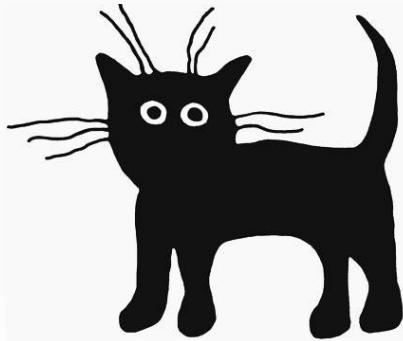


# ASAP Cats

## Kitten Foster Manual



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## Introduction to ASAP Cats Kitten Foster Program

### Why Do We Need Fosters?

Every year, ASAP receives hundreds of young kittens into our shelter that come from all over Santa Barbara County. Kittens are in need of frequent attention to keep them warm, fed, clean and healthy. The shelter is not an ideal environment for the kittens, and our goal is to get them into foster care as soon as possible. As an in-home foster parent of young orphaned kittens, you will be credited with saving the lives of kittens that might have otherwise perished.

### Who Can Foster?

People from all backgrounds come together to help kittens in need. Many foster parents work full-time outside their home, mother cats with kittens and older kittens do quite well in this type of home environment. Other foster parents are homemakers, students, or individuals who are retired or employed part-time. These foster parents may choose to work with younger kittens that need additional feedings and care. Some fosters are able to take their neonatal kittens to work with them, so that they can continue to provide regular feedings throughout the day! Every foster parent spends quality time with their kittens **every day**, ensuring that their charges remain healthy and social.

### How Do You Know If You Can Help?

We invite any compassionate individual or family who can accommodate additional animals in their home to apply for fostering. We will work with you to determine whether foster care is something you would enjoy and would be appropriate for your current circumstance. As you read this Kitten Foster Manual, please ask yourself the following questions:

- Do I have an appropriate space for the foster kittens/queen that can provide isolation from my resident pets until the ASAP Cats Wellness Team has advised that they are free from any contagious disease or illness; or, if necessary, for the entire time the kittens are in foster care with me?
  - This is for the health and safety of both your own pets and the foster kittens, which may be too delicate to fend off an illness.
  - An area such as a spare bedroom, extra bathroom, or laundry room that can be kitten-proofed and easily cleaned is ideal. Neonatal bottle-feeders can be housed in a carrier, and younger but more mobile kittens in a larger kennel or cage or even a large cardboard box or unused bathtub with time out for play, exercise, and socialization.
  
- Am I willing to take the risk of exposing my pets to the foster animals, which may be carrying something that could make my own animal ill?



- No matter how careful you are, there is always a risk for your own pets.
- Am I emotionally prepared to foster kittens?
  - Even seemingly healthy kittens sometimes “fade” and pass away. It is also emotionally difficult to return the kittens to the shelter after their foster period. Please discuss these situations as a family when considering becoming a foster parent.
- Am I able to spend quality time with the foster kittens every single day?
  - This is the most rewarding and FUN part of fostering!
- Am I willing and able to work with the ASAP Cats Wellness Team and Kitten Foster Program?
  - We do everything we can to provide the best care to the kittens; however, we also work with limited budgets and time schedules. In addition, any assistance you can provide by purchasing food or other supplies is appreciated (and can be taken as a tax-deduction).
- Am I willing to clean-up after kittens daily and incur possible damage to my home?
  - Even with the best kitten proofing, they always find something to get into! Kittens can be messy and may have a few accidents when training to use the litter box.
- Am I reachable during the day?
  - Immediate care is often needed for the tiniest kittens that are turned in at the shelter. The quicker these young ones can get into a foster home, the better.

## **The Rewards of Fostering**

While fostering queens and/or kittens can sometimes be an exhausting responsibility, it is also immensely rewarding! It is the highlight of the summer months for many ASAP Cats fosters—some of which have eagerly anticipated kitten seasons with ASAP Cats for more than a decade! As you take care of the queens and/or kittens, you will discover each one has a different personality and will bond with you in a unique way. They will be part of your family during a very important time in their lives—and you will help them grow into healthy and social companions that will bring much love and joy into people’s lives.

Many fosters take photos of their kittens to document their experience, as well as to help promote the ASAP Cats Kitten Foster Program and the adoption of their fosters. If you do take some terrific pictures or videos of your foster kittens, please email them to [volunteer@asapcats.org](mailto:volunteer@asapcats.org)



Thank you again for your willingness to donate your time and energy to save the lives of these little ones. We hope that the time you spend fostering for ASAP Cats will be an experience to cherish forever!

## Logging Your Foster Hours

All ASAP Cats volunteers, including fosters, are asked to complete an application before beginning their service with ASAP Cats. Once your application is approved, you will be provided with access to the ASAP Cats online volunteer software (Volgistics). Volgistics can be found on the ASAPCats.org website by clicking on the drop down “Get Involved” tab and choosing “Volunteer/Foster Hub.” This will enable you to update your profile including email address, phone number, address, username, password, etc. You are responsible for keeping your personal as well as emergency contact information up-to-date. You can also now log the time you care for foster queens and kittens.

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, many of the grants and donations that ASAP Cats receives are contingent on the number of hours logged by our volunteers. It is also important to log your time so that ASAP Cats has an accurate measure of how much time each volunteer is donating, as well as the total hours it actually takes to provide shelter and care for cats and kittens each year.

To keep track of how many hours you are fostering, it helps to keep a log. You can note the date, time and task you have done (e.g., feeding, cleaning the litter box, washing baby blankets, playing with the kitten). Once you have fostered a few times, you will have a good idea of how much time to log.

## Calculating Foster Hours

Below is an approximate idea of how many hours to log, depending on the age and number of kittens you are fostering:

- Neonatal bottle-feeders – 1 day to 2 weeks old
  - **2 hours per day** (more if more than 2 kittens)
    - 10 minutes per feeding, more time if more than two kittens, includes piddling, burping and washing bedding.
- Bottle-feeders – 2-5 weeks old
  - **2-3 hours per day** (more if more than 2 kittens)



- 15 minutes per feeding, more time if more than two kittens, includes piddling, burping, clean up (if they've soiled themselves), washing bedding, playtime and cleaning their housing area.
- Weaned kittens – 6-10 weeks old
  - **1-2 hours per day** (more if more than 2 kittens)
    - Feeding, cleaning the litter boxes and bedding, and playtime.
- Pregnant queens
  - **1 hour per day**
    - Feeding, cleaning the litter boxes and bedding, petting time.
- Queens with kittens up to 3-4 weeks old
  - **1 hour per day**
    - Feeding, cleaning the litter box and bedding
- Queens with kittens 5-10 weeks old
  - **1 hour per day** (more if more than 2 kittens)
    - Feeding, cleaning the litter box and bedding, playtime with the kittens (and the queen).

**The hours spent fostering kittens and/or queens through ASAP Cats are not eligible as Community Service.**

## Fostering Basics

### Fostering Supplies

#### Provided by ASAP Cats

The following items needed for fostering can be supplied by ASAP Cats. ASAP Cats is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization and all of these supplies are purchased by ASAP Cats or donated. Anything that you purchase to use for fostering is highly appreciated, and conserves ASAP Cats resources to use for other critical supplies and programs.

- Canned food
- Dry kibble
- Baby food
- Pedialyte - unflavored





- Scales to weigh kittens
- Flannel and fleece bedding
- Litter pans
- Litter
- Large dog kennel for confinement, if needed
- Top loading carrier for neonatal kittens
- Regular size to larger size carrier for kittens 2-4 weeks old

## Provided by Foster

You should have a ready supply of these items, as they will need to be changed or discarded often:

- Hand sized towels
- Baby blankets (flannel or fleece)—can be purchased at Sears, K-Mart or thrift shops
- Wash cloths (no loops)
- Soft stuffed animal toys (company for a single kitten)
- Toilet paper, baby wipes, cotton balls (for piddling/elimination)
- Hand sanitizer
- Bleach

See the following reference for what supplies can be tax-deductible if you purchase them yourself:

<https://www.alleycat.org/community-cat-care/volunteers-for-nonprofits-may-be-able-to-deduct-cat-care-related-expenses-on-their-taxes/>

To request supplies, fill out the Foster Supply Request Form at:

<https://forms.gle/CYiYGjdbUqCTEH7Q6>

## Housing Foster Kittens and Queens

### Isolation from Your Animals

It is extremely important to isolate new foster kittens and/or queens from your own animals. Many of the kittens who arrive at the shelter start out their lives with no owner, no consistent care or with a queen who may be undernourished or in poor health. The kittens may have been exposed to, or are carrying parasites or illnesses from their mother or their surroundings. They may have a compromised or underdeveloped immune system. They are often stressed and confused by the dramatic change in their environment. It is our goal to minimize risk of disease or parasite transmission to your pets and the kittens. In addition, this time will give your own animals the opportunity to adjust to the idea of new kittens being in their territory.

***For all of these reasons, you must isolate the kittens from your own animals until they have been cleared of any contagious diseases (URI, ringworm, parasites, FeLV, etc.) by the ASAP***



***Cats Wellness Team. Normally the screening for feline leukemia (FeLV) is not done until the kitten has been spayed or neutered at approximately two months of age.***

***Bottle-feeders must be kept within a secure carrier or box until they are old enough to move to larger housing.***

***Queens should ALWAYS be kept separate from your own pets, as they can be very protective of their kittens.***

***ALL FOSTER KITTENS AND QUEENS MUST STAY STRICTLY INDOORS!***

## The Isolation Area

Your isolation area should include the following components:

- Isolation from other animals in the home.
- Surfaces that are easy to disinfect (vinyl or tile floor, not carpet).
- Stocked with supplies that are dedicated to the area and easy to sanitize.
- A good, ideally separate, source of ventilation (e.g., window with secure screen).
- Low human traffic.

## Kitten Proofing Your Home

### Preparing Your Home to Foster Kittens

The age and number of kittens you are fostering will determine how you set up their housing.

- It is **critical** that your home be safe for foster kittens. Before you bring any foster kittens into your home, you must inspect your home carefully. **Think like a kitten.** Get low on the floor and explore. Remember kittens can squeeze into *tiny* spaces.
- Look through your home as if you have a baby learning to crawl in the house. As kittens get older and start to explore their world, they tend to get into anything and everything.
- We recommend that you confine kittens to a limited space, both for safety reasons and to facilitate cleaning.

Kittens may be kept in a spare bedroom or bathroom that has been “kitten proofed”, (see following section on kitten-proofing). Younger kittens can even be kept in an extra-large crate or kennel that is outfitted with food, water and litter pans. They can be taken out of the crate for supervised play and then returned. Be sure that the bars of the crate or kennel are not wide enough for the kitten to squeeze through.

### General

- Look for kitten-sized openings along the base of cabinets and tightly plug them with rags.
- Look for anything kittens can eat or break, or items that could be harmful. For example, kittens can easily ingest small plastic things, string, rubber bands, hair ties, pins, thumbtacks, ribbon, twist ties and dental floss.



- Tightly plug spaces around large appliances like stoves, water heater, dishwasher and refrigerator with thick towels.
- Check all windows and screens to ensure that the screens are securely installed. If there are no screens, make sure that the windows are not left open when you have fosters in your home.

## Bathroom

- In the bathroom, the **toilet seat lids should be kept CLOSED** and toilet paper should be kept up out of reach.
- Cabinet locks or baby latches can be used on vanities, storage cabinets and medicine cabinets.
- Pedestal sinks should be checked for hollowed areas around the base and if there are any, they should be plugged with towels.
- Hang towels and shower curtains up high.
- Shampoo, liquids, chemicals, toothpaste and dental floss should be kept in inaccessible places.
- Garbage cans should have secure lids—or removed from the area completely as they can easily be knocked over.

## Laundry Room

- Washers and dryers must be checked before each use—to ensure that no curious kitten has put themselves in harm's way. It is best to keep the lids closed at all times when not in use.
- Plug spaces around large appliances (washer/dryer) with thick towels.
- Always check to make sure kittens are not playing or sleeping in piles of laundry.

## Bedroom/Living Room/Office

- Check under beds for holes in the covering over the bedsprings.
- Be extra careful when using reclining chairs or rocking chairs.
- Paper shredders should be unplugged to prevent tails from being accidentally pulled in.
- Be sure that electrical wires and cords are not easily accessible for the kittens to chew on.
- In the living room, block the fireplace opening, check air vents, and look for cords that can be chewed or entangled around small kitten necks, especially drapery cords.

## Toys

- When using stuffed animals as toys, remove the small plastic eyes or anything that can be chewed off and swallowed.
- Never leave string or wand toys with unsupervised kittens.



## Poisonous plants

Plants that are poisonous to cats include lilies, philodendron, mistletoe, poinsettia, ivy and “Creeping Charlie” plus many others.

## Routine Practices to Prevent Infection in your Foster Home

Routine practices to control disease transmission include:

- Setting up an isolation area for foster kittens and queens.
- Practicing good hand hygiene before and after handling animals or objects in the isolation area.
- Cleaning and disinfecting items in the isolation area using the appropriate agents.

## Cleaning and Disinfecting Agents

Soaps and detergents are not the same as disinfectants. It is important to understand how these two groups of products work and to use them appropriately.

- **Soaps and detergents** are cleaning agents that work by suspending dirt and grease and breaking up organic matter. Soaps do not necessarily kill germs. Dish and laundry soaps are common examples of detergents.
- **Disinfectants** are chemical solutions that kill germs. The particular germs killed depend on the ingredients in the disinfectant. While some disinfectants serve a dual purpose and have some cleansing properties, many disinfectants do not effectively remove dirt and grease.

## Hand Hygiene

Clean hands thoroughly before and after handling foster animals or items in the foster area of your home.

- Pay particular attention to fingertips, between fingers, backs of hands and base of the thumbs (most commonly missed areas).
- Lather or sanitize for a **minimum of 15 to 20 seconds**.

## Alcohol-Based Hand Sanitizers

- Use hand sanitizers that contain 60-80% ethanol or isopropyl alcohol.
- Can be used when hands are not visibly soiled.
- Provide a rapid kill of most transient microorganisms but are not recommended when risks of ringworm are significant.



## Cleaning and Disinfecting in Foster Homes

The chart below outlines the cleaning and sanitary procedures that should be taken in order to provide the optimum home for foster animals.

SURFACE/OBJECT	SUGGESTED PROCEDURE	SPECIAL STEPS
All surfaces and objects	Thorough cleaning and disinfection between each animal's stay in your home	
High contact surfaces (counters, light switches and floors)	Daily cleaning with a detergent and a weekly disinfection	
Visibly soiled objects/surfaces	Cleaning with a detergent and disinfection	
Litter boxes and food bowls	Daily cleaning and weekly disinfection	Sanitize food bowls separately from litter boxes
All regular surfaces	Weekly cleaning and disinfection	Increase frequency to daily or more when infection is present
Laundry	Remove organic material before laundering  Use soap and bleach  Machine or sunlight dry	Take caution in moving soiled items to washing machine to prevent environmental contamination   Throw away heavily soiled items

## Litter Box

### Training

- Kittens can be litter-box trained at a very young age, but if they do not have an easily accessible litter pan nearby when they have to go, they will not spend much time looking for it! Place kittens in their litter pan after they have eaten, starting at 3-4 weeks old, as eating often triggers a natural response for elimination.



- Kittens may cry while looking around for a place to urinate. If you see this happen, place them in their litter pan.
- Keeping the kittens in a very small room (with the floor covered with newspapers) or other confined space with a litter pan will help with tidy habits—especially when they get old enough to wander farther and explore their surroundings.
- If you find that kittens are using another area as a potty, place an additional litter pan in that spot.
- Keeping the litter box clean is very important. **Daily cleaning is a must.** Depending on the number of kittens, you may need to change the litter one to two times each day. This will also allow you to monitor daily for diarrhea, blood in the stool or other signs of illness.

## Sanitation

- We recommend using less litter and changing it more often.
- Put in enough litter to cover the bottom of the pan, not more than 1/2 inch deep.
- Rather than trying to scoop out waste, just dump all of it out, clean the litter pan and fill with fresh litter.
- A spray bottle with a diluted solution of bleach and water is handy for quick sanitizing. **Use a solution of 1 part bleach to 32 parts water or one ounce of bleach per quart of water.**

## Kitten Weight

***It is important that you weigh kittens every day and keep a record of their weights.***

- Weigh them about the same time each day, before feeding.
  - Use the ASAP Cats Foster Kitten Daily Record (Appendix VI) or keep a notebook, noting the weight and anything else of note (eyes running, urine appears dark, etc.) and any medications and dates given for each kitten.
  - If the kitten has not gained any fraction of an ounce in two days, then you know it is not getting enough to eat or has a medical problem that needs attention. ***Notify the Wellness Team or Kitten Foster Coordinator immediately.***
  - Normal weight gain for kittens is approximately 1/3 to 1/2 ounce each day.

Age of Kitten	Average Weight
1 day	2-3 oz (birth weight)
3 days	4-5 oz
1 week	6 oz. (at least twice the birth weight)
10 days	6-8 oz



2 weeks	8-10 oz
3 weeks	10-12 oz
4 weeks	12-16 oz
5 weeks	> 1 lb
6 weeks	1.25 lbs
7 weeks	1.5 lbs
8-9 weeks	2 lbs

## Veterinary Needs of Kittens

### Basic Kitten Veterinary Care

All kittens will receive a preliminary vet check prior to being sent into foster. Every kitten at ASAP Cats receives FVRCP vaccinations, deworming, fecal screening and treatment for parasites if needed, and FeLV screening at the age appropriate time. The ASAP Cats Foster Placement Coordinator and Wellness Team will work directly with you to schedule regular vet checks for your foster kittens.

### Basic Veterinary Care

1 <sup>st</sup> FVRCP – intranasal	Between 4-6 weeks
1 <sup>st</sup> Deworming	1 month or 1 lb.
Fecal Screening	AS NEEDED for kittens that are experiencing gastrointestinal issues. Contact Wellness Team and a fecal sample should be collected immediately.
2 <sup>nd</sup> FVRCP – injectable	2 - 4 weeks after 1 <sup>st</sup> FVRCP (intranasal)
2 <sup>nd</sup> Deworming	2 - 4 weeks after 1 <sup>st</sup> Strongid
if positive for Coccidia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Marquis Paste dose given once daily for 3 days.</li> <li>● Fecal sample 3 days after last dose.</li> </ul>
if positive for Giardia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● 5 day treatment—medication can be given by foster. Wellness Team will provide medication and instructions.</li> <li>● Fecal screening 3 days after treatment is finished.</li> </ul>



## Ready for Spay/Neuter

### Surgery

- When the kitten reaches approximately 2 lbs, is strong, and thriving, notify the Kitten Foster Coordinator who will let the Wellness Team know to schedule the kitten for surgery.
- You will need to bring the kitten(s) to the shelter on the morning of the day of surgery between 8:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. If you are unable to take the kitten into the shelter on the morning of surgery, you may pre\*arrange to drop off the kitten(s) the afternoon before (no later than 4:30 p.m.).
- You may feed the kitten(s) a **small** meal of canned food, the morning of surgery, before 6:00 a.m. They may also have some water.
- When you take the kitten(s) in for their surgery, feel free to provide the shelter staff with detailed information on each of your kittens. For example, you can provide their name, personality traits, likes/dislikes, experience and reaction to adult cats, dogs or children and any other information you think would be helpful in placing them into homes. A typed or written description of each kitten is extremely helpful!

### Post-Surgery Care

- After surgery, the kitten(s) will either remain at the shelter for observation or go back into the foster home for 24-48 hours.

## Health Concerns

### Hypothermia (Low Body Temperature)

#### ***Important: Never feed a cold kitten!***

- How can you tell if a kitten is hypothermic?
  - The pads of their feet and/or ears feel cool or cold.
  - Gently place your finger in the kitten's mouth; if it feels cold, then the kitten's temperature is too low.

#### ***Hypothermia is life threatening and must be dealt with immediately!***

- Hypothermic kittens must be slowly warmed to their normal body temperature over 1–2 hours.
  - Keep the kitten on the heating pad (on **LOW** setting). Check their temperature again with your finger.
  - You can also fill a plastic/latex glove with warm-hot water. Tie a knot in the end and check to make sure it is not leaking. Cover the glove with a very lightweight cloth and place the kitten stomach down on the glove. You will need to keep a close eye on the kitten so that it does not fall off or get too warm.
  - Do not warm up the kitten too quickly—be patient as it can be dangerous to warm a kitten too fast!





## Diarrhea

- Diarrhea is commonly seen in small kittens. **However, at the first sign of diarrhea in newborn/neonatal kittens, contact the ASAP Cats Wellness Team immediately!!**
- There are a number of possible causes: eating something they should not, improper diet, overfeeding, parasites, or diseases such as giardia or coccidia.
- **At the first sign of diarrhea in a kitten less than 5 weeks old, contact the Wellness Team immediately. Kittens with diarrhea can quickly become dehydrated and die.**
  - If diarrhea is severe, kitten(s) may need hydration and the ASAP Cats Wellness Team may provide medication and a probiotic supplement.
  - It will be important to take in a fecal sample as soon as possible if requested.
- If kittens are over 5 weeks old and on canned food, first try mixing dry food with the wet, or feed canned food alone, until the diarrhea gets better. Sometimes, just switching to a different brand of kitten food will eliminate the problem (especially if a fecal test has come back negative for parasites). **If the diarrhea does not improve within 2 days, contact the Wellness Team. Do not wait longer than 2 days.**

## Dehydration

- Assess for dehydration in kittens younger than 6 weeks by looking at their urine (it should be very light yellow if they are properly hydrated; dark urine means dehydrated), and their mouths (gums should be pink, moist and slightly slippery to the touch; pale and dry gums indicate dehydration).
- You can check for dehydration by pulling the skin up at the neck scruff (just a little lower than the back of the neck). It should be taut and snap back down quickly. If the skin stands up or takes some time to go back down, the kitten may be dehydrated. This is a more reliable test in older kittens.
- Other signs of dehydration include:
  - Eyes are open but look sunken.
  - Face looks drawn in at the sides (normal kitten faces are round in appearance).
  - Kitten acts lethargic.
  - Not eating well, not latching on to nipple.
  - Gums or inside of their mouth is pale.
- If one kitten is dehydrated, most likely the entire litter is at risk for dehydration also.
- **If you see dehydration in your kitten, immediately notify someone on the ASAP Cats Emergency Contact List, (see Appendix I). The kitten may need to be hydrated with subcutaneous fluid.**

## Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)

URI is like a cold in humans, however, kitty colds are not transmittable to people. **At the first sign of any of the following symptoms: sneezing, snotty noses, and watery or red eyes combined with lethargy and decreased appetite, contact the Wellness Team immediately.**

- Fragile kittens with suppressed immune systems may have a harder time recovering



from URI, and a kitten cannot be spayed/neutered while sick.

- Infections spread most readily from cat to cat by direct contact or shared contact with feeding dishes or toys.
- URI can also be transmitted by contamination on the foster's clothes. If the foster isolates a cat/kitten known to be infected and makes sure that healthy littermates do not share its dishes or playthings, the infection is less likely to spread throughout the household.
- Washing hands after handling an infected cat/kitten, and even changing clothing, may help deter or eliminate the spread of disease.

## **Bloating**

- Bloating—observed as a round, hard belly—is not uncommon in kittens.
- Bloating can be a sign of worms, so be sure and contact the Wellness Team. They may provide you with a container to bring in a fecal sample or direct you to give medication.

## **Fecal Tests**

Foster kitten(s) and queens may need to have a fecal screening to determine if any parasites are present. The Wellness Team will provide you with a small plastic container to retrieve a sample of the feces. It has a little “scoop spoon” inside.

- The fecal sample should be as “fresh” as possible. It should be kept in the refrigerator and taken to the shelter within 24 hours of collection.
- The results are normally available the following day, unless the sample was sent to the lab on Saturday, in which case, they will be available on Monday.
- The Wellness Team or the Kitten Foster Coordinator will contact you with the results and if parasites are present, you will need to go to the shelter to pick up the required medication.

## **Parasites**

### **Fleas**

- Fleas can be a major threat to weak or very young kittens. They can cause anemia, tapeworms or even death for a small kitten.
- If you find fleas on the kittens, notify the Wellness Team.
- If it is possible, make your house a flea-free environment before you bring any kittens home.
  - If you cannot eradicate the fleas entirely, then the next best thing to do is comb the kittens daily with a flea comb. It is best to wait until after a meal or active play, when they are tired and mellow. Do not try combing them when they are wild and crazy – they will only fight you. Frequent combing is also a good way to get them used to grooming. To kill the fleas combed off, drop them into a solution of hot, soapy water.



- Do not use any chemicals or flea products on or around the kittens, as they can be hypersensitive to them and become ill.
- Flea shampoo is not recommended for kittens. If there are only a few fleas, you may want to bathe the kittens using baby shampoo, combing the fleas out while they are wet and easier to see. Remember, the kitten must be **dried completely** afterward to maintain its body temperature.
- If you do have a flea problem in your home, please treat your own cats with appropriate flea preventative before bringing home kittens.
  - One of the most effective ways to keep fleas under control is by using a vacuum cleaner daily. Remember to put two or three mothballs in the vacuum bag to prevent the eggs from hatching in the bag and escaping from there.
- For every flea that you see, there are about 100 more somewhere in the environment. Please work at controlling this common problem—especially during the warmer summer months.

## Tapeworms

Tapeworms are whitish/cream colored and look like a grain of rice. They are transmitted by fleas, which pass the larval stage of the tapeworm to the cat. The cat becomes the final host, where the larvae develop into an adult tapeworm. Once the tapeworm reaches maturity, it leaves the cat's body via feces or by crawling out of their anus. Tapeworms are caused by a cat ingesting an infected flea. You and your other non-feline animals cannot catch tapeworms from your foster queen or kittens.

If you see anything that looks like a grain of rice on your foster kitten or queen, or in their bedding or litter box, immediately notify the Wellness Team. They will prescribe the appropriate medication.

The good news is that tapeworms are easily treatable!



Tapeworm segment--about the size, shape and color of a grain of rice.



Dark, granular substance in the ears is a clear indication of mites.

## Ear Mites

If you observe your foster kitten(s) scratching at their ears or shaking their head, they may have ear mites. If you look inside their ears and you see dark, almost black, coffee ground-like material, they likely have ear mites.

***Do not attempt to clean out their ears.***

At the first sign of possible ear mites, contact the Wellness Team.



## Ringworm

- Ringworm is a fungal disease similar to Athlete's Foot. There is no actual "worm" in ringworm!
- Ringworm usually shows up as hair loss with a scaly patch anywhere on the kitten's body, but commonly seen on the animal's head. On humans, a red "ring" (thus the name 'ringworm') surrounds the scaly area.
- **Ringworm is highly contagious to other animals including kittens, cats, dogs and people! You can also spread ringworm to your foster kittens if you have contracted it from another source. If you suspect ringworm, notify the Wellness Team immediately.**
- All potentially exposed animals should be carefully monitored for lesions for at least 2-3 weeks after exposure.
- Please **DO NOT** adopt out kittens known to be exposed until the veterinarian clears them.



Ringworm on a cat's head



Ringworm on a human's forearm

## Inappropriate Suckling

Inappropriate suckling on one kitten suckling on another and can cause injury to the suckled kitten. Only one thing will stop a kitten from suckling inappropriately - separation. When you notice two kittens connected in a way that no two kittens ever should be, gently pry them apart and separate them. Supervise the nursing kitten to make sure he will not simply turn to another littermate. Split them up every time you notice this nursing until the behavior fades.

If the kittens are orphans, try putting them in a large container with low sides and dividers between them. This way, they can smell and hear each other and not be completely isolated.

Provide each of them with a soft, cuddly blanket that they can "nurse" on.

To help with their comfort while the kittens are separated, make a couple of sock rice heaters and put these homemade heaters inside their cubicles with each kitten. Make sure the sock heater is not too hot and you keep the same sock heater with the same kitten.

Keep warming the sock heaters up in the microwave any time you have to change out the soiled bedding, they will implant their scent on the sock and it will calm them down.

If you do not separate the suckling kittens, inappropriate suckling can lead to wounds causing abscesses, which are very difficult to treat in newborn kittens. Allowing a kitten to suckle on a male sibling's genitals can cause severe damage and even the need for euthanasia.



## **Kittens That Fail to Thrive – Also Known as “Fading Kitten Syndrome”**

With the use of colostrum-enriched formula for neonatal kittens, ASAP Cats has seen a dramatic increase in the survival rate of kittens over the recent years. However, neonatal kittens and even older kittens can still succumb to “fading kitten syndrome”. If they have arrived at ASAP Cats severely compromised (dehydrated, hypothermic, malnourished or extremely underweight) it is possible that they will struggle or even not survive. Sometimes these kittens will rally and begin to gain weight but after a few days or even a week, they stop growing, lose weight, stop nursing, become unable to stay upright, cry continuously, or exhibit extreme lethargy. If they continue to decline, they may begin gasping for breath or breathe with their mouths open. As soon as any of these symptoms are observed, follow the emergency contact protocols. Please know that this is not your fault—it is just nature’s way. Do the best you can, keep the kitten warm and loved and know that your efforts are appreciated.

Sometimes a whole litter of kittens may fail to thrive. They may have been affected by the queen’s lack of prenatal care (she may have been malnourished) or there could be other reasons that are not always evident. If a kitten is not thriving, often the queen will instinctively know that there is something wrong with it and reject it. While it is best for the kitten to have its own mother’s milk, if the queen has rejected it, there are ASAP Cats fosters who are expert bottle-feeders who can attempt to give it a chance at life. It is important to immediately notify the Kitten Foster Coordinator so that these fragile kitten(s) can be transferred for specialized foster care.



## **If a Kitten Dies**

If a kitten dies while in foster care, immediately notify the Kitten Foster Coordinator or if you are unable to reach them, make contact with someone on the ASAP Cats Emergency Contact List (see Appendix I). They will instruct you what to do.




While it is extremely sad when a kitten does not survive, every year the ASAP Cats amazing fosters and foster program saves hundreds of kittens! Please remember that the kitten was loved and cared for, did not suffer alone, cold, and abandoned. We do our best for all of them and continue to save as many as we can.



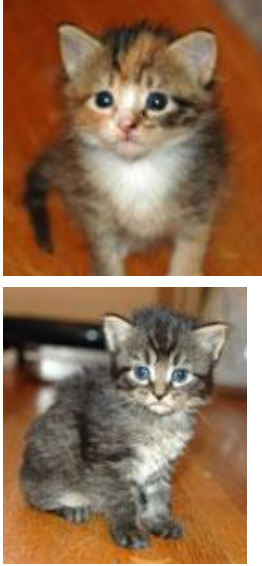

## Kitten Developmental Aging Chart

Age	Weight (Typical)	Physical Observations	Photos
1 day to 1 week old	2-3 oz. (birth weight) to 4-5 oz. at 1 week	<p>At birth, kittens' eyes are closed and their ears are folded down. Umbilical cord attached.</p> <p>Kittens are blind and deaf. Kittens cannot stand, regulate their body temperature, or urinate or defecate on their own.</p>	
3 days	4-5 oz.	<p>Umbilical cord falls off around the 3<sup>rd</sup> day. Ears begin to unfold, though their eyes remain closed.</p>	







<p>1 week</p>	<p>6 oz. (at least twice the birth weight)</p>	<p>Eyes begin opening. Kittens are more mobile. Ears are more open, but still folded.</p> <p>Sleep 90% of time, nurse 10% of time. Kittens are becoming more aware of their surroundings.</p>	
<p>10 days</p>	<p>6-8 oz.</p>	<p>Eyes are open (9-14 days). Eyes are blue at first. When eyes open, there should be no discharge or redness. Ears are more open, but still folded.</p>	
<p>2 weeks</p>	<p>8-10 oz. (at least 8 oz.)</p>	<p>Eyes and ears are open, but vision and hearing is limited. Uncoordinated walking; more aware of siblings. No teeth yet. Look like a “bear cub”. Begin to knead.</p>	







<p>3 weeks</p>	<p>10-12 oz.</p>	<p>True eye color may start to appear, eyesight improves. Ear canals are open. Walking around, but wobbly. Can eliminate on their own. Front baby teeth start coming in.</p>	
<p>4 weeks</p>	<p>12-16 oz.</p>	<p>Increases in coordination, litter box use, playing with siblings. Much higher activity level and duration of wakefulness. Eyes start to become true color. Ears look more kitten-like (compared to a bear cub)</p>	





<p>5 weeks</p>	<p>1 lb. or more</p>	<p>Baby teeth are in. Back teeth begin to come in. Begin weaning-offer wet food. Big increase in coordination and playing. Eyes continue to change. <b><u>1<sup>st</sup> FVRCP-P and Strongid dose due when 1 lb.</u></b></p>	 
<p>6 weeks</p>	<p>1.25 lbs.</p>	<p>Should be eating kitten food and nursing/bottle-feeding. Eyes are true color.</p>	 



7 weeks	1.5 lbs.	Kittens can be separated from Queen when the smallest one is 1.5 lbs. <b><u>2<sup>nd</sup> dose FVRCP-P and Strongid due 2 weeks after 1<sup>st</sup> dose.</u></b>	 
8-10 weeks	2 lbs. or more	Ready for spay/neuter at 2 lbs.	 

Source: NYCferalcat.org

## Types of Fosters

### Neonates (Bottle-Feeding Fosters)

Some things to consider if you want to become a Bottle-Feeder:

- Am I emotionally prepared to foster very young kittens?
  - *Bottle-Feeders are the most fragile kittens to foster. If they have not been with their mother long enough to nurse from them and take in Colostrum, they may not be able to thrive. Sometimes they may just “fade” and pass away. It is emotionally*



*difficult to spend a lot of time and effort only to have the kitten die. Please discuss these situations as a family when considering becoming a Bottle-Feeding foster parent.*

- Am I able to sleep for only 2-3 hours at a time?
  - *Newborn kittens should be bottle-fed every 2-3 hours (including overnight) from birth until about 10 days old. Once they reach 2 weeks, the time between feedings can be extended to 3 hours. At 3 weeks, as long as they continue to thrive, the time can be extended to 4-5 hours.*
- Am I reachable during the day?
  - *Immediate care is often needed for the tiniest kittens that are turned in at the shelter. The quicker these young ones can get into a foster home, the better.*

## Setting up Housing

***Bottle-Feeders must be kept within a secure carrier or box until they are old enough to move to larger housing.***

Keeping newborn and neonatal kittens warm is **MOST** important - even more important than food! It is best to prepare their housing in advance of their arrival.

***Sanitation is important; newborn kittens have low immunity, always wash your hands before you touch them.***

- Place a heating pad on the bottom of a top-loading carrier (or small cardboard box).
  - Set the heating pad on **LOW**.
  - Cover the heating pad with one hand sized towel and one layer of **\*fleece or flannel type blankets** on top of the towel so there's no chance that the kitten can burn themselves on the heating pad. If possible, place another layer under part of the area so that the kitten will be able to move to a cooler spot if it desires. **Be very careful with heating pads - make sure the kittens do not come in contact with the heating pad.**
- \*Do not use terrycloth towels as the kittens' claws can get caught in them. This can lead to the claw being pulled out and cause possible infection.***
  - The bedding should be replaced with clean bedding at least every couple of days or if the kitten has urinated or defecated on it.
  - Placing a towel over the carrier helps to keep drafts of air off the kitten and keeps it warmer inside for the kitten.
  - It is best to provide a single kitten with a small, soft and cuddly stuffed animal that it can snuggle with. Be sure it does not have any small, loose parts that can become dislodged or swallowed by the kitten.
- As the kittens gain weight and begin to move around more, it is best to move them into a little bit bigger space. A larger carrier or cardboard box works well.



- They still need a heating pad, set on **low**, with another layer under part of the area so that the kitten can move to a cooler spot if it desires.
- They will become more aware of their surroundings as their hearing and eyesight develops, so it is best to keep them in a quiet place.

## Handling the Kittens and Socialization

At about the third week, the kitten will become much more aware of you and its surroundings. At this time, it is important to start spending time socializing them. They will become attuned to your voice, especially at feeding time, so it helps to hold them and play with them even when it is not feeding time. Otherwise, every time they hear your voice, they will start crying because they think they are going to be fed.

They will become better people-loving pets the more time you spend holding them and getting them used to human touch.

Once they reach 4-5 weeks, playtime is also important. Use toys such as ping-pong balls and small, soft stuffed animals (make sure there are no pieces or parts that can be chewed off and swallowed by the kitten).

## Bottle-Feeding Newborn Kittens

### Feeding Schedule

- Orphaned kittens need to be bottle-fed for at least the first five weeks.
- Follow the Maddie's Fund Kitten Bottle Feeding and Stomach Capacity Chart for feeding amount and intervals.

***Do not overfeed - this can cause diarrhea!***

- Feed the kittens at evenly spaced intervals, around the clock. Consistency is the key to keeping diarrhea at bay.
- Use the ASAP Cats Foster Kitten Daily Feeding Chart in Appendix V to keep track of feeding times.

### Instructions for Bottle-Feeding

- **Never** feed a kitten who is cold (hypothermic and is less than 98° F). It can cause aspiration, pneumonia and be fatal.
  - Refer to "Assess the Health of the Kittens; Hypothermia."
- If a neonatal kitten has been separated from its mother before it is 7-10 days old, it should be started on Colostrum-enriched Kitten Formula for at least the first week.
  - If the kitten is severely compromised in the beginning and dehydrated, mix the Colostrum Formula with Pedialyte and water (1 part formula, 1 part water, 1 part Pedialyte). As long as it is gaining weight regularly, after 1 week you can mix the Colostrum Formula with Breeder's Edge Formula in equal parts for 1-2 days (1 part Colostrum, 1 part KMR and 4 parts water) and then switch completely to the KMR Formula (2 parts water and 1 part KMR).



- Mix KMR or Colostrum formula according to the kitten's physical status.
  - 1:3 formula to water for first-time bottle-fed kittens
  - 1:2 formula to water is for stable kittens who are used to the formula
- When mixing the KMR formula, be sure all the lumps are dissolved. A shaker container, like what is used for human protein shakes with the small round metal ball that breaks up the lumps, works best. You can also pour it through a strainer to remove all the lumps.
  - Keep unused formula in the refrigerator and be sure to make just enough formula to last for one day. Heating and chilling the formula several times can degrade its nutritional value so it's best to mix only what will be used for a couple of feedings.
- Sterilize the bottle and nipple in hot water. Make sure the nipple has a small hole in it. Do not use an eyedropper, because the kitten will not get enough to eat.
- Using a funnel, fill the nursing bottle up to the line below the top.
  - It is best to note how much formula the kitten takes in at each feeding by using the lines on the bottle.
- **Carefully** warm up the kitten formula to about 95–100° F before feeding.
  - Fill a coffee cup about 2/3 of the way with hot water and put the bottle in the cup. Let it sit for approximately 1-2 minutes and then check it by pouring a couple drops on your wrist. It should be very warm, but not hot, otherwise it will burn the kitten's throat.
- Stimulate the genitals so the kitten can urinate and defecate. (Refer to "Stimulation and Elimination" for instructions).
- Bottle-feed the kitten stomach down - ***never hold them on their backs like a human baby while they are eating***. This will prevent any liquid from going into the lungs.
- Put the nipple in the side of the kitten's mouth, then center it or let the kitten position it comfortably.
  - **Gently** squeeze a few drops out if necessary, and then stop, you should feel the kitten latching onto the nipple.
  - The kitten should be manipulating the suction. Do not squeeze or force formula into its mouth.
  - Sometimes getting the kitten to latch on the first time can be challenging, just be patient; feed another kitten and try the first one again a few minutes later.
  - Kittens may not understand what the bottle is and may roll the nipple on its tongue.
    - Brace the kitten's face with the heel of your palm and fingers and do not let it move its head around. In addition, you can try wrapping the kitten loosely in a blanket.



**Four paws on the floor--this kitten demonstrates the proper position for bottle-feeding.**



- Try again and squeeze a few drops of milk out.
  - If you have someone helping you, have them use a soft, clean toothbrush to gently stroke the kitten while you are trying to bottle-feed. This action mimics the mother grooming their kitten.
  - If you are concerned that your kitten is not latching on, refer to the Emergency Contact List (see Appendix I) to ask for advice.
  - The kitten will either pull away when it is done or may continue to “suckle” the nipple (but not swallow formula). You can tell when it is just suckling because you will be able to see its tongue wrapped around the nipple but you will not see the formula bubbling in the bottle (the bubbles mean that the formula is being swallowed).
    - Normal kitten stomachs are tiny and can only hold about one teaspoon of formula for every 4 ounces that they weigh.
- Do not overfeed - it can cause diarrhea!***
- Burp the kitten.
    - Kittens should be burped after every feeding.
    - Hold the kitten upright against your shoulder or place one hand under his belly and gently pat and rub his back.
  - Stimulate the genitals so the kitten can urinate and defecate. (Refer to “Stimulation and Elimination” for instructions).
  - Offer more formula to the kitten. If they do not want anymore, do not force them.
  - Clean the kitten.
    - Orphaned kittens consider you their mom, so you will need to keep them clean like their mother does. After the kitten is done nursing, use a warm, wet washcloth to gently clean around its mouth. The formula can become dried on their fur and become crusty and pull the fur off.
  - If the kitten has defecated on its own, it is important to be sure and clean it well. Use a warm, wet washcloth to remove all of the feces. Make sure that the kittens are **completely dry**, as they do not create enough body heat to dry themselves.
  - Place kitten back into the warm, clean and dry nest.
    - As the kittens get older, they may begin to urinate and defecate on their own. It is important to keep their bedding clean and dry, hence the need to have extra flannel and fleece bedding available.

## Stimulation and Elimination

Normally, a kitten’s mother will lick it in the genital area in order to stimulate its bodily functions. If the kitten is an orphan, you will need to stimulate elimination before and after each meal.

Normal kitten feces is mustard or brown colored, firm, and formed in tiny little logs but still a bit squishy, especially as a newborn. Green or yellow watery stool usually means overfeeding.



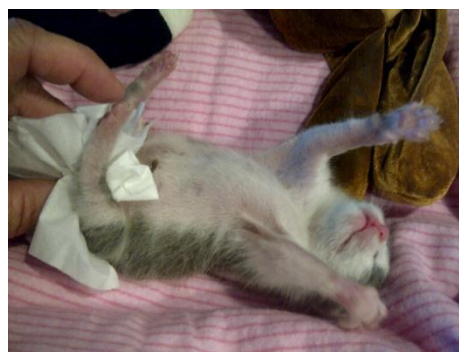
Kittens usually poop at least once a day, but individual kittens can vary. Some kittens can go for a week without pooping! It is still important to track elimination and let the Kitten Foster Coordinator know if your kitten has not pooped in three days.

## Supplies Needed

Cotton balls, toilet paper, tissues, or gauze pads.

## How to Stimulate a Kitten for Elimination

- Before and immediately after feeding.
- With a warm, wet washcloth, cotton ball, toilet paper, tissue or gauze pad, stimulate the genital area.
  - Stroke gently in a circular motion on each kitten's anal/genital area.
    - Be careful not to “rub” so you do not cause any chafing.
    - Be cautious of the “boy” kittens, their aim can be good!
  - Keep going until all urination stops (this means the bladder is empty).



Using a soft tissue makes it easy to gently stimulate a kitten to eliminate.

## Normal vs. Abnormal Elimination

Normal urine should be pale yellow with no odor. If it is dark yellow and smells pungent (strong), it can signify dehydration or other illness and the ASAP Cats Wellness Staff should be contacted as soon as possible.

Normal feces should be yellowish/brown and fairly well formed “logs.” If it is white or green, or runny, the ASAP Cats Wellness Staff should be contacted as soon as possible.

Kittens will begin to urinate and defecate on their own as early as three weeks old. When they begin to do so, you can place a small litter pan with **non-clumping** clay litter or pellet litter, such as Feline Pine, in with the kitten. It is instinctive for the kitten to use the litter box. If they are in a bathroom, it is best to have more than one litter box (unless you only have one kitten). When kittens are very young and running around playing and suddenly need to “go”, they are not going to spend much time looking for the litter box. Make it easy on yourself by placing 2-3 litter boxes in the room with them.

## Assessing the Health of Kittens

Healthy kittens cry just a little, squirm around a bit, eat a lot, sleep a lot, and gain weight. Sick kittens are inactive, cry a lot, may not eat much, and look “not quite right.” When in doubt, call the contacts on the ASAP Cats Emergency Contact List (see Appendix I). Kittens do not have a lot of “reserves” and can become very ill, very fast!



## Kitten Weight

***It is important that you weigh bottle-feeding kittens every day and keep track of the weight.***

Please use the ASAP Cats Foster Kitten Daily Feeding Chart to keep track of feeding times and weight or make your own chart.

- Weigh them about the same time each day, before feeding.
  - Use the ASAP Cats Foster Kitten Daily Record (Appendix VI) or keep a notebook, noting the weight and anything else of note (eyes running, urine appears dark, etc.) and any medications and dates given for each kitten.
  - If the kitten has not gained any fraction of an ounce in two days, then you know it is not getting enough to eat or has a medical problem that needs attention. **Notify the Wellness Team or Kitten Foster Coordinator asap.**
  - They should be gaining about 1/3 to 1/2 ounce each day.
  - Suggested weights chart (*from Alley Cat Allies*): see the next page

Age of Kitten	Average Weight
1 day	2-3 oz (birth weight)
3 days	4-5 oz
1 week	6 oz. (at least twice the birth weight)
10 days	6-8 oz
2 weeks	8-10 oz
3 weeks	10-12 oz
4 weeks	12-16 oz
5 weeks	> 1 lb
6 weeks	1.25 lbs
7 weeks	1.5 lbs
8-9 weeks	2 lbs

## The Weaning Process

At about five weeks of age, the kittens are ready for the weaning process.

- Mix the KMR formula with all meat (chicken or turkey) baby food. You can still bottle-feed them with this mixture.





- If you purchase baby food yourself, read the ingredients and make sure the food contains only meat, water, and perhaps cornstarch. Gerber Stage 2 or Beechnut turkey, chicken, or veal pass the ingredients test and are good choices.
- After a couple of days you can make the baby food mixture thicker and place it in a small shallow bowl or saucer.
  - It helps them get the idea of chewing if you use a small spoon and let them lick it off the spoon. If they resist, put a small amount on your finger and dab it on their mouth, which will cause them to lick it off. Then, try again with the spoon.
  - As they lick it off the spoon, guide it down towards the food in the bowl or saucer. They will attempt to walk through their food at first, or immerse their entire face in it. No one ever said kittens were tidy! Try holding the food centered directly in front of their face for a few feedings. They will soon learn to bite the food instead of the side of the dish!
- They can still be supplemented with occasional bottle-feeding as well if needed.
- Be sure to thoroughly clean the kitten's face and mouth area after it has eaten, if it has made a mess.
- Changes in the kitten's diet can cause diarrhea, so be sure to monitor elimination during this time.
- At six weeks, discontinue bottle-feeding if you have not already, and begin giving them wet food without KMR added.
  - ***Be aware that if you bottle-feed after they have good back teeth, they may bite the end of the nipple off the bottle, swallow it, and possibly choke.***
  - Kittens at this age benefit from 4-5 small (approximately a level tablespoon) feedings per day rather than larger, less frequent meals. Overfeeding wet food can cause digestive problems, especially if too much is eaten at one time.
  - Kittens should have access to high-quality dry kitten kibble at all times, as well.
  - Fresh water should always be provided.
    - Be sure the bowl will not tip over and that it is not big enough or deep enough for the kitten to drown in.

## Weaned Kittens 6 Weeks and Older

### Location

- Kittens starting at 6 weeks old need a safe space where they can have room to run and play.
- An extra bathroom is an ideal place for weaned kittens. If you do not have an extra bathroom, an office area, extra bedroom or laundry room also work well. Refer to the section **Kitten Proofing Your Home**.



- If you do not have an area where you can isolate them from your other animals, you can borrow a large kennel from ASAP Cats. However, it's important that the kittens have time out of the kennel to really run and play, if possible, without having contact with your own cats (until the foster kittens have been cleared of any contagious diseases).

## Bedding

- Kittens need flannel or fleece bedding. Do not use terrycloth towels as kitten claws can easily be caught in the loops. The round, fleece covered kitty beds work great!
- You can use a cardboard box, turned upside down, with a couple of "doorways" cut out for them. Place their bedding underneath it. They will love the privacy.
- Be sure to replace bedding often, or as soon as it becomes soiled.

## Litter Box

- Use Feline Pine (sawdust pellets) or clay litter only.
  - ***DO NOT use clumping litter. Kittens are likely to ingest the litter from licking their paws. Clumping litter can cause a blockage in their digestive system, which can prove fatal.***
- The litter pan should have sides low enough for the kittens to get in and out of easily.
- You will need at least one litter pan per every 2-3 kittens. If there are only one or two kittens and it is a very small bathroom or large kennel, only one large litter pan is needed.
- The litter pan should be cleaned often. Plan on completely cleaning out the litter pan and filling it with fresh litter **at least once daily**, while scooping waste in between.
- At least once a week, disinfect the litter pan with bleach, soap and water.

## Food and Water

- Fresh water should be supplied daily.
- Use heavier ceramic bowls that will not tip, but are not big enough for them to swim (or drown) in.
- A bowl of high quality dry kitten kibble should always be available and replenished daily.
- Canned kitten food should be provided at least twice daily. If it is possible to feed more often, it is better for the kitten's digestive system to be fed several smaller meals a day until they reach the age of 8-10 weeks.

## Toys

- At 5-6 weeks of age, kittens will enjoy all types of toys, but make sure that the toys are safe (no small pieces or parts that can be chewed off and swallowed).
- Never leave kittens unsupervised with yarn or string or other cat toys which could be hazardous or even fatal.



- Feather wands should be stored out of reach from kittens after interactive play sessions or when the kittens are unsupervised.

## Pregnant Queens

### Location

- Pregnant queens need a warm, quiet, draft-free space where they will feel safe and secure enough to give birth peacefully.
- An extra bedroom or bathroom where there is very little noise or foot traffic is an ideal place for a pregnant queen. Closets are often the preferred location for queens as they near their delivery.
- It is best to limit choices so that you do not have to move the queen and her newborns after delivery. However, if the queen does give birth somewhere other than the area you have prepared for her, do not be afraid to handle and move the babies to the appropriate location.

### Nest and Bedding

A large box that is big enough for the queen and her newborn kittens works well. The sides should be low enough for the queen to jump in and out of, but tall enough so that the kittens cannot get out (at least until they are 4-5 weeks old).

- The bottom half of a very large dog-sized carrier works well or a large high-sided litter box. If one side has more of an opening, the opening can be pushed against a wall to prevent the kittens from escaping. (Be sure it has been properly cleaned with soapy water and bleach prior to using as a nest.)
- Line the nest with at least two layers of thick flannel or fleece bedding (no towels). **Do not use terrycloth towels as the kittens' claws can get caught in the loops.** The round, fleece covered kitty beds work well.
- Place a heating pad under one section of the bedding so that if the queen leaves the nest, the kittens will have a source of warmth. **Make sure the heating pad is only on the low setting.** When kittens reach one pound, they no longer require a heating pad, unless they are fragile, ill or the space they are being kept in is very cool.
- You can also drape a blanket partially over the top of the nest to give the family a sense of security and privacy.
- After the queen gives birth, you will need to change out the bedding as it will have likely become soiled during the birthing process.
- Once the kittens reach the age of 4-5 weeks, their enclosure should be enlarged. An unused bathtub works well as the queen can jump in and out when she needs a break and the kittens have room to stretch their legs. The tub should be lined with fleece or flannel bedding so the kittens do not get chilled.
- When the kittens reach 6 weeks, they should have the run of a secure room, as long as it's kitten-proofed well. Refer to the section **Kitten Proofing Your Home**.



## Litter Box

- Use Feline Pine (sawdust pellets) or non-clumping litter. **DO NOT use clumping litter.**
- A large sized litter pan should be placed fairly close to the nest so that the queen can remain close to her kittens.
- The litter pan should be cleaned often. Plan on completely cleaning out the litter pan and filling it with fresh litter **at least once daily**, while scooping waste in between.
- At least once a week, disinfect the litter pan with bleach, soap and water.
- After she gives birth, do not be alarmed at the amount of feces the queen produces. Remember, she is stimulating the kittens and ingesting their waste also. She may also have diarrhea, which can be normal. **Be sure to report any diarrhea if it lasts more than 2 days to the ASAP Cats Wellness Team.**
- When the babies reach 4 weeks old, they usually begin to use the litter box on their own. Be sure there are low-sided litter boxes available for the kittens to get in and out of easily.

## Food and Water

- Fresh water should be supplied daily.
  - Use heavier ceramic bowls that will not tip, but are not big enough for them to swim (or drown) in once they start toddling around.
  - Water bowl needs to be placed far enough from the nest so that if one of the kittens falls over the side, they will not fall into the water bowl.
- A bowl of dry kitten kibble should always be available and replenished daily.
- Canned kitten food should be provided twice daily before the queen gives birth. **Nursing queens should be fed canned kitten food three times a day.**
- Please consult with the Wellness Team if the queen is not eating regularly. They may suggest changing her food; however, any change of food, no matter how subtle, may challenge the gastrointestinal tract of the queen and cause diarrhea. Do **not** make any changes to the queen or kittens' diet before checking with the Wellness Team.

## Gestation

The gestation period for a cat is 63-65 days. This can vary between cats due to their general health, and can fluctuate anywhere between 60-70 days.

When ASAP Cats receives a female cat that is suspected to be pregnant, the Wellness Team will assess the cat's health and look for the following indications of pregnancy:

- By the third week of pregnancy, the cat's nipples will become enlarged and pink.
- By the fourth week of pregnancy she will have gained enough weight to make her pregnancy visible (her entire abdominal area will be visibly rounded and firm to the touch). Be very careful, however, about squeezing or putting any pressure on her abdomen—doing so can possibly cause a miscarriage or damage to the developing



kittens.

- The ASAP Cats Wellness Team can perform an ultrasound on the cat to determine pregnancy.

## The Birthing Process

After the nest has been prepared, all you need to do is wait for her to give birth. Most often, the queen will give birth when you are not around (either during the nighttime or while you are away at work). Some signs that she is close to giving birth are:

- Her mammary glands will increase in size during the last week of gestation.
- She may start nesting.
- Around two days before the queen gives birth, she will start producing colostrum.
- Her appetite may wane in the last day or two of pregnancy.
- She may exhibit a change in her behavior. During the last week or so she may become reclusive and seek out a secluded place (hopefully the nest you have prepared for her), or she may become more affectionate, especially if she has become bonded to you.



**Pregnant queen just days prior to delivering kittens--the typical, round, distended abdomen of full-term pregnancy can clearly be seen.**

## Danger Signs to Watch for in the Queen

Immediately notify the Wellness Team (or someone on the ASAP Cats Emergency Contact List (see Appendix I) if you notice the following changes in the queen's behavior:

- She stops eating for more than 24 hours.
- She becomes depressed or lethargic.
- There is a discharge coming from the vagina (especially if it smells unpleasant).

If the queen goes into labor when you are present and you are not squeamish, it is an amazing opportunity to witness the birth of kittens!

Normally the birthing process goes smoothly, however, if the queen is very young (under a year old) or malnourished or has any other unknown medical issues, problems can occur. Some things that could occur that should prompt you to seek veterinary care (make contact with someone on the ASAP Cats Emergency Contact List found in the appendices) are:

- If the queen is having active contractions and has not passed a kitten within 15-20 minutes.



- If you see part of the fetus or placenta protruding from the queen's vulva and she does not pass the kitten very quickly (within a minute or two).
- It is normal for a queen to rest between having kittens. If more than 2 hours pass between births of kittens make contact with someone on the ASAP Cats Emergency Contact List (see Appendix I).
- It is also possible for an "extra" kitten to be born after the rest of the litter, sometimes not until the next morning.
- It is normal for the queen to have discharge from her vulva after the birth of her kittens, however, if the discharge becomes foul-smelling, make contact with someone on the ASAP Cats Emergency Contact List (see Appendix I).
- Some underage or feral queens who are extremely nervous have been known to actually eat their babies just after giving birth. As frightening and tragic as this may seem, it is a harsh reality of nature that a queen who is underage or out of her element could instinctively do this. In the unlikely event that this should occur, be sure to contact someone on the ASAP Cats Emergency Contact List (see Appendix I).
- If you do have to transport the queen to the shelter, the kittens should travel with her, especially if they are under 4 weeks old. Be sure to line the carrier with plenty of flannel or fleece bedding and make sure that it is big enough so that the queen and kittens are not crowded. It is also best to cover the carrier completely with a towel to keep out drafts.

## Queen Behavior after Giving Birth

The queen will likely spend most of her time with her new kittens. For the first few weeks of their life, the kittens will depend on their mother to help regulate their body temperature and keep them warm. She will also clean the kittens regularly, as well as stimulate them to urinate and defecate. It is normal for the queen to ingest the kittens' feces.

Most queens will enjoy interaction with their human fosters before giving birth; however, for the first week or two after birth, she **may** seek less contact and may be more protective of her newborns.

However, if you have any concerns that the queen is not eating or behaving normally, notify the Wellness Team immediately—especially if you observe the following:

- If the queen is vomiting or experiencing diarrhea, having tremors or seizures, immediately notify the Wellness Team or refer to the ASAP Cats Emergency Contact List (see Appendix I).



Nursing queen with kittens.



- If the queen is ignoring the kittens and they are crying (probably because they are not nursing), **it is CRITICAL that you IMMEDIATELY notify the Kitten Foster Coordinator** so that arrangements can be made to bottle-feed the kittens. **Do not wait more than 8 hours** if you believe that the kittens are not being fed or taken care of by the queen.

## Handling the Babies

Please refrain from handling the babies unless necessary for at least the first week after birth.

- It is a good idea to do a quick exam on the babies when they are about 3 days old to make sure they're all about the same size and don't appear to have any problems. Just take a quick look and then put them right back with the queen, no holding, petting, etc.

You may quietly observe the queen and her babies. Be sure to quietly provide the queen with plenty of praise and encouragement.

As you observe the babies, make sure they are all getting their share of a nipple and no one is getting pushed away. If one kitten seems to be not getting its fair share, make sure to notify the Kitten Foster Coordinator. The kitten may need to be supplemental bottle-fed. If the queen welcomes being petted, please do so. However, she may prefer to be left alone and may even hiss or swat at you. This is normal, as she is simply being protective of her tiny babies. As time passes and they begin to grow, she should relax and allow you to handle them--usually when they reach approximately 2 weeks old.

- It is important to weigh the kittens daily, beginning at approximately 1 week of age, to ensure that they are gaining weight appropriately.
  - If they are not gaining 1/3 to 1/2 ounce per day, notify the Kitten Foster Coordinator as soon as possible. Lack of weight gain may necessitate supplemental bottle-feeding.
- If it is a large litter of kittens, they may need supplemental bottle-feeding. Contact the Kitten Foster Coordinator if the kittens are not gaining weight appropriately.

## Queens with Kittens

### Location

- You can use an extra bathroom, bedroom or office. If you do not have those types of locations available, you can borrow a large kennel from ASAP Cats.
  - Set up the kennel in a quiet area of your house, such as a corner of the living room.
  - Cover it on three sides with a blanket that can also be pulled down over the fourth to completely cover it.
  - It should be large enough for the queen to stretch out in without lying on top of her kittens, as well as a litter box, food and water bowls.
  - The bottom section of the bars of the cage should be narrow enough that the kittens cannot squeeze through them. You can put cardboard up around the bars or weave thin towels or blankets through them.



- Once the kittens get to be about 4 weeks old, they're going to be toddling around so you may have to expand or enlarge the area for the queen by installing a shelf in the cage (available from ASAP Cats) that she can jump up onto to have some "alone time" away from her kittens.
- If they are being housed in a bathroom, be sure to "kitten-proof" the bathroom and **refer to the section on kitten proofing your home. Be sure to keep the toilet lid closed if they are in a bathroom!**

## Nest and Bedding

***\*If the kittens are under 5 weeks old, follow the same basic setup for a Pregnant Queen.***

- Line the nest with at least two layers of thick flannel or fleece bedding (no towels). Do not use terrycloth towels as the kittens' claws can get caught in the loops. The round, fleece covered kitty beds work well.
- Place a heating pad under one section of the bedding so that if the queen leaves the nest, the kittens will have some warmth. **Make sure the heating pad is only on the low setting.**
  - When kittens reach one pound, they no longer need a heating pad, unless they are fragile, ill or the space they are being kept in is very cool.

## Litter Box

- Use Feline Pine (sawdust pellets) or non-clumping litter. **DO NOT use clumping litter. Kittens are likely to ingest the litter from licking their paws. Clumping litter can cause a blockage in their digestive system and can prove fatal.**
- The litter box should have sides low enough for the kittens to get in and out of easily.
- Depending on how many kittens there are, place at least one box per every 2-3 kittens plus the queen. If there are only one or two kittens and it is a very small bathroom or kennel, only one large litter box is needed (with low sides).
- The litter pan should be cleaned often. Plan on completely cleaning out the litter pan and filling it with fresh litter **at least once daily**, while scooping waste in between.
- At least once a week, disinfect the litter pan with bleach, soap and water.

## Food and Water

- Fresh water should be supplied daily. Use heavier ceramic bowls that will not tip, but are not big enough for kittens to swim (or drown) in once they start toddling around.
- A bowl of dry kitten kibble should always be available and replenished daily.
- Canned kitten food should be provided at least 2-3 times daily for the queen while she is still nursing. Once the kittens begin eating on their own, it is best for the kitten's digestive system to be fed several smaller meals a day until they reach the age of 8-10 weeks.





## Weaning Kittens to Eat on Their Own

Around 5-6 weeks of age, you can start introducing kittens to canned food. If they are with a queen, and have access to the food she is eating, they will most likely follow her lead and start eating it on their own. If they do not, you can work with them to introduce it to them.

- Put a little bit of the canned food on your finger and let the kittens lick it off your finger. As they lick it off your finger, slowly guide them down to the plate with the canned food. It should not take too long before they figure it out.

- They will probably walk into and through their food, so it is important to make sure that the queen cleans them up. If she does not or there is no queen, you should take a warm, wet washcloth and gently clean off the kitten's face, paws, and anywhere else that may have food on it. ***It is very important that kittens are kept clean!!*** A build-up of dry, crusty food or fecal material can cause hair loss, skin irritation and infections. After cleaning, ***always make sure the kittens are dry.*** They do not produce enough body heat and can die if they are not dry and completely warm.



5-6 week old kitten just beginning to transition from formula to wet food--a small saucer or paper plate works best as a food bowl at this stage.

- Kittens at this age benefit from 4-5 small feedings per day (approximately a level Tablespoon/kitten/feeding), rather than larger, less frequent meals. Overfeeding canned food can cause diarrhea and bloating, especially if they eat too much at one time.
- The kittens will continue to nurse on the queen, as long as she is available—although queens do tend to instinctively start weaning their kittens.
- Kittens can begin to eat dry kibble when they reach approximately 6 weeks old. When you introduce dry kibble to the kittens, try mixing it with the canned food initially, or add warm water to soften it and then offer it alone.

## Separating the Queen from Her Kittens

Once they are eating solid food readily, usually around 7-8 weeks, the kittens are ready to be separated from the queen. The Wellness Team will contact you to schedule the queen to be spayed. She will remain at the shelter after surgery to recover and will then be cleared for adoption.



## Socialization

### Level 1 – How to Grow a Happy, Well-Adjusted Cat

#### What is Kitten Socialization?

Socialization is a very important learning process through which kittens become accustomed to different types of people, animals, objects and environments. If you have seen shy or scared stray neighborhood cats, you have seen the result of a lack of socialization to humans. Kittens have a short window between 3-9 weeks of age when they are forming long-term opinions on what is scary and what is safe. In the wild, these opinions can be a key to survival. Once kittens reach 9 weeks of age, they start to become more suspicious of things that they have not yet encountered, even if the new experiences are positive. **Gently and positively exposing them to lots of new people and things while they are little kittens is important.**

#### Why is Socialization Important?

ASAP Cats' goal is to provide adopters with well-adjusted, socially competent kittens who are prepared for the challenges of life. Well-socialized kittens become more confident, relaxed and happy cats. They are better able to tolerate changes in their environment. Kittens who have been well socialized tend to have fewer behavioral issues as they mature. Poorly socialized kittens are much more likely to react to new people, other animals, and changes in their environment with fear, aggression or litter box issues.

#### What Should Kittens be Socialized to?

Everything! The more things kittens become accustomed to, the more relaxed they will be in a wider variety of situations. Daily socialization sessions are important in shaping a kitten's future personality and emotional growth. The easiest and most effective way to achieve this is to combine simple play with a variety of handling exercises. This familiarizes a kitten to having its paws touched (front and back), mouth opened, and ears touched. Combining this with regular grooming sessions helps prevent skin sensitivity or aversion to touch and teaches tolerance to nail trimming. Cats who are tolerant to different types of handling are more likely to receive quality veterinary care.

***Note: If your kittens seem fearful or resistant to handling at any time, please stop. Just because kittens are tiny and we CAN handle them does not mean that we should FORCE them. We want them to experience interactions with us as positive so we should always be watchful for signs that our handling is causing distress. If you observe any of the following behaviors, your kittens may need Level 2 socialization. Please refer to the Level 2 Socialization information and contact the ASAP Cats Foster Coordinator for more support.***

Your foster kitten needs Level 2 Socialization if it demonstrates any of the following behaviors:



- Withdraws or hides when you approach
- Huddles in the back of the carrier or cage
- Refuses to eat in your presence

Note: It is not uncommon for siblings from the same litter to exhibit very different personalities and tolerances. If you notice any of your foster kittens exhibiting the above behaviors, even if their littermates do not, please refer to the Level 2 Socialization information and also contact the ASAP Cats Foster Coordinator for more support.

## Early Handling

Cats learn to socialize with each other from their littermates and mom, but it is also important for them to have lots of gentle handling by people so they learn to interact well with humans, too.

Studies have shown human contact before 7 weeks of age can influence kittens' friendliness toward people as they grow up. Start by gently holding and stroking your kitten for a few minutes a day. Overstimulation can be harmful to very young kittens, so keep the handling sessions brief. If you have the mother cat, use caution if the mother cat is anxious while you handle her kittens. Some mother cats can be very protective of their babies. If this is the case, try to handle the kittens for a few moments while mom is out of the room, perhaps during her mealtime.

- When kittens are over 3 weeks of age, begin handling daily so the kitten becomes comfortable with being held and picked up.
- After 4 weeks of age, start slowly introducing interactive toys such as stuffed toys or toys they can begin to chase. (Do not start with electronic, battery operated toys that make noise - they may scare the kitten)

Handle your kitten often in a positive and gentle manner. If they seem fearful or appear unhappy, stop and start again later when they are in a happy mood. Petting your kitten on the head, near the ear or on the cheeks for only a minute or two several times a day is enough to help develop social skills.

## Provide Positive and Different Experiences

Proper socialization introduces kittens to new people, places, objects and situations **ONLY** when you can control the experiences. **It is VERY IMPORTANT that the kitten has POSITIVE experiences.** During this learning period, they can also learn to be fearful from negative experiences. The wider the range of positive experiences they are exposed to, the better the chance that they will be comfortable in new situations when they are adults. Try not to overwhelm them, but instead introduce one new situation at a time.

Provide different textures such as carpet, wood, concrete, and linoleum. Also, choose a variety of objects for them to explore such as paper bags and cardboard boxes. Common household items such as cat carriers, brooms, vacuums, and children's toys should be introduced. Take



your kitten for car rides (only when they are safely inside a carrier), listen to different noises (trains, sound CDs with thunder, doorbells, and horns) or add any other situation your kitten may encounter in day-to-day life.

Begin introducing the kitten to a new experience/object from a distance (or at a reduced volume/intensity). Give treats and a lot of praise. Gradually move closer to the new experience/object while continuing to praise and give treats. Allow the kitten to investigate at his or her own pace. Make sure that the kitten is comfortable before moving closer to the objects. Finish the new experience with an enjoyable activity such as tossing a ball or a gentle ear rub.

If the kitten is scared (stiff tail, straight back, arched back, ears laid back, or puffed up like “scaredy cat”), socialization can be set back. Immediately move the kitten away from the situation/object, and change the situation by playing a game, talking silly to them, or have them do something instead like “sit” for a treat. Once the kitten is relaxed, start again, even slower, approaching the situation - praising and treating the whole time. Sometimes it is better to re-approach the situation after a couple days of positive experiences.

Invite adults and children over frequently to interact with your kitten. When meeting new people, **ask them not to approach the kitten but to offer treats and play and let the kitten approach them.** When socializing a kitten to people, it is important for the people to have different appearances: tall, short, various ages, races and genders. Hats, glasses, beards, boots, and carrying different things change the way people look to a kitten, so it is important to change the appearances as well as the types of people the kitten meets.

When socializing to your other pets, be sure they are well behaved and friendly pets who have had prior experience with kittens and are healthy and up to date on all vaccinations. Always supervise the interactions so that your kitten has a good experience with the pet. Kittens also enjoy and benefit from the process of clicker training. If you are interested in learning to clicker train your kitten, please ask for more information from the ASAP Cats Behavior Team.

Just as children learn a new vocabulary by exposure, kittens can develop a vocabulary of experiences that they are comfortable with. Most importantly, control the experiences so they can have a better vocabulary of positive experiences. When you put the work into positive kitten socialization, the outcome will pay off with a confident and relaxed feline family member.

## Teach Your Kitten to Relax During Nail Trims

By investing a little time into training your kitten to be comfortable with nail trimming, you are sparing them a lifetime of stressful grooming sessions, or even possibly painful health issues.

Once your kitten is comfortable eating solid food (6 weeks +) you can prepare her for nail trims by getting them used to having their



**Specially designed scissors  
make trimming cat/kitten nails  
easier.**

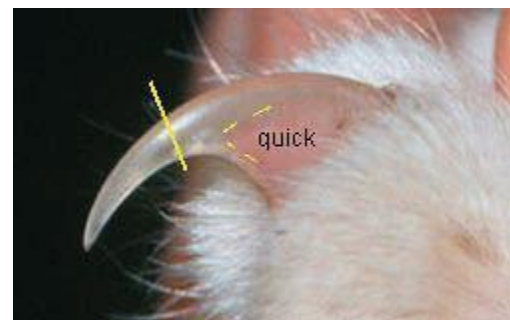


paws and claws handled. Gently squeeze their paws, offering treats at the same time. Time the treats right. When the paws are handled, treats should be given continuously at first so the kitten is just thinking about food. When paws are not being handled, stop any rewards. This approach builds a clear positive association between paws being handled and good things happening.

Progressively increase how strongly you handle your kittens' paws, but only as long as they stay relaxed. Work toward squeezing more tightly and then tapping the claws with trimmers without trimming. Having two people participate in the training may be helpful because one can reward with treats and the other can handle the paws and trimmer.

Clip one nail and offer a treat at the same time. If your kitten stays relaxed, then trim the second nail while the cat is eating. If your kitten stays relaxed, build up to trimming five nails in one session. If you will be doing the trims without assistance, wait until your kitten can stay relaxed while having her paws handled and then you can treat her after the clipping is done.

The location that the claw is trimmed is important for your cat's comfort and safety. The pink part shown in the image is called the "quick." This part of the toe contains nerves and blood supply. It is similar to a vein. If you cut too closely to it, it will cause pain and bleeding will occur. If your kitten has some darkly colored nails where the quick is not visible, trim the lighter colored nails first so you become familiar with how much of the nail to remove.



**The most important thing when trimming nails is to be careful not to cut too close to the "quick".**

## Prepare for Travel

Many adult cats go without healthcare each year simply because their adopters dread trying to wrestle them into a carrier for the trip. By proactively training your kitten to be comfortable in a carrier, you can dramatically increase their chances of receiving quality veterinary care.

Cats learn to fear carriers when they are used only for unpleasant experiences like trips to the vet. To prevent your kitten from becoming frightened of the carrier make sure you pair it with pleasant experiences too. Keep the carrier out and routinely feed your kitten in there, toss treats in there and create a cozy hideaway by lining the carrier with a soft blanket. Periodically place your kitten in the carrier, carry him around the house and take them for rides in the car. Make it into a game. The earlier your kitten is exposed to car travel, the less anxiety the experience will cause when they must go on trips as an adult.

## Appropriate Play

The first and most important rule when it comes to teaching a kitten to play gently is to not use human body parts (fingers, hands, toes or feet) as toys. No matter how young your kitten is and



whether it hurts when they bite or not, this is not the message you want to send to your kitten. Biting people is never to be allowed.

From the very beginning, have appropriate toys for your kitten to bite during play. For interactive playtime, use toys based on a fishing pole design. That will put a safe distance between your hands and your kitten's teeth. This way, when your kitten is enthusiastically involved in play she does not have to worry about crossing the line.

When using smaller toys such as fuzzy mice, be sure you toss them for the kitten to chase. Do not dangle them where she could accidentally bite your fingers or reach up and scratch you with her paws. During playtime, you never want to send a mixed message.

A dangerous misconception many people have has to do with a simple ball of yarn. You may have seen many pictures of kittens and cats playing with balls of yarn and that might appear to be a convenient and fun toy for a curious kitty but it is potentially deadly. All cats have backward-facing barbs on their tongues that are used in the wild to rasp meat from the bones of prey. The barbs also trap dirt, hair and parasites as cats groom themselves. These barbs are what give your kitten's tongue that scratchy feeling when they lick you. Because of the way the barbs face, anything that is attached to the tongue must be swallowed. The cat cannot spit out a piece of yarn or string. Swallowing these types of items can lead to choking and can also cause potentially deadly intestinal blockages. Do not leave string, yarn, thread or rubber bands around where your kitten can get them. Also, if you see thread hanging from the rear end (rectum) of your kitten, do not pull it because doing so might cause injury--**call ASAP Cats immediately**. String type toys also risk your kitten or cat becoming entangled and causing potential injury or suffocation.

## **When Your Kitten Bites**

If your kitten accidentally bites you during playtime, immediately stop all action and stay still. If they are biting your ankles, stop moving. They want movement so if you stay still they will not be getting their desired result. If they bite your hand, stay still. If they are hurting your hand, instead of pulling away, gently push toward your kitten. This will confuse them and they will loosen their grip. You can also make a small "ouch" noise to communicate that they have hurt you but be careful not to raise your voice.

Anytime your kitten bites, it is important to stop all movement and ignore them. You can restart play when your kitten goes back to being relaxed and calm. This will send the message (if you are consistent in your training) that biting skin will mean an end to the game. Do not hit them, push them away, squirt them with water or yell at them. Although these actions may momentarily cause them to release their grip, they can have long-term negative effects. Your kitten may soon learn to become afraid of you. If you use any type of physical reprimand then you may also send them into a defensive state and cause them to bite harder the next time or become more aggressive. The last thing you want is for your kitten to become afraid and eventually start avoiding any interaction with you.



## Kitten Litter Box Training

Unless you have rescued an orphaned kitten who is still in the bottle-feeding stage, chances are you will not have to teach the furry little one *how* to eliminate but you will have to create a litter box set-up that is conveniently located and easy to get in and out of. You will also have to provide guidance and help your kitten with timing. Some kittens get the hang of the litter box right away and others need more hand (paw) holding. Just do not assume kittens come pre-programmed to know where to go. They may need your help!

Typically, cats may eliminate after a nap, after playing or after eating however your kitten will probably need to eliminate more frequently than an adult cat. Bring them over to the litter box on a regular schedule as they learn to perfect their potty timing.

If your kitten is not getting the whole “dig, eliminate, and cover” routine, or if they were taken from their mother too young and did not get that lesson, you will have to assist them. When you bring your kitten over to the litter box for a potty break, use your finger and dig a little in the litter. The sound and sight of that might entice them to do the same. If they eliminate but do not cover it, take your finger and cover it a bit so they can see what the sequence is supposed to be. **DO NOT** take their paws and cover the waste. That will only cause them to pull away and can start you off with potential litter box aversion. Just let them see **YOU** do the covering.

If your kitten is having “out of box” difficulties:

- If you find a little solid waste outside the litter box, instead of tossing it in the toilet, place it in the litter box so they will have a little scented reminder of where it should have been placed.
- Be sure the sides of the box are low enough for a youngster to crawl over, especially with a full bladder. Keep in mind a kitten will not have the bladder control of an adult cat so when they have to “go” it is usually urgent.
- Confine them to a smaller portion of the house so they can easily get to their litter box. Once they start having access to more of the house, place litter boxes in multiple locations. When kittens get the urge to potty, it tends to be immediate, so litter boxes need to be nearby to prevent accidents.
- Place litter boxes in open areas where the kitten can easily see them. Ensure litter box areas are safe and secure so the kitten doesn’t have to worry about the family dog sticking his nose in there or a sudden noise from a household appliance (like a washing machine) startling them. A sudden fright while using the box can contribute to future litter box problems.

**Never punish out-of-box accidents!** Your kitten is just learning and they may not make it to the box in time. Do not punish them in any way for missed litter box attempts. Instead, evaluate what you might be able to do to make it easier for them next time. Perhaps they were playing too far away from the box and you did not bring them back for a potty break in time. Maybe the



box is too hard to get into? Was someone in the family holding the kitten for too long while they were squirming to get away in order to get to the box? Litter box accidents are not the kitten's fault. Any punishment will only start to create a fear of you and potentially cause a litter box avoidance problem.

## Level 2 –When Kittens are Frightened of Touch

Kittens who have had little or no contact with humans, regardless of whether their mother is tame or a feral cat living in a colony, will be frightened of people. They may demonstrate their fear and anxiety by spitting, hissing, and running from human contact, or they may simply freeze and fail to show any behavior at all. To become desirable companions for people, they will need to learn social behavior. It is not enough for a kitten to simply tolerate human touch. ASAP Cats adopters want emotionally healthy kittens who voluntarily seek contact, take pleasure from being pet and easily allow themselves to be picked up and handled. Kittens are most flexible to learning these skills between the ages of 3 and 9 weeks old, however with consistent effort, older kittens and juveniles can be socialized as well.

When we take home obviously scared kittens, our first impulse is to scoop them up and comfort them. It is hard to remember that we CANNOT comfort them with our presence at this point. Our touch can only increase their stress. It is also very tempting to hold them until they realize they have nothing to fear from us. For many years, it was commonplace to “socialize” kittens by forced handling and techniques such as swaddling or “burrito wrapping”. While these methods may have appeared to be successful, it has become increasingly apparent that these outdated training methods were emotionally and psychologically damaging to the kittens and cats undergoing them.

A common question is: “Isn’t handling a frightened kitten “desensitizing” them to our touch?” In reality, it is not. True desensitization is done when an animal is able to remain BELOW their fear threshold. Forcing a terrified kitten to be held is a technique called flooding. Flooding has been well studied in both humans and animals and has been demonstrated to cause **learned helplessness** and emotional damage, which is NOT what any of us want for our kittens. ASAP Cats places a high value on using training techniques that build trust and positive associations between animal and human. **ASAP Cats no longer uses forced handling techniques of any type;** instead, we rely on methods that are less aversive and have ultimately proven more effective.

## Set Up

The best place to socialize kittens is anywhere the socializer can get on the same level and comfortably interact with the kittens without the kittens hiding out of reach, feeling towered over, or "backed into a corner". Small cages or carriers don't work well since the cats always feel cornered when we reach in and they have no room to make the important "mind shift" where THEY choose to approach US out of self-interest in order to get the food they desire. They need to have the option NOT to be near you in order to make that decision to approach.





Most bathrooms work very well for socialization work, although they are isolated from continual household activity. A small room without hiding spots under couches and beds or behind furniture can also work very well. As a bonus, radio and television sounds can help them become accustomed to the home environment and normal household noises.



**Inexpensive pop-up tents can make great enclosures for kittens.**

Large cages or portable “condos” can work very well to start socialization but at some point, you must let the kittens out in a confined space so they can choose to approach you. Some of these cages have wheels, which make it easier for you to move them from the busier living areas of your home to quieter, smaller rooms for focused socialization work. Note: It is ideal for kittens to be housed in an active part of the house so that they get used to the activity and sounds of normal human life. Many large-dog kennels are large enough and even a pop up play tent may work. Try to choose the set-up,

which gives the kittens the most "quality" exposure to you and household activity even when you are not actively working with them.

## Evaluation

Before beginning, kittens must be cleared by the Wellness Director. ***Never restrict feeding unless directed to do so by the Wellness Team.***

Kittens must be:

- Healthy
- Normal weight
- No vomiting or diarrhea
- Eating on their own
- Fully transitioned from formula to solid food

## Food is Our Friend

CATS SOCIALIZE THEMSELVES BY CHOICE. We only provide the opportunity and the incentive. **FOOD** is the most powerful tool to facilitate the socialization process. Growing kittens have an insatiable appetite, which will give them the courage to approach you and be touched when they might normally never allow you anywhere near them. **Never put down the food and leave the room!** It takes away any incentive for them to welcome you into their world. **No free lunch!** Wet food is given **ONLY** during training times and is removed when you leave.

Once the kittens are cleared by the Wellness Director and are calm enough to eat with you in the room, you can safely begin delaying wet meals just enough to give you the advantage of



hunger to speed up their progress in the socialization sessions. Kittens under 3 months should not go without food for more than 6-8 hours at a time so you may leave a limited amount of kibble at the end of each training session. If they are not progressing, you are leaving too much food. Feed kittens 3 months and older only twice per day, and do not leave any food behind when you leave the room. ***If, at any point, you have a “hold out” kitten that is not progressing, contact the Foster Coordinator for additional support.***

## First Sessions

Sit down on the floor with the kittens and put down the dish of food as far away from you as necessary for them to eat in your presence. Do not sit directly facing them but sit in  $\frac{3}{4}$  profile and look at them with your face averted. Progressively inch the dish as close to yourself as possible. If the kittens are in a crate or condominium, place the food inside and step as far back as necessary, inching closer as they become more comfortable with your presence. With kittens 10 weeks and older, it may take a few sessions or even days before they are eating right near you.

Stay with the kittens until they have finished eating each time and then take any remaining food away with you when you leave. Always leave water of course, but NO WET FOOD unless you are there with them.

You can also gently roll small dry kibble to them across the floor. This works especially well with older kittens. The kittens may be frightened at first, so go easy until they figure it out. Progressively roll the kibble shorter distances until you are just putting them down on the ground right near you. The kittens may even start to eat them out of your open hand.

This first technique does not work if the kittens are in a small cage, cattery or carrier. When you reach in at them, they have no room to make the important “mind shift” where THEY decide to approach US out of self-interest in order to get the food they desire. They need to have the option NOT to be near you in order to make that decision to approach. Cats are both prey and predator in the wild so their sense of fight or flight is constantly right there on the surface. If they have nowhere to flee when we reach towards them, they can never relax enough to trust, approach us calmly, and become confident and affectionate around humans. They need space to choose to change.

***Remember! During each step of the process, our goal is to work BELOW their fear threshold. If your kittens become frightened at any point, back off and give them the power to control the interaction.***

## Eating off Your Finger

This technique helps kittens overcome the fear of hands reaching towards them by putting a good association (food) with that experience. When the kittens have progressed to eating from a dish right beside you with your hand touching the dish, start offering something tasty off your



finger. Gerber or Beechnut baby food are favorites in **Turkey or Chicken flavors only**. Be sure you are using meat only flavors, with no vegetables or onions. You may want to try this early on if they will not move closer to you to eat wet food from the dish.

Until they learn the baby food's consistency, kittens may want to gulp bites before they learn to lick it. Let them learn to lick from the lid of the jar, a spoon, Popsicle stick or chopstick first to avoid getting your finger chewed. Kittens generally figure out to lick quickly, but in the meantime, you do want to avoid being accidentally nipped!

The lesson with hand feeding is to get kittens to accept your hand reaching close to them, without retreating in fear. Most kittens find baby food irresistible and will be soon climbing all over you to get a taste of it. Remember not to sit squared off or stare at them, especially older kittens. Once they are hand feeding and comfortable being near you, only then can you start looking at them more directly, talking to them and actively engaging them.

## **Leading Them onto Your Lap**

Once they are used to eating off your finger, use that to lead them up into contact with your body by their choice. You can also try putting a dish in your lap and let the entire litter climb up onto you to eat. The braver ones will start and the shy ones may need to be worked with individually at their level. Lead the braver ones as close as possible and see if they will make eye contact with you while licking from your finger. That is a big step for them! Put the fast learners in a carrier if necessary so that you can do more focused work with the shyer ones. A stress free and safe way to put kittens in a carrier is to place a small dish of baby food inside the carrier and then close the door after they follow the food inside.

## **Initiating Touch**

Initiate physical contact at the beginning of a session where the kittens are particularly hungry and eagerly engrossed in eating. Put down a large dish of food near to you and try gently touching them and petting while they are engrossed in eating. Start in the head and shoulder area only. Stop petting any time they stop eating and resume when they return to the food, working up to petting a bit longer each time. Try different kittens and move around the group to get a sense of which need the most work. If they run off, lure them back with baby food on your finger and any momentary fear should be soon forgotten. This approach works at any stage if you have progressed too quickly and the kittens become fearful. Back up to a stage that they have "mastered" and work back up to where they "freaked-out." Do not stop the session until they have forgotten the bad experience and are happily doing one of the steps with which they feel comfortable.

## **Preparation for Being Picked Up**

When they are comfortable with petting and touching around the head and shoulders, add petting the back and scratching at the base of the tail. Next, try moving to touching the



underbelly. This area is usually sensitive and needs to be desensitized for being picked up. Attempt this when they are busy eating.

## **Moving On the Ground**

Try nudging them from one side to the other while they are engrossed in eating around a dish on the ground. Just having your hands near them and gently pushing them around is an important preparation to being picked up. Set up two dishes a foot apart and gently lift/scoot a kitten the short distance from one dish to the other, very close to the ground. If the kitten is engrossed in eating, they will not mind being lifted briefly if it goes smoothly. Stop handling them any time they stop eating. If they run off, lure them back with a special treat and start over.

## **Picking Them Up**

Up until now, all handling has been with all four paws on the floor. Use a special treat like baby food when you progress to lifting. Have a full jar of baby food opened and ready before you try the first pick-up. Try it when they are engrossed in eating right next to you rather than scrambling after them on the run. Sitting on the floor, hold a dish under their nose as you lift weight off the front half of their body briefly. Gradually progress to lifting to your lap and then to your chest. Young kittens are often reassured if they feel the warmth of your body and can feel your heartbeat when held against your chest. When holding the kitten, do not let it hang loosely - they should be held on your lap or securely against your chest. Always have baby food prepared for distraction in case they freak out.

When they are comfortable being lifted from your seated position on the floor you can try it up on your knees and eventually standing up. Make sure they are very comfortable with the small lifts before you ever bend down to pick them up while towering above them fully standing.

## **Handling Without Food**

After a good long training/socialization session, when your kittens are very full and getting sleepy, try gentle petting and work up to holding and petting without the incentive of food. If this works, you should be able to try it at other times between meals. It may be hardest just before feeding when the kittens are very hungry. They may become confused and stressed by being held when they have only food on their minds. There is usually at least one "love bug" in every litter that will give you hope for the others.

## **Interactive Play**

Most unsocialized kittens are frightened by interactive play when first exposed to humans. There is no rule for when to introduce interactive play, or when they will accept it, but the best way to start is with a small, non-threatening toy. Leave toys for them to play with alone at first and then pick a favorite one and tie it with string to the end of a stick, wooden spoon or chopstick (never leave any toy with string with unsupervised kittens). Try to gently entice them



from a distance, allowing them to get involved with your game without being face to face with you. Some people have found that interactive play was the breakthrough activity rather than using food. Laser pointers are a favorite toy and a great tool for getting kittens back into the pen if necessary. This can be helpful if you are doing the multi-location technique for added exposure to the household AND rolling them into an enclosed room for work sessions.

## **Transition to Adoption**

Before returning them to ASAP Cats, test them with a few different socializers. Enlist friends to test how they do meeting strangers. Remind anyone meeting the kittens for the first time to avoid staring at them or facing squared off to them like a predator would do. Have them come in slowly, sit on the floor, and offer baby food on a finger before progressing to petting. Prospective adopters often love this interaction and it may be the “magic moment.”

## **Level 3 – Advanced Socialization for Tiny Lions and Challenging Kittens**

If you are confident with the Level 2 socialization techniques and have been applying them consistently and accurately, but are not making progress with one or more of your foster kittens, it is important that you contact the Foster Kitten Placement Coordinator or Foster Program Director. In these situations, it may be more effective for the kittens to receive advanced socialization at the ASAP Cats shelter. If progress is not being made or does not progress to the next stage within 5-7 days, please seek guidance from ASAP Cats.

## **Adoption Procedure**

If you have decided to adopt a foster kitten yourself, or you have found an adopter for one of your foster kittens, you or the adopter must still meet all ASAP Cats adoption criteria and follow all ASAP Cats adoption procedures.

- The kitten must be spayed or neutered prior to adoption.
- The Wellness Team must clear the kitten prior to adoption.
- Every adopter must complete an adoption application available at [ASAPCats.org](https://ASAPCats.org). Once it is approved, the adopter will receive counseling and can take the kitten home.
- Under no circumstances are you allowed to give a kitten to someone who has not gone through the adoption process, including screening and counseling.

## **Basic Adoption Process**

- Adopters fill out an adoption application and have their application approved.
- Adopters visit and spend time getting acquainted with the kittens currently available for adoption. Foster parents can assist a potential adopter by identifying cats that will match



their particular lifestyle, family and expectations. Important factors to consider are:

- Activity level of the adopter and family
- Other pets
- Experience with cats
- Amount of time they have available to spend with kittens
- If the foster parent believes an adopter is a good fit for their kitten, **and the kitten has been cleared for adoption by the wellness team**, the adopter can then claim the kitten.
- The Adoption Counselor will complete the adoption and discuss the adoption contract, review the kitten's veterinary record, and give adoption counseling tailored to the specific kitten.
  - The Adoption Counselor will provide counseling on introducing the kitten into a new home, current food and litter used, and other information specific to the kitten and/or adopter household.
- Once all paperwork has been completed, they may pick up their new kitten and will receive emailed records. Please verify that all steps have been completed before releasing custody.
- Samples of food along with a wand toy can be picked up from the shelter.

## Adoption Fee

- The fee is determined by Santa Barbara County Animal Services. ASAP Cats does not keep any adoption fees.
- Special adoption events are held throughout the year, and cats and kittens are often offered at reduced or no fee.
- The Shelter Manager can be consulted for special incentives and fee reductions on a case-by-case basis; for example, the adoption of multiple cats or kittens.

## What is Included in the Adoption Fee?

- Spay or neuter
- Microchip
- Flea treatment
- Vaccinations: FVRCP and Rabies (if over 4 months old)
- Deworming
- Health evaluation, including testing for Feline Leukemia (FeLV), and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) for all cats 6 months or older. Cats eight years or older receive a full blood panel evaluation, thus assuring that the cat is indeed healthy and adoptable.
- Medical and drug coverage through the ASAP Cats Wellness Team for two weeks beyond the adoption date, if necessary.
- Temperament evaluation
- Samples of the food being fed and a wand toy



## Adoption Policies

### Kitten Siblings and Pairs

Adoption Counselors and foster parents should **always recommend that kittens be adopted in pairs when possible**. Going to a new home with a sibling gives both kittens a significant head start in the adjustment process and can reduce/eliminate the development of behavior issues. One kitten is a lot of work, a pair is often less. With a buddy available to expend that boundless kitten energy with, kittens will spend their time on more appropriate play activities and be less likely to find unacceptable activities (like climbing the drapes). Even more important is the fact that kittens learn the limits of acceptable play from each other; for example, when they play too rough, their buddy will withdraw—so it doesn't take long for them to learn what is allowed and modify their behavior appropriately. Resident cats also benefit from a pair of kittens so they are not immediately seen as the only playmate available while they adjust to the newcomer in their space. This often eliminates some of the issues seen when a new kitten is introduced to the home. There is a lot of evidence that kittens grow up to be emotionally and physically healthier for a longer period of time when they remain with a sibling.



## Appendix I

## **ASAP Cats Foster Contacts**

### **During Weekday Shelter Hours:**

- 1) Becky Clement, Registered veterinary Technician  
(for non-emergency medical questions)  
805-770-0906, [RVTBecky@asapcats.org](mailto:RVTBecky@asapcats.org)
  
- 2) Elizabeth Jimenez, Volunteer & Foster Coordinator  
(Tuesday-Saturday, 9AM - 6PM)  
805-561-0049, [volunteer@asapcats.org](mailto:volunteer@asapcats.org)
  
- 3) Marie Nielsen, Kitten Foster Placement Specialist  
(TRANSFERS ONLY or after 6PM and on Sunday/Monday)  
805-881-3662

### **For Emergencies on Weekends and Non-Shelter Hours:**

805-478-9220 (If no answer, leave a message and then send a text message.)

### **To schedule veterinary exams and vaccines, use the link:**

<https://asapscheduling.as.me/>





### Emergency – Call Emergency line now- 805-478-9220

- Severe lethargy or non-responsive
- Severe Lacerations
- Vomiting blood
- Kittens under 4 weeks of age vomiting, not eating, or diarrhea
- Difficulty breathing
- Toxic plant or substance eaten
- Male cats straining to urinate
- Suspected trauma or broken bone
- Sudden swelling to the face or limb
- Bites that break the skin
- Seizures

### Urgent- Text or email during normal business hours- 805-478-9220

- Severe diarrhea in kittens 4 weeks of age or older
- Vomiting more than twice in a day
- Not eating
- Limping
- Minor injury

### Less Urgent- Send email or call ASAP main phone number

- Congestion/coughing
- Nasal discharge/ sneezing
- Fleas or worms
- Weepy eyes/ squinting
- Escaped or lost foster
- Hair loss or skin lesions
- Diarrhea with blood in an adult cat
- Cats urinating outside litter box
- Vomited once

#### Emergency Contacts:

Becky Clement (RVT)- [rvtbecky@asapcats.org](mailto:rvtbecky@asapcats.org), (805) 770-0906

Jessica Wiebe- [jessica@asapcats.org](mailto:jessica@asapcats.org), (805) 705-6575

ASAP Volunteering (Elizabeth)- [volunteer@asapcats.org](mailto:volunteer@asapcats.org), (805) 561-0049

ASAP Main Phone number- (805) 683-3368



## Appendix III Kitten Bottle Feeding and Stomach Capacity Chart

### Kitten Bottle Feeding and Stomach Capacity Chart

Estimated Kitten Age (weeks)	Kitten Weight (lbs, oz)	Kitten Weight (grams)	Daily Caloric Requirement*	Amount of Formula Per Day (ml)**	Amount Per Feeding (ml)*	Approximate Number of Feedings Per Day***
< 1 week	2 oz	57 g	11 kcal	15 ml	2 ml	7
	3 oz	85 g	17 kcal	23 ml	3 ml	7
	4 oz	113 g	23 kcal	31 ml	5 ml	7
1 week	5 oz	142 g	28 kcal	38 ml	6 ml	7
	6 oz	170 g	34 kcal	46 ml	7 ml	7
	7 oz	198 g	40 kcal	54 ml	8 ml	7
2 weeks	8 oz	227 g	45 kcal	61 ml	9 ml	7
	9 oz	255 g	51 kcal	69 ml	10 ml	7
	10 oz	283 g	57 kcal	77 ml	11 ml	7
3 weeks*	11 oz	312 g	62 kcal	84 ml	12 ml	6-7
	12 oz	340 g	68 kcal	92 ml	14 ml	6-7
	13 oz	369 g	74 kcal	100 ml	15 ml	6
4 weeks*	14 oz	397 g	79 kcal	107 ml	16 ml	5
	15 oz	425 g	85 kcal	115 ml	17 ml	5
	16 oz (1 lb)	454 g	91 kcal	123 ml	18 ml	5
5 weeks*	1 lb, 1 oz	482 g	96 kcal	130 ml	19 ml	4
	1 lb, 2 oz	510 g	102 kcal	138 ml	20 ml	4
	1 lb, 3 oz	539 g	108 kcal	146 ml	22 ml	4
5 weeks*	1 lb, 4 oz	567 g	113 kcal	153 ml	23 ml	4

\* The daily caloric requirement was calculated using 20 kcal/100 g body weight and the amount per feeding using 4 ml/100 g body weight. The energy requirement is ~20-26 kcal/100g body weight daily and the maximum comfortable stomach capacity is ~4 ml/100 g body weight.<sup>1</sup>

\*\* Concentration 0.74 kcal/ml. Most commercial kitten milk replacers in the US provide less than 1 kcal/ml (0.74 kcal/ml), acting to increase the volume of milk required to meet caloric needs. This can be problematic in terms of the number and size of feedings given relative to stomach capacity and more likely to result in gastrointestinal disturbances. This may also account for why bottle fed kittens grow slower than kittens that nurse off a mother.

\*\*\* As the kitten is adjusting well to the milk and the feeding volume, you may be able to increase the volume fed to help reduce the number of feedings per day. Be aware that exceeding the stomach capacity (amount per feeding) may put the kitten at risk of aspiration, vomiting, diarrhea, and gas build-up in the stomach and intestines.

\* Kittens at this age (3 ½ -5 weeks) are usually eating some solid food, decreasing the amount of milk replacer required to meet daily caloric requirements. This may result in less frequent milk feedings.

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<sup>1</sup> Lawler, D. F. "Neonatal and pediatric care of the puppy and kitten." *Theriogenology*, vol. 70, no.3, 2008, pp. 384-392.

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