



Foster Care Program
Foster Bottle Babies Handbook
(caring for unweaned kittens without mothers)



Foster Bottle Baby Manual

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Preparing for Your Bottle Baby

You Need to Supply:

- Digital Scale (postal or food)
- Heat source – heating pad on low with **no auto shut off**
- Towels for bedding
- Cotton balls for cleaning
- Karo syrup
- Quick read digital thermometer with some petroleum jelly as lubrication (Example: BeYoung flexible tip quick read thermometer)

We supply:

- Miracle Nipples (minis)
- Baby bottles
- O-ring syringe 3 cc, 10 cc, 20 cc—luer tip works well with miracle nipple
- Syringe caps for tips of syringe
- KMR powder

What to Expect

Orphaned kittens require the same care that kittens with mothers require but in this case the foster parent must take on the duties of the mother cat. Kittens, before they are eating on their own (before 3-4 weeks old), and without a mother present will need round the clock care. Very young kittens will mostly sleep and eat.

The kittens will put on weight steadily, gaining as much as 1/2 oz. a day in the initial period of rapid growth.

The veterinary literature reports intimidating mortality rates for orphaned kittens up to 12 weeks of age, ranging from 15% to 40%. Deaths may be attributed to birth defects, trauma, infections and nutritional problems. The biggest determinants of natural kitten loss are low birth weight and poor growth rates. For dedicated caregivers, it can be heartbreaking and frustrating to lose kittens, but it is worth remembering that up to 60% of low-birth-weight kittens under natural conditions will fail to survive.

Caring for Your Kittens

Kittens 3 weeks or younger cannot feed themselves and they need a heat source such as a heating pad. Make sure the heating pad will not shut off and that it is on low. Once the kittens are a bit more mobile, they can be offered a “porridge” made of KMR and canned cat food mashed up. A good “rule of thumb” is when the kittens’ tail comes up (and is under control), the kittens have enough coordination to learn to eat on their own.

Kittens need to be weighed, at least once per day, around the same time each day.

Keep Them Warm!

Keep the kittens in a place in your home that is warm, draft-free, and isolated from small children and your own pets, particularly cats. During the first two weeks of life foster parents should keep the kittens in a room with a temperature of 85°F. At two weeks of age the room temperature can be dropped to 80°F and at four weeks can be lowered to 75°F.

Kittens 3 weeks and younger must have a heat source. Infant kittens are unable to regulate their body temperature. They can quickly succumb to hypothermia so it is of the utmost importance that they be kept warm. They cannot digest food if they are too cold. Ideally, the kittens can live in a carrier with several layers of towels. Place the carrier half on and half off of the heating pad **on the LOW setting** which is **outside and under the carrier**, so that the kittens can move OFF the heat if they so desire. Be VERY careful to place adequate padding between the kittens and the heating pad to avoid burns. Be sure to tuck the towel under the pad so the kittens cannot crawl between the towel and the pad. Too much heat can KILL. It can be as dangerous for a kitten to be overheated as chilled so make certain that the heating pad is placed in such a manner that the kittens can move off of the heat.

Temperature

The average rectal temperature of a one day old newborn is between 92 and 97 degrees F. The kitten's temperature at 2 to 21 days old will be 96 to 100 degrees F.

Elimination

Elimination In the first few weeks of life, a kitten is completely dependent on the mother cat to stimulate all body functions; her licking prompts the release of bowels and bladder. Just as she tidied the nest at birth, the mother cat consumes all of the kittens’ waste products. Orphaned infant kittens will need your help in this department! Kittens will need to be stimulated to urinate and defecate. Your help will be needed until the time that kittens begin to be weaned, and sometimes beyond that point.

Weaning

Beginning at approximately four weeks of age, you can start to offer the kittens their formula in a shallow bowl or saucer. At first, after offering them time to feed on their own, you should offer a bottle to see if they need any topping off. When they learn to drink from the bowl add wet kitten food in small amounts to the formula. Gradually increase the amount of wet kitten food and decrease the amount of formula. Kittens that don’t quite get the eating process can be encouraged by you putting a bit of food on a front paw where they will “clean” it off or by placing a bit of food in their mouths. Once they are fully eating on their own and don’t take anything from the bottle after eating on their own they are weaned.

Vaccinations

When the kittens reach 1lb, about 4 weeks of age, you will need to return them to PSPCA for deworming medications, vaccinations and a checkup. After the first vaccination you will need to return them every 3 weeks to PSPCA for revaccinations and deworming. You are responsible for scheduling appointments with the Foster Coordinator for vaccinations. Your vaccination visits should not take a great deal of time.

Keep Them Clean

Kittens should be kept clean and free from debris such as food, urine, and feces. If possible, use a damp cloth and dab the areas that need cleaning. If the genital area is soiled, rinse the “lower half” in warm water, soap isn’t usually necessary, and towel dry. You can use water and a little Dawn dishwashing soap, or kitten shampoo. Wipe gently with a cloth, avoiding the ears and eyes. Rinse thoroughly with warm water. Blow them dry with the dryer set on low. Make sure to always dry kittens completely or then may get sick.

Preparing the Bottle Baby Formula Mixture

The easiest way to prepare formula for your bottle babies is to make a large batch of formula that you will pull from throughout a 24 hour period. The amount depends on how many kittens you have and how much they are eating, you will need to increase the amount you make as they get older and eat more.

- Find a mason jar or medium size Tupperware container; make sure the container has a lid that prevents spilling.
- Mix one part KMR (Kitten Milk Replacer) to two parts water. The amount you make should reflect how many kittens you have and how much they eat. **Keep in mind whatever you do not use after 24 hours will need to be thrown away.** Mix the KMR and water thoroughly until all the clumps are gone.
- The opened powdered KMR container must be refrigerated too.
- **DO NOT USE COW'S MILK!** (or anything other than the specified formula given to you by the Foster Coordinator)
- **Young kittens generally do NOT wake up and cry to be fed. You must wake them up.**

Stimulating Your Kittens to Eliminate Before & After Feeding

Before and after each meal, place a cotton ball, facial tissue or soft towel over the kitten's genitals and jiggle gently to stimulate urination and a bowel movement. Slightly dampen the cotton ball with warm water. **DO NOT RUB**; this will cause the area to become raw and sore. (The mother typically cleans this area herself before they're litter trained.)

Kittens should (and almost always will) urinate during each stimulation. You may need to use several cotton balls on each kitten as you assist them in elimination of feces and urine. They should defecate once a day, but some kittens go several days before they need to defecate, so don't panic if they don't defecate every day. One trick is to slowly count to 60 while you're stimulating a kitten; at that point, you'll know if they're done or if something's on its way out!

Feeding Steps

We recommend two types of feeding for orphaned infant kittens: bottle and syringe feeding. Bottle feeding takes longer but probably provides more satisfaction to the kitten. Syringe feeding is somewhat faster but can be messy at times. Syringe feeding is recommended with really young kittens. A start up of kitten formula of KMR will be provided. Mix only enough to use within a 24 hour period. Discard any remaining formula after 24 hours.

Keep the formula mixture in the fridge until you are ready to feed your kittens.

- 1) Use the *Feeding Guide* below to determine how much to feed and how often. Find the stomach capacity for the related weight. Overfeeding KMR milk can also cause diarrhea, as well as regurgitation and aspiration of milk into the lungs, resulting in life-threatening pneumonia.
- 2) Pour the formula mixture into nursing bottle. Place the rest of the formula (that is in a mason jar or similar container) back in to the fridge.
- 3) Fill a coffee cup up with water and place in the microwave for about 1 ½ minutes or until the water is hot (time depends on power of microwave).
- 4) Do not microwave the formula; although you may microwave the water in a glass cup before placing the bottle in the water. **DO NOT ALLOW THE FORMULA TO BOIL.** Any formula that boils must be thrown out, as the protein has been destroyed.
- 5) Place the feeding bottle full of formula mixture into the coffee cup with hot water. Allow the bottle to warm up for a few minutes. Test formula temperature by squeezing the formula onto the inside of your wrist. The formula should be warm **NOT** hot!
- 6) **While waiting for the formula to warm up, now is a good time to weigh your kittens. Kittens should be weighed at least daily.**
- 7) The formula should feel quite warm when tested on your wrist, because a cat's body temperature is 3 to 4 degrees warmer than a human's, milk from a mother cat would be warmer than we might be used to. The milk should be approximately body temperature, around 95 to 100 degrees. The warm formula will encourage a kitten to nurse.
- 8) If you are using a syringe—fill the syringe to the amount you want to feed **EACH** kitten (each kitten should have its own syringe), then pull up a little air into the syringe. Place a syringe tip on the end of the syringe and place the syringe in the

cup of warm water to heat. The formula will expand as it heats—that's why we leave an air space. The syringe tip prevents formula from mixing with the water and becoming diluted.

- 9) Be sure the babies are warm to the touch. If they are cool to the touch, DO NOT try to feed them. Wait until they are warmed up and active. They will be ok if you wait to feed them. Cold kittens will be lethargic and cannot digest food very well. Kittens that are active are warm enough. The best way to warm them quickly is to wrap them up in a towel like a burrito, leaving their faces exposed. Wrap the heating pad turned onto low around the towel – duct tape it or secure it around the towel so it stays wrapped. Don't let the heating pad touch them directly as it can cause burns. Make sure the heating pad never touches their skin. If the kittens are less than 95 or do not warm up within 1 hour call us ASAP.
- 10) If the kittens are lethargic, place one small drop of Karo syrup on its gums and gently rub it in. If the kitten is moving around, don't give it the syrup--it doesn't need it.
- 11) All nipples except, the Miracle Nipples, come without holes. Take care in creating a nipple hole if needed. Use the smallest cuticle scissors you have and start small, making a crisscross; once the hole is cut too big, it cannot be corrected. The hole is perfect when you hold the bottle upside down and it goes drip – drip – drip. Gushing out might cause the kitten to aspirate the formula; a hole too small will keep the kitten from getting any formula at all.
- 12) **To feed your kitten, place it stomach down on a towel or other textured surface, such as in a towel, to which it can cling.** This is similar to the position when nursing on the mother. Kitten positioning for feeding is very important; this is where the crucial surrogate-mom bonding happens.
- 13) Grasp the kitten gently under its armpits. Gently open its mouth with the tip of your finger, then slip the nipple between its jaws. You may have to wiggle it, and squeeze out a bit of milk so the kitten gets the idea. You may also find that gently holding their head steady is helpful. Kittens have a nursing reflex – if you gently place your finger over the muzzle/nose, they will push into it and search out the nipple.
- 14) Kittens should not be laid on their backs to nurse but should nurse with tummies facing down. This will help prevent aspiration of the formula into the lungs, a situation that could easily cause the death of or serious illness in a kitten. **NEVER TURN THE KITTEN ON ITS BACK TO FEED. KEEP BOTH THE KITTEN AND THE BOTTLE IN AS UPRIGHT A POSITION AS POSSIBLE.** Hold the bottle at 45-degree angle, keeping a light pull on the bottle to encourage vigorous sucking.
- 15) Draw up the appropriate amount in an (ideally) slip tip syringe or baby bottle with nipple and insert just the tip into kitten's mouth—you are NOT syringing in the formula, most kittens will start to lap at it and very quickly will actually suckle. Don't force it! If kitten isn't eating well, drip formula in the kitten's mouth.
- 16) **NEVER SQUEEZE THE BOTTLE OR SYRINGE TO FORCE MILK DOWN THE KITTEN'S THROAT!** This could force the formula into the lungs and cause pneumonia and possible death.
- 17) If the kitten does not start nursing right away, or if it seems to have trouble getting the milk, check the nipple again. It may also be helpful to stroke his head gently or pet his back to start his nursing reflexes. Pulling lightly on the bottle or twisting the nipple while in the kitten's mouth can also encourage the kitten to suckle.
- 18) Take your time; some kittens nurse slowly.
- 19) The kitten will let you know when it has had enough simply by refusing more, or bubbles will form around its mouth.
- 20) Once babies are fed, they must also be stimulated again to urinate and defecate. Note: it is VERY normal that they don't defecate at every feeding. They can even go a couple of days without defecating. If they are acting "normal" (eating, sleeping), they are fine. If they are constipated they will be cranky and not eat well. They should urinate at every feeding. Whether to stimulate them before or after feeding is flexible—some kittens are so crazed to eat that's all they want to do and won't urinate. If a kitten has a really full bladder however, they may not eat until stimulated. Use your judgment. To stimulate them to urinate and defecate, hold the kitten belly facing you, take a tissue or cotton ball, moisten a little, and gentle rub the genital area—imagine you are the mom cat cleaning her babies.
- 21) After feeding your kittens if you have any leftover formula mixture in the nursing bottle discard it immediately. Wash the bottle and all its parts thoroughly with warm soap and water.
- 22) At the next feeding repeat the feeding steps listed above. Continue this process until you have used all of your premade formula or it has been past 24 hours since you made the formula mixture.

***Never reheat formula that has already been heated up once. . ANY HEATED FORMULA REMAINING SHOULD BE DISCARDED.** Reheated formula can cause a bacterial infection.

***It helps to write the date and time on the container of when you made up the formula mixture so you will know exactly when to discard it at 24 hours.**

Kittens have a strong instinct to suckle and are generally not satisfied when nursing on a bottle. Consequently they will nurse off one another's genitals, sometimes causing real discomfort to one another. If this happens you can do a couple of things, first increase the number of feedings per day, feeding the same daily total amount. Second, separate the kittens when they are not supervised, several small boxes work well for this. The kittens should be allowed some time together when they are supervised so they are

properly socialized. Also, providing them a fleece toy or towel may help. After feeding gently wipe the kitten's face with a warm, damp cloth and then dry, to imitate their mothers grooming, until they can groom themselves.

OVERFEEDING A KITTEN CAN LEAD TO DIAHRREA WHICH CAN CAUSE DEHYDRATION AND BE FATAL. UNDERFEEDING CAN ALSO CAUSE DEHYDRATION AND CHILLS WHICH CAN BE FATAL. Be alert to your kitten's needs.

Feeding Guide

Age	Weight	Amount per Day	<u>Amount per feeding</u>	<u>How often?</u>
<1 week	2-5 ounces	13-30mL	3-5 mLs	2-3 hrs
1-2 weeks	6-9 ounces	40-60mL	7-9 mLs	3-4 hrs
2-3 weeks	10-12 ounces	65-88 mL	10-14 mLs	4-5 hrs
3-4 weeks	13 oz-1 pound	95-110 mL	Weaning!	Weaning!

Bottle Baby Cheat Sheet

Situation	What to Do
Bottle babies are lethargic	Be sure the babies are warm to the touch. Take their temperature. The average rectal temperature of a one day old kitten is between 92 and 97 degrees F. After that the kitten's temperature should be 99 to 101 degrees F. If they are too cold they may be lethargic. It is very important to warm them up, see the directions below if they are too cold. Place one small drop of Karo syrup, gently rub the drop into the gums in their mouths. If the kitten is moving around, don't give it the syrup--it doesn't need it. Call us ASAP, see the next page for numbers, if the lethargy does not get better within an hour.
Bottle Babies are acting normal, are not losing weight but are having diarrhea or they are constipated	The most common cause for all of these is overfeeding or intolerance of the KMR. Try diluting the KMR mixture in half with water for 24 hours to see if this clears it up. Call the Foster Coordinator if it continues past the 2 days or gets worse. Keep a close eye on the weight. If there is any weight loss call the Foster Coordinator ASAP to schedule an appointment to have the Bottle Babies seen. Bottle Babies are so small that any weight loss is significant.
The feces are white or very pale	
Bottle Babies have not defecated for several days, but are acting normal	
Bottle Babies are losing weight, have diarrhea, AND are not acting normal or are not gaining weight	Call the Foster Coordinator to schedule an appointment to have the Bottle Babies seen ASAP. Bottle Babies are so small that any weight loss is significant.
Bottle Babies are sneezing and having thick or yellow/green nasal discharge	Call the Foster Coordinator for an appointment. You don't need to call the medical emergency phone in this case, but we will have you come in at the next available appointment.
Bottle Babies eyes look weepy and are red or having yellow/green discharge	Call the Foster Coordinator to schedule an appointment. You don't need to call the medical emergency phone in this case, but we will have you come in at the next available appointment. In the meantime, use a cotton ball or soft cloth to gently clean the eyes (don't rub, dap them) of any discharge and apply a warm compress for a few minutes once or twice a day.
The bottle baby doesn't appear to want to eat	Check the nipple again. It may also be helpful to stroke his head gently or pet his back to start his nursing reflexes. Pulling lightly on the bottle or twisting the nipple while in the kitten's mouth can also encourage the kitten to suckle. You may have to wiggle it, and squeeze out a bit of milk so the kitten gets the idea. Take your time; some Bottle Babies nurse slowly. Babies that come into care with their eyes open are sometimes a bit slower to take to bottle feeding—they know you aren't "mom", so you may have to convince them you are!
The kitten feels cold to the touch or is < 99F	If they are 95-99, get them warm. – Wrap them up in a towel like a burrito, leaving their faces exposed. Wrap the heating pad turned onto low around the towel – duct tape it or secure it around the towel so it stays wrapped. Don't let the heating pad touch them directly as it can cause burns. Make sure the heating pad never touches their skin. If the kittens are less than 95 or do not warm up within 1 hour call us ASAP, see the next page for numbers.
The kitten feels hot and is > 102.5 F	Monitor the temp every 30 minutes. If it continues to rise over the next hour then call us ASAP to schedule an appointment to have the kittens seen.

PROCEDURE FOR EMERGENCIES

If Your Foster Is Having a Medical Emergency:

Call the Foster Coordinator if during our open hours at **916-677-7816**.

If during our closed hours, call the Foster Emergency Line at **916-709-7741**.

When you call be prepared to:

- describe what's happening, condition, etc.
- give the temperature history
- give the weight history
- age

Staff will let you know if you need to bring the animal in to the PSPCA or, if it is after hours, to an emergency veterinary clinic right away. BEFORE taking it to an emergency veterinary clinic you will need to get approval from a staff member first. If you get a voicemail please leave your name, number and a brief description of what is happening and someone will call you back.

If it is after hours, and you take the animal to the designated emergency clinic, be prepared to tell them that you are a PSPCA Foster Parent. The clinic veterinarian should contact the staff member you talked to, to obtain permission for any treatment. Foster parents should not make any decisions or approval any care. All billing must go directly to the PSPCA Foster account, you should not be billed or have to pay for the visit.

Call the Foster Coordinator the next morning and let them know what happened. The remaining foster animals may need to come in to the PSPCA for a recheck.

Emergency Clinics for the PSPCA Fosters:

VCA Loomis Basin Emergency Veterinary Clinic
3901 Sierra College Blvd, Loomis, CA 95650
Phone: [916\) 652-5816](tel:9166525816)

(in the rare occasion when VCA Loomis is full)
Atlantic Street Veterinary Hospital Pet Emergency
1100 Atlantic St, Roseville, CA 95678
Phone: (916) 783-4655

General Criteria for Emergencies

Emergency situations include:

- Continuous weight loss
- Continuous diarrhea
- Continuous vomiting
- Bleeding of any kind — nose, urine, more than 2 days in the stool, any unclear discharge
- Any trauma — hit by a car, dropped, limp, stepped on, unconscious
- Difficulty in breathing/blocked airway – open mouthed - not just congested but struggling to breathe
- Lethargy
- Dehydration
- If the animal has vomiting or diarrhea, but is still active, eating and drinking, it can probably wait until the next day to receive help. However, if the animal is lethargic and shows no interest in food or water, it is wise to seek emergency help at the time.
- Coughing or sneezing should pose no immediate problems unless accompanied by blood or symptoms such as lethargy or dehydration.

When possible, it's better for us to know of any issues on weekdays, and when we are open, so our medical staff can handle any issues. We do not have medical staff on the weekends. We contract and pay a premium fee to send animals to outside emergency clinics.