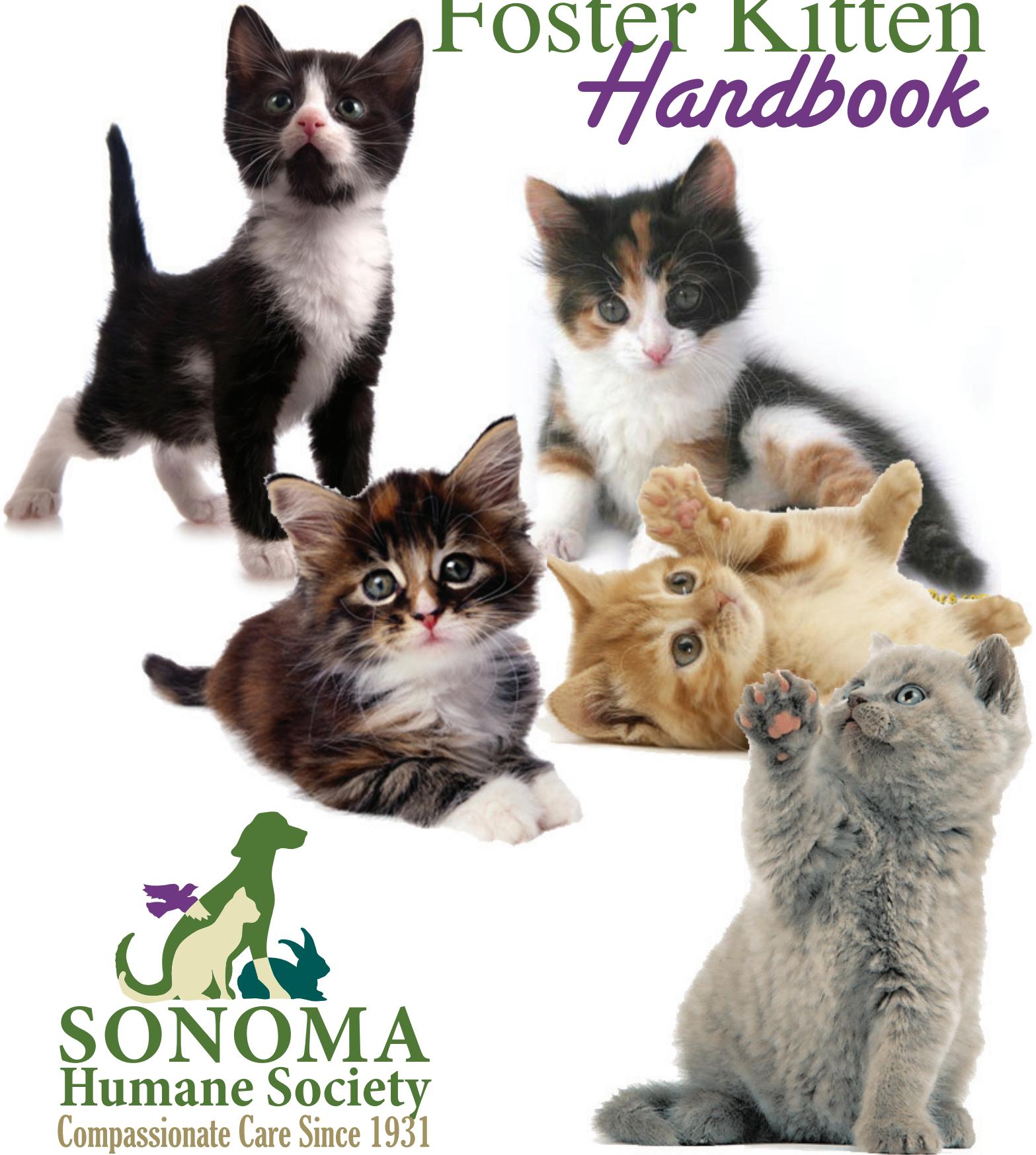


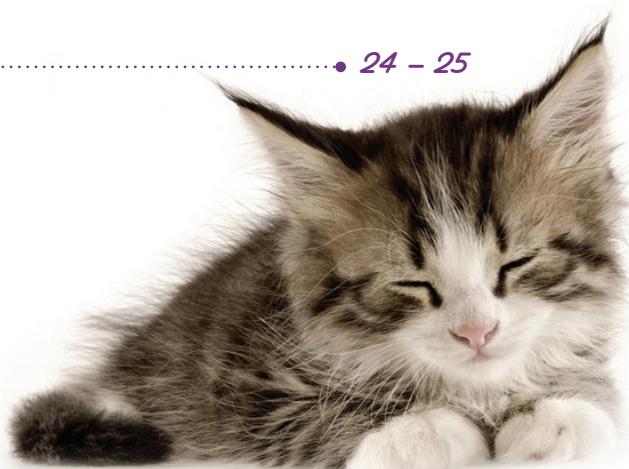
# Foster Kitten Handbook





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Welcome and Introduction .....	• 4 – 5
Overview	
Procedures for Pickup and Return	
Safeguarding All the Animals .....	• 6
Needed Supplies.....	• 7 – 8
Types of Foster Kittens .....	• 9
General Care of Kittens.....	• 10 – 11
Feeding Bottle Babies .....	• 12 – 13
Transitional Kittens .....	• 14
Expectations and Care at Various Ages .....	• 15 – 17
Kittens' Medical Health Concerns.....	• 18 – 21
Kitten Feeding Chart.....	• 22
(Less Than Four Weeks Old)	
Kitten Weight Chart.....	• 23
Tid Bits (FAQs).....	• 24 – 25



# WELCOME & INTRODUCTION

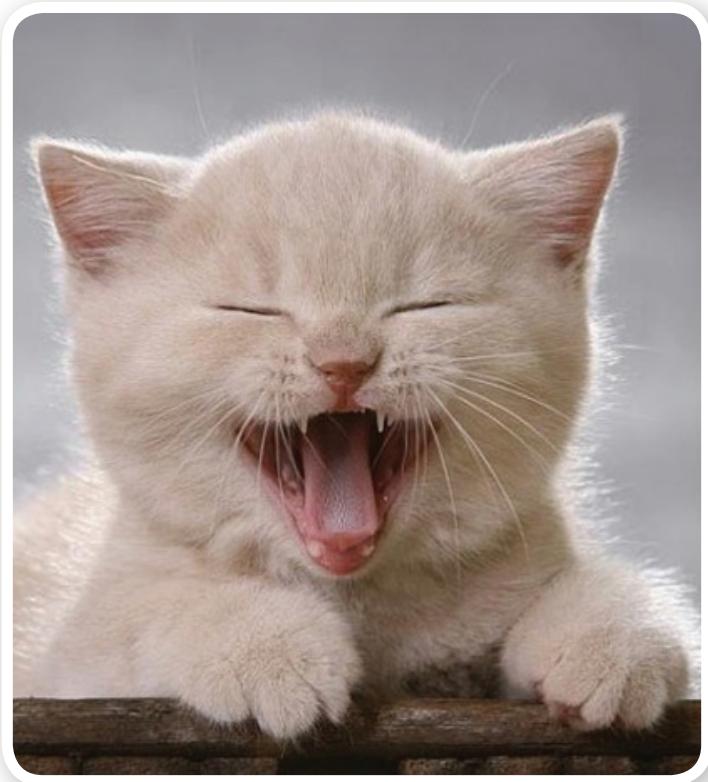
Welcome to the Team of Dedicated Foster Parent Volunteers of Sonoma Humane Society!

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Kittens under the age of 8 weeks need a mother---- either a cat or a human surrogate. To get them into a foster home within 24 hours is a chance to give them a good start.

We, at Sonoma Humane Society, work very hard to find everlasting, loving homes for all animals, by reducing pet overpopulation through our spay and neuter programs. But when vulnerable young kittens and puppies, only days or weeks old, are brought to us, we need compassionate volunteers to help care for these little ones.

With your help as foster volunteers, we are able to save the lives of approximately 500 helpless kittens each year. These are generally kittens that just need the gift of time to grow so that they can attain the required weight to be spayed/neutered and, subsequently, adopted. They are kittens that would very likely be euthanized at many shelters due to space or staff limitations.



## OVERVIEW:

Fostering requires a flexible schedule and a personal commitment to the kittens. During a typical day, you will need to allow for enough time to: give them fresh food and water at least twice a day; scooping out the litter boxes at least twice a day; cleaning/bathing them, if necessary; medicating them if they become sick; weighing them (if they are very young and/or sickly); transporting them back and forth for vaccinations, worming and other medical care; and, last but definitely not least, lots of time for playing and cuddling.

Fostering can be time consuming and quite a bit of work, but it is also a very rewarding experience. Your nurturing helps these kittens grow from helpless little beings into well-adjusted family pets. You also have the enjoyment of their company during a fun period of their lives without the responsibility of lifetime care. But, most importantly, you are saving the lives of these precious beings.

# PROCEDURES FOR PICKUP AND RETURN:

Once you have completed this foster orientation and training, you are ready to foster kittens. By completing the information on the Sign-In form today, we can match you up with the type of foster kittens you prefer. We will then place you on our email alert system and send out a message notifying you of kittens needing foster placement. If you do not have email access, we will call to check on your availability. When you respond to either our emails or phone calls, we will arrange for a convenient pick-up time. Please understand that we try to place the kittens in foster care as soon as possible to minimize their stay in a stressful situation. Therefore, the kittens will be sent out with the volunteers who respond first to our emails or phone calls.

When the kittens approach their 2 pound weight goal, contact the foster care coordinator to schedule a date for their return. We usually have you bring them back on the morning of their spay/neuter surgery. They need to be dropped off between 8 – 8:30 AM at our veterinary hospital. After a thorough physical exam by the doctor and any necessary vaccinations and tests, they will be prepped for surgery. You will need to prepare yourself and your family for this date because once they are brought in for their surgery, they will stay here. If there is room in the adoption habitats and there are no medical issues, the kittens are up for adoption the day after their surgeries.

The following guidelines will help you with the care of your kittens and will help you understand the policies and procedures of the Sonoma Humane Society Foster Care program.



# SAFEGUARDING ALL THE ANIMALS

First and foremost, we want to protect the health of both your resident pets and the fosters. We need to be concerned about your pets introducing diseases to the foster kittens as well as the fosters introducing diseases to your pets.

The Sonoma Humane Society requires all foster volunteers to be current on their resident pets' vaccinations. As an added precaution, fosters MUST be separated from your resident pets for an initial period of 2 weeks. This 2 week period of time is deemed sufficient for fosters to become symptomatic of most diseases they may be incubating. However, there are a few like Feline Leukemia and Ringworm, which may take longer to exhibit symptoms. We, therefore, strongly recommend that fosters be kept separated from your resident pets for the entire fostering period. Having a totally separate room for the fosters would be ideal. But there should be absolutely no sharing of food and water bowls, litter boxes, and toys.

Good personal hygiene of washing hands with soap and water should be practiced regularly, both before and after contact, with foster kittens. We are concerned with the health of ALL animals under your care. As thorough and careful as we try to be in our examinations of the fosters before sending them out, there is still a real risk of disease transmission. Hence, the strong recommendation to keep your pets separated from the fosters. As a reminder, Sonoma Humane Society cannot be responsible for the health of your resident pets.

Cleaning between litters is another precaution against spreading disease. After a litter of kittens is returned to Sonoma Humane Society, the fostering room will need to be sanitized before another litter is brought home. All surfaces should be disinfected with a mild bleach solution ( 1 ounce bleach to 1 quart of water). More details in Tid Bits section of manual.

## NOTES:

# NEEDED SUPPLIES

Sonoma Humane Society will provide you with virtually all the supplies you will need to foster.

**CARRIER:** An appropriate sized carrier will be provided to transport the fosters home and also to bring them back and forth for medical appointments. Please note that fosters MUST be transported in carriers at all times. Carriers may also be used as their “sleeping quarters” if there is sufficient room for all to stretch out and be comfy.

**FOOD:** Please use only the food provided by the Sonoma Humane Society. You will be supplied with both dry kitten kibble and canned kitten food. We will also provide you with alternative diets if your kittens will not eat the regular food supplied. Any change at all in fosters’ diets must first be approved by our veterinarian. A mother cat is given the same dry and canned KITTEN food (rather than CAT food) for extra nutrition while nursing. For orphaned newborns who need to be bottle-fed, we will provide you with kitten milk replacement formula and bottles.

**CAT LITTER:** Please use only the cat litter supplied by Sonoma Humane Society. Clumping litter may be dangerous if ingested by kittens. For very young kittens (3 – 4 weeks) shredded newspaper may work better than litter.

**LITTER BOX:** If you need litter boxes, we can supply you with shallow cardboard boxes. Bigger boxes for Mommy Cat and older kittens; smaller, shallower boxes for younger kittens.

**WATER BOWL:** Should be ceramic/porcelain or stainless steel but NOT plastic, as plastic is difficult to disinfect due to its porosity. Heavier the better to not tip over.

**FOOD BOWLS:** One bowl for the entire litter for the eat-at-will dry kitten food and another bowl for the canned food. It is usually best to have a separate bowl/dish for each kitten to eat canned food from, to ensure that each gets its fair share. Inevitably, there is a food bully in the litter that may crowd out a less assertive sibling.

**HEATING DEVICES:** Heating pads (NO AUTO SHUT-OFF), heating discs, rice socks, hot water bottles. From 3 – 4 weeks of age and older, the floor temperature of the kittens’ environment should be 70 – 75 degrees F. But for the younger ones, their sleeping environment needs to be 85 – 90 degrees F. In order to maintain this temperature, you will need some type of heating device. We try to provide all of our foster parents with either a heating pad or heating disc but we do run short in the height of the season so we encourage you to look around in thrift stores and garage sales for the old fashioned heating pads without the Auto-Off safety feature. Heating pads should always be on the LOW setting (NEVER on Medium or High). Wrap both the electrical cord and heating pad itself with a towel to safeguard the kittens. They should NEVER be placed directly on a heating pad as this could cause burns. Always make sure there is a large enough area for the kittens to move off of the heating pad if they get too warm.



**SCALE:** We are not yet able to provide scales to our volunteers. If you have a postal or food scale at home, this would be very helpful in monitoring the weight gain of very young kittens. This is particularly critical for sickly kittens, newborn kittens and those up to 4 weeks old. A weight gain of 3 to 4 ounces (84 to 113 grams) each week, usually indicates the very young kittens are doing well.

**TOYS:** We occasionally receive a donation of toys and can provide you with some at those times. Kittens need 2 types of toys: interactive and solo. Toys should be easy to clean (soaked in a mild bleach solution) or disposable (foil balls, paper tubes) and impossible to consume (ping-pong balls). Solo toys can be left with the kittens to play on their own when you are not there. They should not have any small parts that can be eaten or chewed off and swallowed. Interactive toys include those with string and parts like feathers that can be chewed off, swallowed and cause harm to the kitten. These toys should only be used for play with kittens under adult supervision.

## NOTES:

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# TYPES OF FOSTER KITTENS

For the most part, kittens in the foster care program are those who have not yet reached the 2 pound (1 kg) minimum weight required to undergo spay/neuter surgery prior to adoption. But there are some differences in the types of kittens needing foster care. You may decide to foster a variety or specialize in a certain type of foster. This decision may be affected by your work schedule, your resident pets, the activity level in your home or other factors.

**ORPHANED NEWBORNS:** These are kittens ranging in age from 1 day to about 4 weeks old without a mother cat to nurse from. They need to be bottle-fed every 3 to 4 hours around the clock for the first 3 weeks; less often from 4 weeks and on. They need to be burped, and stimulated to urinate and defecate after each feeding. They also need to be kept clean and warm constantly.

**MOTHERS with KITTENS:** These kittens may also range from 1 day old and older but they have their mother to care for them and nurse from. Hence, this fostering involves primarily taking care of the mother until the kittens are about 5 weeks old. Around this time Mom begins the weaning process and the kittens start eating food.

**WEANED 5 WEEKS AND OLDER:** This is generally the shortest fostering situation since the kittens are oldest. It usually takes the kittens about 2 months (8 to 10 weeks) to reach the 2 pound minimum weight for spay/neuter surgery. So this could be as short as a 3 week foster. They are eating on their own, usually have good litter box habits and have learned to clean themselves. However, this is also the time they are transitioning from formula to food and may have gastro-intestinal problems leading to diarrhea.

**SICK KITTENS:** Kittens of all ages with mild to moderate illnesses. They may require oral medication, ear drops, eye ointment or skin salve. They may also need frequent visits with our shelter veterinarian to monitor their progress. Kittens generally recover much quicker in foster care than in a shelter environment.

**BEHAVIOR KITTENS:** Ideally, kittens should be introduced to human handling between 2 and 7 weeks of age. If not, they will learn to fear human interaction. We frequently refer to them as “undersocialized”. These kittens usually require intensive treatment due to the small window of time with which we are working to convince them that human contact can be pleasurable.

**PRE AND POST OPERATION CATS:** Although once in a great while we have kittens that need recovery time from surgery of some type, for the most part, it is adult cats. They may need time in foster care prior to surgery and afterwards to recuperate in a home environment.

## NOTES:

# GENERAL CARE OF KITTENS

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**1-Foster cats and kittens are **NOT** allowed outdoors.  
**NO EXCEPTIONS.****

**2-It is **VERY IMPORTANT** to keep kittens **WARM**.** They do not thrive unless they are in a bedding environment that is between 80 to 90°F. Heating pads (without the Auto Shut-Off safety feature) are ideal for this. Make sure there is a towel wrapped around the heating pad and electrical cord. **Never** let kittens lie directly on a heating pad. **Always** have the heat setting on **LOW (NEVER on Medium or High)**. It is also important to have a section that is not on a heating pad so that if they get too warm, they have an area to move to. Keep in mind, the smaller the litter, the more help they will need to keep warm. Large litters are better able to keep themselves warm by piling on top of each other into a big heap.

**3-If kittens are still **too young** (less than 2 to 3 weeks old) **to urinate and defecate on their own**,** they will need to be stimulated. This should be done every few hours (often right before or after feeding) by gently rubbing a warm cloth or paper towel on the kitten's anus and genital area.

**4-Keeping kittens clean** in the absence of the mother cat is very important. A flea comb or a warm, damp cloth can be used to clean off dried feces or litter from the kittens. Be sure to dry them well so they don't chill. Sometimes if the feces is really caked on their back sides and paws, it's easier to dip them into a warm, soapy bowl of water in order to soften and remove it. Beware of sharp claws and teeth!

**5-Socializing:** 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 bed 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 it can't see how big and scary you are. Stroke the kitten and speak gently, telling it how cute and brave and fabulous it is (kittens love to hear that!). Continue this for about 30 seconds, then put the kitten down before it starts squirming. You want this to be a pleasant experience. The kitten may not be impressed, but if you cuddle them often enough, they will learn to love it.

**6-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. Frequently, it is faster and easier to bring a feral kitten around when it is fostered as a singleton. When they have the company of another kitten, they will choose the kitten over you.

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 couch, 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.

**7-Discipline: Prevention** is usually the best answer for handling undesirable feline behaviors. At this stage of their lives, they are the most curious and playful so it's best to allow them to exercise their natural curiosity even as we seek to establish good habits. Inappropriate behavior can be addressed in various ways, but, typically, distracting a kitten and redirecting them to something more positive seems to work best. You can do this by getting their attention with noise, toys or treats. Any type of physical punishment, such as nose tapping or scruffing, is generally considered detrimental and counterproductive. Correction should always fit the kitten's personality. Use the minimum amount of correction necessary to get the desired response.

## NOTES:

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# Feeding Bottle Babies

**1-DO NOT USE COW'S MILK!** (or anything other than the specified formula given to you by the Sonoma Humane Society foster care coordinator)

**2-** Be sure that all bottles and nipples are clean before using.

**3-To make kitten formula:** mix 1 Tablespoon KMR with 2 Tablespoons warm water. Do not mix more than can be used in a 24 hour period. The KMR formula will last 24 hours once it has been reconstituted and should be kept refrigerated. The KMR powder should also be kept refrigerated after opening.

Fill the bottle with KMR formula and warm the formula by placing the bottle in a mug of very hot water. The milk should be approximately body temperature, around 95 to 100 degrees. Test the temperature of the milk on your forearm before feeding your kitten. Test the nipple to ensure that the milk is flowing through the nipple correctly. It should not drip when held upside down, but should drip given a small amount of pressure on the bottle.



**4-Place the kitten prone (belly down, NEVER on its back)** on a towel or blanket. Make sure the kitten is warm before feeding. Feeding formula to a cold kitten can cause serious digestive problems. Without raising the kitten's head, place the kitten's head gently on your palm and guide the nipple into its mouth. The kitten should start nursing right away. Be sure to tilt the bottle up slightly to prevent the kitten from inhaling too much air.

**5-**If the kitten does not start nursing right away, or if it seems to have trouble getting the milk, check the nipple again. It may also be helpful to stroke his head gently or pet his back to start his nursing reflexes. Pulling lightly on the bottle or twisting the nipple while in the kitten's mouth can also encourage the kitten to suckle.

**6-NEVER SQUEEZE THE BOTTLE TO FORCE MILK DOWN THE KITTEN'S THROAT!** This could force the formula into the lungs and cause pneumonia and possible death.

**7-After feeding,** your kitten will need to be burped. This can be done by holding the kitten against your shoulder and gently massaging or patting its back.

**8-Each kitten will need manual stimulation by you to encourage elimination.** Lightly rub anus and genital area with a warm washcloth or dampened paper towel. It may take a couple of feedings to see results.

**9-Kittens will sleep after feedings,** so they should be placed in a warm area to rest.

**10-Do not underfeed or overfeed your kitten.** To find out how much and how frequently your kitten should be fed, please refer to the Kitten Feeding Guide at the back of this manual.

## NOTES:



# TRANSITIONAL KITTENS

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**1**-Transitional kittens are kittens that are being weaned off of bottle feeding to eventually be able to eat solid foods.

**2**-Start by serving the KMR in a shallow bowl. Dip one fingertip (or the bottle the kitten is used to nursing from) into the liquid; let the kitten lick it, then guide him by moving your finger down into the bowl.

**Do not force the kitten to drink.** This concept is easy for some kittens to grasp but not for all, so be patient. Bottle feeding may still be required as the kitten learns to eat from the bowl. You can help with the gradual transition by always offering the bowl first and then the bottle.

**3**-When the kitten is lapping up the KMR liquid well, it is time to make a gruel. This is a mixture of canned kitten food and KMR. As the kitten gets accustomed to eating, gradually decrease the amount of KMR, while slowly increasing the amount of canned kitten food.

**4**-If your kitten seems uninterested in the canned kitten food and KMR gruel, the veterinary staff may suggest that another type of canned food be used instead to help encourage eating. But **DO NOT** try any food without the veterinary staff's approval. Also try heating up the gruel in the microwave for 8-10 seconds. Give the gruel a good stir and check temperature before feeding to your kitten. The gruel should only be warm to touch.

**5**-A kitten should be completely weaned off of the KMR and bottle by six weeks of age, and eating only canned kitten food. The warmed, canned kitten food will be offered to them 3 to 4 times a day. It is better to offer them smaller quantities more often than larger quantities less frequently. Make sure they have clean, fresh water at all times.

**6**-From 6 to 7 weeks of age, kittens can be introduced to dry kitten food. A bowl of this may be left out for them to free-feed throughout the day.

## NOTES:

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# EXPECTATIONS & CARE AT VARIOUS AGES

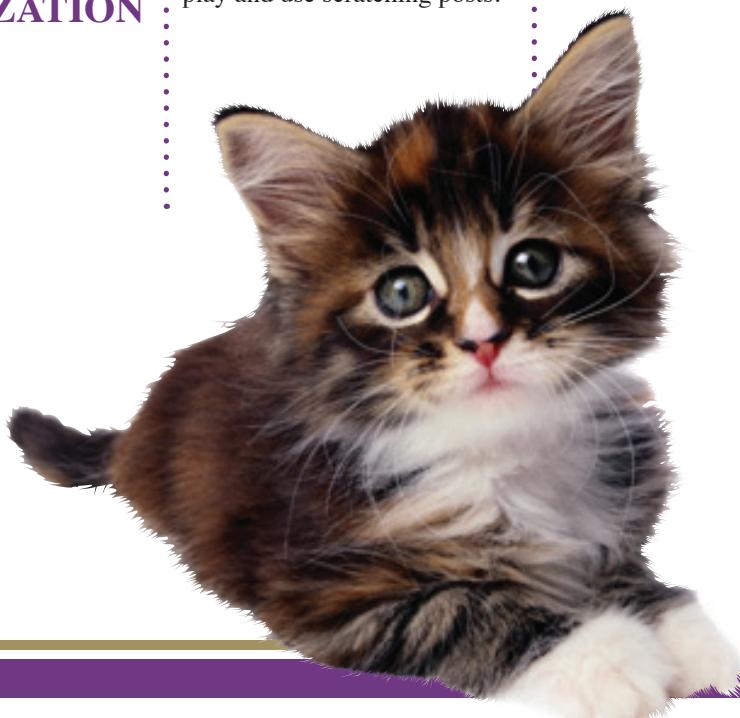
	0 – 1 Week	1 – 2 Weeks	2 – 3 Weeks
<b>FEEDING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bottle Feeding: up to 1/2 Tbsp. (8ml) KMR every 2 -- 3 hours (about 8 -- 10 feedings per day). If there is a Mom cat, make sure each kitten is nursing.</li> <li>A lot of crying and activity could indicate a problem with milk flow or availability.</li> <li>Newborns can nurse from Mom for up to 45 mins.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bottle Feeding: up to 3/4 Tbsp. (12ml) KMR every 2 -- 3 hours (about 8 -- 10 feedings per day)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bottle Feeding: up to 1 Tbsp. (15ml) KMR every 3 -- 4 hours (about 6 -- 8 feedings per day).</li> <li>If there is a Mom cat, she will spend more time outside the nest.</li> </ul>
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temperature in bedding area should be 85-90°F.</li> <li><b>CHILLING</b> is the #1 DANGER to newborns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temperature in bedding area should be 80 -- 85°F. Make sure the kittens have a cooler place to move to if they get too warm. Place heating device on half their bedding and cover with a layer of towel. <b>Always have a layer of towel between kittens and heating pad/disc.</b></li> <li>Heating pad should <b>always be on LOW setting</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temperature in bedding area should be 75 -- 80°F.</li> <li>Make sure kittens have a cooler place to move to if they get too warm.</li> </ul>
<b>DEVELOPMENT &amp; SOCIALIZATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weight will be about 4 ounces.</li> <li>Will sleep 90% of the time.</li> <li>Newborns are deaf &amp; blind &amp; rely entirely on smell.</li> <li>Handle minimally.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weight will be about 7 ounces. Ear canals open between 5 -- 8 days old.</li> <li>Eyes open around 8 -- 14 days old. Initially, eyes always appear dark blue.</li> <li>Vision will be blurry.</li> <li>Healthy kittens will be round and warm, with pink skin.</li> <li>Healthy kittens seldom cry.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weight will be about 10 ounces. Ears will become erect and canals open completely. Kittens will start to crawl and stand between 18 -- 21 days old.</li> <li>Play begins. Teeth start to become more noticeable.</li> <li>Start of socialization phase.</li> <li>Increase handling to get them used to human contact.</li> <li>Important not to expose them to anything frightening.</li> <li>Children may seem intimidating and should be closely supervised to ensure gentle handling.</li> </ul>

# EXPECTATIONS & CARE AT VARIOUS AGES

	3 – 4 Week	4 – 5 Weeks	5 – 6 Weeks
<b>FEEDING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bottle Feeding: up to 1 1/2 Tbsp (23ml) KMR every 4 hours (about 4 feedings per day). Towards 4 weeks of age, may start to lap KMR from a bowl. <b>Middle of the night feedings no longer needed</b>, unless sickly and not thriving.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weaning bottle babies: up to 4 Tbsp. KMR every 5 -- 6 hours (about 3 feedings per day).</li> <li>Wean gradually by offering them gruel: warm canned food mixed with warm water or KMR. Gradually thicken the gruel. It may take a few feedings for them to catch on.</li> <li>If they show absolutely no interest, wait a few days and try again.</li> <li>If there is a Mom cat, she will start to wean them by discouraging nursing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feed gruel 4 times a day.</li> <li>Thicken gruel gradually.</li> <li>Introduce dry food and water closer to 6 weeks of age.</li> <li>If there is a Mom cat, the kittens may start eating her food (but Mom should be eating canned &amp; dry KITTEN food as well, since she has been nursing).</li> </ul>
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temperature in the bedding area should be 70 -- 75°F.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temperature in the bedding area should be 70 -- 75°F.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temperature in the bedding area should be 70 -- 75°F.</li> </ul>
<b>DEVELOPMENT &amp; SOCIALIZATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weight will be around 13 ounces.</li> <li>Permanent adult eye color will start to appear.</li> <li>Self-grooming begins.</li> <li>Vision continues to improve.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Litter box training may begin as early as 3 weeks but definitely by 4 weeks old.</li> <li>Place kitten in shallow litter box after feedings. Hold onto kitten's front paw gently and "paw" at the litter. Sometimes helps to put some feces they made earlier in the box so they make the association. Most of time, they need no training at all.</li> <li><b>Do NOT use clumping litter.</b> It can be <b>very harmful</b> to kittens if ingested.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weight will be between 1 pound and 1 1/2 pounds.</li> <li>Kittens start to roam. Keep them well supervised.</li> <li>Play and interact with them as often as possible.</li> <li>Get them accustomed to household noises (vacuum, TV, dishwasher, etc.).</li> </ul>

# EXPECTATIONS & CARE AT VARIOUS AGES

	<b>6 – 7 Week</b>	<b>7 – 8 Weeks</b>	<b>8 Weeks +</b>
<b>FEEDING</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kittens should be eating both canned and dry food. They will eat small amounts at frequent intervals throughout the day.</li> <li>Make sure dry food and water are available at all times.</li> <li>Offer warm canned food 3 -- 4 times per day.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer warm canned food 3 times per day.</li> <li>Have dry food and water available at all times.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer warm canned food 2 times per day.</li> <li>Have dry food and water available at all times.</li> </ul>
<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temperature in bedding area should be 70 -- 75°F.</li> <li>Make sure room is safe. Kittens are now climbing and jumping. Litter boxes need to be easily accessible and visible to minimize accidents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temperature in bedding area should be 70 -- 75°F.</li> <li>Make sure room is safe. Kittens are now climbing and jumping. Litter boxes need to be easily accessible and visible to minimize accidents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Temperature in bedding area should be 70 -- 75°F.</li> <li>Make sure room is safe. Kittens are now climbing and jumping. Litter boxes need to be easily accessible and visible to minimize accidents.</li> </ul>
<b>DEVELOPMENT &amp; SOCIALIZATION</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weight will be around 1 1/2 pounds.</li> <li>Kittens are now “mini-cats”.</li> <li>They will groom themselves, play and use scratching posts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Weight will be around 1 3/4 pounds.</li> <li>Continue playing and socializing with the kittens.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kittens should be 2 pounds and ready to come back to Sonoma Humane Society for spay/neuter surgery.</li> <li>If they are still on a course of medication at 2 pounds, we will ask you to keep them in foster care until they are done with their medication.</li> <li>Generally the entire litter comes back together.</li> </ul>



# Your Kitten's Health

Foster kittens are given an exam prior to going out into foster, but they can, and do, often break with signs of illness once in your home. It is critical to monitor them closely and to contact us immediately if you notice any signs of illness.

## Illness in Foster Kittens

**Diarrhea:** There are three types of cat stool: normal, soft formed, and diarrhea. Normal stool is firm and well shaped. Soft stool is toothpaste-like in consistency and diarrhea is completely liquid.

When you first notice soft stool, please call the foster coordinator and she can have you drop off a fecal sample and come in for a veterinary visit. Monitor the kitten closely, as dehydration is a common consequence of diarrhea and can become serious, even life threatening, very quickly.

In order to bring in a stool sample, double bag it in a ziplock bag or sealed container and bring it in to our hospital.



**Normal Stool**



**Soft Stool**



**Diarrhea**



Nasal discharge, a common sign of an upper respiratory infection

**Sneezing/nasal discharge:** Occasional sneezing is common in kittens. However, if it becomes more frequent or if it progresses to having nasal or ocular discharge, this is a sign of a common disease in kittens called an upper respiratory infection {URI}. URI is essentially a cat “cold” and is usually just viral in nature, but can progress to a life threatening bacterial infection. If your kitten is showing signs of URI, call the foster coordinator to schedule an exam with the veterinarian.

Treatment for URI can range from just monitoring for mild viral signs, to antibiotics, eye ointments, and fluid therapy for more severe infections.



**Conjunctivitis**



## Skin Parasites:

**Fleas:** Most of the kittens we receive in our foster program are born outdoors, so may come to us with external parasites such as fleas. Kittens are examined prior

to being sent out to foster and treated if fleas are seen. However, if you notice live fleas on your kittens more than 24 hours after taking them home, contact the foster coordinator to arrange for further treatment. Never treat the kittens yourself as many of the flea products are toxic to such small animals.

**Lice:** Occasionally, kittens will come in to us with lice. If we are able to see the lice infestation when they are brought in, we will treat the kittens in the shelter and not send them out. However, sometimes these infections are difficult to detect until they are fairly progressed, which may be once the kitten has been in your home for a few days or even weeks.

You will not see the adult lice, you'll just notice white dots along the kitten's hair. The dots, which are nits, will not come off if you brush the kitten, {as compared to dandruff which is easily removed}.



If you think your kittens may have lice, contact us so we can treat them. Lice is not contagious to you, as they are species specific.

**Ear mites:** Kittens with ear mites will scratch at their ears and shake their heads. Inside the ear, the canal is often filled with a dark debris that looks like coffee grounds. If you notice this, please contact our foster coordinator so we can treat the kittens appropriately.



**Ringworm**

**Ringworm:** Ringworm is a highly contagious fungal skin disease, most commonly found on the head and extremities, in kittens that is transmissible to humans. Ringworm is treatable and is never fatal, but is something that needs to be caught at onset because of how contagious it is and how difficult it can be to eradicate from your home.

Ringworm causes patchy hair loss and the skin revealed often appears rough and scaly. The spot will usually get larger and additional spots often appear within a week or so. If you notice that your kittens have any hair loss, please make a medical appointment so we can check them out immediately and determine if ringworm is of concern.



**Ringworm**

**Fading Kittens:** Occasionally, one or more kittens in a litter that originally seemed healthy and vigorous will begin to “fade” after a week or two of life. They will stop growing, start losing weight, and lose interest in eating.

Kittens can fade very quickly and can die as a result. Early veterinary treatment is imperative, however even with intensive treatment the condition is often fatal. It is critical that you alert our foster coordinator as soon as you notice any signs of a fading kitten so we can do everything possible to support the kitten through this crisis.

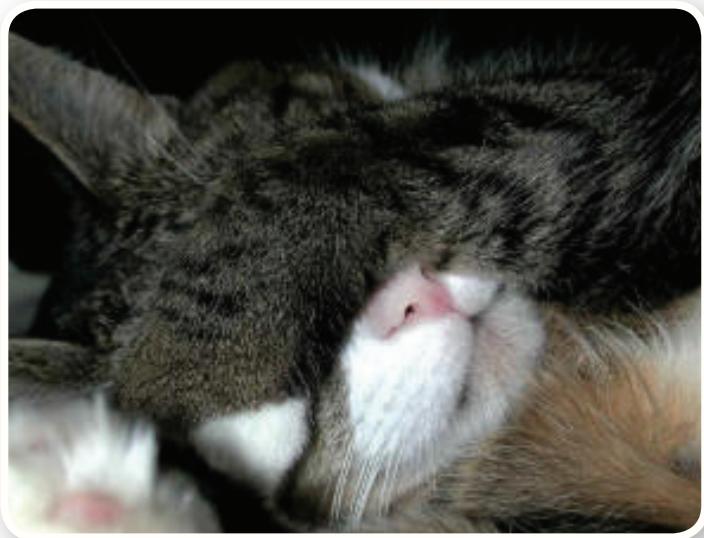
There is no clear cause or reason for this condition, although it has been linked to birth defects, environmental stress and infectious disease.

**Lethargy/Inactivity:** If your kitten suddenly loses interest in playing, is sleeping all the time, and seems to be lethargic, contact our foster coordinator to discuss the episode further and determine if you should come in for a medical appointment.

**Constipation:** Constipation is common in bottle babies and young kittens. Monitor your kitten closely if they have not defecated to ensure that they are eating, bright, playful, and urinating. As long as they seem well otherwise, it is okay to wait up to three days for a bowel movement. If more than three days have passed, contact our foster coordinator to make a medical appointment.



**Vomitting:** Sometimes kittens can vomit due to eating too rapidly. Observe your kitten and if this is the case, offer smaller portions more frequently rather than one large meal all at once. If your kitten vomits more than 2 times, you should call to make a medical appointment.



## NOTES:

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# General Criteria for Emergencies

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**Continuous diarrhea:** Greater than 24 hours and associated with a marked decrease in activity level and/or appetite

**Continuous vomiting:** Kitten has been unable to hold anything down for more than three feedings or 12 hours

*\*If a kitten has vomiting or diarrhea, but is still active, eating and drinking, it can most likely wait up to 24 hours to receive care.*

**Trauma** {stepping on a kitten, hit by car, attacked by another animal} – only true emergency if kitten has been significantly injured, is actively bleeding, etc.

## Labored or open mouth breathing

\*Note: Not just congestion, but the kitten is truly struggling to breathe

**A kitten that is unresponsive:** Not responding to stimulation, interaction, unable to rouse from a sleeping state

## Bleeding

If a kitten is bleeding significantly from anywhere, please seek emergency help



# FEEDING CHART FOR KITTENS

(LESS THAN FOUR WEEKS OLD)

KITTEN'S WEIGHT	TOTAL KMR PER DAY (TBSP)	TOTAL KMR PER DAY (CC'S)	NUMBER OF MEALS PER DAY	TOTAL KMR PER MEAL (EVERY 4 HOURS)
113 GRAMS (4 OUNCES)	2 TBSP.	30 CC'S	6	5 CC'S PER MEAL
170 GRAMS (6 OUNCES)	3 TBSP.	45 CC'S	6	7 CC'S PER MEAL
226 GRAMS (8 OUNCES)	4 TBSP.	60 CC'S	6	10 CC'S PER MEAL
283 GRAMS (10 OUNCES)	5 TBSP.	75 CC'S	6	12 CC'S PER MEAL
340 GRAMS (12 OUNCES)	6 TBSP.	90 CC'S	6	15 CC'S PER MEAL
396 GRAMS (14 OUNCES)	7 TBSP.	105 CC'S	6	17 CC'S PER MEAL
453 GRAMS (16 OUNCES)	8 TBSP.	120 CC'S	6	20 CC'S PER MEAL

# KITTEN WEIGHT CHART

ONE DAY	WEIGHT
ONE DAY	99 GRAMS (APPROX. 3 OUNCES)
ONE WEEK	198 GRAMS (APPROX. 7 OUNCES)
TWO WEEKS	297 GRAMS (APPROX. 11 OUNCES)
THREE WEEKS	396 GRAMS (APPROX. 14 OUNCES)
FOUR WEEKS	496 GRAMS (APPROX. 18 OUNCES)
FIVE WEEKS	595 GRAMS (APPROX. 21 OUNCES)
SIX WEEKS	694 GRAMS (APPROX. 25 OUNCES)
SEVEN WEEKS	793 GRAMS (APPROX. 28 OUNCES)
EIGHT WEEKS	893 GRAMS (APPROX. 32 OUNCES OR 2 POUNDS)



# TID BITS

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## How long are kittens in foster care?

Kittens will be in foster care until they are 2 pounds (1kg).

**It's the WEIGHT, not the DATE.** If a kitten meets the minimum weight but is on medication, it is best to wait until the course of medication has been completed before bringing the kitten in for spay/neuter surgery.

Occasionally, there is quite a disparity in weights between siblings. But, generally, it is best to keep littermates together until they are all 2 pounds and bring them in together for spay/neuter surgery. An exception might be made if there is a medical issue.

## What happens, if for any reason, I need to bring the foster kittens back to SHS before they are ready for spay/neuter surgery?

Life happens! We understand that you do have a life outside of our foster program and occasionally unexpected events occur that make it difficult to continue fostering. If this happens, call the Foster Coordinator (707-577-1919) and we will arrange for the kittens' return. Please do not make arrangements on your own to have someone else care for the kittens. You, and not anyone else, have signed the contract with Sonoma Humane Society to foster these kittens.

## How should I clean the fostering room between litters of foster kittens?

Begin by removing all bedding, food/water bowls, litter boxes and toys. Using a weak bleach solution (1 part bleach to 32 parts cold water or 1 ounce bleach to 1 quart of cold water), scrub all surfaces within kittens' reach. Food and water bowls can be washed in the dishwasher or soaked in the bleach solution for 10 minutes. Litter boxes and reusable toys should be cleaned with the bleach solution as well. All bedding needs to be washed using bleach and hot water. Any toys or items made with non-cleanable material should be thrown away.

## How do I introduce a new diet/food that has been recommended by our veterinarian?

Slowly transitioning from the old food to the new food is the key to introducing a new food with the least amount of digestive upset to the kittens. The general "formula" is starting with 1/2 of the old food and 1/2 of the new food. Then over a period of 5 – 7 days, increasing the amount of new food slowly and decreasing the amount of old food slowly so that by the end of the 7th day, you have transitioned the kitten totally to the new food. Unless the veterinarian gives you specific instructions otherwise, please follow this "formula" whenever you are changing diets. If it is a temporary change (for example, introducing W/D prescription food to treat diarrhea), when the veterinarian recommends going back to the regular food as the diarrhea has resolved, this slow transition of decreasing the W/D and increasing the regular food over a period of 5 – 7 days is again performed.

## How should I introduce the kittens to their new environment?

Starting with a small space where they can see the litter box from anywhere in the room is recommended. After the 2 week separation period from your resident pets, you may let the fosters have access to larger areas within your home, but it is best to make sure they have their litter box habits well engrained first.



## How many litter boxes should I use?

Generally, 1 litter box for 2 kittens should be sufficient, as long as neither has diarrhea and they are cleaned at least twice a day.

When you allow them larger access to your home, it is best to scatter litter boxes in each room. That way, no matter which room they are in, the sight of the litter box will remind them where to go.

## Why do you recommend a separate canned food dish for each kitten?

You may not necessarily see the “food bully” when you feed them but there is usually one in each litter. Some less assertive kittens/runts will not go back to eat once he/she has been pushed away from the food bowl. This may result in weight loss and general decline in health.

## How do you discourage kittens from biting your fingers and hands?

When playing with kittens, always have toys available. This will help discourage kittens from biting hands, feet and other body parts. It is very important to teach kittens that hands are for petting and toys are for playing.

When kittens nip while you’re petting them, stay calm and ignore them for 10 – 15 seconds before interacting any further so that nipping is not rewarded.

## How should I “kitten-proof” my home?

The kittens’ climbing and jumping abilities develop quickly as they grow, so keep anything you don’t want damaged out of their reach. Also watch for objects which may fall or get knocked over. Falling objects are dangerous to kittens on the ground. Block any electrical outlets, hide objects they could swallow or get tangled in. Crouch down to the kittens’ level to see if there are any holes or openings where the kittens might hide or become inaccessible to you. Make sure to keep the toilet lids down at all times. Their curiosity gets them into everything!



## NOTES: