



**OPERATION  
KINDNESS**

The Original No Kill Animal Shelter

# **FOSTER HANDBOOK KITTENS**



**Dear Foster Parent,**

Thank you for joining the Operation Kindness foster family opening your heart and home to dogs and cats in need. By providing foster for just one dog or cat you are saving two lives, the one that comes home with you, and the animal which takes its place.

As a foster with Operation Kindness we will provide needed supplies. Every animal going into foster care will receive on-going medical care at Operation Kindness through our on-site hospital. Supplies which are provided to foster include, but are not limited to: crates, play pens, bedding, weight scale, formula, puppy and kitten food, litter boxes and litter.

We provide this handbook to act as a manual for fostering. Included are the shelter's policies and procedures for animal care, medical care and adoption. These policies and procedures will include daily care and the recording of health and behavior, plan of action in case of an emergency, and the steps to take if someone is interested in adopting your foster pet. Please be sure to read through the entirety of the handbook.

Thank you again for joining our foster family and for caring so much about the animals. Please feel free to contact the shelter at any time with any questions.

Sincerely,

Stephani Coe & The Operation Kindness Foster Team



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Operation Kindness  
3201 Earhart Dr. Carrollton TX 75006  
972-418-7297

Adoption Hours

**Monday** 12pm-7pm **Tuesday** –Closed **Wednesday** 12pm-7pm **Thursday** 12pm-7pm  
**Friday – Sunday** 11am-5pm

Available Hours

**Monday** 7am-7pm **Tuesday** 7am-6pm **Wednesday** 7am-7pm **Thursday** 7am-7pm  
**Friday - Sunday** 7am-6pm

**Medical Emergencies Seeking Permission for Vet Care**

During the Day: Vet Tech Line 972-428-3802  
After Hours: Stephani Coe 214-240-5739



### **Operation Kindness 101**

- Operation Kindness is the oldest and largest no-kill shelter in North Texas.
- On average, we have between 300-350 dogs and cats at the shelter, with another 100-150 in foster.
- 2016 was a record adoption year with over 4566 adoptions.
- Operation Kindness is registered as a nonprofit corporation in the State of Texas, and has 501(c)(3) nonprofit statuses. We are 100% funded by donation.
- All donations to Operation Kindness are tax-deductible.
- We have a fully functional animal hospital on site with surgery and isolation. All spay and neuter surgery is performed in-house.
- We have a volunteer force of over 2500+.

### **Operation Kindness Mission Statement**

The mission of Operation Kindness is to care for homeless cats and dogs in a no-kill environment until adopted into responsible homes and to advocate humane values and behavior.

We:

- Never euthanize one animal to make space for another.
- Provide high quality veterinary care to the animals in our shelter and foster homes.
- Educate the public about responsible pet ownership and the importance of spaying and neutering



### **Foster Contact List**

#### **Stephani Coe Foster Manager**

[Scoe@operationkindness.org](mailto:Scoe@operationkindness.org)

Cell- 214-240-5739 (Call or Text)

Work- 972-428-3804

On-site Mon- Friday 8am-5pm

#### **Operation Kindness Medical Team**

Christy Gray – Vet Technician Manager

[cgray@operationkindness.org](mailto:cgray@operationkindness.org)

Work – 972-428-3823

Onsite Tues, Wed, Fri, Sat

#### **Vet Technicians**

[vettech@operationkindness.org](mailto:vettech@operationkindness.org)

Work – 972-428-3802

**Business Hours:** Mon, Wed and

Thurs 7am – 7 Friday – Sunday 7-6pm

[Vettechs@operationkindness.org](mailto:Vettechs@operationkindness.org)

#### **Client Services**

972-418-7297

[Clientservices@operationkindness.org](mailto:Clientservices@operationkindness.org)

Available Monday – Sunday 11am – 5pm

#### **Who Do I Call When...?**

- General foster questions, re-fill on supplies, behavior questions?
  - Stephani Coe
- Change in eating, diarrhea, any medical issue
  - During the day – vet tech line 972-428-3802
  - After Hours – Stephani Coe 214-240-5739
- Schedule a time bring foster in to see the vet, or to come in for vaccinations/ boosters
  - Stephani Coe, Vet Techs
- Medical Emergency/ Seeking permission for vet care– 6pm.
  - During the Day- Vet Tech 972- 428-3802
  - After Hours –Stephani Coe 214-240-5739

#### **Approved Emergency Clinics**

**\*\*Fosters must get approval before seeking outside medical treatment**

North Texas Emergency Pet Clinic **1712 W. Frankford Rd #108**



## **Foster Animal Guidelines**

Animals are placed into foster care at Operation Kindness for several reasons. Provided below are general foster guidelines for all animals in the Operation Kindness foster program. Additionally, we will include instructions for caring for nursing mothers, orphaned kittens and for cats who are recovering from medical treatment or injury.

### **Housing**

All foster animals must be housed inside in a clean environment. Animals should not be kept outside, or in a garage. Operation Kindness will provide a crate for animals to sleep and stay in during the day if needed. Operation Kindness highly recommends cleaning the area or room where the foster resides on a continual basis. This can be done with warm water and non-toxic cleaner. We do recommend disinfecting the area where your foster was housed once they return to the shelter or are adopted.

### **Food and Water**

Before leaving the shelter, Operation Kindness staff will go over the proper amounts and times to feed your foster animal. Operation Kindness will provide food for your animal. Food is very important for both dogs and cats. A shelter employee should be contacted immediately if your foster loses their appetite, or begins to consume less food, as this can be a symptom of illness.

Water should be available to your foster at all times. Similar to food, your foster's water intake should be monitored daily, and the medical department informed if your foster begins drinking more than normal, or if they stop drinking water.

### **Interaction with Children**

Children should always be supervised when interacting with a shelter animal no matter how comfortable the animal may seem.

### **Interaction with Persons outside the Household**

Socialization is very important with shelter animals: the more types of people the animal is comfortable around, the better its chances for adoption. We encourage fosters to introduce their animals to new people in a slow calm manner. All interactions should be supervised to make sure the foster pet does not become stressed or overwhelmed.

### **Interaction with Family Pets**

Introducing young puppies or kittens to family pets is not recommended unless you know the foster animal is free of illness. Our recommendation is to keep owned and shelter pets separated for the first two weeks of foster. Operation Kindness is not liable if your pet contracts illness from a foster pet.





### **Adoption Information**

It's not uncommon for fosters to have friends and family express interest in adopting their foster animals. While we encourage fosters to help find homes, it is important to keep in mind Operation Kindness' adoption policies and screening process. If you do have someone who is serious candidate for adoption, and they meet the criteria below, the following steps can be taken.

1. Contact the foster manager and let them know you have someone interested in adoption. They will place a memo on the animal's file stating there is a possible adopter.
2. When the animal(s) return for spay/neuter, have the potential adopter fill out an application either on-line ([operationkindness.org](http://operationkindness.org)) or in person during open hours
3. If the adopter is approved they will be able to adopt the animal once it becomes available. This generally will be the day after their surgery, or on Wednesday if surgery is performed on Monday (OPK is closed Tuesday)
4. Adoption paperwork can be completed during Operation Kindness open hours
  - ☐ All adopters, even fosters must pay the animals adoption fee of \$135 for cats and \$185 for dogs.

### **Adoption Policies**

- ***18 years of age or older***
- ***Have current photo ID***



## Operation Kindness Kitten Care

### Housing

- Kittens should be kept in a secure location to prevent them from escaping or getting lost. Single kittens and small litters do best in a wire or airline crate (provided by Operation Kindness).
- Kittens being kept in bedrooms or bathrooms should have either a baby gate or unfolded play pen in front of doors to prevent escape when doors are opened.

### Feeding

Operation Kindness provides all needed food for foster kittens and nursing mothers. [?](#)

**Wet Food:** Each kitten should eat 1/3—1/2 of can of wet food per meal.

- [?](#) **Dry Food:** Dry food should be available throughout the day. For single kittens we suggest 1/3 cup, and leaving at least a 1/2-full cup for litters. Dry food should be replaced daily.

### Socialization

- Kittens should be handled and played with daily to become used to and to seek out human interaction, and to become used to normal household sounds (TV, microwave etc.) This helps make them more adoptable.
- Refer to the socialization handout in the Foster Handbook for more socialization tips.



## Operation Kindness Foster Care Raising Kittens

### Before bringing fosters into your house

- To protect other cats, foster animals should be separated from household pets for at least two weeks. This means that you should also prohibit the sharing of food and water bowls, litter boxes, and toys.
- Kittens should be de-fleaed before they enter your home and as often as necessary to keep fleas off of them.
- You should wash your hands with soap and water before handling your own animals or children. You may also want to change clothes.
- You should routinely disinfect the foster kittens' quarters and disinfect the entire premises before new kittens are introduced.

The best way to disinfect the area is to place the kittens in a carrier and then remove all organic material and fecal debris. Then soak with a mild bleach solution (1 part bleach to 32 parts water) for at least 10 minutes. All surfaces, bowls, toys, etc. need to be disinfected (so you probably want to keep kittens in a room without carpeting. We recommend hardwood floors, tile, and so forth).

- It is possible even with these precautions that resident cats could be exposed to mild infections such as URI. Ask the foster coordinator for more information if this is a concern

### Supplies You Will Need

#### **Box or carrier**

A birthing box may be desirable, as it will allow you to see in, as well as provide plenty of room for the mother and the new, growing litter of kittens. Some fosters have also used their bathtub as a place to keep their litters of kittens.

#### **Newspaper**

Keep several layers in the bottom of the box, and they will come in handy when the kittens start to roam around the room. Newspaper will need to be changed daily, if not several times a day. Some fosters prefer to use sheets or fleece blankets, which can be quickly laundered and re-used.



#### **Big litter box for mother cat**

□



### **Small litter box for kittens**

Provided by Operation Kindness

#### **❓ Cat litter**

Any non-clumping variety of litter will be fine. The clumping litter may be dangerous if ingested by a kitten. Kittens over 6wks of age are generally old enough to use clumping litter.

#### **❓ Water bowls**

All water bowls should be heavy and impossible to tip. Water bowls should also be stainless steel or porcelain/ceramic. Avoid plastic, as plastic is difficult to disinfect because it is so porous.

#### **❓ Food bowls (at least 2)**

One is for the eat-at-will dry cat food, the other for canned food. You can use TV dinner trays, paper plates or whatever you have; any relatively flat plate or saucer will do. The larger the litter, the larger the plate should be so that no one gets crowded out.

#### **❓ Food**

Provided by Operation Kindness. You should have both dry kitten chow and canned cat food.

#### **❓ Heating pad, hot water bottle**

Unless the nursery is at least 80° and your kittens are 2 weeks or older, you need to supply extra heat. **Be sure the kittens have room to move away from the heat**

(leave room for mom if she is with them). For instance, if you are using a heating pad, place it under several towels, and make sure that it covers only half of the floor area of their box. The heating pad should be on "low" to prevent overheating the kittens.

Make sure to cover any electrical cords as well, so that the kittens are not tempted to play and bite on them. Alternatively, hot water bottles or rice filled bags can be used as heat sources. These should also be covered by towels, and should be changed regularly to ensure that they stay warm for the kittens to snuggle up against. Operation Kindness can provide cord free heating pads which can be re-heated in the microwave.

#### **❓ Clean towels and blankets**

#### **❓ Scale**

Kittens will go home with a scale and should be weighed daily with their weight recorded on their daily health chart. It does not matter what time of day the kittens are weighed, as long as it is the same time each day.



### **Caring For a Pregnant Cat**

- If you are fostering a pregnant cat during her final weeks of pregnancy, it is important to remember she may not have a big appetite because the kittens are crowding her internal organs. Feed her several small meals daily, rather than one or two larger meals. Leave dry kitten food and water out at all times. It is virtually impossible to overfeed a nursing or pregnant queen. Food requirements increase up to three times the normal amount.
- Prepare a birthing box. Place it in a dry, warm, relatively dark and out-of-the-way place, and put mom in it. If she doesn't want to stay in it, don't insist, but you can encourage her by petting her and giving her little food treats. If your nursery room is not that warm, you can keep the box warmer by wrapping a heating pad in a towel, setting it on "low," and placing it under HALF of the box so that the mother and kittens can remove themselves from the heat source if they choose. One word of warning: you might consider wrapping duct tape or a cord protector around the cord, as the kittens tend to chew on it! Until the mother cat delivers, fill her litter box with shredded newspaper instead of cat litter. Many cats will deliver their kittens in the litter box. Newspaper provides a much cleaner environment for the cat and kittens than litter. Mom cannot clean the moist litter granules, which make a damp nest for the newborns. After the kittens are born, you can switch to your normal non-clumping litter.

### **The Birth of Kittens**

- The majority of cats give birth with no problem or need for outside help. Before delivery, the cat may become irritable and restless. She will search for a place to have her kittens. Put her in the designated birthing box. She may choose not to have them there, so it helps to keep the box in a room with as few nooks and hiding places as possible. If she has her kittens outside of the birthing box, let her. When she is completely done with the delivery, move them all into the box. If the cat has had her kittens outside the box, don't worry about the "mess" - when she is finished she will normally clean up and leave very little evidence of the birth.
- Some cats may want you to stay with them, and will try to follow you if you leave. You will probably have to spend some time with this kind of cat soothing her. Often, after the birth of the first couple of kittens, she will be very busy and not so dependent on your presence. Other queens will try to get away from you and hide. Give her the space she needs, but keep checking in on her regularly. It is quite possible that you will miss the birth process entirely. You might wake up one morning or come home from work to find the new family born, dry, and nursing.



### **Stages of Feline Labor**

- The first stage may take 12 hours, during which the cat may purr and breathe rhythmically. She may become very active, try to dig at the floor, appear to be straining to use her litter box, and cry loudly.
- In the second stage, the water breaks, and straw-colored fluid is passed. A kitten will be delivered a few minutes later. The cat will lick the kitten clean and bite through the umbilical cord. She is bonding with her kittens through this process, and learning to recognize them as her own. Do not disturb her. It may look as if her treatment is too rough, but she is actually stimulating breathing and blood circulation. Kittens should begin nursing between subsequent births.
- In the final stage, the placenta follows a few minutes after delivery of a kitten. The mother will probably eat some or all of the placentas. Kittens are born anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes apart, so most deliveries take 2 to 6 hours. The average litter is 4 to 5 kittens. Larger litters of 6, 7, or more are unusual.
- If a kitten is not born within 2 hours and the mother appears to be continually straining or in distress, call Operation Kindness (during hours) or Stephani (after hours) immediately, and Stephani can refer you to a vet. She may need a Caesarean or a drug called oxytocin to stimulate contractions. If the mother is content and happy, she is probably finished, though there have been cases in which a cat resumed delivery sometime later.

### **General care of kittens**

- Young kittens should be kept in a large box or cat carrier lined with a towel for easy cleaning. It is very important to keep the kittens warm, and a heating pad is ideal for this. The heating pad should be placed under HALF of the towel (so they can move away from the heat if they need to) and set on "low." The more kittens in your litter, the better able they will be to keep warm by sleeping together in a heap. Small litters and singletons need more help keeping warm. Keep kittens away from space heaters or cold drafts.
- If kittens are not urinating and defecating on their own (when they are less than 2 weeks old), they will need to be stimulated. This should be done every few hours (often right after feeding) by gently rubbing a warm wet paper towel on the kitten's anus and genital area. They will pee and poop into the paper towel.
- A mother works hard to keep her kittens clean, grooming them thoroughly to remove any sticky messes they may get into, such as kitten food or feces. Keeping kittens clean in the absence of their mother can be a messy business, but it is extremely important.

A flea comb will get rid of dried feces in the fur. You can also stroke a kitten with a warm, damp cloth, using short strokes to mimic a mother's tongue. Be sure to dry him



well so he can't chill. Sometimes cat litter and dried feces can become caked on the underside of the tail or between the kitten's toes. This may be softened and removed by dipping the kitten's back end into a basin of warm water. Many kittens will not even notice that they are partially wet, but some will protest violently, and scramble to escape, so beware of sharp little claws!

### **Proper Socialization**

- Any introductions of cats to other cats or cats to dogs should be made with great care and under constant supervision. Part of your job is to convince the kittens that humans are kind and loving. Outgoing, friendly kittens can be cuddled and played with freely, after spending a day or so to accustom themselves to a comfy box in a quiet room. Shy kittens will need more encouragement. Try sitting on the floor with a kitten held against your chest, supported underneath, and facing outwards, so he can't see how big and scary you are. Stroke him and speak gently, telling him how cute and brave and fabulous he is (kittens love to hear that!). Continue this for about 30 seconds, then put him down before he starts squirming. You want this to be a pleasant experience. The kitten will not be impressed, but if you cuddle him often enough, he will learn to love it. Sometimes holding a pair of kittens helps - they seem to reassure each other.
- Feral kittens are a special challenge to socialize. The earlier feral kittens separate from their mother, the more likely they are to adapt to people. Even at 6 weeks, feral kittens can act like little tiger cubs. If your kittens are fearful and run away when you approach, try sitting or lying quietly on the floor near them and let them come to you. Spend time quietly in their presence to get them accustomed to your company. Stroke them and talk to them gently while they are eating to further reinforce positive associations.
- There is no such thing as a "bad" kitten. Even if your litter doesn't enjoy being held and cuddled, if they will tolerate being stroked and don't cower under the sofa, they will make someone a wonderful pet. Not everyone wants an affectionate lap-cat. Many people prefer cats who are more independent and somewhat aloof companions.
- Also, it is useless to punish a "naughty" kitten. Their little minds do not grasp deductive reasoning. Try distracting a mischievous kitten with something else until he forget whatever he was doing (it should not take long)!



### **Keeping kittens healthy & recognizing common problems**

A healthy kitten has bright eyes, a sleek coat, and a plump belly. Younger kittens are content to sleep between feedings. As they approach 8 weeks they begin to spend more time playing. Normal body temperature for a kitten is 100 - 102.5. Unfortunately, kittens do become ill and sometimes die while being fostered, so it is important to take steps to prevent disease and treat it appropriately as soon as it appears.

#### **Signs of Illness**

It is very important to keep Operation Kindness informed with any health changes with the kittens or the mother. Keep in mind that any illness you notice with the mother will be transferred to the kittens either in gestation or through nursing. It is for this reason that we supply fosters with daily health and behavior sheets to monitor how everyone is doing. These sheets are extremely important, as they will also make it much easier to spot signs of illness such as weight loss, decline of appetite or change in behavior more quickly. If any of the following signs of illness are seen they should be reported to the medical department immediately. All non-emergency medical treatment must be completed by Operation Kindness.

#### **Non-Emergency Signs of Illness**

*Lethargy	*Coughing	*Blood in Stool
*Loose Stool	*Lack of appetite	*Rice like worms in stool
*Eye Discharge	*Discharge from the nose	
*Sneezing	*Vomiting	

Please bring your health and behavior sheets when visiting medical, the information on the sheets will assist the Vet Techs and Vet to make the best decision for treatment.





### Medical Emergencies vs. Non-Emergencies

Medical emergencies must be reported to an Operation Kindness staff person immediately. A medical emergency could be any of the following.

#### Emergency Medical Conditions

- *A temperature over 103F or less than 98F*
- *Trouble Breathing*
- *Seizures Severe lethargy/non-responsive*
- *Evidence of severe pain: restlessness, vocalizing, panting*
- *Major wounds requiring suture*
- *Vomiting excessively (3-4 times) or excessive diarrhea*
- *Not urinating x 24 hours or more*

Once you notice any of these you must contact the shelter. If it during working hours contact the **medical department at 972-428-38002**. After hours call **Stephani Coe at 214-240-5739**. She will be able to either give instructions for care, or make the call to send the dog to an emergency clinic.

#### Feeding Bottle Babies

Age in Weeks	Avg. Weight	CC of Formula Per Day	Feedings Per Day
1	4oz	32	6
2	7oz	56	4
3	10oz	80	3
4	13oz	Begin transitioning to gruel	3
5	1lb	Full transition to dry and wet food	3

- Operation Kindness will provide formula and food. Formula should be given at the kitten's body temperature, about 100 degrees. Expiration and how long opened formula will last differ from each brand be sure to check the label for proper storage, and when to discard. **NEVER give a kitten cow's milk (or anything else besides the specified formula).**

- It is best to feed the kittens one-by-one, and on a counter-top - this allows them to feed with all four feet on the counter, and their heads level, much as they would if they were nursing from their mom. Some kittens prefer to nurse standing on their hind legs while holding the bottle. They will require a little support from you in this position. Gently open a kitten's mouth with one finger and place the tip of the nipple on his tongue. If he won't eat, try stroking him. Pull lightly on the bottle to encourage vigorous sucking. Be sure to tilt the bottle up slightly to prevent the kitten from inhaling too much air. Do not force the kitten to nurse, or allow him to nurse too fast. Avoid feeding a kitten while he is cradled on his back - if the fluid goes down the wrong way, it may end up in his lungs.
- After each feeding, the kitten should be burped. Hold him against your shoulder and gently massage his back or pat it lightly.
- Overfeeding is as dangerous as underfeeding kittens! Keep an eye on your kittens at feeding time and monitor how much each is eating. If you see signs of diarrhea, separate them until you find out which one is sick. Your kittens will generally regulate their own food intake. If they need more food, they may whine or suck on their litter mates. A good indication that they are getting enough to eat is the size of their bellies - they should be filled out after a meal, but not bloated. The next section of this protocol discusses amounts of food required at various stages of kitten hood.

### **Expectations and care required at each stage of kitten hood**

When you take your fosters home Operation Kindness will send you will health and behavior charts for your kittens. These will help track growth and help to identify if the kitten is ill. These sheets will come with the kittens if they are seen by the vet, and when they come in for their vaccinations.

#### **WEIGHT CHART**

##### **AGE WEIGHT**

At Birth 3.0 - 3.7 oz (90 - 110 grams)

Three - Four Weeks 11.7 - 15 oz (350 - 450 grams)

Eight Weeks 1.7 - 2.0 lbs (800 - 900 grams)

Kittens should gain 7 - 10 percent of their birth weight each day (10 - 15 grams).

A kitten must weigh 2 pounds and be 8 weeks old before it is adoptable.



## 1 Week of Age

### Feeding:

- **Bottle Babies** Bottle feed 1/2 tablespoon formula every 2 - 3 hours.
- **Mother with kittens.** The kittens should nurse vigorously and compete for nipples. Newborns can nurse up to 45 minutes at a time. Be sure to watch kittens nursing at least once a day, if mom cat will permit it. Check that everyone is nursing and that there isn't too much jockeying for position. A great deal of activity and crying could indicate a problem with milk flow, quality or availability. When mom cat reenters the box, there should be some fussing for only a few minutes before everyone has settled down to serious nursing.

**Environment:** The temperature of the nest box should be nice and warm: 85-90 degrees. Chilling is the number one danger to newborn kittens.

**Behavior & Training:** At one week of age, the kittens should weigh 4 oz., and should be handled minimally. Kittens will sleep 90% of the time and eat the other 10%

## 1-2 Weeks of Age

**Feeding:** Bottle feed formula per manufacturer's instruction every 2 - 3 hours until kittens are full but not bloated- usually kittens will consume at least 1/2 tablespoon of formula per feeding.

**Environment:** Floor temperature of the nest box should be nice and warm: 80-85 degrees.

**Behavior & Training:** Kittens at 2 weeks of age will weigh about 7 ounces. Ear canals open between 5 and 8 days. Eyes will open between 8 and 14 days. They open gradually, usually starting to open from the nose outward. Short-haired cats' eyes will usually open earlier than those of Persian ancestry. All kittens are born with blue eyes, and initially no pupils can be distinguished from the irises - the eyes will appear solid dark blue.

Healthy kittens will be round and warm, with pink skin. If you pinch them gently, their skin should spring back. When you pick a kitten up, it should wiggle energetically, and when you put it down near the mom it should crawl back to her. Healthy kittens seldom cry.

To determine the sex of the kittens, hold a kitten tummy-up in your hand. In females, the vulva is a vertical slit above the anus; they are very close together. In males, the penile opening is above the anus,



but they are separated by a raised scrotal sac and thus seem far apart. It is easiest to see the differences between the sexes if you examine all the kittens and then find two who don't have matching equipment. Don't worry if it is still unclear; by the time the kittens are ready for permanent homes, their sex will be obvious.

## 2-3 Weeks of Age

**Feeding:** Bottle feed formula per manufacturer's instruction every 2 - 3 hours until kittens are full but not bloated- usually kittens will consume at least 1/2 tablespoon of formula per feeding.

**Environment:** Floor temperature of the nest box should be nice and warm: 75-80 degrees.

**Behavior & Training:** If there is a queen, she will begin to spend larger periods of time out of the nest, though she will not go far from it.

Kittens will weigh about 10 ounces. Their ears will become erect. Kittens begin to crawl around day 18. Kittens can stand by day 21. Kittens will begin to play with each other, biting ears, tails and paws even before their teeth have come in. Their milk teeth are cut during this period. Kittens learn to sit and touch objects with their paws.

Kittens begin their socialization phase - they will be strongly influenced by the behavior of their mother for the next six weeks. To further socialize kittens, increase the amount of handling, and get them accustomed to human contact. It is important not to expose them to anything frightening; children may seem intimidating and should be supervised closely while visiting to ensure gentle handling.

## 3-4 Weeks of Age

**Feeding:** Bottle feed formula per manufacturer's instruction every 2 - 3 hours until kittens are full but not bloated- usually kittens will consume at least 1/2 tablespoon of formula per feeding. At this stage kittens may start lapping from a bowl.

**Environment:** Floor temperature of the nest box should be 70-75 degrees from this point onward.



**Behavior & Training:** Kittens will weigh about 13 ounces. Adult eye color will begin to appear, but may not reach final shade for another 9 to 12 weeks. Kittens begin to see well and their eyes begin to look and function like adult cats' eyes. Kittens will start cleaning themselves, though their mother will continue to do most of the serious cleaning.

### 4-5 Weeks of Age

**Feeding:** 3 tablespoons (1-1/2 oz.) formula every 8 hours. They can usually drink and eat from a saucer by 4 weeks. Weaning should be done gradually. Introduce them to solid food by offering warmed canned food, mixed with a little water into a gruel, in a shallow saucer. You can begin by placing one kitten by the plate of canned food gruel, and hoping for the best - if she starts eating, great! Her littermates will probably copy her and do the same. But without mom around to show them, many kittens do not have a clue about feeding time. The kittens will walk in it, slide in it, and track it all over the place. Sometimes one will begin lapping right away, and in its anxiety to consume as much as it can, it will often bite the edge of the plate. Some will prefer to lick the gruel from your fingers. Some will start licking your finger after they sniff it, then slowly lower your finger to the plate and hold it to the food. The kittens need to learn to eat with their heads bent down. Sometimes it takes two or three meals before they catch on. If they do not seem interested enough to even sniff your finger, try gently opening the kittens' mouth and rubbing a little of the food on their teeth. Hopefully then they will start licking your finger. If they're still not getting the idea, you can take a syringe (without a needle) and squirt a small amount of gruel directly into the back of their mouths.

If there is a queen present, she will usually begin weaning by discouraging her kittens from nursing; however, some cats (particularly those with small litters) will allow nursing until the kittens are old enough for permanent homes. Some nursing activity is the feline equivalent of thumb-sucking, that is, for comfort only. Even if kittens appear to be nursing, they may not be getting all the nutrition they need from mom. Make sure they are eating food and gaining weight.

Be sure that the kittens have access to fresh water in a low, stable bowl.

**Behavior & Training:** Begin litter training at four weeks. Use a low box with one inch of non-clumping litter. Do not expose the kittens to the clumping variety of litter, as it is harmful if ingested. After each feeding, place the kitten in the box, take his paw, and gently scratch the litter. Be patient! He may not remember to do this every time, or may forget where to find the litter box, but he will learn quickly. Be sure to give the kittens lots of praise when they first start using their boxes. Most will use it from the start, but like other babies, might make an occasional mistake. It is a good idea to confine the kittens to



a relatively small space, because the larger the area the kittens have to play in, the more likely they will forget where the litter box is. Keep the litter box clean and away from their food.

## 6 Weeks of Age

**Feeding:** Feed gruel 4 times a day. Thicken gruel gradually. Introduce dry food and water. If you are fostering a litter with their mother, continue weaning. Some kittens will not like canned food. For reluctant eaters, try mixing any meat-flavored human baby food with a little water. The meat flavor is often more appealing to the picky eaters. Be sure the brand you get **does not contain onion powder** as this ingredient can be hazardous to kittens. Once the kitten is eating well reincorporate wet food. The human baby food with not have the nutrients that kitten food does.

**Behavior & Training:** At about five weeks, kittens can start to roam around the room, under supervision. They will weigh 1 pound and the testicles of male kittens will become visible. The strongest, most curious kitten will figure out how to get out of the nest. The others will quickly follow.

**Play with your kittens daily!** It is a good idea to wear long sleeves and pants, as they can play roughly and their claws are sharp. If you sit on the floor they will play "King of the Mountain," using your knees and shoulders as vantage points. This game is lots of fun and good exercise for them. Some kittens may be fearful at first; do not force yourself upon them. You can get them used to your presence by sitting in the middle of the room making phone calls; this way they hear your voice but do not feel threatened. Make them an important part of your household activities; accustom them to the sounds of the TV, vacuum cleaner and other household sounds.

**Vaccinations:** The kittens are now old enough to come in to the shelter for their first vaccines. You can schedule a time to bring the kittens in by calling the vet tech line 972-428-3802. The vet does not need to be present for vaccines. The kittens do not have to come in with their mother, a crate for travel can be provided by Operation Kindness. The kittens will receive their first FVRCP and de-worming, and then go back home for another two weeks.

**The Mother:** The vet techs will discuss with you if the mother is ready to come back to the shelter for spay and adoption. If the kittens are no longer nursing on the mother, then it is likely time for her to come back. To help with the mother's adoption you can write a short memo (4-6 sentences) to be placed on her kennel card to help adopters know more about her personality.



## 7 Weeks of Age

**Feeding:** Should be eating canned and dry food well. Feed the kittens at least three meals daily. If one kitten appears food-possessive, use a second dish and leave plenty of food out so that everyone is eating. Bear in mind that a kitten at this age has a stomach roughly the size of an acorn, so, although they may not eat much at a single sitting, they like to eat at frequent intervals throughout the day.

**Behavior & Training:** By this time, you have "mini-cats." They will wash themselves, use scratching posts, play games with each other, their toys, and you, and many will come when you call them. Be sure to reintroduce them to their litter box after meals, during play sessions, and after naps. These are the usual times that kittens need to use the litter box.

## 7-8 Weeks of Age

**Feeding:** Offer wet food 3 - 4 times a day (each kitten will be eating a little over one can of food per day). Leave down a bowl of dry kibble and water for them to eat and drink at will. If you have a litter with a mom cat, she should only be allowing brief nursing sessions, if any. DO NOT feed the kitten's table scraps.

**Surgery:** Kittens will come in for surgery when they are over 2lbs. At seven weeks of age you will be contacted by the Intakes staff enquiring of the smallest kitten's weight. If the smallest in the litter is within a few ounces of 2lbs the staff will go ahead and schedule the kitten's surgery date.

## 8+ Weeks of age

**Feeding:** Offer wet food 3 times a day. Leave down a bowl of dry kibble and water for them to eat and drink at will.

**Behavior & Training:** By the end of the 8th week, kittens should weigh 2 pounds each. If all the kittens weigh two pounds, take a deep breath, and prepare yourself to return them to the shelter. They are also old enough for early spay or neuter. If you have the queen and will be using two cat carriers, be sure to put at least one kitten in the same carrier with the mom. She may not be able to count, but she will definitely know the difference between some and none.



### **Coming in for surgery:**

Once the kittens come in for their second vaccine you will be contacted via email to schedule a date for the kittens to come in for spay and neuter surgery. Currently, Operation Kindness completes surgery on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday. Kittens can be dropped off either the evening before, or the morning of surgery. Coming in the morning of surgery the kittens will need to be dropped off by 8:30am.

Kittens can have their normal evening meal before surgery, though no other food past 9pm, and no breakfast. Water is fine.

To help with adoption be sure to compose a short memo of about 4 sentences going over the kitten's temperament (are they more relaxed or rambunctious) letting adopters know if they have been around other people and pets is a plus as well. Sending photos in to the Foster Manager is helpful and will be added to their adoption profile.





## Teach Your Kitten How to Play Nice

A kitten's life is all about play, and play is all about prey. Soon after they open their eyes and hoist themselves up on their teeny paws, kittens start to play. But if you look closely, you'll notice that you have an itty-bitty hunter in your house.

Every race down the hallway, every pounce from behind a door, every swat and nip is a display of a kitten's hunting skills: instincts that are just as strong in today's housecat as they were in her ancestors thousands of years ago. To a kitten, everything, and we mean everything, in the house is potential prey, including you.

### Learning to play nice

A kitten's first playmates are his mother and littermates, and from them he learns how to inhibit his bite. A kitten who is separated from his family too early may not have learned that lesson well enough and won't know when to stop. Acceptable behavior can quickly escalate.

In addition, if people use their hands and/or feet instead of toys to play with a young kitten, the kitten may learn that rough play is okay. In most cases, it's not too difficult to teach your kitten or young adult cat that rough play isn't acceptable.

If playing with your kitten evolves from peek-a-boo to professional wrestling in a matter of seconds, follow these tips to keep playtime interesting and reduce the number of trips to the first-aid kit.

- Don't let your kitten play with your hands or feet (or any other body part). This sends the wrong message.
- Use a toy when playing with her. Drag a toy, preferably a fishing pole-type toy that keeps your hands from kitty's mouth and claws, along the floor to encourage your kitten to pounce on it, or throw a toy for her to chase. Some kittens will even bring the toy back to be thrown again.
- Give your kitten something to wrestle with, like a soft stuffed animal that's about her size, so she can grab it with both front feet, bite it, and kick it with her back feet. This is one of the ways kittens play with each other, especially when they're young. It's also one of the ways they try to play with human feet and hands, so it's important to provide this type of alternative play target.
- Encourage play with a "wrestling toy" by rubbing it against your kitten's belly when she wants to play roughly—and be sure to get your hand out of the way as soon as she accepts the toy.
- Don't hit or yell at your kitten when she nips or pounces. This will only make her fearful of you and she may start to avoid you. The idea is to train her, not punish her.



### **Discouraging "bad" behavior**

Playing is not bad behavior, but you do have to set the rules for your kitten: no biting. Everyone in the household must be on the same page, too; your kitten can't be expected to learn that it's okay to play rough with dad but not with the baby. Equip yourself with the right training tools: toys, toys, toys.

### **A gnawing problem**

As we said, you shouldn't let your kitten play with your body parts. But if you're petting her and she starts gnawing on you, immediately say "no" and carefully take your hands away. Give her a toy to play with instead, but be sure she's not gnawing on you when you give her a toy or she'll think she's being rewarded for gnawing. Don't try to pet her again until she's tucked out and no longer tempted to "kill" your hand.

You can also make your hands unattractive to your kitten by putting a bad-tasting, but harmless, substance on them, like Bitter Apple or Tabasco sauce. A kitten will catch on quickly.

### **Gimmie that!**

Kittens always seem to want to play with whatever you're using—knitting needles, pencil, telephone antenna. If yours starts "attacking" your utensils, sharply say "no" to disrupt her behavior. Then give her one of her own toys. Be sure she's not attacking when you give her a toy or she'll think she's being rewarded for biting.

### **On the hunt**

Kittens also like to "hunt" you while you're walking around. They'll jump out from behind a door or under a chair and pounce on your ankles. If she doesn't pounce, praise her with "Good kitty." If she does pounce, use your sharp "uh-uh" to distract her and interrupt her behavior and offer her an acceptable toy. Be sure she's not pouncing on you when you provide the toy or she'll think she's being rewarded the bad behavior.

### **Pay no attention**

Withdraw attention when your kitten doesn't get the message. If the distraction and redirection techniques don't work, the most drastic thing you can do to discourage your cat from rough play is to withdraw all attention.

The best way to withdraw your attention is to walk to another room and close the door long enough for her to calm down. If you pick her up to put her in another room, then you're rewarding her by touching her, so you should always be the one to leave the room.



Remember, your kitten wants to play with you, not just toys, so be sure to set aside time for regular, serious, and safe play sessions.

*Adapted from material originally developed by applied animal behaviorists at the Dumb Friends League, Denver, Colorado. All rights reserved.*

[http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/cats/tips/kitten\\_play.html?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.g](http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/cats/tips/kitten_play.html?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.g)

[oogle.com%2F](http://www.humanesociety.org/animals/cats/tips/kitten_play.html?referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.google.com%2F)

## Foster Vaccination Schedule

**DAPP:** Healthy puppies will receive their first vaccine at 6weeks of age. Boosters will be given two weeks apart. Surgery will be scheduled a week after the second booster. **Bordatella:** Puppies will receive their first Bordatella vaccine at 8weeks of age.

**FVRCP:** Healthy kittens will receive their first vaccine when they are 6weeks of age and weigh at least **1.5lbs**. Boosters will be given two weeks apart. Surgery will be scheduled a week after the second booster.

**Strongid:** Given to all animals over three weeks of age. Follow up doses can be given after two weeks.

### Surgery:

**Puppies:** Healthy puppies will be scheduled in for surgery after two DAPP, and one Bordatella vaccine.

**Kittens:** Healthy kittens will be scheduled in for surgery after two FVRCP and once they weigh more than 2lbs.

**Foster Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Going Into Foster:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Returning to Foster:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Pet ID** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

	1st	2nd	3rd
DHPP			

	1st	2nd	3rd
Bordatella			

	1st	2nd	3rd
FVRCP			

	1st	2nd	3rd
Strongid			

**Notes:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Animal's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Name	Weight	Health and Behavior Notes

**Non-Emergency Signs of Illness – Email Stephani [Scoe@operationkindness.org](mailto:Scoe@operationkindness.org) or Call Vet Line 972-428-3802 – Animal will need to come in to see the vet. (Mon – Wed, Friday 9am – 1pm)**

*Lethargy	*Coughing	*Blood in Stool
*Loose Stool	*Lack of appetite	*Rice like worms in stool
*Eye Discharge	*Discharge from the nose	
*Sneezing	*Vomiting	

**Emergency Medical Conditions – Call Stephani 214-240-5739 or Medical Line 972-4283802- Call all persons on Emergency Contact List until you reach someone. Offsite medical treatment must be approved by the Operation Kindness Medical Manager**

<p>? A temperature over 103F or less than 98F</p> <p>? Trouble Breathing</p> <p>? Seizures Severe lethargy/non-responsive</p>	<p>? Major wounds requiring suture</p> <p>? Vomiting excessively (3-4 times) Excessive Diarrhea</p> <p>? Not urinating x 24 hours or more</p>
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Name	Weight	Health and Behavior Notes

Much of the information in this handout was constructed using the following article.

"UC Davis Koret Shelter Medicine Program." *Feline: Guide to Raising Orphan Kittens*. Koret Shelter Medicine Program, 9 July 2010. Web. 16 Apr. 2015. <<http://www.sheltermedicine.com/node/39>>.