



Humane Society  
Silicon Valley

Thank you for saving a life!

# HSSV FELINE FOSTER MANUAL



## ► About this Manual

We're here to help you be the best foster parent you can be. This manual contains a ton of helpful information and links to even more resources. If you don't find what you're looking for, please reach out!



[www.hssv.org](http://www.hssv.org)



901 Ames Ave. Milpitas CA

## ► Highlights:

- HSSVContacts.....page 5
- Vet Emergency Protocol.....page 10
- Escaped Cat Protocol.....page 34
- Cat Bite Protocol.....page 33
- Feeding Guidelines.....page 30
- Behavior Challenges.....page 19
- Returning Your Foster.....page 36

For questions, please email:

**[feline.foster@hssv.org](mailto:feline.foster@hssv.org)**

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Dear Foster Parent,

First and foremost, we want to THANK YOU!

You are about to embark on a life-saving adventure that you'll never forget!

Opening your home to a foster animal not only allows us to increase the number of animals we save, but it also immensely improves the quality of life for the individuals YOU foster while they wait for their forever homes.

The shelter is a stressful place to live, no matter how nice we make it. You have a major impact as foster parents just by providing these animals some stability during a really scary and uncertain point in their life.

Additionally, sharing the information you've learned about your foster will help capture the attention of potential adopters, and it will help their new home be as prepared as possible to offer that same stability.

In this manual, you will find guidance and helpful tips to ensure success for the duration of your foster animal's stay.

If therequirements included in the following section do not work wellwithyour schedule, please let us know. We can help youfindafoster situation that will work best for you!



Sincerely,

HSSV Foster Team

# RULES TO LIVE BY

1

## Expect the **unexpected**

Every cat is an individual, and we usually don't have a lot of background information on the cats before they go to foster. Prepare your home proactively and let us know if you have any trouble.

2

## Keep your foster cats or kittens **crated in transit**

We wouldn't want any kittens to get spooked and try to run! They should always be transported in carriers.

3

## Carefully watch your foster animals **body language**

Your foster will experience many new things while in your care. Watching their body language will let you know if they're feeling uncomfortable. If you notice signs of stress, slow down and/or get them some space from whatever is stressing them out.

## Train your foster cat or kittens with **positive reinforcement**

4

Reward behaviors you like with praise and treats. Reduce behaviors you don't like by ignoring them or arranging things so they can't practice them. This is the safest and most effective approach! See the common behaviors sheet – or HSSV contacts for more help.

---

5

## Keep under-vaccinated kittens **safe from disease**

Keep all personal pets up to date on vaccinations and be sure to wash hands and sanitize before handling your kittens if you've handled any outdoor animals

6

## If you're not sure about something – **ask us!**

There's a lot to keep track of when you're caring for cats and kittens, and we don't expect you to know it all right away. That's why we have a team of folks to help you along the way. See the [HSSV contacts](#) for help.

# TYPES OF FOSTERS & THEIR CARE REQUIREMENTS

| Type of Foster                           | Typical Care Requirements                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>All Fosters</b>                       | Need two week quarantine from resident animals                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Sick or Injured Foster</b>            | Vary based on the individual issue but may include activity restrictions, medications, and/or routine vet visits.                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Neonate Kittens<br/>(1 – 5 weeks)</b> | Bottle feed every 2-4 hours, even overnight<br>Need to be stimulated to poop & pee at every feeding<br>Great for small spaces as they stay in a carrier until 3 weeks old                                                                                        |
| <b>Moms with Kittens</b>                 | Mom does most of the work for the kittens for the first 4-5 weeks<br>Mom needs:<br>Dry food available at all times and wet food offered multiple times a day<br>Pets, attention, and play depending on the mom<br>Quiet space away from people and pets to nurse |
| <b>Underage kittens<br/>(5 – 12 wks)</b> | Fed wet food a few times a day<br>Once eating on their own reliably can be left alone throughout the day<br>Need a secure, clean, & enclosed space (a spare bathroom is recommended)<br>Need area cleaned multiple times a day                                   |
| <b>Adult Cats</b>                        | Fed twice daily<br>Other enrichment requirements vary<br>Designated safe space away from resident animals (a spare bedroom or bathroom)                                                                                                                          |

# SUPPLIES FOR KITTENS

## What HSSV lends to all kitten fosters

- **Formula** -- for bottle feeding neonates
- **Bottles + Nipples** -- for bottle feeding neonates
- **Towels + Blankets** -- for bedding
- **Rice warmies** -- to keep kittens warm
- **Litter & box** -- for potty training
- **Carrier** -- for containing and transporting kittens
- **Kitten food** -- for feeding mom, or weaning kittens
- **Toys** -- for kitten play and enrichment

## What's available to borrow depending on donations

- **Kitchen scale** -- for daily weight checks
- **Gauze pads** -- for stimulating kittens to pee and poop
- **X-pen** -- for creating larger confinement space
- **Poop bags** -- for cleaning up solid waste
- **Water bowl** -- ceramic or metal
- **Food bowl** -- ceramic or metal

## Nice to have items (not supplied by HSSV)

- **Shower curtain** or other waterproof material -- to protect flooring
- **Nail clippers** -- for clipping kitten nails
- **Humidifier** -- for congested kitties



# HSSV CONTACTS



In an emergency call 408-262-2133 ext.188

\*see our [emergency page](#) for more details

| Group                 | Contacts                                                                                                                        | When to Contact                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>FAVS</b>           | <a href="mailto:FAVS@hssv.org">FAVS@hssv.org</a><br>408-252-2133 ext. 158<br><a href="#">Schedule appointments HERE</a>         | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Schedule routine vaccinations</li><li>• Personality profiles</li><li>• Schedule supply pick ups</li></ul>                                                     |
| <b>Foster Mentors</b> | <a href="mailto:felinefostermentors@hssv.org">felinefostermentors@hssv.org</a><br>Individual mentor will be assigned at pick up | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To get a mentor assigned</li><li>• General advice &amp; support</li></ul>                                                                                     |
| <b>Foster Staff</b>   | <a href="mailto:feline.foster@hssv.org">feline.foster@hssv.org</a><br>408-262-2133 ext. 364                                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Schedule surgeries</li><li>• Schedule pick up, drop off</li><li>• Schedule 1st triage</li><li>• Provide medical updates</li><li>• You want to adopt</li></ul> |
| <b>Medical</b>        | Use the QR code below                                                                                                           | Non-emergency medical concerns                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Behavior</b>       | <a href="mailto:feline.foster@hssv.org">feline.foster@hssv.org</a><br>408-262-2133 ext. 364                                     | Non-emergency behavior concerns                                                                                                                                                                       |

## MEDICAL CONCERNS



Expect a response within 24 hours

## FAVS FORM





# WHERE TO GO WHEN YOU ARRIVE



901 Ames Ave. Milpitas CA



Depending on your appointment type, you will be directed to go to one of the following:

- ★ Community Services Lobby (Med appointments)
- ★ Foster Animal Vaccination Station (FAVS)

# HOW TO SCHEDULE A FOSTER PICKUP



## REQUEST A PICKUP APPOINTMENT

Choose a time that works for you

Select the types of kittens you'd be willing to foster: bottle baby, weaning, underage, nursing, ringworm

Based on our current kitten inventory, you will be notified 12+ hours before your requested appointment whether it is

**confirmed** or **canceled**

### **Confirmed Appointments:**

- Show up at FAVS at your scheduled time
- Email feline foster if you are running late or need to cancel

### **Canceled Appointments:**

- Do NOT show up at FAVS
- Request a future appointment
- Email feline foster if you are willing to take a different type of feline

# TYPICAL APPOINTMENT SCHEDULE



| Kittens Age or Stage                | Reason for appt.                                                    | How to Schedule                                                          |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 Weeks                             | First triage for kittens: full exam, microchip, vaccines, deworming | Email <a href="mailto:feline.foster@hssv.org">feline.foster@hssv.org</a> |
| 6 Weeks                             | Vaccine booster                                                     | <u>Schedule with FAVS</u><br>( <u>Click here</u> )                       |
| After full weaning (Moms + kittens) | Mom's spay (Exact timing varies on a case by case basis)            | Email <a href="mailto:feline.foster@hssv.org">feline.foster@hssv.org</a> |
| At 1.5 lbs                          | Kitten spay/neuter                                                  | Email <a href="mailto:feline.foster@hssv.org">feline.foster@hssv.org</a> |

- You'll receive a **medical chart** for your foster. It includes:
  - The animals A#
  - Due dates for future vaccinations
  - A weight log for you to fill out
- Bring this with you when you attend medical appointments



# WHAT IS CONSIDERED A "MEDICAL EMERGENCY"?

| EMERGENCY                                               | NON-URGENT CONCERN                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Difficulty breathing                                    | Unusual feces<br>(diarrhea or constipation)          |
| Vomiting, lethargy, loss of appetite<br>and/or diarrhea | Vomiting or loss of appetite<br>(more than 12 hours) |
| Ingested something toxic                                | Discharge from nose and/or eyes                      |
| Broken limbs or severe swelling                         | Sneezing or coughing                                 |
| Uncontrolled bleeding                                   | Small cuts/abrasions                                 |
| Seizures                                                | Limping, mild swelling                               |

- If you're unsure if something is a concern, please consult your mentor
- All medical appointments will be at the HSSV Medical Center
- You will always need a **scheduled** appointment to use the Medical Center
  - Email [feline.foster@hssv.org](mailto:feline.foster@hssv.org) to schedule an appointment

## REPORTING NON-URGENT MEDICAL CONCERNS:



\*Expect a response within 24 hours.  
If the situation becomes urgent while  
you are waiting, take emergency  
steps (next page)





# WHAT TO DO IF THERE'S A



## Daytime Emergencies

Between the hours of **8am–5pm**

- ▶ Come directly to the shelter
- ▶ Call ahead: **(408) 262-2133x188**



## Night Time Emergencies

Between the hours of **5 pm–7 am**

- ▶ Go to [www.vettriage.com/hssv](http://www.vettriage.com/hssv)
- ▶ Click “Connect Now”
- ▶ Use discount code **HSSV50**



If the Veterinarian on duty determines emergency care is needed after hours, you will be directed to a **specific** emergency vet hospital once they speak with a HSSV representative.

If you have been instructed to take your foster to a hospital, please make sure to bring your foster's **animal ID number** with you

**ALL EMERGENCY VET VISITS MUST BE  
APPROVED IN ADVANCE!**

**Please send an email to foster staff in the morning so  
we can schedule you for follow-up care at the shelter**

# PREPARING YOUR HOME



## 1. Ensure your personal pets are fully vaccinated



- Make sure your own animals are current on their vaccinations and are in the best possible health.
- If they have health concerns, check with your veterinarian to ensure that fostering is appropriate for your pets.

## 2. Set up a safe confinement zone



- All cats and kittens should go through a two week quarantine.
- A spare bathroom or bedroom is highly recommended as their

transitional area.

## 3. Check your home for hazards



- Cat-proof inside your home:
  - Store loose cords and small or valuable objects to avoid chewing
  - Ensure all food is put away or kept away from foster animals
  - Ensure cleaning supplies are stored in a separate area that they cannot access

## 4. Secure the entrance and exit from your home



- Cats sometimes try to leave the house as we enter or exit!
- Going through the garage, laundry room, or back door can ensure that even if your new foster gets past you, they are still safely contained.
- Sectioning off the front door with an x-pen can be helpful if you have a lot of people coming and going.

## 5. Decide on ground rules for your foster

- It's important that everyone in the family is consistent and agrees to the same terms ahead of time.
  - Are you going to allow the foster cats or kittens in every room after their quarantine period?
  - What is the schedule is going to be?

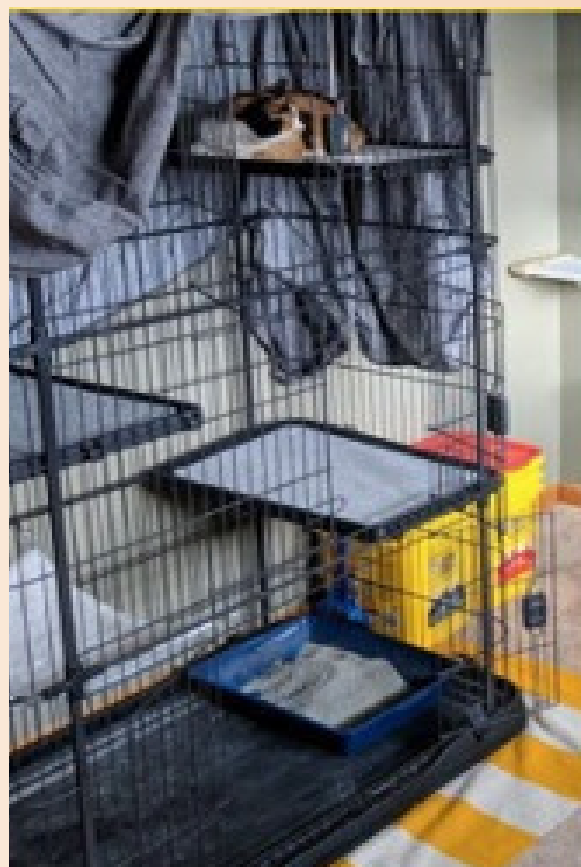


# FOSTER CAT QUARANTINE AREA



## Fosters should have a two week quarantine

- The area you choose should be climate controlled, easy to clean, cat proof, and secure. Bathrooms and laundry rooms are popular choices!
- If you don't have a room you can dedicate as a foster space, we can loan you a large dog crate to create an enclosed space.
- This area should be free of carpet and easily sprayed down with a disinfectant should your foster have any signs of being sick.



**Kitten care tip:** line the bottom of the x-pen with a shower curtain to protect your flooring underneath!

# ABNORMAL POOPS



## Diarrhea is common for kittens

If you see it, don't panic! It may be caused by parasites, viruses, bacteria, food changes, stress, or just overfeeding

## If the diarrhea continues 48 hours

Start the "diarrhea protocol" that was given to you at pickup and email [feline.foster@hssv.org](mailto:feline.foster@hssv.org)

## If the diarrhea is severe (Type 7):

If the diarrhea is severe, does not respond to the diarrhea protocol, contains blood or obvious parasites, you should submit a Medical Concern form. Reference the scoring numbers on the chart below to communicate the severity

| SCORE | SPECIMEN EXAMPLE                                                                    | CHARACTERISTICS                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1     |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very hard and dry</li> <li>Often expelled as individual pellets</li> <li>Requires much effort to expel from body</li> <li>Leaves no residue on ground when picked up</li> </ul> |
| 2     |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Firm, but not hard, pliable</li> <li>Segmented in appearance</li> <li>Little or no residue on ground when picked up</li> </ul>                                                  |
| 3     |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Log shaped, moist surface</li> <li>Little or no visible segmentation</li> <li>Leaves residue on ground, but holds form when picked up</li> </ul>                                |
| 4     |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very moist and soggy</li> <li>Log shaped</li> <li>Leaves residue on ground and loses form when picked up</li> </ul>                                                             |
| 5     |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Very moist but has a distinct shape</li> <li>Present in piles rather than logs</li> <li>Leaves residue on ground and loses form when picked up</li> </ul>                       |
| 6     |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Has texture, but no defined shape</li> <li>Present as piles or spots</li> <li>Leaves residue on ground when picked up</li> </ul>                                                |
| 7     |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Watery</li> <li>No texture</li> <li>Present in flat puddles</li> </ul>                                                                                                          |

# PARASITES ARE COMMON

## Cats and kittens often have worms

- You may see pieces of them in their stool
- If you do, and your kitten hasn't recently received a de-wormer, submit a medical concern form

## De-wormer is always given at first triage

- First triage is at about 4 weeks for kittens
- Pyrantel (for roundworms), Ponazuril (for protozoal parasites) and Droncit (for tapeworms) are all very safe and effective
  - Can be started earlier than 4wks if there are signs of worms
- Parasites may still be seen in stool during deworming protocol
  - They are expelled as a result of the treatment

**Roundworms** appear in the cat's stool as light-colored, spaghetti-like strands



**Tapeworms** appear in the cat's stool in broken segments, like grains of rice



## Flea treatment is also given at first triage



- Fleas are tiny insects that can be seen on kitten's skin
  - If you see signs of fleas before their first triage, submit a medical concern form
- It takes 24-48 hours for the treatment to kill all adult fleas
  - Please do not bathe kittens until 3 days after treatment

# RINGWORM 101

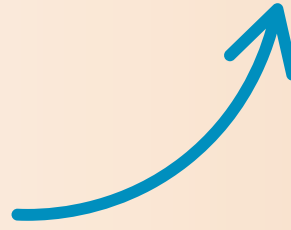


## Ringworm is a fungus

- Despite the name, ringworm is not a worm at all!
- It's a common fungus, like athlete's foot

## Spots of hair loss

- Ringworm presents as spots of hair loss
- Scabby/scaly or red rings may appear, which resemble a burn



## Zoonotic disease

- Ringworm is contagious to humans and other animals
- While symptoms are mild, it's something to avoid spreading!

## If you suspect your kittens have ringworm...

- Fill out a medical concern form
- Use gloves while handling your kittens
- Keep kittens in their quarantine area, away from other pets

## Fostering ringworm cats

- Let us know if you're open to taking known ringworm cases!
- Treatment can easily be provided at home
- Cats recover faster when they are in a low stress (home) environment



# URI – UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS

## Kitty Colds

- Upper Respiratory Infections are akin to a kitty head cold
- They are very common, and most kittens recover easily with treatment

## Symptoms to watch for

- Discharge from eyes and nose
- Congestion (noisy breathing)
- Sneezing and/or coughing
- Reduced appetite



## If you see signs of URI:

- Fill out a medical concern form
- Follow vet's instructions, which may include:
  - Eye ointment
  - Oral antibiotics (via syringe)

## Tips to reduce congestion

- Bring kittens into the bathroom and run a hot shower
  - Or add a humidifier to their space
- Gently clear mucus from eyes and nose with a warm compress



## Everything is new for them

- Animals need time to get used to a new home, new family, and new routine
- Be patient, and take the following steps to help set them up for success while they transition into life in your home
- We recommend setting up your confinement area before you pick up your new foster friends!



## Take time to help them adjust

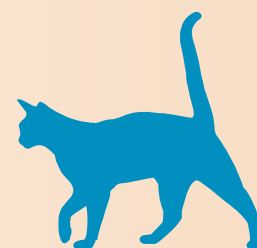
- A foster cat or kitten may be nervous when first arriving in a new environment. Give them some quiet time and allow them to adjust before working on socializing and handling

## Keep things simple

- Having visitors over can be stressful for a cat in transition
- Keep things as quiet as possible around your home and let them get used to your routine before bringing people over

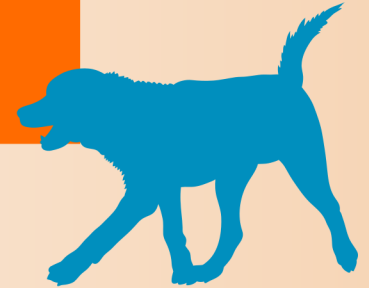
## Set a regular routine

- The sooner you establish a routine for eating, sleeping, and play time, the faster your kitties will acclimate!
- Remember: it takes cats **3 days** to decompress and **3 weeks** to get comfortable in a new routine





# RESIDENT PETS AND CHILDREN

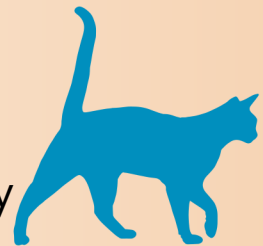


## If you have **dogs** at home

- Introduce the cat or kittens slowly after their quarantine period is over.
- Supervise all interactions: never leave the animals unattended together
- Use a gate or x-pen so that foster cats can approach when they're comfortable and still be in a safe space

## If you have **cats** at home

- Create a separate and secure place for your cats to get away
  - Have a plan to keep them separate as long as is needed
  - Use a gate across a doorway so they can see but not touch/chase
  - Feed treats to build positive associations and reward calm behavior



## If you have **kids** at home

- Supervise all interactions between children and your foster.
- Establish ground rules for your children ahead of time:
  - Leave the foster alone when they're eating, or sleeping
  - Walk, don't run, near the foster – and never play chase
  - A wand toy is the best way for children to interact with kittens
    - Make the toy run and hide from the cat(s) to entice them
    - Remind kids that wand toys are not for pushing or hitting cats!



# COMMON BEHAVIOR CONCERNS

## Shy or Nervous Behaviors

- Most kittens will hide or be nervous in a new environment
  - Give them a cozy spot to hide and allow them 24 hours to adjust
- Sit and talk quietly with them to start, so they gain confidence in your presence
- Then try feeding food or treats by hand to encourage them to approach
- We also recommend using wand toys, to encourage them to move and explore
- Continue their socialization by inviting other people in to play with the kittens

**If they're still difficult to touch or handle after 24 hours email your foster mentor for more tips and tricks!**

## Mouthing or Biting

- Kittens rely on other cats or kittens to show them how to play appropriately
- "Solo kittens" rely on their human playmates to teach them
  - Redirect them to the toy any time they start to get mouthy
  - Cat wands or small toys you can toss work great!
  - Some kittens love having a larger stuffed animal to bite, kick, and wrestle

## Litter Box Accidents

- Accidents can happen with kittens. But, they can also be a sign of illness
  - Fill out our medical concerns form if kittens aren't using the box
- Once medical causes are ruled out, consider behavioral reasons:
  - Is the litterbox easy to access?
  - Is it in a stressful location?
- Other tips:
  - Deep clean the box regularly
  - Add more litter boxes for them to pick from
  - Use an enzyme cleaner to clean up accidents
  - Put food and water where the accidents are occurring
  - Contain the kittens in a smaller space
  - Put them into the box regularly to remind them to go there



# BOTTLE BABY SETUP



## When kittens are 0–3 weeks old

- Set kittens up in a low traffic area in your home
- Keep them in an enclosure big enough for all kittens to fit **twice**
  - Bottom of the space should be lined with soft bedding
    - Low pile fleece or towels are good options
  - Flat material with nowhere for kitten to get stuck in a fold
  - Heating pad placed underneath **one side** of bedding
- From birth to 2 weeks, the kittens should be kept between 85 and 90 degrees. Take cues from them if it is too cool or too warm:
  - Kittens that are too warm will move away from the heat
  - Kittens that are cold will cry and/or pile up with siblings
- Consider keeping crate near your bed for easier overnight feeding
- Have stimulation materials nearby for before/after feeding



# PREPARING BOTTLES FOR FEEDING



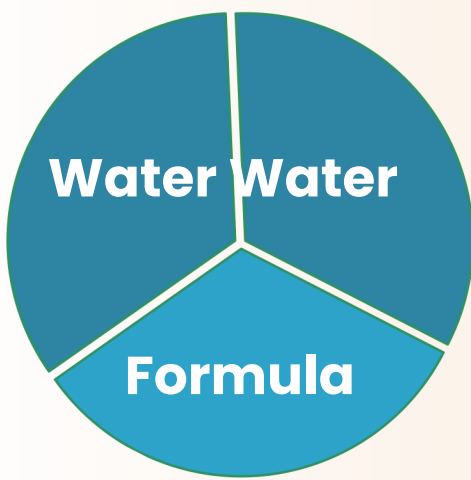
## Preparing the Nipple

- You will receive a bottle at the time of pickup. If you're purchasing extra bottles you will need to cut an "X" shape in the tip of the nipple with small scissors such as embroidery scissors or cuticle scissors. We highly recommend using a "miracle nipple" brand nipple instead of the standard nipple.
  - If using a nipple other than a "miracle nipple" check the hole size by turning the bottle upside down
    - The correct size will allow a drop of milk to slowly form
    - The milk should drip out at a rate of 1-2 drops per second with a gentle squeeze of the bottle

## Food Safety

- Sterilize the nipple by boiling in water for 10 minutes
- Wash bottle and nipple in warm soapy water anytime you add more formula to the bottle
- Only add enough formula to the bottle for one to two feeds to reduce waste as formula should not be reheated more than twice





# USING KITTEN FORMULA

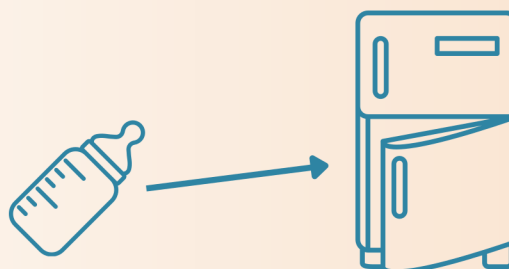


## Preparing Formula

- 2:1 ratio of water to powdered formula
  - 2 parts very warm water to 1 part formula
  - Ratios may be adjusted based on kitten's stools- email your mentor for advice, or [click here for troubleshooting tips!](#)
- Add water to the bottle first
  - Add the powdered formula next
  - Secure the nipple and shake vigorously
- Temperature of milk should be between 95-100 degrees
  - It is best to warm in a container of hot water, swirling often
  - **Do not** heat formula directly in the microwave
  - Test the temperature by placing a few drops on your inner wrist

## Storing Formula

- Once opened, containers of powdered formula must be refrigerated
- Formula needs to be used within 24 hours of mixing
  - Use a mason jar or immersion blender to mix thoroughly!
- Do not use formula that's at room temperature for longer than 1 hour



# FEEDING AMOUNTS



## Utilize the feeding chart

- Consult the bottle feeding chart below for how much kittens should be eating per feeding
  - This is a guideline and some kittens will eat more or less than expected
  - Adjustments may be needed based on how the kitten is doing
- Kittens in a litter can use the same bottle to feed
  - Make a note of how much formula is in the bottle prior to starting to feed each one, and then how much remains after the feeding to estimate consumption

| AGE       | WEIGHT        | AMOUNT PER FEEDING            | SCHEDULE        |
|-----------|---------------|-------------------------------|-----------------|
| 0-1 week  | 75-150 grams  | 2-6 ml                        | Every 2 hours   |
| 1-2 weeks | 150-250 grams | 6-10 ml                       | Every 2-3 hours |
| 2-3 weeks | 250-350 grams | 10-14 ml                      | Every 3-4 hours |
| 3-4 weeks | 350-450 grams | 14-18 ml                      | Every 4-5 hours |
| 4-5 weeks | 450-550 grams | 18-22 ml                      | Every 5-6 hours |
| 5-8 weeks | 550-950 grams | weaning; offer ample wet food | Every 6 hours   |

This chart is a general guide; individuals will vary. Monitor weight as kittens grow. Healthy kittens gain 7g+ daily but may fluctuate at each feeding. Adjust feeding based on appetite, growth and individual needs.



# BOTTLE FEEDING NEONATES

## Feed Kittens on their tummy

- Kittens should **not** be positioned on their backs like human babies
  - This can cause inhalation (aspiration) of milk or swallowing of air
- Kittens should be bottle fed while standing, or held parallel to the floor
  - Head and neck should be stretched upward and forward as they would naturally be if nursing from mom
    - Do not allow kittens to extend the head too far back
    - Use a soft blanket to mimic a mother cat, and support their feet!
  - Hold the bottle at a 45 degree angle to avoid kittens suckling air

## Help them latch, then let them suckle

- Hold the kittens head with one hand
  - With your other hand, guide the nipple in to their mouth
- Allow a drop of milk to drip onto kittens tongue
  - They should latch on quickly; but it may take a few attempts
- Do not squeeze the bottle and stream milk into the kittens mouth
  - This may cause them to aspirate (inhale) the milk
- Go slowly, allowing the kitten time to breathe and swallow. Watch for swallowing by watching their ears for wiggling or gently feeling for throat movement
- Be sure that kittens don't chew the nipple while nursing

[Click here for a video demonstration!](#)

# SYRINGE FEEDING



## If a kitten is not taking the bottle:

- Reach out to your mentor
- Your mentor may instruct you to try syringe feeding
- [Here's a helpful video and how to!](#)
- Syringes will be in your "Supportive

## To syringe feed:

Care Baggie"

- Mix formula as you normally would for a bottle
- Fill a syringe (without a nipple) with the formula
- Place the tip of the syringe in the kitten's mouth on one side
- Very slowly deliver a small amount of formula
- Continue to deliver small amounts of formula at a time with breaks in between so the kitten can swallow

## Syringe feeding is only for the short-term:

- Always try offering the bottle before syringe feeding
- If you struggle to get them back on the bottle, contact your mentor

## If syringe feeding isn't successful:

- e.g. the kitten is not swallowing the formula
- Contact your mentor, **and** submit a medical concern form



# WEIGHT CHECKS



## Weigh kittens daily

- Do so at the same time each day, prior to feeding them
- Some fosters prefer to weigh before **and** after feeding so they can record how much each kitten is eating
- Place a bowl or container with a towel in it on a kitchen scale
  - Zero out the weight once the bowl is on the scale, before adding cat
- Weigh daily from birth – 2 weeks and then every few days after that
- If kittens are with mom they should still be weighed daily
  - They may need bottle feeding if they're not gaining enough weight

## Record the weights

- The back of the medical card has an area for recording weight
- You may use your own notebook or other record keeping device.

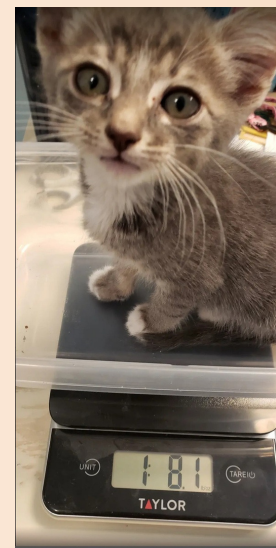
### **Remember to bring it to medical appointments!**

- You should see weight gain every day
  - If you don't, submit a medical concern form right away

## If kittens lose weight

- Submit a medical concern form immediately

### MEDICAL CONCERNS



# WEANING KITTEN SETUP



## When kittens are 4+ weeks old (and are mobile)

- Create a secure enclosure big enough to have separate areas:
  - Sleeping area (covered crate with heat pad and blankets inside)
  - Play area (provide a variety of toys for them to explore)
  - Eating area (place a towel underneath for easy cleanup)
  - Potty area (low sided cardboard litter box, non-clumping litter)
- We recommend an X-pen with waterproof material underneath
  - You can use samples of laminate flooring, or a shower curtain
- Check for hazards kittens could get into by reaching through the x-pen wall, or if (when) they escape.





# THE WEANING PROCESS

## Once kittens have teeth

- Start transitioning to food
- Usually, between 4-5 weeks
- You should NOT start to transition them until then
- [Click here for a video about getting started](#)

## Making “gruel”

- Gruel is made by mixing kitten canned food and formula together
  - It should be warm, and in the beginning should be a smooth consistency. As you work towards them eating independently it should be the consistency of loose/runny oatmeal
- Feed from a bottle to start and then a small saucer, or a large plate for larger litters.

## Getting them started on the gruel

- Put a bit on your finger, then on their lips. Once they lick it, slowly move your finger to the dish until they are eating from the dish
  - It may take a few tries to get them interested
- Gruel feedings should take place 4 – 6 times per day to start
  - Increase quantity and decrease frequency as kittens grow
- The first few days, when they are not getting enough to eat from the gruel, follow up with a bottle feeding

## Offering kibble

- Once they have the hang of the gruel, start leaving kibble available at all times in their area
- Some kittens prefer it!

**Look for the  
Supportive CareKit  
provided at pickup!**

# FEEDING YOUR FOSTER

**Please, only feed the food provided by HSSV**

## Feeding Instructions

- Ensure your fosters have a place to eat their meals in peace
  - Away from other pets and children
- Monitor litters to ensure everyone is getting a chance to eat
  - If you have one kitten hogging or guarding the food, they may need to be separated for feeding times
- Depending on the number of kittens, multiple food bowls spread throughout their space may be needed
- If you have any questions please reach out to your mentor!



## Feeding Amounts

|          | Kittens                                                                                                                       | Adult Cats                                                                                           |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Dry Food | Access at all times                                                                                                           | Access at all times, unless otherwise instructed                                                     |
| Wet Food | Several times per day <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 Tbsp per cat to start</li><li>• Adjust as they grow</li></ul> | Twice per day <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <math>\frac{1}{4}</math> can per cat</li></ul> |

# MORE ON FEEDING YOUR FOSTER

## Picky eaters

### When should I be concerned?

- Adult cats (6 months and up):
  - Not eating for 24 hours is OK. Watch for other health concerns
  - Submit a medical concern on the 3rd day, after troubleshooting
- Kittens (Under 6 months):
  - Submit a medical concern if they haven't eaten for **24 hours**
    - After troubleshooting using the tips below

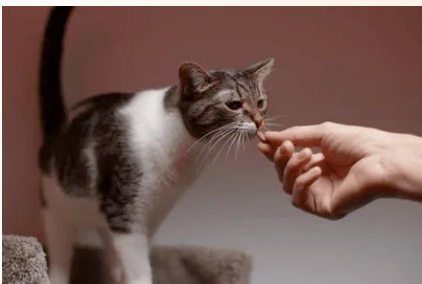
### Trouble-shooting Tips:

- Warm up the food (add water to plain kibble for adults)
- Mix in something extra tasty:
  - Low sodium chicken broth or chicken baby food
- Try hand feeding
- Make sure their bowl is totally cleaned of older food remnants
- If you're still having issues, ask your mentor

## Make it more than a meal

### Feeding time is an opportunity for socialization and training!

- Hand feeding shy kittens helps them learn to trust you
- Food puzzles keep feisty cats occupied and satisfied
- Handling kittens while they eat helps them enjoy your touch
- Pairing food with any novel experience is great socialization!



# FOSTER CAT ENRICHMENT

**Enrichment** is anything your foster cat enjoys doing that promotes normal cat behavior.

**Variety is critical –**  
try a different option each day!

## ENRICHMENT EXAMPLES

### Environmental Enrichment

- Being allowed to explore
  - A new room or object
- Covered places to hide and rest
- Elevated climbing surfaces
- Scratching posts or mats

### Prey Play

- Playing fetch with a ball
- Playing with wand toys
- Chasing/catching toy mice

**Providing ample enrichment tends to reduce challenging behaviors!**

### Foraging Enrichment

- Finding treats in a cardboard box
- Eating from a food puzzle
- Licking goodies from a lick mat
- Eating wheat grass
- Finding kibble scattered on floor

### Social Connection

- Basic training sessions
- Gentle petting or brushing
- Snuggling on the couch
- Meeting new friends

“Enrichment must be given the same significance as other aspects of animal care, and should never be considered optional.”

–Association of Shelter Veterinarians

# WHAT TO DO IF YOUR FOSTER CAT BITES

If your foster animal bites **and breaks skin** on anyone (including you) we need to know right away.

They are not in trouble, but per CA state law, we are required to complete a bite report to send to animal control.

Your foster will need to complete a state-required 5 to 10-day **bite quarantine**, to ensure they do not show signs of rabies, which is extremely unlikely in shelter animals.

This quarantine can be completed in your care or you can return to HSSV, whichever you prefer.

## Please document the following information about the incident:

### Bite Victim Information:

- ▶ Victim's full legal name
- ▶ Victim's age
- ▶ Victim's address and phone number



**Seek first aid or medical care as needed**

### Incident Information:

- ▶ Location and severity of the bite (photos are very helpful)
- ▶ Date and time that the bite occurred
- ▶ Address where the bite occurred
- ▶ Circumstances surrounding the bite (the more detailed, the better)

**What happened before, during, after?**

# WHAT TO DO IF YOUR FOSTER CAT ESCAPES

## 1 Remain calm

Yelling or chasing the cat will usually cause them to run farther, faster. Take a deep breath, and gather supplies: **your phone, a crate, a wand toy and high value snacks**

## 3 Keep eyes on the cat

Following at a distance and keeping them in your sights will help you narrow in on their location. Calling for backup will be most effective if we have an accurate search area.

## 5 Use a crate or blanket to pick up

You might corner or contain the cat in someone's yard, but if they are scared you may not be able to pick them up with your hands. Offer them a covered crate to run into, or carefully pick them up with a towel or blanket.

## 2 Call and bribe them

Cats in a panicked run may not go for this, but cats who are just exploring will! Be fun and inviting; use a jolly voice, lure them with a wand toy or offer yummy snacks (human food is OK here!)

## 4 Avoid direct approaches

Your first priority is to get the cat to approach you. However, if you must close the distance, do so using a curved path, arcing your approach. This is less threatening to the cat!



**If you can't easily collect the cat, contact HSSV and your mentor right away:**

**[feline.foster@hssv.org](mailto:feline.foster@hssv.org) -- (408) 262-2133 x188**



# WHAT TO DO IF YOUR FOSTER PASSES AWAY

## Unexpected Deaths

- In rare cases, a cat may die unexpectedly
  - Most common in young kittens, or medical cases
- This is not the fault of the foster, the medical team, or anyone else
  - Sometimes kittens simply fail to thrive, or have a sudden health crisis

### If this happens with one of your fosters:

- Contact [feline.foster@hssv.org](mailto:feline.foster@hssv.org) and your mentor immediately
- Bring the deceased pet to HSSV's Intake area, wrapped in a towel
- After hours, a small kitten may be placed in a freezer until morning

## Euthanasia

- In some cases, the best outcome for an animal is humane euthanasia
  - Medical cases that are not treatable, and the animal is suffering
  - Behavioral cases that pose a safety risk, or are not treatable and result in poor quality of life for the animal
- Euthanasia is decided by veterinarians or a panel of shelter managers and is always with the animals' best interest at heart

### If euthanasia is necessary for your current foster, you will be notified

## Self Care

- *Compassion fatigue* is a common side effect of rescue work:
  - The physical & mental exhaustion or emotional withdrawal experienced by those who care for sick or traumatized individuals
- Self care is critical to your own health, and to your ability to continue to help pets in need of foster care –especially after losing a foster



# FOSTER RETURNS & OUTCOMES

## Personality Profiles

- Your stories help cats get adopted!
- [Click here for personality profile form](#)
- Please do this 2-3 days before returning

## Spay/Neuter Surgery

- Scheduled by FosterStaff when kittens are 1.5 lbs
  - Email [feline.foster@hssv.org](mailto:feline.foster@hssv.org) to get on the schedule
- For some, this is “goodbye and good luck!” – foster stays for adoption
- It’s also sometimes an option to take kittens home to recover from surgery, let us know which you would prefer!

## Other Pathways & Outcomes:

### Neighborhood Adoption Center (NAC)

- Some fosters will be asked to drop off at our off-site adoption center: Petco in W. San Jose – 500 El Paseo de Saratoga, San Jose, CA 95130

### Return to Shelter for Adoption

- For animals whose journey doesn’t include a spay/neuter surgery
- For foster families who helped their foster recover after spay/neuter
- Email [feline.foster@hssv.org](mailto:feline.foster@hssv.org) when you are ready to return

### Foster “Fails” – you adopt your foster

- Contact [feline.foster@hssv.org](mailto:feline.foster@hssv.org) ASAP if you’d like to adopt
- Include the A# and your contact info (phone, address, email)
- Adoptions may be finalized in person or over the phone

### Friends or Family want to adopt your foster

- Contact [feline.foster@hssv.org](mailto:feline.foster@hssv.org)
- Include the animals A# and the adopter’s contact information



# THE ADOPTION PROCESS

## Help us Market your Foster Animal

- Provide bright, in-focus images of your foster pet being adorable
- Play up their best qualities when filling out their personality profile

## Leave Adoptions to the Adoptions Team

- It is not your responsibility to provide counseling to adopters
- The adoptions team may invite you to participate in an adoption meeting if appropriate or necessary

## Our Adoption Philosophies:

- We trust people.
- We look for ways to make an adoption happen, not turn one down.
- We take a conversational approach with customers by asking open-ended questions rather than a pass/fail application process.
- We are respectful of the customer's experience and knowledge, and assume they come from a place of wanting to help animals.
- We cater to the individual, both person and pet, with flexible guidelines.
- We provide support before, during & after adoption to help them succeed
- We provide exceptional customer service to all our visitors, regardless if they intend to adopt, because word of mouth is the best advertising.
- We view adoption returns as an opportunity to learn more about our adopters and our animals to make better matches for both the next time.