



# Fostering rescue cats as health promotion

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## INTRODUCTION

Many rescue organisations have foster programmes for animals who are too young to be adopted or need time for healing or adjustment. Community fosterers take foster animals home and live, work, and play with them for periods ranging from a few days to several months or longer. While there has been research that looks at the health-promoting aspects of owning pets and visiting programmes in assisted care settings, little is known about the experiences or benefits of fostering by older people.



## AIM

To explore the health promotion potential of feline companion animal fostering by older adults in Aotearoa New Zealand

## METHOD

A national on-line survey of 106 animal rescue organizations



Interviews with 14 fosterer programme co-ordinators about their work and involving more older fosterers



An interview study with older fosterers. Do they experience fostering as health promoting?

## HEALTH PROMOTION

My health promotion perspective on fostering means exploring:

- 🐾 Different inter-related dimensions of health - taha tinana (physical), taha hinengaro (mental and emotional), taha whānau (extended family and social relationships), and taha wairua (spirituality) <sup>(1)</sup>
- 🐾 What are the potential barriers to fostering by older people?
- 🐾 Do foster programme organisers see older people as capable and contributing fosterers?

*Community fosterers live work and play with foster animals - is this health promoting?*



## INITIAL RESULTS

About 75% of the cat or kitten animal rescues programmes in Aotearoa New Zealand have foster programmes. Programme co-ordinators:

- 🐾 **Value** compassion, responsibility, and time availability in fosterers and see these as qualities older people bring.
- 🐾 **Emphasize that fostering can provide** emotional connection companionship and build social networks and a sense of community.
- 🐾 See potential **challenges** for older people as anxiety, physical frailty, damage to their property and the use of social media and web-based methods in fostering.
- 🐾 See **potential** for families collaborating to support older family members who foster, fostering programs in retirement villages and fostering in residential settings.

## IN A NUTSHELL

Companion animal fostering has the potential to promote and sustain the health of older adults, the animals they care for, and the families and communities they are part of.



Interested in these ideas?  
Let's talk!  
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Or read more here

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**Companion Animal Fostering as Health Promotion: A Literature Review**

Christine Roseveare; Mary Breheny; Juliana Mansvelt; Linda Murray; Marg Wilkie; M. Carolyn Gates

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Reference: <sup>1</sup> Durie, M., Whaiora: Māori health development. 1994: Oxford University Press.