



FOSTER CARE MANUAL

CATS AND KITTENS



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The SPCA Foster Care Volunteer

A foster care volunteer plays a special part in saving lives at the SPCA. Many animals that come in to the shelter are not immediately ready to be placed up for adoption. These animals may be injured, sick, too young, underweight, unsocialized, pregnant, or orphaned. To keep these animals at the shelter and rehabilitate them is not always in their best interest. Kittens at the SPCA can be exposed to life threatening viruses, young cats with broken limbs may not receive important socialization, and some cats just do not do well behaviorally or medically while at the shelter.

This is where foster care volunteers come in. These volunteers are highly committed individuals and families who give weeks or months of their time to homeless animals needing extra care. The efforts of the foster parents save hundreds of lives a year.

Having a foster care program is a celebration of the success of the SPCA in lowering the number of homeless animals in Erie County. Ten years ago, sending hundreds of kittens into foster care would have been extremely difficult due to a lack of available foster homes. Today, thanks to volunteers like you, the situation is much more positive.

Overall Responsibility of the Foster Home

Foster parents are responsible for providing a warm, clean and safe environment for the animal(s) placed into their home through the program. They are responsible for providing daily care, cleaning, feeding and the administration of prescribed medication. Foster parents are responsible for providing socialization for the pets in their care and contacting the SPCA for any medical problems that might arise. Foster parents are responsible for bringing their kittens to the shelter for vaccinations and deworming at six weeks of age. Kittens are returned to the shelter when they weigh two pounds, usually around eight to nine weeks of age. During the summer months, lack of room at the shelter may mean that you need to keep the foster animals longer. Mother cats can be returned when they are no longer nursing, usually two weeks after the kittens are weaned. **The SPCA is responsible for providing all supplies and food to the foster home and providing all necessary medical and emergency care.** Volunteers must understand that if they seek medical help outside of the SPCA, they take full financial responsibility in doing so.

Time Commitment

The amount of time that a foster animal needs to remain in your home does vary depending on the specific situation. Some kittens may require only a week or two, while the fostering of a mother cat may be upwards of two months. When the animal is placed in your care, you will be advised of the estimated foster duration and possible return date. People who work-full time can still be wonderful foster parents.

Emotional Investment

Foster parents often form bonds and become emotionally involved with the animal(s) they are caring for. It is wonderful when this happens but does not obligate you to adopt the animal. The same considerations for any person adopting a pet should be maintained for the foster parent. The volunteer must determine if adopting the foster would be a good fit in their household. If you do not adopt, after returning the animal to the shelter you can check on his or her status.

It is important to understand that sometimes an animal will not survive, even with the best of care. Each foster parent will handle this differently. Please feel free to discuss your feelings with any staff member at the SPCA.

Risks

There is always a risk of bringing disease (or injury) home to your own pets when you bring home a foster animal. The SPCA assesses the health of the animal(s) before they are placed into foster homes. If there are known risks, you will be advised at the time of placement and it is your choice whether to take on the responsibility.

Pregnancy and Care of the Pregnant Cat

When a pregnant cat comes in to the SPCA we generally have very little information about her background. Some cats that appear large may not deliver for weeks, while some that appear average may give birth within a few hours of being placed into your home. We do our best at the shelter to give you an estimate on when the kittens may be delivered.

Before placing a pregnant cat in foster, a blood test is completed to determine that the cat does not have feline AIDS (FIV) or feline leukemia (FELV.) There are several other diseases that we are unable to test for and conditions that can arise unbeknownst to us when placing a cat in your care. Consequently, there is some risk to you or to your pets from taking in a cat whose background is unknown. The cat and/or kittens should be kept in a separate room from your resident pets for this reason.

The domestic cat's gestation is approximately 63 days in length. As the gestation period comes to an end the pregnant cat becomes restless, searching for a suitable den or nest in which to deliver her kittens. She looks for somewhere private, quiet and dry. Litter sizes vary, but three to six kittens is average.

Usually ravenous, the pregnant cat's desire for food disappears as she goes into labor. Some cats will hate interference at this point, while some may seem to enjoy having company during their labor. Most will gladly stay in a box provided by the foster parent for the birth of the kittens, but others might try to hide in closets or drawers. If the mother cat attempts to find a different location to give birth, gently put her back in the place you have selected. Usually she will comply, but from time to time a very independent cat will only be happy giving birth in private. The mother cat should be provided with a box that is large

enough for her and her kittens, ideally measuring at least two feet by two feet and lined with soft towels, sheets or blankets. (A brand new large litter pan works well)

Labor

When the first stage of labor starts, the mother cat's rate of breathing increases and she may begin to breathe through her mouth and purr rhythmically. This stage may last for hours and the foster parent should not be overly concerned.

Provided that the mother cat is happy, there is no need at this point for interference. It is important to ensure that you have all of the necessary supplies and that the birthing room is warm enough. The room temperature should be at least 72°, as a cold room can cause hypothermia in the newborn kitten.

A cat may be well into labor before a foster parent even notices. A mother cat often has her kittens in the middle of the night without the foster parent even being aware that she is in labor.

Giving birth is a lengthy process for the average cat. With a typical litter of four kittens, and a typical delay between births of one half hour, the birth of the kittens may last two hours. However, some cats give birth much more quickly. A typical delay of one half hour gives the mother cat time to tend to the newborn kitten before the next arrives. Occasionally, a cat will rest between kittens for up to 24-hours. As long as she is not having contractions there is no need to panic if there is considerable time between kittens.

As labor progresses, there will be some vaginal discharge, colorless at first but later becoming blood tinged. If at any time she has a foul smelling discharge or if bleeding is profuse, this may be a sign of trouble and you need to call for help. Any sign of bright red blood is also indicative of a need to call for help. Please call the Foster Care Department at 716-629-3509.

The second stage of labor begins when the mother cat experiences contractions of her abdominal muscles and starts to bear down. Contractions become more frequent, and when they occur about every 30 seconds, delivery is near. The mother cat will repeatedly lick her genital area and may show signs of agitation. You may soothe her by talking to her and gently rubbing her belly.

Birth

The first amniotic sac will soon come into view. In a regular birth, the enclosed kitten will be born within 15 to 30 minutes. Very often, the mother's constant licking will rupture the sac. If this happens you should remain calm and resist the temptation to interfere. If the kitten is being born head first, a few more contractions should release it.

In about one-third of all births, the hind legs emerge first. This is only slightly more difficult for the mother cat than a head-first birth. In a true breech birth (the kitten is arriving hindquarters and tail first) the mother cat may become agitated and turn around repeatedly in attempts to release the wedged kitten. She may

find it easier to bear down if she can push with her hind legs against the box or your hand. Even with this help, the birth may take 20 minutes. The mother cat's persistence will probably ensure delivery. If she should weaken or become distressed, you should be ready to call the SPCA for help. In most births there are no complications, and only in a very few do serious difficulties arise.

There are three main phases that the mother cat goes through once a kitten is born. The first phase will be to break away the birth sac that covers the kitten. Next, she will clean the nose and mouth of the newborn, enabling him or her to take his or her first breath. Lastly the mother cat bites through the umbilical cord, separating the kitten from the placenta. She will ingest the cord up to about an inch from the kitten's belly. The remaining cord should be left alone and will eventually dry up and fall off on its own. Following this she will often eat the entire placenta. This will provide the mother cat with nourishment. If the mother cat ignores the afterbirth, remove and discard it. After these crucial steps, the mother cat vigorously licks the kitten all over, helping the fur to dry and allowing the kitten to stay warm. The next kitten will soon arrive and the process will begin all over again.

Problems

Occasionally a new mother does not attempt to remove the sac from the kitten. She may not know what to do or may be too busy with the next delivery. In this case, give her a minute to realize what is needed, but if there is no sign of action, act quickly. Gently remove the membrane, being careful not to pull on the umbilical cord as it can easily cause a hernia. If the mother cat still does not begin to help, carefully cut the cord about one inch from the kitten's belly. Tie the cord off with dental floss at the cut end. Then, rub the kitten dry with a clean towel to remove the amniotic fluid and stimulate breathing. After the kitten is breathing well, place it close to the mother's belly. The kitten will usually find a nipple and begin to suck. This is generally enough to arouse the mother cat's natural instincts to take over.

Apart from a mother cat being unable to deliver a breech kitten, there are two other situations when it is vital to call the SPCA for help. The first situation is one in which the mother has strong contractions for two hours with no sign of a kitten appearing. This may be due to two kittens blocking the birth canal. The second situation is uterine inertia, when the mother suddenly appears to tire before or after the first kitten is born. This is different than a cat resting between births. She will seem generally exhausted and distressed, and help will be needed.

Occasionally a mother cat is very protective of her kittens. Carefully observe your foster cat before trying to handle her kittens or before putting your hands or face near the birthing place.

If you feel that your pregnant cat has gone beyond the point when she should have delivered her kittens, please call the SPCA immediately at 716-629-3509.

Kitten Development

After the kittens are born, the mother cat will clean herself and then settle down with her newborn kittens. Around this time, remove the soiled bedding and replace it with clean, warm bedding. Clean the box if necessary. Place the kittens back with the mother cat and allow them to nurse.

The first milk, called colostrum, is only produced for a few days. It is rich in protein and minerals and contains antibodies that protect the kittens from disease. For this reason it is very important that infant kittens nurse from their mother. The kittens will put on weight steadily, gaining as much as a half-ounce per day during the initial period of rapid growth.

Occasionally, a kitten will be pushed out by another kitten when it is attempting to nurse. This is normal, but if the same kitten is repeatedly kept from the nipple it will fall behind in growth and development. A kitten repeatedly pushed away by the mother may suffer a decrease in body temperature. If this occurs, warm the kitten and attempt to place it back with the mother cat. If this does not work, you will need to call for help. You may need to start feeding the kitten yourself. Careful examination of the kitten may reveal a defect such as a cleft pallet, or it may just be a “runt.”

A kitten will use heat receptors in its nose to find the nipple. Cat milk is high in fat and protein. Kittens compete for the most productive nipple and by two days of age, the kittens know which nipples are most productive. Kittens that latch onto the most productive nipples grow quicker.

At birth, a kitten is totally helpless, unable to even regulate its own body temperature. Within four days it is able to find its mother and crawl to her from two feet away. By two weeks old coordination is sufficiently developed for it to use its front legs, and by three weeks of age the kitten can stand tentatively. By seven weeks of age the kitten leaps, runs, and seems to have developed a near perfect sense of balance. Watching kittens grow is fascinating.

Kitten/Cat Developmental Periods

- Kittens are born with closed eyes and tiny folded-down ears
- The stump of the umbilical cord will dry up and fall off in about 5 days
- Eyes open between 5 and 13 days
- At approximately 18 days kittens begin to crawl and their ears begin to straighten
- Between two and three weeks teething begins
- By about three weeks a kitten can stand and weaning begins
- At four to five weeks a kitten can stand and eat at a bowl easily
- By five weeks it is becoming mischievous, playing and grooming itself
- By six weeks it can receive its first inoculation and deworming (Occasionally a kitten will require deworming at an earlier age)
- By 9 weeks of age, a kitten should be ready for adoption

Kitten Raising Guide

As a foster parent of young kittens, you have a wonderful opportunity to make sure your foster kittens get off on the right paw in life! Raising a kitten is a serious commitment. It takes time and effort to raise a confident, friendly cat. We are thrilled that you are up to the task!

Below are some guidelines based on years of research and experience. If you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Foster Care Department at 716 629-3509. If needed, you can also contact our Behavior Department at 716-629-3537 or SPCABehavior@aol.com.

Environment Needed to Raise Kittens

The ideal environment for raising a litter of kittens should be large enough to allow for adequate separation of food, water, litterbox and a sleeping space. The room should be temperature controlled so that kittens do not get too warm or too cold. Kittens (and mom if she is with her litter) need to have hiding options and vertical space. A comfortable sleeping space with a soft bed or blanket (possibly inside a hiding area like a cardboard box) is recommended, as well as having different surfaces (carpet, grass, tile, and wood) for the kittens to walk on and get used to. Objects for scratching are important, you will want to include both horizontal and vertical scratching objects and offer different surfaces such as cardboard, sisal rope, carpet, etc. Toys should also be included, such as ball type toys, real fur mice toys, Mylar/foil ball toys. If using strings, wand toys or other toys that could be ingested, they should be put away when you are not supervising the cat or kittens. As they are growing, food toys that encourage foraging and hunting for their food should be encouraged. The main idea is that cats and kittens should have as much choice and control in their environment as possible.

Developmental Stages and What to Do During Each

Developmental stages generally overlap and do not begin/end at specific points. They are very dynamic and continual. Some kittens may start/end different stages at different times, but the categories below are what you will see in the average kitten.

Research shows that kittens that are not given appropriately enriched environments and socialization during early development are less able to cope with normal life situations. All behavior patterns require nature (genetics) and nurture (environment) to develop. Appropriate stress in small amounts can be beneficial and produce adult cats who can cope with stress and respond confidently when they are in a less than perfect situation. On the flip side, too much stress can cause anxiety. It is critically important that we get it right to help ensure we encourage the development of confident and appropriate cats. The tips below will help you do just that.

BIRTH – 2 WEEKS (Neonatal Stage)

SENSORY DEVELOPMENT

- Newborn kittens do little but eat and sleep as they cannot yet see or hear. Their external ear begins to open between 1-2 weeks old. They begin to orient toward sound starting when they are one week old. Their tactile response is present at birth. The sense of smell is highly developed at birth;

they show avoidance to offensive odors by day two. They can purr starting around day two. Pain response is observed by day four.

- They also cannot regulate their own body temperature and need to be kept warm. You will need to provide an appropriate and safe heat source. Empty water or pop bottles (small ones – not two liter bottles that can crush a kitten) filled with hot water and wrapped in a towel work well, microwaveable heating pads and plug in heating pads also work. Be careful when using heating pads or other heat sources, to ensure that the heating source is not too hot which could hurt the kittens.

NUTRITION AND FEEDING

- If you have kittens without a mother, you will need to bottle feed them on a regular schedule to provide appropriate nourishment. Kittens are born with a suckling reflex that is strongest after waking. They generally will nurse on their mom for about eight hours/day for the first few weeks. Generally mom will initiate the feeding during this phase. Nipple preference is developed by day three. Olfaction guides them to the preferred nipple.
- Kittens generally double birth weight by one week old, triple birth weight by two weeks old, quadruple by three weeks old.



How to bottle feed a kitten (from aspcapro.org)

ELIMINATION BEHAVIORS

- If the mother is not present, you will also need to stimulate them to eliminate by using a warm, moist cotton ball or paper towel. Gently rub their anal/genital region, just enough to stimulate urination and/or defecation. This should be done regularly after feeding. They will be able to eliminate on their own sometime in week three.

2-3 WEEKS (Transitional Stage)

SENSORY DEVELOPMENT

- Kittens begin to see and hear during this time, although their senses are very crude and not well developed until much later (about eight weeks old). Eyes open between 1-2 weeks old.

- Their motor skills will start to develop also. They will be walking between 2-3 weeks old. Their sense of smell is mature by three weeks old.
- They also develop the ability to regulate their body temperature starting at week three and are fully able to do so by week seven.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- By the end of the third week, social relationships start to form. You should start to gently hold the kittens at least twice daily to start to familiarize them with the scent and feel of humans – if possible a variety of humans: children (supervised and age-appropriate for safety of fragile kittens, never leave children unattended with kittens) and men in particular. They begin to approach specific people and/or littermates at about 2-3 weeks old. Kittens (and cats) prefer to be held firmly, but not tightly and prefer gentle stroking to patting.
- Kittens raised with other kittens are more stressed when alone. It is especially important that kittens between 2-4 weeks of age have littermates to help calm them in strange surroundings. Being alone is a skill that you should work on later as the kittens develop.
- Self-play begins at two weeks old (batting objects).
- Kittens separated early from mom are more likely to develop decreased response/recovery rate when stressed and show increased emotionality.
- Hand-reared/orphaned kittens show decreased bite inhibition and are generally rougher in play than those raised with other kittens.

ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT/PLAY

- Start to expose them to environmental sounds (vacuum cleaners, TVs (ESPN is great for male voices, cheering crowds and buzzers/whistles, etc.) Likewise, when they start to investigate these new things (sounds, sights, etc.) allow them to investigate and interact with them as much as is safely possible.

NUTRITION AND FEEDING

- Nursing begins to change from mom-initiated solely to more initiation by kittens. By end of week five, it is generally 50% kitten-initiated. Some of this is because milk teeth erupt between 2-5 weeks old.
- Malnutrition has significant effect on development. Increases reaction to external stimuli, decreases responsiveness to other cats. Malnourished moms often have kittens with poor brain/physical development, increased aggressive playfulness in males, increased climbing behavior in females, increased vocalizations and decreased bonding in moms. Severe deprivation permanently affects learning capacity

3-9 WEEKS (Socialization Stage)

This period is sometimes called a “*critical period*” because it is so important to the behavioral development of the individual. *Experiences during this period have a strong influence and long-lasting effect on the cat’s future personality and temperament.*

SENSORY DEVELOPMENT

- Sound recognition of littermates or people begins around 3-4 weeks old which is coordinated with mature hearing and appearance of their defense response (the Halloween cat!) that stabilizes by week five. Kittens recognize unique individual vocal patterns by week nine. Their hearing range is similar to humans.
- Kittens’ eyesight continues to develop during this phase but will not reach adult sight capacity until about 2-4 months of age. Their depth perception, however, is well developed by four weeks of age. Because cats use up to 5% more available light than humans and have a larger visual field, they need light stimulation to develop normal vision. The most important time to have access to normal light cycles is between 4-5 weeks old. Cats are dichromatic meaning they see mostly yellow/blue and green wavelengths. They do have binocular vision which makes them good hunters – they see motion very well. They do not see details as humans do – their visual acuity is only about 10% of humans’ sight! Cross-eyed cats often are identified by 6-8 weeks old and have trouble locating objects in space due to decreased binocular vision compared to normal cats.
- Smell is very important to cats. They use it to identify individuals and acquire information about their environment. Their nasal area and olfactory bulb in their brain are bigger than humans but smaller than in dogs. As early as six weeks old the Flehmen response is present. They open their mouth and breathe in/out forcefully to force odor into their vomeronasal organ.
- Kittens display adult locomotion patterns by seven weeks old. They begin climbing between 3-6 weeks old. Their eye-paw coordination matures between 7-11 weeks old. They have the ability to “right” themselves in air between 3-7 weeks old. Around eight weeks of age they start to change their preferred location from their “nest” area to wherever mom is at the time. They also can retract their claws starting in week three.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- Primary social bonds are formed during this period. Mom starts to become progressively less important to the kittens as they begin to form relationships with one another and others in their environments. It is very important that kittens are introduced to various social partners like humans and dogs (if available). It is necessary to introduce them to non-cats between weeks 3-6. The weeks where the most impact overall is seen socially is between weeks 5-7. Research shows that kittens handled by humans between 5-7 weeks of age show a decreased fear of strangers. Cats socialized with people are friendlier to unfamiliar people, show decreased signs of distress when approached by strangers. It is important that there are multiple people handling the kittens, just one person is not enough to socialize them to all the possible humans they will meet in their future. You may,

however, notice a normal avoidance of humans between 6-7 weeks old. If you have done a good job socializing them with multiple humans, this often disappears by week 10.

NUTRITION AND FEEDING

- Nursing transitions are solely kitten-initiated. By week five mom starts to avoid kittens, avoidance increases for weaning purposes. Smaller litters nurse longer than larger litters. Milk has little nutritional value after week 12 which corresponds to the time when kittens would naturally start to disperse from the nest if raised without human intervention.
- They begin eating solid foods (generally wet/canned foods) by 4-7 weeks of age. This has a lot of individual variation in when they begin eating on their own. You will prepare to transition kittens from bottle feeding to eating canned kitten food over the course of several weeks. At 3-4 weeks of age start providing a slurry mixture that is easy to eat and digest. It is made with warm kitten formula or canned food. If you do not have formula available you can use warm canned food or water to moisten the kibble. Over several weeks start to change the consistency of the slurry from a runny liquid to a more chunky consistency to canned food.
- When you are feeding very young kittens and transitioning from the bottle to eating from a tray or bowl, you should monitor their food intake. You can offer each kitten the bottle after offering slurry for the first couple weeks. By 4–5 weeks of age you should slowly wean the kittens from expecting the bottle. However, you must monitor their weight every 2–3 days to make sure they are continuing to gain weight when you are weaning them from the bottle.
- During this time kittens should learn to eat from their own feeding station. Feeding the kittens in their own individual crates or carriers is a great idea that helps for a good association with the crate/carrier. We recommend that you also include food toys for the kittens (Kongs, ping pong balls with holes cut in them or other food-stuff able toys) for at least one feeding per day once the kittens are consistently eating dry food. Teaching kittens to compete for food by feeding out of one dish for the entire litter is a bad idea and can encourage resource/food guarding behaviors in developing kittens.
- They begin drinking water from a dish by week five.

ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT/PLAY

- Continue to expose the kittens safely to a variety of sights and sounds – think of things they may experience in a normal household.
- Object play peaks at 7-8 weeks old. It is a good idea to provide objects for them to explore such as cardboard boxes, paper bags, or even glad ware containers with lids attached but holes cut in them so they can place their paws inside and play with the toy placed inside such as a ball or toy mouse.
- Early weaning, all male litters show an increase in social play. Females who are raised with boys (single female in a litter of boys) develop more male play patterns. Social play begins at three

weeks (pawing, biting others kittens). Kittens begin stalking, chasing, arching back in week five, wrestling in week six, balancing on objects and climbing in week seven. Leaping presents between weeks 3-6 with a lot of individual variation for when kittens first display this behavior.

PHYSICAL HEALTH

- They will need to have their first vaccines when they are 6 weeks of age. If you are inviting people over to meet your kittens (and we encourage you to do so!), please make sure they leave shoes at the front door (or even outside!) and wash their hands before handling. These rules should be followed at least until after they have had their first set of vaccinations.

10 WEEKS – 6 MONTHS (Early Adolescence Stage)

By this time, the initial socialization period is complete. Kittens are in the awkward stage where they are between kitten hood and adolescence. Inadequate socialization and training becomes apparent during this stage. Behavior problems may start to arise. They will start to become more independent and push limits as a normal part of testing their environment and those in it. Social play starts decreasing at 12-14 weeks. Gender differences start to become apparent in social play around 12 weeks of age.

The kitten should be fully vaccinated at this time and should be exposed to the rest of the world. Make sure they are going for regular excursions outside of their home environment. Take them for car rides in their carriers that do NOT end in a trip for medical procedures.

6 MONTHS – 3 YEARS (Adolescence Stage)

This stage is defined by massive amounts of change both physically and behaviorally. Often, behavior problems that were not addressed before this age become more intense. Inadequate and/or inappropriate training and socialization result in a need for intense training and behavior modification at this age. The need for consistent and fair training is extremely important during this stage. It is normal for cats to start to push limits while searching to find their independence as individuals. We often also see them challenge the existing social structure. Continued socialization and training is critical during this period. When socialization and training are discontinued, they gradually de-socialize and eventually can become fearful, asocial, and aggressive or display other abnormal behaviors. The message is – kitten socialization is not enough!

3 YEARS – ONWARD (Adulthood Stage)

Social maturity occurs during this stage. By this time their personalities are more consistent and they display predictable behavior patterns. Cats with a great foundation grow into wonderful companions!

ELIMINATION – LITTERBOX TRAINING

- At about four weeks of age kittens start to “rake” in litterbox substrate or in dirt. They also start exploring their environment using their mouths and can easily ingest litter around 3-5 weeks of age so you need to avoid using clumping/plastic pellet litter types during early litterbox training. A few days after this oral exploration state, they often begin eliminating and covering in specific locations where they previously investigated. Also avoid using lines or heavy scents within the litterbox.
- Location for elimination is often identified by observation and olfactory cues. Often, watching mom or another adult cat using a box is one way they learn a location preference. Additionally, it is helpful to leave feces in the litterbox to “draw” the kittens toward it. You can also use kitten attract as an additive to the litter to help encourage the kittens to use the litterbox.
- Litterbox size is very important. Make sure that the litterbox is not so large the kittens cannot get into it (i.e. sides are too high for them to easily enter) or that it is so small that an adult cat won't use it because it is too small. Additionally, you will need to make sure that you clean enough that the number of cats/kittens using the box doesn't overload the box with urine/feces so that it becomes unattractive to use.
- Location is important. Make sure that the litterbox is in an easy to access location for the kittens. They should not have to climb stairs or eliminate in a loud or otherwise scary location. A place slightly out of the main traffic area but close enough they can get to it quickly is a good choice.

SCRATCHING

- Provide appropriate scratching options in prominent area near resting/sleeping area. Provide both vertical and horizontal scratching options. Various surfaces (sisal rope, cardboard, wood, carpet, etc.) should be provided and will allow you to learn what each kitten prefers as their scratching substrate.
- They learn by watching other cats using scratching locations. You can encourage them to use a scratching post by placing a toy they want to get on top of the post. This encourages climbing on the post. It is also helpful to make sure that no other scratching options (i.e. furniture) are present in the room where you have the scratching post.
- If needed at this young age, you can use Feliway to discourage scratching on items such as furniture by spraying Feliway on those locations. DO NOT spray Feliway on any surfaces you want the kittens to use for scratching!

WHEN TO CONTACT THE SPCA FOR BEHAVIOR CONCERNS

Kittens do not grow out of behavior problems. They grow into them. Therefore it is very appropriate to use the old saying “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” Below are some behavioral red flags that indicate that you should contact the foster department for assistance. If behavior concerns are addressed sooner rather than later there is a better chance that we can successfully change the behavior. It

may be “cute” when it is a small kitten, but the same behavior may be a significant concern if they are engaging in the same behaviors as a large adult cat. Don’t wait until it is too late to contact the Foster Care Department – it could save the kitten’s life.

1. **Resource/Food Aggression:** If your kitten at any time growls, snarls, freezes or otherwise displays protective or aggressive behaviors when they are in possession of/near a food bowl, toys, people or spaces (like a couch or bed.)
2. **Problems with Other Animals:** If your kitten is very fearful/afraid of other animals, aggressive toward other animals or behaving unpredictably toward other animals contact us immediately. Safety is first and foremost!
3. **Handling:** If your kitten is growling, snarling, biting or attempting to bite, freezing or showing other avoidance/aggressive behaviors when you touch, pet or hold them, let us know! This could be related to a physical condition or a developing behavior concern.
4. **Aggressive Behavior:** If your kitten displays any of the following, contact us: freezing, staring (hard stare), hissing, growling, biting/attempting to bite. Also note the situations in which these behaviors occur so they can be addressed with an appropriate behavior modification plan.
5. **Fearful or Anxious Behavior:** If your kitten is fearful, avoids social contact, meows and whines when you are separated from them (or when they are confined) or otherwise is not “happy”, let us know quickly so we can provide you with a plan to make the kitten feel more confident and comfortable.
6. **Something is just “off”:** Sometimes you know there is a problem, but you can’t define, specifically, why you think that. Your gut feeling is that something is not normal. Talking with a behavior professional, who will ask questions can help you figure out what the problem might be. Then we can identify the behavior concern and address it.

Again, it is a noble undertaking to raise kittens. With hard work and dedicated effort you will provide the foundation for the rest of the kitten’s life! It truly does take a village to raise a kitten – support from professionals can help make all your efforts well-focused, effective and efficient – not to mention FUN! Now that you have all the information you need...go play with your kittens!!

Caring for the Orphaned Kitten

The SPCA Serving Erie County receives orphaned kittens from the public at all ages, ranging from 1-day-old kittens to kittens that are very close to being two pounds and are almost ready for their spay/neuter surgeries. Orphaned kittens require the same care as kittens that have mothers, but in this case, the foster parent must take on the duties of the mother cat.

Kittens become orphaned in a number of ways. The death of the mother cat or abandonment by the mother cat is the most common reason. Less common reasons are maternal aggression towards the kittens or an inability to produce enough milk. In these cases, it is important for the SPCA to work with foster families to provide what the mother cat can no longer offer.

We recommend two types of feeding for orphaned infant kittens: bottle or syringe. Bottle-feeding takes the longest but provides more satisfaction for the kitten. Syringe feeding is somewhat faster but can be messy. Proper instruction is necessary to avoid aspiration of formula, (when the formula goes through the larynx down the trachea and lungs instead of through the esophagus to the stomach.) Foster parents who are interested in specializing in very young orphans need more time to dedicate to their kittens, since the kittens need to be fed more often.

Kittens that nurse from a mother cat will suckle 10 to 20 times a day. A foster parent hand-raising a litter of kittens may find this impractical. Infant kittens should be fed every few hours during the hours you are awake. However, a feeding every six hours will allow them to get enough nourishment to live and grow. Feedings more than eight hours apart would make it very difficult for a kitten to grow and develop.

How to Mix the Formula

The SPCA usually uses KMR (a powder), the instructions on how to prepare the formula are located on the can. (There is even a scoop included inside the can.) The ratio is one part formula to two parts warm water. Mix only enough to use within a 24-hour period. Formula that is not in use should be refrigerated and any remaining formula should be discarded after 24 hours.

When mixing the formula, it is very important to dissolve all of the formula into the water. (Many foster parents whisk the formula rather than stir it with a spoon.) If the mixture is clumpy, the consistency will be wrong and the kitten will have trouble drinking it from the bottle.

To warm the bottle, microwave water in a mug for 1 - 2 minutes. Once the water is warm, place the bottle in the mug and leave it for a few minutes allowing it to warm up. The formula should feel warm when tested on your wrist. Because a cat's body temperature is three to four degrees warmer than a human's, milk from a mother cat would be warmer than what we are used to.

Approaching your Kittens to Feed Them

When handling your kittens it is important to pay attention to how they are acting. Do they feel warm? (They should be.) Are they responsive to your touch? (They should be.) Do they wake up and begin to cry and squirm? (This is a perfectly normal reaction.)

Sometimes young kittens are admitted to the shelter, and even with our best attempts, they do not survive. They may have been lively and active upon arrival and placed in the incubator to warm up before feeding, but there is never a guarantee that they will thrive and survive. Because of their small body weight and immature immune systems, they can die from the simplest disorder, and diligent nursing care is critical to their survival.

If there is a concern with kittens under your care, do not hesitate to alert a Foster Care Employee, 716.629.3509. They are here to assist you with whatever you may need.

As long as the kittens feel warm and are responsive to your touch, then it is OK to begin feeding them. Some kittens are hungry and latch on quickly and other kittens have trouble at first and syringe feeding needs to be done instead of bottle feeding.

How to Properly Feed Your Kittens

After assessing your kittens to see if they are warm and responsive, gently pick one kitten up and wrap it in a small towel. (It is very important to keep the kitten as warm as possible during feedings.) You may sit or stand, whichever is most comfortable. Some kittens are quite active and will squirm out of their towel, therefore it is very important to wrap them as snug as possible while feeding. Once they begin to eat, they usually calm down and focus on eating instead of rooting for the nipple.

Kittens should not be laid on their backs to nurse, and should nurse with tummies facing down. This will help prevent aspiration of the formula into the lungs. If you see milk coming out of a kitten's nose, or if the kitten seems to be coughing while eating, immediately STOP and reassess your position of the kitten and the size of the hole in the nipple. (See photos below)



CORRECT!



CORRECT!



INCORRECT!!



The correct way to syringe feed a kitten

Each kitten is different at feeding time. Variations occur in the amount of formula they drink, how long they suckle, and whether they prefer the bottle or the syringe at first. The bottles and syringes the SPCA provides are measured in ML's, depending on the age of the kitten it should consume:

Daily Feeding Requirements

Birth – 1 week: 2 - 4 mL per feeding (around 24 mL a day)

1 week: 3 - 6 mL per feeding (around 32 mL a day)

2 weeks: 6 - 8 mL per feeding (around 54 mL a day)

3 weeks: 8 - 10 mL per feeding (around 80 mL a day)

4 weeks: 10 - 13 mL per feeding (around 104 mL a day)

Kitten Feeding Schedule

Birth - 2 weeks: every 3 hours (8 times per day)

3 weeks: every 4 hours (6 times per day)

4 weeks: every 5 hours (5 times per day)

4 - 5 weeks: 4 - 5 times per day (Begin to introduce canned kitten food and formula slurry)

If the kitten seems fussy at first, or does not drink the amount listed above during the first meal of the day, don't worry too much, there are a few reasons he/she is acting like this:

- The kitten just ate (it has a round belly and seems content)
- The kitten is used to mom and not the bottle or syringe yet
- The kitten is new born and has yet to grasp the concept of nursing

After feeding, gently wipe the kitten's face with a warm, damp cloth to try to imitate the mother's grooming.

After You Have Fed Your Kitten

Make sure you mark on a feeding chart what time you fed them and the amount. It is important to keep track of how often the kittens are being fed and how much they are eating during each feeding. Consult the chart above to see when your next feeding should take place.

Stimulating the Kittens for Elimination Purposes

Kittens need to be manually stimulated to eliminate urine and feces. Usually, the mother cat will lick the kitten's belly and genitals to stimulate them to go, therefore, you will need to stimulate them after each meal. There are a few different ways you can do this.

To begin you can use a wet, warm cotton ball or piece of cloth and gently stroke the kitten's belly and anal area while it is on the towel. You can also hold the kitten over a sink and stimulate it the same way using warm water just over the private areas. Keep stimulating the kitten until it finishes eliminating (but know when to stop or you may make the delicate skin raw). Normal stools have a toothpaste-like consistency and are a yellow-mustard color. Don't worry if the kitten isn't having stool after every feeding, or even every day. Kittens will start to eliminate on their own by two to three weeks of age.



Tucking them in until the Next Feeding

Once your kittens have been fed, have eliminated urine and feces, and seem content, then it's time to place them back into the warm incubator or carrier that you are keeping them in. Feel free to peek in on the kittens from time-to-time while they're in the carrier. It is definitely one of the cutest things to see! Your kittens should be warm, cuddling, and best of all, sleeping!



Weaning

Beginning at three to four weeks of age, you can offer the kittens formula in a shallow bowl or saucer. When they learn to drink from the bowl, add kitten food in small amounts to the formula. Gradually increase the amount of kitten food and decrease the amount of formula. Canned food is also helpful in the weaning process. Adding formula to the canned food can be very enticing to a kitten. Kittens that don't understand the eating process can be encouraged if you place a small amount of food on a front paw where

they will clean it off or by placing a small amount of food in their mouths. Soaking kitten kibble in water (or formula) will make it easier for the kitten to eat dry food. By five weeks of age the kittens will have a full set of pin-sharp teeth and should be able to handle kitten food. These teeth play a role in weaning the kittens as sharp teeth can become very annoying to the nursing mother. As the kittens mature and try to nurse, the mother cat will begin to hiss and bat them away.

When the kittens reach six weeks of age you will return them to the SPCA for vaccinations and deworming. Please call first so the SPCA is prepared for you. Your visit to the SPCA should not take too much time, especially if we are prepared for your arrival.

Socialization

Your orphaned kittens will need to be socialized while in your care. Try to make certain that you are not the only person handling them. Kittens that are not socialized will grow into cats that are not socialized. Experts in cat behavior suggest that kittens should be socialized to a minimum of five people, but the more people they meet and have positive experiences with the more socially well rounded they will be. If you live alone, invite your friends over to play with and handle the kittens. Make every attempt to provide this socialization daily for your kittens from around five weeks of age up until they are returned to the shelter. Special care should be used when introducing kittens to children. Wrap the kitten in a loose towel before allowing a child to handle the kitten and instruct the child to be seated. Small kitten claws do not retract and a scratched child might be startled and easily drop or injure a kitten.

As your kittens become more mobile, move them around the house to get them used to a changing environment. Allow them to play and explore in a new room individually and as a group. Carry only one kitten per hand. With two in a hand, you could easily squeeze the kittens together and harm them if they began to squirm.

Mother cats pick up their kittens by scruffing them (lifting them by the extra skin on the back of their neck). Mother cats do this to scold or to move kittens. We recommend you get your kittens used to humans doing this, as it will help us restrain them when they're older. The best way to do this is to follow these steps in order:

- Gently grab the scruff without lifting the kitten up off his feet. Release your hold on the scruff. Immediately provide something the kitten likes such as food, play or cuddling. When the kitten no longer reacts negatively to this, move to the next step.
- Gently grab the scruff and lift the front legs from the ground. Return kitten to all four feet and then release scruff. Immediately provide something the kitten likes. When the kitten no longer reacts negatively to this, move to the next step.
- Gently grab the scruff and lift all four legs from the ground. Return kitten to all four feet and then release scruff. Immediately provide something the kitten likes. When the kitten no longer reacts negatively to this, move to the next step.

- Gently grab the scruff and lay kitten on its side while holding back legs. Release kitten. Immediately provide something the kitten likes.

After the kitten no longer reacts negatively, practice each step randomly on various occasions.

The Single Kitten

Littermates are important to the social development of a kitten. If you are raising a single kitten it will be completely dependent on you to socialize it properly. Feed the kitten in several locations, have numerous people handle the kitten, and make certain that it explores many locations throughout your home. If you have another cat or a dog that would not harm a kitten, you may want to introduce them. Be aware, though, that there is some risk involved. In cases where the SPCA places a single kitten into your home, it is unlikely that we have any information concerning the feline leukemia or feline AIDS status of the kitten. While your cat can be inoculated against feline leukemia (FELV), no vaccine is 100% effective and there is no vaccine for feline AIDS (FIV). However if introduced, many dogs and cats will become impressive foster parents to kittens and may clean, groom, and offer to suckle orphans.

Grooming

It is a great idea to begin the experience of grooming while a kitten is young. You may start when the kittens' eyes open. There is very little grooming to do at this time but you are helping to teach the kitten appropriate behavior when being groomed. You might want to start by wiping the kitten with a washcloth and gradually introducing a cat comb or brush. Groom each kitten for about a minute, two or three times a week. Trimming the nails of a kitten can be done with a pair of human nail trimmers. Trim off only the very end of the kittens' nails. Their nails do not grow fast so you won't want to trim them each time you groom, but you can still go through the motions of handling the feet and toes at each grooming session. Trimming nails every week to two weeks is sufficient. Always follow grooming sessions with something the kitten enjoys like treats, mealtime or play.

Your kittens will rarely need a bath. Most messes can be easily cleaned with a moistened cotton ball or washcloth. Make certain that the water you are using is warm, and thoroughly dry any wet areas on the kitten, keeping the kitten warm throughout the process. If you must bathe kittens, bathe only one at a time. Do not submerge a kitten's head in the water. Try to clean the kitten with just water and if necessary, use only a mild baby or kitten shampoo.

While the SPCA makes every effort to ensure that all animals leaving the shelter are free of fleas, an occasional flea may be seen. **Please *do not* treat the kitten for fleas until you have talked to either a veterinary technician or a veterinarian at the shelter. Many flea products are highly toxic to kittens even if they say "safe for kittens" on the label.**

Litter Box Training

Begin to provide a litter box when kittens start to eliminate on their own. Use a box that the kittens can easily get into (a meat tray or cat food box work well) and use just a small amount of litter at first. Keeping the box clean will encourage the kittens to continue using it. Kittens will not dig and bury their elimination until about six to eight weeks of age.

Number of Litter Boxes: The general rule is one box for every cat plus one, so in a two-cat household there should be at least three litter boxes. With a litter of young kittens (under eight weeks of age) you can use one to two boxes for the entire litter. Some cats prefer to defecate in one box and urinate in another. Some cats will not use a box that has been soiled by another cat. Provide many options for success.

Type of Litter Box: For an adult cat the litter box should be a minimum 22" x 16" in size. The bigger the litter box, the more comfortable the cat will be while using it. Each litter box should have an average of 2"-4" of litter so your cat(s) can adequately scratch around and cover once they have eliminated. Cats will also have depth preferences, so try to determine if your cat prefers more or less litter in the box. Avoid using plastic litter box liners. Some cats find the texture of the plastic irritating and it will cause them to stop using their box. Some cats prefer open litter boxes while others will be comfortable using covered litter boxes. If using a covered litter box, ensure that the cat is not bothered by other cats while using it. Having only one entry/exit area prevents the cat from escaping should they feel threatened or unsafe while eliminating. Covered boxes also trap the odors inside creating an "outhouse effect" if not regularly cleaned.

Litter Boxes for Kittens: Make sure the sides of the litter box are short and the kitten can easily gain access to litter box. For very small kittens a litter box may need to be modified by using a small tray or pan until the kitten is big enough to access a real litter box. Do not expect your kitten to travel far distances to use the litter box. They need to have easy access to their toilet area. *Cat Attract* litter can help train your kitten to use their litter box. Use positive reinforcement when your cat or kitten uses their litter box. This will help them to learn that using their litter box earns treats, play, and love.

Litter Type: Early on, at approximately 30-36 days of age, cats develop a substrate (texture) preference. You must choose a litter that appeals to your cat. Research has shown that cats prefer a fine granular or sand like texture. High quality scooping litters meet these criteria. Other textures that can be considered include high quality, dust free, unscented clay litters. If your cat spent some time outside as a stray or a former indoor/outdoor cat you may choose to mix some potting soil in with your regular litter to encourage usage. There is also a special litter called *Cat Attract* designed to attract cats to their litter box using an herbal scent. It has been successful in the training kittens and to rehabilitate a cat that has developed litter box aversion.

Location Preference: Place litter boxes in a quiet, private place that is easily accessible to your foster cat. You do not want them to be disturbed by children or ambushed by other pets in the home. Avoid

locations such as near the washing machine, furnace, or under stairs or other noisy areas as the noise may scare your cat away from the litter box. Do not place all the litter boxes in the same area. If you have multiple floors in your home, a litter box should be placed on each floor.

Distance between Food, Water and Litter Box: Avoid placing the litter box near food and water bowls. You would not want to eat where you eliminate and neither does your cat. There should be at least a 10'-15' barrier between the litter box and food/water bowls. If this is not possible or your cat/kitten(s) are housed in a condo or kennel cage, try to maximize the distance between the food/water and the litter box. In these situations a minimum of 20" is ideal.

Cleaning the Litter Box: You must scoop all boxes once or twice a day. Frequency will vary depending on the number of cats living in your home compared to the number of litter boxes. The entire box should be dumped weekly and washed out with hot water and dish soap. Do not use harsh chemicals that could leave a scent behind that would offend the cat.

Health

Healthy kittens are plump and have good skin tone. They feel warm to the touch. If placed on their backs or sides they will quickly right themselves to a crawling position. Healthy kittens nurse vigorously and seldom cry unless disturbed. They generally nest closely with one another.

Sick kittens feel cold, thin and limp. They lie scattered in the nest. They may cry incessantly and sound weak, and are often too weak to nurse effectively. Kittens that are failing may have become chilled, they may be starving or they may be dehydrated.

Kittens can become chilled very quickly. Chilling will increase the kittens' susceptibility to bacterial infection of their intestinal and respiratory systems. Starvation and dehydration, which almost always occur together, can kill kittens very quickly. If you have a kitten in this condition, and need to transport it to the SPCA, make certain it is as warm as possible. Use a warm hot water bottle (pop bottles work well) in a small carrier and cover the carrier with a towel to maintain the heat.

If you have talked to the SPCA and have been instructed to provide oral fluids, medication or sustenance, remember that weak kittens can easily aspirate liquid into their lungs. If they do, they will most likely not survive. Take it slow, keep the kittens on their stomachs and do not force any fluids.

Your kitten's eyes should be bright and clear. Any discharge collecting in the corners should be cleaned away with a cotton ball soaked in warm water. The ears should be clean in appearance and free of discharge or odor. Routine cleaning of ears should be accomplished by gently swiping with a moistened cotton ball. The nose should be clean and moist without discharge or sores. Examine kittens' mouths regularly. The gums should appear pink and healthy. Feel your kitten's body regularly for lumps, ticks, or tumors. Legs should be inspected for any swollen joints and look between the toes for tiny objects that could be stuck. Check your kitten's anus for possible infection, swelling or intestinal parasites

Stress and Body Language

When a cat is feeling stressed and becoming anxious they exhibit body language cues that will convey this message. Sometimes the message may be difficult to interpret since most of the cat's body language is not intentional but rather a reflexive response to a specific perceived stimulus. Cats have an innate fight or flight response to fearful situations and would prefer to flee and hide from a perceived threat. They would rather avoid confrontation, but if feeling trapped and/or threatened, they will fight.

When a cat is becoming stressed and is feeling anxious they may exhibit several body language cues while trying to cope with their emotions. In an attempt to cope with a situation, cats may exhibit several different signals that may include:

- ✓ Yawning
- ✓ Lip licking
- ✓ Freezing
- ✓ Blinking
- ✓ Grooming
- ✓ Avoidance or looking away
- ✓ Hiding
- ✓ Vocalization
- ✓ Dilated pupils
- ✓ Facial whisker twitching
- ✓ Tail tucking or hair standing on end
- ✓ Out of context play behavior

Tips for Handling a Fearful or Stressed Cat

Never use punishment, physical or verbal, such as yelling at the kitten/cat and then swatting at it to correct a behavior. This will only reinforce fear in your kitten/cat and teach her to mistrust your actions. It may also encourage your kitten/cat to become aggressive.

Provide a safe place for the cat to hide. Observe where it likes to hide and feels safe. Provide easy access to that space or create a similar one for it to retreat to when needed. Make sure the cat has access to food, water and a litter box at all times.

Be sure that the cat has an escape route to its safe place. An escape route only works if the cat knows how to use it. Do not pick a route you have never seen your cat take.

Pay attention to your kitten/cat's body language. If it is displaying threatening behavior, leave the cat alone. Give it space and time to work through the anxiety. The cat should come out when it feels safe. If needed, use food or treats to encourage it to come out of hiding. Go slow and do not force the issue.

Avoid direct eye contact. This will make your stressed kitten/cat more anxious and defensive. They will interpret this as a threatening behavior.

If the cat is afraid of a particular person or animal, do not allow that person or animal to approach it. Completely ignore the cat and do not force the issue. If your cat does take the initiative to approach the person, have them offer it a food treat but do not pet. Continue to ignore the cat after giving the treat. Increase play therapy and mental stimulation when your cat is not behaving fearfully. This will help decrease anxiety and may help strengthen your relationship. Pair the play activity with tasty food rewards to help build confidence.

Feliway spray or a *Feliway* diffuser may help a nervous or fearful cat to relax. This product is usually provided by the foster care department.

Take a “hands off”, calm approach in helping your fearful cat. Do not force the issue. Patience, time and lots of love are the keys to success. Try to remember how it feels to be scared. You must be kind and understanding of your cat’s feelings.

Additional Ideas:

- Leave a radio on playing soft soothing music.
- Allowing your cat to sniff your fingers and then slowly begin to stroke the cheek. Go in the direction away from the face.
- Never reach for or over the cat’s head.
- Use a calm, soothing voice. Do not yell or scream around your cat.

Kitten Proofing Your Home

Don’t leave electrical cords exposed. Electrical shock is common when cats chew on cords. Make sure you tie all cords down and cover them so that your kitten/cat cannot get to them.

Put all medications and cleaning supplies behind closed, latched and even locked doors. Childproof lids are not a safety guarantee; otherwise they would be called cat-proof lids!

If anyone in your house smokes, immediately empty all ashtrays. Cats can get nicotine poisoning from eating ashes. Cats suffer side effects from second hand smoke, so it is a better idea to stop smoking altogether if possible.

Always supervise when burning candles or incense. Cats that are curious about the smell or flame could be injured. And, keep all burning objects up high to avoid a swishing cat’s tail from coming in contact with an open flame.

Keep your toilet lid down. Kittens or cats can drown if unable to escape should they fall into the toilet. If you use any cleaners on your toilet your cat can be poisoned by drinking water from the toilet. Keep windows and doors closed and properly screened in. Kittens can tear screens with their nails, so supervise if any of your windows are open.

Lock away all string, thread, yarn and needles. Cats can swallow these objects, which may lead to fatal injuries.

Keep cats indoors at all times. There are many dangers in the great outdoors that can be life threatening.

Make sure that any poisons or pesticides are secured and out of reach. Use these items with strong caution since a cat that ingests these chemicals could suffer fatal side effects.

Make sure that any cat toys you provide for playtime have no small removable parts (like eyes) that could be swallowed.

Check that all shampoos, conditioners, food, etc. is safe for your cat's age. Many products are not safe for use on very young kittens.

Always make sure you know where your cat is before closing doors to refrigerators, freezers, dishwashers, stoves, washers, dryers, etc.

Scratching and Nails

Scratching is a natural and pleasurable feline behavior. Cats scratch to remove the outer part of their nails that become frayed, to mark their territory with the scent gland located on their feet and to stretch. Nails allow cats to establish footing while walking, jumping and running. Because this is such a natural behavior, it is unrealistic to train a cat not to scratch. It is realistic, however, to train a cat to scratch an appropriate object/area that is acceptable to both of you.

You can also help train your foster cat/kitten to enjoy regular nail trimming sessions. Properly trimmed nails will reduce damage to any area that the cat may scratch. Using a nail clipper designed specifically for cat nails, trim the curved tip of nail before the pink quick. Give treats during and after the nail trimming to make it a more positive experience for you and your cat. If you are unsure about how to trim your foster cat's nails, ask any SPCA veterinary technician to demonstrate for you.

To prevent your cat from scratching you it is important that you do not encourage any play that includes human hands, feet, etc. as targets. If teeth ever touch skin, all play and attention stop immediately. Simply walk away from your cat and ignore her for a few minutes before giving any more attention.

If your cat is on your lap, simply stand up and allow your cat to slide off your lap and walk away. Your cat soon will learn that if teeth or nails touch skin the fun time ends. Provide appropriate play toys such as cat-nip filled fabric mice, fishing pole toys or treat balls.

Scratching posts paired with positive reinforcement training when the cat uses the new, approved scratching post/area is often a successful compromise between you, your cat and the furniture. Place the new, approved scratching post/area near the old, forbidden area. Rub some catnip on the new, approved scratching post, feed the cat near the post or play with your cat in that area to help foster a positive association between your cat and the new, approved scratching post/area. Once the cat is reliably using the new, approved scratching post/area move it a few inches every day to the spot you prefer it to remain permanently. Moving it too quickly can result in the cat returning to the old, forbidden scratching area or finding another forbidden area to scratch.

Common Diseases and Ailments

Feline Panleukopenia (Distemper): This disease is caused by a virus. No specific conditions are required for it to exist so it attacks unprotected kittens indiscriminately and without warning. It is extremely harmful to cats of all ages and is especially lethal to young kittens. Kittens can fall into a coma and die before a foster parent even realizes a kitten is sick. Symptoms include listlessness, lack of appetite, vomiting, diarrhea and blood in the stool.

Upper Respiratory (URI): A group of viral and bacterial infections of the upper respiratory system with cold like symptoms. URI's are highly infectious and are usually contracted from other cats. An upper respiratory infection can be fatal to kittens. Symptoms of this disease include sneezing, nasal and ocular discharge, and difficulty breathing. Just like a cold in humans, it is treatable if caught in time. Infrequent sneezing is normally not a concern. However, frequent sneezing along with discharge from the nose warrants a call to the SPCA.

Feline Leukemia (FELV): This deadly disease is caused by a virus that inhibits the immune system. It is not likely that a foster home would experience this disease. Every precaution is taken to avoid placement of cats into homes without first testing for feline leukemia. However, there is no reliable test for kittens under eight weeks of age. If taking in kittens whose mother could not be tested, foster parents should be extremely careful to avoid contact between their cats and foster cats. It is transmitted from cat-to-cat via saliva, urine and other bodily fluids.

Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP): This disease does not occur as commonly as URI. Symptoms are the same as distemper but with abdominal bloating and labored breathing. One kitten in a litter may be infected while others may be fine.

Feline Immunodeficiency (FIV): This disease, better known as feline aids, is transmitted from bites and scratches.

Diarrhea: A common ailment of kittens and cats, and can be caused by many factors including bacteria, viruses, parasites, toxic substances, food or psychological upset. If diarrhea persists more than 24 hours, call the SPCA. You will be asked to bring in a sample of the diarrhea to help diagnose the problem.

Vomiting: Occasional vomiting can be considered normal, but frequent vomiting is not.

Fleas and Ticks: The SPCA tries to make certain that foster animals do not leave the shelter with these types of parasites. Should you find fleas or ticks on your foster animal(s), call for instructions. **Please do not attempt to treat on your own!**

Ear mites: Nearly microscopic, these parasites live in the ear canals of dogs and cats and cause a brown waxy material that looks similar to coffee grounds to form in the ears. Call for instructions on treating ear mites.

Ringworm: Ringworm is not a parasite but a fungal infection of the skin. It is more commonly found in cats than in dogs. The infection can come from another kitten or cat or from fungus that is found in soil. Classic symptoms appear as a scab or irregularly shaped area of skin infection and may include a rapidly enlarging circle of hair loss. Ringworm can be easily transmitted to animals *and* humans; especially children, the elderly and the immune suppressed.

Coccidiosis: Microscopic, one-celled organisms irritate the intestinal lining, leading to diarrhea and weight loss. Coccidiosis is transmitted through feces. The diarrhea is usually blood tinged and has a mucous consistency.

Hookworm: Kittens acquire hookworm before birth through the mother or by ingesting hookworm eggs. They cause diarrhea, weakness, and anemia as a result of intestinal bleeding caused by the parasite “hooking” itself to the intestinal wall.

Roundworm: *These are the most common feline parasite.* They live in the intestine and are passed on from mom and stool and appear as white, spaghetti-like strands when fresh. Ingesting contaminated soil, feces or prey transmits them. They can cause weight loss, weakness, pneumonia and intestinal obstruction.

Tapeworm: Tapeworm is acquired by eating uncooked meat, certain prey and also from fleas. It can be hard to detect until a segment of the tapeworm is found in fresh stool or around the anus. Watch the litter box for opaque white, rice-like segments that are capable of movement when fresh.

While any of the previous ailments should be reported to the SPCA for treatment, they don't necessarily constitute an emergency.

CONTACT THE SPCA IMMEDIATELY IF YOU NOTICE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

- **Severe or uncontrollable bleeding**
- **Difficulty breathing**
- **Unconsciousness or convulsion**
- **Paralysis**
- **Repeated or continuous vomiting or diarrhea**
- **Constipation occurring for two or more days**
- **Ocular discharge**
- **Repeated sneezing**
- **Fever**
- **Limping, difficulty walking, jumping or running**

Bites and scratches may also cause issues for humans. Any bites or scratches must be reported to the SPCA then the SPCA will report to the health department. Wounds need to be cleaned out thoroughly and antibiotics may be necessary. If the cat has bacteria in its nails, the bacteria can go into your bloodstream and can be very harmful. You need to clean the wound immediately and call your doctor for advice and possible treatment.

The SPCA is available 24-hours a day. During regular business hours, all questions are welcomed. Calls after hours should be limited to emergencies only. After regular business hours or on weekends, please reach the SPCA through the answering service. The service will contact the staff member on call.

SPCA main number	716-875-7360
Night answering service	716-712-0251
Foster Care Department	716-629-3509
***SPCA EMERGENCY	716-875-7363

(Please do not use this number unless it is an emergency)

We appreciate all of the hard work and time foster families put into their foster animals. Because of our dedicated foster families, thousands of homeless pets are given a chance to find their forever homes. While fostering does *not* entitle you to a free adoption, it does give you the pick of the litter. If you or anyone you know is interested in adopting the animals in your care, they must be pre-approved at the SPCA. When the animals are brought back to the shelter it is imperative that we know the name(s) and phone number(s) of the adopters.

PLANTS THAT ARE TOXIC TO CATS

Based on information from ASPCA National Animal Poison Control Center

Aloe Vera	Cutleaf Philodendron	Indian Rubber Plant
Amaryllis	Cycad	Janet Craig Dracaena
Apple (seeds)	Cyclamen	Japanese Show Lily
Apple Leaf Croton	Daffodil	Jerusalem Cherry
Apricot (pit)	Dieffenbachia	Kalanchoe
Asparagus Fern	Dracaena Palm	Lacy Tree Philodendron
Autumn Crocus	Dragon Tree	Lily of the Valley
Azalea	Dumb Cane	Madagascar Dragon Tree
Baby's Breath	Easter Lily	Marble Queen
Bird of Paradise	Elephant Ears	Marijuana
Branching Ivy	Emerald Feather	Mexican Breadfruit
Buckeye	English Ivy	Miniature Croton
Buddhist Pine	Eucalyptus	Mistletoe
Caladium	Fiddle-leaf Fig	Morning Glory
Calla Lily	Florida Beauty	Mother-in-law's Tongue
Castor Bean	Foxglove	Narcissus
Charming Dieffenbachia	Fruit Salad Plant	Needlepoint Ivy
Cherry (seeds, wilting leaves)	Geranium	Nephtytis (Arrowhead)
Chinese Evergreen	German Ivy	Nightshade
Christmas Rose (Hellebore)	Giant Dumb Cane	Oleander
Cineraria	Glacier Ivy	Onions
Clematis	Gold Dust Dracaena	Oriental Lily
Corn Plant	Golden Pothos	Peace Lily
Cornstalk Plant	Hahn's Self-Branching Ivy	Peach (pits and wilting leaves)
Croton	Heartland Philodendron	Pencil Cactus
Cuban Laurel	Hurricane Plant	Philodendron

Plumosa Fern
Poinsettia (low toxicity)
Poison Ivy
Poison Oak
Pothos
Precatory Bean
Primrose
Red Emerald
Red Princess Philodendron
Red-margined Dracaena
Rhododendron
Ribbon Plant
Saddle Leaf Philodendron
Sago Palm
Satin Pothos
Schefflera (Umbrella Plant)
Silver Pothos
Spotted Dumb Cane
String of Pearls
Striped Dracaena
Sweetheart Ivy
Swiss Cheese Plant
Taro Vine
Tiger Lily
Tomato Plant
Tree Philodendron
Weeping Fig
Yew

CAT-SAFE PLANTS FOR YOUR HOME AND GARDEN

Achillea (Yarrow)	African Violet	Alyssum
Aster	Basil	Bean Sprouts
Begonia	Buddleia (Butterfly-bush)	Calendula
Catmint	Catnip	Celosia
Cleome	Chamomile	Chervil
Chives	Columbine	Coneflower (Echinacea)
Coriander	Cosmos	Cress
Dahlia	Dianthus (Pinks)	Dill
Dorotheanthus (Ice Plant)	Forget-Me-Not	Heliotrope
Hollyhock	Hyssop	Impatiens
Japanese Matabi	Lavender	Lemon Balm
Lemon Verbena	Lettuce	Lovage
Miniature Rose	Mint	Monarda (Bee Balm)
Nasturtium	Oats	Orchid
Oregano	Pansy	Parsley
Pea (not Sweet Pea)	Peppermint	Petunia
Phlox	Portulaca (Moss Rose)	Rose
Rosemary	Torenia (Wishbone Flower)	Sage
Scabiosa (Pincushion flower)	Shasta Daisy	Snapdragon
Spearmint	Spider Plant	Spinach
Strawflower	Sunflower	Tarragon
Thyme	Verbascum (Mullein)	Violet
Wheat (sprouts)	Zinnia	