



**Chico Hospital for Cats
530-892-2287**

Orphaned Kitten Care

Hand raising an orphaned kitten includes feeding, ensuring elimination and providing a warm, clean environment. The 1st 48 hours are critical for survival of kittens that have never nursed. Keep isolated from your other pets to protect from infectious diseases.

Orphan kittens should be kept at a constant temperature of approximately 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Placing the kittens box half way onto a heating pad turned on **LOW** will give a constant temperature but allow the kitten to crawl away from the heat if he/she is too warm. Always be sure the kittens' bedding is clean.

There are several formulas (e.g. Nurturall, Just Born) on the market that ensure proper protein and minerals for a healthy kitten. Only use 1 formula. Switching formulas may cause digestive upsets. Cow's milk is unsuitable and should never be used. Kittens should never lie on their back while being bottle-fed. Wrap the kitten in a clean dish towel and hold at a 45-degree angle while feeding.

The first week, feedings should occur every 2-3 hours, including through the night (10-12 feedings per day). **By the 2nd week**, feeding can be done every 3-4 hours (6-7 feedings per day). As the kitten's weight increases, so should the amount being fed. On the average the kitten should be given **2 TABLESPOONS** per 4 ounces of body weight per day. Divide the daily feeding amount into equal amounts. Be sure to weigh kitten at least weekly.

Average weight guideline:

1 week = 1/4 lb (4 oz) feed 2 Tablespoons per 24 hours
2 weeks = 1/2 lb (8 oz) feed 4 Tablespoons per 24 hours
3 weeks = 3/4 lb (12 oz) feed 6 Tablespoons per 24 hours
4 weeks = 1 lb (16 oz) feed 8 Tablespoons per 24 hours

A change in diet (from mother's milk to formula) can cause constipation. If this occurs, give 1 ml water with a small drop of olive oil. After each feeding, the kitten must be gently wiped with a warm, wet cotton ball to stimulate urination and defecation. This also ensures cleanliness. The kitten's coat will also need to be groomed once or twice daily with a warm, wet washcloth but never leave the kitten wet. If there are problems with constipation, call your veterinarian as a kitten enema may be needed.

At 3 weeks of age, a kitten can be introduced to solid food by mixing a small amount of canned kitten food with the formula. You will need to make a larger opening in the bottle to accommodate the thickness. Also at this time, voluntary urination and defecation are possible. A small shallow pan with a little litter placed near the sleeping area should ensure successful training.

Between 4-6 weeks a gruel made of formula and canned kitten food can be introduced to the kitten using a shallow bowl. The kitten will probably 'swim' through the mixture and will need to be thoroughly cleaned after each self-feeding.

Once you have survived hand raising your kitten, you will have a wonderful companion that was worth all the work. To ensure your kitten's health, don't forget to have your veterinarian do a virus test and start the vaccines at about 6 weeks.

If you are unsure of the age of your kitten this may help: at 8-12 days old their eyes and ears begin to open. They begin walking at about 3 weeks old. Kittens will gain approximately ¼ pound per week (1lb=1 month)

Good luck and if at any time there are any questions, problems or concerns, contact us right away.

