

SOLANO COUNTY ANIMAL CARE

FOSTER CARE MANUAL



Welcome to Solano County Animal Care Foster Program

Kittens come to Solano County Animal Care during kitten season, which generally begins in March and ends in November. The kittens are impounded at Solano County Animal Care and are the property of Solano County Sheriff's Office Animal Care Division.

Generally, kittens in this foster care program are those who have not yet reached the weight minimum or the age minimum required to undergo the spay/neuter surgery. These kittens are very small, and often require more individual care than they can receive in a shelter environment. They may have a mother or they may be orphaned. It takes dedication and a lot of patience to care for kittens.

Fostering requires a flexible schedule and a personal commitment to the kittens. In a typical day you can expect to give the kittens food multiple times (be sure water is available at all times). The litterbox(es) will need scooping as well. Don't forget to allow for playtime and snuggling. If the kittens you are fostering are sick, you will have to medicate the kittens as well. Additionally, you are required to keep appointments for scheduled vaccinations. We provide all supplies needed for fostering! Come on down during our regular business hours to pick up foster supplies at our clinic.

Although fostering is a lot of work, it is a very rewarding experience. You get to help kittens grow from little beings into confident, well-adjusted family pets. Most importantly, you are saving lives.

The mission of the foster care program is to rehabilitate and care for as many at-risk kittens as the shelter can reasonably handle and make them available for adoption.



Important Contact Information

Shelter Main Line: (707) 784-1356 (press option 9)

Clinic/Foster Email: AnimalCareFosters@SolanoCounty.com

Foster Coordinator: Amanda Hoover (707) 784-1361 or
anhoover@solanocounty.com

Animal Care Manager: Renee Gutierrez (707) 784-1370
rgutierrez@solanocounty.com



Hours of Operation:

Tues-Fri 10am-6pm closed from 1pm-2pm

Sat 9am-5pm closed from 1pm-2pm

Closed Sun/Mon and all county holidays

*After hour emergency questions, send us a private message via our Facebook page. Our page is named =

“Solano County Sheriff’s Office Animal Care Division.”

Join our special foster group via Facebook named:

“Solano County Animal Care Foster Families”.

Types of Foster Kittens

As a foster parent, you can encounter many different types of foster kittens. You may see all these types, or you may specialize in a certain type.

Underage/Underweight kittens- Most kittens in the foster program are too small to be spayed or neutered and put up for adoption. The preferred weight requirement to perform the surgery is 2lbs. As soon as the kittens achieve this goal, they can be returned to the shelter and sent down the path to adoptions!

Mothers with kittens- Sometimes we have mothers with kittens as young as 1 day old. Generally, the mom does most of the work and you take care of her. These tend to be long term fosters, as it takes about 2 months for the kittens to reach 2 pounds.

Bottle-fed kittens- Frequently, Solano County Animal Care Services receives kitten(s) who do not have a mother and are too young to eat on their own. These kittens need to be bottle-fed until they are able to be weaned and then fostered until reaching the adoptable weight.



Sick kittens- Kittens have brand new immune systems, and a majority of them come down with some sort of sickness or another before they are grown. Generally, foster kittens will have only mild to moderate illnesses such as diarrhea or upper respiratory infections.

Behavior kittens- The ideal age range for kittens to be introduced to human handling is between 2 and 7 weeks of age. If kittens are not introduced to people during that time, they will learn to fear human interaction. Behavior kittens tend to be about 6 weeks old, so they are nearing the end of the ideal socializing period. A few weeks in a foster home usually helps the kittens develop trust and sometimes even a craving for human interaction.



Picking up, Appointments and Returning Kittens

When kittens are available for fostering, you will receive a call or an email request for your assistance. You will come to the shelter at an agreed-upon time to pick up the kittens and supplies. We also regularly post on our Facebook page asking for assistance. Our Facebook name = Solano County Sheriff's Office Animal Care Division.

Depending on the length of your foster commitment the kittens may need booster vaccinations. Kittens over 4 weeks of age or 1lb should have been vaccinated and will need a booster vaccination in 14 days. To schedule an appointment for your foster(s) to be vaccinated and or weighed, please send an email to the AnimalCareFosters@SolanoCounty.com.

Return procedures will vary a bit depending on the reason you are returning the kittens. All returns will start with the Foster Coordinator. Regardless of the reason, never feel like you have to keep a kitten you are no longer willing or able to keep. However, all returns will be during business hours.

Remember these kittens belong to Solano County Animal Care. You *must* return them to the shelter to be spayed or neutered before they are adopted. If you are interested in adopting, let our team know!

In the event that a foster kitten passes away, the kitten **MUST** be returned to the shelter. Do **NOT** dispose of the animal on your own.



Kitten Proofing

We recommend using a spare bedroom or bathroom as your foster room. Rooms with some natural light are best. Cat-proofing and especially kitten-proofing your home is much the same as child-proofing it! Remember kittens are babies, and consequently they will try to get into everything! Use the following tips as a guide to make your foster room and home safe for cats and kittens.

Keep the temperature regulated in the room avoiding any drafts. Room temperatures above 75 degrees are ideal.



Remove any personal belongings that could be potentially dangerous to the kittens and consider protecting your furniture and carpet with sheets or plastic table covers. Kittens can be messy, especially when they're learning to use the litter box!

Make sure the garbage, cleaning supplies, and human food are out of reach.

Be careful with any heavy items a rambunctious kitty may knock down or pull down upon itself.

Keep all small items like rubber bands, paper clips, needles, fishhooks – anything kitty can swallow – out of reach. Keep plastic bags, which can cause suffocation, out of reach.

Exposed electrical cords are a very real danger. Kitties love to chew them and end up getting an electrical shock.

Keep doors/windows closed, unless covered with a screen that is securely in place.



What do I do with the kittens once I get them?

Supplies you will need

Litter Box	Litter Scoop	Non-clumping litter	Food bowl
Water Bowl	Food	Towels/Bedding	Toys

Feeding: Please only feed cat food or formula provided by SCAC to your foster kittens. There are many reasons for this. Cats are generally lactose intolerant, and cow's milk will give them diarrhea. Some human foods can be toxic to cats.



Newborn Orphans: Newborns to four weeks require bottle feeding and genital stimulation if they do not have a mom. Use a kitten bottle to feed the kittens. The hole in the bottle nipple should leak milk slowly from the bottle without pressure. Never feed a chilled kitten: make sure he is warm prior to feeding. Body temperature should not be lower than 98°F. Make sure formula is just warm, not hot or cold (98°-100°F).



Newborn-4 weeks: Kittens will start to show interest in “real” food around 4 weeks of age. Feed 3-5 meals per day. Mix kitten replacement milk and canned food and place it in a container with low sides (plate, cake pan, etc.) Expect them to step in it. After a few attempts, they will get the idea. Feed them their last meal just before bedtime. They usually eat and then go straight to sleep. You can warm the food in the microwave for about 6 seconds. Make sure to stir the food and test it with your finger. Do not give hot food to kittens.



Kittens 5-6 Weeks: Feed 3-4 meals per day of 1 tablespoon of canned food. A full dish of dry kibble should be left out all day for them. Also, fresh water daily. Make sure you see them drinking water on their own.

Kittens 6-8 weeks and older: Feed 2-3 meals per day. Reduce the canned food amount to 1 teaspoon at each meal mixed with kibble to encourage them to start eating dry kibble too. A full dish of dry kibble should be left out all day for them. Also, fresh water daily.

TIP: If your kittens are slow to be enticed by solid food, use a very small baby spoon or syringe to get food into their mouth. Once they taste it, this usually encourages them to take a few bites. You may have to do this for several days at each meal until they are eating eagerly on their own.

Overfeeding can cause digestive problems. Frequent small meals are preferred to large meals. Canned food stays fresh in the fridge for up to 5 days.

Litter and Litter Box- Litter boxes should be kept clean all the time. The box should have non-clumping litter. Scooping the box twice a day is a good guideline, but you may need to scoop more frequently if you have a lot of kittens or the kittens are sick. A clean box will encourage good litterbox habits, as well as limit the kittens' exposure to germs.

If you have a mother cat, she will clean the genitals of her young to stimulate the bowels and bladder until the age of 3-4 weeks. Once the kittens are mobile and have been introduced to solid food, provide them with an easily accessible box. After each meal, place them in the box. They will learn how to use the litter box very quickly. Sometimes they learn how to use the litter box without any help from us, as they have been watching Mom use her box. Orphans may need a little more assistance from you. When you bring home older foster kittens (4 weeks and up), show them where you placed their litter box immediately when you bring them home.

TIP: Keeping the kittens in a bathroom for the first few days will reinforce good litter habits and then you can move them to a larger room if you have it available. Keeping the box clean is very important...daily cleaning is a must. Make sure the litter box is as far away from the food and water as possible. Place the bed near the food, not the litter box.



Playtime- Kittens will need toys to play with so they can occupy their mind as well as get exercise. Toys should be easy to clean and impossible for the kitten to consume. Ping-pong balls, toilet paper tubes and wine corks are good examples. Other toys to use are string toys attached to a stick. However, these toys should never be left unsupervised with a kitten.

Daily Monitoring- It is important to monitor your kitten's health, weight and hydration levels. You can simply observe, or you may want to keep a log where you can record the changes in the kitten's behavior, eating habits, and overall health. The most important this is the kittens are hydrated, eating and maintaining/gaining weight.

**For more tips on kitten care, check out on Youtube
"The Kitten Lady" to view some great how-to videos.**

Bottle Fed Orphans

Supplies you will need

Bottles	Nipples	Milk Replacement	Carrier/containment
Towels/Bedding	Washcloths	Heat Disc	

Bottle fed kittens will need to be handled differently from the more independent kittens. Kittens are born blind and deaf. They need help with everything from eating to eliminating. They must be kept warm and watched more closely than older kittens, as they are very fragile.

Here is the general procedure for handling bottle fed kittens.

- Feed milk replacer every 4 to 6 hours until the kittens reach about 4 weeks old. The amount of liquid replacement a kitten should consume is roughly 30mL per 4 ounces of body weight per day.
- After meals, stimulate the kitten's genitals with a warm, wet wash cloth or baby wipe. This is an important step because they kittens cannot yet eliminate on their own.
- Kittens should be kept in a carrier or small enclosed area to ensure they cannot wander away.



Weaning Bottle Fed Orphans

When the kittens are approaching 4 weeks old, they will have developed teeth. At this time, you can try weaning them onto kitten food.

- Begin weaning by making a soupy mixture of kitten replacement milk and canned kitten food. You can put this mixture in a bottle to feed the kittens.
- After the kittens have been eating the mixture, place some in a low sided bowl.
- The kittens may need some encouragement to try the new food. Just put a little bit of the food on the tips of their tongues and put the kittens by the bowl.
 - As the kittens catch on to eating from a bowl you should make the mixture thicker by adding smaller portions of kitten milk replacement and greater portions of canned food.
- You may need to supplemental bottle feed during the transition.



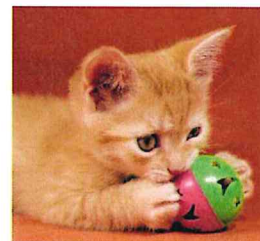
Behavior

Although individual kittens have unique personalities, there are a few basic things to expect from every kitten. Normal kittens are very curious about their new world. Any new object is a potential toy. It is normal for kittens to slightly fear unfamiliar noises or movement. Sometimes kittens will come to you with undesirable habits. Some examples of these habits include underdeveloped litterbox habits, aggressive playtime habits or extreme fear of people or objects. These habits can easily be changed if you use gentle, consistent methods of behavior modification.

Litter Box trouble- The first thing you should do if your foster kittens miss the litterbox is to determine if it is a medical problem or a behavioral problem. If the kittens have diarrhea, it may be a medical problem and you need to contact Solano County Animal Care Services. If the stool is normal or if the kittens urinated outside of the box, it is more likely a behavior issue. Also, consider litterbox conditions.

- The most important thing is to make sure that the litterbox is clean.
- Try changing the type of cat litter you are using.
- Consider the location of the litterbox. If the kittens are eliminating on the other side of the room from the box, move the box to where they are going. If the litter box is too close to the feeding or sleeping area, the kittens may prefer to eliminate further away.
- You can also try providing additional boxes.

Aggressive Playtime habits- By nature, kittens will use their teeth and claws while playing with other kittens. Since these kittens are going to be family pets, it is crucial to teach them how to “play nice” Encourage them to bite toys, and never play with them with your hands.



Extreme fear of people or objects- It is quite normal for kitten to fear new things. After all, the whole world is new to them. Some kittens, however, are afraid of simple things like a person walking into a room or a new toy. The easiest way to persuade kitten that people are not a threat is to sit down. When you sit down you are closer to their size and less scary. If the kitten fears a new toy, place it far away from them. Curiosity eventually will win out, and the kittens will come over to explore.

Medical

Just like human children in school, kittens are prone to catching colds and other sicknesses from the shelter environment. These illnesses range from mild to life threatening in nature. If you have any concern contact Solano County Animal Care.

Description of common symptoms of illness:

Conjunctivitis - Eye Infection

Conjunctivitis is characterized by swelling and/or yellow or green discharge around the eyes. An eye ointment or drops are typically prescribed to treat the infection. If you notice conjunctivitis please contact the shelter to schedule a veterinarian visit. To clean the kitten's eyes, use a cotton ball or gauze that is clean with warm water. If the eye is sealed shut you will need to use a wet and warm cotton ball as a compress and let it sit there for a few minutes. This will soften the crusted material around the eye. Once it is soft and pliable you can wipe it from the eye. Start at the area closest to the nose and wipe outward. Don't force the material off of the eye. You may need to continue to let the cotton ball set on the eyelid to soften the material for longer. It will be helpful to the kitten if you can gently wipe the eye clean multiple times a day.

Diarrhea

Diarrhea is probably the most common problem with kittens. Runny poop seems to be a kitten's preferred response to almost all stress or illness. It can be dangerous for kittens because the water lost in the stool tends to dehydrate them rapidly. When diarrhea is first seen: Contact the foster coordinator, they will recommend a course of action dependent on your kitten's symptoms. **NOTE:** If diarrhea is accompanied by vomiting, refusing to eat for more than 24 hours, or acting very lethargic you should immediately call the shelter.

Upper Respiratory Infection

An occasional sneeze is expected. Lots of sneezing, yellow or green nasal discharge, and congestion is cause for concern. Please contact the shelter if you suspect your kitten(s) of having an Upper Respiratory Infection, medication may be prescribed.

Vomiting

Vomiting can be very dangerous for kittens because they dehydrate so quickly. Vomiting is not as common as diarrhea, so it's especially troubling, especially if the kitten is vomiting repeatedly. If there is blood in the vomit contact the shelter.

When to contact the Solano County Shelter:

These signs do not indicate an immediate emergency but should be brought to the attention of the foster coordinator so the kitty can be examined in a timely manner. Please contact during business hours. If you are uncertain about any aspect of your foster animal's health, please send us an email: AnimalCareFosters@SolanoCounty.com.

Eyes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">-yellow or green discharge-red or swollen conjunctiva, including 3rd eyelid-white film or cloudiness over eye-yellowing on white part of eyes	Ears: <ul style="list-style-type: none">-dark, flaky debris-painful when rubbed or cleaned-frequent scratching at ears-unusual smell-missing hair	Nose: <ul style="list-style-type: none">-yellow or green discharge-bloody nasal discharge-excessive sneezing
Mouth: <ul style="list-style-type: none">-increased appetite-vomiting-coughing-trouble eating poor appetite-ulcers or lacerations on gums or lips--excessive drinking	Skin: <ul style="list-style-type: none">-lumps-hair loss-scabs-kitty is frequently scratching or itchy	Anal/Genital Area: <ul style="list-style-type: none">- diarrhea-blood in stools-no bowel movement for more than 48 hours-painful urination-straining to defecate

Cleaning up Between Litters



When you return the foster kittens, you will need to sanitize the fostering area before putting new kittens in. You will need to remove all bedding and wash it in hot water with bleach added if possible. Follow your machines guidelines for adding bleach to the wash load. You will also need to sanitize the litter box and carrier. Empty all of the contents and wash with hot soapy water. Rinse well and then fill with hot water/bleach and let sit at least 10 minutes. Rinse and let air dry. Wash food and water dishes with hot soapy water or run through the dishwasher. If you have carpeted floors you will need to vacuum well and spot clean any areas that need it. If you have a carpet cleaner, you should use it between groups. Hard surface floors: sweep and mop with a bleach dilution. Wipe down all other hard surfaces with a bleach dilution.

Important Dates

An average healthy kitten(s) should be gaining weight at about 3-4 oz per week. Once they reach about 2 pounds they are ready to come back to the shelter for their spay/neuter. Please contact the Foster Coordinator Amanda Hoover Anhoover@solanocounty.com or AnimalCareFosters@SolanoCounty.com.

Depending on the length of your foster commitment the kittens may need booster vaccinations. Kittens over 4 weeks of age or 1lb should have been vaccinated and will need a booster vaccination in 14 days. To schedule an appointment for your foster(s) to be vaccinated and or weighed, please send an email to the AnimalCareFosters@SolanoCounty.com.





SOLANO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE ANIMAL CARE DIVISION

Guide to Feeding Foster Kittens

What to Feed

Please **ONLY** feed your foster kitten(s) milk replacer, food and/or supplements that have been provided to you by the Solano County Animal Care (SCAC). To ensure that your kitten(s) are growing appropriately and are getting proper nutrition it is very important that you do not offer any other milk or food products without prior consent from the veterinary team at the SCAC.

Diarrhea is one of the most common health problems in foster kittens. When milk replacer and/or foods are changed, that alone can lead to diarrhea. There are multiple other causes of diarrhea, including GI (gastrointestinal) parasites, over feeding and dietary intolerances, as well. If the milk and/or food products are changing it makes it difficult to assess and identify the cause of the diarrhea. Diarrhea can develop rapidly in pediatric patients and become life-threatening in a short period of time.

The foster kitten(s) will need to come into the SCAC every 2 weeks for deworming medication(s), flea preventatives and/or vaccines. You can pick up additional milk replacer and/or food at every visit. If you need food prior to that please come in during regular business hours to pick it up.

Milk Replacer and Food Products

The milk replacer that will be supplied is Breeder's Edge Kitten Replacer Powder or Fox Valley Milk Replacer. **Please mix the milk replacer in a 1:3 ratio (1 part powder to 3 parts water) instead of the recommended 1:2 ratio. Kittens have a tendency to become dehydrated quickly with any issue and this helps prevent that from happening.**

Purina Pro Plan Veterinary Diets EN Gastroenteric Feline Formula dry (EN kibble) and canned (Canned EN) food will be supplied for kitten food.

Purina Fortiflora is a probiotic veterinary supplement that will be added to the milk replacer in nursing kittens. It may also be added for older kittens if they develop diarrhea or other GI problems. This supplement increases the level of beneficial bacteria in the GI tract and promotes a strong immune system.

Feeding Recommendations by Age

NEWBORN ORPHANS (Breeder's Edge Kitten Replacer or Fox Valley Milk Replacer)

- Require bottle feeding and genital stimulation (unless they are with their mom)
- Use a kitten bottle to feed the kittens (also provided by SCAC)
 - The hole in the bottle nipple should leak milk slowly from the bottle without pressure
- Make sure the kitten is warm prior to feeding (see foster handout for additional information)
- Check the temperature of the formula by putting a drop or two on the inside of your wrist
 - If it feels cold – please warm the formula up a little bit more
 - If it feels hot – please cool it down prior to feeding
 - If it doesn't feel hot or cold it is perfect
- We recommend making up to 24 hours of formula at a time
 - It can be stored in the refrigerator between feedings
 - *Do not keep formula more than 24 hours after it has been mixed up as it is no longer safe to feed the kitten(s)*
 - General Feeding Reference Chart from
 - <https://www.kittenlady.org/bottlefeeding>
- Please add fortiflora to the formula as listed below
 - Litters of 1 to 4 kittens: Add ¼ packet of fortiflora total to the milk replacer once a day
 - Litters of 5 or more kittens: Add ½ packet of fortiflora total to the milk replacer once a day
 - If you are making the milk replacer up in batches (24 hours at a time) just add the fortiflora to the total batch that will be fed that day

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; after ample wet food)	Every 6 hours

Follow this guideline to determine the proper amount and frequency of feeding. Remember that every kitten is different, and this is a guideline--not a rule book!



SOLANO COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE ANIMAL CARE DIVISION

Guide to Feeding Foster Kittens

NEWBORN TO 4 WEEKS (Adding Purina Pro Plan Veterinary Diets EN Gastroenteric Feline Canned food)

- Around 4 weeks of age kittens often start to show interest in kitten food
- Please mix kitten milk replacer, fortiflora (as above) and canned food together to make a slurry
- Feed 3-5 meals a day
- To encourage eating please warm the food up slightly in the microwave (no more than 6 seconds)
 - Be sure to mix the food up and test the temperature prior to feeding
 - The odor of the food is one of the main drivers for kittens (and cats) to eat so heating the food/milk up will increase the odor
- Please see foster handout for additional information regarding transitioning to canned food
- If the kittens are not ready to eat canned food, please continue to supplement with milk replacer and fortiflora until they are ready. They need to eat enough to continue to grow.
 - *If you are offering both milk replacer and canned food please offer the canned food followed by the milk so that they don't fill up on milk replacer first*

KITTENS 5 TO 6 WEEKS (Adding Purina Pro Plan Veterinary Diets EN Gastroenteric Feline Dry Kibble)

- Please feed 3-4 meals per kitten per day
 - Feed 1 tablespoon of canned food per meal (per kitten)
- Please leave a bowl of dry kibble out all day for them to try
- Please be sure to always provide fresh, clean water to drink

KITTENS 6 TO 8 WEEKS AND OLDER

(Transitioning to Purina Pro Plan Veterinary Diets EN Gastroenteric Feline Dry Kibble)

- Feed 2-3 meals per day
 - Feed 1 teaspoon of canned food at each meal mixed with kibble
 - It is important to mix the canned food with the kibble to encourage them to start eating the dry food
- Continue to leave a bowl of dry kibble out all day for them to eat as well
- Please be sure to always provide fresh, clean water to drink

Please refer to the SCAC Foster Handout for additional information and guidance on feeding kittens

Please do not offer or change milk replacer, canned and/or dry kibble without prior consultation with the veterinary team at the SCAC

PLEASE MONITOR THE FOSTER KITTEN(S) BOWEL MOVEMENTS

Normal stool for a kitten should be mustard yellow to orange in color and well-formed.

If you notice diarrhea in the foster kitten(s) at any time please contact the SCAC as soon as possible so that we can help assess and treat the kitten(s) as needed.



Figure 1. Normal Kitten Stool¹

Bottle fed kittens need to be stimulated to poop after EVERY feeding. It may take 2-3 days for defecation to become regular when first started on milk replacer. After that point if they are not having a bowel movement every 12-24 hours or if you notice any straining please let us know. If they are constipated we want to start treatment sooner rather than later.

¹ Emmanuel PRO Technical Service. "White stools in newborn kittens/puppies: What does it mean?." *Royal Canin Breeders' Club*, <https://royalcaninbreedersclub.ning.com/profiles/blogs/white-stools-in-newborn-kittens-puppies-what-does-it-mean>. Accessed 19 September 2020.