



NEONATAL FOSTER PROGRAM



Itty Bitty Kitty Committee

Thank you for your participation in this lifesaving, neo-natal fostering program. The Anti-Cruelty Society too young. Neonate animals are in desperate need of 24-hour personalized attention and care that we are unable to provide here at the shelter. These young kittens require: a warm room free of drafts, lots of observation, and around the clock care. Neonatal fosters have a very weak immune system and should not be introduced to resident animals. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to reach out.

Neonatal Foster Responsibilities

- 1) Provide round-the-clock care and socialization to assigned foster animal(s)
- 2) Seek out assistance from volunteer services and staff as needed
- 3) Complete a detailed Foster Personality Profile on each foster animal before drop-off
- 4) Act as a community ambassador for The Anti-Cruelty Society
- 5) Follow all policies and protocols as specified in this manual and the Foster Manual

Basic Routine for Neonates

- 1) Keep kitten warm
- 2) Bottle feed kitten formula
- 3) Gentle stimulation to pee and poop
- 4) Wipe down face and genitals
- 5) Monitor the kitten's weight and take observational notes

Neonatal kittens

Any kitten under 1 pound is considered to be a neonatal kitten. Neonatal kittens are especially vulnerable as orphans and need to be bottle fed every 2-4 hours depending on their age. Neonate animals are in desperate need of the personalized attention and care to ensure their survival. These young kittens will need: lots of observation and care, and a warm room free of drafts.

Litters with Mom

Kitten foster parents will be provided with a bag Science Diet kitten kibble for your foster mom. Note that kitten kibble is higher in calories which makes it a great feeding option for nursing cats. This is the same food that the animals are fed in-shelter, and since they'll return this diet post-foster, it's important to keep them on it. Please follow the feeding instructions that are printed on the back of each bag. Foster parents are welcome to supplement with additional wet food as needed. Note that any change in diet – even such a minor one as switching brands of food – may cause diarrhea.



If the kittens are with their mother, and under four weeks of age, the mother should take care of the feeding. Once the kittens are about four weeks of age, you should start to notice them showing interest in their mother's food, this is an indication that they are ready to be weaned.

Housing Set-Up

Create a safe space for litter or orphaned kittens by choosing a quiet room that you can close off from your resident pets, if applicable. It is very important to make sure it is temperature controlled and there are no drafts as kittens body temperatures can drop very quickly. Make sure that there is a designated hiding spot so if the cat feels the

need to burrow they're doing so in a safe space. Look out for furniture or fixtures where a cat can hide themselves and then have difficulty being retrieved. The cat-friendly space should also include some soft bedding, water and food bowls, a litter box and toys. It is not unusual for some mothers to be territorial about their newborns. If your foster mom is displaying offensive body language it is best to give them their space for a few days.

At around 3 weeks of age you can introduce a shallow litter box to your neonates. The litter should be fragrance free, non-clumping litter. Place kitten in the litter box frequently so that they remember to use it. You can also stimulate them over the litter pan to make the association. Make sure the litter box is easy to access and clean.

Warming Kittens

Wrap a hot water bottle, sock filled with dry rice, or a Snuggle Safe in a towel and place it next to the kitten. Make sure the warming item can be held against your own skin for 20 seconds comfortably. You can also place a heating pad (on lowest setting) down one side of a cardboard box and half way underneath the box. Place a towel at the bottom of the box. Make sure the kitten has room to move away from the heating pad if necessary but not enough room to lose its way back to the warmth.

Neonatal Feeding

Bottle-feeding neonatal kittens requires an around-the-clock commitment. Fosters should only utilize a feline formula. Never use cow's milk with your kittens. When determining quantity of formula use your best judgement; if a kitten is eating less than recommended per feeding, you may need to increase the frequency of the feedings. If you're working with these small orphaned kittens - thank you in advance for offering your time and attention to these fragile babies.

Age	Weight	Amount Per Feeding	Schedule
0-1 week	50-150g	2-6 ml	Every 2 hours
1-2 weeks	150-250g	6-10 ml	Every 2-3 hours
2-3 weeks	250-350g	10-14 ml	Every 3-4 hours
3-4 weeks	350-450g	14-18 ml	Every 4-5 hours
4-5 weeks	450-550g	18-22 ml	Every 5-6 hours
5-8	550-850g	Weaning; offer wet food	Every 6 hours

Foster Tip

A kitten's ideal body temperature is 100 to 102 degrees. If a kitten feels cold to the touch, warm them up immediately. Place the kitten on a heating pad safely wrapped in two or three layers of towels. Turn the kitten side to side every 5 minutes. To stimulate blood flow, you may, ever so gently, massage the kitten with hand-rubbing.

Bottle Feeding Kittens

If you are fostering a neonatal kitten, please follow these steps for feeding them. Note that depending on their age kittens need to be fed every 2-3 hours.

1. **Prep formula:** Place the bottle of KMR formula in a bowl of hot water for a few minutes. Before feeding always test the temperature of the formula by placing a few drops on your inner wrist to be sure it is not too hot. It should be slightly warmer than your body temperature.
2. **Kitten Temp Check:** Make sure that your foster kitten is warm before offering them food. Do not attempt to feed a kitten who has a low body temp as it can have serious health consequences.
3. **Prep Kitten:** Wrap the kitten in a towel or blanket and position him so that his belly is toward the floor. Kittens should not be fed on their backs or in an upright position.
4. **Feed:** Turn the bottle upside down and allow a drop of formula to come out. Place the nipple in the kitten's mouth and gently wiggle it, holding the bottle at a 45-degree angle to keep air from getting into the kitten's stomach. This movement should encourage the kitten to start eating. If at first you don't succeed, wait a few seconds and try again. Usually the kitten will latch on and begin to suckle.

Burping Kittens

Always burp the kitten after each feeding. Do this by gently rubbing and patting the kitten's back.

Kitten Stimulation

After each meal, kittens under 3 weeks of age must be stimulated to urinate and defecate. When kittens are with their mom she takes care of this by licking the kittens in order to stimulate their bowels. For motherless kittens, use a cotton ball dampened with warm water to massage the area around the kitten's rectum and genitalia. This process is necessary after each meal until the kitten can eliminate on her own. At this time you can start putting the kitten in a litter box to encourage it to go on its

Weaning kittens

Once your kittens are about four weeks old, it is time to start the weaning process. Your goal is to have the kittens eating on their own consistently before returning them to the shelter. So, beginning at four weeks, start offering warm gruel (two parts wet food, one part formula) at all times, along with dry kitten food and water. Every four to six hours, discard any uneaten gruel and provide a fresh batch.

You will still be supplementing the kittens with a bottle every eight hours to ensure that they are getting all the nutrients they need, but encourage them to eat gruel before you offer a bottle. To get a kitten interested in trying the gruel, you may have to offer the gruel with a spoon or use your finger to place a small amount on the kitten's tongue. Ideally, by the end of five weeks, your foster kittens will be happily eating dry and wet food on their own.

FOSTER TIP

To make gruel mix 1/2 can of wet food with 1/4 mixed formula per kitten. You can add a little water if the kittens seem to like a looser consistency. It's OK make gruel in bulk and refrigerate it just remember to warm it up slightly before offering it to the kittens.

It is important to continue weighing your foster kittens every day, after each feeding, to ensure that they are always gaining weight. During the weaning stage, you should also begin introducing the kittens to the litter box because they should be able to eliminate on their own by about four weeks of age.

Caring for independent eaters

By six to seven weeks old, your kittens should be independent eaters. Dry kibble should be their primary source of food, since it has a higher calorie content. Offer wet food frequently as well to encourage eating and maximize growth. Replace the water in their water dish twice a day and wipe out the dish if needed.



Dehydration

Kittens can become dehydrated very quickly from not eating/drinking. When a kitten has diarrhea, it is a good idea to mix the kitten's bottle with Pedialyte in place of water. This will help prevent dehydration. If the diarrhea is severe (lasting over 24 hours) or contains blood, please contact the Foster Coordinator to schedule a time to bring the kitten in to be seen by a clinic staff member.

Severe dehydration in kittens requires immediate intervention. The most effective way to test for dehydration is to "tent" the skin on the kitten's back. This is done by pick up a fold of skin and watching what happens when you release the skin- it should spring back into shape. If the skin remains in a ridge, the kitten is dehydrated.

If you believe your foster kitten is dehydrated, contact the clinic to schedule a time to bring the kitten in to be seen by a veterinarian. Please keep track of what and when the kitten ate last.

Litterbox Training

When kittens are about four weeks old, they will begin to play in, dig through and explore loose, soft materials such as dirt or litter. As a result of this investigative digging, kittens begin to relieve themselves in these materials. So, kittens do not have to be taught by either their mothers

or humans to relieve themselves in soft, loose materials, or to dig and bury their waste. Kittens are simply born knowing how to do it.

Kittens under the age of six weeks should not be introduced to clumping litter. Only non-clumping litter should be used. At this age they are still teething and could accidentally swallow their litter which could lead to severe medical consequences.

It's not necessary to take kittens to the litter box and move their paws back and forth in the litter. Doing so may actually be an unpleasant experience for them, causing them to have some negative associations with the litter box. However, litter boxes that don't provide an acceptable place to eliminate (from the cats' point of view) may cause

cats to relieve themselves elsewhere. That's why it's important to provide a litter box that meets the kittens' needs. You want the kittens to like the box and use it consistently.

Be sure to choose a box that has walls low enough for the kitten to access it and clean the contents regularly. Praise the kitten when they're using it.

Kitten Socialization

As with human babies, kittens are not born understanding about the world and how to behave. The best time to teach them is during the primary socialization period, which is roughly from 3 to 12 weeks of age. This is when kittens are most open to new experiences and are thirsty to learn. After this time they become more cautious of new people and situations and their behavior is less malleable. Well-socialized kittens are more likely to grow up to be friendly adults who are easy to handle and not overly frightened or stressed. Lessons not learned by 12 weeks of age can be partially, but never fully, recovered.

Begin lightly handling you foster kittens as soon as possible. There is no truth to the idea that a mother will reject her babies if they are touched by people. However, mom needs to be okay with you petting the babies in order to avoid accidentally teaching them to be stressed by petting (if mom does seem to be too anxious for the first few days try petting them while she is out of the room or sleeping). Gentle petting and holding for just a few seconds several times each day is ideal for newborns. The babies should be picked up and held in different positions for brief periods each day by about 2 weeks of age.

As they get older, it is okay to handle them more frequently and for longer periods of time. Once they are about 5 weeks old, more people should be interacting with them. Behaviorists recommend that kittens meet as many new people as possible.

Socialization should intensify at around 4 weeks of age by:

- Introducing new textures by playing with the kittens on carpeting, tile, wood, blankets, rugs, concrete, etc.
- Exposing them to household noises such as blenders, doorbells, banging pots, washing machines, alarm clocks, stereos, etc. If there are no children living in or visiting the home, buy a cd with the sounds of children and play it frequently. Very loud or harsh noises, such as a blender, can be muffled initially by covering the appliance with a towel or making the noise while the pups are in an adjacent room.
- Placing items, such as winter boots, skateboards, and books on the floor for the kittens to investigate.
- Offering a variety of objects for the kittens or puppies to play with, including empty plastic bottles, paper towel cores, and cardboard boxes in different sizes, as well as commercial pet toys.
- Continuing to handle the kittens daily, including touching every part of their bodies.

Emergency Protocol: Fading Kittens

Open Hours (9 a.m. – 6 p.m.): Call (312)645-8220 and ask to speak with a veterinarian or shelter manager. Always indicate that you are a foster and that it's an emergency.

Before or After Hours: Your goal is to stabilize the animal until they can be brought into our clinic. To do this, follow these steps:

1) Body temperature: If the animal is too cold, you will need to slowly, and safely, get them to a comfortable temperature. Be careful, as doing so too quickly can be a shock to the animal.

- Wrap their entire body in a towel leaving only their face out. Then wrap the towel in a heating pad.
- If you do not have a heating pad you can use tube socks and rice to make one. Please be sure to keep the pet warm as you do so.

- Fill two socks with rice and tie off the tops, microwave them for about two minutes. Carefully remove from the microwave and place them on the outside of the towel.
 - Check on the conditions inside the towel frequently so the animal does not overheat in the process.
- 2) **Blood Sugar:** Once the animal's body temperature is stabilized, help to increase their blood sugar levels by administering a sugar solution: Put a few tablespoons of sugar in warm water. Stir it up; you want the solution to be as strong as possible while still runny. Use a syringe, or your finger, to give 3 drops every 3 minutes into the mouth
- 3) **Give TLC:** Keep the foster comfortable: Do your best to put the foster pet at ease. Keeping yourself composed will help to keep the animal relaxed. This way, in the worst case scenario, if the animal does not make it, their final moments will be ones of peace, and not distress.

FOSTER NOTE

Emergency clinics are not miracle workers and cannot help every Kitten Fading case that comes their way. Your goal in the case of Kitten Fading Syndrome is to comfort the kitten until our clinic opens and our veterinarians can provide care.

Kitten Mortality:

If a kitten passes away while in your care, please separate them from the rest of the litter, wrap the kitten in a towel, and bring them into our Intake Department at your earliest convenience. Losing a kitten is never easy, so please reach out to the Foster Team for support. You are not alone in this fight, and a Kitten Loss Support group will be made available to foster parents on the last Thursday of every month between 4:00-5:30 p.m.

Thank you!

We thank you again for your decision to become a neonate foster volunteer with us and for choosing to help the animals in our care. Your efforts make a significant difference in The Anti-Cruelty Society's work and our mission to find loving homes for shelter pets. Please keep in mind that you are taking on a momentous task by caring for these young kittens. Due to their sensitive nature, there is a chance your neonate foster may not survive. Still, these fragile kittens have a much smaller chance of survival here at the shelter than in your home, where they will receive the care, love and attention they need. We hope you find your foster volunteer experience at The Anti-Cruelty Society enjoyable and rewarding. If you have any questions or concerns at any time, please contact the Foster Coordinator.



PHONE DIRECTORY

Main Phone Number: (312)644-8338

In the event of an emergency call the General Operator and ask to speak directly with a manager

General Operator (9 a.m. – 6 p.m.): ext. 8220

Veterinary Clinic (10 a.m. – 4 p.m.): ext. 8051

Behavior Helpline (9 a.m. – 5 p.m.): ext. 8253

Foster Support Team: foster@anticruelty.org

Clare Hamilton, Coordinator of Foster Services (Sun – Thu 8:30-4:30): ext. 8096

Eric Tostado, Coordinator of Volunteer Services (Tues – Sat 9-5): ext. 8092

Steve Weaver, Director of Community Programs (Mon – Fri 8:30-4:30): ext. 8079

Lydia Krupinski, Vice President of Mission Impact (Mon – Fri 7:30-3:30): ext. 8094

Veterinarians:

Dr. Primiano: ext. 8240

mprimiano@anticruelty.org

Dr. Dent: ext. 8243

Dr. Shudell: ext. 8244

Dr. Belding: ext. 8245

Dr. Medhurst: ext. 8242

Dr. Hampton: ext. 8241

Behavior Specialists:

Melissa Klett: ext. 8251

mklett@anticruelty.org

Stephanie Marquardt ext. 8252

smarquardt@anticruelty.org

Anna Lininger-Pniewska ext. 8097

alininger@anticruelty.org

Managers:

Amber Pazdzioch: ext. 8073

Dave Pinto: ext. 8076

Sarah Hayes ext. 8077

Lane Anderson ext. 8072

ORIENTATION NOTES

Use this page to jot down notes from your Foster Orientation.