

# CAT & KITTEN FOSTER MANUAL



**Fort Wayne Animal Care and Control**  
HELPING PEOPLE . HELPING ANIMALS



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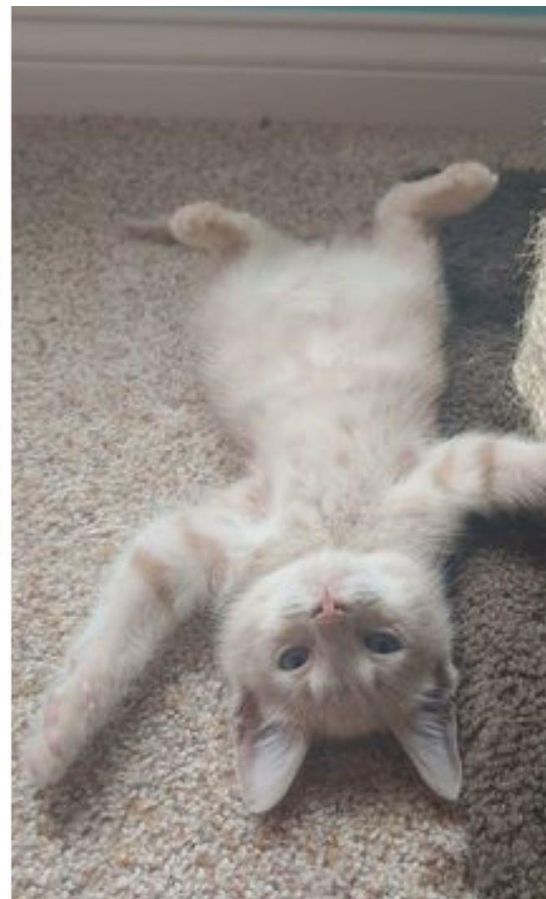
### Emergency Protocol

**If you have a medical emergency  
please call  
260-427-5549 or 260-427-1244  
or our main shelter line  
260-427-1244  
during business hours**

**If you have a medical emergency  
outside of the business hours  
please call  
260-449-3000**



**When calling the emergency number  
please let dispatch know you are a current  
foster and need to speak with an animal  
control officer. If you live outside of city  
limits, we may request you meet an animal  
control officer at the shelter.**







# WELCOME!

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

Fostering is messy, rewarding, stinky, adorable, and sometimes a heartbreaking job. We certainly could not provide the level of care we do without valuable foster homes like yours.



## MEET OUR FOSTER TEAM!

THE QUICKEST, EASIEST WAY TO GET AHOLD OF SOMEONE IN THE FOSTER DEPARTMENT IS TO EMAIL

**FOSTER.HELP@CITYOFFORTWAYNE.ORG**



**Emilee Smith**

**Foster Coordinator**

Emilee.Smith@cityoffortwayne.org

260-427-5551

Typically in office Tues-Fri 8am-6pm



**Racheal Branning**

**Foster & Transfer Program  
Assistant**

Racheal.Branning@cityoffortwayne.org

260-427-5549

Typically in office Sun 10am-2pm,  
Mon, Tues & Fri 10am-6pm



**Sandy Whitmore**

**Foster Assistant**

260-427-5549

Typically in office Mon, Tues, Wed and Fri  
9:30am-2:30pm



**Patricia Peterson**

**Transfer Coordinator**

Patricia.Peterson@cityoffortwayne.org

260-427-1244 and ask for Patricia

Typically in office Mon 7am-3pm

Tues-Fri 8am-4pm



# FOSTER FAQ'S

## What do foster parents need to provide?

- A healthy and safe place
- Transportation to and from shelter appointments (typically every 2 weeks)
- Socialization to teach kittens about positive relationships

## 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 together so they can socialize with and learn from each other. There are times larger litters come in.

## How long will I have the foster kittens?

- Kittens need to be fostered until they weigh at least 2 pounds and are healthy. At this time they return for their spay/neuter surgeries 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 medicate your foster 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 them separate from your personal pets with their own supplies. We also highly suggest you consult with your veterinarian before fostering to ensure your personal pets are up to date on vaccines. Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control is not responsible for and cannot provide medical care for your personal pets.

## Where do all of the cats come from?

- Most arrive as strays that citizens find and bring to the shelter. Some are surrendered by their families who can no longer care for them.

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

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

## 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. If you are bitten and the skin breaks contact us within 24 hours of the bite. The law requires 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 a 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 stand a chance of survival. You're helping to save lives!

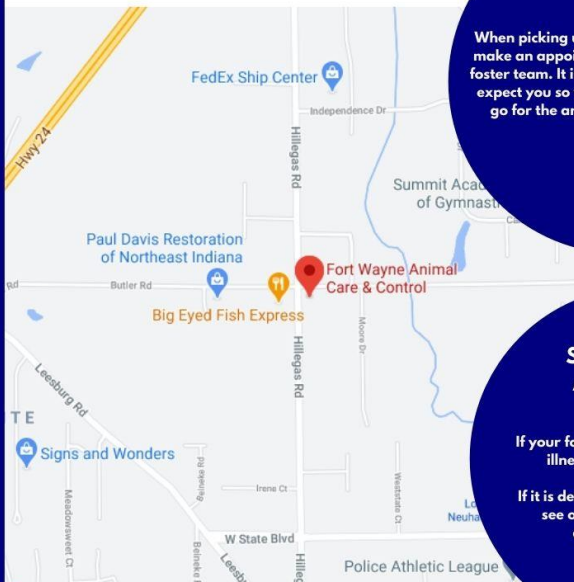
## What if I want to adopt one of my foster kittens or know someone who does?

- That's great! We encourage our fosters to find adopters for their foster animals! We just need a completed adoption profile from the potential adopter (with foster's name and animal number by the end of business on the day of their surgery) and the full adoption process will be followed. Please contact us right away with this information because once the animal is up for adoption, we cannot hold him/her for anyone, including the foster parent.



During the time you foster kittens, you'll need to make a few appointments — to pick up and drop off your kittens, bring them in for vaccines and spay/neuter, and pick up supplies. Please note that all appointments, including your pickup and drop-off appointments, should be scheduled in advance. If you cannot make an appointment, please change your appointment slot and/or notify the foster department immediately to reschedule as appointment times fill up quickly. FWACC provides all medical care for foster animals through our shelter veterinarian. Because we are ultimately responsible for your foster kitten's well-being, our staff must authorize any and all treatment for foster kittens. FWACC is not responsible for payment of any medical care if foster parents take their foster to a veterinarian without authorization. FWACC is not responsible for any sickness/illness of owned pets in the foster's home.

**All appointments take place at Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control located at 3020 Hillegas Road Fort Wayne, IN 46808**



### Picking Up, Dropping Off

When picking up or returning kittens please make an appointment with a member of the foster team. It is important we know when to expect you so we have everything ready to go for the animal(s) you are fostering.

### Additional Supplies

If you need additional supplies for your foster kittens please help yourself to our foster supply pantry any time during hours that staff are here. If you do not see what you are looking for please let us know.

### Scheduling Vaccine Appointments

You will receive a medical sheet with dates of when your foster will need to return for vaccines and another round of dewormer. To schedule this appointment visit

<https://fortwayneanimalcareandcontrol.setmore.com>

and follow the prompts. This is for **VACCINES ONLY**. Video instructions are posted on the foster Facebook page

### Scheduling Vet Appointments

If your foster kitten is showing signs of illness please notify the foster department ASAP. If it is determined your foster needs to see our vet we will schedule an appointment for you.

### Scheduling Spay/Neuter Surgery

Once your kittens weigh two pounds email the foster.help email so we can schedule their surgeries. Kittens can be dropped off at the shelter the afternoon before the surgery date between 4-5:30pm or between 7:30-8am the day of surgery. There is no need to withhold food or water for kittens. If you are bringing an adult cat in for surgery please withhold food and water after 10pm the evening before surgery. The day after surgery kittens will come into the adoption program.



# APPOINTMENTS





Facebook will be the only place that we post animals needing a foster home. Typically, the first person to comment gets to foster that particular animal however there are times when we have to make sure we select the best environment for the animal to succeed. Always read the full post to see if there are any special requirements or restrictions for that particular animal.

Once an animal has foster commitment the post is updated with **FOSTERED!** at the top of the post.

Please keep in mind the following things when it comes to our Facebook Group:

Be kind! We are all here for the same reason, to help animals- please be respectful.

Please do not post immediate concerns- the group is not monitored by staff 24/7- if you have an issue that requires immediate attention please give us a call, send an email to [foster.help@cityoffortwayne.org](mailto:foster.help@cityoffortwayne.org) or (if during non-business hours) follow our emergency protocol

Please do not send staff members messages through Facebook messenger- messages are not checked regularly and will not be answered

Please do not reach out to individuals privately who take foster animals, this can make some uncomfortable. If you have a question about an animal in our foster program please email the foster department.

Please do not post advertisements for animals outside of Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control's foster program. If you, or someone you know, needs assistance with an animal please send an email to us.

Check out the **FILES** section of the Foster Facebook page for more information!



Each foster will receive a foster kit containing each of the items listed here. →  
When supplies are running low fosters may refill at our foster pantry.



## What's in my foster kitten kit and what is it used for?

- **Dry kitten food-** Please make sure you have dry food available to your fosters at all time.
- **Wet kitten food-** Please offer roughly two tablespoons of wet food to each kitten 2-3 times per day. Most kittens enjoy it mashed up and warm.
- **Playpen-** Please keep in a low stress area away from owned pets.
- **Litterbox-** We have provided one large litterbox for you to use.
- **Non-clumping litter-** 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-** Can be used to place on the floor of your playpen.
- **Blankets-** Can be used to place on the floor of your playpen and draped over for additional comfort.
- **Scale-** Please weigh your kittens twice a day each day to ensure they are gaining weight. If they are not gaining, please reach out through the foster help email. Keep your extra scale battery!
- **Hidey house-** Giving kittens the opportunity to hide is very important in helping them feel safe.
- **Toothbrush-** You can brush your kittens with a toothbrush to simulate how a mom cat would clean them.
- **Flea comb-** Many kittens come in with fleas. Staff makes sure we don't send any live fleas home but there may be times when kittens still have a lot of flea dirt or dead fleas on them. Combing them will help get the kittens feeling and looking much better.
- **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 reaching out to staff so we can make sure there is nothing else medically going on.
- **Two bowls-** One is used for dry food and one is used for fresh water.
- **1 dual sided food dish-** This is a great dish to use when offering the wet food.
- **Variety of toys-** Kittens love to play. Offering a wide variety of toys can keep your kittens engaged and teaches them to play with appropriate toys instead of human hands/fingers.
- **Snuggle Safe disc-** Place this disc in the microwave for roughly 5 minutes and it will stay warm for roughly 5-8 hours. Please make sure it is covered with fabric so it doesn't get too hot for your foster kittens. We love these discs because if the kittens are too warm they can easily move off them.
- **Litter scoop-** Please make sure you are scooping frequently.
- **1 large stuffed animal (if available)-** This is a great thing to have for single kittens or kittens who like to snuggle. They can snuggle up to this stuffed animal.
- **Cat/Kitten manual-** There is A TON of information in this manual. Please make sure to read it carefully and always reach out to our foster help email for questions/concerns as soon as you notice them.

\*Should you need more of any of these supplies please visit our foster pantry\*

Thank you so much for fostering!



-FWACC Foster Team 😊



# PREPARING YOUR FOSTER SPACE

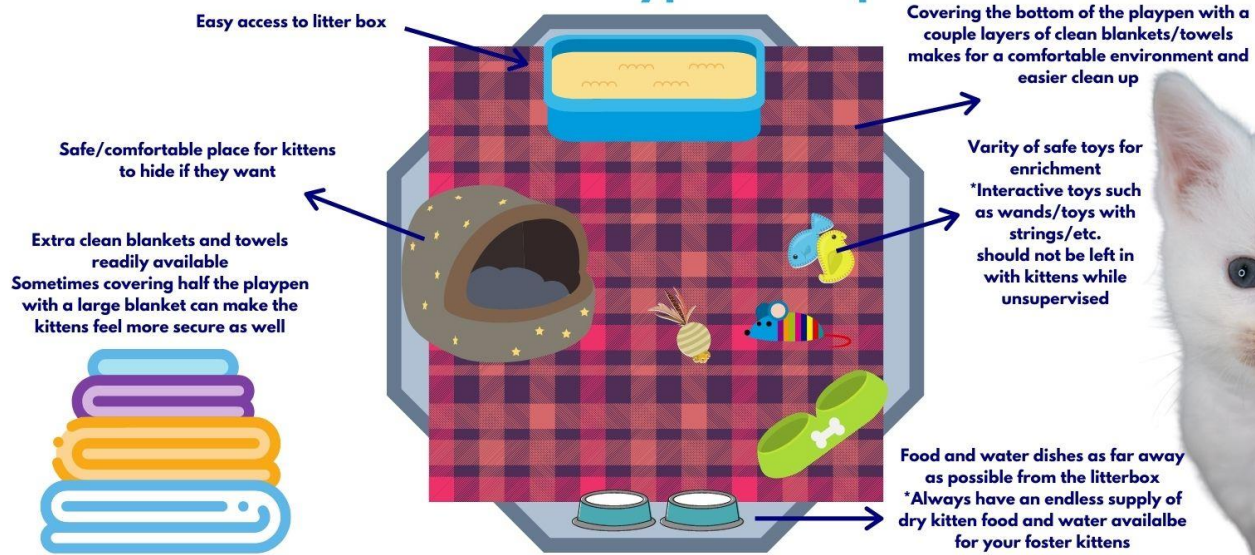
Your foster kittens should be separated from all other animals in your household and kept in a small, warm, draft free area, such as a spare room (in a playpen) or bathroom, where they have access to their food, water and litter box.

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 don't put the kittens in a garage or place that has outdoor access; those locations are not safe. Kittens must always be confined when not being directly supervised.

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 at all times.
- Block off any spaces that the kittens could crawl into and hide in. Make sure windows stay closed unless they are screened in.
- Never allow your foster kittens outside. They can be frightened easily and may run away.

## Ideal Playpen Set Up



# CARING FOR YOUR KITTENS

## Feeding

- Dry Science Diet kitten food should be available to your kittens at all times
- Offer pate canned food at least twice a day- some kittens may need more
- If your kittens are not eating email the foster.help email for advice
- Do not feed cow's milk or any other human/non-approved items to your kittens!
- Pick up dirty bowls/dishes
- Clean water must be available to your kittens at all times
- Monitor appetites closely

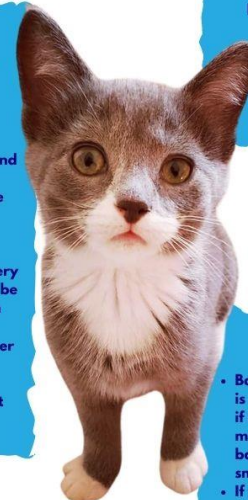


## Keeping Kittens Warm

- Kittens cannot regulate their body temperature, it is important that they have a heat source they can get on and off of easily
- We recommend using a SnuggleSafe disc

## Litter Boxes

- Use only unscented, non-clumping litter 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
- Use a box that is easy for kittens to get in and out
- Depending on the size of the litter you foster will depend on how many litter boxes you should have
- 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 daily- possibly more if needed
- When washing the litter box (which you should do every few days if soiled heavily) soap and hot water should be sufficient enough- using strong chemicals may result in the kittens avoiding the box
- If you are having issues with your kittens using the litter box email the foster.help email right away for assistance
- NEVER yell at or punish a kitten for having an accident outside of the litter box!



## Keeping Kittens Confined

- Kittens will need to be confined to their space unless they are under close supervision
- Too much roaming can cause kittens to burn their calories which leads to weight loss

## Health Monitoring

- Look over your kittens daily for any changes or potential medical problems
- Fill out your wellness log daily
- A thriving kitten will be bright and playful with a good appetite and normal stool.
- If you notice diarrhea, vomiting, decreased appetite, lethargy or any other concerns regarding your kittens health email foster.help as soon as you can for assistance

## Weighing Your Kittens

- You will be provided a scale to weigh your kittens twice a day
- Keep track of the weights as they will be the easiest way to ensure you that your kittens are growing
- If a kitten is losing weight please email foster.help for assistance

## Bathing

- Bathing is very stressful for kittens and is only necessary if kittens have fleas or if they are extremely dirty from feces, mud, or any other filth. In most cases baby wipes are enough to clean up small messes
- If you do need to bathe keep soap/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 & DISINFECTING

## Daily Cleaning

- Shake out and remove unsoiled blankets and toys
- Sweep up scattered litter/food and throw away
- Dirty bedding and toys should be laundered
- Wipe out bowls or scrub with soap and water if needed (especially wet food bowls)
- If there are any other messes in the kitten area lightly spray a towel with a diluted bleach solution and scrub the area until clean- never spray the kennel area- only a towel
- Make sure the area is completely dry before setting the space back up for the kittens to return



## Bleach Rules

- Bleach solution is 1:10 ratio; 32oz Spray Bottle= 3oz of bleach + 30oz of water
- Make a new bleach solution for each use as bleach rapidly degrades in the presence of light and when mixed with water
- Let bleach sit on surfaces for 10 minutes before wiping off
- Discard any remaining solution



## Deep Cleaning

**Should only be utilized as needed or 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 litterbox
- Sweep up scattered litter/food
- Thoroughly spray all surfaces with a bleach solution
- Let bleach sit for 10 minutes
- Scrub any surfaces where debris still remains if necessary
- Use a clean towel to wipe the area down after the dwell time
- Make sure the area is completely dry before setting up with all clean/fresh items for your new foster friends!

Throughout their lives cats will need to be transported. The best way to transport a cat is when they are safely and comfortably secured in their carrier. Check out these tips on getting your foster kittens to tolerate and more often than not enjoy their carrier:

# CARRIERS



Always leave the carrier out (with the door off) in the kittens space so they can check it out

Put toys, treats and a soft blanket in the carrier to encourage the kittens to go in and spend time in there

**ALWAYS** cover the top of the carrier with a blanket or towel- this helps kittens feel more secure and safe while 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

## CAT LANGUAGE



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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!



## Body Language of Feline Anxiety



For additional Low Stress Handling information, posters, flyers, books, and DVDs, please visit our website at <http://DrSophiaYin.com>

Questions@catdogpublishing.com

(530) 757-2385 — P.O. Box 4516, Davis, CA 95617

Support@lowstresshandling.com



# GROOMING & HANDLING

Spending time with the kittens is one of the best parts of fostering! Picking up and holding your kittens can be very beneficial in preparing them for adoption. Please follow these points for safe and happy handling:

It is important to handle kittens frequently so they become accustomed to it.

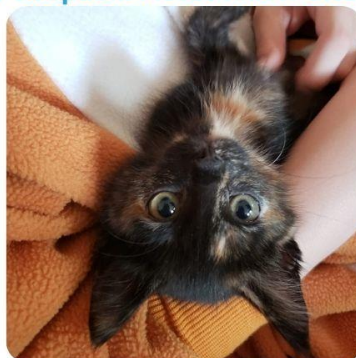
Picking up and holding kittens several times a day while gently petting them can encourage affectionate behavior.

Pay close attention to the kitten's body language and if you are seeing signs of discomfort stop and try again at a different time.

NEVER scruff a kitten!



If kitten is uncomfortable!



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.

Pairing this session with a treat is always a good idea to create a positive experience!

Pay close attention to the kitten's body language and if you are seeing signs of discomfort stop and try again at a different time.

Kittens, especially those with longer hair, can benefit from being brushed.

Having a yummy treat can be very beneficial here to help the kittens associate that grooming is a positive experience.

Pay close attention to the kitten's body language and if you are seeing signs of discomfort stop and try again at a different time.





# 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 that they can get physical exercise and mental stimulation. There are two types of toys that help with kitten development:

**Solo toys** are things the kittens can play with when you aren't there. These toys should be easy to clean and impossible for the kittens to consume. 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. 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.



Please be sure to provide your kittens with something to scratch on. Cardboard scratchers work well since they can be discarded between litters because they can't be sanitized. Encourage kittens to use it by dragging a toy across or up the post. Never encourage the kitten to scratch by holding their paws and performing the scratching motion.



Although playtime is very important, it is imperative that kittens receive an appropriate amount of rest.



During play time it is important to remember the following:

- Go slow- not all kittens will be interested in playing right away
- Drag toys away from kittens instead of hanging it right in front of their faces
- Discourage kittens from scratching or biting your hands and feet- redirect them to an appropriate toy
- You must not punish the kittens for behavior that you find undesirable because punishment is ineffective at eliminating the behavior. If a kitten is doing something undesirable, distract him or her before the behavior occurs. It is also important for every human in the foster home to stick to the rules established for your foster pets, which will help them to learn faster.

Playing is great but here are some additional ideas on keeping kitten minds busy!

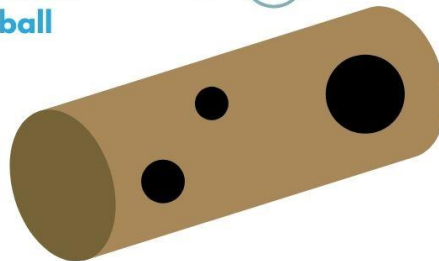
## Puzzles

- 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

Birdfeeders in a window  
Blowing bubbles  
Pinwheels  
Motion toys



Hiding Places  
Boxes  
Paper bags  
Perches  
Carriers



# ENRICHMENT



Introducing your foster kittens to new things and new experiences will also help prepare them for living happily in forever homes. Follow these rules to positively expose your kittens to new people, environments and noises:



**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 the 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. Whenever you introduce the kittens to a new space, provide lots of treats and play with interactive toys so that the kittens associate the new space with their favorite things. Keep the exploratory sessions brief so you don't overwhelm your kittens and return them to their living space if they do seem overwhelmed or scared.



**New noises:** It is beneficial to expose kittens to a variety of normal household noises but, again, try to do it in a positive way. The key is to introduce different noises gradually. For example, start by keeping a radio on low volume and gradually increase the volume over a few days. Another example: Run the vacuum in another room at first, with your kittens at a safe distance. Then, over the course of a few days, move the vacuum noise closer to their room. If another person plays with the kittens while you make the noise, it may help alleviate any stress or fear that they may feel. Some kittens are naturally fearful, so just go even slower if you notice they are uncomfortable.



## Schedule for successful socialization

If your foster kittens are shy when you bring them home, you'll need to have a more focused socialization plan. Remember, keep all experiences positive for the kittens.

### First Few Days

- Select a small quiet room to set the kitten's playpen up in. Have background sound (sound machine/radio/tv/etc.) playing softly.
- Make sure they have hiding spots that you can access- close off any areas the kittens may be able to wedge themselves into.
- Enter and exit the room quietly and spend some time quietly sitting on the floor in the room.
- Speak softly to the kittens while you are in the room or even read a book out loud. It is important to
- Provide a nice variety of solo toys for the kittens.
- Use interactive toys to entice kittens to play but don't force them to.
- If they will eat in front of you use a long spoon to handfeed wet food, baby food or Churu to the kittens from a short distance. If they are not interested in taking it from the spoon leave the yummy food on a dish in with the kittens while you are in the room with them- pairing food with hands is always a good idea.
- Don't push interactions for the first few days



### Only Try if Successful with First Few Days Bullet Points

- If the kittens are allowing you to approach or are approaching you, you can 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 gently grasping sides to lift them off the ground.
- Over time you can desensitize them to being picked up. If the kitten becomes uncomfortable return the kitten to a safe space.
- Kittens can be worked with in pairs or a group but if one is more fearful than the others you may want to separate that one and work with him/her individually.

**If you are not seeing progress please reach out to the foster team for assistance!**



# FEAR FREE FOSTERING

## FEAR FREE FOSTERING

Check out these tips on reducing fear, anxiety and stress for your foster cats and kittens



### COVER CARRIERS

You will notice that every carrier we hand you is covered with a blanket or towel. This helps keep the cats/kittens feeling more secure and safe while traveling.



### REMOVE TOPS OFF CARRIERS

By taking the top off the carrier you don't have to reach in the dark space to remove cats/kittens. This will help them feel more comfortable.



### GENTLE HANDLING

Make sure you always handle your cats/kittens in the least stressful way possible. Never scruff, grab or force your foster into any position. Never pill your cat/kitten always crush medications & offer in food.



### BACKGROUND NOISE

You can leave on a television, radio or noise machine for your cats/kittens to have something other than silence when they are alone.



### OFFER A HIDING PLACE

Offering a safe place to hide can be very beneficial for your cats/kittens. Examples include: hidey houses, carriers with the door removed and a blanket over the top, cardboard boxes and/or a blanket draped over half of their playpen.



### LOW TRAFFIC AREA

Setting up your cats/kittens in a secured area of your home that has low traffic flow can make them feel more comfortable.



### TREATS

Food can be one of the easiest rewards we can use for cats. You can try offering the following options: meat baby food (without onion or garlic), canned tuna or chicken, freeze-dried liver or even canned cat food can be a high enough reward.



Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control's foster team is always here to help! When you have questions or concerns please email [foster\\_help@cityoffortwayne.org](mailto:foster_help@cityoffortwayne.org)

# 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 young. If you have children and an active home, it may be best 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 a 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 with all of the 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 the mother cat to come and go as she needs to. 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 the mother cat 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 the mother cat has enough to eat, give her access dry food at all times and offer wet food 2-3 times daily. Food intake for a nursing mother can be two to four times the amount eaten by a cat who's not nursing. Start out by giving mom space in the beginning until she trusts you enough to approach for attention. Pay close attention to her body language and stop interactions if necessary. Mom will need playtime and enrichment as well.

#### Grooming & Litter Boxes

The mother cat will groom and lick her babies frequently for the first two to four 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 to leave the nest and deposit urine and feces nearby, which is a good time to start introducing a couple of low-sided litter boxes (disposable tend to work best). Typically, kittens learn how to use a litterbox on their own. You can encourage 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 cat should take care of her kittens by herself for at least three to four weeks before she starts the weaning process for her babies. Each mamma cat that 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 two hours of being born. Mom cats should be lying on their sides to ensure that their kittens can find the nipples for nursing. Here are three stages of nursing:

1. One to two weeks old: Mom initiates nursing by licking her kittens to wake them up and curling her body around them. After she wakes all of her babies, the kittens search for a short time period and then quickly latch on to nurse.
2. Two to three weeks old: The kittens' eyes and ears begin to function, and they start to explore beyond the nesting area. This is when the kittens start interacting and playing with their mom. At this age, the kittens start to initiate some of the nursing and mom should comply by lying in the nursing position.
3. Four to five weeks old: The kittens begin weaning and, in turn, mom cat no longer initiates any nursing. If mom still allows the kittens to nurse, it will be initiated by the kittens and can be lateral or upright nursing.





## Mastitis

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

## Maternal Neglect

Sometimes a mother cat stops providing care to 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 inexperienced or she's in a stressful environment. That's why it's so important to make daily observations to ensure that she is caring for her babies. You should weigh each kitten TWICE a day to ensure that they are gaining weight. If you notice that she 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 right away.

## Maternal Aggression Towards other Animals

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. With that in mind, please do not try to introduce her to the other animals in your home. As mentioned, mom cat and her kittens should have a quiet room of their own away from all other pets so that she and her babies can always feel safe. If she has seen another animal and becomes stressed or aggressive, it is very important to leave her alone and not try to comfort her. Give her 20 minutes or so to calm down and then check on her.

## Maternal Aggression Towards People

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 young. We evaluate mom cats for these behaviors before sending them into foster homes, but sometimes the behaviors develop later. 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 kittens before they are eight weeks old. But there are a few medical or behavioral reasons for separating them earlier than eight 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 four to five weeks old). Separating them would prevent the kittens from learning behaviors from their mom and help them to become socialized, which increases their chances 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 at survival is to stay with their mom. Please do not separate your foster kittens from their mom for any reason, or attempt to supplement the mother's milk with formula, without consulting us first.

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 any issues with your new foster please reach out to the foster department.

Please follow the steps below when adding kittens into your existing foster group:

- Gradually introduce the kittens
- Signs of a good interaction include both kittens initiation play and that neither of the kittens seemed stressed
- It can be normal for kittens to initially hiss, swat, or play rough with some vocalization. Monitor these signs closely and do small, positive interactions for a while
- Bowls and litterboxes are shared with no issues

When there is a problem:

- Persistent bullying by a kitten
  - Bullying is not distracted/interrupted by toys
  - One kitten keeps other from bowls/litterboxes
- When in doubt separate them and always reach out to the foster department as soon as possible if you are having issues.



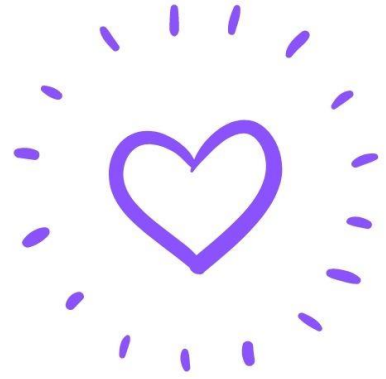
## Quarantine for 2 weeks before introductions!

We are sure you have read/heard by now 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 we don't want anyone getting hurt.
- Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control 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 love Kitten Lady's information on bottle feeding kittens so much we have decided to use her Orphan Kitten booklet as a guideline for our bottle baby fosters!

If you are curious about what it takes to foster these little ones please let us know and we can discuss the next steps!

## EMERGENCY PROTOCOL

**EMERGENCY - NOTIFY  
IMMEDIATELY BY PHONE  
260-427-5551**

- 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

**AFTER HOURS  
EMERGENCY  
CALL 260-449-3000**

**Weekdays after 6pm  
All day Saturday  
Sunday before 10am and after 2pm**

When calling the emergency number please let dispatch know you are a current foster and need to speak with an animal control officer. If you live outside of city limits, we may request you meet an animal control officer at the shelter.



[illegible]



# MEDICAL CONCERNS

Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control provides all medical care for our foster animals through our shelter veterinarian. Because 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.

If your foster kitten needs to see the shelter veterinarian staff will schedule the appointment and notify you of the date/time.

Remember, foster parents will be responsible for payment of any medical care if they take their foster animal to a veterinarian without authorization from Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control.

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 kittens' daily activity and appetite levels. Be aware that kittens act differently at different ages. For example, a healthy two-week-old kitten will sleep often and get up only to nurse, whereas a healthy six-week-old kitten should have a lot of energy. If you have any questions about the health of your foster kittens, please reach out.

## Eye discharge

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

## 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 kittens may have a bacterial infection. Be sure to monitor the kittens' breathing. If they start to breathe with an open mouth or wheeze, call the foster department immediately and follow the emergency contact protocol. Also, once you notice nasal discharge, monitor the kittens' eating habits more closely to ensure that they are still eating. And, of course, continue to weigh them daily.



## 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 four weeks old misses two meals or a kitten over four weeks of age 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 the foster department. An abrupt change in diet can cause diarrhea, which will lead to dehydration.

## Lethargy

The activity level of your kittens will vary with each kitten in your litter and with 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 foster kittens' energy level, please contact the foster department. If a kitten cannot be roused or seems weak and unable to stand, this is an emergency, so you'll need to start the emergency contact protocol. Note: 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 tracking all behaviors will help you decide whether you contact the foster department to schedule an appointment.

The concerns above are associated with Upper Respiratory Infections. To learn more about what to do next if you notice these symptoms see the following page.

# UPPER RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS

If you suspect your kitten is coming down with an upper respiratory infection please follow these steps:



DOES KITTEN HAVE GREEN/YELLOW COLORED DISCHARGE COMING FROM EYES/NOSE AND/OR SEEM LETHARGIC?

YES

EMAIL THE FOSTER.HELP EMAIL ASAP TO SET AN APPOINTMENT FOR THE KITTEN TO BE SEEN BY STAFF

ANTIBIOTICS WILL MOST LIKELY NEED STARTED

NO

JUST SNEEZING?

MONITOR FOR UP TO 48 HOURS

IS THERE IMPROVEMENT?

YES

WONDERFUL! KEEP CLOSELY MONITORING AND REACH OUT IF ANYTHING CHANGES!

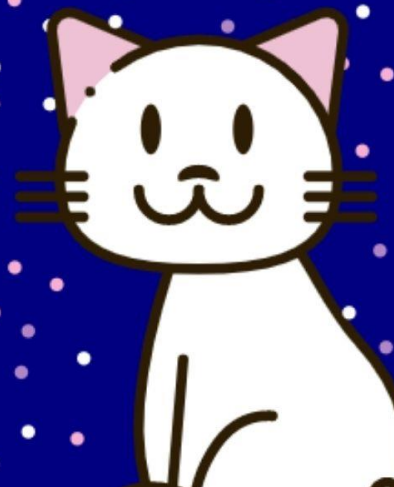
NO

EMAIL THE FOSTER.HELP EMAIL TO SET AN APPOINTMENT FOR THE KITTEN TO BE SEEN BY STAFF

PLEASE NOTIFY US THROUGH THE FOSTER.HELP EMAIL ASAP ANY TIME YOU NOTICE ANY SYMPTOMS OF ILLNESS IN YOUR FOSTERS. EARLY INTERVENTION IS KEY AS THESE LITTLE ONES CAN DETERIORATE SO QUICKLY!



# FOSTER KITTEN URI CHART





# 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 two 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 kittens are five weeks old and are eating consistently on their own, they should have firm, normal stool. If your foster kittens have liquid stool, please contact the foster department.

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 department if you notice any diarrhea. If a kitten has bloody or mucus diarrhea, please contact the foster department.

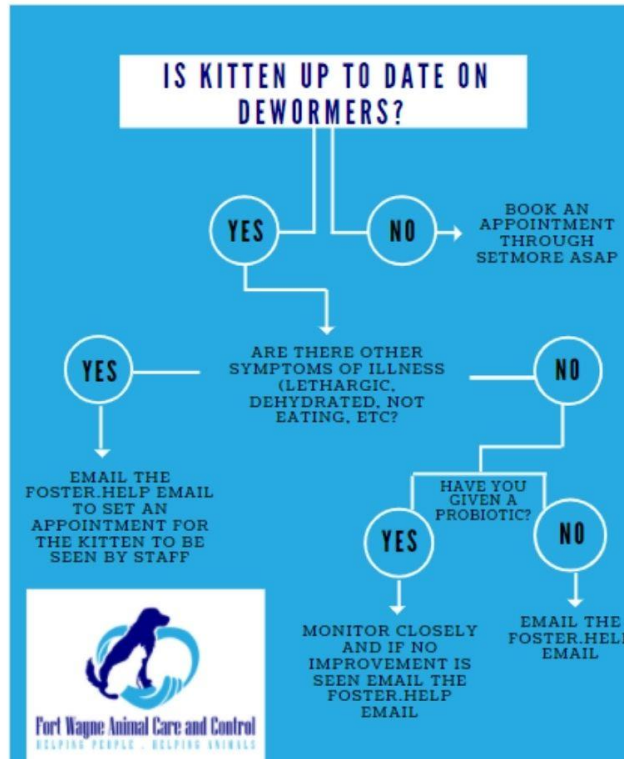
**If you notice diarrhea in your kittens please follow these steps:**



## 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 a 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 the foster department immediately and start the emergency contact protocol, as dehydration can be fatal in kittens.



# FOSTER DIARRHEA DECISION MAKER



**Please refer to the following examples when reaching out with questions/concerns regarding stools from kittens.**



## FECAL SCORE CHART

Fecal consistency is primarily a function of the amount of moisture in the stool and can be used to identify changes in colonic health and other problems. Ideally, in a healthy animal, stools should be firm but not hard, pliable and segmented, and easy to pick up (Score 2).



**Score 1**  
Very hard and dry; requires much effort to expel from the body; no residue left on ground when picked up. Often expelled as individual pellets.



**Score 2**  
Firm, but not hard; should be pliable; segmented in appearance; little or no residue left on ground when picked up.



**Score 3**  
Log-like; little or no segmentation visible; moist surface; leaves residue, but holds firm when picked up.



**Score 4**  
Very moist (soggy); distinct log shape visible; leaves residue and loses form when picked up.



**Score 5**  
Very moist but has distinct shape (piles rather than distinct logs); leaves residue and loses form when picked up.



**Score 6**  
Has texture, but no defined shape; occurs as piles or as spots; leaves residue when picked up.



**Score 7**  
Watery, no texture, flat; occurs as puddles. Leaves residue.



## ADDITIONAL MEDICAL CONCERNS

### Vomiting

If a foster kitten has thrown up two or more times in one day, please notify the foster department.

### 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 the foster department. Also, if you notice the kitten straining to urinate or defecate with little or no results, or crying out when urinating or defecating, please contact the foster department immediately.

### 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 are found around the anus. If you notice worms in your kitten's poop or vomit please contact the foster department.

### 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 the foster department.

### Amputations, Enucleations, Wounds, Etc.

There are times when kittens come in with advanced medical needs. Our staff will go over specific instructions for these kittens. When fostering one of these cases always reach out if you have questions/concerns.



### Hair loss

Please contact the foster department if you notice any hair loss or crusty/scabby lesions on your foster kittens. It is normal for cats to have thin fur around the lips, eyelids and in front of the ears, but clumpy patches of hair loss or thinning hair can indicate ringworm or dermatitis. It is important to check your foster kittens' coats every day.

### Frequent ear scratching

A foster kitten may have ear mites if she scratches her ears often and/or shakes her head frequently, or if you see a dark discharge that resembles coffee grounds when you look in her ears. Ear mites can be treated, so please inform the foster department.

### FelV/FIV

Both are viruses kittens can get from their mothers and other cats. It is important to note that Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control does not routinely test kittens for these viruses. Should kittens show signs of illnesses for a repetitive amount of time we may test them to rule out possibilities.

### 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 virus (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 department during the next business day and inform us what happened and what steps you took for the kitten.**



### Critically Crashing Kitten Protocol

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. If intervention is not immediate

#### Symptoms:

- Low body temperature- the 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/crying out

#### Causes:

- Hypothermia (being too cold) and/or hypoglycemia (not enough blood sugar)

**What to do:** Take immediate action, AT HOME.

1. Get them warm:
  - o 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.
  - o 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. Repeat as needed.
  - o The kitten's body cannot warm itself with only a towel; you'll have to apply extra heat. Your own body heat won't work because your temperature is lower than what a kittens should be.
2. Raise their blood sugar
  - o Sugar sources: warm sugar water; Karo Syrup; Nutrical
  - o Provide 3 drops every 3 minutes
  - o If kitten isn't swallowing, try rubbing the sugar on its gums and tongue
  - o Take care not to contaminate anything by double dipping syringes

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. Our animal control officers will not be able to provide this type of attentive care. Going to a veterinarian outside of our shelter vet without prior approval would be at the cost of the foster.

Once stable, an appointment can be made to bring the kitten in for a temperature check and fluids, if needed. E-mail foster.help@cityoffortwayne.org to schedule.

Keep in mind, 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 the love and attention possible, unfortunately many of them still won't make it.

If you are worried that a kitten is suffering or have one that passes away after hours, please call 260-449-3000 and let them know you are a current foster and need to speak with an animal control officer. If you live outside of city limits, we may request you meet an animal control officer at the shelter.



# MEDICATIONS

**Please keep in mind the following when asked to give your foster medications.**

- ✓ follow all directions closely and only give as directed
- ✓ make sure you give the correct dose of medication based on the animal's weight
- ✓ do not stop medications before they are completed unless advised to do so
- ✓ do not give your foster any medication/supplements not approved by FWACC



PLEASE EMAIL [FOSTER.HELP@CITYOFFORTWAYNE.ORG](mailto:FOSTER.HELP@CITYOFFORTWAYNE.ORG) WITH QUESTIONS/CONCERNS

# DEALING WITH LOSS

## Kitten Death

While very 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

Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control 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 animals may display behavior 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. Euthanasia by injection, performed by certified euthanasia technicians, is currently recommended as the most humane method for all companion animals and is the only method used by Fort Wayne Animal Care & Control.

Euthanasia is an emotional issue for everyone involved. 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**



**They are up to date on all vaccines and dewormers**

Please email us when all of these things have happened and we will schedule your kittens for their spay/neuter surgeries.

The kittens stay at the shelter at this time and the day after surgery they are made available for 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 webpage ([fwacc.org](http://fwacc.org)), select the adoption tab, click on Fees and Processes then scroll down and have them click the purple Adoption Application Pets Currently in Foster Homes. Please be sure they are including your name, the animals name and most importantly the **ANIMAL NUMBER**. If you are unsure of the animal number, please reach out to us and we can provide it for you. Please let them know that this does not guarantee that they will be approved for the animal as all adoption policies and procedures must be met and that applications are timestamped as they are submitted. We rely heavily on our foster parents helping keep track of who they have lined up to adopt their foster animals and communicate with them regularly what is scheduled to happen with the kittens. Please overcommunicate this with us and as soon as you have someone fill out an application send us an email to let us know.

If you have multiple foster animals, please follow the protocol below:

- Please follow the above recommendations for each of your foster animals.
- If you decide to post your animals on social media, please do not provide the link for the adoption application. This gets very confusing for us. There have been multiple times when we received over 20 applications for the same animal in foster and the foster parent did not even know these people due to the post being shared a few hundred times. Here is a suggestion on what you could say when posting:  
 --->“If you are interested in adopting please reach out to me directly for more information on the process.” You can then share the link with the adopter and ask them to inform you once they have completed the application. Once you have that confirmation please email [foster.help](mailto:foster.help@cityoffortwayne.org) to let us know.
- We would like to have all potential adopter applications filled out **BEFORE** the animal returns to the shelter for surgery.  
 If you have any questions, please let us know.

Don't feel bad if you don't have a home lined up! Animals don't stick around long at the shelter before getting adopted!



# ADOPTION

**READY TO ADOPT?**

Scan the QR Code  
OR

Visit [fwacc.org](http://fwacc.org) select the adoption tab, click on Fees and Processes then scroll down and click the **PURPLE** Adoption Application Pets Currently in Foster Homes

You will need the following information to complete your application:  
 Foster's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Animal's Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Animal Number: \_\_\_\_\_

This does not guarantee you are approved to adopt this animal. All adoption policies and procedures apply.  
 After completing the adoption application please notify the foster parent.

PLEASE EMAIL [FOSTER.HELP@CITYOFFORTWAYNE.ORG](mailto:foster.help@cityoffortwayne.org) FOR MORE INFORMATION



# ADVERTISING FOR ADOPTION

## Ways to advertise your animals

Don't forget to complete the bios for your foster animals **BEFORE** they come back to the shelter for spay/neuter and adoption. No one knows your foster better than you, so we created these awesome forms for you to complete in order to help our staff write Adoption Bios for them once they come back for adoption.

<https://form.jotform.com/201766064953157>

\*Be sure to include the animal number so we can make sure we have the correct bio linked to the correct kitten.

Good photos go a long way in helping to get your fosters adopted! For tips on how to get a great photo check out this graphic



You can send photos to [educationhelp@cityoffortwayne.org](mailto:educationhelp@cityoffortwayne.org) please be sure to include the animal number and foster's name in the subject line.



Once you have a great description and an eye catching photo feel free to share on your personal social media platforms.



# SAYING GOODBYE



We understand 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 keep a close eye on the Foster Facebook page for more fostering opportunities.

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!



**THANK YOU!**

**Words can't express how grateful we are for our fantastic team of foster families!**

**Without your help we would not be able to help as many cats and kittens as we do in our community!**

**Please know that we are here for you, reach out with any and all questions and concerns.**

**Thank you!!!**

