

Neonatal Kitten Care

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
NEONATAL KITTEN CARE	2
General Information	2
Birth Weight	2
Colostrum	3
Temperature	3
Eyes and Ears	3
EMERGENCY CARE	4
General Information	4
Danger of Chilling	4
Warming a Chilled Kitten	5
Emergency Supplement	6
Dehydration	6
Subcutaneous Injection	6
NUTRITIONAL CARE	8
General Information	8
Computing the Formula	8
Feeding Methods	9
Tube Feeding	10
Bottle Feeding	11
Feeding with Eyedropper	12
Feeding Routine	12
Feeding Problems	13
Overfeeding	13
Underfeeding	13
EXTERNAL PARASITES	14
General Information	14
Fleas	14
Lice	15
Ear Mites	15
INTERNAL PARASITES	16
General Information	16
Roundworms	16
Hookworms	17
Tapeworms	17
Giardia	17
Coccidia	17
Treatment	17

NEONATAL KITTEN DISEASE	18
<i>General Information</i>	18
FVR	18
FCV	18
URI	18
FeLV	19
FIP	20
FUNGAL DISEASE	20
<i>General Information</i>	20
<i>Treatment</i>	20
KITTEN MORTALITY	21
INDEX	22
CHARTS	24

NEONATAL KITTEN CARE

This handbook was developed by Joan E. Bush as a response to the need for trained individuals to care for abandoned kittens found in San Francisco each year. Many of these kittens were either euthanized or left to die on the streets because there were no adequate resources available to help them.

The program's intend was to bring together individuals interested in the welfare of San Francisco's abandoned kittens. Unfortunately, the program no longer exists. Alley Cat Allies has gotten permission to reprint the Neonatal Kitten Care handbook and distribute it because this problem exists nation wide.

This handbook is a well written, comprehensive tool which can be used to teach individuals basic information regarding the care of a newly found abandoned kitten, and the ongoing care required for her sustenance and growth. The skills developed by individuals would minimize the need for extensive veterinarian involvement.

Caring for abandoned neonatal kittens is time consuming, and at times, difficult work. However, participating in a process that turns fragile abandoned newborns into healthy adoptable kittens, is an enriching experience. It is hoped that many individuals will want to participate in this process, and that together, we can substantially reduce the numbers of abandoned neonatal kittens that die needlessly from lack of care.

NEONATAL KITTEN CARE

General Information

The term neonatal refers to kittens from birth to three weeks of age. Kittens are very fragile during these first weeks. They are totally dependent upon their mother for protection, warmth and nutrition.

Healthy newborns cared for by their mother are a vision of contentment. They spend 90% of their time sleeping against her warmth, and 10% of their time eagerly nursing.

Most mother cats normally take excellent care of their litters. They are meticulous about keeping the nest and each kitten clean. They are extremely protective of their newborns, and will move them to a new location if they are threatened.

Abandoned neonatal kittens present a very different picture. Cold, hungry, and unprotected, they cry plaintively for their mother. Denied the warmth of her presence, they eventually become comatose. Abandoned neonatal kittens, unable to sustain their body temperature, slip into a coma and die.

Birth Weight

A healthy kitten will weigh three to four ounces at birth. Kittens should begin to gain weight rapidly a few days after birth, and should double their weight by one week. A continuous weight gain of approximately $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce a day is one indication of a healthy kitten.

If a kitten drops 10 percent of initial birth weight during the first 48 hours of life, and does not start to regain by 72 hours, the kitten is not doing well and should be closely monitored.

The following chart will give you an indication of what is considered normal weight ranges for a kitten.

Average Kitten Weight

Age in Days	Weight
1	$2 \frac{1}{2} - 4 \frac{3}{4}$ oz.
5	3 - 7 oz.
10	$4 \frac{1}{2} - 9 \frac{3}{4}$ oz.
15	6 - $11 \frac{3}{4}$ oz.
20	$7 \frac{1}{2} - 14 \frac{1}{2}$ oz.
25	8 - $16 \frac{3}{4}$ oz.

Colostrum

The first milk that a kitten receives is colostrum. Colostrum is a protein substance high in antibodies that protect the kitten from illness during its first few weeks of life. The kitten absorbs these proteins through the intestines during the first 24 to 36 hours after birth. The degree of immunity received through colostrum depends upon the antibody level in the blood of the mother cat. A kitten that does not have colostrum in this time frame is seriously immuno compromised, and therefore extremely vulnerable.

Temperature

The average rectal temperature of a one-day-old newborn is between 92 and 97 degrees F. The kitten's temperature at 2 to 21 days old will be 96 to 100 degrees F.

The neonatal kitten does not have the ability to constrict its skin blood vessels. Because of this, the kitten cannot retain body heat and is dependent on the mother cat to keep warm.

Eyes and Ears

All kittens are born with closed eyes and closed ear canals. They can neither see nor hear during the first few days of life. They find their way to their mother by sensing the heat generated by her body. Kittens find their way to a nipple by sense of smell and tactile sensations.

The ear canals will begin to open at 5 to 8 days of life. Eyes begin to open at 8 days and are completely open at 14 days. When kittens are three weeks old, they will have developed complete sight and sound orientation.

Neonatal Kitten Care

All kittens are born with blue eyes. Their true colors appear when they are three weeks old.

EMERGENCY CARE

General Information

One of the most important aspects of caring for a kitten is *keeping good records*. You will want to chart the kitten's initial weight, take notes on the kitten's general appearance, and accurately chart the feeding schedule with the time and amount of formula fed.

The more detailed your notes, the more information you will have available to you for decisions you may have to make regarding a kitten's health.

Keeping the kitten and its environment clean is essential. If you do not wash your hands before and after working with a kitten, you could transmit viruses and bacteria to healthy cats or kittens. The utensils you use for feeding and medicating must also be thoroughly cleaned and sterilized.

If you will be caring for a neonatal kitten in your home, it is helpful to have the supplies you will need before hand. The following is a list of items you will need:

Nursing Bottles	Cotton Balls	KMR
Gram Scale	Q Tips	Heating Pad
Room Thermometer	Pedialyte	Baby Rectal Thermometer

Danger of Chilling

The greatest single danger to the neonatal kitten is *chilling*. A kitten that is separated from its mother will not live long. Apart from her warmth, the kitten has no way to maintain a normal body temperature. Prolonged exposure to cold results in a drop of body temperature (hypothermia). As the kitten's body temperature drops the blood sugar level of the kitten falls below normal (hypoglycemia). The kitten's internal organs begin a systematic shutdown. The colder the temperature the sooner the kitten will lapse into a coma and die.

Most kittens that are found outside have already lost essential body heat. If a kitten feels cold to the touch, hypothermia has set in. A kitten's condition is critical at this point.

Neonatal Kitten Care

Although it is vital to warm a kitten, care must be taken to avoid warming too rapidly. **Dehydration, shock and death can result from warming too quickly.**

Warming a Chilled Kitten

You can use the following techniques to warm a chilled kitten. When you are outside and find a newborn:

Place the kitten under your coat or sweater. An armpit makes an excellent temporary incubator.

Gently begin massaging the kitten to restore circulation.

When you are at home:

Wrap a hot water bottle in a towel and place it next to the kitten.

or

*Place a heating pad down one side of a cardboard box and half way underneath the box. Place a towel in the bottom of the box. Place the heating pad on the low temperature setting. **Make sure the heating pad does not cover the entire bottom of the box. The kitten must have room to move away from the heating pad if it is too hot.***

or

*A small "Pet Taxi" (a plastic pet carrier) with a heating pad placed down the back and partially under the bottom is an excellent incubator. Place the heating pad to the low temperature setting. Place a towel in the bottom of the plastic carrier. **Make sure there is sufficient room for the kitten to move away from the heat.***

The temperature in the area the kitten is kept must be maintained at 85 to 90 degrees F. during the first week of the kitten's life. The temperature should be lowered 5 degrees F. each week until 70 degrees F. is reached. A reliable room thermometer is essential to insure the temperature is maintained at a correct level.

Emergency Supplement

Food is essential to the survival of the newly found kitten. However, a kitten is unable to digest food when it is chilled or cold. ***Never feed a kitten that is chilled or cold - this will kill the kitten!***

Administering .01 cc of "Karo Syrup Light" orally or by rubbing it on the gums of a hypoglycemic kitten will raise the blood sugar level of the kitten, and help stabilize the kitten while you are warming it. If you do not have karo syrup, you can mix a solution of water and sugar in equal parts and administer .01 cc to the kitten. Nutro-Cal is also effective when used for hypoglycemic conditions and administered at .01 cc. Nutro-Cal can be purchased at most pet stores.

You will serve the kitten its first formula once its body temperature has returned to normal and its internal organs are once again functioning normally.

Dehydration

Dehydration is an excessive loss of water and electrolytes (minerals such as chloride, sodium and potassium). It is caused by insufficient milk intake, prolonged vomiting or diarrhea and hypothermia. A dehydrated kitten requires immediate care.

The best way to detect dehydration is to pick up a fold of skin along the kitten's back. When you release the skin it should spring back into shape. If it remains in a ridge, the kitten is dehydrated.

If a kitten is severely dehydrated it should receive a subcutaneous injection of Ringer's lactate (a balanced electrolyte solution). It is not difficult to learn how to give subcutaneous fluid injections, and it will often save a kitten's life. The fluid should be **warm** not hot when given.

For less severe cases of dehydration an electrolyte solution can be given orally. Pedialyte is an electrolyte solution used for human babies that are dehydrated. It is sold at drug stores and grocery stores in the baby section. Administered at 1 cc three times a day to a kitten Pedialyte helps maintain the kitten's electrolyte balance while the source of the dehydration is being corrected.

Subcutaneous Injection

Subcutaneous injections of electrolyte solutions are given to kittens under the skin, not into the muscle (intramuscular). A subcutaneous injection given to a kitten using a "butterfly needle" causes little discomfort to the kitten. The butterfly needle is a very small needle with a long tube that attaches to a syringe. The kitten can move around while you are administering the electrolyte solution.

Neonatal Kitten Care

The amount of electrolyte solution administered will be determined by the degree of dehydration, and the kitten's weight. The following picture demonstrates how to use a butterfly when rehydrating a kitten.

NUTRITIONAL CARE

General Information

Neonatal kittens have only a minimal amount of subcutaneous fat. Frequent feedings are required to maintain adequate blood sugar levels and provide energy for metabolism. Sufficient intake of formula must also offset the large amount of dilute urine and water loss resulting from immature kidneys. Frequent feedings spread out over a day's time will help prevent overloading of the kidneys and digestive system.

Cow's milk is an inadequate substitute for the milk received by a kitten from its mother. The calcium-to-phosphorous ratio and lactose levels are too high in cow's milk. The energy, fat levels and protein are too low to provide adequate growth in a kitten. Human baby formula is also not a good substitute as it provides less than 50% of the protein and fat required for a kitten's growth.

There are a number of commercial feline formulas on the market that closely match the nutrients received by kittens in their mother's milk. You can purchase these products at most pet stores, or through a veterinarian.

Milk replacer products available in the Bay Area are KMR (Pet-Ag), Just Born (Farnam), and Nurturall (Veterinarian Products Laboratories). These products are available in liquid and powder form.

Computing the Formula

The kitten's energy level requirements dictate how much food is to be fed. Kittens require 380 kilocalories per kilogram at birth. To calculate the daily amount of milk replacer to feed:

1. Divide the kitten's weight in grams by 1000 to determine the weight in kilograms.
2. Multiply the answer from step one by 380 kilocalories. This amount is the caloric requirement for sustaining the kitten's life on a daily basis.
3. Divide the amount needed by the kitten by the caloric value of the commercial formula. Multiply this answer by the quantity of formula in millimeters that supplies the specific caloric value.
4. Take the total for the day and divide it by the number of feedings per day.

Are you confused? The following chart will enable you to quickly assess the kitten's daily nutritional needs.

Neonatal Kitten Care

KMR			
Age in Weeks	Average Weight	CC of KMR per Day	Feedings per Day
1	4 Oz.	32 cc	6
2	7 Oz.	56 cc	4
3	10 oz.	80 cc	3
4	13 Oz.	104 cc	3
5	1 lb.	128 cc	3

According to this chart, a 4 Oz. kitten would be served approximately 5 cc of formula 6 times a day.

The two other commercial milk replacers, Just Born and Nurturall, have daily feeding schedules printed on their products.

If you are unable to obtain a commercially prepared milk substitute, you can use the following recipe as a temporary milk replacement:

- 2/3 cup homogenized whole milk
- 3 raw egg yolks (*organic or "free range" eggs are best*)
- 1 tablespoon corn oil
- 1 dropper liquid pediatric vitamin

Small and weak kittens do best if they are fed every four hours for the first four days. If they are unable to take the amount of formula scheduled for each feeding, the number of feedings should be increased, and the amount of formula decreased at each feeding.

It is important to understand that formula intake is limited by the size of the stomach. A kitten's stomach should feel full but not extended after being fed.

Feeding Methods

There are three methods for feeding a neonatal kitten. They are by bottle, tube and eyedropper. It is best to try bottle feeding or eyedropper feeding before the tube method.

Tube Feeding

Tube feeding is strongly recommended for very small, weak or ill kittens who are unable to suckle. The advantages of tube feeding are that it is time saving, easy to learn, and it precisely administers the amount of formula that is needed. You do not have to burp a tube fed kitten because no air is taken into the stomach.

The disadvantage of tube feeding is that it must be done skillfully and carefully to avoid aspirating (dispensing) fluid into the lungs. Aspiration of formula can lead to pneumonia and death.

The following is a list of the steps required to perform a successful tube feeding.

1. Obtain a small soft rubber catheter (5 French) for small kittens, a larger (8 French) for larger kittens, and a syringe from a drug store or veterinarian.
2. Measure the tube from the kitten's last rib to its mouth.
3. Mark the tube with a piece of tape at the point it reaches the opening of the mouth.
4. Warm the formula to body temperature, approximately 100 degrees F.
5. Moisten the tube with formula.
6. Place the kitten in an upright position.
7. Slide the tube over the kitten's tongue and into its throat.
8. Continue passing the tube into the mouth until you reach the tape mark.
9. *Slowly* begin to eject the formula into the kitten's stomach.

Neonatal Kitten Care

Make sure you do not inject more formula than the kitten can hold. Doing so can cause the kitten to regurgitate the milk, aspirate the formula, and develop pneumonia. If you have weighed the kitten and have computed the correct amount of formula to give, you can avoid this complication. Injecting the formula too rapidly can also cause aspiration of formula.

If the kitten begins to choke, remove the catheter and begin again. If you feel resistance when inserting the tube, remove the tube and begin again. You do not have to be concerned if the kitten cries. Having the capacity to cry indicates the tubing has not been inserted into the windpipe.

Kittens that are tube fed do not have the opportunity to suckle. This may result in the kitten trying to suck on various body parts of other kittens. If this occurs the kitten may have to be separated from other kittens.

Bottle Feeding

Most pet stores sell nursing bottles for kittens. Often the hole in the nipple of these bottles is too small. You want to make the hole large enough to allow milk to drop slowly from the nipple when the bottle is inverted. Pediatric baby bottles also work, especially for older kittens.

Warm the formula to approximately 100 degrees F. The formula should feel warm on your wrist at this temperature.

Place the kitten on its stomach to bottle-feed. This is done to avoid having milk run into the kitten's windpipe. Try to angle the bottle so that air does not go into the stomach. Encourage suckling by keeping a slight pull on the bottle. ***Never squeeze the bottle to force formula out.*** This action could result in the kitten inhaling formula into its lungs, which could cause pneumonia.

You will usually see bubbles forming around the kitten's mouth when it is full. ***Always burp the kitten after each feeding.*** Kittens can actually die from too much gas formation in their stomachs.

Feeding with Eyedropper

Feeding with an eyedropper is the least desirable method of administering formula. It is time consuming and more difficult to administer correct dosages. However, it can be used if nothing else is available.

Follow the same guidelines for feeding with an eyedropper as you would when tube feeding or bottle feeding. Do not inject more formula than required or administer the formula too rapidly. You do not want to cause fluid to be dispensed into the lungs.

Feeding routine

There is one more aspect of the feeding routine that must not be overlooked regardless of the feeding method you use. ***After each meal the kitten must be stimulated to urinate and defecate.*** Massaging the kitten's anal area with a warm, damp cotton ball will provide this stimulation.

It will be necessary for you to continue this after each meal until the kitten can eliminate on its own, usually at three weeks of age.

When the kitten reaches three weeks of age, you can begin training to eat from a dish. You can purchase a commercial gruel, or make one of your own from formula mixed with Gerber's baby food. Gerber's turkey and broth baby food mixed with KMR works well as gruel.

Feeding problems

There are two common feeding mistakes that can cause health problems for a kitten, *overfeeding* and *underfeeding*.

Overfeeding

Overfeeding a newborn kitten can cause serious health complications. The kitten's immature kidneys have a very limited capacity and are unable to handle excessive amounts of fluid. Overloading the digestive system causes diarrhea. Diarrhea causes dehydration which can kill a kitten if it is not corrected.

The kitten's stool should be firm and yellowish in color. A loose yellowish stool is a sign of mild overfeeding. Greenish stool indicates food is passing too rapidly through the kitten's system. Grayish stool with a foul odor indicates inadequate digestion of formula and it is the most serious form of diarrhea.

It is important to correct overfeeding conditions as soon as you become aware of them. Make sure you have computed the correct amount of formula for each daily feeding. If you are administering the correct amount, and the stool is loose and yellow, you can dilute the formula with 1/3 water. When the stool appears yellow and firm you can return to feeding the full strength formula.

If the kitten continues to have diarrhea, and it appears greenish, dilute the formula with 1/3 water and administer three drops of kapectate every four hours. Return to the full strength formula when stool appears normal.

Grayish stool is the result of consistent overfeeding. At this point the kitten is not receiving nutrition and is dehydrated. Once again, dilute the formula with 1/3 water. Administer 1 cc of Pedialite (a balanced electrolyte solution available at drug and grocery stores) three times daily. Administer kapectate at three drops per ounce body weight every three hours until diarrhea has stopped.

Although overfeeding is commonly responsible for severe diarrhea, it is not always the cause. Kittens with gray or white stool should be examined by a veterinarian.

Underfeeding

Underfeeding is life threatening to the newborn. A kitten that is underfed is restless and cries excessively. It will eventually appear listless and apathetic.

A kitten that is underfed will eventually become dehydrated and chilled. If this has happened you will have to warm and rehydrate the kitten if it is to survive (review procedure for warming a chilled kitten on page 5).

Neonatal Kitten Care

To be sure you are feeding the correct amount of formula refer to the kitten's weight chart on page 3.

Keeping accurate records of the kitten's weight is extremely important. Having weighed the kitten initially you will be able to tell if the kitten has gained weight steadily during the first seven days. The kitten should be weighed daily for the first two weeks, and then weighed every three days until one month old.

EXTERNAL PARASITES

General Information

Most kittens born outside are infested with lice or fleas. It is essential to remove these parasites as soon as possible. Fleas in particular are a serious health threat. Fleas ingest blood from the kitten for nourishment. ***A kitten can die from anemia due to blood loss from flea infestation.***

One other troublesome parasite of kittens is ear mites. If the mother cat has ear mites, her kittens become infected while they are still in the nest. Ear mite infestations that are not attended to can lead to bacterial infections of the ear canal. Ear disfiguration can also result from severe ear mite infestation.

Ear mites are very contagious to other cats, kittens, and dogs.

Fleas

Fleas are by far the most common external parasite found on kittens. The use of a simple flea comb will expose the degree of flea infestation. In severe cases it is difficult to comb through the kitten's hair. The comb becomes blocked with flea fecal material composed of digested blood. When this material is brushed onto a wet piece of paper, the paper will turn a reddish brown color. A flea comb will also pick up salt-like white grains, which are flea eggs. Visually you will be able to see fleas moving rapidly across the kitten's body.

If a kitten is severely infested with fleas it is best to bath the kitten in Mycodex Pet Shampoo. The following procedure will help you give a successful bath:

1. Heat the room you will be bathing the kitten in to 85 degrees F.
2. Place cotton in the kitten's ears.
3. Instill artificial tears or Terramycin ointment in the kitten's eyes.
4. Begin shampooing kitten at the neck and work towards the tail.

Neonatal Kitten Care

5. Rinse well to remove all soap.
6. Wrap kitten in a towel and pat dry.
7. Use a hair dryer on *low heat* and completely dry the kitten.

Remember that *chilling* is a serious threat to kittens. You want to make sure the kitten is completely dry and warm before removing it from the bath room. You also must be very cautious when using a hair dryer. It is easy to burn a kitten's skin if you do not pay close attention to the blow drying process.

Lice

Lice are often found on kittens that are malnourished and run down. They feed on the skin scales of kittens. Lice are pale colored and move very slowly through the kitten's hair. They attach their white grain like eggs to the kitten's hair shafts. The eggs are very difficult to brush off.

Kitten lice are *not* transferable to humans.

Follow the same bathing procedures for the removal of lice as you do for fleas.

Ear Mites

Typical signs of ear mite infestation are headshaking, pawing and scratching at the ear. These are reactions to the ear mites moving on the skin surface of the inner ear and piercing the skin for food.

You can detect an ear mite infestation by looking into the kitten's ear and observing a dark brown waxy material. This material has a coffee-ground look to it and possibly will be accompanied by an unpleasant odor.

The first step in treating an ear mite infestation is to clean the ear. If the ear is not clean the ear mites will be sheltered by debris and make it difficult for the ear medication to reach them.

Moisten a cotton ball with mineral oil and wrap it around your little finger. Gently insert it into the ear canal and wipe the surface to remove debris.

You can also use a Qtip moistened with mineral oil to clean the creases of the ear and the vertical portion of the ear canal. *You must be careful to swab the vertical portion of the ear canal with the applicator held vertically and downward.* The ear canal turns horizontally before it ends at the ear drum.

Neonatal Kitten Care

After you have cleaned the ear canal you will be ready to insert medication to kill the ear mites. A miticide preparation is used and the directions for use are on the bottle. The miticide will not kill the ear mite eggs that have been deposited in the ear canal so repeated treatments of miticide twice weekly for three to four weeks will be required or as directed by a veterinarian.

INTERNAL PARASITES

General Information

The most common internal worm parasites found in kittens are roundworms, hookworms, and tapeworms. The gastrointestinal parasites, *Giardia* and *Coccidia*, are commonly found in kittens.

Roundworms

Kittens become infected with roundworms through their mother's milk. Larvae that are inactive in the mother cat are somehow activated by pregnancy and migrate to the mammary glands.

A majority of abandoned neonatal kittens have roundworm infestations. Infected kittens may lose their appetite, appear depressed, have diarrhea, become anemic, and pass mucus or blood in their stool. Roundworms may also be visible in the kitten's feces.

Neonatal Kitten Care

Hookworms

Hookworm infestation is also passed to the kitten through the mother's milk. As with roundworms, the larvae of the hookworm is activated during pregnancy and passed to the kitten via the mammary glands.

An acute infestation of hookworms in kittens can cause anemia, and potentially kill the kitten from loss of blood. The stool of the kitten will appear very black and possibly bloody.

Tapeworms

Tapeworms are not life threatening. A kitten becomes infected by ingesting a flea that is infected with a tapeworm. You may notice white rice looking segments around the kitten's anus.

Kittens are usually treated for tapeworms at six weeks of age.

Giardia

Giardia is a protozoa (an organism composed of a single cell) parasite of the small intestine tract. Giardia interferes with the absorption of nutrients and fluids by the intestines. This malabsorption leads to severe diarrhea. A yellowish, foamy, soft stool can be an indication of Giardia.

Coccidia

Coccidia is a protozoa parasite of the small intestine and the beginning of the large intestine. Kittens can develop dysentery from Coccidia and die. The kitten's stool will contain mucus and blood.

Treatment

There are medications available to cure the various internal parasitic infections of kittens. Stool samples must be examined by a veterinarian to determine what medications are to be used.

If a kitten you are caring for has persistent diarrhea, and you are not overfeeding, you can suspect an internal parasitic condition may be causing it.

NEONATAL KITTEN DISEASE

General Information

The diseases affecting neonatal kittens are: feline viral rhinotracheitis (FVR), feline calicivirus (FCV), feline leukemia virus (FeLV), and feline infectious peritonitis (FIP).

The brief descriptions of FVR, FCV, FeLV and FIP are to aid you in recognizing and potentially serious illness.

Upper respiratory infections (URI) caused by the feline calicivirus will be discussed in more detail. Mild cases of URI can be treated with minimal veterinarian intervention.

FVR

Feline viral rhinotracheitis is caused by the herpes virus and affects the respiratory system. An infected kitten may appear weak, refuse to nurse, and cry painfully. Coughing, sneezing, nasal congestion, eye discharge, fever, ulcers of the tongue, and conjunctivitis complicated with ulcerations of the cornea may occur. Upper respiratory infections (URI) caused by the feline viral rhinotracheitis virus require a longer course of treatment than upper respiratory infections caused by less potent viruses.

The FVR virus can survive eighteen to twenty-four hours at room temperature.

While waiting for veterinarian assistance, keep the kitten warm and hydrated.

FCV

Feline calicivirus is an acute respiratory infection of the feline respiratory system. The FCV virus can survive for one or two weeks at room temperature. The calicivirus is similar to the human cold virus. The symptoms of FCV are similar to FVR.

URI

A majority of abandoned neonatal kittens rescued from outdoors have upper respiratory infections. The severity of the URI is dependent on the virus causing it, and the general health of the kitten. A mild case of URI resembles a human cold with runny eyes and sneezing. However, severe cases of URI can cause high fever, loss of appetite, dehydration, and eye ulcers.

Neonatal Kitten Care

Because there are other serious diseases that also begin with mild URI symptoms it is essential that all kittens with URI be isolated until the cause and severity of the URI can be determined.

URI is *extremely contagious* and easily spreads from one kitten to another. It is transmitted by direct contact with infected eye or nasal discharge, contaminated cat litter pans, food and water bowls, air borne droplets, and by human hands and clothing.

The following list can be used to help a kitten recover from a mild case of URI:

1. Provide a warm draft-free environment.
2. Keep eyes and nose clear of discharge by using a moistened warm cotton ball.
3. Use a room vaporizer to ease nasal congestion, or steam up the bathroom and have the kitten stay in it for 15 minutes several times a day.
4. Nasal congestion can be relieved by using Afrin Pediatric Nasal Spray. This should only be used for a maximum of 4 days, so that the mucus membranes do not dry out.

In kittens, mild cases of URI can develop very quickly into more serious conditions. If a kitten stops eating, develops thick yellowish-green discharge from the eyes or nose, or has difficulty breathing, it needs veterinarian attention.

URI is not sensitive to antibiotics. Antibiotics are administered to prevent secondary bacterial invaders.

URI is a common cause of conjunctivitis in kittens. Conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the membrane lining of the eyelids. The kittens eyes will usually be pasted shut. Cleaning the eye with a warm moist cotton ball and applying Terramycin four times daily usually clears up the conjunctivitis. If the conjunctivitis is caused by the herpes virus, a longer period of treatment will be required using different medications.

FeLV

The feline leukemia virus can be contracted in utero or through the mother cat's milk. Maternal infection may cause "fading kitten" syndrome - a condition in which neonatal kittens grow weak and die rapidly.

FeLV suppresses the kitten's immune system and allows other diseases to develop. The signs of illness are apathy, fever, loss of appetite, weight loss, and pale mucus membranes caused by anemia.

A blood test is required to diagnose FeLV.

Neonatal Kitten Care

FIP

Feline infectious peritonitis is a fatal disease. It is responsible for a small percentage of kitten mortality. Early signs of FIP (listlessness, loss of appetite, weight loss, depression, and mild upper respiratory infection) mimic other diseases.

FIP is also suspect in cases of "fading kitten". Kittens at first may appear healthy, but grow weak and die in a few days. Kittens may experience difficulty breathing and die within a few hours from circulatory collapse and congestive heart failure.

FUNGAL DISEASE

General Information

Ringworm is the most common skin disorder of the kitten. This fungi invades the superficial outer layers of the skin, nails, and hair.

The classical signs of ringworm are circular areas of hair loss with scaly skin at the center, and an advancing red ring at the margin.

Ringworm fungi are contagious to humans as well as other animals.

Treatment

Mild cases of ringworm can be treated by clipping away the infected hair at the margins of the ringworm patch. Bathing the area in Casteen or Betadine shampoo will remove dead scales. Fungistatic cremes (Conofite) can be applied as a topical solution.

Spores must be eliminated from the premises to prevent further reinfection. Clothing and animal bedding can be washed in Clorox bleach: Vacuuming will remove infected hair from the premises.

Resistant cases of ringworm may require oral antifungal drugs given with direction of a veterinarian.

KITTEN MORTALITY

Many factors play a part in kitten mortality. Kittens born on the streets are subjected to influences that can significantly reduce their chances of survival. When they are born to malnourished or ill mothers, their risk of congenital or inherited defects is heightened.

Poorly nourished kittens have little defense against disease and infection.

Despite the best efforts at emergency care, proper nutrition, attention to cleanliness, correct diagnostic and medical treatment, and detailed record keeping, some kittens die.

The death of a kitten can be an emotionally disturbing experience to a volunteer who has cared for the kitten. It is important to understand and accept that some kittens will not survive. What we can do for these kittens, is surround them with warmth and care, and make their passing as comfortable as possible.

INDEX

Afrin Pediatric 19
anemia 14, 17
antibiotics 19
antibodies 3
artificial tears 14
aspiration 10
average weight 3
Betadine 20
birth weight 2
blood sugar 4
bottle feeding 11
burping 11
butterfly needle 6
Casteen 20
chilling 4
chloride 6
coccidia 17
colostrum 3
comatose 2
commercial formulas 8
conjunctivitis 19
Conofite 20
dehydration 5
diarrhea 13
digestive system 13
ear mites 15
ears 3
electrolytes 6
emergency care 4
emergency supplement 6
external parasites 14
eyedropper 12
eyes 3
fading kitten 19,20
FCV 18
feeding methods 9
feeding problems 13
FeLV 19
FIP 20
fleas 14
formula 8
formula computation 8
fungal disease 20

Neonatal Kitten Care

FVR 18
giardia 17
gruel 12
hookworms 17
hypoglycemia 4
hypothermia 4
internal parasites 16
Just Born 8
kaopectate 13
karo syrup 6
kidneys 8,13
kilocalories 8
kitten disease 18
kitten mortality 21
KMR 8
lice 15
miticide 16
Mycodex 14
neonatal 2
Nurturall 8
nutritional care 8
nutro-cal 6
overfeeding 13
pedialyte 6
pneumonia 10
potassium 6
protozoa 17
rectal temperature 3
rehydrating 7
ringer's lactate 6
ringworm 20
roundworms 16
sodium 6
subcutaneous infection 6
suckling 11
tapeworms 17
temperature 3
Terramycin 14,19
tube feeding 10
underfeeding 13
urination 12
warming techniques 5
weight 2

CHARTS

Feeding Schedule

Weight Chart

Progress Chart

m

e

m

o

COMMITMENTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

We have many different fostering opportunities at NOAH. Each situation requires a different time commitment by the foster family.

Estimated Time Commitment

TYPE OF FOSTER	TOTAL WEEKS INVOLVED	VOLUNTEER HOURS (Daily amount)
Weaned kittens (4-8wk) *	1 - 5 weeks	4 hours
Mom w/ kittens	1 - 9 weeks	3 hours
Bottle fed kittens (2-4wk)	4 - 7 weeks	6 hours
Weaned puppies (4-8wk)	1 - 5 weeks	5 hours
Mom w/ puppies	1 - 9 weeks	4 hours
Bottle fed puppies(1-4wk)	4 - 8 weeks	6 hours
Single kitten/puppy *	2-7 weeks	3 hours
Medical dog/cat	1-3 weeks	2 hours
Injury dog/cat	1-3 weeks	2 hours
Socialize dog	1-3 weeks	2 hours

* Kittens needing socialization fall under the weaned kitten or single kitten category.

You can expect to have to return to NOAH for the following appointments:

- **4 week exam/worming**
- **6 week exam/vaccinations**
- **8 week PUFA (put up for adoption) and Spay/Neuter**
- **Emergency health exams**

Additional time may be required to transport foster animals to NOAH for regular treatments or to pick up medications to administer at home.



NOTE: Foster families get first choice to adopt!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Commitments and Responsibilities..... 1

Table of Content..... 2

Supplies You Will Need 3

Disease Prevention 3

What Makes Bottle Feeders so Special 4

The Benefit of a Mom Cat 4

Confinement and Safety 5

Keeping Your Kittens Warm 5

Monitoring Health 6

Socialization 6

Feeding Amounts 7

What Formula Do I Use 7

Time to Eat Bottle Babies 8

Recap on Bottle Feeding 8

Weaning Your Kittens 9

All About Pee and Poop 10

Introducing the Litterbox 11

Bath Time! 12

What to Watch For and When to Call 13

Emergencies 14



SUPPLIES YOU WILL NEED

1. **Cat carrier-** plastic is the easiest to clean
2. **KMR (Kitten Milk Replacement)-** Liquid or powdered
3. **Fleece-**great for bedding, dry quickly
4. **Heating Pad-** specially designed for animals
5. **Washcloths and towels-**have washcloths and towels you use for your foster animals ONLY
6. **Cat/kitten food**
 - a. **Canned-** turkey, mixed grill, or chicken flavored pate is best for kittens. NO FISH FLAVORS
 - b. **Dry Kibble-** NutriSource kitten or Royal Canin Babycat (we feed nursing moms kitten food as well because it provides more nutrients than adult cat food
 - c. **Baby food-** chicken or turkey flavored baby food (step 1) is great for slurry and to stimulate a kittens appetite
7. **Ceramic or stainless steel dishes-** one for water, one for dry kibble, and one for wet food. NO PLASTIC DISHES PLEASE
8. **Litterboxes-**use a cookie sheet or low sided cardboard box for young kittens (3-4wks). Use a regular litterbox with 2" sides for mom cats and older kittens.
9. **Non-clumping clay litter-** Non scented is best, **NO CLUMPING LITTER**
10. **Nature's Miracle-**excellent at removing stains and odors



DISEASE PREVENTION

Not only are many diseases that cats and kittens contagious to the other animal's in your home, they can carry diseases that are communicable to humans as well. To prevent the spread of these diseases (giardia, coccidia, ringworm, ect), we ask that you wash your hands after handling your foster animals. Make sure to keep foster animals separate from your personal pets to limit exposure to possible diseases.

Bedding, clothing, towels, washcloths, and linens should always be washed with laundry detergent and bleach. The foster animals' area should be sanitized using a bleach water solution (1/4 bleach to 8 cups water) before you bring home your next foster animals.

WHAT MAKES BOTTLE FEEDERS SO SPECIAL

It takes a strong person to take home a litter of newborn babies. These fragile babies need round the clock care, which includes getting up throughout the night. Because neonatal kittens are completely helpless, it is the foster parent's role to be the surrogate mommy.

Bottle feeding, temperature control, stimulating them to potty, socializing, grooming and love are all essential needs you will have to fulfill. These babies may take up only a tiny spot in your home, but they take lots of time, patience, and energy. We never know why these kittens came to a shelter in the first place (mom hit by a car; mom rejected kitten) you can expect a 50% mortality rate. You should be emotionally prepared for the loss if you are working with bottle feeders.

The addition of new babies also includes all of their supplies. Make sure to reserve space in your fridge dedicated to bottles, formula, and baby food. The younger the litter, the more supplies they need. They also bring extra loads of laundry and dishes. Be sure you are up for the extra work before committing to a litter.



THE BENEFIT OF A MOM CAT

The best part of opening your home to a mom cat and her kittens is that mom will do most of the work for you. Unlike with bottle feeders, you will have a mom to make sure the kittens are fed, cleaned, pottied, and warm. Think of yourself as the mom's assistant. Your job is to keep the environment safe and clean, provide regular feedings, change litterboxes and dirty bedding, give love and socialization, and monitor the health of the litter.



After all of your hard work and hours of snuggling, cleaning, and care, you will have the satisfaction of returning your babies to NOAH where they can find their new families!

CONFINEMENT AND SAFETY

Kittens or Mom cats with their kittens should be kept in a quiet area of the home; preferably one that is closed off and easy to clean (bathrooms are great!). Place a clean box or carrier lid in the space. Fill the box with bedding. This will become the nest. The box should be large enough for the litter to comfortably fit but not so large that they can't huddle for warmth. The sides need to be high enough to prevent the kittens from rolling out or wandering off, but low enough that a mom cat will have an easy time getting in or out. **HINT:** A box should never be put directly on a cement surface as it draws out the heat.



KEEPING YOUR KITTENS WARM

If there is a mom cat, she will provide her kittens with the necessary warmth. If you have a litter with no mom, it is your job as a foster parent to make sure the kittens are maintaining a body temperature of 99-102 degrees. Until kittens are 4 weeks old, they cannot regulate their body temperature and get cold or overheat very quickly. Kittens need an additional heat source until they have reached 5 weeks old.

Animal safe heating pads are recommended. To prevent kittens from direct exposure to the heat, make sure the heat pad is covered. Also, make sure the cord is in a place where the kittens aren't able to chew on them. You can place a digital thermometer in the bedding to monitor the temperature of their environment. Make sure their bedding is kept clean and dry. Wet bedding reduces the temperature very quickly.

If you have a litter of kitten, they will also pig-pile to keep warm. If you have a single kitten, you will need to provide a stuffed animal to snuggle with. We highly recommend a Snuggle Kitty. These are stuffed animals that have a pouch to hold a small warming bag as well as a battery operated "heart" to mimic a mother's heartbeat. They are available to purchase at most pet stores. They are wonderful for young kittens because they are able to cuddle, stay warm, and relax to the sound of a beating heart.



SNUGGLE KITTY



PET HEATING PAD

MONITORING HEALTH

It is important to monitor the health of mom cats and kittens on a daily basis. For mom cats, be sure to check their mammary glands for any signs of infection (hard, red, or hot glands are all signs of infection). Observe kittens eating habits. If nursing, make sure each is getting fed. If you see that one kitten is regularly separate from the others, call the foster department. This can be a sign that something is wrong with the kitten. If weaned, be sure that each kitten gets a fair share of the slurry and dry food. If one is getting bullied, feed them separate. If possible, check the kittens' weight on a weekly basis. Kittens should gain approximately 4 oz a week. Monitor cat/kitten(s) stool. Diarrhea can be a sign of parasites, stress, or illness so it is important to note any changes in their stool. Look for any signs of Upper Respiratory Infection; sneezing, crusty eyes, discharge from nose, or labored breathing. If you notice any of these symptoms, we will want to start the litter on antibiotics.



Upper Respiratory Infection

SOCIALIZATION

While it is very important to make sure mom cats and their kittens, as well as orphaned kittens get proper socialization, we want to do it in a manner that does not affect the development of the animals.

Mom cats can be very protective of their kittens, so be sure to give them time to settle into their surroundings before you begin handling her or the babies. Watch her reaction when you handle the kittens. If you notice that it causes her too much stress, limit handling them to once a day (during this time you will provide human interaction, check hydration, and assess overall health). If a mom is extremely stressed by you handling her kittens, she can reject them so always be observant of her behavior.

Orphaned kittens do require more handling since you are the surrogate mom. Regular petting, cleaning, and feeding are necessary to help with their socialization. While cuddling and interacting with these kittens is very beneficial, you do want to allow them time to rest. Kittens need sleep to grow and build up their immune system. If they are regularly woken to be handled, it can stress their immune system and cause them to get sick. So, make sure to allow them "rest" periods throughout the day where no one is allowed to handle them.



FEEDING AMOUNTS

Feeding will vary depending on the stage the kittens are at, as well as whether there is a mom cat with the litter.

Mom cats with kittens under 4 weeks old will typically provide the kittens with their feedings. In this case, you just want to make sure the mom is getting enough food to produce the milk necessary for her kittens. You will want to have an unlimited amount of dry food and water available to her. On top of dry food, you will want to feed her wet food 3 times a day (about $\frac{1}{2}$ can per feeding).

If kittens are bottle feeders or orphaned, you provide all of their feedings. Below is a chart of how often a kitten should eat and the type of food needed dependent on their age.

Age	Type of food	Amount per day	How often
0-1 week	Formula	2 Tbsp	Every 3 hrs (2x at night)
2 weeks	Formula	3- 4 Tbsp	Every 3-4 hrs (once at night)
3 weeks	Formula	5-6 Tbsp	Every 4-5 hrs
4 weeks	Formula/slurry	7 Tbsp	Every 5-6 hrs
5 weeks	Dry/wet food	$\frac{1}{4}$ can wet-unlmted dry	3-4 times daily
6 weeks	Dry/wet food	$\frac{1}{4}$ can wet-unlmted dry	3 times daily
7-8 weeks	Dry/wet food	$\frac{1}{4}$ can wet-unlmted dry	2 times daily

Kittens are bottle fed if under 4 weeks old. Weaning starts at 4 weeks of age. Follow the process for bottle feeding and weaning listed on the following pages.

WHAT FORMULA DO I USE

NOAH recommends KMR, Kitten Milk Replacement, for foster kittens. KMR is offered in both a liquid and powder version. The liquid version is ready mixed and great for "on-the-go" care. The powder version is less expensive and keeps longer. Both versions are available at most pet stores. **HINT:** If you are using the powder version and have a well system, we recommend using bottled water to mix it. There are chemicals in well water that can cause kittens to get diarrhea.



TIME TO EAT BOTTLE BABIES!

Heat the KMR in a microwave safe dish and pour into a bottle or put the prepared bottle in a glass of warm water until the formula is warm. Test the temperature of the formula on your wrist to make sure it is warm, NOT hot, before you begin bottle feeding. Place a towel over your lap. You can wrap the kitten in a soft fleece blanket to help maneuver it around. This also helps them feel more secure and protects your hands from their sharp little kitty claws. Sit with your legs crossed and prop the kitten on the upper portion of your leg with his head tilting toward the ceiling (see photo). Never feed a kitten on its back as this can cause them to aspirate formula into their lungs causing illness or drowning.



Hold the kitten firmly around the shoulders so he can't back up. Gently place the bottle up to his mouth. You may need to have a drop on the tip so he can smell it. You can also put some on his lips so he can lick it off. Don't be surprised if your kitten turns his nose up at the formula. Remember that even if he never knew his mommy, he will know that rubber thing is NOT her.

It may take a good amount of time for your kitten to even sample the bottle, so be patient. For the first feeding, make sure you have all of the supplies ready and nothing else to do for at least half an hour. After a few awkward tries at drinking, your kitten may start to chew on the bottle. This is the first step to drinking. As long as he is getting something into his stomach, he is fine.



Squirming and crying during this process is normal. Remember, the kitten is hungry and the only way to tell you is to cry. When the kitten latches on properly, you will see him gulp and swallow. His ears will also twitch when nursing. These are all good signs that your kitten is eating correctly. After a few days, your kitten will be a professional bottle baby and will know exactly what to do. He will let you know he is done eating by letting go of the bottle and turning away. After his tummy is full he will fall asleep or get quiet and calm. Give him a few minutes to sit and then **move on to the "Peeing and Pooping" portion of the manual.**



RECAP ON BOTTLE FEEDING

- Kittens will not eat if their body temp is below 95* F, optimal temp is 99-102*F
- Kittens may not latch on right away, be patient
- Never squeeze the bottle or feed kittens on their backs.

This can cause the kitten to aspirate formula which can lead to illness or drowning.

- Kittens must be pottied after eating.
- Call the Foster Department if you have questions or concerns 360.629.7055

WEANING YOUR KITTEN

Formula to Slurry

When your kitten is approximately 4 weeks old, you can introduce them to slurry (a mixture of pate wet food and formula). You will want to make the mixture the consistency of wet oatmeal and serve it in a low sided ceramic or stainless steel dish. Start by putting a little slurry on your finger and hold it up to the kitten's lips to encourage him to lick it off. You can slowly lower your finger towards the dish of food. He may sniff it or stick his face in it. Don't be discouraged if he chooses not to eat. Give him time and try again later. This process can take a couple of days before he chooses to eat. Kittens are very messy when first learning to eat. Don't be surprised if they walk through it and smear it all around. This is why it is important to clean them with a warm washcloth after every feeding. This removes the food bits and prevents bacteria build up and hair loss.



Kitten Kibble



Once your kitten gets the hang of eating real food, you can slowly discontinue mixing it with slurry (usually when the kitten is between 5 and 6 weeks of age). You can start leaving a low dish of dry kibble out when the kitten is 4 weeks of age. You will also want to have a shallow dish of water out at all times when kittens hit this phase of weaning. For 4 week old kittens we provide Royal Canin BabyCat because it is tiny kibble easy for young kittens to eat. At 6 weeks of age, kittens should be eating regular kitten food and drinking water by themselves.

Feeding Tips

- Feed mom cats dry kitten food. It has more nutrients she needs during nursing
- DO NOT use fish flavored wet food. It is too rich for kittens systems and can cause digestive issues
- Always use shallow dishes for kittens under 6 weeks old. Deep dishes present a drowning hazard
- Change water and wash bowls regularly to prevent bacterial build up
- Watch kittens and mom cats during feeding times to ensure everyone is eating



ALL ABOUT PEE AND POOP



Stimulating

If you have a mom cat, she will take care of pottyng her kittens. If you are the surrogate mom, you will have to do it for the kittens. Start by laying a towel across your lap. Gently hold the kitten to keep it from crawling away. Using a warm, soft cloth or cotton ball, gently rub the genital region. It is normal for a kitten to fight or cry out. Most kittens will pee pretty quickly. You will notice the cloth or cotton ball turn yellow and get warmer from the urine. This should be done after every feeding.

Kittens also need to be stimulated to poop. They may be tiny but they produce a lot of waste! It can be helpful to start the stimulation process by making small circles on their lower abdomen helping move the waste down. Then move to rubbing the genital region. Kittens should poop at least once a day. Feces should be firm or soft but formed. Make sure to clean the area completely after pottyng. This may require a bath. It is important to get any excess urine or feces washed off to prevent urine burn or infection.

NOTE: If your kitten's stomach becomes distended (sometimes blue and firm to the touch) and they have not pooped, call the Foster Department as soon as possible.

Diarrhea

The most common call we get from concerned fosters are about their kittens/mom cats having diarrhea. What do we consider diarrhea? Diarrhea is any stool that has no shape or consistency. There are several causes of diarrhea in kittens/cats.

1. Parasites - stools can have a mucus like discharge, requires treatment
2. Worming/vaccines - not uncommon to have blood in their stool from the worming, usually clears up within 3 days
3. Change of diet - can cause an irritation of the digestive track and can need medication to rectify
4. Diseases -can be a sign of serious illness, if also vomiting & lethargic do not wait 3 days to call; bring in immediately

Anytime a kitten has diarrhea for more than **three days** the Foster Department should be called. It is important to resolve these issues as soon as possible to keep kittens from becoming dehydrated. If you notice your animal is dehydrated and it hasn't been three days since the diarrhea started, call the Foster Department to bring your kitten in for examination.

Only the last 2 images on the sheet would be considered diarrhea in a kitten/cat



INTRODUCING THE LITTERBOX

Teaching your kittens to use the litterbox will likely be the easiest part of being a foster parent. It is a kitten's natural instinct to use a litterbox. Mom cats will usually show their kittens how to do this. If there is no mom cat, you can introduce them to the box as early as 3 weeks old. By 6 weeks old, they will be old pros!

You should always use non-clumping clay litter for kittens. Clumping or scoopable litter gets stuck in their toes and fur, produces too much dust for their nasal passages, and if ingested, can get stuck in their stomach or intestines. Tidy Cat makes an inexpensive, non-clumping clay litter. You will want to start 3-4 week old kittens with a low sided litterbox (cookie sheets are great because there is very little lip they need to be able to climb over). Put about 1-2 cups into the box or cookie sheet and place your kitten in it. He may just walk away or begin digging in it naturally. Make sure that the kitten is not eating the litter. They will sometimes eat it or play in it but not use it. If you notice this, remove the box and try again later.



Once your kitten has used the litterbox for the first time, he will more than likely use it there after. Keeping your kitten in a small area will ensure they find the litterbox easily. Don't be surprised if he has an accident or two while he is learning how to use the box. Make sure to clean the box daily and monitor his stools. When kittens are still young, they tend to not always cover their feces. If your kitten isn't doing this, you need to do it for him. This will encourage him to cover his waste. If you are not stimulating him to potty anymore, it can be hard to monitor his waste. He should be going after meals and when he wakes up.

Once the kitten reaches the 5-6 week age, a deeper sided box can be introduced. Cheap plastic boxes are the best for training because they are low and large enough for kittens to find. They are also easy to spot waste in so can be more regularly cleaned and sanitized. **DO NOT** use covered litterboxes. Many cats feel the same way about covered boxes that we humans feel about porta potties! Who wants to go surrounded by stink?!?!?

It is not uncommon for kittens to step in their waste. If your kitten does, simply use a warm washcloth to clean him up. Sometimes the messes take a little more than a washcloth to wipe away. If this is the case, you may need to give them a bath. **Please refer to the "Bathing your kitten" page in the manual.**

BATH TIME!

KITTENS ARE MESSY! When kittens get to be 4 weeks old they are notorious for walking through their food bowl, playing in their water, and sleeping in their litterbox. All kittens do this and the only way to keep them clean is by bathing them. If you have a mom cat, she will do her best to help you keep up on the kittens' cleanliness. But even kittens with a mom sometimes need that helping hand!

Kittens hate baths!



They will cry and squirm, but when it's all over, you will have a clean (and fresh) ball of fluff! First you will want to assemble the necessary supplies: tear free shampoo, towels, and washcloths. It is helpful to have a 2nd person to help scrub while you hold.

Kittens under 6 weeks of age: Hold under a stream of running water (like in the photo above) to bathe. We do this because until they are 6 weeks old they think they can breath under water and will aspirate if they put their face in the water. Use a gentle, tear free shampoo (Johnson's Baby Shampoo is good) to scrub the kitty clean. Kittens will have A LOT of baths and heavily scented shampoos can irritate their skin.

Once your kitten is washed and rinsed, immediately wrap him in a clean, dry towel. Gently rub him with the towel to get him dry and keep him warm. Once he is sufficiently dry, he can go back to hid bed to snuggle with his littermates or on his heat pad. His body temperature can drop quickly if he is still wet, so make sure he stays in a warm, dry area until thoroughly dry.



Kittens 6 weeks or older: Fill you sink with 1-2 inches of warm water, using a few drops of shampoo in the water. Scrub gently being very careful not to get soap or water in his eyes, nose, or mouth. Follow the same drying procedure that was used for younger kittens.

WHAT TO WATCH FOR AND WHEN TO CALL

Cats and kittens come into the shelter for a variety of reasons, from a wide range of places where they may have been exposed to parasites, viruses, and other potentially harmful and contagious elements. Part of being a great foster parent is monitoring your foster cats and kittens for the following common conditions that may not have been present at the shelter:

If you see any of the following conditions, please call the Foster Department at 360.629.7055 so we can determine treatment.

- A kitten not eating for twice the time indicated (SEE PAGE 7)
 - Example: Your kitten should eat every 3-4 hours and it has been 8 hours since it has eaten
- A kitten consistently separated from the rest of the litter
- Colored discharge from eyes and/or nose or crusty eyes
- Lethargy
- Fever (temp should be between 99 & 102)
- Fleas or flea dirt (flea dirt looks like ground black pepper)
- Black, cakey dirt in ears (looks like coffee grounds)
- Patches of missing fur
- Rice or spaghetti looking parasite in the stool
- Unusual gait
- Nursing on genitalia
- Diarrhea for more than three days
- Aspirated while feeding
- Dramatic drop in body temp
- Dramatic drop in weight
- Vomiting
- Injured
- Open mouthed breathing
- Mom cat has hard, red, hot or painful mammary glands

NOTE: For emergency situations, see page 14



EMERGENCIES

The NOAH Foster Department can be reached at 360.629.7055. We are here 7 days a week during these hours:

Monday-Friday 9:00am-6:00pm
Saturday/Sunday 9:00am-5:00pm

If possible, please call ahead and speak to the Foster Care Manager/Specialist on duty before bringing in your sick or injured animal. If the Foster Care Manager/Specialist is unavailable, ask for the Director of Animal Care, Vet Clinic Manager, or an Animal Care Specialist.

If you think your kitten is in a life-threatening condition, bring it to NOAH anytime between 8:00am and 6:00pm Mon-Fri. and 8:00am and 5:00pm on Sat/Sun. You will be asked to leave the kitten/cat at NOAH for assessment. Please be aware that our funds and equipment are limited, and euthanasia may be necessary to prevent the animal's suffering.

Our funding is limited to basic supplies and not for outside veterinary care. If you choose to take your foster cat or kitten to your own veterinarian or an emergency clinic, NOAH will not be able to reimburse you.



Thank you for saving our lives!!

We would like to thank PAWS for sharing their foster manual with NOAH

Foster Dog Parent Training
3rd Saturday's of every month
10-12:30 – SAS conference room and corral

General Information

Please feel free to use your own style and make the session work for you. I use a lot of antidotal stories of my own fosters to reiterate important points or to answer questions. I would encourage you to re-read the manual and review the content of the information on the foster website. Keep an eye on your time – I try to get through the conference room info by 11:30 and then use the last 30 minutes outside. Although I don't think that I've ever ended at 12 - it usually goes over. I try to let folks ask questions throughout the preso, but if the answer is going to be answered later on, I'll just tell them to hold on – this way you don't get overly randomized.

Set-Up Information

- Arrive 15-20 minutes before session begins
- Check out which dogs are green sheeted and select one or two that would be good to use as your demo dog (I usually pick a mid-range dog)
- Put the "Foster Dog Training" sign on the outside of the conference room door – the door leading to the outside (signs are on the inside of the door)
- Open the door slightly so that it stays ajar so people can enter directly into the conference room from 15th Ave.
- Grab a stack of Foster Dog Manuals from the supply closet. Supply closet is the door just past the sofa in the employee break/kitchen room. (Southwest corner of the room). The manuals are on the shelves – towards the very back of the closet on a higher shelf. The correct manuals have a picture of "sierra" on the cover
- Have blank copies of the foster parent agreement and foster parent applications available (These will be located in a box w/ your name on it behind the adoption desk)
- Put out the foster binders so people can see what types of dogs we have in foster (Located in box)
- Have a sign-in sheet available for people to sign in with their name, and email address. (Located in the box)
- Have available Pens & Name Badges (Located in box)
- Have the toys & harnesses available for demonstration (Located in box)
- Have the foster packet available for YOU to reference. (Located in box)

Before the Session – As people arrive

- I usually give folks until 10:05 to arrive
- While waiting -- Let folks look through the binders
- Ask them to sign-in and fill out a name badge
- Ask them if they need a foster manual (these are emailed to people prior to the meeting, or they may have received them at the foster orientation)
- Ask them if they have their foster applications and agreements – If not, ask them to fill them out
- Ask if everyone has read the foster manual (they should have done this). If not, urge them to completely read the manual!
- Make sure that everyone who is there is either a current SAS volunteer OR has attended the foster dog orientation.

The Training Session:

Intro

- Introduce yourself and thank folks for attending.
- Ask folks to introduce themselves, if SAS volunteers – what program they volunteer in, and ask why they are interested in fostering. (Keep this short)
- Outline the purpose of the foster training:
 - Folks should have already read the manual and feel that they are able to foster!
 - Goal is to have folks foster w/in the next few months
 - Session will go over the key points of the manual, provide more information, answer questions and also demonstrate dog handling.
 - If any attendees are from the orientation (Not SAS volunteers) we will schedule a dog handling evaluation at a later date

Stats & General Info

- In 2007, 100 dogs were adopted from the foster program
 - 10% adopted their own dog (feel free to say that you are a 'foster failure' too)
 - Only 10% of foster homes fostered more than one dog in 2007
 - The average time in foster was 77 days in 2007
- Why don't homes foster more dogs (aka -- serial foster homes)
 - Anecdotal info but:
 - Fostering is hard – it's like adopting a dog, but giving it up when it starts to get easy.
 - Information and support was lacking -- trying to change that with the new manual and better support with case managers
- Why does it take so long to get a dog adopted from foster (77 days)
 - Because the dogs are not well marketed, because we don't know the dog is in foster!
 - Numbers are getting better with better support
 - 77 days is the average – some shorter and some longer
 - Puppies are usually much shorter (2-3 weeks)
 - Older dogs and Pit bulls are longer (3-6 months)
 - 77 days is from the time a dog goes into foster and is then adopted – does not take into account recovery time from injuries, evaluation, etc. We don't have the number from the time a dog is adoptable, to when it is adopted.
 - Dogs that are well marketed (great photos & bios) get adopted more quickly.
 - Foster Parents that help promote their foster dogs help get dogs adopted more quickly
 - VERY IMPORTANT: That foster parents send an email to sasfosterdogs@gmail.com when they take a dog home. The shelter computer system is not connected to the foster team volunteers – and it's the foster team that gets the ball rolling on getting a foster dog adopted (petfinder, etc.)
- Most common reasons why dogs are on the foster list.
 - 1) Dogs going through shelter stress (usually young dogs, pit mixes because they've been at the shelter the longest)
 - 2) Puppies (better socialization outside of the shelter, and healthier)

- 3) Dogs recovering from a medical issue/injury, or need to be evaluated - because may not be showing well at the shelter
- 4) Senior dogs
- If you are looking for a “Perfect” dog, then you probably won’t ever foster.

Foster Manual and Foster Packet/Website

- The foster manual has been updated and is full of valuable and important information – please read it and refer to it while you are fostering
- The training resources (page 42) are extremely helpful. The SFSPCA resource library is especially excellent
- We no longer hand out a foster packet – and instead all this information is online on a special website. You will be invited to join the website as it is invitation only. The entire manual is also available online on the website.

Rules - page 9 in manual

- Review the rules on Page 9 in the manual. Go through each one and provide some explanation.
 - No dog parks: Why –
 - Stressful for dogs, too many unknowns, temperaments of dogs are unknown, liability for the shelter (city-run agency) if a dog or person gets bit.
 - Illness also a concern (Guardia, kennel cough).
 - Remind folks that it can take a number of months before a dog is bonded to a new handler – and taking it to a high distracting environment is way too risky, even if there weren’t the other issues.
 - On leash at all times – Why
 - Safety for the dogs -- Dogs are not trained and can run away
 - Off-leash in a park is illegal
 - Even in secured yard – Dog should be watched – No unattended dogs in a yard:
 - Dogs can escape very quickly by jumping a fence, digging under, chewing through it.
 - Don’t know the dog, and dog doesn’t know you (bonding again).
 - Dog doesn’t know that this is their home.
 - Aggressive behavior:
 - Report any bites to other dogs or people immediately to shelter staff
 - Growling, baring teeth, or any other types of lesser aggressive behavior must be reported to case managers and they will provide you with assistance
 - If a dog growls – DON’T PUNISH THE DOG and just step away from the dog. The dog is providing you with a warning – it might be afraid, or it might be guarding a resource (bone) and by punishing the dog, or getting angry, you could make it much worse!
 - Vet Visits and Hotline
 - Must get pre-approval for any vet visits. This helps to manage costs for the shelter.
 - Once you get approval, you must go to an approved Vet (listed on the foster website)
 - If you go to a non-approved Vet, or don’t get approval, you will be charged and not reimbursed.

- Please try not to call the vet hotline after hours unless it's an emergency – the phone is answered by staff, and they are happy to answer it at 3am if it's an emergency, but not so happy about answering it at 3am if the dog has a minor sniffle 😊
 - Respond to communications w/in 24 hours. Very critical if the dog is available for adoption. We (volunteer team) will also respond to you w/in 24 hours too)
- Reiterate that folks MUST abide by these rules. If they can't do that, then don't foster for SAS.
- You can let folks know that most shelters/rescues have foster programs and the programs are all very different w/ different rules.

Commitment – Page 10 in manual

- We need committed foster parents who are willing to open their home to an orphaned dog.
 - Many shelter dogs have some behavior issues - we can help you with these minor behavior issues, but don't expect a 'perfect' dog
- Foster dogs take time – many of the young dogs need at least two 45 minute walks a day, plus additional mental and physical stimulation and play time
- A foster dog may be with you for many months -- be prepared for the mental and physical challenge of this (and giving up the dog when it's adopted)
- When it's raining outside, or you just got home from a busy work day, your foster dog still needs attention and care.

Team Volunteers

- The Foster Team is there to support the foster parents. They are all volunteers, and are not paid.
 - Case Managers are assigned to every foster parent and are your direct liason with the shelter. You should work with your case manager and keep in touch with them on a weekly basis. If you have any questions – (behavior, adoption, etc.) ask your case manager.
 - There are also folks that will get your bios/photos posted on petfinder, create videos of your foster dog, create posters of the foster dogs for the shelter and for you to send to your friends, and folks that answer emails and voice mail.
- Mike Kokernak is the Animal Care Officer who is the staff liason with the foster team. He screens potential applicants, helps to match foster parents to dogs, and helps with final adoptions. (Most of the other ACOs are not as familiar with the foster program and may not be able to answer all of your questions)

Finding the Right Match

- Be very honest about finding the right match (your lifestyle, your schedule, your commitment, your skill/dog handling level)
- This also needs to be matched to the needs of the shelter.
- If a dog is highly adoptable, there is no need for it to go into foster.
- A foster request list is sent out via email (usually every 2-3 weeks).
- If you see a dog that might be a good match, send an email to sasfosterdogs@gmail, and then please go to the shelter to meet the dog. Volunteers may not be able to provide you with any additional information, so the best thing to do is to stop by the shelter.

Picking up your dog (Checklist from the foster packet & also starting on page 10 of the manual)

- Get your house ready BEFORE you bring home your dog.
 - Less stressful for everyone, and the dog
 - You can pick up supplies before you bring the dog home
- Any dog/dog meet and greets MUST have an ACO present
- Get any paperwork and supplies you need (I will give folks the checklist and let them pass it around – this is on the foster website)
 - Green sheet, white sheet,
- Make sure the shelter checks you out on the system
- Make sure you have any medicine, and that the dog is microchipped
- Don't let the shelter "Rush" you through this process. It's best NOT to come on the weekends as it's very busy at the shelter. Also, don't come after 5pm.

The First Week (page 16)

- Contact sasfosterdogs@gmail.com (The first day please!!!!) and let them know that you have a foster dog, and provide information (case number, etc.)
 - If you don't tell us that you have a foster dog, it might be weeks before the shelter staff lets us know!
 - This is critical to make sure that you get a case manager
 - We can get the PF bio changed so that the dog is stated that its in foster care
 - We can get you entered into the foster team's spreadsheet and we can provide you with support!
- Keep it mellow – let your foster dog settle – it will be very stressed
 - Quiet walks in the neighborhood during quiet times
 - No house guests, keep the noise level down
 - Let your dog have its own space away from kids, other dogs
 - If you have cats – keep them separate (see info in manual)
- If you are fostering a puppy -- Throw a PARTY!
- Start working on a new bio and photos (your case manager can help you)
- If you are Foster sitting – pretend it's just like the first week too!

Bios and Photos – page 24 in the manual and in the packet/website

- A great photo and bio can really generate interest in your foster dog
- Look at your dog's competition on PF
- Lots of info on the foster website to help you!
- Your case manager can also help you if you're stuck, or if you don't have a camera
- Re-write and take new photos every month!
- The foster team/shelter may make changes to your bio – they have a lot of past history to draw upon in making changes

Exercise, Training and Attention – Page 22 and various handouts in foster packet/website

- Crate Training – You don't have to crate training, but it can help manage your foster dog.
 - Dogs need to be trained to be in a crate - -don't just put a dog in a crate and leave them – they will just learn to hate the crate!
 - Don't crate your foster dog in the same space where a resident dog is running loose
 - Puppies should not be left in a crate for more than a few hours
 - Lots of crate training handouts to help you!

- Shelter has crates for you to borrow
- Feeding – You can buy food, or the shelter can provide you with science diet (not the best food IMHO)
 - If you buy food, buy quality food! It is tax deductible (as are any other expenses, but talk to your tax accountant)
 - Don't overfeed your dog – remember that treats count!
- Housetraining – Handouts on housetraining on the website
 - Accidents happen – many dogs have accidents when they are stressed
 - Some of the shelter dogs were only outside dogs, so they need to learn to hold it!
 - Don't get mad at the dog – instead work on managing your dog so that he can be successful
- Exercise – Dogs need physical activity to stay healthy – exercise keeps dogs mentally healthy too!
 - A tired dog is a happy dog! It's very hard to over-exercise a dog (unless it's older, or injured!)
 - You MUST exercise a dog before you put it in a crate!
- Attention and Toys – Page 24 in the manual, and lots of handouts
 - Toys are your friend – and can help challenge a dog mentally and help with boredom and can tire them out!
 - Stuffed toys are made for unstuffing! You can buy them at value village (cut out eyes or other hard parts). This is called dissection and it's a natural drive of dogs
 - Treat dispensing toys are a great way to keep your dog occupied (in crate, etc.) You can feed your dog using these toys, rather than feeding them entirely in a bowl.
 - Dogs don't always play with toys on their own – you might need to play games with them.
 - If you have a resident dog – Don't have toys out initially and let the dogs become familiar with each other – slowly introduce low value toys in a low stressful way.
 - Don't replace toys for exercise. Playing ball in the backyard is great, but dogs need to get out and walk neighborhoods to become better socialized to other people, sounds, dogs, etc.
- Training & Behavior Issues
 - The foster program believes in positive based training techniques (no choke chains, prong collars, etc.)
 - There is a library of books that you can check out to help you
 - GreatDog (in Northgate) will let you take a foster dog to any of their classes (if space is available) for \$25.
 - Behavior Issues - page 25 and lots of information from the links in resources
 - Many of the issues are: bad manners – aka no training, shyness, poor socialization, etc.
 - We have a foster team member who can help you with some of the more basic training issues and we have trainers in the community who can help with bigger issues.
 - We are not behaviorists, nor do we expect foster parents to be dog trainers, so please keep in touch with your case manager

Adoption Process - Page 37 in manual

- Applications come in via email, fax and in person at the shelter

- Staff review incoming applications to determine if it's a match
 - If it's a match on paper then the shelter screener will call the PA (potential applicant)
 - If it goes well, then the screener will contact foster parent and ask them to set up a meet and greet with the dog.
- Meet and greets should happen at the shelter - page 39 in manual
 - Safer and neutral location
 - Ask for an ACO to be there during the meet and greet
 - If there is a resident dog, then there must be an ACO present!
 - You must go into the shelter and wait for an ACO to be there for dog/dog meetings
 - When you are meeting with a PA, do not promise anything!
 - Applications are reviewed in the order that they are received – so if you meet someone who is interested in your dog (friend, colleague, neighbor, etc.) please tell them to submit an application.
 - If you like a PA – let the shelter know!

Outside demonstration

- Grab an appropriate (mid-ranged) dog to take outside.
- Review the paperwork before you get the dog
- Meet folks in the corral
- Once in the corral:
 - Show how to put on and use a easy walk harness (I'll put one in the box)
 - Explain that these are available for foster parents and are great for dogs that pull
- Demonstrate the following:
 - Dogs that jump on you (turn away and ignore them)
 - Dogs that pull (redirect, stop and wait for slack, or change directions NOT leash corrections) Reward appropriate leash walking, don't punish bad leash walking
 - Passing people on the street
 - Body block
 - Cross the street or wide circle
 - Watch me – and/or keeping your dog focused on you.

Show them where the foster supplies are located

- Harnesses, ex –pens, baby gates and some specialty toys are locked and must be requested.
- Supplies that are borrowed MUST come back to the shelter after the dog is adopted (even if the FP adopts the dog).

Seattle Animal Shelter Dog Handler's Agreement

We thank you for your interest and decision to volunteer in one of the many dog handling or foster programs at the Seattle Animal Shelter. Many of us have used methods which differ from the guidelines set out in the Seattle Animal Shelter Dog Handling Manual. It is important for all volunteers to handle our dogs in a consistent manner. By following these procedures, our dogs will not be confused, frustrated and stressed by conflicting methods applied by different handlers. To truly create happy, adoptable dogs the techniques and methods within this manual must be adhered to.

To ensure that all SAS dogs are handled consistently and appropriately, we ask that you initial and sign this agreement. If you choose not to sign this agreement, you will not be approved to handle dogs for the Seattle Animal Shelter.

- ____ 1. I understand that the dog training methods within the Seattle Animal Shelter Dog Handling Manual must be adhered to at all times.
- ____ 2. I have attended all required orientations and training and have received and reviewed the Seattle Animal Shelter Dog Handling Manual.
- ____ 3. I will not use training methods outside those described in the Seattle Animal Shelter Dog Handling Manual.
- ____ 4. I understand that continued participation in the volunteer program depends on my cooperation with these expectations.
- ____ 5. I will never shout angrily at a dog, spray it with water, smack a dog (even lightly), jerk its leash or lift it by the leash.
- ____ 6. I understand that the only form of punishment that is acceptable at the Seattle Animal Shelter is to withdraw attention from the dog.
- ____ 7. I will reward good behavior that a dog presents to me.
- ____ 8. I will *only* reward good behavior that a dog presents to me.
- ____ 9. I will avoid situations that unduly stress a dog.
- ____ 10. I understand that there may be dogs that the staff does not allow me to handle or further training may be required to handle these dogs.
- ____ 11. I understand that decisions made by Seattle Animal Shelter staff are final.

Failure to comply with any of the above described points could result in the loss of dog handling privileges or termination as a volunteer with Seattle Animal Shelter.

Name: _____

Home Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Signature: _____