



CAT & KITTEN FOSTER MANUAL

EMERGENCY PROTOCOL: If you have a medical emergency please call during business hours at 260-744-0454.

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WELCOME

Thank you for opening your hearts and homes to kittens and/or cats in need. Whether you foster tiny kittens who need some time to grow, or an adult cat who needs a little extra TLC, you are making it possible for us to provide the very best care for cats and kittens that find their way to our shelter.

Fostering is a messy, rewarding, stinky, adorable, and sometimes a heartbreaking job. We certainly could not provide the level of care necessary without valuable fosters like you.

HUMANE FORT WAYNE FOSTER TEAM

Kris Brandt, Foster Manager

Dr. Sam Gamble, Veterinarian

Vicki Swanson, Foster Assistant

Barbara Wanley, Vet Technician

Chelsea Haire, Feline Animal Care Specialist

FREQUENTLY ASKED FOSTER QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

What do fosters need to provide?

- A healthy and safe environment
- Transportation to and from shelter appointments (typically every 2 weeks)
- Socialization of kittens

Can I foster if I work full time?

Yes!! We will match you with foster animals who are a good fit for your schedule.

How many kittens will I foster?

We like to have at least two kittens fostered together so they can socialize with and learn from each other. We do often get larger litters.

How long will I have my foster kittens?

Kittens need to be fostered until they weigh at least 2 pounds and are healthy. At that time, they will return for their spay/neuter surgery and are ready for adoption.

Will I need to give medicine to my foster kittens?

We do our best to ensure that we are sending healthy kittens out to foster, however, most illnesses have incubation periods, meaning that symptoms may not start until you have them in your home. There may be times when you are asked to give medicine to the kittens. This will be explained and demonstrated by staff if needed.

Can my foster kittens meet my personal pets?

No. We require that you keep fosters separate from your personal pets with their own supplies. We also request that you consult with your vet to ensure that your animals are current on their vaccines. Humane Fort Wayne is not responsible for and cannot provide medical care for your personal pets.

Where do all of the animals come from?

Most arrive as strays that citizens find and bring into the shelter. Some are owner surrenders, whose family can no longer care for them. We also pull animals from surrounding shelters who are over capacity.

What if something comes up and I have to go out of town?

If there is a change in your plans, please reach out to us right away. We will work with you on making alternative arrangements for your fosters. You cannot leave your fosters with anyone that is not an approved foster with Humane Fort Wayne.

What if a behavior problem arises or a foster bites me?

If you have any worries about your foster, contact us right away so we can assist you. If you are bitten and the skin breaks contact us within 24 hours of the bite. The law requires that we must report all bites. The tooth of the animal, not the nails, must have broken the skin for it to be a bite.

Will any of my foster kittens die?

Sadly, a small percentage of kittens do not survive even with the loving care they receive in your foster home. This may be the hardest thing about fostering kittens. Please keep in mind that without foster homes, most of these kittens would not have stood a chance of survival.

What if I want to adopt one of my foster kittens or know someone who does?

That is wonderful! We encourage our fosters to find adopters for their foster animals. We just need a completed and approved adoption application from the potential adopter, which can be found at HumaneFW.org. Please contact a member of the foster team and give us the name of the adopter so we can mark the kitten's file accordingly. We cannot hold an animal for anyone, including the foster, once it is on our website.

APPOINTMENTS

During the time you are fostering, you will need to make a few appointments, to pick up and drop off your kittens, bringing them in for vaccines, and finally for spay/neuter. Please schedule your appointments in advance. If you are unable to keep an appointment, please notify the foster department to reschedule. Humane Fort Wayne provides all medical care for foster animals through our shelter staff. We are ultimately responsible for your foster's well-being. Our staff must authorize any and all treatment. Humane Fort Wayne is not responsible for the payment of any medical care if a foster takes them to a veterinarian without prior authorization. Humane Fort Wayne is not responsible for any sickness or illness of owned pets.

Scheduling your foster pet's spay/neuter surgery can be done once the foster weighs 2 pounds and is healthy. Kittens may be dropped off at the shelter the afternoon before the surgery date between 4:30 and 5:30 pm, or at the clinic the day of surgery by 8:00 am.

FACEBOOK FOSTER GROUP

Humane Fort Wayne has a Foster page on Facebook. This page is to share photos and information with all the current fosters. It is not intended to be used as a forum for immediate concerns about your foster. Please do not send staff members messages through Facebook.

FOSTER SUPPLIES

Each foster will receive a foster kit containing each of the items listed below. When supplies run low you may refill at the shelter.

- Cat/Kitten Foster Manual: There is a ton of information in this manual. Please make sure to read it carefully and always reach out to our shelter foster staff with any questions and/or concerns.
- Dry kitten food: Make sure that you have dry kitten food available at all times
- Wet kitten food: Offer roughly two tablespoons of wet food to each kitten 2-3 times per day.
- Litter box: We will provide one large litter box
- Non-clumping litter: It is important to use non-clumping for small kittens so we can tell the form of the stool and also so they don't get obstructions when exploring with their mouths and accidentally eat the litter.
- Towels and blankets: Can be used for bedding
- Scale: If you are fostering kittens, weigh them twice a day to make sure they are gaining weight. If they are not gaining weight, please reach out to the shelter staff.
- 1 jar of baby food: Sometimes adding in a little bit of baby food can help entice a kitten to eat. *Please only use this after you have reached out to the shelter staff so we can determine that nothing medical is going on.*
- Two bowls: One for food and one for water
- Snuggle Safe Disc: If you are fostering young kittens who cannot regulate their body temperature, we will send this microwave safe disc to help keep them warm.

PREPARING YOUR FOSTER SPACE

Your foster kittens should be separated from all other animals in your home and kept in a small, warm, draft free area, such as a spare room, or bathroom, where they have access to their food, water and litter box. It may be a good idea to consider an area that is easy to clean up in terms of spills and litter box accidents, which will happen since the kittens are learning. Please do not keep kittens in a garage or space that has outdoor access; these locations are not safe.

Foster kittens are very curious. They will try to get into everything to explore, so you will need to kitten-proof your space. Here are some tips:

- Put away any small items that a kitten can swallow.
- Hide any breakable items, block electrical outlets and remove toxic plants.
- If your kittens are staying in a bathroom, make sure that the toilet lid is closed.
- Block off any spaces that the kittens could crawl into and hide. Make sure windows stay closed.
- Never allow your foster kittens outside.

CARING FOR YOUR KITTENS

Feeding: Dry Science Diet should be available to the kittens at all times. You may also offer wet kitten food at least twice a day. If your kittens are not eating well, please reach out for advice. Do not give cow's milk or any other human/non-approved items to the kittens. Pick up dirty bowls and dishes. Clean water must be available to the kittens at all times. Monitor feedings closely.

Monitoring general health: Look over the kittens daily for any changes in physical conditions. A thriving kitten will be playful with a good appetite and normal stools. If you notice diarrhea, vomiting, decreased appetite, lethargy or any other health conditions, reach out as soon as possible for assistance.

Keeping kittens warm: Kittens cannot regulate their body temperature, so it is vital that they have a heat source they can get on and off of easily. We recommend using a Snuggle Safe Disc with a cover.

Litter Boxes: Use only unscented, non-clumping litter so you can tell the form of the stool. Also, so they don't get obstructions when they are exploring with their mouths and accidentally eat the litter. Use a box that is easy for kittens to get in and out of. Depending on the size of the litter you foster will determine how many litter boxes you will need. Keep kittens confined to a small area where they have easy access to a litter box. The litter box should be scooped at least twice a day. When washing the litter box (which you should do every few days if soiled heavily) using soap and water is sufficient. Never use strong chemicals as this may result in the kittens avoiding the box. If you are having issues with the kittens using the litter box, reach out for assistance.

NEVER yell or punish a kitten for having an accident outside the litter box.

Weighing your kittens: You will be provided a scale to weigh your kittens twice a day. Keep track of the weights as that will be the easiest way to ensure that the kittens are thriving. If a kitten is losing weight, please reach out for assistance.

Keeping kittens confined: Kittens will need to be confined to their space unless under close supervision.

Bathing: Bathing is very stressful for kitten and is only necessary if kittens have fleas or if they are extremely dirty from feces, mud, or other filth. In most cases, baby wipes are enough to clean up small messes. If it is necessary to bathe them, keep soap and water away from nose, eyes, and ears and be sure to keep your kitten warm afterwards as they cannot regulate their body temperature and are at great risk of becoming dangerously cold when wet.

Cleaning and Disinfecting: Daily cleaning includes shaking and removing unsoiled blankets and toys; sweeping up scattered litter/food and throw away; dirty bedding and toys should be laundered; wipe out bowls and scrub with soap and water (especially wet food bowls). Deep cleaning should only be done when cleaning between litters. Remove everything from the kitten space; throw away all disposable items; bedding and soft toys need to be laundered; throw away unused food from the bowls and litter from the litter box; thoroughly spray all surfaces with a cleaning solution. We recommend Rescue. Make sure the area is completely dry before setting up with all clean/fresh items for your new litter.

Carriers: Throughout the life of a cat, they will need to be transported. The best way to transport is to safely and comfortably secure them in their carrier. You can always leave the carrier out (with the door off) in the kitten space so they can check it out. Put toys and/or treats on a soft blanket in the carrier to encourage the kittens to go in and spend time there. Always cover the top of the carrier with a blanket or towel. This helps kittens feel more secure and safe when actually traveling. If a kitten is hesitant to come out of the carrier, you will want to remove the top of the carrier to make them feel more comfortable.

Body language: Get in the habit of observing the kitten's behavior/body and the location of the kitten before approaching. Approach quietly and slowly with a relaxed body posture and quiet, low, calm voice. Don't stare directly at the kitten. Notice any signs of the kitten being uncomfortable and back off as necessary. Reward interactions with food/treats. Keep visits short and positive. Allow the kitten to make choices. Be patient. Setbacks happen!

Grooming & Handling: It is important to handle kittens frequently so they become accustomed to it. Picking up and holding kittens several times a day while gently petting them can encourage affectionate behavior. By providing an appropriate place for kittens to scratch it helps them keep their nails worn down. You may gently hold their paws to help prepare them for having their nails clipped. Providing treats is always a good idea to create a positive experience. Pay close attention to the kitten's body language and if you see signs of discomfort, stop and try again at a different time. Kittens, especially those with longer hair, can benefit from being brushed. Having a treat available is beneficial to help the kitten associate that grooming is a positive experience.

Playtime: Play time is a very important part of kitten development. It is crucial for young kittens to have other kittens to wrestle with in order to develop appropriate play skills and be properly socialized with other kittens. Kittens also need toys to play with so they can get physical exercise and mental stimulation. Solo toys are things that kittens can play with when you are not there. These toys should be easy to clean and impossible for the kittens to consume. Some examples are ping pong balls, toilet paper tubes, bottle corks, and plastic shower curtain rings. Interactive toys are things that you use to engage the kittens in play. Some examples are wand toys and other toys with yarn or string attached.

Don't leave kittens alone with these toys since they can easily strangle or be ingested by the kittens. During play time it is important to remember to go slow. Not all kittens will be interested in playing right away. Drag toys away from kittens instead of hanging it in front of their face. Discourage kittens from scratching or biting your hands and feet. Redirect them to an appropriate toy. You shouldn't punish kittens for behavior that you find undesirable because punishment is ineffective at eliminating the behavior.

Please be sure to provide your kittens with something to scratch on. Cardboard scratchers work well since they can be discarded between litters. Although playtime is very important, it is imperative that kittens receive an appropriate amount of rest.

Enrichment: Playing is great for the kittens, but here are some additional ideas on keeping kitten minds busy!

Puzzles: Cut holes in a paper towel roll/toilet paper roll, place treats small enough to get through the holes in the roll and fold the ends over; place food/treats/catnip inside a paper bag; place catnip or treats on a piece of paper and crumble it into a ball.

Visual: Bird feeders in a window; blowing bubbles; pinwheels; motion toys. Hiding places: boxes, paper bags, perches, carriers.

Introducing new people/places/noises: Introducing your foster kittens to new things and new experiences will help prepare them for living happily in their forever homes. New people: introducing your foster animals to new people will help them become well-adjusted adult cats. Monitor all interactions with new people to ensure that they are positive, not scary, experiences for kittens. Have new people give gentle pets and treats to the kittens and interact with them using fun toys. If children are visiting, they must always be supervised until they are old enough to understand how to gently interact with a kitten.

New environments: It will help the kittens' adjustment into adopters' homes if you can allow your kittens to experience different parts of your home that can be easily disinfected and away from your owned pets. Keep the exploratory sessions brief so you don't overwhelm your kittens.

New noises: It is beneficial to expose kittens to a variety of normal household noises, but again, do so in a positive way. Gradually introduce new noises. For example, you could start by keeping a radio on low volume and gradually increase the volume over a few days. Another example would be to run the vacuum in another room at first, and over the course of a few days move the vacuum noise closer to their room.

Under socialized kittens: If your foster kittens are shy when you bring them home, you will need to have a more focused socialization plan. For the first few days, you will want to select a small quiet room where you could have background sound playing softly. Make sure they have hiding spots that you can access. Close off areas the kittens may be able to wedge themselves into. Enter and exit the room quietly and spend some time sitting on the floor in the room. Speak softly to the kittens while you are in the room. Provide a variety of solo toys for the kittens. Use interactive toys to entice kittens to play, but don't force them. If they will eat in front of you, use a long spoon to hand feed wet food, baby food, or Churu, from a short distance. If they are not interested in taking it from the spoon, leave the food on a dish while you are in the room. Preparing food with your hands is always a good idea.

Don't push interactions for the first few days. If you are successful and the kittens are allowing you to approach or they are approaching you, you may add a gentle touch to your routine using a finger or a toothbrush. If the kitten becomes more comfortable with touch, you may try introducing other touching, like grasping their sides to lift them off the ground. Over time you can desensitize them to being picked up. If the kitten becomes uncomfortable return it to a safe place. Kittens can be worked with in pairs or in a group, but if one is more fearful than the others, you may want to separate the fearful one and work with him/her individually.

Moms with kittens: Mother cats need to be in a calm environment so that they can be stress free and feel like they are keeping their kittens safe. Sometimes, stress can cause a mother cat to become aggressive or to not care for her babies properly. With that in mind, choose a private and quiet room of your home, away from the daily activities of your family. It's also important that they be kept away from other pets in the home. Other pets can be perceived as a threat by the mother cat and cause her to act aggressively to protect her kittens. If you have children and an active home, it may be best for you to foster when the kittens are four weeks or older. Sometimes mother cats will behave less defensively if their kittens are older.

Set up: Provide a couple of different safe places where she can care for her kittens. A dark area equipped with some sort of whelping box is ideal. A whelping box is a box that is large enough for the mother cat to lie on her side slightly away from her kittens in the box with her. The box should have sides high enough to prevent the kittens from wandering away, but low enough so it's easy for mom cat to come and go as she needs. Large carriers with the doors off work well for this purpose. Lining the bottom of the box with puppy pads topped with newspapers will help absorb moisture. Placing a blanket on top of the absorbent materials gives themselves the mom and kittens a soft place to lie. It is important to keep all these materials dry so that the kittens are not chilled. When you bring your new foster family home and set up, give them some space and allow mom to explore on her own. Give her a couple of hours before you enter the room.

Feeding, handling and socializing mom: To ensure that mom has enough to eat, give her access to dry KITTEN food at all times. You may also offer wet KITTEN food 2-3 times daily. Food intake for a nursing mom can be two to four times the amount eaten by a cat who is not nursing. Mom will need play time and enrichment as well.

Grooming and litter boxes: The mother cat will groom and lick her babies frequently for the first 2 to 4 weeks. She will stimulate her kittens to pee and poop and will generally consume the fecal matter and urine. As the babies become more mobile, they will start leaving the nest and deposit urine and feces nearby, which is a good time to start introducing a couple of low-sided litter boxes. Typically, kittens learn how to use a litter box on their own. You can encourage the kittens to use the box by gently returning them to the box every 15-20 minutes while they are playing.

Mom's care of her kittens: Mom should take care of her kittens by herself for at least 3-4 weeks before she starts the weaning process for her babies. Each mom cat you foster will be slightly different in her level of attentiveness, but there are three basic stages of nursing. Kittens are born blind, but they can feel their mother's heat and seek her out to begin nursing within 2 hours of being born. Mom cats should be lying on their side to ensure that their kittens can find themselves nipples for nursing.

There are 3 stages of nursing. When the kittens are 1 to 2 weeks old, mom initiates nursing by licking her kittens to wake them up and curling her body around them. After she wakes all of the babies, the kittens will search for a short period of time and then quickly latch on to nurse. When the kittens are two to three weeks old, their eyes and ears will begin to function, and they will start to explore beyond the nesting area. This is when the kittens start interacting and playing with their mom. Four to five weeks old, the kittens begin weaning and, in turn, mom cat no longer initiates nursing.

Moms with kittens: Occasionally, mom cats can develop mastitis when their kittens stop nursing. Mastitis occurs when the mammary glands inflame and harden, creating a very painful infection for the mom cat and causing symptoms such as a fever and listlessness. If you think your mom cat may have mastitis, please contact us.

Sometimes a mother cat stops providing care for one or all of her kittens. The neglect may be because of a birth defect or weakness in the kitten. Neglect may also happen because she is an inexperienced mom or she is in a stressful environment. This is why it is imperative to make daily observations to make certain she is caring for her babies. You should weigh each kitten twice a to ensure they are gaining weight. If you notice that mom is spending all of her time away from the kittens, is not grooming or nursing them frequently, or doesn't respond to their cries, please reach out immediately.

Aggressive behavior directed at other animals is common and expected from mother cats because they have a maternal instinct to protect their young at all times. Do not try to introduce mom to your owned pets.

Sometimes mom cats will act aggressively toward people. These behaviors may include hissing, growling, swatting and nipping. Again, mom is merely trying to protect her babies. If you have a mom exhibiting these behaviors, do not try to correct or punish her. She is only acting out of instinct to protect her babies and you could cause her aggressive behavior to escalate. Contact us at the first sign of any of the above behaviors so we can assess the situation and decide on the safest option for mom and her babies.

Separating kittens from mom: If everyone is healthy and friendly, we have no reason to separate mom from her kittens before they are 8 weeks old. But there are a few medical or behavioral reasons for separating them earlier than 8 weeks. As mentioned above, if the mom cat is showing signs of maternal neglect and is no longer caring for her kittens, we may decide to separate her from her kittens. If mom cat is under socialized, we may decide to separate the kittens once they are eating on their own consistently and no longer need to nurse (around 4-5 weeks old). Separating them would prevent the kittens from learning behaviors from their mom and help them to become socialized, which increases their chance of adoption. If there is a medical concern about the mom or babies, our shelter veterinarian could make the decision to separate the kittens from mom. The kittens' best chance of survival is to stay with their mom. Please do not separate your kittens from their mom for any reason, or attempt to supplement the mother's milk with formula, without consulting us first.

Introductions and quarantine: We love for kittens to go out in pairs, but sometimes we get single kittens that come into the shelter. We make sure the kittens are around the same size and energy levels when attempting to match pairs. Please quarantine the kitten for 2 weeks to look for signs of illness before doing the introduction. If you notice issues with your new foster, please reach out to the foster team.

Please follow the steps below when adding kittens into your existing foster group. Signs of a good interaction include both kittens initiating play and neither kitten seems stressed. It can be normal for kittens to initially hiss, swat, or play rough with some vocalization. Monitor these signs closely and do short, interactions for a while. Bowls and litter boxes are shared with no issues.

Signs of problems: Persistent bullying by one of the kittens. One kitten keeps the other from bowls and/or litter boxes. When in doubt separate them.

We are sure you have previously read that you should keep your fosters away from your owned pets at home. This is important for the following reasons:

- Kittens may be harboring something that could make your owned animals sick.
- We aren't sure how everyone will get along and you don't want anyone getting hurt.
- Humane Fort Wayne is not responsible for any illness/injury to your owned pets.

Bottle babies: Caring for kittens this young, is an around-the-clock job, but so worth it! We recommend KittenLady.org for information on bottle feeding babies. If you are curious about what it takes to foster these little ones, please let us know and we can discuss the next steps.

MEDICAL CONCERNS

Emergency Protocol: Notify us immediately **260-744-0454** if any of the following occurs.

- Unresponsive/unable to stand or walk
- Difficulty breathing
- Severe trauma
- Profusely bleeding
- Ingested a dangerous item (medication/chemical/etc.)
- Seizure/disoriented
- Any bite from a foster that breaks the skin
- Lost foster animal

Medical concerns: Humane Fort Wayne provides all medical care for our foster animals through our shelter veterinarian. Since we are ultimately responsible for your foster kitten's well-being, our staff must authorize any and all treatment for foster kittens. Do not give your fosters any medications, foods, supplements, etc. that have not been prescribed/approved by our staff. REMINDER, foster parents will be responsible for payment of any medical care if you take your foster to a veterinarian without authorization from Humane Fort Wayne. Kittens do a good job of masking when they don't feel well, so determining if a foster kitten is ill will require diligent observation of the kitten's daily activity and appetite levels. Be aware that kittens act differently at different ages. For example, a healthy 2 week old kitten will sleep often and get up only to nurse, whereas a healthy 6 week old kitten should have a lot of energy.

Eye discharge: It is normal for kittens to have some discharge from their eyes when they wake up. But if a kitten has a yellow green discharge or swelling around the eyes (making it hard for them to open their eyes) or the third eyelid is showing.

Sneezing and nasal discharge: Occasional sneezing is common in kittens. If the sneezing becomes more frequent, examine the discharge coming from the sneeze. If the discharge is clear, the infection is probably viral and medication may not be necessary. It is important to monitor the kittens in case the problem becomes worse. If the discharge becomes colored, contact us to schedule an appointment because the kitten may have a bacterial infection. Be sure to monitor

the kitten's breathing. If they start to breathe with an open mouth or wheeze, call immediately. Also, once you notice nasal closely to ensure that they are still eating.

Loss of appetite: Your foster kittens may be stressed after arriving in your home, and stress can cause lack of appetite. Unwillingness to eat in kittens can be very serious, so pay close attention to whether the kittens are eating and gaining weight. If a kitten under 4 weeks old misses 2 meals or a kitten over 4 weeks goes more than 12 hours without eating, let us know. With a kitten who is not eating, please do not change the kitten's diet without contacting us. An abrupt change in diet can cause diarrhea, which can lead to dehydration.

Lethargy: The activity level of your kittens will vary with each kitten in your litter and with their age. Sick kittens may have lower energy levels and just want to sit in your lap or on the floor and not move much or play. If you notice a drop in your kitten's energy level, cannot be roused, or seems weak and unable to stand, this is an emergency, so reach out immediately. Some under socialized kittens will move less because they are frightened. If you have a fearful group of kittens, it can be more difficult to determine if their energy levels are low, but keeping an eye on all the other behaviors will help determine whether you need to contact the foster department.

Diarrhea: In kittens, it can be tricky to determine if diarrhea is a problem. Soft stool diarrhea, most likely caused by stress, is normal for the first 2 days after you take kittens home. Kittens who are nursing tend to have loose stool, but if it is watery or very large in volume, that's a concern. By the time the kittens are 5 weeks old and are eating consistently on their own, they should have firm, normal stool. If your foster kittens have liquid stool, please contact us. Once your kittens are using a litter box, please monitor the box daily. Remember that diarrhea will dehydrate your kittens, so be proactive about contacting the foster team. If a kitten has bloody or mucus diarrhea, please call.

Dehydration: Dehydration is usually associated with diarrhea, vomiting, and/or loss of appetite. To test for dehydration, check the kitten's gums. If they are sticky, dry or pale color, the kitten is dehydrated. If the gums are smooth, slick and a nice pink color there should be no immediate concern with dehydration. If the kitten is dehydrated, please call immediately. Dehydration can be fatal.

Vomiting: If a foster kitten has thrown up 2 or more times in one day, please call.

Pain or strain while urinating or defecating: When kittens first go into a foster home, they may not urinate or defecate due to stress. If a kitten hasn't urinated or defecated in more than 12 hours, however, please contact us. Also, if you notice the kitten straining to urinate or defecate with little or no results, or crying out when urinating or defecating, please reach out.

Worms: All kittens are given a round of dewormer before they leave for foster care. Round worms will look like spaghetti. Tape worms will look like grains of rice and found around the anus. If you notice worms in your kitten's poop or vomit, please contact us.

Fleas: All kittens are checked for fleas before going to their foster homes. If old enough, kittens are given flea preventative. If you notice fleas on your kittens, please contact us.

Amputations, Enucleations, Wounds: There are times when kittens come in with advanced medical needs. Our staff will go over specific instructions for these kittens.

Hair loss: If you notice any hair loss or crusty/scabby lesions, please contact us. It is normal for cats to have thin fur around the lips, eyelids and front of the ears, but clumpy patches of hair loss or thinning hair can indicate ringworm or dermatitis. Check your kittens' coats every day.

Frequent ear scratching: A foster kitten may have ear mites if it scratches its ears often and/or shakes its head frequently. Or if you see a dark discharge that resembles coffee grounds when you look in their ears. Ear mites can be treated. Please reach out.

FELV/FIV: Both are viruses that kittens can get from their mother and other cats. It is important to note that Humane Fort Wayne does not routinely test kittens for these viruses.

FIP: A viral disease caused by a feline coronavirus. This type of coronavirus is different from the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 in people. It is very common and usually doesn't cause any serious issues, aside from mild diarrhea. But when the feline coronavirus changes to a specific strain of the coronavirus, FIP can develop. In about 10% of infected cats, the virus will multiply and mutate, resulting in an infection known as feline infectious peritonitis (FIPV) that spreads throughout the cat's body.

Critically Crashing Kitten Protocol: If you experience a kitten that may be crashing please follow this protocol. Even if the kitten seems okay afterwards please reach out to the foster team during the next business day and inform us about what happened and what steps were taken for the kitten. This can be a life-threatening emergency when a kitten, that was previously doing well, "crashes". This can occur with kittens who have a mother, as well as those who do not. For kittens with moms, watch out for the mother pushing away a kitten and not caring for it, as this kitten may need bottle feeding and extra warmth.

Symptoms:

- Low body temperature - kitten feels cool or cold to the touch.
- Extreme lethargy—not getting up, unable to stand, not responding when touched.
- Gasping for breath
- Distress meowing or crying out.

Causes: Hypothermia, being too cold, or hypoglycemia, not enough blood sugar.
Take immediate action at home:

1. Get them warm. Immediately wrap the kitten up in a towel like a burrito. Their whole body should be in the towel, with only the face exposed. Do not take the kitten out of the towel to adjust them or check on them. Every time you take them out you will make them cold again, even if only for a second. Wrap a heating pad set on low around the burrito towel (to avoid burns) as an extra source of heat. Secure it around the towel so it stays in place. If you don't have a heating pad, place a towel in your dryer for a few minutes and wrap that around the burrito to function as a heating pad.
2. Raising blood sugar: Sugar sources can be warm sugar, Karo syrup, Nutrical. Provide 3 drops every 3 minutes. If the kitten isn't swallowing, try rubbing the sugar on its gums and tongue.

Please do not rush your kitten to the shelter or emergency vet. Performing the steps above right away will be their best chance of survival. Going to a vet outside of the shelter without prior approval would be at the cost of the foster. Once the kitten is stable, an appointment can be made to bring the kitten in for a check-up and fluids, if needed. Keep in mind, that it can sometimes take hours for kittens to recover and start acting normally again. Also know that even if you follow these instructions perfectly and provide all of the love and attention possible, sadly many of them will not survive.

Medications: Please keep the following in mind when asked to give your fosters any medications. Follow all the directions closely and only give as directed. Make sure you give the correct dose as prescribed by the medical team. Do not stop giving the medications before they are completed unless advised to do so. Do not give your foster any medications or supplements not approved by Humane Fort Wayne.

Dealing with loss: While rare, not all kittens survive even with early intervention and advanced medical care. We work hard as a team with our foster families staying in close communication to identify kittens who may be struggling. Unfortunately, there are still a small percentage of kittens who crash suddenly through no fault of anyone. If this happens, please follow our emergency protocol. Although this is the most devastating part of fostering, please know that without individuals willing to take these kittens into their homes, they would not stand a chance of survival. We are here to support you!

Euthanasia: Humane Fort Wayne never sends an animal out to foster care intending the end result to be euthanasia. Through the use of foster homes we find out information that we would otherwise never know. Although most of the information we gain is very positive there are times when serious issues occur once the animal is in foster care. The decision to euthanize an animal is not taken lightly and is used only when we have exhausted all reasonable alternatives. Some animal may display behavioral patterns or have physical conditions that make it difficult, with limited resources, to care for them at the shelter or in a home environment. There are also times that an animal may show behaviors that could make them potentially dangerous to people or other animals. Please know that we will be open and honest when talking about this sensitive topic should it arise with one of the animals you are fostering.

Returning to the shelter: Kittens can return to the shelter when they weigh over 2 pounds. They are healthy, and they are up to date on all vaccines and dewormers. The kittens will stay at the shelter at this time and the day after surgery they are made available for adoption.

Adoption: We highly encourage our foster families to find homes for their foster animals. If you have someone wanting to adopt your foster animals direct them to the main web page, **Humane Fort Wayne.org**, select Adopt, and complete the adoption application, adding that they are interested in an animal currently being fostered and give the foster's name. We rely heavily on our fosters to keep track of who they have lined up to adopt their fosters and to communicate with them regularly on what is scheduled to happen with the kittens.

Saying Goodbye: We understand that bringing your foster kittens back may be an emotional time for many fosters. There are always more animals that need fostered. If you need to fill that void sooner rather than later please let the foster coordinator know. Volunteering in the animal welfare field often times put you at a greater risk of developing compassion fatigue. When your emotions build up you may feel exhausted, angry, sad, etc. A combination of these symptoms can lead to burnout and is often responsible for the loss of many talented foster volunteers. In order to maintain your emotional and physical health, take frequent breaks and reach out if you are struggling with anything. We are here to help you have a positive and rewarding foster experience!

Thank you: Word's cannot express how grateful we are for our fantastic team of foster families. Without your help we would not be able to help as many animals as we do in our community. Please know that we are here for you, and please reach out with any and all questions and concerns.

Thank You!

Humane Fort Wayne Foster Team