

Auburn Area Animal Rescue Foundation

Feline Foster Manual

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Welcome to AAARF Foster Program

Thank you for joining our family. The following pages will outline everyone's responsibilities, while caring for our furry friends. Even though our procedures and protocols are outlined for you here, we are constantly updating and improving our program.

At the beginning of each kitten season, an update and refresher meeting will be held. This will be our chance to get together, reconnect, update your supplies, and go over any changes that were implemented.

We encourage you to contact us at any time, with any questions or concerns you may have and thank you for becoming an AAARF foster parent.

Our Responsibilities to You

- ✦ Supply you with a manual, full of important and necessary protocol guidelines.
- ✦ Supply you with the healthiest kittens and cats possible and that meet your fostering capabilities.
- ✦ Be available to you Monday – Friday, during business hours, for routine questions and appointments.
- ✦ Be available to you 24/7 for medical emergencies.

Your Responsibilities to AAARF

- ✦ Keep accurate health records, including weekly weighing and medication when necessary.
- ✦ Transport to and from AAARF, Foster Coordinator's home, and/or outside vet visits.
- ✦ Keeping bi-weekly appointments for vaccines and or medical appointments, as required.
- ✦ Understand the required protocol for vaccines, worming, spay/neuter, blood tests and micro-chipping.
- ✦ Be a vigilant caretaker of your foster cats/kittens. If at any time you become unable to care for your foster cat/kittens, please call one of the AAARF Foster Coordinators. Emergencies come up and we are always available for you.

Program Overview

Importance: The foster care program is vital to saving lives. Taking cats or kittens into foster care gives them an opportunity to be socialized, which is imperative to placing them in their “forever” homes. Without foster homes, we cannot rescue as many pets.

Time involved: This will depend on the needs of each animal. Some foster cats/kittens are young or have health issues so it is important to understand the needs of each foster cat/kitten and how much time you have available. We can match you up with the appropriate foster cats/kittens depending on your availability and experience. The length of time you will foster greatly depends on the individual cats or kittens and the number of animals fostered. The foster period could be from 2 weeks to several months.

Qualifications:

- ⤴ Most important is love and concern for pets.
- ⤴ Time and desire to socialize pets.
- ⤴ Willingness to provide food, water and medication, if necessary.
- ⤴ Provide a clean living environment and daily care.
- ⤴ Ability to keep foster cats/kittens separate from your personal pets.
- ⤴ Ability to follow directions of the Foster Coordinator and abide by the protocols set forth by AAARF.

Expense Involved: AAARF will provide food, medical care and medications. Cages and carriers can be provided when needed. Foster parents provide litter, toys, and love! AAARF will also provide you with a Foster Kit of supplies you may need during the foster period. This kit remains the property of AAARF and will be returned to AAARF if you discontinue fostering along with any and all equipment.

Is Fostering for You and Your Family?

Will you be able to spend quality time with the foster animal(s)? Socialization can be as important as feeding them and keeping them clean.

Are you willing to work with our vet care system? Please understand that foster cats/kittens are treated only by our shelter vet(s) or selected facilities. Some procedures are done for a substantial savings to our organization at selected facilities. Additionally, all medications must come from our sources only. If you choose to go to a vet outside our system without our prior consent (other than life-threatening emergencies) or get medications from outside our system, any cost incurred will be the foster parent's responsibility. However, NO medication should ever be given without prior authorization from the foster coordinator or medical support staff.

Do you feel comfortable explaining to friends that these animals are not yours to adopt out and that they must go through the regular adoption process at AAARF? They are not to be "promised" to anyone prior to being available for adoption.

Can you commit to spending the entire foster period with the animal? If something unexpected happens we will work to place the fosters in your care into another approved foster home.

Do you have a place you can keep your fosters separate from your own pets? This is essential for the health of your pets, as well as the foster cats/kittens. We recommend you discuss with your veterinarian the fact that you are planning to foster and any implications of exposure to your personal pets. Your own pets' vaccine history should be reviewed with your veterinarian as well.

As with anything else that involves change, there may be an adjustment period for you and your foster cat/kitten. Please be patient — many of our animals have come from rough situations and are frightened. Many times, their only way to communicate their fears is what we humans refer to as abnormal or deviant behavior. Some will hide, while others may exhibit any number of signals: inappropriate urination/defecation, growling, hissing, snapping (also called fear biting), cowering in corners, etc.

Your Responsibility as a Foster Parent

You will be responsible for keeping weekly or bi-weekly appointments with our foster coordinators to examine foster cats/kittens in your care and to provide medical treatment, vaccinations, and other preventive measures. This could be at different locations in the Auburn/Newcastle area.

Weekly reports on your foster cat/kittens progress and growth (i.e.: Weight) are necessary on our medical progress sheets. It is your responsibility to provide that information either via e-mail, telephone, or in person to the Foster Coordinator.

Communication is key, if foster cat/kittens have any medical problems or need assistance with anything, it is necessary to contact the Foster Coordinator immediately. Please try to make contact before the situation becomes an emergency or an after hours event, if possible. If it is necessary for your foster cat/kittens to see an outside veterinarian, an AAARF Foster Staff member will authorize the visit and direct you where to go.

Your Foster Manual provides guidelines for care and medical information. You are expected to follow these guidelines without exception.

Please keep fosters separated from your own pets at all times. At no time should your fosters mingle with your personal pets.

If you are fostering more than one litter of kittens they must be kept strictly separate. At **no time should kittens from other litters mingle with each other.**

If you have any changes in your status and ability to foster, please contact the Foster Coordinator.

When your foster cat/kittens are ready for adoption they will be moved to AAARF's adoption center until adopted. It is your responsibility to "let go" and make sure your family members (particularly younger ones) know that this will eventually have to happen.

Your knowledge of your cat/kitten(s) is instrumental for placing them into their forever home. You are required to provide a short written biography for each cat/kitten at the time of their spay/neuter appointment. A form will be provided to help get you started.

Foster Parent Supply Kit Checklist

- ⤴ Foster Manual
- ⤴ Scale
- ⤴ Thermometer (normal temp for cats is 99-101)
- ⤴ Vaseline or Lubricant
- ⤴ Heating pad/Heating Disc
- ⤴ Nail Clippers
- ⤴ Karo syrup
- ⤴ Cages (upon request)
- ⤴ Cat Carriers
- ⤴ Bedding – towels, blankets, etc. as necessary
- ⤴ Food
 - Dry Science Diet Cat/Kitten Food
 - Canned food (adult and/or kitten)
 - Can of pumpkin
 - Cat/kitten appropriate baby food – as necessary
 - Specialized food – A/D, W/D, kitten milk replacement, or other as necessary
- ⤴ Other items specific to individual cats/kittens such as bottles, nipples, bottle brushes.

Please ask a Foster Coordinator if you need any of these supplies and they will be provided to you. Foster supplies are the property of AAARF and should be returned to AAARF when fostering is completed.

* Do not use any medications without direction from an approved Veterinarian, Foster Coordinator or AAARF Medical Support Staff.

Acknowledgment of receipt of Foster Supplies:

Name	Signature	Date
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Bringing Your Fosters Home

1. Establish a separate area. Never mix litters or AAARF -kittens with your personal animals. Bathrooms, laundry rooms, and spare bedrooms work well. However, for healthy post quarantine cat/kittens, a cage in your home's common area is acceptable with Foster Coordinator's approval.
2. Keep accurate records. Week one can become week four before you know it.
3. Fosters should be weighed as soon as you get home, so you have your own beginning weight. The scale will be an indicator if your foster's eating, elimination, or energy habits change. Even if your foster is healthy, weekly weights need to be recorded at your bi-weekly appointments.
4. Food and water bowls should be refreshed twice a day so you can closely monitor their intake. Bowls should be thoroughly cleaned once a day.
5. The litter box is one of the most important tools you will use. Use clay or non-scoopable litter for kittens under three months. Kittens three months and older are normally ready for scoopable litter.
6. Kittens often have loose stools, especially after worming and dietary changes. However, it is never a good thing and should always be watched closely. It can be the first sign of a more serious condition. If you have multiple kittens in a litter, you may need to isolate each one, in order to determine which one has the problem. Always contact the Foster Coordinator if loose stools or diarrhea continues for more than 4 hours. Small kittens can dehydrate quickly. We may have you feed them W/D, pumpkin, or mix the kitten milk replacer a little stronger. You should never change their diet without first consulting the Foster Coordinator.
7. Cats/kittens may also experience vomiting. This can be an indication of serious illness and should be monitored. If your foster has repeated vomiting, please contact a Foster Coordinator.
8. Cleaning litter boxes, scoopers, and bedding requires a mix of water and bleach with a mix ratio of 32 parts water 1 part bleach. This solution is the most effective way to help stop the spread of communicable diseases. Litter boxes should have any debris or organic matter (dried feces) removed, cleaned with a detergent, and then disinfected with the bleach solution.
9. A separate litter box scoop is required for each litter of kittens if multiple litters and/or cats are fostered in one location. Do not use the same litter box scoop that you use for your own personal pets.
10. Cat carriers, cages, trees, toys, bedding, litter pans, and scoopers must all be thoroughly bleached in between litters.
11. Read "UC Davis Guide to Raising Orphan Kittens" in this manual prior to bringing home your first foster kittens.

Typical Bi-Weekly Appointment

1. Weight
2. Physical Exam
3. Preventative Medicine and treatments as needed:
 - a. Vaccinations (kitten vaccines are due every 21 days until 16 weeks old)
 - b. Dewormer(s) and/or miticide
 - c. Ears cleaned
 - d. Nails trimmed (you should do on opposite weeks)
 - e. Flea prevention
 - f. Blood tests

Foster moms report weekly weights and any other growth issues. Communication with your Foster Coordinator is key. Please make sure that you discuss concerns, ask questions, and indicate need for food and/or additional supplies, so that they can be ready and available at the time of your appointment.

ASN Drop Off/Pick Up Information

The Foster Coordinator will contact you prior to your kitties being scheduled for surgery at Animal Spay & Neuter Clinic.

Please let her know at that time when you will be dropping off and at what location. You are also responsible for letting her know at what location and what time you will be picking up your foster.

Prior to morning drop off, all cats/kittens can have unlimited dry food and water. Do not feed wet food 24 hours prior to drop off.

Drop Off:

- ✦ Please be at the Foster Coordinator's home by 7 AM the morning of appointment. If you live far from coordinator's home or the drop off time does not work with your schedule, drop off can be done the night or weekend before with prior arrangement with the Foster Coordinator.
- ✦ If dropping off at AAARF in Auburn, please arrive no later than 7:45 AM the morning of appointment. If the drop off time does not work with your schedule, please make sure to make prior arrangements with the Foster Coordinator.

Pick Up:

- ✦ Pick up time is between 5-6 PM from the Foster Coordinator's home.
- ✦ Auburn foster families need to pick up their cats/kittens from ASN between 4:30 and 5 PM.
- ✦ If you are unable to pick up your fosters during that time frame, please let the Foster Coordinator know. If you live far from Foster Coordinator's home and make prior arrangements, the cat/kittens may stay with the Foster Coordinator for the recovery period until ready for transportation to AAARF adoption center.
- ✦ Always feed your kitties when you get home. It is recommended to feed them canned food after surgery. Offer them a quiet, peaceful night while they recover. Most are up and running the next day. Try to limit jumping, climbing and rough play.
- ✦ Call the Foster Coordinator if you have any questions/concerns.

Important Contact Information for Foster Parents

Patrick Duffy – Coordinator Assistant/Medical Support (916) 485-8978 – home
(916) 416-6022 – cell
Pduffy69@live.com

Peri Oldham – Coordinator Assistant/Medical Support (916) 485-8978 – home
(916) 910-4699 – cell
pamperedpj66@yahoo.com

Caitlin Klein – Medical Support (916) 813-5755 – cell
caitlink9@hotmail.com

Cassie Reeves – Medical Support (530) 637-9413 – home
(530) 277-7702 – cell
Cassieandcats@wildblue.net

Veterinarian Partners

(authorization required)

Companion Veterinary Clinic

105 Auburn Folsom Road
Auburn, CA 95603
(530) 885-3251

North Fork Veterinary Clinic

12080 Locksley Lane
Auburn, CA 95602
(530) 887-9337

Animal Spay/Neuter Clinic

3524 KOA Way
Auburn, CA 95602
(530) 889-8800

Banfield the Pet Hospital

2375 Iron Point
Folsom, CA 95630
(916) 817-2538

Banfield Pet Hospital

920 Groveland Lane
Lincoln, CA 95648
916-543-2888

All veterinary visits must be approved in advance by AAARF approved staff.

Any sick or injured cat/kitten will be seen by an AAARF medical staff before scheduling vet appointments. Our medical staff can diagnose and treat most common ailments. We can also administer fluids and medication, as necessary. Most common ailments are lack of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea, high running temperature, and eye/nose discharges. If a cat/kitten is lethargic, that can be very serious. Always contact our medical staff if you have any concerns or questions.

Foster Vaccine and Medication Schedule

AAARF Preventative Medicine/Intake Protocols

Medication/Vaccine/Test	Cat Done during Intake	Kitten Age	Kitten Frequency	Notes/Comments
Droncit	Yes	5-6 weeks if tape worms seen, otherwise 6-8 weeks	Twice – 2 weeks apart	Drontal can be used in lieu of Droncit and Strongid in certain instances
Strongid	Yes – repeat in 2 weeks	4 weeks first dose	Every 2 weeks until 10 weeks	Kittens older than 10 weeks at intake: 2 doses 2 weeks apart
Marquis	Yes – one dose	6-8 weeks – 1 dose if no coccidia	See notes	Repeat if needed
Ivermectin injectable	Yes – if ear mites. Repeat in 2 weeks	6-8 weeks if ear mites	Once unless ear mites, then repeat in 2 weeks	
Flea Treatment/Preventative	Yes	5-6 weeks or earlier if indicated	Once	Repeat every 6-8 weeks while foster/shelter care
FVRCP Vaccine (MLV)	Yes, unless contra-indicated by vaccine hx records	6 weeks	Every 3 weeks until 16 weeks	**Kittens can be vaccinated at 4 weeks if they originate from a high-risk situation **Booster at 1 year after last kitten vaccine and every 3 years for adults
Leukemia Vaccine	Not used	Not used		
FeLV Test FeLV/FIV Test FeLV/FIV/HW Test	Yes – at intake FeLV/FIV/HW	At intake FeLV only		**2 week minimum and before ASN spay/neuter appt **Kittens can be batch tested in 2's or 3's at the most
Basic Blood Panel or other screening	Yes, if 8 yrs or older and/or otherwise indicated			For any cat/kitten when medically indicated
Fecal Test	As indicated	As indicated	PRN	Since prophylactic tx is given to all cat/kitten, a fecal test is done only when there are sxs unresponsive to normal parasite tx
Rabies	Yes	At 4 months		Annual vaccine for adults

All protocols are based on published best practices by UC Davis Shelter Medicine and American Association of Feline Practitioners

Common Medications

(to be used only at the direction of AAARF staff or a Veterinarian)

1. Albon: used for treatment of coccidian
2. Amoxicillin: Antibiotic
3. BNP w/ HC: used for treatment of eye problems
4. BNP w/o HC: used for treatment of conjunctivitis, eye problems
5. Clavamox: Antibiotic
6. Clindamycin: Antibiotic
7. Doxycycline: Antibiotic (*used most at the shelter due to cost and efficacy.*)
8. Droncit: used to eliminate tapeworms
9. Flagyl: treatment of coccidian and giardia
10. Frontline/Advantage: topical flea treatment
11. FVRCP (aka PRC): Feline Rhinotracheitis-Calici-Panleukopenia Vaccine
12. Ivermectin: used to treat ear mites and intestinal parasites
13. Lyme Dip: used to treat ringworm
14. Marquis Paste: used for treatment of coccidian
15. Metacam: NSAID (non steroidal anti-inflammatory drug)
16. Panacur: used to treat roundworm, hookworms
17. Panalog: Anti-Yeast/Anti-Fungal/Anti-Bacterial/Anti-inflammatory Cream or Ointment
18. Probios/Probiotic (powder or paste) - A source of live, naturally occurring microorganisms to replace those lost in the intestinal tract with digestive disorders or after antibiotic therapy, or deworming.
19. Revolution: topical flea/tick/earmite treatment.
20. Strongid: used to treat roundworms, hookworms
21. Terramycin: used for treatment of conjunctivitis, eye problems
22. Transfer Factor: used to boost immune system
23. Vitamins: complete vitamin supplement for cats
24. Zithromax: Antibiotic

Dehydration Estimation

Clinical Estimation of Degree of Dehydration

Degree of Dehydration	Clinical Signs
<5%	Not clinically detectable
5% to 6%	Subtle loss of skin elasticity
6% to 8%	1. Obvious delay in return of tented skin to normal position 2. Slightly prolonged capillary refill time 3. Eyes possibly sunken in orbits 4. Possibly dry mucous membranes
10% to 12%	1. Skin remains tented 2. Very prolonged capillary refill time 3. Eyes sunken in orbits 4. Dry mucous membranes 5. Possibly signs of shock (tachycardia, cool extremities, rapid or weak pulse)
12% to 15%	1. Obvious signs of shock 2. Death imminent

Calculating Daily Fluid Requirements:

- ⤴ Replacement Requirements: Fluid deficit = % dehydration x body weight (kg) x 10
- ⤴ Maintenance Requirements: Maintenance requirement = 40-60 mL/kg/day
- ⤴ Ongoing Losses: Losses in diarrhea and vomitus (estimated)

***Example: 5# cat (2.27 kg) 2 days of vomiting and diarrhea, 2 times/day.
Tented skin slowly returns to normal position.***

Replacement requirements: Fluid deficit = 8% dehydration x 2.27kg x 10 = **181.60mL**

Maintenance requirement = 40-60 mL/kg/day (50 x 2.27 = **113.50mL/day**)

Ongoing losses = Estimated vomitus & diarrhea 5mL x 2 days x twice daily = **20mL**

Daily fluid requirement = 181.60 + 113.50 + 20 = 315mL / 24 hours = 13mL/hr

References:

*Principles and Practice of Veterinary Technology – Paul W. Pratt (446)
(VETT-Fluid Replacement Requirements 07-2004)*

Medical Record Abbreviations

Δ – change

® - right

♀ - female

♂ - male

abd. – abdomen

d/c – discontinue or discharge

dx – diagnosis

fx – fracture

gtt. – drop

hx – history

n/v – nausea/vomiting

p.o. – by mouth

r/o – rule out

rx – medications

s/s – signs/symptoms

sx – symptom or surgery

tx – treatment

a.c. – before meals

p.c. – after meals

q – every

q.h. – every hour

s.i.d. – once daily

b.i.d – twice daily

t.i.d. – 3x daily

q.i.d. – 4x daily

EOD – every other day

ASA- aspirin

BAR-H – bright, alert, responsive-hydrated

Bilat- bilateral or both i.e. eyes, ears, etc.

BM- bowel movement

D5W- dextrose 5% in water (IV only)

GI- gastrointestinal

IM- intramuscular

IV-intravenous

L- left or L with circle around

LRS- lactated ringers solution

Lungs CTA- lungs clear to auscultation

NPO- nothing by mouth

NS- normal saline

NSF- No symptoms found

OD- right eye

Oral – mouth

OS- left eye

OU- both eyes

P.E.– physical exam

Pnk. Mm - Pink mucous membrane (mouth)

PRN- as needed

SQ or Sub. Q.- subcutaneous

T – temperature

URI– upper respiratory infection

UTI- urinary tract infection

WNL- within normal limits

WT-weight

Minimum Requirements for Adoption Release

Quarantine

- If a cat has come from a confirmed private home with no outdoor access and/or more than minimal exposure to other animals and we have complete up-to-date medical records adoption release can be immediate. Otherwise, a minimum 2-week quarantine is imposed with medical release by medical staff before adoption release.

Spay/Neuter

- Must be released for adoption by staff veterinarian post-surgery

Microchip

FeLV/FIV/HW test (FeLV only for age <4 mos)

FVRCP Vaccine (MLV)

- Kitten – Minimum of 2 vaccines starting at age 6 weeks administered q. 21 days until 16 weeks. Must have minimum 2 vaccines prior to spay/neuter w/ 2nd vaccine given at least 4 days prior to surgery.
- Adult – 2 vaccines if hx unknown. If hx of MLV vaccine is known, then q 3 years.

Rabies (age appropriate)

Parasite control

- Droncit
- Strongid/ivermectin
- Marquis
- Flea Treatment/Prevention (q 30-60 days while at shelter or in foster home)

Fecal - laboratory ova and parasites as indicated

Blood panels

- As indicated
- All cats >8 years have a baseline panel

Veterinary exam – ASN veterinarian exam during spay/neuter appointment

- Utilize specified clinics for additional services as well as a 24 hr emergency center and ophthalmologist. Each cat/kitten is seen by a medical support staff at a minimum:
 - ▲ On intake
 - ▲ Every 60 days while at shelter or in foster home

Resolution of any illnesses that occur while in the shelter. If the cat has an ongoing or chronic condition a hx and treatment plan/guidelines will be noted in the medical record.

Behavior evaluation and assessment

- Completed Profile as indicated for adult cats

UC Davis Guide to Raising Orphan Kittens

Information Sheet

Feline: Guide to Raising Orphan Kittens

Introduction

This protocol was adapted from the Pet's In Need foster handout.

Welcome to the team of dedicated Kitten Rescue Volunteers! Kittens under the age of 8 weeks need a mother – either a cat or a human surrogate. They are very vulnerable in a shelter and the chance to get them into a foster home within 24 hours is a chance to save their lives. The following guidelines will help you with the care of your kittens and will help you understand the policies and procedures of the foster care program. Please keep the following items on this list in mind before you agree to bring foster animals into your home.

- ⤴ A foster animal could potentially carry illness into your home that could affect your resident animals' (or humans') health.
- ⤴ To protect people, young children should not handle the foster kittens and everyone should wash their hands after handling animals, fecal waste, or litter boxes.
- ⤴ To protect other cats, foster animals should be separated from household pets for at least two weeks. This means that you should also prohibit the sharing of food and water bowls, litter boxes and toys.
- ⤴ Kittens should be de-fleaed before they enter your home and as often as necessary to keep fleas off of them, because fleas can spread disease among cats and to people.
- ⤴ You should **wash your hands** with soap and water before handling your own animals or children and you may also want to change clothes.
- ⤴ You should routinely disinfect the foster kittens' quarters and disinfect the entire premises before new kittens are introduced.
- ⤴ The best way to disinfect the area is to remove all organic material and fecal debris and then soak with a mild bleach solution (1 part bleach to 32 parts water) for at least 10 minutes. All surfaces, bowls, toys etc. need to be disinfected (so you probably want to keep kittens in a room without carpeting, hardwood floors and so forth).
- ⤴ It is best to have only litter at a time (rear the kittens in cohort groups) rather than constantly adding new kittens in with others. Keeping them in cohorts allows you to prevent disease mixing among cohorts and to disinfect between groups.
- ⤴ It is possible even with these precautions that resident cats could be exposed to mild infections such as URI. Ask the foster coordinator for more information if this is a concern

Supplies you will need before you bring home kittens

- ⤴ **Box or carrier**
You may want to use the carrier in which you took the litter home. It will provide a familiar-smelling, dark, quiet home for your foster kitties. However, a bigger box may be desirable, as it will allow you to see in, as well as provide plenty of room for the mother and the new, growing litter of kittens.
- ⤴ **Newspapers**
Keep several layers in the bottom of the box, and they will come in handy when the kittens start to roam around the room and into their litter box.
- ⤴ **Big litter box for mother cat (queen)**
- ⤴ **Small litter box for kittens**
An oblong cake pan is perfect. Cut-off cardboard boxes also work well.
- ⤴ **Cat litter**
Any non-clumping variety of litter will be fine. The clumping litter may be dangerous if ingested by a kitten.
- ⤴ **Water bowls**
Heavy and impossible to tip. Should be stainless steel or porcelain/ceramic, NOT plastic, as plastic is difficult to disinfect because it is so porous.
- ⤴ **Food bowls** (at least 2)
One is for the eat-at-will dry cat food, the other for canned food. You can use TV dinner trays, paper plates or whatever you have; any relatively flat plate or saucer will do. The larger the litter, the larger the plate should be so that no one gets crowded out.
- ⤴ **Food**

You should have both dry kitten chow, canned cat food (any brand for adults or kittens), and all-meat baby food (must not contain vegetables or onion powder). Offer several choices to weaned kittens to determine their preferences.

▲ **Heating pad, heating disc, hot water bottle, or infrared lamp**

"Unless the nursery is at least 85° and your kittens are 2 weeks or older, you need to supply extra heat. BE SURE THAT THE KITTENS HAVE ROOM TO MOVE AWAY FROM THE HEAT (leave room for mom if she is with them). For instance, if you are using a heating pad, place it under several towels, and make sure that it covers only half of the floor area of their box. The heating pad should be on "low" or "medium" to prevent overheating the kittens. Make sure to cover any electrical cords as well, so that the kittens are not tempted to play and bite on them. Alternatively hot water bottles or rice bags can be used as heat sources. These should also be covered by towels, and should be changed regularly to ensure that they stay warm for the kittens to snuggle up against."

▲ **Clean towels and blankets**

▲ **Toys**

Plastic, disinfectable toys are good to reuse for new litters. Kittens can also amuse themselves with empty toilet paper rolls. Empty 12-pack cardboard soda boxes are good for an inventive number of games. Clean tennis balls, old stuffed socks, caps from soda bottles and paper bags are marvelous toys as well. Young kittens do not respond to catnip, but mom will like it. Kittens will also "play" with anything they can find. Drapes, lamp shades and crystal ornaments are as much fun as the toys listed above. Be sure to "kittenproof" your home. As they grow, their climbing abilities will develop, so anything irreplaceable should be kept out of reach!

▲ **Scale**

Although not critical to success, a food or postal scale will be very helpful in monitoring small kittens' growth, which averages 4 ounces a week.

Care of the pregnant queen

If you are fostering a pregnant queen during her final week of pregnancy, it is important to remember she may not have a big appetite because the kittens are crowding her internal organs. Feed her several small meals daily, rather than one or two larger meals. Leave dry kitten food and water out at all times. It is virtually impossible to overfeed a nursing or pregnant queen. Food requirements increase up to three times the normal amount.

Prepare a birthing box. Place it in a dry, warm, relatively dark and out-of-the-way place, and put Mom in it. If she doesn't want to stay in it, don't insist, but you can encourage her by petting her and giving her little food treats. If your nursery room is not that warm, you can keep the box warmer by wrapping a heating pad in a towel, setting it on "low," and placing it under HALF of the box so that the mother and kittens can remove themselves from the heat source if they choose. One word of warning: you might consider wrapping duct tape or a cord protector around the cord, as the kittens tend to chew on it! Until the mother cat delivers, fill her litter box with shredded newspaper instead of cat litter. Many cats will deliver their kittens in the litter box. Newspaper provides a much cleaner environment for the cat and kittens than litter. Mom cannot clean the moist litter granules, which make a damp nest for the newborns. After the kittens are born, you can switch to your normal non-clumping litter.

The birth of kittens, or kindling

The majority of cats give birth with no problem or need for outside help. Before delivery, the queen may become irritable and restless. She will search for a place to have her kittens. Put her in the designated birthing box. She may choose not to have them there, so it helps to keep the box in a room with as few nooks and hiding places as possible. If she has her kittens outside of the birthing box, let her. When she is completely done with the delivery, move them all into the box. If the cat has had her kittens outside the box, don't worry about the "mess" - when she is finished she will normally clean up and leave very little evidence of the birth.

Some cats may want you to stay with them, and will try to follow you if you leave. You will probably have to spend some time with this kind of cat soothing her. Often after the birth of the first couple of kittens, she will be very busy and not so dependent on your presence. Other queens will try to get away from you and hide. Give her the space she needs, but keep checking in on her regularly. It is quite possible that you will miss the birth process entirely. You might wake up one morning or come home from work to find the new family born, dry, and nursing.

Stages of Feline Labor

The first stage may take 12 hours, during which the queen may purr and breathe rhythmically. She may become very active, try to dig at the floor, appear to be straining to use her litter box, and cry loudly.

In the second stage, the water breaks, and straw colored fluid is passed. A kitten will be delivered a few minutes later. The

queen will lick the kitten clean and bite through the umbilical cord. She is bonding with her kittens through this process, and learning to recognize them as her own. Do not disturb her. It may look as if her treatment is too rough, but she is actually stimulating breathing and blood circulation. Kittens should begin nursing between subsequent births.

In the final stage, the placenta follows a few minutes after delivery of a kitten. The mother will probably eat some or all of the placentas. Kittens are born anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes apart, so most deliveries take 2 to 6 hours. The average litter is 4 to 5 kittens. Larger litters of 6, 7, or more are unusual.

If a kitten is not born within 2 hours and the mother appears to be continually straining or in distress, call a veterinarian immediately. She may need a Caesarean or a drug called oxytocin to stimulate contractions. If the mother is content and happy, she is probably finished, though there have been cases in which a cat resumed delivery sometime later.

General care of kittens

1. Young kittens should be kept in a large box or cat carrier lined with a towel for easy cleaning. It is very important to keep the kittens warm, and a heating pad is ideal for this. The heating pad should be placed under HALF of the towel (so they can move away from the heat if they need to) and set on "low." The more kittens in your litter, the better able they will be to keep warm by sleeping together in a heap. Small litters and singletons need more help keeping warm. Keep kittens away from heaters or cold drafts.
2. If kittens are not urinating and defecating on their own (when they are less than 2 weeks old), they will need to be stimulated. This should be done every few hours (often right after feeding) by gently rubbing a warm wet paper towel on the kittens anus and genital area. They will pee and poop into the paper towel.
3. Keeping kittens clean. A mother works hard to keep her kittens clean, grooming them thoroughly to remove any sticky messes they may get into, such as kitten food or feces. Keeping kittens clean in the absence of their mother can be a messy business, but it is extremely important.

A flea comb will get rid of dried feces in the fur. You can also stroke a kitten with a warm, damp cloth, using short strokes to mimic a mother's tongue. Be sure to dry him well so he can't chill. Sometimes cat litter and dried feces can become caked on the underside of the tail or between the kitten's toes. This may be softened and removed by dipping the kitten's back end into a basin of warm water. Many kittens will not even notice that they are partially wet, but some will protest violently, and scramble to escape, so beware of sharp little claws!

Proper socialization

Any introductions of cats to other cats or cats to dogs should be made with great care and under constant supervision. Part of your job is to convince the kittens that humans are kind and loving. Outgoing, friendly kittens can be cuddled and played with freely, after spending a day or so to accustom themselves to a comfy box in a quiet room. Shy kittens will need more encouragement. Try sitting on the floor with a kitten held against your chest, supported underneath, and facing outwards, so he can't see how big and scary you are. Stroke him and speak gently, telling him how cute and brave and fabulous he is (kittens love to hear that!). Continue this for about 30 seconds, then put him down before he starts squirming. You want this to be a pleasant experience. The kitten will not be impressed, but if you cuddle him often enough, he will learn to love it. Sometimes holding a pair of kittens helps - they seem to reassure each other.

Feral kittens are a special challenge to socialize. The earlier feral kittens separate from their mother, the more likely they are to adapt to people. Even at 6 weeks, feral kittens can act like little tiger cubs. If your kittens are fearful and run away when you approach, try sitting or lying quietly on the floor near them and let them come to you. Spend time quietly in their presence to get them accustomed to your company. Stroke them and talk to them gently while they are eating to further reinforce positive associations. After 8 weeks of age, some people put kittens into solitary confinement briefly, which has the effect of making them very lonely and more willing to take comfort from a human. If they have the company of another cat, they are more likely to hide from you with the other cat. However, this practice can be cruel if the kittens are isolated for prolonged periods (more than a day).

There is no such thing as a "bad" kitten. Even if your litter doesn't enjoy being held and cuddled, if they will tolerate being stroked and don't cower under the sofa, they will make someone a wonderful pet. Not everyone wants an affectionate lap-cat. Many people prefer cats who are more independent and somewhat aloof companions.

Also, it is useless to punish a "naughty" kitten. Their little minds do not grasp deductive reasoning. Try distracting a mischievous kitten with something else until he forget whatever he was doing (it should not take long!).

Maintaining healthy growth of kittens

Commercially available kitten formula should be given at the kitten's body temperature, about 100 degrees. Once the can is opened or the powder reconstituted, unused formula should be kept refrigerated and discarded after 24 hours. NEVER give a kitten cow's milk (or anything else besides the specified formula).

It is best to feed the kittens one-by-one, and on a counter-top - this allows them to feed with all four feet on the counter, and their heads level, much as they would if they were nursing from their mom. Some kittens prefer to nurse standing on their hind legs while holding the bottle. They will require a little support from you in this position. Gently open a kitten's mouth with one finger and place the tip of the nipple on his tongue. If he won't eat, try stroking him. Pull lightly on the bottle to encourage vigorous sucking. Be sure to tilt the bottle up slightly to prevent the kitten from inhaling too much air. Do not force the kitten to nurse, or allow him to nurse too fast. Avoid feeding a kitten while he is cradled on his back - if the fluid goes down the wrong way, it may end up in his lungs.

After each feeding, the kitten should be burped. Hold him against your shoulder and gently massage his back or pat it lightly.

Overfeeding is as dangerous as underfeeding kittens! Keep an eye on your kittens at feeding time and monitor how much each is eating. If you see signs of diarrhea, separate them until you find out which one is sick. Your kittens will generally regulate their own food intake. If they need more food, they may whine or suck on their littermates. A good indication that they are getting enough to eat is the size of their bellies - they should be filled out after a meal, but not bloated. The next section of this protocol discusses amounts of food required at various stages of kitten hood.

Expectations and care required at each stage of kittenhood

WEIGHT CHART
AGE WEIGHT
At Birth 3.0 - 3.7 oz (90 - 110 grams)
Three - Four Weeks 11.7 - 15 oz (350 - 450 grams)
Eight Weeks 1.7 - 2.0 lbs (800 - 900 grams)
Kittens should gain 7 - 10 percent of their birth weight each day (10 - 15 grams).

A kitten must weigh 2 pounds and be 8 weeks old before it is adoptable.

<1 Week of age

Feeding: Bottle feed 1/2 tablespoon formula every 2 - 3 hours. If the queen is with the kittens, they should nurse vigorously and compete for nipples. Newborns can nurse up to 45 minutes at a time. Be sure to watch kittens nursing at least once a day, if mom cat will permit it. Check that everyone is nursing and that there isn't too much jockeying for position. A great deal of activity and crying could indicate a problem with milk flow, quality or availability. When mom cat reenters the box, there should be some fussing for only a few minutes before everyone has settled down to serious nursing.

Environment: The temperature of the nest box should be nice and warm: 85-90 degrees. Chilling is the number one danger to newborn kittens.

Behavior & Training: At one week of age, the kittens should weigh 4 oz., and should be handled minimally. Kittens will sleep 90% of the time and eat the other 10%.

1-2 Weeks of age

Feeding: Bottle feed formula per manufacturer's instruction every 2 - 3 hours until kittens are full but not bloated – usually kittens will consume at least 1/2 tablespoon of formula per feeding.

Environment: Floor temperature of the nest box should be nice and warm: 80-85 degrees.

Behavior & Training: Kittens at 2 weeks of age will weigh about 7 ounces. Ear canals open between 5 and 8 days.

Eyes will open between 8 and 14 days. They open gradually, usually starting to open from the nose outward. Short-haired cats' eyes will usually open earlier than those of Persian ancestry. All kittens are born with blue eyes, and initially no pupils can be distinguished from the irises - the eyes will appear solid dark blue.

Healthy kittens will be round and warm, with pink skin. If you pinch them gently, their skin should spring back. When you pick a kitten up, it should wiggle energetically and when you put it down near the mom it should crawl back to her. Healthy kittens seldom cry.

To determine ***the sex of the kittens, hold a kitten tummy-up in your hand. In females, the vulva is a vertical slit above the anus; they are very close together. In males, the penile opening is above the anus, but they are separated by a raised scrotal sac and thus seem far apart.*** It is easiest to see the differences between the sexes if you examine all the kittens and then find two who don't have matching equipment. Don't worry if it is still unclear; by the time the kittens are ready for permanent homes, their sex will be obvious.

2-3 Weeks of age

Feeding: Bottle feed formula per manufacturer's instruction every 2 - 3 hours until kittens are full but not bloated – usually kittens will consume at least 1/2 tablespoon of formula per feeding.

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

Behavior & Training: If there is a queen, she will begin to spend larger periods of time out of the nest, though she will not go far from it.

Kittens will weigh about 10 ounces. Their ears will become erect. Kittens begin to crawl around day 18. Kittens can stand by day 21. Kittens will begin to play with each other, biting ears, tails and paws even before their teeth have come in. Their milk teeth are cut during this period. Kittens learn to sit and touch objects with their paws.

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

3-4 Weeks of age

Feeding: Bottle feed formula per manufacturer's instruction every 2 - 3 hours until kittens are full but not bloated – usually kittens will consume at least 1/2 tablespoon of formula per feeding. At this stage kittens may start lapping from a bowl.

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

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

4-5 Weeks of age

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

If there is a queen present, she will usually begin weaning by discouraging her kittens from nursing; however, some cats (particularly those with small litters) will allow nursing until the kittens are old enough for permanent homes. Some nursing activity is the feline equivalent of thumb-sucking, that is, for comfort only. Even if kittens appear to be nursing, they may not

be getting all the nutrition they need from mom. Make sure they are eating food and gaining weight. Be sure that the kittens have access to fresh water in a low, stable bowl.

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

5-6 Weeks of age

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

Behavior & Training: At about five weeks, kittens can start to roam around the room, under supervision. They will weigh 1 pound and the testicles of male kittens will become visible. The strongest, most curious kitten will figure out how to get out of the nest. The others will quickly follow.

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

6-7 Weeks of age

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

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

7-8 Weeks of age

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

8+ Weeks of age

Feeding: Offer wet food 2 times a day. Leave down a bowl of dry kibble and water for them to eat and drink at will.

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

Keeping kittens healthy & recognizing common problems

A healthy kitten has bright eyes, a sleek coat, and a plump belly. Younger kittens are content to sleep between feedings. As they approach 8 weeks they begin to spend more time playing. Normal body temperature for a kitten is 100 - 102.5. Unfortunately, kittens do become ill and sometimes die while being fostered, so it is important to take steps to prevent

disease and treat it appropriately as soon as it appears.

A note about treating your kitten: In general, if you need to treat a kitten, try to medicate him in an impersonal way. If you hold the kitten in your lap to medicate him, he will associate being picked up with being medicated, and think the worst every time you go to cuddle him. It is better to put the kitten up on a counter top, maybe wrapping him in a towel to administer medication.

Recognizing illness:

If you have a sick kitten, you should always at least call a Foster Coordinator and discuss the problem. They may advise you to come in or provide advice over the phone.

One of the first steps you can take to evaluate your kitten's health is to take his temperature. To take the temperature of your kitten, you will need a regular human thermometer and some KY Jelly. Don't forget to shake down the mercury in the thermometer first. The wipe KY on the thermometer and insert just the tip into the kitten's anus. Hold it there for at least a minute and then read. If the kitten's temperature is over 103 or under 99, it is important to call the veterinarian.

Before leaving a veterinary facility, always ask for a copy of the treatment sheet. Information on this sheet is important for future follow-up treatment. If a foster kitten should die, you should keep the body cool but not frozen and transport it to the facility where it came from so that a full autopsy can be performed.

Abnormal signs to watch for in a kitten:

- ⤴ Runny discharge from the eyes or nose.
- ⤴ Lack of appetite
- ⤴ Lethargy (lack of energy)
- ⤴ Diarrhea lasting more than 3 or 4 feedings
- ⤴ Vomiting
- ⤴ Weight loss
- ⤴ coughing and sneezing

Emergencies requiring immediate veterinary attention

- ⤴ Continuous diarrhea
- ⤴ Continuous vomiting
- ⤴ Bleeding of any kind nose, urine, stool
- ⤴ Any trauma: hit by a car, dropped, limping, stepped on, unconscious.
- ⤴ Difficulty breathing.
- ⤴ A kitten that does not respond or that hasn't eaten for more than a day.

Specific disease conditions in kittens

Diarrhea

Diarrhea is common in kittens and be caused by parasites, viruses, bacteria, food changes, stress, overfeeding, and other causes. If the diarrhea is mild and the kitten is otherwise alert and playful, you can try giving it less food but more often, and if it is over 4 weeks old, you can add 1/8 teaspoon of Metamucil to the food to help get rid of the diarrhea. Because kittens can become dehydrated very quickly, when a kitten has diarrhea it is a good idea to give the kitten a few drops of Depilate to prevent dehydration. If the diarrhea is severe, lasts more than 3 or 4 feedings, or contains blood or obvious parasites, you should call a veterinarian and bring in as much as possible of the feces in a Ziploc bag.

One of the causes of diarrhea that may be detected by microscopic examination in coccidiosis, due to the protozoan *Eimeria* spp. This single celled parasite is most common in kittens, but occasionally found in adults. Treatment will consist of about ten days of medication in either liquid or pill form. If the symptoms of coccidiosis persist following treatment, an effort will be made to identify other possible causes of diarrhea. *Eimeria* can be spread to other cats, but often does not cause clinical symptoms. It does not spread to people.

Two other protozoa which are very important in kitten diarrhea are *Cryptosporidium* and *Giardia*. Also human pathogens, these protozoa produce watery diarrhea which can spread among all other cats, sometimes resolve without treatment, and

sometimes require specific medication. Both can be diagnosed provided the veterinarian receives fresh feces. Several large worms can be found on the feces of cats, although few actually cause diarrhea. Kittens can get roundworms ("spaghetti") from their mothers. These worms can come up in vomitus or stool. The cysts of roundworms can persist for years in soil and be spread to other cats or human children, so it is important to deworm cats as directed by a veterinarian or shelter medical director. Cats can also get whipworms, which actually do produce diarrhea. Even if large worms are not seen in the feces, sometimes microscopic examination can indicate the cysts.

Cats will sometimes have tapeworms either on their feces or anus ("rice"). These are spread by fleas or by eating rodents. Although they are not causes of diarrhea and cause relatively little harm, most people seek medication to get rid of the tapes. The bacteria Salmonella, Campylobacter, Clostridium, and others are all implicated in kitten diarrhea and all require microscopic examination and/or bacterial culture for diagnosis. These and some other fecal pathogens can be spread to people if you are not careful enough hand washing. Most bacteria respond to antibiotics prescribed by a veterinarian. Finally, there are a number of viral causes of diarrhea, with panleukopenia being the most devastating. If panleukopenia is suspected, you may have a number of kittens die and you may have to temporarily suspend fostering until the kitten areas can be thoroughly disinfected with bleach. Older cats are rather well-protected with commercial panleukopenia vaccines.

Ear Mites

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

Fading Kittens

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

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

Feline Leukemia (FeLV) and Feline immunodeficiency (FIV)

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

Fleas

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

The Life Cycle of the Flea

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

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

The larvae can develop into adult fleas in 5 days. Adult fleas prefer furry animals, but may feed on people. The common flea is hardy; it can live up to 4 months without feeding, and has a life span of up to 2 years. Fleas feed on their animal hosts, but spend most of their time off the animal. For every flea that you see, there are probably at least 100 lurking somewhere else in your home. Fortunately, the adult flea is the most sensitive to flea products.

Good Reasons to Control Fleas

Fleas harbor tapeworms. Most dogs and cats will eat a flea or two while grooming themselves and repeatedly become

infested with tapeworms. A large part of tapeworm control involves flea control.

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

How to Control Fleas

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

If the kitten is less than 6 weeks old and heavily infected, a flea bath may be necessary to save its life. The kitten must be warm at all times. Use warm water and immediately towel it dry afterwards. Then follow up with a warm hair dryer until the kitten is completely dry. Use a shampoo labeled as safe for kittens. You can also use flea powder mixed in equal amounts of talcum powder, or a 2.5 % carbaryl powder product.

If the Kitten is 4 Weeks old and 2Lbs or more Capstar can be given orally up to once a day to kill adults fleas. This product starts to work within 90 minutes and is effective against adult fleas for 4-6 hours. It does not have any affect on, eggs, larva, or other adult fleas in the kittens environment.

If the cat is older than 6 weeks, * you can use topical one-time/month applications available from a veterinarian.

All bedding needs to be washed in hot soapy water as soon as fleas are spotted.

The most effective way to remove eggs from the house is by using a vacuum cleaner. The vacuum bag should first be treated by placing flea powder, a piece of flea collar, or flea spray inside it. The bag should be emptied immediately after vacuuming. To kill adults and larvae, the house can be treated with flea foggers or sprays, boric acid products, or other commercial products.

Upper respiratory infection (URI)

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

Signs of URI to watch out for:

- ^ Sneezing and discharge from eyes or nose
- ^ Congested breathing
- ^ Loss of appetite
- ^ Lethargy
- ^ Dehydration

Vomiting

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

Reference: http://www.sheltermedicine.com/portal/is_caring_orphaned_kittens.shtml



Socializing Feral Kittens **Tompkins County SPCA** *Feral Cat Series*



Kittens who are not exposed to humans early in their lives learn from their mothers and quickly become feral. However, if they are caught and handled at a young enough age, feral kittens can be socialized and placed in loving homes.

Remember that spay/neuter is the single most important thing you can do to help feral cats. It is best to alter as many cats in a colony as possible before you begin socializing.

Kittens under four weeks old can usually be socialized in a matter of days, and kittens up to eight weeks old can take approximately two to four weeks to socialize. 10-12 weeks old kittens can also be tamed, but it may take longer. Taming feral kittens over 12 weeks old can be difficult and they may never be fully socialized to people.

Getting Started

- ✦ Kittens cannot be socialized while they are still in their colony. They must be brought inside and confined so you have regular access to them. If you cannot do this, have the kittens altered and return them to their colony.
- ✦ Kittens can be taken from their feral mothers when they begin weaning-at approximately four weeks of age. To determine a kitten's age, see our fact sheet "*Basic Kitten Care.*"

Housing the Kittens

- ✦ You will need to confine the kitten(s) at first, preferably in a dog crate, large pet carrier, cat condo, or cage. If you do not have a cage or carrier, you can keep the kittens in a small room. Be sure to block up anything they could crawl into or under and remove anything that could injure them.
- ✦ Do not let feral kittens run loose in your house. They can hide in tiny spaces and are exceptionally difficult to find and coax out. In addition, a large room can be frightening and hinder the taming process.
- ✦ If possible, kittens should be separated from each other to facilitate taming. Left together, one kitten can become outgoing and playful while another remains shy and withdrawn. If you cannot separate them, the kittens can be housed together, but be sure to spend time alone with each one.
- ✦ The cage should contain a small litter box, food and water dishes, and something to cuddle in like a towel or piece of your clothing.

Socializing

- ✦ Food is the key to taming. Make dry kitten food available at all times and give the kitten a small amount of wet food at least twice a day. The kitten may hesitate to eat in your presence at first, but be patient. Eventually the kitten will associate your presence with food.

- ⤴ Chicken-flavored baby food is a special treat that almost no kitten can resist.
- ⤴ How soon you begin handling the kitten depends on the kitten's age and temperament. Older kittens and those who are more feral are harder to handle. With these kittens, start by offering baby food or wet food on a spoon through the cage. Once they are used to this, you can begin handling them.
- ⤴ Younger and less feral kittens can be picked up right away. Wear gloves if you will feel more comfortable, as it is important to be confident and gentle when picking up any animal. Wrap the kitten in a towel allowing her head to stick out. Offer baby food or wet food on a spoon. If she does not respond, dab a tiny bit on the end of her nose. Once she tastes it, she will soon want more.
- ⤴ When petting a feral kitten, approach from behind his head. Gradually begin to pet the kitten's face, chin, and behind the ears while talking gently. Try to have several feeding/petting sessions (15-20 minutes) with each kitten as many times a day as you can.
- ⤴ Progress will depend on the kitten's age and temperament. Each day you will notice improvement-falling asleep in your lap, coming towards you for food, meowing at you, purring, and playing are all great signs. Once the kitten no longer runs away from you but instead comes toward you seeking to be fed, held and pet, you can confine her to a small, kitten-proofed room rather than a cage. Siblings can also be reunited at this point.
- ⤴ Expose the kittens to a variety of people. Everyone should use low voices at first, and approach the kittens in a non-threatening manner.

Important Tips

- ⤴ Handle feral kittens cautiously-nails and teeth are sharp.
- ⤴ Do not give kittens cow's milk-it can make them sick.
- ⤴ Once the kitten is willing to play, offer toys and use a string (not yarn) or a cat dancer for him to chase. Do not let the kitten bite, scratch or play with your hand.
- ⤴ If the kittens are staying awake at night, try to play and socialize with them more during the day and cover their cage(s) at night with a towel or blanket.
- ⤴ Leave a television or radio on (not too loud) during the day so the kittens get used to



human voices.

Tompkins County SPCA
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Diseases/Ailments

Ringworm FAQ

We are providing you with this information on ringworm because there is a very slight possibility the cat or kitten you adopted today has been exposed to ringworm. At AAARF we do everything medically possible to ensure your new pet does not have ringworm. However, because ringworm can exist in the environment around all of us, we feel it is important to inform you of the remote possibility that your cat or kitten has been exposed to ringworm and could develop a ringworm blister.

What Is Ringworm?

Worms don't cause ringworm. Rather, this superficial skin infection, also known as tinea, is caused by fungi called dermatophytes. Fungi are microscopic plants that can live off the dead tissues of your skin, hair, and nails, much like a mushroom can grow on the bark of a tree.

Ringworm is characterized by a red ring of small blisters or a red ring of scaly skin that grows outward as the infection spreads. Though children are especially susceptible to catching ringworm, it can affect adults as well.

What Causes It?

Ringworm is caused by a fungus that grows on the skin. Once the fungus is established, it spreads out in rings. The center of the ring may clear up, while a new ring of infection develops at the edge of the old ring.

Children are most likely to get ringworm. Ringworm of the scalp can spread from child to child when children share hats, combs, or brushes. Ringworm of the body can be spread on towels, clothing, or sports equipment. Personal hygiene is important in preventing the spread of ringworm. Dogs and cats can be infected with ringworm, too, and they can pass it to people through direct contact.

What Are the Symptoms?

Ringworm of the scalp:

- ⤴ Dry, brittle hair or hair loss in patches.
- ⤴ Severe itching.
- ⤴ Red-ringed patch of small blisters or scaly skin.

Ringworm of the body:

- ⤴ Red-ringed patch of small blisters or scaly skin.
- ⤴ Severe itching.

Call your doctor if you have a red-ringed skin infection, severe itching of the skin or scalp, a scaly rash or hair loss.

How Do I Know If I Have It?

Your doctor will probably recognize ringworm's characteristic rash. However, he or she may also:

- ⤴ Look at the infection with a special ultraviolet light that can detect traces of fluorescent materials that occur in a ringworm infection.
- ⤴ Scrape an area of involved skin and look at the sample under the microscope.
- ⤴ Take a culture to find out which fungus is causing the infection in order to select the most effective antifungal medicine.

What Are the Treatments?

Your doctor may prescribe an antifungal medication. These drugs work to kill fungus and prevent it from coming back. You may spread the antifungal on your skin as a medicated shampoo, powder, cream or lotion; or you may take a pill so the medicine can spread throughout your body. Your doctor may prescribe a combination of these treatments.

Many antifungal medications, such as miconazole, are available over the counter at a lower dose and a less expensive price. Ask your doctor whether you can use one of these or whether prescription-strength medicine is necessary.

How Can I Prevent Ringworm?

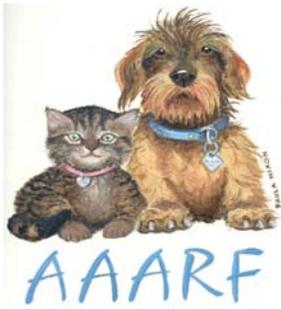
Good personal hygiene helps prevent the spread of ringworm. Teach your child to practice good hygiene and generally not to share combs, brushes, or hats. Children also shouldn't share towels, clothes or sports equipment that haven't been properly cleaned.

Wash all surfaces with bleach and water and then soap and water. (1 part bleach to 10 parts water)

Ringworm also can be transmitted from an infected dog or cat, so avoid animals who look mangy or have bald spots in their coats. If you have an animal that you think may have ringworm, take it to your veterinarian for treatment.

Medically updated by Cynthia Haines, MD, WebMD, August 2005.

SOURCES: American Academy of Family Physicians.



Auburn Area Animal Rescue Foundation ***The “F” Words***

*What you should know about these
feared diseases in cats*

Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV)

Feline leukemia is a viral disease seen only in cats. It is not transmissible to humans (even children) or to any other species, such as dogs. FeLV is caused by a type of virus, called a retrovirus, which infects the cat's cells and re-programs them to continually produce copies of the virus. This produces a condition in the cat called persistent viremia, which makes the disease impossible to cure. Since the virus is in the blood, saliva, mucus, urine, and feces of infected cats, any contact by an uninfected cat with these body fluids can result in transmission of the virus. Fighting, sharing food and water bowls, sharing litter boxes, and mutual grooming are the most common means of transmission. There are three types of blood tests available to test for FeLV. Although a variety of treatments have been tried, presently there is no effective cure for feline leukemia. The cat should be supported with good nutrition, a low-stress environment and regular veterinary care at the first sign of illness. There is a vaccine for feline leukemia, but you and your veterinarian should decide together whether or not to vaccinate your cats. Most cats survive less than two years following diagnosis. How long a particular infected cat will live is impossible to predict. Since the disease affects the immune system, close monitoring for signs of illness and prompt treatment of these illnesses can help prolong the cat's life.

AAARF uses the ELISA test and tests all cats/kittens upon arrival at our facility.

For more information: <http://www.bestfriends.org/theanimals/pdfs/cats/CatFeLV.pdf>

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)

Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) is very similar to the virus that causes AIDS in humans. However, the virus seen in cats is in no way transmissible to humans or dogs. FIV is shed in the saliva of infected cats, so the disease is spread through bite wounds. The disease is seen more often in un-neutered stray or feral male cats, since fighting is more common among these cats. Transmission can also occur from an infected mother to her kittens, either while in the womb or through ingestion of milk during nursing. A simple blood test called ELISA is used to diagnose FIV. Although there is no specific treatment for FIV, infected cats can live long and healthy lives. It is important to keep these cats up-to-date on vaccinations, feed them a high-quality diet, and seek veterinary treatment at the first sign of illness. Since the disease is spread by bite wounds, you can safely keep an FIV-positive cat with FIV-negative cats if the cats get along well together. If you have a cat with FIV, remember to work closely with your veterinarian regarding vaccinations and health care. There is currently a vaccine available for FIV, but you and your veterinarian should decide together whether or not to vaccinate your cats. Remember, too, that FIV-positive cats can live long, happy lives with proper care.

AAARF uses the ELISA test and tests all age appropriate cats for FIV upon arrival at our facility.

For more information: <http://www.bestfriends.org/theanimals/pdfs/cats/catfiv.pdf>

Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP)

Feline infectious peritonitis is a very devastating disease in cats caused by a corona virus. There are two forms of the disease: the wet form and the dry form. Cats of any age can be affected, but the disease occurs most often in young cats from six months to five years of age. Diagnosis by laboratory testing can be difficult since most cats naturally have the corona virus that causes the disease. What causes the development of the disease signs is the cat's immune response to the virus. For this reason, FIP is not considered to be a contagious disease in the traditional sense. There is a laboratory test, but a positive test merely means that the cat has a corona virus, not that the cat will develop the disease. Once the cat is showing clinical signs, there is no cure. Cats infected with FeLV and/or FIV are more prone to develop clinical FIP. Despite supportive care, all cats that develop clinical signs of the FIP virus will die or will need to be humanely euthanized. The incidence of clinical disease is low in most cat populations and especially low in single-cat households. The disease prevalence is highest in multi-cat facilities or households. There is a vaccine available for FIP, but its efficacy is low and therefore it cannot be relied upon to prevent the disease.

With the absence of a reliable test for FIP AAARF adheres to the protocols recommended by Shelter Medicine experts for isolating and maintaining the health of kittens to minimize risk of FIP exposure.

For more information: <http://www.bestfriends.org/theanimals/pdfs/cats/CatFIP.pdf>

Panleukopenia

(AKA Parvo, Distemper)

Panleukopenia virus causes vomiting, diarrhea and can cause sudden death in cats. The virus is transmitted primarily by the fecal-oral route (including through exposure to objects/clothing/hands contaminated with virus from feces). Panleukopenia is very durable unless inactivated by an effective disinfectant and can persist in the environment for months or even years. The incubation period is generally less than 14 days, and cats may shed infectious virus for 2-3 days before signs are observed. Kittens are at highest risk for this disease, and adult cats with current vaccinations are at very low risk. Control is dependent on effective vaccination, keeping cats separated during the time they may be incubating the disease, and careful cleaning and disinfecting of all areas in which cats are housed.

Recognition/diagnosis Signs include:

- ⤴ Vomiting
- ⤴ Diarrhea
- ⤴ Dehydration
- ⤴ Sudden death/found dead in cage (especially suspicious in adolescent to adult cats with or without concurrent URI).

Diagnosis may include:

- ⤴ Symptoms and exposure history
- ⤴ Positive results on a Parvo snap test

Cleaning and disinfection:

- ⤴ Panleukopenia is very durable in the environment and is reliably inactivated only by bleach* or potassium peroxymonosulfate
- ⤴ Most quaternary ammonium disinfectants (e.g. Triple Two, Parvosol, Roccal) do not reliably kill panleukopenia virus
- ⤴ Alcohol hand sanitizers do not kill panleukopenia virus.

Use and change gloves or wash hands well with soap and water after handling suspect cases.

* Notes on bleach: Bleach must be applied to a clean surface to be effective. 5% household bleach should be freshly diluted at 1:32 (1/2 cup per gallon). Correct dilution is very important, too weak is ineffective, too strong is overly corrosive and irritating to cats and humans. Spray bottles should be non-see-through plastic, as bleach is inactivated by light. Bleach solution should be made up fresh using newly purchased bleach, as solution becomes inactivated with storage.

Zoonotic Diseases

Zoonotic diseases in animal shelters: considerations for shelter professionals

A zoonotic disease is an infection that is naturally transmitted from vertebrate animals to human beings. Potential zoonotic agents include bacteria, viruses, fungi, internal parasites and arthropods.

An overview of *some* zoonotic diseases of importance in a shelter environment.

Zoonotic diseases found in the gastrointestinal tract of animals

<u>Disease Name</u>	<u>Shelter species most commonly infected</u>
Campylobacteriosis	Dogs, cats, many other mammalian and avian species.
Echinococcosis- Hydatid disease	Dogs
Giardiasis	Dogs (reported prevalence up to 25-36% in dogs with diarrhea), cats.
Hookworm (Ancylostomiasis)	Dogs, cats
Roundworm (Toxocariasis)	Dogs, cats, raccoons.
Salmonellosis	Reptiles, many other species, including dogs, cats, birds and livestock.
Toxoplasmosis	Cats.

Zoonotic skin diseases

<u>Disease Name</u>	<u>Shelter species most commonly infected</u>
Cheyletiellosis	Cats, rabbits, dogs.
Ringworm (Dermatophytosis)	Dogs (young animals, Persian cats and Yorkshire terriers at greater risk).
Scabies (Sarcoptic mange)	Dogs, cats

Zoonotic diseases spread by bites and scratches

<u>Disease Name</u>	<u>Shelter species most commonly infected</u>
Bartonellosis (Cat Scratch Fever)	Cats, Kittens.
Dog and Cat Bites (Pasteurella and Capnoytophagia infection)	Dogs, and Cats.
Rabies	Most warm blooded animals can be infected.

Miscellaneous zoonotic diseases

<u>Disease Name</u>	<u>Shelter species most commonly infected</u>
Kennel Cough (Bordetellosis)	Dogs, cats
Leptospirosis	Dogs (cats uncommonly affected)

For more information on any of the above mentioned diseases go to www.sheltermedicine.com