



Kitten Foster Care Manual

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Understanding Kitten Growth

Introduction The first eight weeks of a kitten's life are important to its survival. To better understand the kitten's growth, refer to the following timeline.

1 week old During its first week of life, a kitten's ears are folded, and its eyes are closed.



2 weeks old In week two, the kitten's eyes are completely opened and it is wobbly on their feet.



3 weeks old In week three, incisors begin to emerge. Its ears unfold, and it begins to discover the litterbox.



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Understanding Kitten Growth, Continued

4 weeks old

By week four, the kitten's vision improves, canines emerge, and it begins to walk more confidently.



5 weeks old

In week five, premolars emerge, the weaning process begins, and wet foods are introduced.

Note: For more information on the weaning process, refer to the Weaning section of this manual.



6 weeks old

By week six, the kitten is eating more confidently, all milk teeth have emerged, and it is using the litterbox and becoming more social.



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Understanding Kitten Growth, Continued

7 weeks old In week seven, the kitten is more playful, active, and should be almost completely weaned.



8 weeks old By week eight, the kitten must be fully weaned, eating on its own and eligible for spay or neuter if they weigh 2 pounds (lbs.) or more.



Keeping Your Foster Kitten Warm

Warmth

It is important to provide a warm and cozy environment for kittens while also ensuring they have the option to cool down if needed. The following are convenient ways to provide warmth for your kitten:

- If a heating pad should be used, set it to the lowest setting and cover with a soft material.
- Rice socks are an easy and effective way to keep your kitten warm. Using the directions below, a rice sock can easily be made at home.

Note: To prevent overheating, it is crucial to monitor the heating pad's temperature and ensure that the kitten is not in direct contact with the heating source.

Step	Action
1	Find a long tube sock (crew or tube size) and fill $\frac{3}{4}$ with uncooked, dry rice. Beans can be used as an alternative.
2	Tie off the neck of the sock to prevent the rice or beans from spilling.
3	Microwave the sock in intervals of 15 seconds until warm.
4	Rewarm the sock as needed to keep the kittens warm.



Feeding Your Foster Kitten

Feeding schedule

The kitten's food should be adjusted by the type of food, portion, and number of feedings based on the kitten's age and weight. Use the table below for feeding guidance.

Age	Approx. Weight	Amount to Feed Each Meal	Schedule
0–1 week	50–150 grams (g) or 1.7–5.2 ounces (oz)	2–6 milliliter (ml) kitten formula	Every 2 hours
1–2 weeks	150–250 g or 5.2–8.8 oz	6–10 ml kitten formula	Every 2–3 hours
2–3 weeks	250–350 g or 8.8–12.4 oz	10–14 ml kitten formula	Every 3–4 hours
3–4 weeks	350–450 g or 12.4–15.9 oz	14–18 ml kitten formula	Every 4–5 hours
4–5 weeks	450–550 g or 15.9 oz—1.1 lbs. The weaning process begins	Offer 18–22 ml kitten formula; slowly combine kitten formula with wet kitten food	Every 5–6 hours
5–8 weeks	550–850 g or 1.1–1.5 lbs. The weaning process concludes by week 8	Offer an unlimited amount of wet kitten food and have water constantly available in shallow dishes	Every 6 hours

Note: Kittens 8 weeks and older should have a diet that consists of only solid food. Water must always be readily available.

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Feeding Your Foster Kitten, Continued

Bottle feeding

Refer to the table below for tips on preparing a bottle for foster kittens.

Step	Action						
1	Sterilize the bottle and nipple by washing them in hot soapy water, or a sterilization solution followed by a thorough rinse under hot water.						
2	Warm the formula to no more than 100 °F.						
3	Check the formula by putting a few drops on your wrist to ensure the formula is safe for the kitten. The drops should feel warm.						
4	Check the nipple for dripping. The flow should be steady and appropriate for the kitten's size and age. Use the table below to address potential issues with the bottle's nipple. <table><tr><th>If...</th><th>Then...</th></tr><tr><td>There is no dripping,</td><td>Carefully widen the hole with a needle for a smoother flow.</td></tr><tr><td>The formula is constantly flowing out,</td><td>The hole may be too large, and the kitten can aspirate. Immediately replace the nipple with a new one.</td></tr></table>	If...	Then...	There is no dripping,	Carefully widen the hole with a needle for a smoother flow.	The formula is constantly flowing out,	The hole may be too large, and the kitten can aspirate. Immediately replace the nipple with a new one.
If...	Then...						
There is no dripping,	Carefully widen the hole with a needle for a smoother flow.						
The formula is constantly flowing out,	The hole may be too large, and the kitten can aspirate. Immediately replace the nipple with a new one.						

Feeding time Review the following tips before feeding foster kittens.

- Ensure the kitten is warm and comfortable.
- Place the kitten on its stomach. Use a soft towel under the kitten that will allow it to grip with its nails.
- Gently lift the kitten's head to a 45-degree angle and start bottle feeding.

Note: Avoid feeding the kitten while it is being held or lying on its back.

Weaning

Weaning is transitioning a kitten's diet from milk to solid food.

- Weaning begins at around 4-5 weeks of age.
- Chewing on the bottle's nipple is a good sign that a kitten is ready to begin weaning.
- Create a slurry by mixing formula with warmed wet paté kitten food. Slurry should have a consistency similar to oatmeal.
- Transition to wet food, exclusively, and then introduce dry food after a few days.

After Feeding Care

Stimulation

Stimulation is the process of manually making a kitten urinate and defecate. It is important to stimulate a kitten until it urinates and defecates after every feeding.

If a kitten looks bloated, it may require stimulation. Until about 3 weeks of age, a kitten is unable to urinate or defecate on its own.

Refer to the table below for tips on how to properly stimulate the kitten.

Step	Action
1	Use a clean, soft, damp and warm cloth to gently rub the kitten's anus and genital area until they start to urinate or defecate.
2	Continue rubbing until the process is complete, which may take up to a minute.
3	Clean the kitten's anus and genitals to prevent any skin irritation.

Cleaning

Kittens require regular cleaning. After feeding, it is important to keep its face clean. After stimulation, its anus and genitalia must be cleaned.

Use a clean, warm and damp cloth to wipe your foster kitten. If necessary, add a very small amount of water-diluted blue Dawn® dish soap. Ensure that your foster kitten is **completely** dry to ensure it stays warm.



Emergencies

In case of an emergency

When fostering kittens, especially those who require bottle feeding, it is essential to monitor and address common health issues carefully. If a medical emergency arises, it needs to be addressed the same day it occurs. Notify the foster liaison right away if your foster kitten needs medical attention.

Business hours

The Devore Animal Shelter is open 7 days a week from 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. except on:

- Wednesdays until 7 p.m.
- Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Note: Shelter hours are subject to change and may vary during holidays.

Emergency contact information

The following numbers and emails can be used to contact a member of the foster liaison team.

Role	Name	Contact
Program Coordinator	Kacie Roe	Phone: (909) 386-9820 Email: ACFosterProgram@dph.sbcounty.gov
Health Education Assistant	Jessie Velasquez	Phone: (909) 386-9820 Email: ACFosterProgram@dph.sbcounty.gov

In the event of an after-hours veterinary emergency involving your San Bernardino County Animal Care (SBCAC) foster pet, you are required to call SBCAC **immediately**. SBCAC staff will assess the situation carefully and will direct you on how to care for your foster pet. Please remember that after-hour care is limited and humane euthanasia may be the recommended outcome for your foster pet.

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Emergencies, Continued

Critical emergencies

Contact the foster liaison **immediately** if any of the behaviors or scenarios listed below are observed.

- Pain/open mouth breathing
- Traumatic injuries resulting in great bodily harm
- Straining to use the litter box and/or yowling in the litter box with little to no result
- Blood from nose/mouth
- Seizures and/or stumbling or inability to maintain balance
- Fading kittens - lethargic, poor appetite, and weight loss
- Foster pet(s) lost outside of the home

Note: If a critical emergency occurs after hours, call the foster liaison emergency line at 1 (800) 472-5609.

Urgent emergencies

If the following behaviors are observed, contact the foster liaison within 12 hours:

- Not eating for three meals in a row
- Limping but eating and drinking normally
- Minor cuts, lacerations or scrapes that bleed less than five minutes
- Hair loss or thinning of hair
- No bowel movement for 48 hours
- Bites that break skin regardless of the animal's age
- Growling, hissing, lunging, scratching or biting at people or other animals
- Unexpected death



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Emergencies, Continued

Non-urgent emergencies

Contact the foster liaison if the following behaviors are observed and the kitten remains bright, alert, responsive and is eating and drinking normally.

- Diarrhea or vomiting
- Coughing or sneezing
- Eye or nasal discharge
- Repeated headshaking
- Presence of worms in stool or vomit
- Foster animals repeatedly scratch themselves and/or evidence of fleas or flea dirt
- Urinating or defecating outside of the litter box (kittens above 6 weeks of age)
- Excessive meowing or vocalizing
- Hiding or inability to pet, touch, or hold the cat
- Inability to safely place the cat in a carrier

If there are questions or requests for supplies, email the foster liaison within 24 hours at ACFosterProgram@dph.sbcounty.gov.



Common Kitten Ailments

Gastro-intestinal issues

The following are common gastrointestinal issues for kittens:

- Diarrhea, which often results due to a change in diet, bacteria, stress or parasites. Use the table below to describe the kitten's stool consistency to the foster team:

If the stool...	Then it is...
Is formed and looks like a tootsie roll,	Normal.
Looks like soft serve ice cream and peaks,	Soft-formed stool.
Has very little form and looks like pancake batter or pudding,	Soft-unformed stool.
Has no form at all, absorbs right into the litter box and looks like chocolate milk,	Liquid stool.

- Constipation, which often results from dehydration or issues with diet.

Note: Hydration is important for kittens. Consult the foster liaison if diarrhea or constipation persists.

- Gastrointestinal parasites are a common issue for kittens. Kittens should be dewormed to prevent gastrointestinal parasites that may be transmitted from lactating mothers. The following are symptoms of gastrointestinal parasites:
 - Diarrhea,
 - Bloated abdomen,
 - Blood in stool (if not constipated),
 - Noodle or rice-like worms within feces,
 - Poor weight gain, and
 - Thinning hair.

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Common Kitten Ailments, Continued

URIs

Upper Respiratory Infections (URIs) are also known as “kitten colds” and have symptoms ranging from common to severe. Use the table below to both identify and classify kitten cold symptoms:

Classification	Symptoms
Common	• Nasal congestion • Excessive sneezing • Discolored nasal discharge • Conjunctivitis (redness/ swelling/ discharge from eyes) • Fevers
Severe	• Loss of appetite • Lethargy • Dehydration

Note: Contact the foster liaison if any of the above symptoms are observed.

Ringworm

Ringworm, also known as tinea, is a common fungal infection that affects the skin, scalp, nails, and groin.

Contact the foster liaison immediately if itchy, flaky, bald skin patches with localized redness are observed along the kitten’s ears, head, or front paws.

Pets suspected of having ringworm must have minimal skin to skin contact. To prevent the further spread of ringworm, wash hands and bedding regularly and wear gloves when handling animals.

Fleas

The removal of fleas is essential to keeping a kitten healthy. Anemia can occur from kittens having a heavy load of fleas. The following are common symptoms of fleas:

- Excessive itching
- Black flea dander
- The observance of actual fleas

When fleas are observed, the best course of action is to use Dawn® dish soap and combing the kitten with a flea comb.

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Common Kitten Ailments, Continued

Mange

Mange is a generic term used for skin mites. Skin mites are contagious, can be present in excess and cause generalized hair loss. The following are common symptoms of mange:

- Itching
- Hair loss
- Open sores
- Restlessness
- Dirty ears

Note: Mange is contagious to both animals and humans. Contact the foster liaison immediately if mange is suspected.

FKS

Fading kitten syndrome (FKS) refers to a kitten's failure to thrive during the period between birth and when they are weaned from their mother or a bottle. The following are common symptoms of FKS:

- Continuous crying
- Weight loss
- Lack of growth
- Extreme lethargy
- Decreased appetite
- Open mouth breathing

Note: Kittens with FKS may not survive 48 hours. Contact the foster liaison immediately.



Thank you!

Thank you for devoting your time to review this informative packet. Your dedication to fostering is vital in providing a nurturing environment for these young animals as they begin their journey toward finding a forever home. If you have any questions or need assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the foster liaison team. The foster liaison team is available during business hours or can be reached via email at **ACFosterProgram@dph.sbcounty.gov**.

