



Cat & Kitten Foster Manual



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Introduction

Friends of Strays relies heavily on our foster parents to prepare our kittens and puppies for adoption. It is very important that during their most critical weeks of development, they are in a low stress and safe environment.

Is fostering right for you:

- Are all of your pets up to date on their vaccinations?
- Do you have a space available to keep the cats/kittens separate from your pets?
- Are you able to bring the foster cats/kittens in to the shelter for vaccinations or as requested by our veterinary staff?
- Are you able to dedicate the necessary time for feeding, cleaning, and socializing?

Preparing to bring your foster cat/kitten home

Before bringing your foster cat or kitten home, you will need to prepare a safe and suitable space for them that meets the following criteria:

- Small room or crate/playpen (will be provided by FOS) that has been disinfected with rescue cleaning solution
- Separate from other pets
- No small or breakable items
- All items in room should be able to be easily cleaned, including bedding, bowls, and litter box
- Litter box should be placed as far away from food and water bowl as possible



Caring for your foster kittens

Feeding

Adult cats (over 1 year) get a measured 1/3 cup of dry food once a day as well as 1 tbsp wet food twice a day. Mom cats should have unlimited dry food throughout the day.

Weaned kittens should be fed 1tbsp of wet food 3 times a day and dry food left out at all times.

Bottle fed kittens should be fed according to the feeding chart on page 7.

Fresh water should be provided at all times.

Cleaning

All food and water bowls should be cleaned daily (metal bowls work best). Litter boxes should be scooped several times a day and litter completely replaced as necessary.

In between foster cats or groups of kittens, area should be completely disinfected with bleach or rescue cleaning solution and all bedding, toys, litter boxes and bowls cleaned thoroughly.

Socializing

It is very important that kittens are well socialized at a young age. Kittens should be socialized at least twice a day for 20-30 minutes minimum. Shy or under-socialized kittens may require significantly more time each day to help them learn to trust people and prepare them for adoption. If a kitten is shy or fearful, go slow and let them come to you. It works best to simply sit on the floor and let them get used to your presence. You can use food and toys to encourage them to interact with you.

Adult cats may take some time to warm up to their new surroundings and foster parents. If a cat is exhibiting signs of fear (ears back, crouching or hissing), let them go at their own speed and provide a safe and quiet place for them to hide (hide-a-box works well). Let them decide when they are comfortable enough to come to you and when they do, make it a positive experience with treats and toys.



Daily Monitoring

Kitten(s) should be checked every day for any changes or medical issues. Notify the medical department if you notice any of the following:

- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Open mouth breathing
- Nasal discharge
- Hair loss
- Lethargy
- Watery eyes

Kittens should be weighed at the same time every day and weight recorded in your journal. If you notice any weight loss, contact the foster coordinator or medical department.

Emergencies

If your foster cat/kitten exhibits any of the following, please contact the medical department during the hours of 8am-6pm.

After hours please call Mari (Shelter Director) at 727-485-6644

Example of emergencies:

- Injury -Open mouth breathing -not breathing
- Aspirated while bottle feeding -dehydrated -Sever vomiting and diarrhea



Week to Week Expectation Guide

Week #	Feeding	Development
0-1 Week	<p>If bottle fed, should be eating every 2-3 hours. See chart on page 7 for amount.</p> <p>If there is a mom cat, make sure that each kitten is getting adequate nursing time.</p>	<p>Kittens cannot regulate their temperature at this age, so bedding needs to be 85-90 degrees. If mom is not present, use heating pad or disc. There should always be a layer of bedding on top of the heating pad.</p> <p>Handle minimally.</p>
1-2 Weeks	<p>If bottle fed, should be eating every 2-3 hours. See chart on page 7 for amount.</p> <p>If there is a mom cat, make sure that each kitten is getting adequate nursing time.</p>	<p>Temperature in bedding area should be between 80-85 degrees. Place device under half of their bedding, so they can move to a cooler spot if needed. Eyes begin to open between 8-14 days old.</p> <p>Handle minimally.</p>
2-3 Weeks	<p>If bottle fed, should be eating every 3-4 hours. See chart on page 7 for amount.</p> <p>If there is a mom cat, make sure that each kitten is getting adequate nursing time. She will begin to spend more time away from the litter.</p>	<p>Temperature in bedding area should be between 75-80 degrees. Place device under half of their bedding, so they can move to a cooler spot if needed. Ears will become erect and kittens will start to crawl. Slowly begin socializing.</p>



Week #	Feeding	Development
3-4 Weeks	If bottle fed, should be eating every 4 hours. Overnight feeding is no longer necessary. See chart on page 7 for amount.	Kitten will begin to defecate on their own and groom themselves.
4-5 Weeks	Begin weaning kittens at this age. Feed KMR every 5-6 hours (they may lap from bowl) and gradually mix in warmed can food to create gruel. See chart on page 7 for amount. If mom cat is present, she may start to discourage nursing and spending more time away from kittens.	Kitten should be around 1 lb. Litter box training should begin by using a shallow litter box with clay litter (do not use clumping litter as it can be harmful if ingested).
5-6 Weeks	Gruel should be fed 4 times a day. See chart on page 7 for amount. Gradually thicken the gruel and introduce dry food and water.	Kittens need to be handled and socialized as much as possible.



Week #	Feeding	Development
6-7 Weeks	Feed canned food 4 times a day and leave dry food and fresh water out at all times. See chart on page 7 for amount.	Kittens are playing, jumping, climbing and begin to use scratching posts. Continue to socialize and encourage play as much as possible.
7-8 Weeks	Feed canned food 3 times a day and leave dry food and fresh water out at all times. See chart on page 7 for amount.	Continue to socialize and encourage play as much as possible.
8+ Weeks	Feed canned food 3 times a day and leave dry food and fresh water out at all times. See chart on page 7 for amount.	Kitten should be around 2 lbs. If so, they are ready to come back to Friends of Strays and be made available for adoption.



Feeding chart

Week #	Weight	Amount per feeding	Schedule
0-1 Week	50-150 grams	2-6 ml	Every 2 hours
1-2 Weeks	150-250 grams	6-10 ml	Every 2-3 hours
2-3 Weeks	250-350 grams	10-14 ml	Every 3-4 hours
3-4 Weeks	350-450 grams	14-18 ml	Every 4-5 hours
4-5 Weeks	450-550 grams	18-22 ml	Every 5-6 hours
5-8 Weeks	550-850 grams	One tablespoon of wet food/leave out dry food	Every 6 hours (not overnight)



Caring for bottle fed kittens (newborn-4 weeks old)

Fostering bottle babies is an amazing and rewarding experience. This manual will help you care for these kitties each step of the way. In addition, you will be provided with a Orphan Kittens manual: A guide to saving the tiniest felines.

Small kittens, especially when separated from mom at an early age, are very fragile and need to be monitored closely. If unsure about a kitten's development, eating habits, or general health, please contact the foster coordinator or medical department.

Safe Space

Kittens under 3 weeks should be kept in a small and enclosed space, such as a top-opening carrier. They are not able to regulate their temperature at this age, so a heating pad or disk should be used to keep them warm. It should be placed under half of the bedding in the carrier so the kittens are able to move to another spot if they are too warm. If heating pad is used, it should always be set to the lowest setting. A stuffed animal (with battery-operated heartbeat) can be used to comfort smaller kittens who have been separated from mom too early.

Kittens over 3 weeks old can move to a playpen for more space. A shallow litter box should be offered at this age.



Feeding

Kittens should be fed KMR formula, mixed according to the instructions on the container. Always test the temperature of the formula on the inside of your wrist: it should be slightly warmer than your body temperature. Bottles or syringes can be used with the miracle nipple, depending on preference.

The kitten should be positioned belly down on a table or your lap. Elevate the head and hold it steady with your non-dominant hand. Let the kitten latch onto the nipple and drink at its own pace. Do not squeeze the bottle or syringe as this may cause aspiration. Feed according to age and weight on the feeding chart. Kitten will need to be fed every few hours, according to the Expectation guide. Record the frequency and amount of each feeding, along with their weights in a journal to monitor how much they gain.

Potty Time

Mama cats typically stimulate their babies to urinate and defecate. You will need to replicate this behavior, as well as keep the area clean. A soft tissue can be gently rubbed on the kitten's genitals in a circular motion to stimulate them. This should be done every time they eat. The kitten should pee every time, but may only poop a couple of times a day. Once they have urinated and defecated, use an unscented wet wipe to clean the area. Diarrhea can be a big issue with small kittens, so it is important to make sure their poops are normal. A healthy poop will be brown or yellow and should be fairly solid or a little soft, but not loose or liquid.



Saying Goodbye

When your kittens are 2lbs, they will be ready to come back to the shelter. They will be spayed/neutered and then available for adoption. Like most fosters, you will have bonded with the animal(s) and it will be difficult to say goodbye, but remember that goodbye is the ultimate goal of fostering. Because of your hard work, these cats/kittens will be healthy and well socialized and will find the perfect forever home.

Much of the information in this manual was modified from Maddie's Fund Foster Kitten Handbook, Best Friends Kitten Foster Manual, and Life-Saving Foster Care Guide from Charleston Animal Society.



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