

JHACC  
CAT/KITTEN  
FOSTER CARE MANUAL

Foster Coordinator: Catherine Cornelius

Email: [catherine@jhacc.org](mailto:catherine@jhacc.org)

Phone: 970-625-8808 ext 1007

Days off: Sat & Sun

Table of Contents

Foster Baby Timeline.....

Scheduling Appointments.....

Preparing Your Home and Family.....

Getting Acquainted.....

Dog and Cat Introductions.....

Daily Care for Mom with Kittens.....

Young Kitten Care.....

Problem Signs.....

Supplemental Feeding for Nursing Kittens with Mom.....

Daily Care for Orphaned Kittens.....

Safe Feeding.....

Elimination.....

Transitioning Kittens to Wet Food.....

Daily Care for Kittens Eating On Their Own.....

Bathing Kittens.....

Socializing Your Foster Kitten.....

Cleaning and Sanitizing.....

Hand Hygiene.....

Signs of Illness.....

Kitten Sizing Stomach Chart.....

Thank you so much for your interest in fostering cats/kittens for Journey Home Animal Care Center!

By opening up your home to foster pets, you're not only helping to save lives, you're providing the individual attention and care these cats/kittens desperately need.

This kitten foster manual has information on preparing for, bring home and caring for foster cats/kittens to prepare them for a forever home.

Do not hesitate to call the foster coordinator if you need any help or assistance with fostering your kittens. We are always here for you, ready to answer any questions that you may have.

## **Kitten Manual**

### **Foster Baby Timeline**

#### **0-4 Weeks of age:**

- Kittens that have a mom will drink only her milk until about 3-4 weeks of age.
- Orphaned kittens will need to be bottle/syringe fed formula every 2 hours then potty'd after each feeding.
- The babies should be vigorously eating and gaining weight. We supply scales for our foster parents to measure out weight gain. Daily weights are preferred, before and after feeding takes place.
  - Eyes will begin to open around 2 weeks of age.
- Death in this stage is not uncommon with orphaned babies and death is heartbreaking but not a failure.

#### **4-5 Weeks of age:**

**\* Kittens under 5 weeks of age may still need an additional heating source since they cannot regulate their body temperature. If this is the case, you will be provided with a heating pad to use. It is very important to make sure that the kitten has an area with no additional heating where they can go if they become too hot\***

- Solid foods can start to be introduced. Kibble can be moistened; canned food can be mixed with formula to create gruel.

- Babies should be running and playing often.
- New textures can be introduced, toys, flooring, blankets.
  - Eyes will be open and blue.

### **6 Weeks of age:**

- Kittens that have a mom will start to wean at this time.
- Moms will not be able to have spay surgery until her milk is dried up. Separating mom from her babies helps with drying.
- Everyone including mom (if applicable) will need to see our on-staff veterinarian for vaccinations which will be scheduled by the foster coordinator. This can start as early as 4 weeks.
  - The kittens should be eating kibble and canned food.
    - They should be drinking water regularly.
    - Eye color will begin to change to the adult color.
    - Molars will be coming in and will be very sharp.
- Weekly weight check-in with Foster Coordinator to prepare for surgery.

### **7-8 Weeks of age:**

- At week seven if babies are not weaned yet it is time.
- Kittens have to be 8 weeks old and at least 2lbs to qualify for spay neuter surgery.
  - On the day of surgery please arrive between 8:00am – 8:30am for drop off.

### **Scheduling appointments:**

The foster coordinator will schedule all the appointments and appointments will typically be scheduled on Monday at JHACC.

When your foster cat/kittens' weights are 8 weeks they can be spayed or neutered.

### **Preparing your Home and Family:**

Note: Foster kittens and cats must remain indoors only!

- Remove small, ingestible objects from the environment; this may include small toys or parts of toys, elastic bands, paper clips, string, sewing pins and needles, ornaments, tinsel, and more.
  - Keep toilet bowls closed, especially when small kittens are in the home.
  - Secure window screens in any open windows no matter how small the opening.
- Ensure that side panels on window AC units are securely in place and cannot be moved or opened.

- Secure loose electrical wires, cords for window blinds and other potential hazards.
- Remove plants and flowers from the vicinity of your foster animal's space; many types of decorative vegetation are highly toxic to animals.
  - Do not offer any human food to your foster animal.
- Keep your home reasonably climate-controlled (if it's too hot for you, it's likely too hot for your foster)
- Ensure visitors do not leave doors or windows open, and are conscientious about safety measures that are in place for your foster.
  - Discard old or uneaten animal food and keep fresh water available at all times.
  - Secure/remove household toxins such as cleaning agents, pesticides and solvents.

### **Getting Acquainted:**

Being in a new environment is stressful for most cats. Allow your foster cat time to adjust to your home while being housed in "safe space" such as roomy crate or a separate room.

Block off small areas where the cat may try to hide and get stuck.

It is much safer to keep a frightened new cat safely in one cat-proofed room. Open up your cat carrier and let the cat decide whether she wants to explore or wants to remain in the carrier.

Many times, a cat will remain in her carrier for hours.

Never try to pull your new foster cat out of hiding. Instead, use toys or treats to encourage her to come out. If your foster cat still won't come out, let her be. Cats need time to adjust to their new environments.

Some cats may need less than a day to adjust; others may need days or weeks to be comfortable enough to explore the entire house without fear. This is normal cat behavior.

### **Dog and Cat Introductions:**

If you have a personal pet who are dogs, you'll need to make the introduction to the foster cat/kitten carefully and safely. You will need to have your dog under control and know which behaviors are appropriate when interacting with a cat.

Allow your foster cat/kitten to settle down and get to know it's surrounds first.

Please speak with the foster coordinator if you need additional instructions.

### **Daily Care for Mom with Kittens:**

Most mothers, even first-timers, can take care of themselves and their offspring quite well. For the most part, you will leave mom and babies alone while observing for any signs of trouble.

Provide a nesting box for nursing mothers so babies can't get out but mom can when she needs some peace and quiet.

Only half of the nesting box should have extra warmth added.

### **Young Kitten Care:**

A kitten's survival depends on getting consistent nutrition and warmth.

It is very important that newborns nurse as soon as possible after birth. If they do not find a nipple on their own, put their mouth close to one and monitor to make sure they start to nurse.

Continued healthy nursing behavior is crucial for kitten survival. In order to tell if the kittens are nursing, gently pick up each kitten and feel for a round belly full of milk. A flat or concave belly indicates that the kitten may not be nursing. You should perform this check once or twice a day.

Also, visually confirm that each kitten is actually latching onto mom. A scale works great to log each kitten's weight. Healthy kittens should gain a little weight each day.

### **Problem Signs:**

During the first two weeks, kittens should spend approximately 90% of the time eating and sleeping. Newborn kittens are very susceptible to infections and can die within 24 hours. Please contact the foster coordinator if there is excessive crying.

### **Supplemental Feeding for Nursing Kittens with Mom:**

When adequate nursing isn't possible, supplemental feeding one to three times per day may be recommended, especially for any litter with more than five kittens. We will supply you with Kitten Milk Replacer (KMR) for supplemental feeding.

The temperature of the milk replacer can be tested on your forearm and should be about the same as one's skin.

**\*Do not hold kittens on their backs like human babies or squeeze the bottle while feeding- this can cause kittens to aspirate the milk, choke and/or catch pneumonia\***

If replacement feeding is elected, kittens less than two weeks of age should be fed every 3 to 4 hours. Kittens 2 to 4 weeks old do well with feedings every 4-6 hours. Don't feel like you have

to wake them up to feed- if they're full enough to sleep peacefully, let them rest until they wake up hungry.

### **Daily Care for Orphaned Kittens:**

Please note that young kittens are extremely fragile, and some may die no matter how well you take care of them. Remain attentive to your foster kittens and provide them with the best possible care; as difficult as it is to lose a foster pet, you should not blame yourself. In the unfortunate event your foster kitten passes away, contact the Foster Coordinator as soon as possible.

### **Safe Feeding:**

Kittens should be warm before feeding to digest food properly. Prepare kittens for feeding by placing them on their stomachs or wrapping them in a small towel like taco if they are fussy.

Support the lower body with your hand and hold the head steady with your thumb and forefinger.

Never force milk down by squeezing the bottle since this can cause aspiration.

Make sure you do not overfeed the kitten by checking her tummy for fullness while feeding.

After bottle feeding, gently burp the kitten. This will allow any air ingested to be expelled, however, you won't hear the kitten "burp".

After the kitten has finished feeding, you must now stimulate the kitten to urinate and defecate. Kittens should defecate at least once a day and should urinate every time.

### **Elimination:**

If you are fostering orphaned kittens, or mom is unable to care for her babies, it is necessary to stimulate kittens less than 3 weeks of age to urinate and defecate.

The foster caregiver must therefore gently massage the kitten's genital area with a warm damp cloth or cotton ball. This should be done after each feeding, and each kitten should pass urine and have a bowel movement at least once a day.

Kittens will eventually learn how to use a litter box on their own but accidents are common. If they defecate outside the litter box, move the feces to the litter box. You can also place kittens inside their litter box after meals.

### **Transitioning Kittens to Wet Food:**

Transitioning kittens should be fed “gruel,” which is a pudding-like consistency mix of KMR or water and wet kitten food.

You are welcome to experiment with different consistencies but the gruel should be gradually thickened to get them ready for solid food. Leftover gruel should be discarded immediately if not eaten. Canned food that has not been made into gruel yet can be covered and refrigerated for up to 48 hours.

Fresh water should be provided at all times for transitioning kittens.

This transition period can take days to weeks.

### **Daily Care for Kittens Eating on their Own:**

Kittens who are eating completely on their own will need to be fed wet food about three times throughout the day. They should always have dry food and water available.

### **Bathing Kittens:**

Kittens should be kept clean and will often need bathing since they are so messy.

Less is more for bathing kittens.

Spot clean the kitten with warm water, and if there is food stuck on it’s face, use a warm damp cloth.

Kittens cannot be put back into their home until they are completely dry. You can use a blow dryer on the lowest setting after towel drying.

### **Socializing your Foster Kitten:**

Socializing is critical for young kittens. They will need multiple short socializing sessions on a daily basis, as well as playtime and enrichment to help them learn to enjoy being around people.

Make sure to use every meal time as a socializing event. Offer kittens food and sit with them while they eat.

Short socialization sessions several times a day are better than one or two long sessions.

Work on getting them used to household noises.

Always pair food or playtime with your presence.

Give them safe objects to explore, such as paper bags and cardboard boxes.

Do not allow them to play or bite your hands or feet.

### **Cleaning and Sanitizing:**

It is very important to repeatedly and thoroughly clean and disinfect any areas of your home where your foster pets are- and any objects foster pets contact.

Daily and weekly cleanings will help keep your foster kittens and any other animals happy and healthy.

All surfaces may not be easily cleaned and disinfected in the environment but thorough and repeated washing and vacuuming helps in decreasing the number of germs in the environment.

### **Hand Hygiene:**

Hand washing is critical- it is the most important way of reducing transmission of disease between animals. Clean hands thoroughly with soap and water before and after handling animals or items in the animal's environment.

### **Signs of Illness:**

**If you observe any of the symptoms listed below, call the Emergency Foster Line.**

All animals at the shelter are evaluated for age, health, and temperament before being placed in a foster home. There are no guarantees that the animal will not get sick later on so their initial isolation from your companion animals is crucial. We are happy to provide all necessary veterinary care for your foster animals, but cannot treat your resident animals if they become infected as well. **All foster animals MUST see an JHACC veterinarian.** You cannot take the foster animals to your personal veterinarian without prior approval from the Foster Coordinator. Many of the diseases that we deal with in a shelter environment have an incubation period. Your foster animal may have been infected with a disease before they came to the shelter and/or before going to foster, but will not show symptoms until after you have brought them home. Below are some symptoms to look for.

**Symptoms - Call IMMEDIATELY for the following symptoms (if it is after hours, call the emergency line and we will guide you):**

- Vomiting blood
- Severe diarrhea, especially in combination with vomiting
- Excessive blood in diarrhea (especially in puppies)

- Labored breathing
- Unconsciousness, seizures, uneven pupil dilation, or fainting
- Severe lethargy or dehydration
- Broken bones

**Other symptoms – Call during regular operating hours:**

- **Vomiting** – more than three times
- **Dehydration** – To check for dehydration, lift the skin between the animal's shoulders and drop it back into place. If the skin drops back slowly or bunches up the animal may be dehydrated. Dry, sticky gums are another sign of dehydration.
- **Diarrhea** – Although common with young animals, if left unchecked it can lead to death see below for sample collection/analysis procedure of a fecal sample.
- **Fever**
- **Lethargy** – or other behavior changes for more than one day
- **Weight loss** – in an animal eating normally and failure to gain in a young animal
- **Loss of Appetite** – for more than two days in adult animals or for more than two feedings in very young animals
- **Trouble eating or mouth pain**
- **Excessive drinking** – for more than three days in adult animals or for more than three feedings in very young animals
- **Increased urination, difficult urination, or inability to urinate** – watch for sudden accidents in the house, straining, bloody, or discolored urine.
- **Sneezing** – with or without nasal discharge for more than one day
- **Eye problems** – squinting, redness, swelling, or discharge
- **Ear problems** – head shaking, scratching at ears, or ear discharge
- **Coughing** – for more than one day
- **Hair loss** – with or without scabs, scales, crusts, scratching

## Kitten Bottle Feeding and Stomach Capacity Chart

Estimated Kitten Age (weeks)	Kitten Weight (lbs, oz)	Kitten Weight (grams)	Daily Caloric Requirement*	Amount of Formula Per Day (ml)**	Amount Per Feeding (ml)*	Approximate Number of Feedings Per Day***
< 1 week	2 oz	57 g	11 kcal	15 ml	2 ml	7
	3 oz	85 g	17 kcal	23 ml	3 ml	7
	4 oz	113 g	23 kcal	31 ml	5 ml	7
1 week	5 oz	142 g	28 kcal	38 ml	6 ml	7
	6 oz	170 g	34 kcal	46 ml	7 ml	7
	7 oz	198 g	40 kcal	54 ml	8 ml	7
2 weeks	8 oz	227 g	45 kcal	61 ml	9 ml	7
	9 oz	255 g	51 kcal	69 ml	10 ml	7
	10 oz	283 g	57 kcal	77 ml	11 ml	7
3 weeks*	11 oz	312 g	62 kcal	84 ml	12 ml	6-7
	12 oz	340 g	68 kcal	92 ml	14 ml	6-7
	13 oz	369 g	74 kcal	100 ml	15 ml	6
4 weeks*	14 oz	397 g	79 kcal	107 ml	16 ml	5
	15 oz	425 g	85 kcal	115 ml	17 ml	5
	16 oz (1 lb)	454 g	91 kcal	123 ml	18 ml	5
5 weeks*	1 lb, 1 oz	482 g	96 kcal	130 ml	19 ml	4
	1 lb, 2 oz	510 g	102 kcal	138 ml	20 ml	4
	1 lb, 3 oz	539 g	108 kcal	146 ml	22 ml	4
5 weeks*	1 lb, 4 oz	567 g	113 kcal	153 ml	23 ml	4



