


# KITTEN COLLEGE

## Foster Care Manual

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## WELCOME!

Animal Welfare League of Arlington, Kitten College would like to welcome you to the Foster Care Program! As a foster volunteer, you will have the opportunity to open your heart and home to those animals most in need. Many of the animals that come into our shelter are too young, too ill, or too under socialized for general adoption. With limited space and the potential for sick animals to expose healthy animals to disease, we do not have the internal resources necessary to care for them all. **Our solution: save lives through foster care!**

With the help of wonderful volunteers like you, these animals are given the opportunity to be raised in a loving home until they are old enough and healthy enough. On behalf of the staff and the many residents here at AWLA:

**THANK YOU!!**








## ANIMALWELFARE LEAGUE OF ARLINGTON

### Phone Numbers and Contacts

AWLA MAIN NUMBER: 703-931-9241

AWLA fax number: 703-931-2568

AWLA website: www.awla.org

**Marnie Russ,** Kitten Program Administrator

703-861-5000 email:mruss@awla.org

**Vanessa Parks,** Kitten College Coordinator

703-887-3259 email:vparks@awla.org

**Sam Snow,** Foster Care

703-931-9241 ext. 245, email: foster@awla.org



**Emergency numbers:**

*If you're having an emergency between the hours of 8am-6pm- come to AWLA directly or text Vanessa*

*After-hours emergencies (7pm-7am), call (571-220-0350). Leave a message if no one answers*

Always alert Vanessa via text BEFORE calling emergency number

**ALL EMERGENCYVISITS to offsite vet clinics and hospitals MUST BE APPROVED IN ADVANCE! We do not offer reimbursement of any kind for veterinary visits outside of our emergency protocol.**

If you have been instructed to go to a vet clinic, bring your foster animal's ID number with you. Let the staff at the clinic know you are a foster parent with AWLA. .

## 1. Before You Bring Your Foster Home

**1.1 Make sure that your pets are in the best possible health.**
While it is our policy that owned companion animals are kept separate from foster animals during the quarantine period, some illnesses are easily transmitted even when following precautions. If your pet is on *any* type of medication, ask your veterinarian about concerns regarding your pet's immune system, even temporarily. If your pets have not had a veterinary exam in the last year or are overdue on vaccines, please have them checked prior to bringing home foster kittens. if you choose not to vaccinate your animal(s), you cannot foster for AWLA.

**1.2 Set up a quarantine area (or "safety zone") to house your foster animals for the first two weeks.**
Each animal entering our shelter receives a basic physical examination. Cats and kittens

have a compromised immune system and may also have been exposed to illness and disease. Even if they appear healthy, keep foster kittens isolated from owned pets in a quarantine area for the first **14 days** unless instructed otherwise by AWLA staff. This area will also be used after the quarantine period when your kittens are not under direct supervision.

The following are suggestions for the set up of the quarantine area. The primary concerns in choosing the area are safety and disinfection. Always check carefully for small openings or cracks into which a one-pound kitten could crawl. For disinfection purposes, the area should ideally be a tiled floor room, free of fabric and wood. If the area where a foster is to be kept is a carpeted room, take measures to cover and protect the carpet from any potential contaminants.

**Bathrooms:**

Bathrooms often receive natural light and are easy to disinfect, Bathtubs can make great nap areas if you line them with comforters or blankets, or great play areas if you throw in some ping-pong balls! The bathtub is also ideal for moms and nursing kittens. Mom will easily be able to jump out of the tub when she wants time to herself while still having a safe place to care for her babies.. Cover all drains and plugs at all times and always keep the toilet seat down.



**A large wire crate or kitty condo:**

These containment systems are ideal for foster parents who don't have a room that can easily be closed off. The wire crate is the same type that one would purchase for a large breed dog. (we recommend a wire crate for kittens over 5 weeks old, not a plastic Vari kennel, so that the kitten will be exposed to the sights and sounds around them.) Both the crate and the condo should be spacious enough to provide room for a litter box, toys, and food/water bowls. Depending on the size of your kittens, you may need to weave a towel or newspaper in and out of the bottom bars to prevent little paws and heads from getting caught.

The drawback to crates and condos is the cost. If we have appropriate items donated, we can loan them to you.







**1.3 Make sure you have all your supplies ready!**

**Supplies are available at the Kitten Foster Pick Up Area.** We are able to provide you with supplies as donations come in. If you have any questions about any of the items, proper household set-up, or are finding it difficult to provide the necessary supplies please speak to your foster mentor or coordinator.

We are not able to reimburse you for your expenses. however expenses you incur on behalf of fosters are tax deductible. Please keep your receipts so that we may record your donation appropriately.

- **Litter box:** choose a box with sides low enough so a kitten can easily crawl in and out. For tiny kittens the cardboard boxes canned food comes in work great! Generally, enclosed litter boxes are too difficult for kittens to access. If fostering a litter or a mom with kittens, more than one litter box is needed.
  ***NOTE-Do not return litter boxes to AWLA. If re-using litter boxes at home, properly clean and disinfect between litters of kittens.***
- **Kitty litter:** We recommend using basic unscented clay litter for kittens under 8 weeks. Do not use anything labeled “scoopable” or “clumping.” – please bring a refillable container if you are picking up litter from us.
- **Toys:** Play is very important to kitten development. They should have small lightweight toy balls or mice that they can carry around and attempt to “disembowel” and balls or interactive toys that will move so that they can run and pounce. Choosing toys can be difficult because kittens can easily choke on small pieces or feathers. Inspect all toys carefully to see how well attached all the pieces are and save the toys that are on the end of a “wand” or rope for when you are there to hold the other end. Check all toys daily to make sure they are not becoming too worn and can still be considered “kitten proof.”
- **Food and water bowls:** choose glazed ceramic or stainless steel dishes that will not easily tip over. Water bowls need to be shallow enough that a kitten cannot drown.

The number of bowls should be appropriate for the size of the litter.

- **Bedding: old t-shirts, sheets, etc.** Bedding should be warm and cozy without surfaces where a kitten could get their nails stuck. Young kittens are not able to retract their nails, and are at risk for broken limbs if they struggle when stuck. This is why terry cloth towels are **not** recommended for kittens.
- **Scratching post:** A variety of scratching surfaces is preferred, but disposable corrugated cardboard posts will suffice. If using an upright post, be sure that the post is sturdy enough and that the kitten can stretch their body length without concern of the post toppling .
- **Heating Pad / Snuggle Safe Disc**
- **Small scale for weighing kittens**
- **Original formula Dawn dishwashing detergent**



**Emergency items helpful to have on hand:**

- Digital Thermometer
- Humidifier
- Karo Syrup - rub on the gums of kittens not eating well
- Chicken flavored baby food

*Time to bring kittens to the foster home!*






### 2. Clean Break and Disinfection

To prevent the spread of disease and illness the quarantine area must be thoroughly cleaned between new fosters. At AWLA, Rescue is used to disinfect our cages and supplies. An MSDS for Rescue is conveniently located in the back of this manual. We can provide you with Rescue to sanitize between fosters.

Even though you are sanitizing your quarantine area thoroughly between litters, an instance may come up when kittens come down with an infectious illness such as ringworm or panleukopenia. In that case, the quarantine room will need what we refer to as a clean

break. Everything kittens have been in contact with is contaminated and must be cleaned or thrown away (porous items). We will provide you with **A HIGHER** concentration of Rescue (1:16) for clean break purposes. When **clean breaking** your foster room, the following practices must be adhered to:

- All exposed bedding, toys, brushes, litter boxes, bowls, etc. should be discarded. ● Non-porous items (i.e. bowls and litter boxes) can be disinfected by spraying them with Rescue at a 1:16 dilution. Pre-clean bowls and litterboxes or remove any visible organic material prior to disinfecting.
- All non-porous surfaces should be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected where possible with Rescue at a 1:16 dilution. This should be repeated at least three times. Rescue must be applied for 10 minutes then wiped clean or rinsed.
- Porous items (i.e. bedding) can be washed and dried in a dryer. Be sure to remove all visible organic material from bedding prior to machine washing.
- All exposed carpets and furniture should be vacuumed daily for one week, and the vacuum cleaner bags discarded daily (ringworm exposure only).
- All heating and cooling vents should be vacuumed or filters replaced (ringworm exposure only). It is not usually necessary to have ducts commercially cleaned. ● Carpets should be commercially steam cleaned. Steam cleaning with cleaners that use hot tap water is ineffective, as the water does not reach a high enough temperature.
- Clothing that was worn when in contact with the kittens should be washed in hot water, bleached if possible, then dried in a dryer.

**The contaminated area MUST be properly cleaned before new kittens can come into your home!**



## 3. “Bottle Babies”

### 3.1 Basics

Kittens under three weeks old are not able to regulate their own body temperature and need an artificial heat source. If they were still with mom, they’d be huddled up next to somebody with a body temperature of 101-102 degrees. We replicate this as best we can by giving them a stuffed animal to snuggle with and a heating pad. The kittens should be kept in a carrier in a draft free room where you will have easy access to them and will be able to hear them if they start to cry. If the kittens can crawl, put the heating pad underneath only half of the carrier so the kittens can move away from the heat source if they want .

Keep the heating pad on a low setting underneath the carrier, so that there is no risk of a kitten climbing onto the direct heat source and getting burned. Regulate the temperature and check it often by placing a digital thermometer on the bedding. Ideally the temperature should stay above 85 degrees Fahrenheit.

If siblings start to suck on one another, put a stuffed animal between them to keep them separated. Sucking is a natural, normal behavior, but kittens can unwittingly do **severe** damage to each other particularly dangerous if the area they are sucking happens to be a sibling's eye or genitals. If they continue to suck on one another despite your attempts to separate them, temporarily put them in separate carriers. Contact your foster supervisor if this is occuring.

**For helpful videos and detailed instructions on how to care for and feed bottle baby kittens, go to: http://www.maddiesfund.org/orphaned-kitten-care-how-to.htm or we have also created this helpful video https://youtu.be/E1APOaF4v54**

**3.2 Appearance**
Kittens that do not yet have their eyes open should feel warm to the touch and look plump. They will lie on their stomachs and generally sleep quietly unless it is feeding time. If they have siblings, they will remain close to each other unless they have intentionally been separated. Their gums and mouths should be pink. Their eyes will generally open at 7 to 10 days of age. Watch for any swelling or colored discharge from the eyes that could indicate infection. Kittens should not feel cold to the touch, continually try to wander away from their siblings or their "surrogate" teddy bear, fret constantly, look thin, or have a poor appetite.

**3.3 Feeding**
Kittens that don't have their eyes open will need to be fed every 3-4 hours around the clock. Let them dictate how often they want to be fed rather than forcing them onto a particular schedule. The older they get and the closer they are to solid food (around 3.5 to 4 weeks), they may prefer their feedings every 5 to 6 hours. More frequent, smaller meals are easier to digest than several large meals,



We will provide you with powdered Breeders Edge (Kitten Milk Replacement) and baby bottles. Instructions for recommended use: One part Formula with two parts water. Watch your kittens' stools carefully. If you start to see diarrhea or stool that is very yellowish in color, you may need to add more water. For dehydrated kittens, kittens that are having diarrhea, or kittens that are poor eaters, you may substitute the water for unflavored Pedialyte. Do not use mixed formula older than 24 hours as it can harbor harmful bacteria that can cause diarrhea in kittens. . Only mix enough formula powder for one day of feeding.

Warm formula to approximately 101 degrees Fahrenheit. It should feel warm, not hot, when dripped on the inside of your wrist. We recommend heating the formula by submerging the

bottle in a mug of warm water until it is the correct temperature. *Do not put formula directly into the microwave.* Store unused powder in the refrigerator and thoroughly clean bottles and nipples after each use with warm soap and water. Kittens are extremely sensitive to bacterial infections and it is important that all supplies be kept spotless.

Make sure that the bottle's nipple is clean, warm, and intact without any chew holes prior to trying to use it. If it is a new nipple, cut a tiny little X at the top so that the milk can dribble out. If kittens seem frustrated that they can't get enough, make the cut a little deeper. Adjust the flow as your kittens age.

The easiest way to position kittens for feeding is to sit with them on your lap with your knees slightly lowered. This way the kitten is on its stomach looking towards you, with their front paws slightly elevated from their back paws, but with all four feet firmly on the ground so that gravity is in your favor. **Never feed a kitten lying on his or her back!** This can cause the kitten to choke or aspirate milk into its lungs and potentially die.

**Here is a video showing bottle feeding techniques: https://youtu.be/g2vJwjsnRyg**

Gently insert the nipple into the front of the kitten's mouth. Your kitten may be reluctant at first, and you may need to trickle just a drop into their mouth so that they get used to the taste. At this point, some kittens will respond immediately, grab the bottle and start to suckle. Others take longer, and you may find that you have to keep placing tiny amounts in their mouth until they get the idea. If you are only able to feed tiny amounts, try more frequent feedings regardless of their age. In general, kittens will not overeat and can be fed as much as they want in each feeding. However, if they are trying to guzzle an entire bottle in one sitting, it can be an indication that they need to be fed more frequently. In older kittens this may mean they will soon be able to start moving onto something a bit more solid.

If your kitten is starting to chew on the bottle, it is time to start weaning! Chewing on the bottle can be dangerous since small rubber pieces can be easily swallowed.

**Orphaned Kitten Feeding and Stomach Capacity Table**

| Estimated Age | Weight (grams) | Weight (ounces) | 20 Kcal/100 g body weight [1] | Daily volume Commercial milk replacer (ml) Concentration 0.74 kcal/ml* | Stomach capacity (ml) (4 ml/100 g body weight) [1] | Approx. number of feedings per day** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Newborn | 50 | 1.8 | 10 | 13.5 | 2 | 7 |
| | 75 | 2.6 | 15 | 20 | 3 | 7 |
| | 100 | 3.5 | 20 | 27 | 4 | 7 |
| | 125 | 4.4 | 25 | 34 | 5 | 7 |
| ~ 1 week | 150 | 5.3 | 30 | 40 | 6 | 7 |
| | 175 | 6.2 | 35 | 47 | 7 | 7 |
| | 200 | 7.0 | 40 | 54 | 8 | 7 |
| | 225 | 8 | 45 | 61 | 9 | 7 |
| ~ 2 weeks | 250 | 8.8 | 50 | 68 | 10 | 7 |
| | 275 | 9.7 | 55 | 74 | 11 | 7 |
| | 300 | 10.6 | 60 | 81 | 12 | 6-7 |
| | 325 | 11.5 | 65 | 88 | 13 | 6-7 |
| ~ 3 weeks | 350 | 12.3 | 70 | 95 | 14 | 6-7 |
| | 375 | 13.2 | 75 | 101 | 15 | ~6 |
| | 400 | 14.1 | 80 | 108 | 16 | ~5 |
| | 425 | 15 | 85 | 115 | 17 | ~5 |
| ~ 4 weeks*** | 450 | 15.9 | 90 | 122 | 18 | ~5 |
| | 475 | 16.8 | 95 | 128 | 19 | ~4 |
| | 500 | 17.6 | 100 | 135 | 20 | ~4 |
| | 525 | 18.5 | 105 | 142 | 21 | ~4 |
| ~ 5 weeks*** | 550 | 19.4 | 110 | 148 | 22 | ~4 |

### 3.4 Weight Gain

Kittens should double in weight from the time they are born to the time they are one week old. After that, they should be gaining approximately 100 grams a week or an average of 14 grams per day. Please weigh your kittens regularly and record their weights on your medical chart. Healthy kittens gain weight every day. Any weight loss or the same weight for more than one day may be an indication of an underlying problem, Contact your foster mentor or Kitten College Coordinator so they can arrange for the kitten to be seen by medical staff.



### 3.5 Stimulating Your Kittens and Litter Box Training

Kittens are not able to eliminate waste on their own until they reach two to three weeks of age and will need stimulation. Use a moistened cotton ball to gently stroke the genital area after feeding. You will know whether or not you are successful by the presence of urine or feces. You may find that some kittens want to be stimulated right after waking up. Stimulate your kittens to urinate/defecate prior to feeding. Kittens on a liquid diet will often have stool that is softer and lighter in color than you would normally expect. You may not see stool for a couple of days, but don't panic! If your kitten seems bloated and uncomfortable or is having diarrhea, contact your foster mentor or Kitten College Coordinator.

To avoid having kittens urinate on one another and risk having them lie in wet bedding, we recommend stimulating them after feeding past the two-week mark. Once they are at the toddling stage, you can start stimulating them while their feet are in the litter box so that they become accustomed to the idea of using the litter box. Place a small, shallow litter box (a paper plate will suffice) in their carrier when they are approximately three weeks old. Don't expect them to be perfect, and check the bedding regularly to make sure it doesn't need to be changed. By the time your kittens are four weeks old, they should have access to a clean litter box at all times.

**3.6 Weaning**

When your kittens are approximately 3.5 to 4 weeks old, it is time to start introducing them to solid food. You will know that they are ready when they begin chewing on the bottle and acting insatiable. Gradually change their diet by mixing the formula with canned kitten food, making a pudding like consistency. Spoon the food with your finger from the bowl into the kitten's mouth and then back to the bowl several times so the kitten gets the idea that they should eat from the bowl. Don't be surprised if their first inclination is to walk through the bowl rather than eating from it.

Some kittens wean faster than others, don't despair if your kitten isn't eager to give up their bottle! If your kitten doesn't want to give up their bottle, but you're worried their teeth are puncturing the nipple, try one of the following:

- Wait a little longer and try again in a few days or so to see if they're ready. ● Offer a dish of formula/canned food gruel to a hungry kitten *prior* to offering the bottle.
- Hand feeding- try putting just a tiny piece of canned food in your kitten's mouth and see how they respond. Repeat several times to get them accustomed to the taste and texture. The best time to try this is when a kitten is hungry *before* offering the bottle.
- Mix canned food with the formula in their bottle to accustom them to the taste. ● Try an intermediary step and introduce them to chicken or turkey flavored human baby food. (Kittens tend to love baby food; we just don't recommend it as the first



option because it can be hard to wean them away from.) **Read the ingredients carefully.** Some baby foods contain onion or garlic powder and these can be toxic to kittens. If you just see the word "gravy" listed under ingredients without any explanation,

don't use it! Gerber makes a safe Chicken and Chicken gravy product that consists *only* of: finely ground chicken, water, and cornstarch. Chicken and turkey products are easiest for kittens to digest, *do not use beef or ham*! ● Try warming the food you are trying to tempt them with.

● Try offering small pieces of steamed or boiled (unseasoned) chicken

Don't give up! Some kittens will not wean until they are seven weeks old. As long as they are healthy, happy, gaining weight, and not in danger of choking on their nipple, they'll be fine!

Once your kittens are eating the gruel, you can gradually decrease the amount of formula. You may introduce the kittens to dry kitten food during the weaning process. You may need to mix the canned food with dry to get them to eat it at first. If they really love their KMR, soaking the dry food in the formula can also be helpful. At 4-5 weeks of age, they should always have dry food available even if you are still having to supplement them with canned food or KMR.



**3.7 Grooming and Bathing**

Bottle babies can be messy,the weaning process is even messier. It is extremely important that you keep your kittens as clean as possible as they are prone to bacterial infections. You can bathe your kittens at any point you feel that they need a bath, Be careful that they don't become chilled and be sure to dry them thoroughly. Most shampoos on the market are not designed for kittens this young. The safest product to use is diluted original formula Dawn dishwashing detergent since it is designed to lather up quickly, rinse off without leaving a residue, and is gentle enough for us "to eat off the plate." Don't feel that you need to use soap every time that you bathe them either. If they are making such a mess that you have to bathe them every day, just using warm water or spot cleaning the messiest places is fine!



To warm your kittens after a bath, you may use a heat lamp or a blow dryer on a low setting. Just be very careful to monitor your kittens carefully! If you're using a heat lamp,

set a thermometer near them so that you know if the temperature is over 101 degrees. If you're using a blow dryer, keep your hand between the heat and the kitten at all times so that you know right away if it's getting too hot.

For regular grooming of bottle babies, you can use a soft toothbrush. Grooming can be a great way to stimulate a kitten with a poor appetite, and most kittens really enjoy it! After bottle-feeding, you can also use a toothbrush to get rid of any dried milk left in the corner of their mouth (or you can use a warm, damp cloth.) It is important to make sure that no residue is left, because hair loss around the mouth can result.

***A word about the survival rate of bottle babies:*** *Bottle babies are the most difficult, and the most resource and time intensive foster animals to care for, and the younger the kittens, the more difficult they are. For many bottle babies, the prognosis for survival may not be in their favor, and it is not uncommon for even the most experienced and seasoned foster parents to lose kittens through no fault of their own. Always remember that you are doing the best you can.*



## 4. Kittens That Are Eating on Their Own (~4+ weeks)

### 4.1 Basics

Kittens at this age are adorable, but they are growing fast mentally and physically and have a lot of places they want to go and see. They will put everything and anything in their mouth and will climb anywhere they are able to reach. Therefore, it is extremely important that you keep them in their **safety zone** unless they are under direct supervision. Kitten proof carefully and leave nothing to chance!

DANGEROUS HOUSEHOLD ITEMS:

Electrical cords Rubber bands

Washing Machines Christmas Trees

Clothes Dryers Holiday ornament decorations High balconies Ribbon

Trash cans String

Plastic bags Shoe Laces

Cigarettes Snail Bait

Fireplaces Pesticides

Rocking Chairs Anti-Freeze

Skateboards Table Scraps

Wheelchairs Doors

Open Cupboards Aspirin

Soaps Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) Uncovered Toilets Windows

Stairs Houseplants (Azalea, Mistletoe,

Other household companion animals Hydrangea, and Philodendron, are just a few.)

Your kittens should have access to food, water, toys, and a clean litter box at all times. Keep them in a confined area, large enough that they can still play but not too large a territory at this age. They are still learning to use their litter box, and if they have too many options



available, they may find another place that they find more appealing! Make sure that your food and water bowls are not next to your litter boxes.

Kittens in this age range can maintain their own body temperatures, but still prefer things to be warm. Keeping the room temperature in the mid 70's is ideal. If you are fostering in the winter months or if you like to keep your home air-conditioned, give your kittens access to a heated bed. You can place a heating pad underneath your cat carrier, remove the

carrier door and place a cozy blanket inside. Kittens can choose to be on the heat if they want to but are not in any danger of accidentally getting trapped inside.

**4.2 Feeding**

Kittens have a high metabolism,once they are fully weaned it is important that they always have food available. If your kittens love the dry food and are perfectly healthy, you may not need to use the canned food at all. However, if you have kittens that have poor appetites, or are recovering from an upper respiratory infection and are having difficulty smelling the dry food, you may need to rely more heavily on the canned.
Watch your kittens carefully to make sure that they are able to approach the food bowl. Sometimes, a bully kitten does not want to share with the group. You may need to add more bowls or move existing bowls further apart. In severe cases, you may need to separate the kittens either permanently or several times a day.

As with the bottle babies, it is important to weigh your kittens regularly to ensure that they are getting enough nutrition. They should be gaining approximately 100 grams or a quarter pounds a week. Please note their weights on a regular basis.

**4.3 Things to look out for**

**Emergencies: *Kittens may need to be seen ASAP- see emergency protocol***

- Stool that is white, light yellow, dark black, contains mucous, or has a lot of blood in it.
- Streaming Diarrhea where the kitten has no control at all.
- Temperatures over 103 degrees
- Extreme dehydration- if you pinch the skin on its back, and the skin remains tented for 5 seconds. The eyes may appear to be sunken in. The gums will feel dry or tacky. ● Excessive vomiting or vomiting blood or green or yellow bile.
- Vomiting combined with diarrhea
- Difficulty breathing or very shallow or labored breathing
- Extreme lethargy where the kitten is barely moving or not moving at all.
- Eyes that have swelled shut
- Prolapsed rectum
- If you have reason to believe that your kitten has ingested something toxic
- Swollen or broken limbs
- Anything else that makes you think your kitten is in pain or in danger of passing away.

If you find your kitten with any of the above symptoms, text Vanessa and contact the shelter immediately to let them know you are a foster parent with an emergency at **(703) 931-9241**.

**If you have an after-hours emergency, we will need to send you to an authorized emergency veterinarian. Please text Vanessa and then call the emergency line 571-220-0350 for authorization.**

**Non- Emergencies that Require an Appointment with our Medical Staff:**

● Kittens that are not gaining weight
● Continued diarrhea after protocol has been administered
● Eyes that are red, inflamed or have a colored discharge
● Loss of appetite
● Lethargy
● Temperatures under 100 degrees or over 102.8 degrees
● Vomiting (unless it is only undigested food and the kitten shows no other symptoms and the vomiting does not reoccur.)
● Congestion
● Raspy Breathing
● Sneezing (unless it is a dry, infrequent sneeze with no signs of a colored discharge and the kitten is still active, eating, and shows no other symptoms of illness.) ● Any change in behavior that causes alarm (ex: suddenly not using the litter box) ● Straining in the litter box
● Constipation
● Swollen rectum
● Limping
● Hovering about the water bowl, but not drinking
● Dehydration
● Pale gums
● Ear-mites
● Worms (Tape worms will often look like grains of rice. Roundworms are longer and look more like spaghetti.)

Contact Vanessa Parks for any of the above issues! Texting works best. 703-887-3259 Page

## 5. Common Illnesses

### 5.1 Common Illnesses

Kittens and their mothers may suffer from a wide variety of illnesses. Fortunately, a great many of them are treatable with basic medications and care. Below is a list of common illnesses you may encounter with your foster and the steps to take should these occur.

**Diarrhea**

Diarrhea is a frequent condition in kittens often caused by parasites such as worms, Coccidia or Giardia. Viruses such as panleukopenia may also cause diarrhea. It's common for kittens to have loose or runny stools within the first 24-48 hours of coming home. If diarrhea continues after this time frame, we'll start treatment. If your kittens are eating and acting normal, we can get them started on medication. Please email your foster mentor for help/advice.

**Upper Respiratory Infections**

Kittens in a shelter setting are bound to pick up colds. Sneezing, runny eyes, and congestion are all symptoms. Many of the upper respiratory infections we see are viral and will not respond to antibiotics directly, our veterinarian may prescribe antibiotics to fend off secondary bacterial infections. You can help by ensuring kittens have access to a heated bed, running a humidifier, and warming their food. If you don't have a humidifier, try bringing the kittens into the bathroom while you are taking a hot shower to relieve some of the congestion.

**Eye Infections**

Eyes are a very sensitive and painful area, it is important to treat eye infections quickly. If the eyes develop clear discharge, keep them clean with a warm damp gauze or tissue. Email a picture and we can advise on next steps.

**Ear mites:** Ear mites are tiny parasites that live in the ear canal. You may notice that your kitten's ears smell bad or that they look "dirty." Often your kitten will shake his or her head or scratch a lot. In severe cases, their eyes may tear or they may have a

head tilt.

**Ringworm**
Ringworm isn't actually a worm, but a fungus. It will usually appear as hair loss in areas where the skin is thin: around the nose, ears, eyes, and feet. In severe cases, it can look scaly and may resemble a burn. Ringworm is contagious to humans and other animals, and if it gets into your carpet fibers it can live there for up to a year or more. If you suspect ringworm, it is important to handle your kittens with gloves and



keep them in their quarantine area until you can have them examined by our medical vomiting, lethargy, fever, dehydration and loss of appetite.

**Panleukopenia**
Panleukopenia is a highly contagious, often fatal virus. Symptoms include: diarrhea, lethargy, fever and not drinking. They will frequently be huddled in a ball and appear to be in pain. Because the symptoms of panleukopenia are like so many other ailments, please try not to panic. However, if you suspect panleukopenia, keep your kittens in their quarantine area and contact us immediately. Panleukopenia is a very hardy virus and can live on surfaces for over a year.. If kittens test positive for panleukopenia, this will more than likely result in quarantining the home for 6 months. This means that no kittens under 6 months of age will be permitted to be fostered into the home for 6 months. During that time, it will be possible to foster fully vaccinated adult cats if kept in a separate room from where the positive panleukopenia kittens were kept. Veterinarian approval should be given before having new fosters in the home.

**FIP (Feline Infectious Peritonitis)**
FIP is a fatal disease responsible for a small percentage of kitten mortality. FIP is difficult to diagnose and can appear as many other illnesses. Symptoms may include loss of appetite, lethargy, weight loss, recurrent respiratory infections, a distended abdomen, high fevers, or labored breathing.

**Feline Leukemia (FELV)**
FELV suppresses the kitten's immune system and allows other illnesses to develop. FELV can be transmitted through saliva, through the mother's milk or in utero. Due to new research and the number of kittens we take in we will not test for FELV unless the kitten appears to have a compromised immune system. Additionally, in young kittens the test is not 100% reliable and there is always some risk. Many kittens that are FELV positive will not show any symptoms.

**Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV)**

FIV is an immunodeficiency virus transmitted through bodily fluids (blood, urine, saliva, milk). Cats and kittens with FIV can live for a long time if their immune systems are kept strong and they are not exposed to other illnesses. The test for FIV is not accurate in kittens, so there are some risks that foster kittens can be carriers. Many kittens that are FIV positive will not show any symptoms. We do not test for this.



**5.2 Death**

If a foster kitten dies while in your care, please wrap up the body and place it in a box. Tape the kitten's animal ID # and any medical notes to the box and bring the kitten into the shelter as soon as possible. If you need to keep the kitten overnight, place the box in your freezer.

### 6. Socializing Your Foster Cat or Kittens

Remember that your goal is to raise friendly, outgoing, easy to handle happy, well-adjusted kittens! Their behavioral well-being is just as important as their physical health.

Kittens learn through association. You have the advantage of being able to use every feeding as a lesson in love.

Most kittens love canned food. By sitting in the room with your kittens when you feed them, they will associate your presence with a positive experience. For kittens that are very shy, try gradually working up to hand feeding them canned food (just be sure that you pick up a large enough chunk that they don't accidentally bite your finger.) Once they are eating comfortably from your hand, try stroking them while they are eating. Eventually you want to be able to hold them while they are eating. If the canned food doesn't work, try small pieces of steamed or boiled chicken, small pieces of turkey, or commercial cat and kitten treats.

If your kitten does not appear to be overly food motivated, try seeing what toys they like. Most kittens will respond to a "cat dancer" or cat wand. These are toys at the end of the wand that you can move along the floor for your kittens to chase. They are wonderful toys for exercising rambunctious kittens and for drawing shy kittens out of their shell.

**It's common for your cat or kittens to hide in a safe spot within the first 24 hours of coming home, but you should be able to pick up and handle your foster animal without any issues.**

Try to ensure that your kittens do not bond solely to you by inviting people over to spend time with the kittens. Load your friends up with your kittens' favorite treats or toys and let them play!

If young children are handling the kittens, supervise at all times. Kittens are very impressionable at this age and very fragile and can be easily injured by accident.

The best way to have young children and kittens interact is by asking the children to sit on the floor and giving them a toy such as a cat dancer to gently move across the floor. You may place the kitten in the child's lap, but don't force the kitten to stay and do not allow the child to chase the kitten.

**6.1 Mouthing & Biting**

**The following suggestions are for kittens only.**

Kittens learn proper bite inhibition from their littermates. Single kittens that have been raised by themselves or that have relied primarily on humans for socialization often bite harder than they should. While this behavior may appear "cute" coming from a tiny kitten, it can become dangerous as the feline matures. Aggression towards humans is a reason that



the cat will either return to the shelter or be forced to live outside. Please adhere to the following guidelines:

- Stop moving your hand and remove attention completely away from them by not petting or handling them.
- Have an adequate supply of toys on hand at all times. Toys such as the “cat dancer” or cat wand are wonderful, because they create distance between the toys and your hands and encourage play with appropriate items.
- Throw toys! Some kittens like to fetch or carry items around!
- Provide the kitten with a stuffed animal that he or she can kick, bite! *Never swat, blow on, or scruff a kitten for mouthing. These actions are ineffective and confusing.. You will only agitate the kitten further.*

***If your kitten does bite you and break skin, notify the Foster Team as soon as possible. By law,we need to document and fax a report to Animal Control. In most cases, we can arrange for the kitten to serve his or her “quarantine” period in your home.***

**6.2 Litter Box Aversion**

Most cats and kittens instinctively use the litter box. If your fosters are having difficulty, consider the following:

- Accidents can be a result of bladder or urinary tract infection. A kitty with diarrhea may not be able to make it to the box quickly enough. This is usually the case with a kitty that has used the box in the past and suddenly having trouble. .

*If we have ruled out a medical condition, please:*

- Make sure the litter box is accessible. Are the sides low enough for the kittens to easily walk in and out? Is it in a quiet, low traffic area?
- Clean the box more often.
- Add litter boxes, especially if you have a litter of kittens. Many kittens do not like to share with several other animals.
- Move the litter box; maybe there is a draft, a smell, or a sight that is causing that kitten to avoid the area.
- Put a mat under or in front of the box. Many cats have surface preferences. ● Use an enzyme cleaner to clean up accidents.
- Dump the entire box regularly if just scooping isn't enough.
- Rinse the entire box out with an enzyme cleaner and hot water.
- Put the food or water bowl in the place where accidents occur.
- Try to identify which kitten is having the accidents. He or she may need to have a litter box of his or her very own or may need to be contained to a smaller area. If your kittens are in a small room already, you may need to confine them to a kitty condo or large Vari kennel.



**6.3 Kittens and Dogs**

Never leave your dog unsupervised with a foster cat or kittens, make sure the area where

you are keeping them is completely dog-proof. Positive interactions between your kittens and dogs will be very beneficial for the kitten, especially if adopted into a home with a resident dog.



### 7. Mother Cats and Kittens

Be extra patient with mother cats.

We try to screen mother cats to ensure they will adapt to a foster home, but some adjust faster than others. When you initially bring home mom and her kittens, please set them up in their "quarantine zone" and leave them to adjust. If mom doesn't want to come out of her carrier, prop the door open and allow her to come out at her leisure.

Keep visitors and household activity to a minimum while mom adapts to her new environment. Make sure that the room is "cat proof" and does not have screens that she can pop out of the window or unsafe places where she can hide. Provide enough space that mom can get away from the kittens if she wants to (a simple perch or windowsill will suffice) but not too much space.

Once your mom cat is comfortable in your presence and fully adjusted to her living area, you can start spending more time with her and her kittens. Wait for her to solicit attention before overwhelming her.

Since your mom cat will be the primary provider for her family, her health and well-being is paramount. Mother cats need extra fat and protein in their diet, she should have access to high quality kitten food and fresh water at all times.

Lactating mothers need to defecate more than usual, set up more than one litter box to ensure cleanliness.

Check the family regularly to ensure that the mom cat is providing enough nutrition to her kittens. Weigh the kittens daily. Remember that kittens should double in weight from the time they are born until they are one week old. Afterwards, they should be gaining 100 grams a week or a little over 14 grams per day. If the mother cat doesn't mind, gently touch her nipples to make sure that she is lactating.

If you suspect that the mom cat isn't lactating or if you hear the kittens crying incessantly, begin supplementing the kittens with a bottle and contact AWLA immediately. Mother cats will frequently cease lactating if they are ill or malnourished themselves. If you notice any signs of illness or loss of appetite in the mother cat, please contact Kitten College Coordinator.

Mom cats can come back into heat when their kittens are as young as four weeks old. If you suddenly see your mom cat being overly demonstrative in her affections towards you, rolling around on the floor, rubbing against household items, or being unusually vocal, she may be coming back into heat. Make sure all windows are secure and family members



know to be extra careful when entering her room, as she will have a strong desire to leave during this period.

Ideally, mom cats should have an opportunity to wean their kittens and cease lactating before being spayed. Mother cats will usually begin weaning their kittens between 4 and 6 weeks of age. You will often see that this takes little effort on her part, kittens will naturally start to eat her food. (You can assist, by making sure that there is a frequent supply of soft food available and tempting the kittens yourself) Occasionally you will see mother cats lose patience with their kittens or decide they've had enough of parenthood altogether. If you see the mom cat starting to get rough with her kittens, give her some time to herself in a separate room. If she wants nothing to do with her kittens and you are unable to keep her separated from them, notify your mentor or coordinator.

Every mother cat is a unique individual and we want to do what is best for her physically and emotionally. Some mother cats bond very strongly to their kittens and will do best if they can be returned to the shelter at the same time as their kittens. Others need more time to recuperate and would benefit from more time in their foster home.





### 8. Medical Charts and Vaccinations

When you pick up your foster cat or kitten, you will receive weight charts to record their weights. Daily weights for kittens are very important.

**Commonly used medical terms:**

- **FVRCP**- Routine vaccination, will need to be updated every two to three weeks
- **Ponazuril/Pyrantel**- General deworming, pyrantel needs to be re-dosed every two weeks while in foster care
- **First Triage**- Typically for bottle babies
- **Revolution Plus**- Flea, tick, ear mite, heartworm and roundworm prevention. Starts at 4 weeks/1 pound.

**Stay on top of getting your kittens in for their routine vaccinations.**

**If your email is correct in our database then you should get Maddie Fund emails that remind you when your kitten is due for vaccines. Please email Vanessa to make a vaccine appointment. Please do not just show up!**

Vaccine reactions are not common, but they can occur. Plan on bringing your kittens in for vaccines on a day when you have time to monitor them. Reactions include: high temperatures, lethargy, loss of appetite and vomiting.

It is our intention to have the kittens return to the shelter for spay or neuter and adoption when they are eight weeks of age and/or weigh over 2 pounds.

### 9. Spaying and Neutering

Due to the high number of surgeries we perform at AWLA, there may be a backlog of appointments available for foster kittens. It's important to email vparks@awla.org as soon as your kittens reach 2.2 pounds. We will tell you when to return your kittens.



### 10. Communicating with the Foster Team

During the peak of kitten season, we may have as many as 250 kittens in foster care, which translates to about 150-200 unique foster families. To ensure everyone gets the help they need, include all the pertinent information when you text, email or leave a message.

We have a private Facebook group for our feline foster parents. It's a space for our Kitten College volunteers to share ideas, photos of cute kittens and to reach out for the support of other foster parents. Please note - any medical, behavioral or procedural questions should be directed to your mentor or foster staff.

**Kitten College Facebook Group Page:**
**https://www.facebook.com/groups/752852924887469/**

If you are interested in adopting one of your foster animals, alert Foster staff. You will still need to go through the adoption process, but we will assist in expediting the process for you.

***Thank you!! You have just helped make the world a better place for felines and humans!! We hope that you have enjoyed your Foster Care experience and that you will consider fostering again!***

## Rescue Material Safety Data Sheet

https://www.viroxanimalhealth.com/hubfs/VAH_PDFS/REScue_Concentrate_US_GHS.pdf