in years)?

18, 19, 20 100+ (dropdown list)

What is your gender?

Man

Woman

Non-binary

Prefer to self-describe _____

Prefer not to answer

What country do you live in?

All countries available (dropdown list)

What type of community do you live in?

Rural community (fewer than 4,999 people)

Small community (5,000 to 49,999 people)

Mid-sized community (50,000 to 999,999)

Large community (more than 1 million people)

How many adults (18+ years of age) live in your household (including yourself)?

1–10+ (dropdown list)

How many children and/or teenagers (under 18 years of age) live in your household?

0–10+ (dropdown list)

Ten-item personality inventory (TIPI)

Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please select the rating next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement.

You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other.

Please select your agreement with each pair of traits.

PERSONALITY TRAITS	Disagree strongly	Disagree moderately	Disagree a little	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree a little	Agree moderately	Agree strongly
Extraverted, enthusiastic	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Critical, quarrelsome	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Dependable, self-disciplined	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Anxious, easily upset	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Open to new experiences, complex	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reserved, quiet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Sympathetic, warm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Disorganized, careless	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Calm, emotionally stable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Conventional, uncreative	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed many people’s lifestyles and routines, and this may have impacted how we interact with foster kittens. Have your fostering practices changed because of the pandemic?

I have only fostered during the pandemic

No, there have been no changes

Yes, please describe _____ *(Text box for open-ended response)*

END



DO YOU FOSTER KITTENS?

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Participate in our new research survey! This online survey is anonymous and will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

Participants must:

- be 18+ years of age
- have fostered kittens 8 weeks of age or younger within the last 2 years

To learn more and to participate, please visit:
<https://uoguelph.com/kittenfoster>

If you have any questions, please contact Courtney Graham at courtney.graham@uoguelph.ca or Dr. Lee Niel at lee.niele@uoguelph.ca

 UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH

REB #21-05-007

This project has been reviewed by the University of Guelph's Research Ethics Board for compliance with federal guidelines for research involving human participants.
This project is funded by NSERC.

Figure S1. Advertisement for participant recruitment for the online survey titled *Kitten fostering experiences and practices*.