

ANIMAL RESCUE CONNECTIONS  
**Foster Handbook**



# Animal Rescue Connections

## Foster Handbook

### FOSTER SUPPLIES

**HEATING PAD:** Make sure you have the old style that doesn't shut off automatically. Wrap a towel around the heating pad and make sure kittens have space to crawl off the pad if they get too hot. Alternatively, a man's sock filled with uncooked rice and heated in the microwave for a few seconds, holds its heat for several hours.

**SCALE:** You need to weigh the kitten/cat periodically to make sure they are gaining weight and to make sure you give medication for the proper weight. Digital mailing scales can be purchased at reasonable prices.

**SYRINGES:** 1, 3, AND 20cc syringes without needles for dosing medications. 3cc syringes with needles to give vaccinations.

**KITTEN SUPPLIES:** Nursing bottles and nipples. Kitten powdered milk: KMR First and Second step; Just Born that has colostrum in it.

**MEDICATIONS:**

- Amoxicillin and/or Clavamox as antibiotic (powdered form – mix as needed)
- Erythromycin or Terramycin for eyes
- Ponazuril for coccidia
- Panacur/Flagyl for giardia
- Strongid T for hook and round worms
- Praziquantal/Droncit for tape worms
- Total dewormer can be used for adult cats
- Albon for a wide range of bacterial infections
- Viralys anti-viral to strengthen immune system
- Capstar for fleas currently on animal
- Revolution for fleas, mange and ear mite management
- Otomite for ear mites
- Tresaderm for ear infections,
- Zymox Otic for yeast infections in ears

**THERMOMETER:** Digital for quick and accurate readings.

**BEDDING:** Towels, small baby blankets can be used for bedding (easy to wash).

### CLEANING SUPPLIES

**BLEACH:** Bleach mixed with water will kill most bacteria and fungi. The downside is it will rust metal, take out color and leaves a very strong odor.

**PRO-3:** From Simple Green available from Home Depot. It is as effective as bleach without the downside: It has no fumes when dry and does not take out color so it can be used on ALL surfaces. You should leave any disinfectant on the area for a minimum of 15 minutes before rinsing it off.

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### FOSTER PROCEDURES

#### INTAKE

**GETTING READY:** The Foster Coordinator will contact you to see if you are prepared to take on fostering of cat or kittens.

**TESTING:** The animal will be taken to the vet for combo testing for feline leukemia (FeLV)/Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV). If a kitten is under 6 weeks of age it would need to be tested at a later time. If the animal is not interacting with other fosters or personal animals the test can be done at the time of the spay/neuter surgery. There will be 100% testing of all kittens unless the mother is available and has already tested negative. If it tests positive for FIV or FeLV, separate the kitten from the others. Re-testing at 6 months of age is required. Many kittens will throw off any antigens passed on by the mother once their own immune system kicks in.

**SEPARATE:** The foster cats/kittens are to be kept in a separate room to be certain that they are free of fleas and there are no signs of upper respiratory infection. Many new cats will have some bowel issues so this period of separation gives time to ensure the feces are good and free of parasites. Skin issues and any hair loss problems are also addressed during this time. ONLY once it is established that the animal is healthy may it be introduced to other foster animals for additional socialization.

**PAPERWORK:** The Feline Medical Log should be filled out completely. It is the responsibility of the individual foster to keep all health information documented on the Medical Log. Bring the medical papers whenever you bring the cat for adoption venues.

The Feline Medical Record Log should be started to track required treatments.

- \*Important to track all treatments given to animal for health (*See Sample as Reference*)
- \*The top is for quick reference on what needed to have ready for adoption
- \*The bottom grid is for tracking ALL treatments given, when, weight, dosage, etc.
- \*All FVRCP labels should be placed on the form under the date given to animal
- \*A microchip sticker should be placed in the upper right corner of the form
- \*Designate type of flea treatment given – Revolution, Capstar or bathed in Dawn liquid dish soap
- \*If additional medical treatments needed for an animal – check with Jenny for approval

**FLEAS:** If the kitten has fleas, bathe them in warm water with a small dash of Dawn liquid dish soap. If an adult, give them Capstar (oral), and then dose with Revolution (topical).

**MEDICATIONS:** All should be given the appropriate dose of Ponazuril (two doses), Strongid (two doses). If the cat has diarrhea, consult the foster coordinator for procedure to treat.

**MICROCHIPPING:** All animals should be micro-chipped at the time of surgery. If already fixed, the chipping can be done at an alternative time best suited to getting the animal ready for adoption.

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### NEEDS TO BE DONE AT THE TIME OF INTIAL INTAKE OF NEW FOSTER

Initial vetting of the animal depends on the age of the kitten/cat. *(See Tables Below)*

Age	Treatment/Procedures – for Kittens
3 wks	Initial Evaluation of Health: Bath with Dawn liquid dish soap (fleas), Strongid T (worms) and then again 2 wks later
6-8 wks	1 <sup>st</sup> FVRCP shot given, Revolution & Capstar can be given
10-12 wks	2 <sup>nd</sup> FVRCP shot given
12 wks +	Rabies, surgery (spay/neuter), microchip, FIV/FeLV & Heartworm SNAP Combo Test
14-16 wks	3 <sup>rd</sup> FVRCP shot given
16-20 wks	4 <sup>th</sup> FVRCP shot given

Age	Treatment/Procedures – for Older Kittens and Adults
Over 5 months	Initial Evaluation of Health: Revolution and Capstar (fleas) Strongid T (worms) and then again 2 wks later (for younger kittens)
	May give a total de-wormer in place of Strongid (to older cats only)
	Check ears for mites and coat for ringworm – etc.
	1 <sup>st</sup> FVRCP shot given
	Rabies, surgery (spay/neuter) and microchip
	FIV/FeLV & Heartworm SNAP Combo Test
	2 <sup>nd</sup> FVRCP for booster

### VACCINATIONS

When intaking a new foster, wait a couple of days before giving vaccinations to make sure they do not come down with upper respiratory infection or diarrhea. Do not give cat that is sick or puny any vaccinations.

### SPAY/NEUTER

As soon as the cat is healthy and weighs 3+ pounds, the foster will let the Foster Coordinator know so that they can be scheduled for surgery. After 2-5 days following surgery, they can be brought to day adoptions as long as all procedures have been completed. Be sure to bring ALL paperwork.

### ADOPTION

The Foster Coordinator will make arrangements for you to bring the cat to PetSmart as a day cat until permanent space is available. Once the cat has been accepted into the permanent space, the foster is required to be available to take the cat back in event of illness or stress-related behavior.

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### HEALTH CARE

#### WORMS

All kittens should be wormed by three weeks of age. Below are the most common worms in cats/kittens:

**Roundworms:** Most common worm in cats/kittens. Kittens with roundworms appear thin but have pot bellies. In the feces, they look like strands of spaghetti. They can be fatal in young kittens.

**Hookworms:** Small, thin worms. Signs of hookworms are diarrhea, anemia, weight loss and progressive weakness. They can also kill kittens.

**Tapeworms:** Look like rice segments around the anal area or in the feces. They are caused by ingesting an infected flea. If the cat or kitten has ingested even one flea they will most likely have tape worms.

**Treatment:** Strongid given in at least two doses two weeks apart will be effective for roundworms and hookworms. Praziquantal/Droncit is for tape worms.

### DIARRHEA / STOOL CONSISTENCY/ URINE COLOR

#### Causes of diarrhea:

1. Food change or overfeeding (especially in kittens)
2. Parasites
  - a. Worms – treat with Strongid 2 doses, 2 weeks apart
  - b. Coccidia – treat with Ponazuril (2 doses/2 days consecutively)
  - c. Giardia - treat with Panacur/Flagyl mixture for 7 days
3. Bacterial infection – treat with Amoxicillin or Clavamox

Diarrhea in kittens is sometimes difficult to diagnose the cause and requires trial and error. Sometimes the treatment itself (antibiotics) causes diarrhea. Often, Fortiflora added to the food helps (like acidophilus in humans). Some cats respond well to plain yogurt added to their food, also plain pumpkin, and goat milk – all in moderation because too much can itself cause diarrhea. Consult with the foster coordinator for help with persistent diarrhea, especially in young kittens. They can quickly become dehydrated and die. *See dehydration section.*

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### STOOL COLOR

**Bloody** - Actual red blood seen in stool. Could indicate feline panleukopenia virus (FPV). Grossly abnormal, must be treated.

**Mucous** - yellowish/white/clear slimy substance. Indicates severe bowel irritation. Grossly abnormal and needs immediate care.

**Black** - True dark black color to stool. Usually indicates bleeding high in the bowel. Severe sign, needs immediate attention.

**Brown** - Normal color. Be happy!

**Orange** - Usually indicates way too much bile in stool, can occur with reflux. Seek medical advice.

**Yellow** - Almost always indicates bacterial imbalance in the bowel. If has diarrhea also, usually related to coccidia. Seek medical advice.

**White** - Grossly abnormal color, usually indicates, severe bacterial imbalance and severe infection in the bowel. Kitten at risk of dying, needs medical attention, ASAP.

### STOOL CONSISTENCY

**Dry/hard** - Abnormal, usually indicates dehydration. Seek care, promptly.

**Firm** - Normal, be happy.

**Formed but soft** - Low range of 'normal'. If stools changes from firm to soft you should seek medical advice.

**Toothpaste** - Still has somewhat tubular form but falls apart once touched. Abnormal, needs medication.

**Cow-patty** - Never formed but thick enough it falls into a 'cow-patty' shape. Abnormal, significant risk and needs immediate attention.

**Liquidy** - Just fluid that falls out of rectum, thin and may have mucous. Abnormal, animal is at severe risk and must be treated ASAP.

**The 'Squirts'** - Animal has no control over bowel and watery fluid squirts out of rectum. Grossly abnormal, animal in danger of dying, must be treated immediately!

### URINE COLOR

**Red/Dark Orange** - Severe sign. Severe at-risk, must be treated immediately.

**Dark yellow/almost brown** - Extreme dehydration. It's BAD! Needs immediate aggressive treatment.

**Intense yellow** - Concentrated urine. Animal is not getting enough fluid for total body hydration.

**Yellow** - Mildly concentrated urine. Monitor closely and if ANY other signs, seek care immediately.

**Light yellow** - Mildly dilute urine. Overall body hydration should be adequate if no kidney disease. With sick/injured or at-risk animals, this is the color we shoot for.

**Pale yellow** - Dilute urine. Hydration should be excellent if no kidney disease. With any significantly debilitated or severe risk animal, this is the color we shoot for.

**Almost clear** - Severely dilute urine. Risk of over-hydration. Urine should only be this dilute if under constant medical supervision

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### DEHYDRATION

Dehydration mostly occurs in young kittens or sick adult cats. Check the nape of their neck and if it doesn't pop back quickly, then they could be dehydrated. Feed them Pedialyte, the unflavored variety that can be found in the baby food section of your grocery store. If a kitten is getting dehydrated, fluids are more important than food, they can die in a matter of hours. It is difficult to get enough fluid in them by mouth, so subcutaneous fluids may be needed. It is not hard to do and may save a life. Contact your foster coordinator immediately if concerned.

#### Overview of hydration and skin turgor:

**Immediate snap back** - Excellent hydration. Watch however at this stage for over-hydration.

**Quick snap but not immediate** - Hydrated. Monitor other signs to be sure the kitten is overall (full body) hydrated.

**Snap back within one second** - Adequate hydration. However, if ANY other signs, this animal is at risk and needs constant care.

**Within 1-3 seconds** - Dehydrated. Needs immediate attention.

**Stands up on own** - SEVERE dehydration. DYING. Must be seen immediately!

### UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTION

Symptoms include sneezing, watery eyes, runny nose, congestion, and poor appetite.

We regularly stock Amoxicillin and Clavamox to treat URI. Make sure you get your dosage correct. Remember: Antibiotics do not get rid of the upper respiratory but it will keep a secondary infection from starting. If the animal is not responding within the first 5 days, contact us. For severe cases that are not responding, we will take the cat to a vet for further evaluation, sometimes they will prescribe Zithromax.

For eye symptoms, we use Erythromycin or Terramycin eye ointment.

For severe symptoms, or when a cat is not eating at all, we use a nebulizer treatment 2-3 times daily.

### MANGE

**Sarcoptic mange:** Distinguished by scaly patches on ears or small scabs on head/neck. Easy to treat with two doses of Revolution given two weeks apart. These mites do not live long off the host so you do not need to worry about transmission to humans.

**Demodectic mange:** Harder to treat, usually needs a veterinarian's intervention, but, fortunately, is much less common than sarcoptic.

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### RINGWORM

Ringworm is actually a fungus and is very contagious to other cats and humans. The infected cat needs to be isolated, in a small bathroom or area away from other animals. A/C should preferably be turned off for that room or vent closed to prevent spread of spores through the house. There are a number of treatments depending on the severity.

**A few lesions or spots:** Treat topically with miconazol spray, or over the counter human anti-fungals such as Lotrimin, Lamisil or Tinactin.

**More pervasive lesions:** Lyme sulphur dips one week apart, usually three times.

**Extreme cases:** Ketakonazole orally must be prescribed and monitored by a vet.

Ringworm can take between 6 – 8 weeks to cure. Occasionally a kitten/cat will come down with ringworm and appear to be over it and a week or two later it will come back. Cats in the wild get it and it will go away by itself after a while. It is really no different than athlete's foot. Wear protective clothing when cleaning a cage with a kitten that has ringworm. Be sure to take care of the kittens/cats that **don't** have ringworm first then move on to the ringworm kitties.

Kittens are most at risk. Older cats have a stronger immune system and may get a spot or two which clears up in a week or so and then does not return.

Use Pro-3 liberally to clean any area where the cat has been or is being kept. You can also spray it on any furniture or carpet in the area. If you prefer bleach the mixture is (1 part bleach to 32 parts water) be careful since it will discolor cloth items and will rust metal.

### GROOMING

**Claws:** Clip them regularly to get the cats used to the process.

**Ears:** Use an alcohol-based (over-the-counter) ear cleaner to clean ears. DO NOT USE Q-TIPS IN EARS... USE COTTON BALLS. If ear mites are suspected, treat with Otomite. Revolution (topical flea control) when used monthly, helps to prevent ear mites.

**Brushing:** Choose your brush carefully. Some brushes are very sharp and can graze the cat's skin. Start brushing along its back with slow, long strokes. Be gentle and try to watch cat's emotions to look for any unhappy reactions. If the cat bites you, you are either brushing it in a "private area" or you are tugging on a matt of hair that is causing some discomfort or pain. Do not try to cut out matts close to the skin with scissors – seek professional help. A cat's skin is VERY thin and the slightest nick can penetrate the skin and cause a hole. Long-haired cats can swallow a lot of their hair from licking, so brush regularly to reduce hair balls and vomiting.

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### FOSTERING KITTENS

#### Judging the Age of a Kitten:

Birth	Eyes closed, ear canals closed
2 – 3 days	Umbilical cord drops off, body temperature between 92° and 97°
4 days	Purrs while nursing
5 - 8 days	Ear canal opens
7 days	Develops ability to shiver
7 – 10 days	Eyes open, blue eyes, body temperature around 98°
8 – 14 days	Ears uncurl and start standing up
14 days	Socialization begins – positive human contact is critical
14 – 28 days	Baby incisors (front teeth) come in
16 –20 days	Starts crawling
3 weeks	Starts walking, eyes start changing color, ears completely stand up.
3 – 4 weeks	Baby canine teeth come in – begins eating solid food
4 weeks	Starts washing themselves and littermates, can control urge to eliminate, begins to dig or rake anything that looks like cat litter
4 – 5 weeks	Starts running
4 – 6 weeks	Baby premolars come in on lower jaw
5 weeks	Weight about 1 lb.
6 weeks	First vaccination
6 – 8 weeks	Hunting play begins (can start as early as 4 weeks)
8 weeks	Old enough to leave mom. Weight is 2 lbs.
9 – 12 weeks	Eyes change to adult color/shade
12 weeks	3 lbs weight – ready to be spayed/neutered and get rabies shot
14 – 16 weeks	Permanent incisors appear
6 months	Permanent canines appear – sexual maturity is reached (territorial and mating behaviors begin)

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### AGE AND WEIGHT CHART

Age	Weight (oz.)/ (lbs)
1 day	2 - 4 /
5 days	3 - 7 /
10 days	4 - 9 /
2 weeks	6 - 11 /
3 weeks	7 - 14 /
25 days	8 - 16 /
4 weeks	9 - 18 /
5 weeks	10 - 21 /
40 days	10 - 23 /
6 weeks	13 - 26 /
7 weeks	13 - 31 /

Normal Adult Values:	
Temperature	101° - 102° F
Pulse	110 - 140 beats per min.
Respiration	20 - 30 breaths per min.
Gestation	Ranges from 59 - 69 days

### FEEDING

The best milk is from a nursing momma cat. It contains antibodies that a newborn kitten needs. If the biological momma cat is not available, a surrogate lactating momma cat can sometimes assist. Introduction of orphan kittens to a surrogate momma cat with her own kittens must be done very carefully or she might reject not only the new kittens but also her own! Remove the biological kittens and place them in a cloth bag (about 15 mins) to transfer their scent into the fabric. Do not contaminate their own natural scent. Return them to their momma. Place the new kitten(s) in the fabric bag (about 15 mins) to transfer the biological kittens' scent onto the new kittens. Smear a little butter or wet kitten food on the new kittens' heads. The momma will lick this off and be more likely to feed the kittens afterward. This is a crucial step to ensure momma accepts the other kitten without alienating her own kittens.

#### **If you can't find a surrogate mom:**

Feed with a small baby bottle (easily available at pet stores). Use KMR or Just Born. **Do not use regular cow's milk – it will cause diarrhea and possibly kill kittens.** Cut a small crosscut slit in the nipple with a sharp scissors. Do not cut too much – kittens need to suckle and can aspirate if the milk flows too quickly.

Feed with an eyedropper or syringe if absolutely necessary. They can easily aspirate when being fed with an eyedropper. Keep track of how much they eat at each feeding (see below for schedule).

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### Feeding schedule for newborns:

Kitten's Age	How Much Food	How Often - Day	How Often - Night
1 week old or less	½ to 1 tsp.	Every 2 hours	Every 2 hours
1 to 2 weeks old	1 to 1-1/2 tsp.	Every 2 hours	Every 4 hours
2 to 3 weeks old	1-1/2 to 2 tsp.	Every 2 hours	Once

After feeding newborns, wipe their faces and bodies with a warm damp cloth to mimic the licking action of mama. Rub the kitten's anal area with a warm damp cloth to stimulate urination and defecation, usually needed until about 3-4 weeks old.

### **For kittens over 3 weeks old** (*Still using a bottle*):

Mix equal parts of rice cereal with kitten milk formula to the thickness of cream. This will transition kittens to solid food and hold them between feedings.

Start feeding a thin slurry of mixed canned kitten/cat food and KMR kitten milk. Paté texture of wet food is best and easiest to mix

After feeding, put each kitten in a litter box immediately to encourage litter box training. You can start them with Dr. Kelsey's Kitten Attract litter if you like, but most take to the litter box instinctively.

### **For kittens over 4 weeks old:**

Start putting the food mixture in a shallow plate or pie tin instead of a bottle. Continue to use the paté canned food mixed with KMR so it is mushy. As they get the hang of it, you can reduce the amount of milk until they are eating straight wet food. At the same time, you can keep dry kibble available to them at all times. They are usually curious and attempt to eat it when they can. If they have any trouble with diarrhea, Royal Canin Baby Cat Kibble has lower cellulose so is better tolerated by some kittens.

### **For kittens over 5 weeks old:**

Start feeding mostly the dry kitten food. Once the new diet is established cut back on the canned food – the kitten should start eating dry food within a week or so.

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### CARE AND FIRST AID

#### Symptoms to Watch For:

**CARE:** Caring for an orphaned kitten can be difficult and even the most conscientious foster parent may lose a little one. If a kitten dies you should not blame yourself – remember that it would certainly have died if you hadn't tried to help. Check the kitten out for dehydration and general overall condition.

**FLEAS:** Immediately take care of any fleas, which can kill kittens. Bathe the kitten with warm water and a small dash of Dawn liquid dish soap. Lather up the kitten and place on a towel in a carrier for 15 minutes. Make sure the kitten does not get cold during this time. Rinse with clean, warm water. Pick off any fleas (dead or dying) and dump them in a small pot of flea shampoo. Dry the kitten well and keep it warm. If the kitten is over 2 weeks of age, you can also get a small towel and spray some Frontline on it and gently rub over the kitten. By 4 weeks of age the kitten can be given half of a Capstar, which kills the fleas within about 30 minutes. You can then bathe the kitten to get rid of the dead fleas and dirt.

**LIMPING:** This can be from the Calici virus. Rapid high fever and an ulcerated mouth can also accompany this virus. Antibiotics could be needed immediately! Don't just think your kitten has hurt his leg or foot if he's limping, check temp and reaction to verify the cause. Start antibiotics if necessary.

**STOMACH BLOATING:** This could mean round worms. Deworm with Strongid T.

**STOOL CONSISTENCY:** Check the variations under the Diarrhea/Stool Consistency page.

**DANGER:** **Never** give a cat/kitten aspirin (Anacin, Bufferin, or an acetaminophen such as Tylenol, or Ibuprofen (Nuprin, Motrin, etc.). These can be fatal to all cats.

**Contact your foster home coordinator if you notice ANY signs of ANY problems! Do not hesitate because it can go from a small issue to a matter of life or death with in a very short time span!**

### KEEPING KITTENS WARM

As soon as you find an orphaned kitten it must be protected from becoming chilled. A cardboard box with sides at least 8 inches high or a laundry basket makes a good kitten shelter. Place towels in the bottom for bedding.

Be sure to keep the kittens **WARM**. Getting too cold is the number one killer – kittens by themselves cannot keep heat themselves – if you have another kitten available put them together. A man's sock filled with uncooked rice and heated in the microwave for a few seconds, holds heat for several hours or you can use a heating pad but be certain the kittens have a way to move off the heat sources if they get too warm. Note: The newer model heating pads have an automatic shutoff which can leave the kittens cold. (Check garage sales or ask your friends to recycle their older models with you and buy them a new one.)



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