



WASHINGTON AREA
HUMANE SOCIETY

Foster Kitten Manual

Emergency Protocols:

Non-Emergencies		Emergencies	
<p>Monitor the kitten.</p> <p>If kitten worsens, call Foster Team using the appropriate number from the business hours list.</p>		<p>Requires Immediate Veterinary Attention:</p> <p><i>Business Hours:</i> Come straight to the shelter.</p> <p><i>After Hours: 724-747-4579</i></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;">Non-Emergency Symptoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Runny discharge from the eyes or nose • Lack of appetite • Lethargy (lack of energy) • Diarrhea lasting more than 3 or 4 feedings • Vomiting • Coughing and sneezing • Lack of bowel movement for more than 24-36 hours or straining in the litter box • Swollen eyes or eyes held closed • Lack of weight gain 		<p style="text-align: center;">Emergency Symptoms:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous diarrhea longer than 24-36 hours. Blood in diarrhea. • Frequent vomiting longer than 12 hours • Loss of appetite • Bleeding of any kind (from nose, in urine or stool) • Any trauma (hit by car, dropped, unconscious, etc.) • Difficulty breathing • Seizing • A kitten who doesn't respond or has not eaten for more than a day 	
Non-Emergency Business Hours			
Sunday	8:30 am – 5:00 pm	Veterinary Tech	724.470.9712
Monday	8:30 am – 5:00 pm	Veterinary Tech	724.470.9712
Tuesday	8:30 am – 5:00 pm	Veterinary Tech	724.470.9712
Wednesday	8:30 am – 5:00 pm	Veterinary Tech	724.470.9712
Thursday	8:30 am – 5:00 pm	Veterinary Tech	724.470.9712
Friday	8:30 am – 5:00 pm	Veterinary Tech	724.470.9712
Saturday	8:30 am – 5:00 pm	Veterinary Tech	724.470.9712

Emergency Care

If you have questions about the health of your foster animal or if an emergency situation should arise during non-emergency business hours (listed on page 1), please call appropriate phone number. If you do not speak to the front desk staff or a Veterinary Technician, please come directly to the shelter. Our hours of operation are Sunday through Saturday from 8:30am-5pm.

If your foster animal has an emergency that occurs outside of the normal business hours, please call the emergency after-hours phone number at **724-747-4579**. (Before calling, please refer to the list of emergencies & non-emergencies on page 1.) The vet tech on call will contact the veterinarian for a treatment plan. Should after-hours treatment be needed, the vet tech on call will instruct the foster family on the appropriate steps to take. Washington Area Humane Society must approve any and all treatments for foster pets.

- The Washington Area Humane Society has a policy that we do not reimburse individuals for vet bills for foster animals when taken for veterinary care outside of that which is provided and authorized by the Washington Area Humane Society.
- If the foster parent takes a foster pet to any other veterinary or emergency clinic other than the one authorized by the WAHS, the foster parent will be responsible for ALL costs.
- If Washington Area Humane Society has not approved any or all treatments to foster pets, the foster parent will be financially responsible for ALL costs.

*Please note: As a foster volunteer for the WAHS, you are not to under any circumstances re-home our animal or place the animal under the care of anyone else or in anyone else's household. If any emergency occurs and you need to place your foster animal in care, please contact WAHS vet department or emergency after-hours phone number for placement.

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Are You a Foster Kitten Candidate?



Time considerations:

Are you able to devote the required time daily and weekly to your foster animal (see chart below)?

Are you able to bring foster animals to the shelter for vaccinations and wellness exams every 1-4 weeks?

Are you able to contact Washington Area Humane Society or bring foster animals to the emergency care facility quickly in an emergency?

Space considerations:

Are you able to separate your foster animals from your household pets to protect them from illnesses?

Are you able to handle cleaning procedures such as washing hands after every encounter and cleaning/disinfecting the kittens' living space daily?

Are you able to handle any potential home damage (carpet, clothing, and/or furniture) associated with animals?

Care considerations:

Are you prepared to handle sickness or possible death of your foster animal?

Are you able to emotionally handle letting go of the foster animal after becoming attached once their foster period is over?

Are you able to handle the potential of foster animals carrying illness that could affect your household animals/family?

TYPE OF FOSTER.	DURATION OF FOSTER	DAILY COMMITMENT
Weaned Kittens	1-3 weeks	2 hours
URI Cats	2-3 weeks	1-2 hours
Kittens with Mom	2-10 weeks	1-2 hours or more
Injured Cat	2 weeks - 2 months	1-2 hours
Neonate Kittens	8-10 weeks	Up to 8 hours

Frequently Asked Questions

What do foster families need to provide?

Foster families need to provide:

- A healthy and safe environment for their foster kittens. We require fosters to have a separate contained area to house the kittens that is separated from other household pets.
- Transportation to and from Washington Area Humane Society and all vet appointments as needed.
- Socialization and cuddle time to help teach the kittens about positive family and pet relationships.

How much time do I need to spend with the kittens?

As much time as you can. The more time you spend with your foster kittens, the more socialized they will be to people. The amount of time required for feeding will vary depending on the age of the kittens you are fostering. Very young kittens need to be bottle-fed every two to three hours around the clock, while older kittens may be eating on their own and needing to be fed just a couple times a day.

Can I foster kittens even if I have a full-time job?

Yes. The foster coordinator will match you with kittens appropriate for your schedule. We will need you to be available, however, to take the kittens to a vet appointment if they are sick.

How many kittens will I be fostering?

Ideally, we like to have at least two kittens in a foster home so they can socialize with and learn from each other. Sometimes there are special circumstances in which a kitten goes to a foster home alone. *WAHS does not mix litters of kittens.*

How long will the kittens need to be in foster care?

It depends on their age and weight. Once a kitten weighs two pounds, she/he can be spayed or neutered and then put up for adoption. If you are fostering a litter of kittens, we will try to keep at least two of the kittens together for the surgery, but we want to get everyone spayed or neutered and ready for adoption as early as possible.

What is my role before and after the kittens' spay/neuter surgery?

When your kittens reach 2 pounds (900 grams), contact our vet department ASAP so we can schedule for surgery. You will drop your kittens off at the shelter the day before the surgery.

After the kittens' surgeries, we will communicate if any kittens need to go back into foster prior to adoption. You will be given a foster animal biography form to fill out so you can tell potential adopters about any special or fun personality traits that the kittens have. As you would expect, kittens are usually adopted quickly. If kittens are not required to go back into foster, you are welcome to follow-up with our cat department manager on how they are doing at the shelter.

Will I need to give medicine to the foster kittens?

We do our best to ensure that we are sending out healthy kittens to foster care. However most illnesses have incubation periods, meaning that if a kitten picked up something prior to surrender or at the shelter, symptoms can arise after you take them home. Some kittens do not require any medicine, while others do. If your foster kitten(s) need medication, we can show you how to administer it before you take the animals home.

Can I let my foster kittens play with my personal pets?

Kittens are very susceptible to illness and can carry and/or catch dangerous ailments easily. For this reason, we require that foster parents isolate foster kittens to ensure that your personal pets and the foster kittens are healthy. We also advise that you consult with your veterinarian before fostering to ensure that all of your personal pets are healthy and up-to-date on all vaccines. If, for any reason, your

personal pet becomes ill while you are fostering a WAHS pet, we cannot provide medical care for your personal pet.

Will any of my foster kittens die?

Sadly, kittens are fragile, so it is always possible for them to become ill and pass away while in a foster home. This may be the hardest thing about fostering kittens. If it's something you don't want to encounter, then fostering kittens may not be the best fit for you. But please keep in mind that without foster homes, most of these kittens would not stand a chance of survival in a shelter. You're helping to save lives.

Who will take care of my foster kittens if I need to go out of town?

If you have travel plans while you are fostering kittens for Washington Area Humane Society, you will need to contact the vet department and make arrangements to return your foster group to the shelter for the duration of the time that you are gone. Please provide at least one week's notice to ensure that we have space for your kittens. If your trip is over a holiday, please provide a minimum of two weeks' notice. If you have a trip planned, please communicate this before your foster start.

You cannot leave your foster cat with an unauthorized person or pet sitter. We have specific training for foster parents, and pet sitters have not undergone that training or signed the release waivers for the foster program.

What if a foster kitten bites me?

If any of your foster pets bite you and break skin, causing you to bleed, you need to report the bite to the vet department within 24 hours of when the bite occurred. The law requires that we report all bites. The teeth of the animal, not the nails, must have broken the skin. If you are unsure, then please report the bite anyway.

What if I want to adopt one of my foster kittens?

If you want to adopt a foster kitten, you will need to complete an adoption application and follow the full adoption process. When you bring your foster kittens back to Washington Area Humane Society, they are not always immediately available for adoption. We have to ensure that their medical records are current and give them an examination to ensure they are healthy enough to be adopted. With that said, although we give most fosters first choice, if you decide to adopt after you've returned the kittens to the shelter, please contact the cat coordinator right away. Once the kittens are up for adoption, we cannot hold a kitten for anyone, including the foster parent.

What if I know someone who's interested in adopting one of my foster kittens?

If someone you know is interested in adopting one of your foster kittens, they will need to complete an adoption application and follow the full adoption process. Please contact the foster coordinator as soon as possible, because once the kittens are up for adoption, we cannot hold them for anyone. However, we do want to accommodate referrals from foster parents if we can.

Will it be difficult for me to say goodbye to my foster kittens?

Saying goodbye can be the most difficult part of fostering but remember that we always have more kittens who need wonderful foster homes. Keep in mind that by fostering these vulnerable pets, you are playing a crucial role in helping to save their lives.

Supplies

All supplies are provided by the WAHS! The following supplies will be needed to bring your kittens home:



- **Carrier:** WAHS will send your fosters home in a carrier. For newborn kittens, you may want to use this cat carrier as their “home”. It will provide a familiar-smelling, warm, dark, quiet home for your foster kitties. However, a bigger box may be desirable, as it will allow you to see in, especially as the kittens grow.
 - For a mother and her new, growing litter of kittens, you can use a larger sized nesting box that allows the mother to lay comfortably while nursing the kittens. The wall height should be tall enough to prevent the kittens from escaping but low enough for the mother to easily leave the box.
- **Scale:** Critical to success, a food scale will be very helpful in monitoring small kittens' growth, which averages 105 grams (nearly 4 ounces) a week, or 10-15 grams DAILY.
- **Newspapers/pee pads:** Keep several layers in the bottom of the box, plus they will come in handy when the kittens start to roam around the room and into their litter box.
- **Big litter box for mother cat (queen):** large litter box should be kept separate from the nursing box.
- **Small litter box for kittens:** An oblong cake pan is perfect. Cut-off cardboard boxes also work well.
- **Cat litter:** Any *non-clumping* variety of litter will be fine. Do not use clumping litter with kittens! If they ingest it, it causes serious health and digestive issues.
- **Water bowls:** Heavy, wide based and impossible to tip. Should be stainless steel or porcelain/ceramic, DO USE NOT PLASTIC, as plastic is difficult to disinfect because it is so porous. Water bowls are not used until kittens begin to wean at 4 weeks of age.
- **Food bowls (at least 2):** Ideally use metal or ceramic bowls. One bowl is for the eat-at-will dry cat food; the other bowl is for canned food. You can use TV dinner trays, paper plates or plastic lids from food containers (i.e., yogurt container lids) in weaning kittens; any relatively flat plate or saucer will do. The larger the litter, the more plates and saucers required so that no one gets crowded out.
 - For a mother, use a regular cat food bowl for water and eat-at-will dry cat food. Again, do not use plastic bowls.

- **Food:** When weaning kittens or feeding older kittens, you should have both dry kitten chow, “pate style” canned cat food (any brand for adults or kittens), and all-meat baby food (*must not contain vegetables, garlic or onion powder*). Offer several choices to weaned kittens to determine their preferences.
 - For a mother, a water bowl and eat-at-will dry kitten chow should be left out. Canned food should also be offered. Keep this separate from her nesting box.
- **New bottles and nipples for each bottle-fed litter and formula for bottle-feeding:** Pet Ag Kitten Milk Replacer (KMR) is the required brand of powdered formula for bottle-feeding kittens. We only use the powdered KMR formula, we do not use the pre-made KMR formula as it causes diarrhea in most kittens.

Keeping the kittens’ nursing bottles and supplies clean is vital as this will prevent diarrhea, vomiting, or infection. Cleaning the bottles and nursing nipples is quite easy. Using hot, soapy water, clean the bottle with a bottle brush. If you do not have a bottle brush, you may wash the bottle and nursing nipple in the dishwasher. You may place them in the silverware rack or in a dishwasher basket.

- **Heating pad, hot water bottle, or “Snuggle Safe” disk:** Unless the nursery is at least 85° and your kittens are 6 weeks or older, you need to supply heat support. BE SURE THAT THE KITTENS HAVE ROOM TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE HEAT. We most often provide Snuggle Safe discs for heat support.

One method of supplemental heat is a warmed *Snuggle Safe* disk. This disk then provides warmth for 8 hours. Instructions for how long to heat the *Snuggle Safe* disk (depending on the wattage of the microwave), are printed on each disk. If you are unsure what wattage the microwave is, heat the disk for 4 minutes, then check the temperature with your hands. Heat in additional 2 minute increments until warm enough. Make sure it does not feel too hot before placing it in the cage or crate. Cover the heating disk with a soft folded towel or blanket so the kitten cannot directly contact the disk, which can potentially lead to painful, severe skin burns and skin sloughing.

We use “Snuggle Safe” discs, hot water bottles or rice bags that can be used as heat sources. These should also be covered by towels and should be reheated regularly to ensure that they stay warm for the kittens to snuggle up against.

- Rice bags and water bottles must be reheated every 2 hours by placing in the microwave in 2 minute increments. You will want to gently shake the water bottle or rice bag to ensure the heat is evenly distributed.

We avoid the use of heating pads. If you are using a heating pad, place it under 1-2 towels, and make sure that it covers only half of the floor area of their box. The heating pad should be on “low” or “medium” to prevent overheating the kittens. Make sure to cover any electrical cords as well, so that the kittens are not tempted to play and bite on them.

- **Clean towels and blankets:** Ensure all blankets are free from holes and strings. Kittens can accidentally strangle themselves in holes or strings.

- **Toys:** Plastic toys that can be disinfected are good to reuse for new litters. Soft toys without hard parts can be washed in the washing machine.
 - Kittens can also amuse themselves with empty toilet paper rolls.
 - An empty 12-pack cardboard soda box is good for an inventive number of games.
 - Clean tennis balls, crinkled paper balls, caps from soda bottles and paper bags are marvelous toys as well.
 - Young kittens do not respond to catnip, but mom will like it. Kittens will also "play" with anything they can find.
 - Drapes, lamp shades and crystal ornaments are as much fun as the toys listed above, so be sure to "kitten-proof" your home to prevent injury. As they grow, their climbing abilities will develop, so anything irreplaceable should be kept out of reach!

Picking Up Supplies

To schedule supply pickup, foster volunteers should call the front desk with the list of necessary supplies at 724-222-7387 ext. 101. If you would like to pick up supplies during a scheduled appointment, please tell the vet techs or front staff in advance.

Scheduling your kittens for spay/neuter

When your foster kittens weigh at least 2 pounds (900 grams), they can be spayed or neutered. Our vet staff will communicate with you at a recheck examination as to the date of surgery.

The Day of Surgery:

- Adult cats – no food after 10 pm the night before surgery but may have water until 7 am on the morning of surgery.
- Kittens – Feed a small breakfast (1 tablespoon of canned food) and offer water until 7 am on the morning of surgery.
- All pets should receive fresh water at all times, even the morning of surgery.
- Our vet staff will communicate exact times and dates to drop off your foster for surgery (ideally we have you drop off fosters the day prior to surgery).

Cleaning up between litters

Once you've returned your group of kittens to Washington Area Humane Society for adoption, you must sanitize your foster room or area before you can take home a new batch of kittens. Kittens easily harbor parasites and viruses that can be deadly to other pets. For this reason, it is imperative that your foster room and supplies are cleaned and disinfected between each and every litter. Being conscientious about sterilization will help ensure that your next foster group will not catch any illnesses from the previous group of kittens.

Remove anything the kittens touched and clean it with soap and water to remove any residue or debris. Once items are cleaned and dried, you can then use a weak bleach solution to disinfect the items. For bleach to effectively kill germs, the items **MUST** be thoroughly cleaned prior to applying bleach solution. To make a bleach solution, we use one part bleach to 32 parts cold water then soak the items for 10-20 minutes of contact time. This is 1 cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water or ¼ cup of bleach to a 32oz spray bottle. **BLEACH SOLUTIONS WILL DESTROY FABRIC PATTERNS AND CARPETS.**

If you have items that can be washed in the dishwasher, please do so since the heat will disinfect those items. Plastic or metal items that need to be sterilized, such as litter boxes or plastic toys, must be first cleaned thoroughly with soap and water to completely clean the item. It can then be soaked in the bleach solution for 10-20 minutes and then rinsed off. Wash all bedding with bleach and hot water and throw away any toys that cannot be sterilized or washed.

Kitten-Proofing your Home

Foster kittens are tiny and cute, and just like children, they are also very curious. They will try to get into everything to explore, so you will need to kitten-proof your home. Here are some tips:

- House kittens in a space where temperature can be controlled.
- Put away any small items that a kitten can swallow. Vacuum floors.
- Hide any breakable items, block electrical outlets, and remove toxic plants.
- If your kittens are staying in a bathroom, make sure that the toilet lid is closed at all times.
- Block off any spaces that the kittens could crawl into and hide.
- When setting up your kitten room, be sure to place the litter boxes as far away from food and water as possible (depending on the age and mobility of the kitten).
- Clean the space using soap and water then disinfect the space by using a mild bleach solution (1 part bleach to 32 parts water; 1 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water).



Caring for Orphaned Kittens from Birth to Eight Weeks



Six Requirements for Kitten Care:

- Keep kittens warm.
- Provide kittens with adequate nutrition.
- Keep kittens clean.
- Weigh kittens daily in the morning at the same time each day.
- Provide socialization with people and litter mates. (Humans should wash hands first.)
- Do your best to protect them from infectious disease.

Body Warmth

We cannot overemphasize the need for a heat source in orphaned kittens. The queen would have provided a nice 100 - 103 degrees F (38 – 39C)

environment for them. Continue to provide a heat source for orphaned kittens until six weeks of age. Although kittens over four weeks old may start avoiding the warmed bed, if the room is cool, even older kittens will seek out a warm spot as they can still suffer from hypothermia.

Kittens under four weeks of age do not have the ability to thermoregulate and we must help them maintain body warmth. Providing a good environment for kittens means providing a warm, non-drafty room. A towel covering the crate or front of the cage/kennel prevents drafts and keeps kittens under 4 weeks of age nice and warm. Ideally, kitten rooms should be kept around 85 degrees F (or 29C), but we recognize that it isn't always practical. For older kittens, a good practice is to make sure a towel covers the entire bottom of the cage/crate and a bed made from a small litter box or cardboard box is available, so kittens do not sleep in their litter boxes. A kitten over 6 weeks of age only needs the availability of a warm, cozy spot. Cat beds are ideal for kittens over 6 weeks of age.

One method of supplemental heat is to place a warmed *Snuggle Safe* disk at the opening of the cage or crate. This disk then provides the needed warmth for 8 hours. Instructions for how long to heat the *Snuggle Safe* disk (depending on the wattage of the microwave), are printed on each disk. If you are unsure what wattage the microwave is, heat the disk for 4 minutes, then check the temperature with your hands. Heat in additional 2 minute increments until warm enough. Make sure it does not feel too hot before placing it in the cage or crate. Cover the heating disk with a soft folded towel or blanket so the kitten cannot directly contact the disk, which can potentially lead to painful, severe skin burns and skin sloughing.

If no heating disk is available, place a heating pad on the low setting under the crate or on the bottom of the cage, then place a soft folded towel or blanket between the kitten and the heating

pad. Check the heat source frequently to ensure it is not too hot or too cold. Make sure some area of the cage does not contain a disk or have a heating pad under it so kittens can move away from the heat source if too hot. Kittens also like a nice nest in their cage or crate so bundle them in a nice fleece that they can crawl in and out of.



Kitten Feeding & Weight Gain

Kitten Weight Gain

Kittens should be weighed at the same time every day with a kitchen or small postal scale in grams. They need to be weighed in grams, not ounces, since grams allow us to monitor weight much more accurately in tiny kittens. Daily weight gain is an indication that the diet is meeting the kittens' nutritional needs. **Weigh kittens at the same time daily to ensure adequate weight gain. Kittens should gain about 10-15 grams per day or 105 grams (about 4 ounces)**

per week. Lack of weight gain in a 24 hour period is cause for concern. Fosters must report any weight loss immediately or any poor weight gain (defined as no weight gain or less than 5 grams) for two consecutive days.

Keep in mind that the younger the kittens are, the more accustomed they are to staying latched onto their mom's nipple all the time and nursing small amounts periodically. Frequency is essential for digestion and allows the kitten's digestive system to handle small amounts at any one time. Additionally, the act of nursing stimulates digestion. If you notice a kitten not eating enough in one feeding, increase the frequency of feedings or go back to that kitten after the others finish eating to give it another chance to take more food.

Kitten Feeding

Guidelines for bottle feeding orphaned kittens:

- Kittens must be warm; they cannot digest properly if their body temperature is low.
- Combine 1 part powdered Pet Ag KMR formula to 2 parts warm water. Mix with a small whisk or fork until clumps are gone. Pour into a nursing bottle or place in a syringe. Do NOT deviate from this 1:2 ratio without veterinary permission.
- Note the volume before and after nursing each kitten.
- NEVER give them cow's milk.
- Do not switch formula brands.
- NEVER use pre-made store-bought KMR.
- We recommend placing a strip of scotch tape on the nursing bottle and using sharpie marker to label the date and time you made KMR. Store in refrigerator between feedings.
- To rewarm KMR, place in a warm water bath and stir bottle frequently until reheated (typically 1-3 minutes). Test temperature on your wrist. Discard any clotted KMR immediately.

- The powder formula must be mixed for feedings. It is important to closely follow mixing directions— one part KMR powder into two parts warm water— as it can cause diarrhea or constipation if not done correctly. When mixing, do not use a blender. Any reconstituted powder formula can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours. After that point, it must be discarded.
- Weak kittens who are not eating well or poorly nursing kittens should be fed more frequently. Some individual variations in frequency and amounts for each kitten may occur.

How to Feed an Orphaned Bottle Baby

1. **Always properly position a kitten for feeding. Kittens are most comfortable when positioned as they would be if nursing from their mom. To achieve this position, place the kitten on its stomach on a towel or cloth so the kitten can cling to the material and knead instinctually. If the kitten is acting frantic while nursing, try wrapping the kitten in a towel while feeding it.**
2. **NEVER** recline a kitten on its back while feeding as this can cause the kitten to aspirate, which means the kitten inhales the formula into their respiratory tract rather than swallowing. Aspiration can lead to a reactive pneumonia and can be fatal.
3. When bottle feeding, gently open the kitten's mouth with the tip of your finger and slip in the nipple. Once the kitten learns what is coming, it will search out the nipple enthusiastically. You will feel a vacuum effect when the kitten gets into suckle mode. The kitten's tongue forms a U shape around the nipple when it latches firmly onto the nipple. Watch for bubbles in the bottle during suckling and ears wiggling. These movements mean the kitten is suckling successfully. To keep air from getting into its stomach, hold the bottle at a 45-degree angle, keeping a slight pull on the bottle. Allow kittens to suckle at their own pace. If a kitten refuses to take the nipple or will not suckle, try rubbing it vigorously on the forehead or stroking its back much as its mom would. Using a clean toothbrush to stroke the kitten can simulate the feeling that it would get from the queen's tongue.
4. If you still cannot get it to nurse from the bottle, syringe feed the kitten to make sure it gets adequate nutrition. To syringe feed the kitten, mix up the KMR as usual and then draw it up in a syringe. Put a nipple on the end of the syringe and place the kitten in the proper feeding position. Try to get the kitten nursing by slowly pushing KMR out of the syringe and through the nipple into its mouth. Make sure it swallows the formula before you push more into its mouth.



5. If feeding multiple kittens, it will be easier to get them all fed the required amount if you feed each one multiple times during the session. To accomplish this, feed the first kitten until it stops nursing, then feed the second, and so on. After each has had one turn at the bottle, go back to the first and repeat the process. Usually after two or three nursing turns, a kitten has had enough for one feeding. When a kitten has had enough formula, it will usually get some bubbles around its mouth and its abdomen will be very rounded, almost pear-shaped.
6. Kittens that seem too weak to nurse may be hypothermic or have an underlying medical issue. A kitten refusing to nurse beyond the first few "getting the hang of it" times may indicate illness and it needs to be examined by a veterinarian. Contact our medical department during regular shelter hours or contact our on-call foster coordinator if this occurs after hours.
7. After each feeding session, give each kitten a full-body once over with a barely damp, warm washcloth or with a clean toothbrush. Use short strokes like its mom would use. This activity keeps the kitten's fur clean, teaches it how to groom and gives it needed socialization. Make sure the kitten is completely dry before placing it back in its cage (after stimulation).
8. Kittens naturally suckle on each other and on fingers, even after eating. Kittens suckling on each other excessively may be a sign that the frequency of feedings need increased. If littermate suckling becomes problematic, especially around the genital area, separate the kittens. Check each kitten's genitals to ensure suckling activity is not causing problems (redness, irritation, penis hanging out, etc.). Suckling on genitals can lead to the urethra swelling shut and having to be surgically reopened. If any of this occurs, contact our foster coordinator ASAP.
9. After feeding, burp your kitten by gently massaging their back.
10. After feeding, stimulate the kittens to urinate and/or defecate. Stimulate them with a warm damp cotton ball, paper towel or clean cloth.
11. Fill out the Daily Weight and Feeding Record.

Kitten Feeding Guidelines

Orphaned Kitten	Feeding and	Stomach Capacity	Chart	
Estimated Age	Weight (grams)	Stomach Capacity (mL)	Approx., number of feedings per day	Daily volume of KMR (mL)- 1 scoop formula + 2 scoops water
Newborn	50	2	12	13.5
	75	3	12	20
	100	4	12	27
	125	5	12	34
1 week old	150	6	12	40
	175	7	9-12	47
2 weeks old	200	8	9-12	54
	225	9	9-12	61
	250	10	9-12	68
	275	11	9-12	74
	300	12	9-12	81
3 weeks old	325	13	9-12	88
	350	14	7-10	95
	375	15	7-10	101
	400	16	6	108
	425	17	5	115
4 weeks old*	450	18	5	122
	475	19	4	128
	500	20	4	135
	525	21	4	142
5 weeks old*	550	22	4	148

* Kittens at this age are in the weaning process and they are frequently eating some solid food, which may decrease the amount of milk replacer required to meet daily calorific requirements. This may result in less frequent milk feedings.

Orphaned Kitten Feeding Issues (Issues, Consequences, and Prevention)

ISSUE	CONSEQUENCE	PREVENTION
Improper feeding position	Aspiration of milk into lungs	Position kitten with feet down (on belly) with head slight flexed and slightly stretched out
Milk too hot	Burn kitten's mouth/stomach	Check milk temperature to make sure it's between 97-100 F. Milk should feel slight warm when dripped onto back of wrist
Milk too cold	Chilling of kitten and slowing of heart rate and digestion resulting in gas formation, colic, bloating, regurgitation and aspiration	Check milk temperature to make sure it's between 97-100 F. Milk should feel slight warm when dripped onto back of wrist
Milk coming out too fast	Aspiration, vomiting, bloating	Make sure milk is coming out of nipple at a drip (1-2 drips per second) and not in a steady stream. Replace nipple if too fast.
Overfeeding (ad lib feeding)	Diarrhea, bloating, regurgitation, aspiration	Determine stomach capacity and feed accordingly. Refer to Kitten Feeding Guideline chart.
Nipple longer than 5/8"	Aspiration into lungs	Use a shorter nipple
Kitten not taking the bottle	Kitten may be chilled	Warm the kitten up slowly over one hour then offer KMR again
	Milk too cold	Warm milk to 97-100F
	Kitten may not be hungry	If kitten is alert and responsive and acting okay otherwise, wait 30 minutes and try feeding again
	Sick lethargic kitten	Try a drop of Karo syrup under tongue and seek veterinary attention ASAP
Unclean equipment	Diarrhea, vomiting, infection	Clean bottles and nipples thoroughly between feedings
Sour milk	Diarrhea, vomiting, infection	Store unmixed KMR in refrigerator. Store reconstituted KMR in a clean storage container in refrig for no longer than 24 hours. Discard any KMR older than 24 hours. To rewarm KMR, place in warm water bath until temp is 97-100 F.

Weaning



A kitten is ready for the weaning process when it bites the nipple often and forcefully and is able to lick formula from fingers. This typically occurs between 3-4 weeks of age. Continue bottle feeding through the weaning process to ensure kittens get adequate nutrition and are not overly stressed. Kittens who are weaning must be watched closely to ensure they are eating enough food. Weaning kittens are at higher risk for low blood sugar levels and death during this stage of life.

Making gruel

Mix 1/2 can of *pate-style* wet food (1.5-2oz) with one bottle of formula per kitten. You can add a little extra milk if the kittens seem to like a looser consistency. It's OK to make gruel in bulk and refrigerate it for 24 hours, but you'll need to warm it before offering it to the kittens. To reheat it, be sure to microwave for short increments and stir frequently to prevent hot spots. The gruel should be slightly warm to the touch. Do not offer hot gruel as this can burn a kitten's mouth.

1. The first step of the weaning process is to get the kitten to lap up formula from your finger and then a spoon. Once it masters this skill, put formula in a flat dish or shallow plastic lid.
2. Introduce the kitten to solid food by mixing warm *pate-style* canned kitten food and prepared kitten formula into a thin gruel. Gradually reduce the amount of formula mixed with canned food until the kitten is eating just the food over a period of 7-10 days.
3. Place the food in a shallow dish. Some kittens begin lapping right away; others prefer to lick the gruel from your fingers. Allow them to do so and slowly lower your finger to the dish. The kittens may bite the edge of the dish or walk in the food. Sometimes it takes two or more meals before they catch on.
 - If a kitten does not seem interested in the gruel, try gently opening the kitten's mouth and rubbing a little of the food on its tongue or teeth. Be patient, the weaning process takes time. As the kittens catch on, thicken the gruel.
 - When kittens are eating thicker gruel, they should always have fresh water available in a low spill-resistant bowl.
4. If a kitten does not eat gruel or eats only small amounts of gruel, always offer them a bottle of KMR at the end of each feeding. Many kittens will readily nurse during the weaning process.
5. **Kittens often walk through their food. Make sure the kittens are thoroughly cleaned after each meal. If kittens are not cleaned prior to placing in their cage, the food dries into their fur and becomes nearly impossible to remove. Fosters must DRY each kitten before putting them in their cages. Most weaning kittens are messy eaters so you may not be able to leave gruel or water in their cages at first. Wet kittens can rapidly lose body temperature and become ill.**

Stimulation for Urination and Defecation

Mother cats groom their kittens to stimulate urination and defecation on a regular basis. If you are acting as their foster parent, you get this important duty. Very young orphan kittens will not be able to urinate and defecate without your help, so this is a crucial part of neonatal kitten care. Before and after each feeding, gently rub the kitten on its lower abdomen, as well as the genitals and rectum with a cotton ball/pad dipped in warm water or a fragrance free baby wipe. Make sure to rub only enough to get the kitten to eliminate because overstimulation will irritate the area. Keep an eye out for chafing and lingering dirt and do not let the kitten get chilled. Kittens almost always urinate during each stimulation. They should defecate at least once daily, at least every 24-36 hours.



- Kittens need to be stimulated until about 3-4 weeks of age.
- Kittens should be stimulated before and after each feeding.
- Kitten should urinate every time and defecate at least once daily.

When kittens get to be 3–4 weeks old, they no longer need help eliminating body waste. Place a litter box in the crate or cage and fill with non-clumping litter. Clumping litter can create litter clumps in their stomachs and respiratory passages and should not be used with young kittens. At the same time as introducing a litter box, you may need to start providing some dry kitten food so the kittens can chew on the food and not the litter. When teaching a kitten to use a litter box, it is helpful to place their feces in the box, so they smell it in there. If you have a kitten that defecates on its towel instead of in the box, move the feces to the box instead of completely cleaning it out of the cage.

Steps to Bathe an Underage Kitten

1. Get a small sink or a basin ready with some warm water. If the kitten is really dirty, a small amount of Dawn or baby shampoo can be used in the water. Make the water a nice warm temperature like you were taking a bath.
2. To keep the kitten from getting chilled, have towels ready to immediately dry it off. If possible, warm the towels in the dryer beforehand.
3. You may want to wear long sleeves and gloves. Kittens may panic and start to scratch. Gently hold the kitten by the scruff and support its body with your other hand. This may help calm and control the kitten.
4. Give the kitten a quick but thorough bath to get any food and feces off them. If only the kitten's butt is dirty, then only immerse the butt, not the whole kitten.
5. Rinse the kitten off with warm water and immediately wrap it in a towel.
6. Rub vigorously to get the kitten dry. If the first towel becomes wet, switch to a clean, dry towel.
7. Keep the kitten with you and do not put it back until completely dry. If needed, wrap a heating pad around the outside of the towel while the kitten is drying.

Kitten Development

In the first few weeks of life, kittens are helpless and vulnerable. They are still developing basic reflexes, their hearing and vision are still not fully developed, and they are unable to properly control their body temperatures. They should therefore be confined to a nursery area. Kittens should not be allowed to mingle with your own pets.

During the first 3-4 weeks of life, kittens do not urinate or defecate on their own and require stimulation for elimination. Gently rub a warm cloth or cotton ball on the kitten's genital area and anus. This should be done before or after feeding.

Keeping the kittens clean from food and feces is vital for his or her health. If you notice your kitten has food, urine or feces on it, gently wipe the kitten down with a warm damp cloth or baby wipe. Be sure to dry the kitten well afterwards so that it does not become chilled.

<1 Week of age

- **Feeding:** Bottle feed orphan kittens 1-2 teaspoons of formula every 2 hours around the clock. If the queen is with the kittens, they should nurse vigorously and compete for nipples. Newborns can nurse up to 45 minutes at a time. Be sure to watch kittens nursing at least once a day, if mom cat will permit it. Check that everyone is nursing and that there isn't too much jockeying for position. A great deal of activity and crying could indicate a problem with milk flow, quality, or availability. When mom cat reenters the box, there should be some fussing for only a few minutes before everyone has settled down to serious nursing.
- **Environment:** The temperature of the nest box should be nice and warm: 85-90 degrees. Chilling is the number one danger to newborn kittens.
- **Behavior & Training:** At one week of age, the kittens should weigh 113 grams (4 oz) and should be handled minimally. Kittens will sleep 90% of the time and eat the other 10%.

1-2 weeks of age

- **Feeding:** Bottle feed "Pet Ag KMR" formula (1 scoop powder to 2 scoops water) every 2-3 hours until kittens are full but not bloated- usually kittens will consume at least 1/2 tablespoon of formula per feeding.
- **Environment:** Floor temperature of the nest box should be nice and warm: 80-85 degrees.
- **Behavior & Training:** Kittens at 2 weeks of age will weigh about 200 grams (about 7 ounces). Ear canals open between 5 and 8 days. Eyes will open between 8 and 14 days. They open gradually, usually starting to open from the nose outward. Short-haired cats' eyes will usually open earlier than those of Persian ancestry. All kittens are born with blue eyes, and initially no pupils can be distinguished from the irises - the eyes will appear solid dark blue. Healthy kittens will be round and warm, with pink skin. If you pinch them gently, their skin should spring back. When you pick a kitten up, it should wiggle energetically and when you put it down near the mom it should crawl back to her. Healthy kittens seldom cry. To determine the sex of the kittens, hold a kitten tummy-up in your hand. In females, the vulva is a vertical slit below the anus; they are very close together. In males, the penile opening is below the anus, but they are separated by a raised scrotal sac and thus seem far apart. It is easiest to see the differences between the sexes if you examine all the kittens and then find two who don't have matching equipment. Don't worry if it is still unclear; by the time the kittens are ready for permanent homes, their sex will be obvious.

2-3 Weeks of age

- **Feeding:** Bottle feed “Pet Ag KMR” formula (1 scoop powder to 2 scoops water) every 2-3 hours until kittens are full but not bloated- usually kittens will consume at least 1/2 tablespoon of formula per feeding.

- **Environment:** Floor temperature of the nest box should be nice and warm: 75-80 degrees.

- **Behavior & Training:** If there is a queen, she will begin to spend larger periods of time out of the nest, though she will not go far from it. Kittens will weigh about 280 grams (10 ounces). Their ears will become erect. Kittens begin to crawl around day 18 and can stand by day 21. Kittens will begin to play with each other, biting ears, tails, and paws even before their teeth have come in. Their milk teeth are cut during this period. Kittens learn to sit and touch objects with their paws.

Kittens begin their socialization phase - they will be strongly influenced by the behavior of their mother for the next six weeks. To further socialize kittens, increase the amount of handling, and get them accustomed to human contact. It is important not to expose them to anything frightening; children may seem intimidating and should be supervised closely while visiting to ensure gentle handling.

3-4 Weeks of age

- **Feeding:** Bottle feed “Pet Ag KMR” formula (1 scoop powder to 2 scoops water) every 3-4 hours until kittens are full but not bloated- usually kittens will consume at least 1 tablespoon (15 ml) of formula per feeding. At this stage kittens may start lapping from a bowl.

- **Environment:** Floor temperature of the nest box should be 70-75 degrees from this point onward.

- **Behavior & Training:** Kittens will weigh about 365 grams (13-16 ounces). Adult eye color will begin to appear but may not reach final shade for another 9 to 12 weeks. Kittens begin to see well, and their eyes begin to look and function like adult cats' eyes. Kittens will start cleaning themselves, though their mother will continue to do most of the serious cleaning.

4-5 Weeks of age

- **Feeding:** 3 tablespoons (1-1/2 oz.) formula every 8 hours. They can usually drink and eat from a saucer by 4 weeks. Weaning should be done gradually over a few weeks. Introduce them to solid food by offering warmed pate-style canned food, mixed with a KMR milk into a gruel, in a shallow saucer. You can begin by placing one kitten by the plate of canned food gruel and hoping for the best - if she starts eating, great! Her litter mates will probably copy her and do the same. But without mom around to show them, many kittens do not have a clue about feeding time. The kittens will walk in it, slide in it, and track it all over the place. Sometimes one will begin lapping right away, and in its anxiety to consume as much as it can, it will often bite the edge of the plate. Some will prefer to lick the gruel from your fingers. Some will start licking your finger after they sniff it. Slowly lower your finger to the plate and hold it to the food. The kittens need to learn to eat with their heads bent down. Sometimes it takes two or three meals before they catch on. If they do not seem interested enough to even sniff your finger, try gently opening the kittens' mouth and rubbing a little of the food on their teeth. Hopefully then they will start licking your finger. If they're still not getting the idea, you can take a syringe (without a needle) and squirt a small amount of gruel directly into the back of their mouths.

If there is a queen present, she will usually begin weaning by discouraging her kittens from nursing; however, some cats (particularly those with small litters) will allow nursing until the

kittens are old enough for permanent homes. Some nursing activity is the feline equivalent of thumb-sucking, that is, for comfort only. Even if kittens appear to be nursing, they may not be getting all the nutrition they need from mom. Make sure they are eating food and gaining weight. Be sure that the kittens have access to fresh water in a low, stable bowl.

- **Behavior & Training:** Kittens should weigh 450 grams (1 pound). Begin litter training at four weeks. Use an oblong cake pan as a litter box, fill with one inch of non-clumping litter or shredded newspaper. *Do not expose the kittens to the clumping variety of litter, as it is harmful if ingested.* After each feeding, place the kitten in the box, take his paw, and gently scratch the litter. Be patient! He may not remember to do this every time, or may forget where to find the litter box, but he will learn quickly. Be sure to give the kittens lots of praise when they first start using their boxes. Most will use it from the start, but like other babies, might make an occasional mistake. It is a good idea to confine the kittens to a relatively small space, such as a play pen, because the larger the area the kittens have to play in, the more likely they will forget where the litter box is. Keep the litter box clean and away from their food.

5-6 Weeks of age

- **Feeding:** Feed gruel 4 times a day. Thicken gruel gradually. Introduce dry food and water. If you are fostering a litter with their mother, continue weaning. Some kittens will not like canned food. For reluctant eaters, try mixing any meat-flavored human baby food with a little water. The meat flavor is often more appealing to the picky eaters. *Be sure the brand you get does not contain onion powder as this ingredient can be hazardous to kittens.*

- **Behavior & Training:** Kittens should weigh 550-700 grams. At about five weeks, kittens can start to roam around the room, under supervision. The testicles of male kittens will become visible. The strongest, most curious kitten will figure out how to get out of the nest. The others will quickly follow.

- **Play with your kittens daily!** It is a good idea to wear long sleeves and pants, as they can play roughly, and their claws are sharp. If you sit on the floor they will play "King of the Mountain," using your knees and shoulders as vantage points. This game is lots of fun and good exercise for them. Some kittens may be fearful at first; do not force yourself upon them. You can get them used to your presence by sitting in the middle of the room making phone calls; this way they hear your voice but do not feel threatened. Make them an important part of your household activities; accustom them to the sounds of the TV, vacuum cleaner, and other household sounds.

6-7 Weeks of age

- **Feeding:** Kittens should be eating canned and dry food well. Feed the kittens at least three meals daily. If one kitten appears food-possessive, use a second dish and leave plenty of food out so that everyone is eating. Bear in mind that a kitten at this age has a stomach roughly the size of an acorn, so, although they may not eat much at a single sitting, they like to eat at frequent intervals throughout the day.

- **Behavior & Training:** By this time, you have "mini-cats." They will wash themselves, use scratching posts, play games with each other, their toys, and you, and many will come when you call them. Be sure to reintroduce them to their litter box after meals, during play sessions, and after naps. These are the usual times that kittens need to use the litter box.

7-8 Weeks of age

- **Feeding:** Offer wet food 3-4 times a day (most kittens will be eating a little over one 5.5oz can of food per day). Leave down a bowl of dry kibble and water for them to eat and drink at will. If you have a litter with a mom cat, she should only be allowing brief nursing sessions, if any. DO NOT feed the kittens table scraps.

8+ Weeks of age

- **Feeding:** Offer wet food 2 times a day. Leave down a bowl of dry kibble and water for them to eat and drink at will.
- **Behavior & Training:** By the end of the 8th week, kittens should weigh 2 pounds each. If all the kittens weigh two pounds, take a deep breath, and prepare yourself to find them homes or return them to the facility where they came from. They are also old enough for early spay or neuter. If you have the queen and will be using two cat carriers, be sure to put at least one kitten in the same carrier with the mom. She may not be able to count, but she will definitely know the difference between some and none.



Socialization and Play for Kittens

Allow all kittens to acclimate to their new environment before trying to play with them. This usually takes just one day.

Outgoing kittens can be cuddled and played with. Shy kittens need to have many short encounters to encourage them that humans are friendly. Hold shy kittens calmly, stroking them and talking to them in a comforting voice. Put the kitten down before he or she starts squirming. If you

repeat this often – perhaps only 30 seconds at a time – shy kittens will begin to love the experience.

Fearful kittens will run away from you when you try to approach them. Simply sit on the floor calmly and wait for them to come to you. Let them become accustomed to your presence and, when they finally approach, use a calming voice and stroke them gently. You can also try tempting them with play toys like feather teasers.

Not all kittens will grow into cats that love to be cuddled and held. This is ok! Although some people want affectionate cats, others prefer independent pets.

Try a variety of toys (balls, squeaky toys, feather toys, etc.) to see which ones your foster kittens enjoy. Cat toys don't have to be fancy or expensive. Cats often enjoy playing with something as simple as a paper bag (remove the handles for safety) or a box with holes cut in the sides. Don't leave your foster kittens alone with any toys that could be easily ingested or cause harm to them— like string toys, yarn and Da Bird (feathers dangling from a string and wand). Toys such as ping-pong balls and toilet paper tubes are safe. Also, it may seem cute, but discourage your foster kittens from play-biting your hands and feet. This is something that adopters may not find desirable.

Fostering Moms and Kittens



Mother cats, also known as “queens,” need to be in a calm environment so that they can be stress-free and feel like they are keeping their kittens safe. Sometimes, stress can cause a mother cat to become aggressive or to not care for her babies properly. With that in mind, choose a private and quiet room of your home, away from the daily activities of your family, in which to situate the mother cat and her kittens.

It's also important that they be kept away from other pets in the home. Other pets can be perceived as a threat by the mother cat and cause her to act aggressively to protect her young. If you have children and an active home, it may be best to foster when the kittens are four weeks or older. Sometimes mother cats will behave less defensively if their kittens are older.

Bringing Everyone Home

Set up your fostering room before you bring the mother cat and her kittens home. You should put the litter box as far away from the mother cat's food and water bowls as possible and provide a couple of different safe places where she can care for her kittens. A dark area equipped with a whelping box is ideal.

A whelping box is a box that is large enough for the mother cat to lie on her side slightly away from her kittens with all of the kittens in the box with her. The box should have sides high enough to prevent the kittens from wandering away, but low enough so it's easy for the mother cat to come and go as she needs to. Lining the bottom of the box with puppy pads topped with newspapers will help absorb moisture. You can place an easy-to-clean blanket on top of the absorbent materials to give the mother cat and kittens a soft place to lie on. Please keep all these materials dry so that the kittens are not chilled by dampness. Do not place straw, hay, or shavings in the area where the mother and kittens are kept.

When you bring your foster kittens and their mom home, put them all in the fostering room and close the door, allowing the mom to explore on her own. Give her a couple of hours before you enter her room and don't be alarmed if it takes a few days for her to stop hiding.



Mom's Care of Her Kittens

The momma cat should take care of her kittens by herself for at least three to four weeks before she starts the weaning process for her babies. Each momma cat that you foster will be slightly different in her level of attentiveness, but there are three basic stages of nursing (see below). If for any reason your momma cat is not performing one of the listed functions, please notify the foster coordinator right away to evaluate whether the mom has a medical concern that we need to address.

Kittens are born blind, but they can feel their mother's heat and seek her out to begin nursing within two hours of being born. Mother cats should be lying on their sides to ensure that their kittens can find the nipples for nursing.

Here are three stages of nursing:

1. 1-2 weeks old: The mother cat initiates nursing by licking her kittens to wake them up and curling her body around them. After she wakes all of her babies, the kittens search for a short time period and then quickly latch on.
2. 2-3 weeks old: The kittens' eyes and ears begin to function, and they start to explore beyond the nesting area. This is when the kittens start interacting and playing with their mother. At this age, the kittens start to initiate some of the nursing and momma should comply by lying in the nursing position.
3. 4-5 weeks old: The kittens begin weaning and, in turn, the mother cat no longer initiates any nursing. If the mother cat still allows the kittens to nurse, it will be initiated by the kittens and can be lateral or upright nursing.

Occasionally, mom cats develop mastitis when their kittens stop nursing and begin to eat on their own. Mastitis occurs when the mammary glands inflame and harden, creating a very painful infection for the mother cat and causing symptoms such as a fever and listlessness. If you think your mother cat may have mastitis, call the foster coordinator on the next business day. This is not an emergency condition.

The mother cat will groom and lick her babies frequently for the first two to four weeks. She will stimulate her kittens to pee and poop and will generally consume the fecal matter and urine. As the babies become more mobile, they will start to leave the nest and deposit urine and feces nearby, which is a good time to start introducing a couple of low-sided litter boxes (disposable tend to work best).

To ensure that the mother cat has enough to eat, give her access to both wet and dry food (kitten food is okay only when nursing) at all times. Food intake for a nursing mother can be two to four times the amount eaten by a cat who's not nursing.

When fostering a momma cat, it is very important to observe her behavior daily and watch her interactions with her kittens to spot any problems. Unfortunately, 8 percent of kittens pass away because of inadequate maternal care. This can happen for many different reasons, some of which are beyond our control.

Problem Behaviors in Momma Cats

Maternal neglect. Sometimes a mother cat stops providing care to one or all of her kittens. The neglect may be because of a birth defect or weakness in the kitten; she may just be trying to follow nature's course, focusing her attention on the stronger kittens. Neglect may also happen because she is inexperienced or she's in a stressful environment. Either way, that's why it's very important to make daily observations to ensure that she is caring for her babies. If she will let you handle the kittens, you should weigh each kitten once a day to ensure that they are gaining weight. If you notice that she is spending all of her time away from the kittens, is not grooming or nursing them frequently, or doesn't respond to their cries, please call the shelter right away.



Maternal aggression toward other animals. Aggressive behavior directed at other animals is common and expected from mother cats because they have a maternal instinct to protect their young at all times. With that in mind, please do not try to introduce her to the other animals in your home. As mentioned above, the mother cat and her kittens should have a quiet room of their own away from all other pets so that she and her babies can always feel safe. If she has seen another animal and becomes stressed or aggressive, it is very important to leave her alone and not try to comfort her. Give her 20 minutes or so to calm down and then check on her.

Maternal aggression toward people. Sometimes mother cats will act aggressively toward people. These behaviors may include hissing, growling, swatting, and biting. Again, the mother is merely trying to protect her young. We evaluate mom cats for these behaviors before sending them into foster homes, but sometimes the behaviors develop later. If you have a mother exhibiting these behaviors, do not try to "correct" the behavior with a spray bottle or any type of punishment. She is only acting out of instinct to protect her babies and you could cause her aggressive behavior to escalate. Contact the foster coordinator at the first sign of any of the above behaviors so we can assess the situation and decide on the safest option for momma and her babies.

Separating Kittens and Moms

If all of your foster animals, mom included, are healthy and friendly, we have no reason to separate mom from kittens before they are eight weeks old. But there are a few medical or behavioral reasons for separating them earlier than eight weeks:

- As mentioned above, if the mother cat is showing signs of maternal neglect and is no longer caring for her kittens, the veterinarian may decide to separate her from her kittens.
- If the mother cat is semi-feral or very under socialized, we may decide to separate the kittens once they are eating on their own consistently and no longer need to nurse (around four to five weeks old). Separating them would prevent the kittens from learning feral behaviors from their mother and help them to become socialized, which increases their chances of finding forever homes.

- If there is a medical concern about the mom or babies, a veterinarian could make the decision to separate the kittens from the mother cat.
- The kittens' best chance at survival is to stay with their mom. Please do not separate your foster kittens from their mom for any reason, or attempt to supplement the mother's milk with formula, without consulting the foster coordinator.



Scheduling Appointments for your Foster Kittens

During the time that you have foster kittens, you'll need to make a number of appointments- to pick up and drop off your kittens, take them in for vaccines and spay/neuter, and pick up supplies. At the time of pick up, you will receive a schedule of when the kittens will need additional care for vaccines and deworming. Please note that all appointments, including your pickup and drop-off appointments, should be scheduled at least

24 hours in advance. Contact our vet department to schedule appointments by calling 724-470-9712.

Picking up and returning your foster kittens

To pick up and return kittens, simply schedule an appointment by calling 724-470-9712. When you speak with the staff about picking up some kittens, she will assess what age of kittens will work best with your lifestyle. Depending on the age of the kittens, pick-up is preferably same-day.

Scheduling vaccines for your kittens

We vaccinate all kittens every 2 weeks starting at 4 weeks of age. Vaccination appointments are scheduled at least 24 hours in advance by calling 724-470-9712. Appointments will typically be scheduled on Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday from 2pm to 4pm, however exceptions can be made when possible to fit the foster's schedule. All vaccination appointments are at Washington Area Humane Society.

Scheduling vet appointments for your kittens

For non-emergency situations, please understand that our veterinary team can book quickly and may not be available for same-day appointments. We ask that you schedule basic non-emergency appointments at least 24 hours in advance. To request a vet appointment, call our vet department at 724-470-9712. When you call to set up an appointment, our team will discuss your availability and then schedule the appointment. If you need refills on any medication, food or litter supplies, please tell our team at the time of scheduling!

Recognizing Illness & When to Call a Veterinarian

If you have a sick kitten, you should always contact our medical department (see page 1) and discuss the problem. They may advise you to come in or provide advice over the phone.

If a foster kitten should unfortunately die, you should keep the body cool but not frozen and transport it to the shelter within 24 hours.

ABNORMAL SIGNS TO WATCH FOR IN A KITTEN:

- Runny discharge from the eyes or nose
- Lack of appetite
- Lethargy (lack of energy)
- Diarrhea lasting more than 3 or 4 feedings
- Vomiting
- Weight loss or lack of weight gain
- Coughing and sneezing
- Swollen eyes or eyes held closed
- Lack of bowel movement for more than 24-36 hours or straining in the litter box



EMERGENCIES REQUIRING IMMEDIATE VETERINARY ATTENTION

- Continuous diarrhea (with or without blood)
- Continuous vomiting
- Bleeding of any kind nose, urine, stool
- Any trauma: dropped, limping, stepped on, unconscious.
- Difficulty breathing.
- A kitten that does not respond or that hasn't eaten for more than a day.
- Seizing

Specific Disease Conditions in Kittens

Diarrhea

Diarrhea is very common in kittens and be caused by many things including parasites, viruses (like panleukopenia), bacteria, food changes, stress, overfeeding, and other causes. If the diarrhea is mild and the kitten is otherwise alert and playful, you can try giving it a little less food for 1-2 days. Kittens can become dehydrated very quickly with diarrhea. When a kitten has diarrhea, it important to monitor them very closely. If the diarrhea is severe, lasts more than 3 or 4 feedings, or contains blood or obvious parasites, you should call our medical department and bring in as much as possible of the fresh feces in a Ziploc bag.

One of the causes of diarrhea that may be detected by microscopic examination is *Coccidia*. This single celled parasite is most common in kittens, but occasionally found in adults. Treatment will consist of 5-14 days of medication in liquid form. If the symptoms of coccidiosis

persist following treatment, an effort will be made to identify other possible causes of diarrhea. *Coccidiosis* can be spread to other cats, but often does not cause clinical symptoms. It does not spread to people. IF YOUR FOSTER IS DIAGNOSED WITH COCCIDIA, YOU WILL BE SENT HOME WITH DISPOSABLE LITTER BOXES FOR THE COURSE OF COCCIDIA TREATMENT.

Worms

Several large worms can be found on the feces of cats, although few actually cause diarrhea. Kittens can get roundworms ("spaghetti") from their mothers. These worms can come up in vomit or stool. The cysts of roundworms can persist for years in soil and be spread to other cats or human children, so it is important to deworm cats as directed by a veterinarian or shelter medical director.

Cats can also get whipworms, which actually do produce diarrhea. Even if large worms are not seen in the feces, sometimes microscopic examination can indicate the cysts.

Cats will sometimes have tapeworms either on their feces or anus ("rice"). These are spread by fleas or by eating rodents. Although they are not causes of diarrhea and cause relatively little harm, most people seek medication to get rid of the tapes.



The bacteria *Salmonella*, *Campylobacter*, *Clostridium*, and others are all implicated in kitten diarrhea and all require microscopic examination and/or bacterial culture for diagnosis. These and some other fecal pathogens can be spread to people if you are not careful enough with hand washing. Most bacteria respond to antibiotics prescribed by a veterinarian. **WASH YOUR HANDS!**

Finally, there are a number of viral causes of diarrhea, with *panleukopenia* being the most devastating. If panleukopenia is suspected, you may have a number of kittens die and you may have to temporarily suspend fostering until the kitten areas can be thoroughly disinfected with bleach. Older cats are rather well-protected with commercial panleukopenia vaccines.

Ear Mites

Ear mites are tiny parasites which live in the ear canal. They cause intense itching, noted by scratching behind the ears and violent head shaking. Inside the ears you may see a crumbly, dark brown discharge, which may smell bad (the discharge closely resembles coffee grounds). Ear mites are contagious to other cats and can be treated with ear drops.



Fading Kittens

Once in a while, one or more kittens in a litter that were healthy and vigorous at birth will begin to "fade" after a week or two of life. They will stop growing, begin to lose weight, stop nursing and crawling. They may cry continuously and lose the ability to stay upright. The mother cat may push them out of the nest, where they often chill and starve to death. Kittens fade very quickly - they will not last 48 hours without veterinary care, and probably will not recover even with intensive care.

There is no clear cause or reason for this condition - it has been linked to birth defects, environmental stress, and infectious disease. Early veterinary treatment is imperative, but even with tube feeding, rehydration and monitoring, many, if not most fading kittens will die.

Feline Leukemia (FeLV) & Feline Immunodeficiency (FIV)

FeLV and FIV are retroviruses cats get from other cats (or from their moms). In the early stages, infected cats appear healthy but over months to years, they develop severe, ultimately fatal disease. The blood test for FeLV can be performed at any time and will be helpful for deciding which kittens should be fostered or if kittens need to be isolated. On the other hand, testing for FIV is more difficult until a kitten is six months old, although tests run at 6-8 weeks provide useful preliminary information.

Fleas

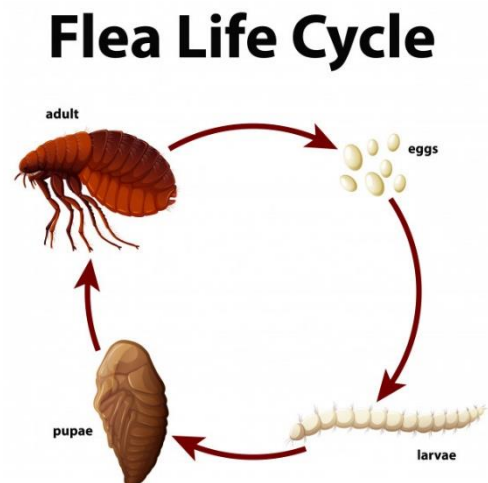
Fleas are insects that love to feed on kittens. Although each flea only consumes a small drop of blood, fleas commonly attack in large numbers and *an infestation can literally lead to anemia and even death*. It is essential that your home be free of fleas before bringing home a small kitten.

The Life Cycle of the Flea

Adult fleas lay eggs, which usually drop off their animal host and accumulate in alarming numbers where the animal spends a lot of time. Dog houses, carpets, sofas, and other such places are often good nesting grounds for flea eggs. Under ideal conditions, eggs hatch in 1 - 2 days but can take as long as 3 - 4 weeks before hatching.

Flea eggs hatch into a larval stage which feeds on debris and organic matter and lives freely in the environment outdoors or in your home. Larvae can be effectively treated with concentrated insecticides.

The larvae can develop to pupae and into adult fleas in 5 days. Adult fleas prefer furry animals but may feed on



people. The common flea is hardy; it can live up to 4 months without feeding and has a life span of up to 2 years. Fleas feed on their animal hosts but spend most of their time off the animal. For every flea that you see, there are probably at least 100 lurking somewhere else in your home. Fortunately, the adult flea is the most sensitive to flea products.

Good Reasons to Control Fleas

Fleas harbor tapeworms. Most dogs and cats will eat a flea or two while grooming themselves and repeatedly become infested with tapeworms. A large part of tapeworm control involves flea control.

Animals may be allergic to fleas. A flea bite sets off a cycle of constant itching and scratching, and your dog or cat will begin to lose hair, especially around the tail. Scratching can severely damage an animal's skin, causing hot spots. A single flea bite can cause an allergic reaction, so flea control is essential in treating the affected dog or cat.

How to Control Fleas

If your foster kitten already has fleas, it is important to remove them without harming the cat. One safe way to remove fleas from very young kittens (less than 6 - 8 weeks) is daily flea combing. For all kittens frequent combing with a flea comb is extremely important. Keep a jar of soapy water near you to dip the comb into as it comes off the cat full of fleas. A combination of water and dish soap is best.

If the kitten is less than 6-8 weeks old and heavily infected, a flea bath may be necessary to save its life. The kitten must be warm at all times. Use warm water and immediately towel it dry afterwards. Then follow up with a warm hair dryer until the kitten is completely dry. Use a shampoo labeled as safe for kittens.

If the kitten is more than 4 weeks old and weighs more than 2 pounds, then a Capstar can be given orally up to once a day to kill adults fleas. This product starts to work within 90 minutes and is effective against adult fleas for 4-6 hours. It does not have any effect on, eggs, larva, or other adult fleas in the kitten's environment.

If the cat is older than 8 weeks, we supply fosters with a topical once monthly flea/tick preventative.

All bedding needs to be washed in hot soapy water as soon as fleas are spotted. The most effective way to remove eggs from the house is by using a vacuum cleaner. The vacuum bag should first be treated by placing flea powder, a piece of flea collar, or flea spray inside it. The bag should be emptied immediately after vacuuming.

To kill adults and larvae, the house can be treated with flea foggers or sprays, boric acid products, or other commercial products.

We recommend fosters speak with their regular veterinarian about appropriate flea and tick prevention for their personal pets. We recommend that all pets are on year round flea and tick prevention.

Upper Respiratory Tract Infection (URI)



URI is, unfortunately, common in animal shelters. It is caused by airborne viruses and bacteria which are contagious and spread very quickly through litters and other animals.

SIGNS OF URI TO WATCH OUT FOR:

- Sneezing and discharge from eyes or nose
- Congested breathing
- Loss of appetite
- Lethargy
- Dehydration
- Eye(s) being held closed

Vomiting

If your kitten is vomiting, it is possible that the kitten is eating his meals too quickly. You should watch him when he eats and not allow him to eat too much too quickly. If your kitten vomits 2-3 times in a row, please contact the foster coordinator.

For Emergency protocol, please see page 1 and 2!