

# Cat Foster Care Guide



HUMANE  
DUBUQUE REGIONAL  
SOCIETY  
COMMUNITY OF UNCONDITIONAL LOVE



## **Mission**

The DRHS protects and promotes the well-being of all animals by fostering respect for their inherent dignity.

## **Vision**

The DRHS envisions a community where every pet has a permanent and loving home, companion animals are spayed or neutered, and all animals are treated with respect and compassion.

## **Visiting Hours**

Monday - Closed to public

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday - 11am-2pm: walk in; 2pm-5pm appointment only

Friday - 11am - 3pm appointment only; 3pm - 7pm walk-in

Saturday - 11am - 5pm walk-in

Sunday - 1pm - 4pm walk-in

4242 Chavenelle Road, Dubuque, IA 52002  
563.582.6766



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# Welcome Message

DEAR FOSTER FAMILY,

Thank you so much for opening your heart and home to kittens in need! Kittens that are under eight weeks of age are the most vulnerable, at-risk population in our shelter. Fostering kittens is a life-saving endeavor!

**Becca Lisanby**  
**FOSTER**  
**COORDINATOR**



Fostering kittens (and their moms!) is a rewarding process that saves hundreds of lives in our community each year, and we could not do it without you! In this guide, you will find helpful tips to ensure success. Kittens usually require consistent love and attention that is difficult to provide in a shelter environment. These kittens are typically only placed in foster homes until they are big enough to undergo spay/neuter surgery. We encourage fosters to take more than one kitten at a time to help promote socialization and normal behavioral growth.

Raising kittens can be overwhelming at times but don't worry - you can do this! Because of you, these kittens will have the best chance of survival, socialization, and quick adoption!

**FOSTERING  
SAVES LIVES**



# Communication

## **Email** *It can Wait!*

Foster@dbqhumane.org

For non-urgent updates or information that can wait. Ex) General questions, updates, pictures etc. You may see foster callout here!

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## **Emergency** *Immediate Necessary Action*

**563-279-4745**

Only for true emergencies outside of working hours. Ex) Severe decline in health of an animal, missing or severely injured animals, personal emergencies that interfere with the care of a foster animal.

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## **Slack** *Urgent but not emergent!*

Slack is a communication platform we'll be using frequently. Slack is available as a mobile app or can be accessed online at [slack.com](https://slack.com). It is to be used for anything urgent, time-sensitive, or short notice during foster coordinator working hours (Wednesday–Sunday, 9 AM – 5:30 PM). Ex) Minor health issues like upper respiratory symptoms and allergies. Scheduling short notice appointments, supply pick ups, urgent questions or concerns.

**All active fosters with animals in the home must fill out a weekly check-in form located on the foster portal ([www.dbqhumane.org/foster-portal](http://www.dbqhumane.org/foster-portal))**

# Preparation

## **Supplies**

All Supplies will be provided for by the DRHS. We will not refund any supplies purchased without prior approval. You may receive an in kind donation sheet for any supplies you purchase in order to care for your fosters.

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## **Kitten Proofing**

Foster kittens are tiny and cute, but just like children, they are also very curious. They will try to get into everything to explore, so you will need to kitten-proof your home.

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## **Tips and Tricks**

Use a space that is temperature controlled and easily disinfected.

Put away any small items that a kitten can swallow.

Hide any breakable items, block electrical outlets and remove toxic plants.

If your kittens are staying in a bathroom, make sure that the toilet lid is closed at all times.

Block off any spaces that the kittens could crawl into and hide in.

When setting up your kitten room, be sure to place the litter boxes as far away from food and water as possible.

# Scheduling Appointments

## 1. Pick up / Return

To pick up and return fosters, simply schedule an appointment using the Coordinator button under Scheduling on the foster portal ([www.dbqhumane.org/foster-portal](http://www.dbqhumane.org/foster-portal)). You may also email or slack the foster coordinator for more flexible time slots or urgent / short notice appointments.

## 2. Clinic Appointments

When picking up a foster, you will get a copy of their medical summary which will show when you need to schedule boosters. It is the foster's responsibility to schedule their appointment for vaccinations/boosters/preventatives using the Clinic button under Scheduling on the foster portal ([www.dbqhumane.org/foster-portal](http://www.dbqhumane.org/foster-portal)). Appointments may only be scheduled between 12 hours and 2 weeks in advance, unless prior approval is obtained. Please give notice for any cancellations. Please be aware that appointment dates and times may be subject to change depending on the clinic's availability.

## 4. Spay/Neuter

Adult Cats should be spayed or neutered prior to going into foster. Some exceptions may occur due to age or medical issues.

Once a kitten reaches 2 months of age and weighs at least 2 pounds, they are eligible to be spayed or neutered. Please provide the foster coordinator with weekly weight updates so surgery can be scheduled when the kitten is ready.

Spay/neuter drop-offs typically occur the afternoon prior to surgery. Fosters are encouraged to pick up their puppies for post-operative recovery before they return to the DRHS adoption floor. Average recovery time is 2-5 days.

# **Bottle Babies**

Bottle-feeding neonatal kittens requires an around-the-clock commitment. Thank you so much for offering your time and attention to these fragile babies. And please remember that we are here to support you. Here's some general info about bottle-feeding.



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## **Milk Preparation**

You can pre-mix enough formula to last for 24 hours of feeding, but it must be refrigerated at all times. Discard all unused and mixed formula after 24 hours. Only heat enough formula for each feeding, and throw away any uneaten warmed formula after each feeding. Do not re-use warmed formula because harmful bacteria can develop in it. You can also mix just enough for each feeding as you go. Do not under any circumstances feed cow's milk or other dairy products, dairy alternatives, or human baby formula, as this can be dangerous or even fatal to the kitten.

## **Latching on**

It may take a few tries for a kitten to latch onto the bottle nipple. Be patient and gentle—they may need a little time and encouragement to begin eating.

Make sure the nipple has a proper flow: When the tip is pierced with a sterile needle, it should drip one drop at a time when the bottle is turned upside down (not a steady stream).

If you're having any trouble, don't hesitate to contact the foster department. We're always here to help with feeding advice or support.

## **Bottle-feeding Tips**

It is easier to feed your kittens when they are gently wrapped in a towel or blanket, instead of just using your hands. The towel or blanket is softer and warmer than your hands, and being wrapped up makes the kittens feel safer as they eat. If the kitten allows it, the forelegs should be free to allow him to “knead” with his feet. This kneading activity is essential to the kitten's muscle development and helps aid in digestion of the kitten's food. Also, be careful to position the kitten so that his belly is toward the floor. To decrease the chance of formula being aspirated into the lungs, kittens should not be fed on their backs.

## **Aspiration**

If liquid bubbles out through the kitten's nose or he starts coughing, he may have gotten formula in his lungs. Pat the kitten very gently on the back to elicit a cough or sneeze, or hold him in an inverted position, tail over head, for a moment to remove the formula from his lungs. Please notify the foster department if this happens so we can determine if antibiotics or a vet visit is needed.

# **Bottle Babies**

## **Elimination**

Bottle-fed kittens need help with elimination, so you'll need to stimulate your kittens to pee and poop. Every feeding, wipe each kitten's back end with tissues, a baby wipe or warm wet cotton ball. Remember to do this every time you feed them. Document the color and consistency in your journal. Kittens should urinate after every meal and should poop at least once a day/every other day. The normal color and consistency of kitten poop is various shades of mustard. When a kitten is first introduced to formula, it is normal for him or her not to poop for 48 hours. (it is important to reach out to the foster coordinator if you have any concerns regarding the poop, or are unable to get the kitten to urinate.)

## **Weighing**

Please weigh the kittens before and after each feeding to ensure that they are growing, and record the weights in the journal. If you are having trouble keeping them still, it is recommended to use a bowl or wrap them in a small towel as long as whatever method you use is accounted for by taring it out or weighing separately and subtracting it from the total. Once a kitten becomes weaned, you can start weighing at less frequent intervals but a minimum of once a day is required. If a kitten is losing weight, tell the foster coordinator immediately.

## **Cleaning**

Kittens are usually cleaned by their mother, In her absence, you must work hard to keep the kitten clean. Please use unscented pet wipes or a damp cloth to wipe mouths and paws after eating and wipe their behind after eliminating. Clean their enclosures, toys, linens, and bowls daily.

## **Keeping Kittens Warm**

Kittens 4 weeks and under cannot regulate their body temperatures, so please keep a heating pad underneath them at all times. Because kittens' skin is very sensitive and prone to thermal burns, the warming pads must be covered by a blanket or cover that the kittens cannot burrow under. Kittens thrive best in temperatures between 80-90°.

## **Signs of Illness**

Watch for signs of illness, including frequent crying, restlessness, weakness, coldness (hypothermia), diarrhea, dehydration, shallow or labored breathing, paleness or blueness in color. Notify the foster department immediately if a kitten is losing weight, is cold to the touch, or is having trouble breathing (either shallow or heavy breathing).



For dried feces or stuck on messes, please use a warm compress and flea comb. If necessary you may bathe the kitten or parts of the kitten in warm water with dawn dish soap, but only if they are warm and healthy. Dry kittens well so that they do not get chilled.

## Feeding Time

### 1. Assess

Before you feed a kitten, always make sure you've assessed to make sure it is safe to feed. If a kitten is overheated or too cold, it is not safe to feed until you have gently stabilized their temperature. If a kitten is not able to swallow, it is not safe to feed. Ensure that the kitten is able to swallow by placing a drop of formula on their tongue and gently feeling the throat with one finger. If the kitten appears stable and is swallowing, proceed.

### 2. Prepare your Bottle

Be aware that the nipple that comes on the bottle is not always cut; you may need to cut a hole in it yourself. The hole should be big enough that if you hold it upside down, formula can slowly drop out of it -- but not so big that it flows out freely. Mix one part formula to 2 parts water, making sure to mix thoroughly, leaving no clumps that could get trapped in the nipple. Depending on your preference, you may mix up enough for each feeding with warm water and toss any remaining formula. Or mix 24 hours worth of formula that you may keep refrigerated and pull out enough for each feeding to warm by letting it sit in a bowl of warm water. The formula should be slightly warmer than room temperature and should always be checked on the inner wrist before using to ensure it is not too hot or cold. Any formula that is warmed cannot go into the refrigerator for later use.

### 3. Feeding

Lay the kitten in a natural, belly-down position -- never, ever on their back. Hold the kitten's head stable with your non-dominant hand. Gently slide the nipple into the kitten's mouth and invert the bottle to start the flow of formula. Follow the feeding chart for a guideline of amount and frequency. Be very careful not to squeeze formula into the kitten's mouth as this can cause aspiration. If you are feeding a very young kitten and having a difficult time controlling the flow, consider syringe feeding.

If the kitten latches, that's great, but it's okay if it takes a while for them to get the hang of things! If the kitten is having difficulty, try these tips:

### TIPS AND TRICKS

- Be sure you're holding the head and body stable to guide her. Kittens don't necessarily understand what you're trying to do, so it's up to you to hold them steady and show them.
- Take a look at your bottle and nipple, and make sure there are no issues such as a nipple that is cut too big or too small, or clumps in the formula that may be causing a blockage.
- Wrap the kitten in a small baby blanket if need be to help her feel focused and swaddled; just make sure she is still in a proper belly-down position.
- Rubbing the face with a cloth or toothbrush can simulate a mother's tongue and help them feel prepared to eat.

kitten weight and feeding chart

AGE	WEIGHT	AMOUNT PER FEEDING	SCHEDULE
0-1 week	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	(weaning; offer ample wet food)	Every 6 hours

# Weaning

Weaning is the process of helping a kitten transition from nursing (or bottle feeding) to eating solid food on her own. Kittens often need extra support during this time to help ensure they're receiving proper nutrition and caloric intake; it can take time and patience.

Kittens' bodies are very sensitive to premature weaning, and can experience life-threatening issues when forced to wean too young. Ideally weaning will start at 5 weeks. Every kitten is different, and some kittens may need a bit more time on the bottle than others due to health issues, differences in weight or size, or mere preference. If you see any changes in the kitten's health or energy during this process, immediately step back to bottle feeding.

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## **Introducing Food**

Start by offering the kittens formula on a spoon. Once they are lapping off the spoon, try putting some formula in a saucer. As they master lapping up the formula out of the saucer, you can gradually add a small amount of canned food to the formula in the saucer, making a gruel. Increase the amount of canned food slowly, adding more food and less formula.

Some kittens catch on right away; others might take a few days. To be sure the kittens are getting enough food, you might need to continue bottle-feeding them a few times a day until they are eating well on their own. Be sure to feed them what they need to be full, but don't overfeed them.

Never force a kitten to wean. Some kittens continue to enjoy their bottle past 4 weeks old. This is fine as long as you keep a close eye on them and ensure that they're not chewing on the nipple. Now that they have teeth, they could ingest part of the nipple.

Weaning-age kittens (5-6 weeks) can be offered 4 meals of wet food per day, and can be given free access to both dry food and water.

## **Introducing Water**

As you introduce solid food, you'll also want to start to introduce water. Be sure you're providing water in a small, shallow dish and cleaning/refilling it daily. Never provide a large dish that can cause a safety hazard to a tiny kitten; keep your water dish to about 2 inches high. It's normal for kittens to struggle with water at first, but she should be drinking confidently within 1-3 days of introduction

## **Monitor**

It's essential to weigh the kitten throughout the weaning process. If weight drops or steadies, you'll need to supplement with a bottle, try a different method of eating, or scale back to kitten formula.

You'll also want to watch the kitten closely to ensure the kitten has successfully developed the motor skills for eating.

Once the kitten is confidently eating on their own, gaining weight, and rejecting the bottle, you can cease supplemental feeding—it's time to switch completely to solid foods! Monitor to ensure that there are no concerning changes in weight, behavior, or condition.



# Feeding Weaned Kittens

By the age of 7-8 weeks, most kittens will be fully weaned. Weaned kittens eat independently and are no longer nursing or being bottle fed. This is the big kid club!

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## What to feed

Kittens require more fat, protein, and calories than adult cats, so be sure that you're feeding a high quality food formulated specifically for kittens that has been supplied by the DRHS. Our goal is to get these kittens eating solid dry food, but it is a good idea to continue supplementing with wet food periodically.

## Free Access

While adult cats are commonly recommended to have a strict feeding routine, kittens should always have access to food and water. When giving wet food, always replace withing 4-6 hours. Wash bowls daily.

## Continue Weighing

Continue weighing once daily at the same time everyday to help routinely monitor kitten health.

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# Feeding Adult Cats and Moms

## Mama Cats

- Feed mama cats ample amounts of kitten food. Kitten food is higher in protein and fat, which the mama will need as she is nursing her young. Be sure to provide large amounts of food at least three times a day, offering both wet and dry kitten food.
- Provide a shallow dish of fresh water. Please never put a deep dish of water into a space with neonatal kittens, as this can be a drowning hazard.

## Adult Cats

- Feed Adult cats  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup dry adult cat food provided by the DRHS twice daily unless otherwise specified
- Provide constant free access to clean fresh water

# Fostering Moms

In some cases, moms are fostered together with their litters. There are a few things to keep in mind for this type of foster situation. Moms require a calm setting with privacy and minimal activity. Stress can cause moms to stop taking care of their kittens.

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## Bringing Mom Home

You will need a separate space for a mom with her litter. When you first bring them home, leave them alone in their new space. Mom will need some time, up to a few days, to adjust to her new space. Be sure to offer mom fresh food, water, and a clean litter box.

## Socialization

Even adult cats need socialization; however, proceed slowly with any adult cat that you do not know. Create situations for socialization but let her come to you. Stop the session if you notice any negative signs, such as swishing tail, ears laid back, head jerk towards you, tensing up, cranky meow, moving away, hissing, or growling.

## Mom and Her Kittens

For the first few weeks, mom will do everything necessary to take care of her kittens. Kittens start nursing very soon after birth. Mom will also groom her kittens. Cats should be left alone for the first two weeks except to feed, clean, and check on the kittens a few times a day.

## Possible Issues with Mom Cats

**Maternal Neglect** - Some cats lack maternal instincts and, in other cases, it is nature's way of handling sick or weak kittens. Environmental stress is an important factor, which is why it is important to create a calm environment for mom and the litter. As the foster parent, watch for signs of maternal neglect. Slack message the Foster Coordinator if you notice the mom avoids feeding and grooming her kittens and ignores their cries.

**Maternal Aggression** - As mom protects her kittens, it is common for her to be aggressive towards humans or other animals. Do not try to introduce your household pets to your foster mom as this adds too much stress to the environment. If aggression becomes severe, Slack message the Foster Coordinator

# Kitten Health

Kittens are the most vulnerable group in shelters. It is incredibly important to monitor their health and update the Foster Coordinator of any concerns. Here are some things to look out for.

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## Measuring Growth

Kittens are weighed to measure growth and development. Neonate kittens should be weighed daily to ensure growth and weight gain. Kittens over 4 weeks of age are weighed twice a week. When weighing your kitten, if you notice he or she has lost or not gained weight please Slack message the Foster Coordinator

## Diarrhea

There are three types of cat 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 liquid, with or without color to it. Diarrhea is common in kittens and can be caused by parasites, viruses, bacteria, food changes, stress, overfeeding, and other issues. Diarrhea must be monitored as it can quickly lead to dehydration. If the kitten is active, mild diarrhea that occurs for 24 hours is not a concern. Feed the kitten less at a time but more often. If the diarrhea is severe, lasts more than 3-4 feedings or contains blood/ parasites, Slack message the Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck.

## Parasites

Kittens can sometimes get tapeworms either in their feces or on their anus. These look like grains of rice. Roundworms look like spaghetti and can be seen in the litter box or in vomit. Parasites are commonly found in the stool of kittens. Some parasites, like coccidia, may not be seen in their feces but can be diagnosed through a fecal test. If you notice or suspect worms, Slack message the Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck.

## Vomiting

Vomiting is not serious unless it happens continuously, It can lead to dehydration. If vomiting occurs 2-3 times in a row, Slack message the Foster Coordinator right away.

## Eye Discharge

It is normal for kittens to have little pieces of crust in their eyes after waking up. If you see continuous yellow or green discharge, swollen, or closed eyes Slack message the Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck. You can use a warm, damp towel to wipe the affected eye(s).

## Ear Mites

Ear mites are parasites that live in the ear canal. You may notice a bald spot behind ears due to continuous scratching. They may also violently shake their head. The ears may smell bad and you may see brown discharge that resembles coffee grounds. Ear mites are contagious to other cats and need to be treated. Slack message the Foster Coordinator if you notice any of these symptoms.

## Fleas

Kittens that have fleas will scratch themselves often. Topical flea prevention is given to kittens over 4 weeks of age. Flea prevention for kittens under 4 weeks includes daily brushing with the flea comb and daily bedding changes. If you still notice signs of fleas, you can wash the kitten in a small amount of Dawn dish soap followed by using a flea comb to remove any remaining fleas. Be sure to thoroughly dry following a bath. Baths should not be given more than once every 1-2 weeks. If you still notice signs of fleas, Slack message the Foster Coordinator to schedule a recheck.

## Ringworm

Ringworm is a contagious fungus that can spread to other animals and humans. A sign of ringworm is thinning hair or patches of hair loss. Ringworm can be difficult to remove from your house. To help with prevention and to prevent spreading, maintain cleaning protocols and a good hand washing routine. Slack message the Foster Coordinator if you notice any hair loss.

## Mange

Mange is caused by parasites that infect the skin of kittens. Some forms of mange are contagious to other animals and humans. The symptoms include itching, hair loss and sores. Mange needs to be treated. If you notice these symptoms, Slack message the Foster/Veterinary Team.

## Upper Respiratory Infections (URI)

URIs are common and are caused by contagious viruses and bacteria. Cats may also carry a gene for URI's, stress may trigger active infections to occur.

Signs to look for include:

- . *Sneezing and colored discharge from eyes/nose*
- . *Congested breathing*
- . *Loss of appetite*
- . *Lethargy (lack of energy)*
- . *Dehydration*

If you notice any of these signs, please Slack message the Foster Coordinator.

**Tip/Trick:** Adding a humidifier or taking the kittens into the bathroom and running a hot shower can aid breathing and clearing congestion. Please do not do this if the kitten has labored breathing or seems lethargic.

## Fading Kittens

Occasionally, a kitten that appeared healthy will suddenly stop thriving. They will stop growing, socializing and crawling. They will begin to lose weight and may cry continuously. When this happens, they fade quickly and, even with medical intervention, may not survive 48 hours. If you notice any of the following symptoms, please follow the DRHS Fading Kitten Protocol

- . *Extreme Lethargy - not getting up/moving, unable to stand, not responsive*
- . *Gasping for breath*
- . *Whining/Crying out*

Occasionally, kittens die in foster care. Even with all the love and attention and perfect treatment of this condition, some of them still won't make it. Try not to blame yourself during this difficult time. Remember, if it wasn't for you, the foster kitten would have never been given a chance at life. If this should occur contact the Foster/Veterinary Team for information concerning the disposition of remains.

# Kitten Health

Fading Kitten Syndrome (FKS), also known as failure to thrive, is generally associated with kittens between birth and weaning. FKS is not a single disease but includes symptoms that are seen in a variety of illnesses. Recognizing early fading symptoms and providing immediate treatment can mean the difference between life and death.

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**Possible Causes:** Premature or difficult birth, neonatal isoerythrolysis (a condition that occurs when the mother has antibodies against the blood type of the kittens), genetic defects, such as cleft palate, low birth weight, bacterial, parasitic or viral infections, exposure to or ingestion of toxins, poor nutrition, unsanitary living conditions.

**Symptoms:** Hypothermia (low body temperature), hypoglycemia (low blood sugar) and dehydration (an excessive loss of water and electrolytes) are three of the most common symptoms of FKS and must be treated without delay.

Other symptoms include: Hyperthermia, lack of weight gain, inappetence, pale gums, diarrhea, vomiting, lethargy or unresponsiveness, excessive crying or agitation, lack of or decrease in righting, rooting and suckling responses

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## Fading Kitten Protocol

### Step 1- Get them warm:

1. Create the “burrito” towel. Immediately wrap the kitten up in a towel like a burrito leaving

their face exposed only. Their whole body, tail, ears, and paws should be in the towel, only nose and mouth exposed. Do not take the kitten out of the towel to adjust them, check on them, etc. - this is very important! Every time you take them out you will make them cold again, even if it is only for a second.

2. Wrap a HEATING PAD turned onto \*low\* around the burrito towel (to avoid burns) as an EXTRA source of heat. Secure it around the towel so it stays in place



# Kitten Health

## Fading Kitten Protocol

### Step 2- Get their blood sugar up:

Once you get the heat on them,

1. Get a bowl or Tupperware and a few tablespoons of sugar in hot water.
2. Stir it up so you get a sugar-water solution - as strong as possible while still pretty runny.
3. Using a syringe or your cotton swab, give 3 drops every 3 minutes into the mouth.
4. If they aren't swallowing, try not to get it down the throat, try to get it on the tongue or gums.
5. Set a timer to make sure you are doing it at least every 3 minutes. Every 5 minutes or 10 minutes will not work, it must be every 3 minutes.
6. Alternatively, if you have Nutrical or Karo Syrup on hand, give a pea-sized amount via syringe and replenish as it is consumed.

### Step 3 – (Optional, If Equipped & Trained) Emergency Subcutaneous Fluids

Only perform this step if BOTH are true:

- You have an emergency fluid kit, and
- You are comfortable and trained in giving subcutaneous fluids.

If so:

Warm the fluids to body temperature (never hot).

Administer 5–10 mL subcutaneously, following foster coordinator instructions.

Continue warming and sugar treatment as described above.

If you are not equipped or not fully comfortable giving fluids:

→ Do NOT attempt. Contact the foster coordinator immediately and bring the kitten in.

### Step 4 – Contact your foster coordinator

via the emergency line and bring the kitten to the Dubuque Humane Society upon instruction:

1. Keep the kitten with you remaining in the towel burrito and continue sugar every 3 minutes.
2. If you do not have a mobile heat source, use hot hands, warmed dry rice in a sock, or dryer warmed towels – if necessary – for the ride over.

# Kitten Health

## Stool Color

**BROWN** Solid, formed brown stool is normal for a weaned kitten. If the poop is well formed and looks like a miniature cat poop, that's the goal! Woo-hoo!

Loose, smelly brown stool can indicate an internal parasite. Get a fecal exam and obtain a prescription medication if needed.

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**YELLOW** Mustard-yellow stool is normal for kittens on kitten formula or their mother's milk. Once they're weaning, it will transition to brown.

Super stinky or loose yellow stool can be an indication of a parasite. You'll want to reach out to the foster coordinator for a fecal exam and medication.

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**GREEN** Green stool may indicate a bacterial infection; if so, you'll need to reach out to the foster coordinator for a prescription antibiotic to clear this one up. Don't forget to give a probiotic, too!

Yellow-green stool may also sometimes be a sign of giardia.

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**BEIGE** Pale poop is often a sign that the kitten is failing to absorb nutrients from her food. A probiotic or predigestive enzyme can help support kittens with malabsorption concerns.

Beige poop can also occur with premature weaning. If the kitten has recently been weaned, consider scaling back and giving her a liquid formula diet until her tummy settles.

Overfeeding may also cause this issue.

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**BLACK** Black, tarry stool typically indicates bleeding in the upper GI tract, which can occur for a number of reasons, from parasites to viruses. You'll want to talk to the foster coordinator immediately to figure out what is causing the bleeding and how to treat it.

The very first poop after a kitten is born will be a dark, tarry stool called meconium. If the kitten is just born, you can expect his feces to look black-green.

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**RED** Red blood in the stool usually means the kitten is experiencing problems in the lower GI tract, which could be caused by anything from colitis to bacterial infections. You'll want to let the foster coordinator know that something is troubling the kitten's gut.

# Kitten Health

## Stool Textures

**MUCOUSY** Mucousy, slimy, or oily stool is often a sign of a protozoan parasite such as coccidia or giardia. Make sure the kitten is dewormed and receives a fecal exam to determine if any additional parasites are present.

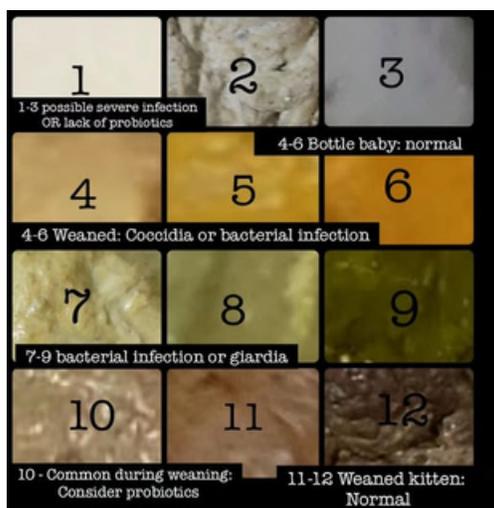
**CURDLED** Curdled-looking stool can occur when a kitten has indigestion due to a parasite, bacterium, or difficulty absorbing the fats and proteins in his food. Ensure that the food is fresh and not spoiled, be sure the kitten is being treated for parasites, and consider providing a probiotic or digestive enzyme.

**LIQUID** Liquid stool indicates severe distress and should be addressed immediately. This often accompanies panleukopenia or an untreated serious parasitic infestation. Tell the foster coordinator immediately for kittens with liquid diarrhea, and ensure that you are also replacing lost hydration by providing oral or subcutaneous fluids.

**SOFT** Loose, unformed poop that looks like soft serve is a sign of a moderate GI issue. Ensure that the kitten has been dewormed, and if the issue persists, reach out to the foster coordinator.

**HARD** Hard, dry stool can be a sign that the kitten is severely dehydrated or suffering from a motility issue. Make sure that the kitten is adequately hydrated, and if chronic constipation occurs, reach out to the foster coordinator to determine if there is a systemic cause that can be addressed.

**FORMED** A healthy kitten's poop will be solidly formed. If that's your kitten, celebrate! Woo-hoo!





# Emergency Vet Care

NON-EMERGENCY	EMERGENCY
<p>Monitor overnight and Slack the Foster Coordinator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Runny discharge from the eyes or nose</li> <li>. Lack of appetite</li> <li>. Lethargy (lack of energy)</li> <li>. Diarrhea/vomiting</li> <li>. Coughing and sneezing</li> </ul>	<p>Require Immediate Veterinary Attention Call the foster coordinator at <b>563-279-4745</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. Difficulty breathing</li> <li>. Severe injury or trauma (hit by a car, opened incision sites ... )</li> <li>.Heat stroke</li> <li>.Unresponsive/unconscious</li> </ul>

## Emergency Care:

If you have questions about the health of your foster animal or if an emergency situation should arise during regular hours of operation, please Slack the Foster Coordinator and call the Foster Coordinator at 563-279-4745 in the case of an emergency. The Foster Coordinator will contact the Veterinary Team on-staff or the Director of Operations for a treatment plan. Should after-hours treatment be needed, the Foster Coordinator will instruct the foster family on the appropriate steps to take. The Dubuque Regional Humane Society must approve any and all treatments for foster pets.

- . If the Dubuque Regional Humane Society has not approved any or all treatments to foster pets, the foster parent will be responsible for ALL costs.
- . If the foster parent takes a foster pet to any other veterinary or emergency clinic than the one designated by the Foster Coordinator, the foster parent will be responsible for ALL costs.
- . The Dubuque Regional Humane Society has a policy that we will not reimburse individuals for vet bills for foster animals when taken for veterinary care outside of that which is preauthorized by the Dubuque Regional Humane Society Foster/Veterinary Team.

## **Outside working hours and not sure if it is an emergency?**

**CONTACT DOOBERT FOR 24/7 SUPPORT**

**TEXT/CALL : (239) 201-2924**

**EMAIL: [CONNECT@DOOBERT.COM](mailto:CONNECT@DOOBERT.COM)**

**DOOBERT CAN OFFER SUPPORT AND  
GUIDANCE, DETERMINE IF IT IS A TRUE  
EMERGENCY, AND CONNECT YOU TO  
LICENSED VETERINARIANS AS NEEDED**

If you know it is an emergency, skip Doobert and call the emergency line 563-279-4745. If you are confident it can wait, email or slack the foster coordinator instead.

If it is a true emergency, the Doobert team will contact the foster coordinator immediately. Do not take a foster animal to any outside veterinarian without prior approval from the foster coordinator.

# Litterbox Training

Learning how to use the litter box is an important part of early feline development, but "litter training" is a bit of a misnomer! Kittens naturally understand the litter box and will be drawn to use it as long as you provide them the proper encouragement.

## Introducing Litter

Newborn kittens need to be stimulated to go to the bathroom, and won't start using the litter box until around 3 weeks of age. Once the kitten has reached 3 weeks, it's appropriate to introduce them to the litter box. Every kitten develops at a different pace, so be patient with the kitten and continue stimulating until you're confident she is using the litter box with regularity.

## Kitten Safe Litter

Kittens learn and explore in the same way human babies do--with their mouths. This means that you'll need to choose a litter that is safe for kittens so that they don't consume something toxic or dangerous. Kittens should not be given litter products that contain fragrances, harsh chemicals, clay, or clumping properties. Opt for non-clumping corn based litter or natural pellets.

## Choosing the Right Box

Kittens require an open-top, shallow litter box that is easy for them to access and locate. Eliminate obstacles such as tall or covered boxes and provide something that is easy for them to walk in and out of until they're big enough for an adult litter box. For very young kittens under 8 weeks old, you can even use a cardboard tray (such as those used for canned kitten food) to provide a shallow lip for the tiny kitten to walk over.

## Placement

Equally important is the placement. Kittens tend to be drawn to corners or other areas away from their main home base, so start by placing the litter box in a corner that is clean from clutter. A puppy pad placed under the box will make clean-up easier, as they can be messy learners.

When litter training kittens, you want to make it extremely easy for them to find a litter box at all times. Kittens have a natural drive to cover their waste, and will look for the most convenient space to do so. This means you'll want to keep them near a box throughout the duration of their transition, and avoid providing any messy areas such as piles of laundry where the kitten might develop bad habits. Ideally, a 3-8 week old kitten learning to use a box should be confined to one room so that they can easily find the litter box at all times. For older kittens acclimating to a larger space, it's best to offer multiple options so that the kitten is always within 10 feet of a litter box.

# Litterbox Training

## Positive Reinforcement

Kittens do well with positive reinforcement--not punishment. Provide praise when kittens use the box correctly!

If the kitten uses an area outside of the box, immediately clean and disinfect the area to avoid scent soaking or scent associations. If the kitten is using bedding or laundry, keep these items off the floor. If a kitten is frequently using the same location, place a litter box in the location. In most cases, switching to a new litter or litterbox will resolve issues.

## Keep it Clean

Clean the box throughout the day (minimum twice a day) to encourage them to continue forming good habits. A clean box is more pleasant for you and for them, and will keep them coming back every time they need to use the bathroom. Keeping it clean makes it easier to assess health, track frequency of poops, and catch any abnormal stool.

# Socialization

Socialization is a very important part of kitty care. It is your job to convince them that humans are kind and loving.



Allow all kittens to acclimate to their new environment before trying to play with them. This usually takes just one day. Note: time varies kitten to kitten. Adult cats and moms can sometimes take a few weeks to acclimate.

Outgoing kittens can be cuddled and played with.

Shy kittens need to have many short encounters to encourage them that humans are friendly. Hold shy kittens calmly, stroking them and talking to them in a comforting voice. Put the kitten down before he or she starts squirming. If you repeat this often - perhaps only 30 seconds at a time - shy kittens will begin to love the experience.

Fearful kittens will run away from you when you try to approach them. Simply sit on the floor calmly and wait for them to come to you. Let them become accustomed to your presence and, when they finally approach, use a calming voice and stroke them gently.

Not all kittens will grow into cats that love to be cuddled and held. This is ok! Although some people want affectionate cats, others prefer independent pets.

Feral adult cats often can never be socialized and it is important that we understand and respect boundaries as much as we possibly can.



# Socialization

## KITTEN PLAYTIME DOS AND DONT'S

Do	Don't
<p>Use plush toys, wand toys, crinkle balls, tunnels, and other enrichment items.</p> <p>Actively play with the kitten using toys you can move, multiple times throughout the day.</p> <p>Allow the kittens to catch the toys and bite/kick.</p> <p>Reward kittens after playtime with a treat or meal to simulate the satisfaction of eating after a kill.</p> <p>Redirect aggressive behaviors toward an appropriate target.</p>	<p>Use your hands to taunt and play.</p> <p>Expect the kitten to play on her own all the time.</p> <p>Tease the kittens by withholding toys.</p> <p>Engage in the hunt without letting them experience the fruits of their kill.</p> <p>Strike, spray, or yell at kittens who play too rough.</p>

## KITTEN TOY SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

TOY TYPE	PRECAUTIONS
<b>PLUSH TOYS AND KICKERS</b>	<p>These are a great option for chewing, kicking, and hunting! Just make sure that there aren't any small pieces that can be bitten off and swallowed, such as beads or buttons, and avoid feathers that can be chewed and swallowed. Catnip-filled plush toys are fun, too, but most kittens won't react until they're about four months or older.</p>
<b>CRINKLE BALLS</b>	<p>Wonderfully crunchy, these toys make an enticing sound when tossed! These are generally safe, but if you see that the kitten is shredding or swallowing a piece of it, opt for something sturdier like a plush with a crinkle inside of it.</p>
<b>TUBES AND TUNNELS</b>	<p>Kittens love hiding, and these enrichment items make a great place to do just that! Just be sure there are no hanging strings where the kitten could get hurt.</p>

# THE SPECTRUM OF Feline Fear, Anxiety, and Stress



## SEVERE SIGNS - FIGHT/ AGGRESSION (FAS LEVEL 5)

- Offensive aggression: pupils constricted or dilated, cat leaning forward, ears forward, moving forward, whiskers forward, tail is an inverted L (first inch of tail is horizontal with ground then the tail drops down), rump raised higher than front (on tip toes), staring, may be growling
- Defensive aggression: ears back, pupils dilated, hunkered down, tail tight or tucked or tail thrashing, whiskers back, hissing, lips pulled back, staring, furrowed brow, could be swatting

## SEVERE SIGNS - FLIGHT/FREEZE/FRET (FAS LEVEL 4)

- Flight: actively trying to escape, pupils dilated, ears back, whiskers back, tail down and bottle brushed, fleeing, turning to look at stimulus
- Freeze/Fret: tonic immobility, dilated pupils, body flattened and tense, tail tucked, increased respiratory rate, ears back, staring, whiskers back

## MODERATE SIGNS (FAS LEVEL 2-3)

- Ears further to the side, more pupil dilation but not completely dilated, increase in respiratory rate, brow furrowed, looking at stimulus instead of looking away, tail tight to body, possible tip of tail moving some, whiskers back, body crouched and leaning away

## MILD/SUBTLE SIGNS (FAS LEVEL 1)

- Avoids eye contact, turns head away without moving away, partially dilated pupils, head held just slightly down, slight brow furrowing, whiskers slightly back, ears partially to the side, body shifted slightly away, tail closer to body with possibly some slight flicking

## PERKED/INTERESTED/ ANXIOUS? (FAS LEVEL 0-1)

- Looking directly but not intensely, tail up and winding, mouth closed with loose lips, ears perked forward, whiskers forward, slight pupil dilation

## RELAXED (FAS LEVEL 0)

- Sleeping
- Neutral: ears in neutral position, brow soft, eyes soft, mouth closed with relaxed lips, body loose, tail carriage U-shaped, pupils normal dilation
- Friendly greeting: tail up and winding, may elevate rear end slightly by standing on toes, ears neutral, forward, or slightly back, might have squinty eyes, brow relaxed, might cheek mark or rub on person or object

FAS LEVEL 4-5

FAS LEVEL 2-3

FAS LEVEL 0-1

H-HO-001-EN-2404



Question	Answer
How long do I have to foster?	Time frames can be as short as a single overnight emergency to as long as it takes to get adopted. Speak to the coordinator regarding any time constraints!
What if a foster is too much or does not fit lifestyle needs?	Reach out to the foster coordinator immediately! They will either help problem solve or facilitate the return of foster animals.
Will this automatically deter me from foster in the future?	Not necessarily! Animal are unpredictable. The coordinator can suggest animals that will be a better fit.
What if I don't have experience?	No worries! The DRHS will provide all necessary training and resource guides to get you started!
Where can I find more reputable information on cat/kitten care?	There is tons of info out there! Two highly reccomeded places to look include the National Kitten Coalition and the Kitten Lady! Need help finding resources? Please reach out to the foster coordinator!
What if a bite occurs?	A bite references any incident in which teeth break skin. Reach out to the foster coordinator asap. Take photographs of the bite. Seek medical care at Medical Associates Urgent Care; if this is closed, proceed to Mercy Emergency Hospital. Upon initial intake, please inform them that the bite occurred while fostering for the DRHS. When it is safe to do so, please stop in person to fill out a bite report at the DRHS and check in with the foster coordinator.
Can I adopt my foster?	Absolutely! Fosters get a 50% off discount for any foster they decide to adopt! (Exceptions may apply and each foster will still need to go through the traditional adoption process!)



Question	Answer
<p>Can I introduce my foster to friends and family? / Can I introduce foster animals to owned animals?</p>	<p>Check in with the foster coordinator first when looking to introduce to people outside of the household! You will need explicit approval prior to introducing any animals. Every animal has its own unique needs and requirements!</p>
<p>What if I'd like supplies the DRHS does not have on hand?</p>	<p>Reach out to the coordinator! The DRHS can often source items and/or purchase out of necessity. If unable to obtain and not deemed necessary by the DRHS, you are welcome to purchase out of pocket on your own!</p>
<p>What if a foster passes away in my care?</p>	<p>Contact the foster coordinator immediately and let them know the circumstances and time of death. Bring the covered remains to the shelter as soon as you can during staff hours.</p>



# Guidebook Acknowledgment / Receipt

I understand that the Foster Guidebook contains essential information about the policies, procedures, and expectations of the Dubuque Regional Humane Society (DRHS) related to the handling and care of animals. I understand that it is my responsibility to read this guidebook and to contact the Foster Coordinator with any questions not addressed in these materials. I acknowledge that the DRHS may modify, revoke, suspend, or change any policies or procedures described in this guidebook at any time. I understand that my foster relationship with the DRHS is voluntary and may be terminated by either me or the DRHS at any time, with or without cause. I further understand that this guidebook does not constitute a contract and does not supersede the terms of any signed Foster Agreement. In the event of any inconsistency, the Foster Agreement will control.

### **Release of Liability, Assumption of Risk, and Confidentiality**

I understand that caring for and handling animals may involve risks, including but not limited to scratches, bites, allergic reactions, injuries, or property damage. In consideration of being permitted to participate in the DRHS Foster Program, I knowingly and voluntarily assume all risks associated with these activities. I hereby release, waive, and hold harmless the DRHS, its employees, officers, directors, and volunteers from any and all liability for injuries, damages, or losses I may sustain in connection with my foster activities, including those arising from the ordinary negligence of the DRHS or its representatives. I understand that this waiver does not apply to injuries caused by gross negligence or intentional misconduct, which cannot be waived under Iowa law.

In the event of accident, injury, or illness, I authorize the DRHS to seek emergency medical treatment on my behalf. I understand that I am responsible for any resulting medical expenses unless the DRHS expressly agrees otherwise in writing. I further understand that I must complete the Foster Onboarding process and sign a Foster Agreement before beginning any foster activities.

As a foster for the DRHS, I may have access to confidential or proprietary information that is not generally available to the public. I agree to maintain the confidentiality of this information during and after my time as a foster. I will not copy, disclose, or distribute confidential information without prior written authorization from DRHS management. All confidential information remains the property of the DRHS.

I acknowledge that public relations are an important part of the DRHS mission and hereby grant permission for the DRHS to use photographs or images of me for promotional, educational, fundraising, and public relations purposes in any media now known or later developed.

Foster Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Foster Name (print) \_\_\_\_\_