

Department of Animal Care and Control
2018

FOSTER KITTEN CARE

A GUIDE TO
FOSTERING

COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES



**PROTECT.
CARE.
ADOPT.**



LOS ANGELES COUNTY

**ANIMAL CARE
& CONTROL**

redefining
CARE.

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are you ready to foster?

Fostering can be an incredibly rewarding experience. Without individuals willing to foster, many kittens wouldn't get a chance at life. However, before anyone commits to becoming a foster parent, they should ask themselves the following questions:

- **Am I available and/or prepared to devote the necessary time required to care for foster kittens?**

FOSTER TYPE	LENGTH OF FOSTER	DAILY COMMITMENT
Weaned Kitten(s)	1-3 Weeks	2 Hours
Neonate Kitten(s)	6-8 Weeks	Up to 8 Hours
Kitten(s) w/ Momma Cat	2-8 Weeks	1-2 Hours or more
URI Cat(s)	2-3 Weeks	1-2 Hours
Injured Cat(s)	1 Week - 2 Months	1-2 Hours

In addition to a daily commitment, foster parents will need to bring their kittens to an Animal Care Center for vaccinations and wellness exams about every 1-2 weeks.

- **If you have household pets, are you able to keep them distant from your foster kittens to protect them from illness?**

Kittens are especially vulnerable to illness due to their undeveloped immune systems. Foster parents will need to keep other animals away from their kittens for at least two weeks, or until kittens can properly adjust to their environment.

- **Are you prepared to deal with sickness or possible death?**

Fostering is tough business, and it can often be unfair. Sometimes, even the best foster parents will lose one or more of their kittens. It is important that you are emotionally prepared to deal with a potentially undesirable outcome.

- **Will you be prepared to let your foster kittens go?**

Naturally, foster parents are likely to grow emotionally attached to their kittens—they're like our children! Thus, it is important that foster parents be ready emotionally ready to detach themselves once their kittens are ready for adoption. As great as it may seem, "foster failing" is the leading cause for losing foster parents. This is because, oftentimes, foster parents who adopt their kittens no longer have the space to take in any more animals. So be prepared!

As you can see, fostering requires a lot of time, preparation, and dedication. While we would encourage every person to become a foster parent, we understand that it is not for everyone. If you have considered the questions above and still want to become as a foster parent, we truly commend you. Fostering is an incredibly rewarding experience and one of the most direct life-saving services that one can provide. And for that, we THANK YOU.

preparing for your kittens

Preparing Your Home



Before receiving your kittens, make sure to prepare a room designated specifically for them. This can be a bathroom, bedroom, or any other room that receives lots of warmth. Here are some general guidelines for your kitten room:

- Can be temperature controlled (kittens need warmth!)
- Secure windows and appliances (toilet lid closed)
- No small or breakable items
- Room has been disinfected by using a mild bleach solution (1 part bleach to 32 parts water)
- Isolated from other pets
- Electrical outlets and wires blocked
- Away from any drafts or breezes
- Can be secured (with a door)
- Able to withstand possible vomit, feces, urine or other spills

List of Supplies:

Required:

- Kitten Formula
- Wet & Dry Kitten Food
- Bottles & Nipples
- Blankets
- Litter
- Baby Wipes
- Fragrance-Free Dish Soap
- Disinfectant Solution

Highly Recommended:

- Heating Pad
- Playpen or Tub
- On-the-Go Carrier
- Cat Toys!



caring for your kittens

Heating

One of the most important things you can do for your kittens is provide warmth. Kittens should always be provided a space for warmth, as well as another space to escape the warmth. A heating pad works best, just make sure to keep it on the lowest heat setting. You can also use a warm rice sock covered with a towel (see below). Make sure your kittens aren't directly exposed to the heating source. For example, if you are using a heating pad, lay a towel or blanket over it so that kittens aren't directly on the pad.

How to make a Warm Rice Sock



STEP 1:

Gather a pair of socks and about 1 1/2 cups of rice.



STEP 2:

Pour the rice into one of the socks, and then tie a knot at the top of the sock.

STEP 3:

Put the sock with the rice into the empty sock (knot end first), then tie a knot at the top of the outside sock.

STEP 4:

Microwave the sock for 1-2 minutes. Watch to make sure it doesn't smoke.

STEP 5:

After ensuring the sock isn't too hot, place it under a blanket or towel. Place the sock in the kitten's area, but make sure the kitten can escape if necessary. The sock may need to be rewarmed about an hour.

TIP: Heating pads usually be found in drug stores (e.g., Rite Aid or CVS Pharmacy) and cost about \$20-\$40. If you don't have a heating pad, or are unable to procure one, a warm rice sock can serve as an alternative. For kittens, heat can be as important as food or water. So make sure your kittens are getting plenty of warmth!

Feeding

Feeding Schedule

The type of food, portions, and the number of feedings will depend on your kitten's age and weight. Follow this guide to determine how much food your kitten needs:

AGE	WEIGHT	AMOUNT	SCHEDULE
0-1 WEEKS	50-150 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	550-850 GRAMS	Ample wet food	Every 6 HOURS

- OR -

Kitten Weight	Amount per Feeding	Feedings per Day
2 oz.	2 ml.	7
3 oz.	3 ml.	7
4 oz.	5 ml.	7
5 oz.	6 ml.	7
6 oz.	7 ml.	7
7 oz.	8 ml.	7
8 oz.	9 ml.	7
9 oz.	10 ml.	7
10 oz.	11 ml.	7
11 oz.	12 ml.	6-7
12 oz.	14 ml.	6-7
13 oz.	15 ml.	6
14 oz.	16 ml.	5
15 oz.	17 ml.	5
16 oz. (1 lb.)	18 ml.	5
17 oz.	19 ml.	4
18 oz.	20 ml.	4
19 oz.	22 ml.	4
20 oz.	23 ml.	4



Type of Food

Kittens three weeks old and younger should be fed liquid or powdered formula. For powder formula, though typically one part powder and two parts water, make sure to follow the mixing instructions. Below are instructions on how to feed bottle kittens:

STEP 1: Make sure the bottles and nipples are clean, washing them if necessary.

STEP 2: If using powdered formula, mix powder with water (follow mixing instructions, though generally one part formula and two parts water).

STEP 3: Once formula is thoroughly mixed, pour into bottle(s) and secure nipple cap.

STEP 4: Heat some water in a cup or mug, then place the bottle(s) into the water until the formula is warm. Do not heat the formula directly in the microwave.

STEP 5: Test the formula on your hand or arm to ensure it isn't too hot. Now, you're ready to feed!

TIP: The "Miracle Nipple" is a highly effective nipple, especially for kittens having trouble latching on. You can purchase these on Amazon.com or on other online sites.

Tips for Feeding

- If your kitten is not accepting the nipple, gently open the kitten's mouth with your finger and place the nipple on its tongue. You can also try to use a syringe instead.
- Stroking your kitten can help them eat.
- Do NOT feed kittens on their backs or squeeze the bottle to force formula into their mouth; this can cause formula to go into their lungs.
- After each feeding, you will need to stimulate your kitten (more information on page 8).
- When feeding, tilt the bottle at an angle; this will prevent the kitten from taking in too much air.

Stimulating

Kittens need to be stimulated after each feeding until they learn to go the bathroom themselves (generally 3 weeks). Usually, mama cat will stimulate her kittens by licking them. However, since you're taking the role of mama cat, you'll have to stimulate the kittens yourself. Don't worry, this doesn't mean you'll have to lick them!

STEP 1: To begin, first you'll need a warm cloth or soft sheet of toilet paper. Make sure the material is soft so you don't irritate your kitten's skin.

STEP 2: Gently rub the cloth on your kitten's anus and genital region in a circular motion. The kitten should begin to pee.

STEP 3: After your kitten has finished urinating, focus on the anal region and rub until poop begins to emerge (this can take up to a minute or more). Help your kitten push it out by continuing to rub around its anus.

STEP 4: Following stimulation, wipe down your kitten's anus and genital region with a warm cloth or unscented baby wipe. This will keep their skin clean and reduce chances of skin irritation.

NOTE: If your kitten's stomach appears hard and bloated, they may be constipated and in need of stimulation.

Bloated Kitten



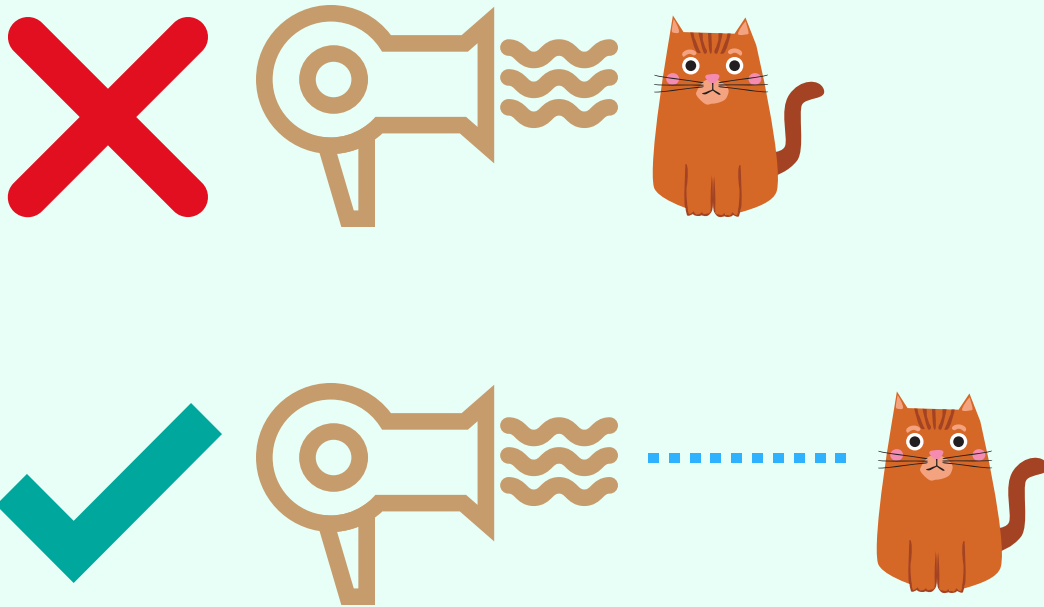
If you notice that your kitten's anal or genital regions are reddened or irritated, you can gently apply A&D ointment, vaseline, neosporin, or any baby ointment that does not contain zinc.

Cleaning Your Kitten

Kittens should be cleaned regularly, but not more than once per week.

To clean your kitten, use a warm cloth to stroke your kitten's fur. You can use a small amount of blue Dawn soap if water isn't doing the job.

After your kittens are bathed, use a towel or low-setting hair dryer to dry their fur. Make sure to keep the hair dryer at a distance so you don't burn your kitten. It is important that your kittens are fully dry so they can retain their warmth. Wet kittens are unhappy kittens!



Tips for Cleaning

- Use a rubber glove while bathing your kitten. Your kitten may be small, but its claws sure are sharp!
- Dried feces can be removed by using a flea comb.



Weaning

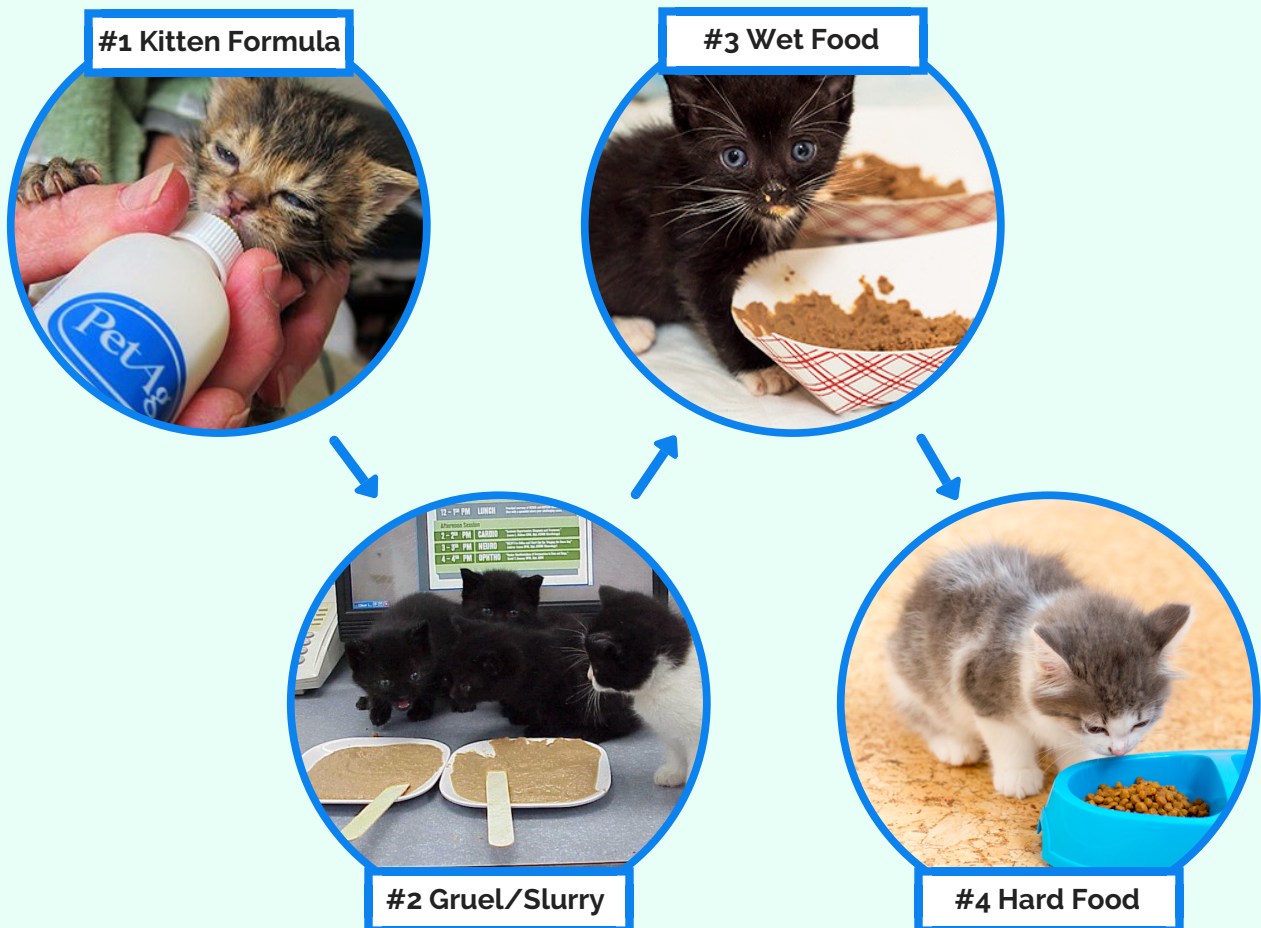
Weaning is a gradual process whereby the bottle is removed and soft or hard food is introduced. Once kittens are about 4 or 5 weeks old, you can begin the weaning process. If kittens are beginning to chew on the nipple, that is also a sign that they might be ready to start the weaning process.

Before moving straight to soft or hard food, create a **slurry** by mixing formula with some warmed wet food. After a few days, you can try introducing your kittens to wet food exclusively. Make sure you're feeding them wet food specifically made for kittens. Kitten pâté is also a favorite.

Place the food on a plate or in a small bowl and direct your kitten towards it. You might want to let them eat it off your finger first if they don't understand the concept. If they don't appear interested, try again the next day.

Once you switch kittens to only wet (or hard) food, you need to also introduce a water bowl. Don't fill the bowl too high (generally 2 in. of water will do). Again, it may take a day or two for your kitten to get used to the new process.

Important! If kittens aren't responding to new food, don't refuse to feed them. Sometimes kittens just aren't ready, and oftentimes, some kittens in your litter will get it faster than others.



The Litter Box

Fortunately, kittens are naturally drawn to kitten litter. All they need is the proper equipment and support.

1. Make sure your kitten isn't too young when you introduce them. Generally, kittens need to be stimulated until they reach 3 weeks of age.
2. Choose a safe kitty litter. Kittens should not be given litter that contains harsh chemicals or clumping properties (this can present a choking hazard). You can use a basic non-clumping litter, Feline Pine, or even shredded newspaper.



3. Choose the right box. Your box should be shallow and have an open top. An aluminum cake pan will also work. Make sure that the box is easily accessible and free from any obstacles. Keeping the box in a corner free of clutter is recommended.
4. Positively reinforce your kitty! Provide praise when your kitten uses the litter box. Lots of hugs and kisses will usually do!

Other Tips:

- Make sure to clean your litter box frequently. Cats don't like dirty litters.
- If your kitten isn't using the litter, try using **Kitten Attract**—a litter alternative.
- After a feeding, you can place your kitten in the litter box and stimulate them. Eventually, they'll learn that this is the space to do their business.

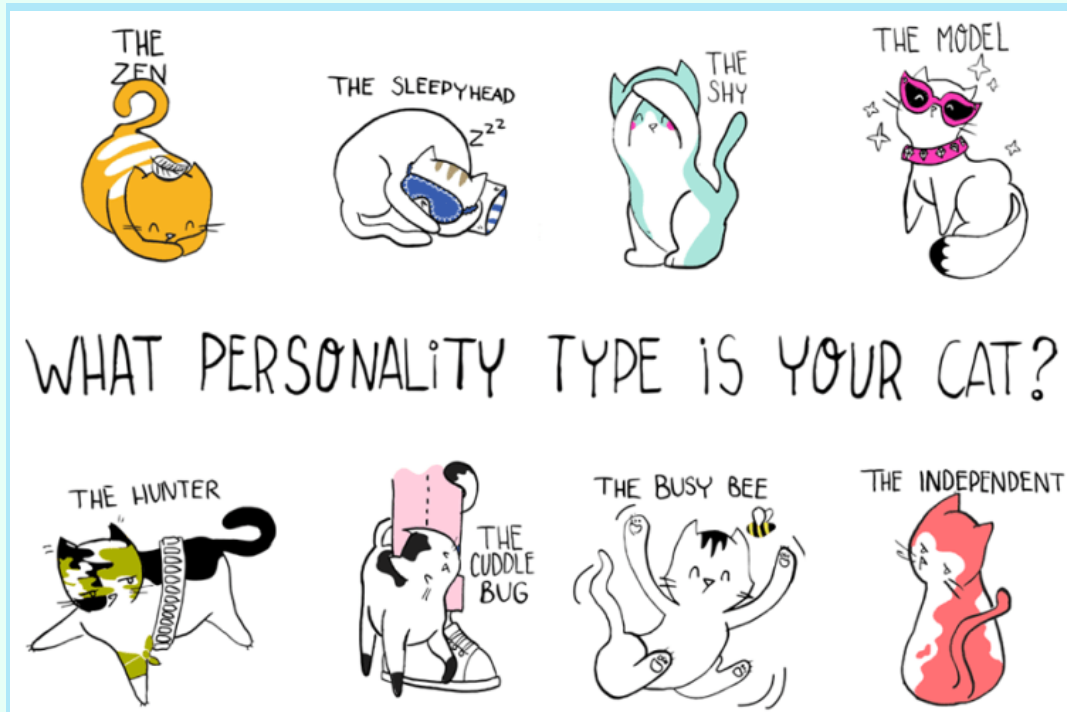


Socializing

A well-socialized kitten is a much more adoptable kitten! Kittens must not only do well with other cats, but also with different humans.

To ensure proper socialization, follow these tips:

- Whenever your kitten is introduced to a new environment, allow him or her to adjust before playing with them. You don't want to add any unnecessary stress.
- If you have an **outgoing** kitten, make sure to frequently play and interact with them.
- If you have a **shy** kitten, expose them to short encounters with other humans. Hold shy kittens and stroke them gently, but release them if they clearly want to be let go. Eventually, they will associate humans with a positive experience.
- If you have a **fearful** kitten, sit calmly on the floor and wait for them to come to you. When they do approach, talk to them in a calm voice and stroke them gently.
- Remember, all cats are different. Some prefer to be held by humans, while others would rather be left alone. Never force your cat to behave in a desired way.



For cats, the age of 2 to 7 weeks is crucial for socialization. During this period, you might want to introduce your kittens to carriers, dogs (only if you know that your dog is cat-friendly), and as many human hands as possible. The most socialized cats tend to be the most friendly.

Kitten Growth

All cats grow at different rates, but generally, this is what you can expect to see:

TEENY TINIES The tiniest, most vulnerable kittens require gentle and frequent care.

NEWBORN 	1 WEEK 	2 WEEKS 
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• pink in color, umbilical cord attached, eyes closed• 97 degrees; can't regulate temp.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• eyes closed, ears folded, no umbilical cord• eyes open at 8-12 days	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• eyes completely open, blue color• wobbly on their feet

TEENY WEANIES As kittens age, you'll help them reach important developmental milestones.

3 WEEKS 	4 WEEKS 	5 WEEKS 
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• incisors emerging, ears unfolded• discovering litterbox	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• canines emerging• walking confidently & exploring their surroundings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• premolars emerging• weaning slowly onto wet kitten food

BIG KIDS CLUB These social, independent, and coordinated kittens are almost ready for adoption.

6 WEEKS 	7 WEEKS 	8 WEEKS 
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• molars emerging• coordinated; like a miniature cat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• all milk (deciduous) teeth have emerged• transitioning into adult eye color	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• once 2 pounds, kittens can be spayed/neutered and placed in their forever home!

*Growth chart provided courtesy of "The Kitten Lady" who is a fantastic resource for all kitten-related information

Age Milestones:

2 Weeks - Kitten eyes fully open.

3 Weeks - Kitten teeth begin to surface. It's almost time to begin the weaning process.

5 Weeks - Premolars begin to emerge. Kittens should be introduced to wet food.

8 Weeks - Kittens should be fully weaned and eating independently.

kitten health

Basic Care

Kittens should be brought in for a wellness exam about every two weeks. This way, veterinary staff can provide a weight check, deworming, and vaccinations. Neonates should be examined weekly.

Dewormer: Generally administered at 2, 4, and 6 weeks of age, dewormer medication protects kittens from gastrointestinal parasites such as roundworms and hookworms. Extreme bloatedness can be a sign of worms.

FVRCP Vaccine: Initially given at 4-6 weeks of age, this vaccine protects kittens from certain feline viruses and upper respiratory infections (URIs). Repeat every 2-3 weeks until 16 weeks old.

Rabies Vaccine: Give at 12-16 weeks of age, this vaccine protects cats from rabies, a potentially lethal disease that can also spread to humans.

Spay/Neuter: Spay or neuter can generally be performed at 8 weeks and at 2 lbs. It is required that spay/neuter be completed prior to adoption.

Microchipping: Microchipping is usually performed at the same time as spay or neuter. Microchipping allows tracking and locating a cat in case it gets lost.

Some signs of trouble:

- **Runny eyes or nose, sneezing, or coughing?** Could be a sign of a respiratory infections. Contact your designated coordinator.
- **Persistent Diarrhea?** Could be due to the introduction of a new food, but might indicate an infection or a parasite. Contact your designated coordinator; diarrhea can cause dangerous levels of dehydration.
- **Gasping for air and/or limp body?** This can be a serious sign of trouble. Contact your designated coordinator immediately.
- **Refusing to eat or constantly crying?** Again, this might be a side effect of a serious health issue. Contact your designated coordinator immediately.

If you notice that your kitten is behaving abnormally or different than usual, you should contact your designated coordinator. Remember, even the best foster parents will sometimes lose a kitten. While it is important that you address any issues that may arise, don't be too hard on yourself if the outcome isn't desirable. You should be proud of yourself for being willing to serve as a foster parent at all.

Common Health Issues

No matter how great of a caretaker you may be, kittens will oftentimes experience some sort of illness or other ailment. Here are some common health issues that your kitten(s) might experience:



Upper Respiratory Infection (URI)

Common Symptoms: discharge from eyes or nose, frequent sneezing or other respiratory noises, loss of appetite, loss of energy, dehydration

Treatment: gently wipe away discharge with warm towel; contact your designated coordinator; ensure that your kitten is eating (even if that means using a syringe) and staying hydrated



Ringworm

Common Symptoms: skin wounds (especially on head, ears, or front limbs), flaky bald patches, localized areas of redness, dandruff

Treatment: ringworm is a fungus, not a physical worm, and can be transferred to humans; if you suspect your kitten(s) has ringworm, you should contact your designated coordinator immediately; you should also wash your hands if you have touched your kitten(s)



Gastrointestinal Parasites (Worms)

Common Symptoms: diarrhea, bloatedness, blood in stool, noodle-like worms in feces, poor weight gain, thinning hair or patches of hair loss

Treatment: as a preventative means, kittens should receive deworming medication at 2, 4, and 6 weeks; kittens afflicted with parasites should be seen by a vet to receive the proper medication (contact your designated coordinator)



Fleas

Common Symptoms: kittens scratching themselves, flea dirt (small black flakes)

Treatment: flea prevention medicine should be given to kittens over 4 weeks of age; brushing your kitten with a flea comb can help prevent fleas for kittens under 4 weeks; for kittens with fleas, you should bathe your kittens with fragrance-free Dawn dish soap and follow up with a flea comb to remove any remaining fleas; if fleas persist, contact your designated coordinator



Mange

Common Symptoms: itching, hair loss, open sores, restlessness

Treatment: contact your designated coordinator immediately, as some forms of mange are contagious to other animals and humans



Ear Mites

Common Symptoms: continuous scratching, violent head shaking, bad odor from ears, brown discharge

Treatment: contact your designated coordinator; ears need to be cleaned and miticides can be applied; to clean ears yourself, apply an ear cleansing solution and gently rub the ears for 10-15 seconds, then clean the residue with a dry cotton ball or gauze pad



Fading Kitten Syndrome

Common Symptoms: continuous crying, weight loss, no growth, little movement, extreme lethargy, decreased food interest, open-mouth breathing

Treatment: kittens displaying these symptoms should be brought to a vet immediately (contact your designated coordinator); kittens with FKS may not survive more than 48 hours

Vomiting

Vomiting may occur occasionally, but if it is incessant, contact your designated coordinator. Make sure to supply your kitten with plenty of water, as vomiting can lead to dehydration.

The Poop Chart

A kitten's poop can tell you a lot about their health. Generally, there are three types of kitten stool: normal, soft, and diarrhea. Normal stool is firm and has a definite shape. Soft stool is not firm but still has some shape. Diarrhea is in liquid form and is often a cause of concern.

You can score your kitten's poop using the chart below. Ideally, you want your kitten's poop to look like Score 2:



FECAL SCORE CHART

Fecal consistency is primarily a function of the amount of moisture in the stool and can be used to identify changes in colonic health and other problems. Ideally, in a healthy animal, stools should be firm but not hard, pliable and segmented, and easy to pick up (Score 2).

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

reaching the end

YOU MADE IT! Now that your kitten is eating by itself, using the litter box, and well socialized, it's just about ready to be adopted.



Just a few more things...

Spay/Neuter Surgery

Before a cat kitten be adopted, Los Angeles County requires that he or she be spayed or neutered. Generally, spay/neuter is considered safe once a kitten reaches 8 weeks of age (although this can vary depending on the cat). Once the foster coordinator has decided that you're kitten is ready for adoption, they'll help you set up the spay/neuter surgery date.

Saying Goodbye

Now that you've raised your kitten, you'll undoubtedly be attached to your new companion. However, it's important to remember that "foster failing"—or the adopting of one's foster kitten—is the primary cause of losing foster parents. This is because foster parents who adopt their kittens often no longer have the space to take in new foster kittens. So no matter you much you might be attached, it's important that you're able to let go. We know, easier said than done!

Here are some tips to prepare for foster release:

1. Take good pictures! Not only will this help you remember your foster children, but it'll make them more adoptable. Sharing great photos is a good way to help your kittens get noticed and adopted.
2. DO NOT give your kitten(s) away without letting the foster coordinator and Animal Care Center know. Adoptions require formal paperwork, even if your friend or family member is the one adopting.
3. Remember that, without your help, your kitten may not have survived. It was your time, commitment, and good-heartedness that allowed the kitten a chance at a quality life. And for that, we THANK YOU!

other resources

General Kitten Care

<http://www.kittenlady.org/savekittens>

<http://www.maddiesfund.org/orphaned-kitten-care-how-to.htm>

<https://bluebuffalo.com/articles/cat/how-to-take-care-of-kittens/>

Using Food for Successful Kitten Socialization

<https://www.aspcapro.org/kittenfood>

Feline Panleukopenia

<https://www.aspcapro.org/panleuk>

Animal Care Centers:

Agoura

29525 Agoura Road

Agoura Hills, CA 91301

(818) 991-0071 / (818) 597-9818 fax

MON-THURS: 12:00 am-7:00 pm

FRI-SUN: 10:00 am-5:00 pm

Downey

11258 S. Garfield Avenue

Downey, CA 90242

(562) 940-6898 / (562) 861-9240 fax

MON-THURS: 12:00 pm-7:00 pm

FRI-SUN: 10:00 am-5:00 pm

Baldwin Park

4275 N Elton Street

Baldwin Park, CA 91706

(626) 962-3577 / (626) 960-8223 fax

MON-THURS: 12:00 pm-7:00 pm

FRI-SUN: 10:00 am-5:00 pm

Lancaster

5210 W. Avenue I

Lancaster, CA 93536

(661) 940-4191 / (661) 723-3409 fax

MON-THURS: 12:00 pm-7:00 pm

FRI-SUN: 10:00 am-5:00 pm

Carson/Gardena

216 W. Victoria Street

Gardena, CA 90248

(310) 523-9566 / (310) 538-9229 fax

MON-THURS: 12:00 pm-7:00 pm

FRI-SUN: 10:00 am-5:00 pm

Palmdale

38550 Sierra Highway

Palmdale, CA 93550

(661) 575-2888 / (661) 538-1027 fax

MON-THURS: 12:00 pm-7:00 pm

FRI-SUN: 10:00 am-5:00 pm

Castaic

31044 N. Charlie Canyon Road

Castaic, CA 91384

(661) 257-3191 / (661) 295-1619 fax

MON-THURS: 12:00 pm-7:00 pm

FRI-SUN: 10:00 am-5:00 pm

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICES

5898 Cherry Avenue

Long Beach, CA 90805

(562) 728-4882 / (562) 422-3408 fax

MON-THURS: 7:00 am-5:00 pm

Closed Fridays, Saturdays, & Sundays

thank you.