

CARING FOR NEONATAL KITTENS

Caring for newborn kittens can be difficult but rewarding work. Below are a few tips that can help better prepare you to care for these little feline friends.

Ask for Help

Contact local veterinary clinics and shelters to ask if they have a nursing mother cat or experienced volunteers available to bottle-feed the kittens. Many times a mother cat will “adopt” more kittens.

Heat and Bedding

At home, provide kittens with a soft nest (like a box or kitty bed) with a heating pad or other warming device. Completely cover it with a blanket or towel, and make sure that kittens can move away from the heat if they want. Change the bedding as needed when accidents occur. Be sure that kittens are kept constantly warm, as chilling can be very dangerous. Continually keep an eye out for signs of chilling (i.e., kittens are listless and feel cool to the touch). If you have nothing else on hand, use your own body heat to warm up a cold kitten, and rub gently to aid circulation.

Chilling can occur after a kitten becomes wet. Never submerge kittens in water. If you need to wash them, wash only certain parts or use a moist wash cloth. Be sure to always fully dry them with a hair dryer (on low) and towel.

****Do not bottle feed until kittens have warmed up completely.**



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

If you have questions or concerns, or for adoption/placement options please contact AHS' Pet Resource Center at 602-997-7585 Ext. 3800

Additional Online Resources can be found at

- Somanycats.org
- Alleycat.org

For information on Trap-Neuter-Return and Outdoor Cat Resources, please contact Animal Defense League of Arizona's Spay Neuter Hotline 602.265.SPAY (7729)

HEALTH CONCERNS

Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)

If heavy yellow discharge develops or the kitten has trouble breathing or eating, see a veterinarian immediately. A mild URI can be cleared up by simply wiping away discharge with a warm, wet cloth and keeping kittens in a warm, damp environment.

Fleas

Fleas can cause anemia. First, pick fleas off with a flea comb. For a bad infestation, bathe the kitten in warm water. You can also use a very small amount of gentle, liquid dish soap, to bathe kittens. Avoid the eye area - use a washcloth around the face - and rinse thoroughly. Do not use flea shampoo or topical flea treatments on kittens 6 weeks or younger. Never submerge kittens fully in water. If bathing, be careful of chilling - dry kittens with a warm towel or hair dryer on low, then place on a heating pad.

Parasites/Diarrhea

Any drastic change in stool consistency can mean trouble. Parasites can often cause diarrhea, strange looking stools, and dehydration. Kittens can begin a deworming treatment schedule as young as 10 days old; see a veterinarian for this. If you notice any unusual signs, your kittens should be seen by a veterinarian.

NUTRITION

Your first purchase should be a pet nursing kit and kitten formula, available at pet stores. The nursing kit usually includes a bottle, several extra nipples and a cleaning brush.

Cut an “X” in the tip of your first nipple with scissors. Kitten formula (brands include KMR and Just Born) is more economical if purchased in powdered form to be mixed as needed. Pet supply catalogs offer very good values on these products.



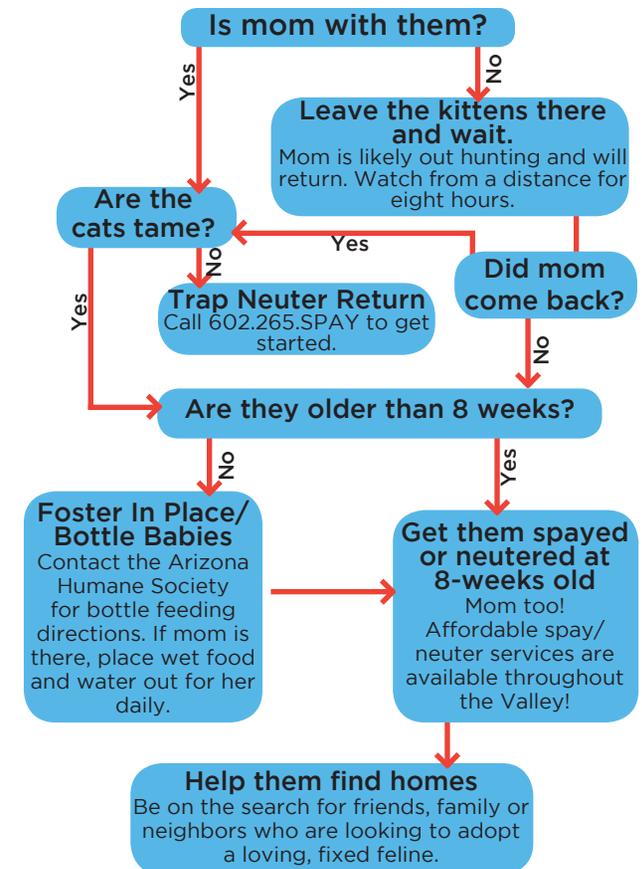
Cow's milk is not nutritious enough for kittens and causes diarrhea which is extremely dangerous. If you can't get to a pet store right away, consult our recipes for Emergency Kitten Formula.



ARIZONA HUMANE SOCIETY

Caring for Bottle Baby Kittens

YOU FOUND KITTENS IN YOUR YARD!



FOSTER IN PLACE

Despite many aggressive and sustained spay and neuter programs combatting pet overpopulation, cats continue to reproduce. As a result, you may someday find a lactating mother cat and her baby kittens on your property or nearby. If the family appears healthy, rather than bringing them to a shelter, **“Fostering In Place”** is the best way to serve the new cat family and the surrounding community.

If you find newborn kittens without their mother, she may be out searching for food. Keep an eye on the kittens and the time. If Mama cat has **not returned within eight hours**, you can assume she will not and either begin to care for the kittens or surrender them to a local shelter.

Please be advised, however, that kittens who are unable to care for themselves - those younger than 4-5 weeks of age weeks - have a very low survival rate if they enter the shelter system. This is why we recommend, “Fostering In Place.”

If the family is together, leave them together if possible.

Provide them food, water and shelter until the kittens can eat on their own (approx. 5 weeks old). If you feel the new family is at risk, attempt to trap the kittens and mother at the same time. Mama cats will be drawn to the mews of their kittens if the kittens are placed in a covered carrier behind the trap. Or, if the mother cat has been captured, cover her enclosure and place a second trap directly beside it.

- Never leave kittens alone once the mother has been trapped.
- Do not trap the mother with kittens who are younger than 4-6 weeks if you are not able to provide the kittens bottle feeding, as they are far too young to eat independently.
- If you trap a female cat and see that she is lactating and you don't see any kittens, it is best to release her. This will likely save the lives of the kittens.



FEEDING

Before each feeding, sterilize the bottles and nipples in boiling water.

Gradually mix 4 tablespoons of formula with 3/4 cup of warm water. This will make 1 cup of formula.

Formula should always be warmed to room temperature. You can do this by microwaving it in the bottle for no longer than 10 seconds (**never let it boil**), or placing the bottle in a bowl of hot water for a few minutes. Test the temperature on your wrist.

Hold or place kittens on their stomachs and arch the bottle so less air gets in (**do not feed kittens on their backs**).

Kittens will usually stop nursing when full.

If you are having trouble getting a kitten to “latch” onto the bottle, try pulling on the nipple when they start to suck. This will encourage her to suck harder and latch on. You can also move the nipple back and forth in the kitten's mouth. If your kitten is too ill to suck on a bottle, consult a veterinarian for other options

FEEDING SCHEDULE

Age (weeks)	Body Weight	Formula per day	Feedings per day
1	4oz	1.1 oz	9 to 12
2	7oz	1.9 oz	7 to 9
3	10oz	2.6oz	7 to 9
4	13 oz	3.5oz	5 to 7
5	16 oz	4.3oz	5 to 7

** Can vary. Base on consumption to ensure daily requirements are met.*

Weaning occurs around 4 to 5 weeks old. Mix formula with wet food so kittens can lap it up, or put the mixture in a bottle. Then mix with dry food and begin providing water.

EMERGENCY KITTEN FORMULA

If you find yourself with a kitten and unable to get to a pet supply store, this emergency formula can be made at home. It should **only be used in emergencies**, and should not replace kitten formula:

- 8oz can evaporated milk
- 1 beaten egg yolk
- 2TB Karo Syrup

Mix all ingredients well and strain. Warm before serving. Keep refrigerated.

**From Feline Neonatal Care DVD from Loudoun SPCA*



AFTER FEEDING

As long as kittens are eating formula, you must burp them. Put them on your shoulder or on their stomachs and pat them gently until you feel them burp. Kitten formula is sticky, so be sure to clean kittens after feeding with a warm, damp washcloth.

Kittens under four weeks must be stimulated to go to the bathroom after each feeding. Use a warm, moist cotton ball to gently rub the kittens' anal area to stimulate urination and defecation. Completely solid feces usually will not form while kittens are drinking formula.

Start litter training at four weeks. Kittens may start looking for a place to go as young as 2^{1/2} weeks of age. You may supply them with a small, shallow litter pan with non-clumping litter. Do not use paper or fabric; while this is soft, it can teach bad habits they may carry into adulthood! Show kittens the litter box and put in a used cotton ball.

Thank you for Fostering in Place!