

KITTEN GUIDE BOOK



Quick Reference

TEN LIVES CAT CENTRE

Ten Lives Cat Centre

12 Selfs Point Road, New Town, Tasmania 7008

Telephone: **03 6278 2111**

Opening hours

WEEKDAYS – We are open from 10am each morning and close at 4pm each afternoon.

WEEKENDS – On weekends, we are open from 10am until 4pm Saturday and **CLOSED** Sunday.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS – We are **CLOSED** all public holidays.

AHVEC

AHVEC – After Hours Veterinary Emergency Centre

37 Derwent Park Rd, Moonah

Telephone: **1300 302 912**

Opening hours

WEEKDAYS – Open from 6pm each evening and close at 8am each morning.

WEEKENDS – On weekends, AHVEC are available 24 hours, opening at 6pm Friday until 8am Monday morning.

PUBLIC HOLIDAYS – **OPEN** all public holidays.

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What to do if your foster kitten gets hurt or is unwell



Who to call and when

Monday – Saturday 10am – 4pm, Closed Sunday & Public Holidays

If your foster kitten becomes unwell or is injured during the above times, [please refer to guidelines for sick cats and kittens in the Foster Care Guide Book](#). If medical advice and or treatment is then required please call **6278 2111** during Centre Opening hours. If the phone lines are busy and it is not a life-threatening emergency please leave a message with your full name, contact number and reason for your call. A staff member will return your call as soon as they can.

After Hours

If your foster kitty becomes unwell or is injured outside Centre opening hours and after referring to the [guidelines for sick cats and kittens in the Foster Care Guide Book](#) they require medical attention that cannot wait until the following day please call the afterhours emergency vet.

AHVEC on 1300 302 912

37 Derwent Park Rd, Moonah

Unsure if kitty needs to be seen after hours?

The friendly staff at AHVEC will be happy to talk to you.

Err on the side of caution with kittens, they can become very unwell very quickly
When in doubt always phone for advice

Welcome to the team

Thank you for opening your heart and home to help assist kittens and their mothers that find themselves at the Centre for various reasons. Kittens are the most vulnerable group in foster care due to their age and underdeveloped immune system, thus they require additional care. Your assistance is invaluable, you are helping the Centre to free up space for other mothers and kittens that need our help. You are also giving them a normal loving home environment while they get ready for their forever home.

This booklet is in addition to the Foster Care Guide Book and both books will provide information you will need to know while fostering kittens, so please take the time to read through both books carefully.

Welcome aboard and let's get started!

Ages and stages of kittens

Knowing how old a kitten is helps determine the care they need.



Newborns are completely helpless, their eyes are closed, ears folded, they can't stand, keep themselves warm and are incapable of regulating their own body temperature. They cannot eat on their own or eliminate their own waste. They are completely dependent on their mother (or you!) for everything to survive and require round-the-clock care and bottle feeding every two hours.



One Week Old kittens are more aware of their surroundings but still completely dependent on their mother (or you!) for everything. Their ears will unfold and their eyes may start to open, they can purr and make distress calls. They spend 90 percent of their time sleeping and the other 10 percent eating. They snuggle together for warmth and comfort and rarely venture far from mum, their nest, or each other.



Two Week Old kittens are born with blue eyes and their eyes are now fully open and their ears uncurred. They are starting to crawl and interacting more with each other, but are still completely dependent on their mother or you for warmth, food and waste elimination. Their sense of smell is developing, and they will hiss at unfamiliar scents or sounds. They are also kneading, though they cannot retract their claws.



At **Three Weeks Old** you can tell if the kittens are boys or girls, their teeth are coming through and they're more confident and mobile. They may start to eliminate waste on their own, it's now time to start litter box training. They are starting to regulate their own body temperature but if orphans, they still need to be kept warm. Bottle fed kittens are drinking much more each feed, four to five times a day. Start introducing solid food, use wet food at first, and try mixing it with kitten formula. By the end of the week, their weight will be close to 400 grams.



Four Week Old kittens are very sturdy on their feet. They show interest in the outside world, interact with their littermates more and are beginning to interact with people and toys. Playing is a great way to socialise kittens and teach them fun and positive ways to interact with people.



At **Five Weeks Old** interacting with people is important as it helps them to be adopted into new homes. Their sight is fully developed and they engage in vigorous and exhaustive play. While they are experimenting with solid food, they are still nursing from their mother (or being bottle fed by you) a few times a day.



At **Six Weeks Old** kittens are using the litter box and eating kitten food, though they still visit their mother for snacks and comfort. Baby teeth are still erupting so they will chew on everything in the house. Continuing to socialise kittens only gets more important as they grow. This is the age when the people caring for them and the rest of their cat family begin teaching the kittens how to play, letting them know that human hands are not for biting or scratching. Kittens can now clean themselves and each other, reinforcing the bond between siblings. Incorporate grooming into your interactions with the kittens – especially if you have a single kitten, or you are raising a litter without the mother cat.



Seven Week Old kittens are almost fully weaned and continue to play and learn. The kittens are pretty self-sufficient at this point, though they still get comfort from their mother or you. As part of their socialisation, introduce them to different parts of the house, different objects, different pets and people, and different experiences as it all helps them adjust to new situations. Introduce them to scratching posts and trim their claws. Training the kittens to understand these routines helps prepare them for their new homes.



Eight Week Old kittens now weigh enough to be spayed or neutered (1 kilo or when the smallest in the litter is 850grams). They are getting more skilled and adventurous, and learning so much from their mum, siblings, and human caregiver. Kittens are now fully weaned from their mother. This is the height of the kittens' eye-paw coordination and play activity, leading them to try more daring and complex feats. It's a good idea to keep a close eye on them during this time and ensure their play area is safe for budding daredevils. The kittens are on more of a schedule now, sleeping and eating at regular intervals. They eat mostly solid food, and mum is close to being done with the occasional nursing that may still be going on – if you were bottle feeding, you're probably done by now as well. Once desexed, microchipped and vaccinated and because they have been socialised to people – they are ready for their loving adoptive home.

Something to keep in mind: kittens develop at their own speed based on environmental and genetic factors. Observing physical signs, such as how open their eyes are and their weight, as well as behaviors, like when kittens begin venturing from their mother or using a litter box, will help determine about how old they.



Saying goodbye to your foster kittens is always hard as you have been such an important part of their life. Without your help they would not have grown into the wonderful, playful friendly kittens they have become. Thank you for taking such good care of our foster mothers and kittens!

Hand raising kittens

From two weeks bottle-feeding can be very successful but is not necessarily guaranteed. Kittens younger than two weeks old have a lower success rate. Bottle-fed kittens are at a higher risk of developing infectious diseases such as upper respiratory infections among many others. Maintaining good hygiene, warmth and consistency with their feeding is crucial to their health and wellbeing. One to two day old kittens will need to be fed colostrum as well as kitten formula.

Making the bottle

- Wombaroo is a powdered milk formula designed specifically for kittens. As the formula is quite different to their mother's milk it is best to dilute the first few feeds so their digestive system can get used to the new milk
- It is very important to measure accurately to ensure the kittens are receiving the correct nutrition. Too much formula in the mix can also lead to the kittens getting diarrhoea and possible dehydration
- Mix the milk powder with **warm boiled** water as directed on the packet. If the water is not warm enough the powder will not dissolve properly and will have a gritty consistency which will block the teat. It is important that the formula is completely dissolved and free of any lumps
- A small plastic water bottle is perfect for shaking/mixing the formula, storing the day's supply in the fridge, and also for ease of pouring into the small nursing bottle
- To save time, make up a 24-hour supply and keep it refrigerated. Any formula left over after 24 hours should be thrown out
- Both powdered formula mixed with water and opened formula powder in an air tight container should be stored in the refrigerator. It will keep for three months if kept cold
- When using a new bottle, place it with the teat in a cup of boiling water for a few minutes to kill any bugs that may be on there
- When bottle nipples are brand new, you will need to cut a small X in the tip of the nipple using small, sharp scissors, or burn a hole in the nipple using a large needle. Heat the needle with a match, then poke it through the nipple tip. This can take a little bit to get right, if it's too big the kittens will get too much milk and risk aspiration and if it's too small they won't get anything out. The best way to tell is to tip the bottle upside down – if the milk slowly drips out (drip-drip-drip) the hole is perfect, if the milk is running out or dripping really fast the hole is too big. If the milk only comes out after considerable squeezing of the bottle, then it is too small and using it may discourage the kitten and it could refuse to nurse
- The temperature of the milk should not be hot but warm like the mother cat's body temperature would be. Generally, the warmth of your forearm is how it should be
- Only heat as much formula as you think the kittens will drink. ANY HEATED FORMULA REMAINING SHOULD BE DISCARDED. Reheated formula can cause a bacterial infection
- **Do not microwave the formula;** although you may microwave the water in a glass cup before placing the bottle in the water. Test a few drops on the back of your hand to make sure it is warm but not hot.
- **DO NOT ALLOW THE FORMULA TO OVER HEAT OR BOIL.** Any formula that over heats or boils must be thrown out, as the protein has been destroyed.



Please note: always feed warm fresh wet food and milk at every feed on clean plates and bowls. Do not leave food and milk out any longer than half an hour after they have eaten as spoiled food and milk can make kittens very sick. Cold food and milk from the fridge does not get digested well and makes kittens sick so it must be gently warmed to room temperature. Always wash bowls, bottles, spoons etc in hot soapy water, rinse thoroughly and allow to air dry.

Orphaned Kitten Feeding and Stomach Capacity Table

Estimated Age	Weight (grams)	20 kcal/100g Body weight	Daily volume Formula (ml) Concentration 0.74 kcal/ml	Stomach capacity (ml) (4ml/100g body weight)	Approx. Number of feedings per day
Newborn	50	10	13.5	2	7
	75	15	20	3	7
	100	20	27	4	7
	125	25	34	5	7
~ 1 week	150	30	40	6	7
	175	35	47	7	7
	200	40	54	8	7
	225	45	61	9	7
~ 2 weeks	250	50	68	10	7
	275	55	74	11	7
	300	60	81	12	6-7
	325	65	88	13	6-7
~ 3 weeks	350	70	95	14	6-7
	375	75	101	15	~ 6
	400	80	108	16	~ 5
	425	85	115	17	~ 5
~ 4 weeks **	450	90	122	18	~ 5
	475	95	128	19	~ 4
	500	100	135	20	~ 4
	525	105	142	21	~ 4
~ 5 weeks ***	550	110	148	22	~ 4

Source: MaddiesFund.org

** as kittens adjust to milk and the feeding volume, you may be able to increase the volume fed to help reduce the number of feeds per day. This will exceed the recommended comfortable stomach capacity and may put the kitten at risk of regurgitation, aspiration and diarrhoea.

***Kittens at this age are frequently eating some solid food and decreasing the amount of formula required to meet calorific requirements. This may result in less frequent milk feedings.

These short videos will provide essential care instructions for orphaned kittens:

maddiesfund.org/orphaned-kitten-care-how-to.htm

maddiesfund.org/caring-for-orphaned-kittens.htm

Bottle-feeding

Kittens require bottle feeding every two to three/four hours depending on their age and should be drinking approx. 4mls p/100g of body weight per feed i.e. if the kitten is 210grams they will require approx. 10mls of formula each feed.

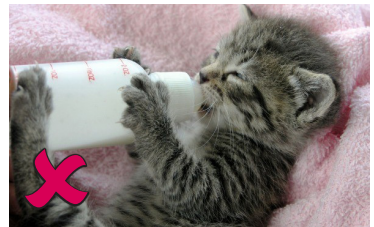
Make sure you never over-feed kittens. You can increase the number of feeds per day but over-feeding them will lead to bloating, gas or regurgitation.

- After each feed you will need to burp the kitten to release any trapped air. Hold the kitten upright and pat very gently until it burps.
- Always ensure there is a clean very shallow dish of water and a dish of 'Royal Canin Baby Cat Biscuits' (not kitten biscuits) available for babies to explore at their own pace. As kittens can be clumsy these bowls will get messy often so will need changing regularly.



When bottle-feeding, it is very important to:

- NEVER bottle feed a kitten on their back as they can choke
- NEVER feed cold kittens, cold kittens are unable to digest milk and food and the result is diarrhoea and vomiting. Warm kittens up by providing a heat source or placing them directly against your skin
- NEVER feed a kitten cold formula – keep a cup of hot water close by to rest the bottle in while toileting to keep it warm, or put it in an insulated bottle warmer
- Ensure the bottle is held at an angle at all times so the milk is always in the teat and they are not sucking air which can cause bloating and a sore stomach
- Allow the kittens to suckle the bottle and drink at their own pace. If the hole in the teat is too big or you squeeze the bottle they could inhale the formula into their lungs which can lead to infection and be fatal. If you are concerned that this may have happened or the kitten has milk coming out their nose while feeding, gently tap them on the back to try and 'burp' them.



Syringe Feeding

- Some people prefer to syringe feed rather than using a bottle as the syringe makes it easier to determine the amount the kitten is drinking
- If you do need to syringe feed please do this very carefully as the rubber can sometimes stick and then shoot the milk down the kittens throat resulting in aspiration
- The negative of the syringe is that you need to keep stopping and starting as it runs out, also the kittens can't seem to get a good sucking hold of the end as well as a bottle.



Toileting kittens

Kittens cannot toilet on their own until they are about three to four weeks old, so they need your help.

Toileting must be done every time you feed the kitten. Some kittens respond better to toileting before they eat while others respond better afterwards. Try both to keep the kitten happy.

- Using a warm damp cotton ball, gently rub/pat their bottom to stimulate them to go to the toilet. Try to mimic the licking action that a mother cat would do. If their fur is wet after toileting gently dry with dry cotton ball or a clean dry cloth
- **Be sure to keep changing the cotton ball as it gets wet or dirty so you are preventing urine infections and not rubbing urine and faeces over the kitten's abdomen. This can lead to burning the kitten, like nappy rash in children and is very sore and painful**
- **Do not rub too hard or you will cause chafing**
- If the kitten has diarrhoea, you may need to wash the area in warm water if it is quite bad. They need to stay clean and dry to help them stay healthy and reduce the risk of infections. Any washed kittens must be dried immediately to prevent them from getting cold, young kittens cannot control their body temperature and chill easily
- A kitten's urine should be pale yellow or clear in colour. If it is too yellow or orange the kitten may not be drinking enough and may be a little dehydrated and require extra feeding during the day
- Kittens can eliminate on their own from four weeks old but may still need toileting, so please monitor if they are going on their own, before assuming so. If the kittens are not yet toileting on their own they will end up going in their bedding which will leave them cold and prone to getting sick
- By placing the kitten in the litter tray and gently toileting them, they will soon understand what to do. Some will catch on straight away even without being shown.



Kittens can eliminate on their own from four weeks old but may still need toileting, so please monitor if they are going on their own before assuming so.

Clay clumping litter, such as Catsan and crystal type litter is dangerous for kittens as they may try to eat it. Digested clay based litter can cause blockages and crystal type litter can cause toxicity.

Please do not use these types of litter for kittens.



Weighing kittens

It is important to record your foster kitten's inputs and outputs, the Centre has charts for you to record this information. It is very important to maintain a daily record of the kitten's weight up until they are at desexing weight (850g for smallest in the litter to 1 kg). This is the most effective way to determine if the kitten is happy and healthy or if something else is going on. If a kitten does not put on any weight in a 24 hr period or worse, loses weight, it needs to be taken seriously, especially for ones under five weeks of age. Kittens will not eat if there is something wrong. So do take note of their weight each day and make sure to record them and contact the Centre if you have any concerns.

- Kittens should put on approximately 10/20 grams p/day (approximately 100grams per week)
- If they lose weight or stay the same then something is wrong. Kittens can go downhill very quickly so even just missing one feed can be dangerous.

Weighing weaning kittens is exceptionally important and if possible needs to be done morning and night. This ensures that they are actually eating the food and not just getting it all over themselves.

Recording what they are eating and their poops is important. If diarrhoea occurs we will first look at what they have been eating or if there has been a change in diet. You will find a poop chart on page 15 of this booklet that all the staff use at the Centre. You will notice they are numbered from score one to score seven, so if you call the Centre with a poop concern we are all talking about the same looking poop. Poop scores of two and three are normal, score four may indicate things could be on their way to being a problem. Score five may indicate inflammation in the intestine and may require a change in diet to a lower carbohydrate food. Please contact the Centre in this situation for advice. Score six and score seven need veterinary attention as it may indicate bacterial or viral infection, please contact the Centre to make an appointment if this occurs.



Small digital kitchen scales can be used to weigh small kitten. Use a washable container that you can dedicate for this purpose. Distract wiggly kittens with a food treat (a piece of dry food or a small piece of cooked chicken meat with no skin or fat) held close to their nose, this will give you enough time to record their weight.

You could also use this opportunity to teach them to sit. Once, and only when their bottom is in a sit position say the word "sit" then offer them the food treat reward. If you do this every time you weigh them they will soon get the idea. Once they are continually sitting for their treat you can then ask them to sit.

Three to five week old orphaned kittens

From this age, a kitten's digestive system has started developing to allow them to slowly start eating solid foods. You can gradually introduce them to "Gruel" - a mix of kitten wet food and the milk formula. Allow their system time to adjust to this new food so start them off with very small amounts at first. Eating too much straight away can lead to bloating, regurgitating and possibly diarrhoea. Even though they can start eating gruel kittens this age must still be getting milk regularly to ensure they are getting the required nutrients and hydration. Kittens do not have much of a 'reserve tank' and can become lethargic or dehydrated very quickly. They can go from being perfectly fine and playing to being flat and lifeless within the space of a few hours. Monitoring their weight daily is crucial to pick up any issues as well as keeping an eye on their toileting. Malnourished kittens are at a far greater risk of developing diarrhoea and infectious diseases so need to maintain a consistent diet.



Feeding Gruel

- Mix Hills kitten wet or Royal Canin mousse with formula (with about half the amount of formula to wet). For kittens five weeks or older substitute the formula for warm water
- Kittens may not know what to do with the food and will walk through it or away from it. Remain patient and help them understand what to do and don't leave them to work it out on their own as in the mean-time they will starve or not be getting enough
- Try syringing the gruel into the side of their mouth to encourage them to eat. Feeding too much at once could cause them to choke as they have not yet learned how to chew
- If they are interested in food but still not eating try a small amount on a spoon and hold it up to their mouth (you may need to open their mouth and put a little in, usually once they've tasted the food they start to understand that they can eat it). Once eating from the spoon, slowly lower it down into the bowl. You may have to do this a few times when you feed them before they catch on. Dipping your finger in the food then offering it to them to lick and eat also works well. Sometimes smearing the food on your finger onto their gums or top lip is enough to get them started. Just be careful they don't get too excited about eating and bite your finger
- Always have a fresh bowl of water and a bowl of 'Baby Cat Biscuits' available also.
- If eating the gruel well, they will still require 13-17ml of formula three times per day - either by bottle-feeding or in a low dish if they are now lapping



Note

- Kittens aged three to four weeks old are too small to eat the 'Hills, Kitten Chicken Chunky' pieces. If you do not have the mince available mash up the chunks with a fork as kittens this age can easily choke
- Feed kittens aged three to five weeks old the Hills Kitten Healthy Development or Royal Canin 'Baby Cat' biscuits. They are designed smaller for this age group.

Five to six week old kittens

- Weigh daily – twice if possible
- Feed them gruel (with formula) three to four times a day if possible
- No longer need extra milk feeds but have formula available to lap
- Always have a bowl of kitten biscuits and water available
- May only be in the very early stages of eating solid food
- Should be able to use the litter tray.

Six to seven week old kittens

- Weigh daily – twice if possible
- Feed them gruel (with water) twice a day if possible
- Kittens can now start being weaned off having milk altogether
- Always have a bowl of kitten biscuits and water available
- If they are showing no interest in eating biscuits start adding a small amount of the kitten biscuits to their wet food while also still having a dish of biscuits separate and plenty of fresh water.

Seven to eight week old kittens

- Weigh daily – in the mornings
- Feed Hills kitten wet or Royal Canin Mousse (undiluted) twice a day if possible
- Always have a bowl of kitten biscuits available
- Slowly start to give less wet food to allow them to adjust to a mainly dry food diet.

Mothers & kittens

Kittens that have a mum are less likely to become ill or fade and are generally raised without too many concerns.

- All mother cats **MUST** be fed on Hills Kitten dry or Royal Canin dry food to ensure their milk supply is high in nutrients and enables the mothers to remain healthy as feeding can be very stressful on their bodies
- It is important food and water is up and away from kittens under three weeks of age, they can easily drown in her water bowl or choke on the food at this age
- Once the kittens are walking it is safe to put the food back down so they can start to explore it themselves
- Some mother cats can get very protective over their kittens so be aware of her body language as you approach.

Diarrhoea

Diarrhoea in kittens can be serious and must not be left for too long. It may be caused by over-feeding, giving milk that is too concentrated (too much formula), change in diet or due to infection – which can be caused by poor hygiene. If you notice a kitten has diarrhoea please make a note on their daily sheet and inform the Centre if it continues for more than 24 -48 hours if score three to six and kitten is otherwise bright/happy and eating. If score is six/seven and has not improved within 12 hours or call earlier if kitten is flat, not eating, unwell etc.

The longer a kitten is left with diarrhoea the more serious it can be as it can quickly lead to dehydration, fading and can possibly be fatal.

Fading kitten syndrome

Fading kitten syndrome is another very serious condition in kittens and especially orphaned kittens. They can be bright and active, then a few hours later completely flat. There is no known cause for why this happens but it is quite common even for kittens that have a mum.

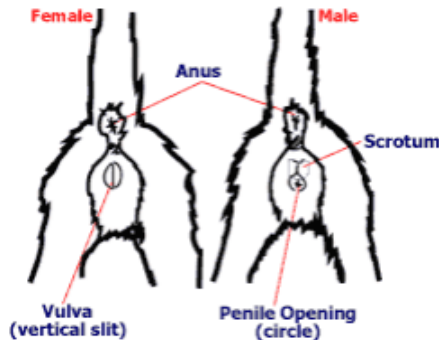
If you notice a kitten is;

- not eating
- not moving much, looks flat or a little spaced out
- they are dehydrated and their skin does not spring back.

Please take them to a vet immediately.

Sexing kittens

It can take a little while to figure out the boys from the girls and it's even harder the younger they are. Just keep practising and don't be afraid to ask if you are not sure.



Fecal scoring

	Score 1 - Very hard and dry; requires much effort to expel from body; no residue left on ground when picked up. Often expelled as individual pellets.
	Score 2 - Firm, but not hard; should be pliable; segmented appearance; little or no residue left on ground when picked up.
	Score 3 - Log-like; little or no segmentation visible; moist surface; leaves residue, but holds firm when picked up.
	Score 4 - Very moist (soggy); distinct log shape visible; leaves residue and loses form when picked up.
	Score 5 - Very moist but has distinct shape; present in piles rather than as distinct logs; leaves residue and loses form when picked up.
	Score 6 - Has texture, but no defined shape; occurs in piles or as spots; leaves residue when picked up.
	Score 7 - Watery, no texture, flat; occurs as puddles.

Socialisation of scared and timid kittens

If kittens have never met people, they will be frightened and show signs of fear and anxiety, like spitting, hissing, and running away. They need to be taught they can be safe and comfortable around people. It's exciting to hear your formerly frightened foster kitten purr for the first time! Kittens eight weeks or younger can be socialised by almost anyone. Kittens between two and four months might require more time and skill to make them feel comfortable near people.

How to help kittens feel comfortable

- You'll need a room to keep the kittens away from other pets and a crate to keep kittens from hiding in hard-to-reach spots (avoid rooms with furniture or vents that they can crawl under or into). The room also should have windows and not be too noisy. Put a small box with blankets inside a large crate or carrier with a small litter tray, food, water. A warm heat pack (do not use packs filled with beads) also help kittens feel more comfortable and secure and a ticking clock wrapped in a towel is very comforting reminds them of their mothers heartbeat
- Make sure the crate is off the floor, cats feel safer if they're higher up where they can see their surroundings. Once set up in their crate, give them an initial two-day adjustment period before trying to socialise them too much. When you start to spend time with them, move slowly and speak softly, and keep loud noises down
- After a few days, leave a TV or radio on low so they can get used to people voices and sounds. If there aren't other pets around, you can leave the crate in a busy part of your home, like the living room
- Kittens react positively to positive experiences and negatively to negative experiences. Reward kittens when they do well, like come up for snuggles, and avoid scolding. Rewards can be small pieces of bbq chicken meat (no skin or fat)
- If a litter of kittens are slow to socialise, you might want to separate them into individual crates or spaces so that they can rely on people more. Or spend some quality time alone with each one. When they feel more comfortable with you, they can be reunited with their brothers and sisters
- Be patient! Spitting, hissing, and hiding are expressions of fear, not signs of aggression.



Socialising with food

- Giving kittens food creates an incentive for them to interact with you and also forms positive associations. Keep dry kitten food out all day, (if over five weeks of age), but when you feed wet food, stay in the room so they associate you with food and start to trust you. If they're scared at first, try to give them food on a plastic spoon. Over time, move the food plate closer to your body while you sit in the room, until the plate is in your lap and the kittens are comfortable crawling on you to get to it
- Pat the kittens for the first time while they're eating so they stay put. Start patting their faces, chins, and behind their ears and work up to patting all over. Take your time building up to holding them, and reward them with some canned kitten food a spoon. Don't give kittens food on your finger though, and don't allow them to play with your hand, or bite or scratch you. A bite from even a young kitten can be painful and become infected quickly.

Socialising with play

- Try to spend at least one to two hours a day playing with kittens to help them build trust of people. Take time to socialise each of the kittens in a litter individually
- Hold the kittens as much as possible once they let you and they enjoy it. Make sure they are close to your body so they feel your body warmth and heartbeat. If a kitten is particularly feisty, put it in a front-carrying pack (lightly, but snugly) wrap her in a towel with only the head out and hold it while doing things around the house. Once the kittens are comfortable enough to fall asleep on your lap or purr around you, they can move from the crate to a kitten-proof room.

Introduce new friends

- The goal is to socialise kittens so they are comfortable around all people and pets and will be happy in their new homes. As long as all are healthy, you can introduce kittens to a grownup cat, refer to the 'Introducing Cats to other Pets' hand-out supplied.

Precautions

- Kittens that were outside and are frightened can hurt you if you are not careful, so don't hesitate to wear gloves or protective clothing. Bites become quickly infected and medical treatment should be sought
- Don't take chances. Sometimes you have to scruff kittens by the back of their neck to gain control. To do it safely, use your entire hand and gently but firmly grasp the fur on back of neck without pinching, pull the cat up, and immediately support her hind legs.

Orphaned kitten behavioural considerations

Kittens are born blind, have limited ability to move and cannot regulate their body temperature. Good maternal behaviour is essential for healthy kitten development not only for the basic physical care needs but also for their psychological and emotional development. Without adequate human contact during the early months, kittens will often become timid, frightened and anxious. Regular positive interactions with multiple people of all ages are essential for kittens to learn to socialise and develop a calm and easygoing temperament. It is also essential to expose kittens to all aspects of normal household life during this time in a safe and secure manner.

Single orphan kittens are more susceptible to being fearful and aggressive toward people and other cats, more sensitive to unfamiliar things, and have reduced learning and social skills. This can be lessened with another cat in the household and, most importantly, a consistent regime of touch and socialization. Independence and learning how to deal with minor stressors are important lessons normally taught by their mothers, and so orphans typically lack these skills. Orphaned kittens may develop an overly dependent bond with the foster parent, as well as lacking appropriate bite inhibition, prey preference and ability to deal with the trials of everyday life. Please encourage independence as their mother would.

Recommendations to prevent behavioral problems of orphaned kittens

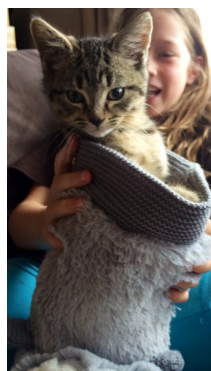
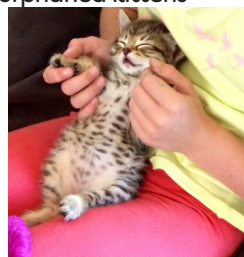
The importance of littermates to the social development of the individual kitten cannot be stressed enough. The presence of littermates, and even older cats, can help modulate the kitten's play behavior so that it is more appropriate.



Early human handling accelerates development. Gently pick kittens up, with one hand under the back legs and the other around the chest, ensuring that they feel safe and secure. Although handling is encouraged from birth, the frequency and length should increase around two to three weeks of age

as their physical and behavioral development become more attuned. And don't limit this pleasure to adults. Kittens and kids go together - both love to play and cuddle, after all! With supervision, children can learn to handle kittens appropriately and be respectful of them. It's the start of a mutual admiration society where both benefit.

A kitten's social life should be top priority. This is especially important for orphaned kittens because they lack their natural mother's contribution to social development. The need for social interactions starts around two to three weeks of age and intensifies throughout the socialisation period, and beyond. Start with short periods (5-10 minutes) of gentle and quiet handling. Stroke bellies, rub behind ears, massages, kisses (optional), be creative, but always gentle and kind. Socialisation also needs to extend to friends and family, and kitten-friendly pets. Try to include a lot of different people to them each week to help the kitten build trust. Slowly increase the time spent with them, but not to the point that their sleep is disturbed or kitten-initiated play and exploration is limited.



By four weeks of age, social interaction develops and increases until 11 to 14 weeks of age - and a lifetime for some. This is the time to add playtime to your kittens interactions. Focus on toys that distance the person from the kitten (e.g., pole toys). This encourages independence and stimulates predatory behavior. Never use hands or feet as playthings. Although the "capture" of hands or feet may seem cute, it will be unwelcome as the kitten gets bigger and the ability to cause injury increases which can affect it finding a new home quickly. Kittens need sensory stimulation and some environmental fun. Safely expose them to normal household objects (furniture, appliances, windows) and noises (radio, television, vacuum cleaner, mops, brooms and dishwashers), Short car rides (not on hot days) in cat carriers are beneficial as it will help them to not be stressed when they need to travel, make it

enjoyable. As their curiosity and maturity expand, expand their environmental fun. Kittens with broader experiences in their first two months are less nervous later in life than those from unstimulating surroundings.

Biting and scratching



What to do about that unintentional - or sometimes intentional - bite or scratch? The moment the kitten places mouth or claws on human skin, make a sharp yelp (as a crying kitten would) and immediately withdraw, ending the play. This acts as negative punishment, a very effective training tool, teaching the kitten that feline teeth and extended claws mustn't touch human skin. So that you don't send mixed messages, be consistent - don't allow the kitten to play bite sometimes and not others. It is challenging to act quickly and with just the right amount of force to stop inappropriate behavior, as another kitten or the queen would. Regardless, inflict no physical punishment. No exceptions. It has a great potential to

cause fear and/or aggression in the kitten. If the kitten continues to pursue, calmly pick him up and place him in a separate, kitten-proof area for about five minutes as a form of a "timeout." Although the kitten is not likely to associate the timeout in another room with the act of biting or scratching, it will give the kitten an opportunity to calm down.

Non-productive sucking



Kittens whose nonproductive sucking is excessive may benefit from an enriched environment with many items to suck or chew. Examples include rawhides soaked in water, cat grass, beef jerky, food stuffed toys and chewy or dry food. Furthermore, if the kitten shows a preference for a certain (and appropriate) item, reward her only when she sucks on that object. For example, if the kitten has a fancy for cotton, an old cotton towel can be given to her so that she will have an appropriate item to suck on. Then, when the kitten starts sucking on the person's skin or clothing, place her on the floor and give the kitten the old cotton towel to suck on. Or better yet, redirect the kitten to a completely different appropriate behavior, like playing with a pole toy. Never punish this behavior; it can be anxiety based

and physical punishment only increases conflict - leading to more undesirable behaviors. In addition, it should not be encouraged through petting or other positive reinforcement.

Suckling on the body parts of littermates is seen more commonly in kittens who lost their mother at around two weeks of age but were used to suckling on demand. In this case, the only solution is to separate the littermates until four to five weeks of age, when their suckling urge typically decreases. During the time of separation, make sure the littermates have supervised playtime with one another.

The reward of watching an orphaned kitten grow from a helpless baby to a loving and playful human companion is priceless. Understanding the behavioral development of kittens, and its link to physical development, is a critical part of this process. It allows us to address the special behavioral considerations of the orphaned kitten - and prepare them for a life embraced by the arms, and heart, of a two-legged companion.



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