



Kitten Manual

WELCOME!

Welcome to the world of A-PAL Humane Society's *SAVE the KITTENS* program!

SAVE THE KITTENS is a life-saving program originated on June 14, 1999. Kittens from the shelter were spayed/neutered, given their first FVRCP vaccination, de-wormed, then placed for adoption. The program was an immediate success. It became difficult to fill the demand for our kittens. Within a short period of time we expanded from one adoption condo to as many as fourteen. At the end of 2021, 11,088 kittens have been saved.

The need for kitten foster care became apparent almost immediately. Many kittens were simply too young, small, sick, or poorly socialized, to enter the program without some supportive intervention. So the "*SAVE the KITTENS*" foster parent program came to the rescue. The program has been a heartwarming success. We have discovered a way to save thousands of homeless kittens from certain death. However, the program is extremely labor intensive. So, we sincerely **THANK YOU** for finding the time to help homeless kittens.

You will find the experience both challenging and rewarding. We've put together the enclosed information in the hope that it will aid you in caring for your foster kittens.

Please take the time to read through the pages carefully. They will answer many of your questions.

If you are fostering newborn kittens (under 3 weeks of age), please refer to the pages titled "**But they're so tiny....**"

If, after reading the enclosed material, you have any questions or you feel your kittens are ill, contact A-PAL.

Good luck and Thank you for Caring....

FOR SICK KITTENS CALL A-PAL: 209-223-0410

Emergency contact Susan Manning: 209-304-9590

HOW THE KITTEN FOSTER PROGRAM WORKS....

Once you have read this manual on fostering kittens and agree to comply with its instructions and requirements, your name and contact information will be placed on a list of available kitten foster parents.

When a litter of homeless kittens arrives at the shelter, you will be contacted by A-PAL. You will need to bring your cat carrier to the shelter or paws center to receive your kittens. You will be notified of the pick-up location when you are called to foster.

If you have picked up your new fur babies from our shelter you will need to bring your kittens to our new facility at 12360 Trade Center Dr. in Jackson by Jackson Creek vet. Do not assume that shelter staff has made this contact. We will need to know the weights of your kittens, how many in the litter and any other pertinent information you can give us. (209)223-0410

****Note: This is an important step. If you don't contact A-PAL we WILL NOT know that you have kittens****

You will need to keep in contact with A-PAL on a regular basis regarding weights, eating habits and if there are any issues, examples-eyes watering, not eating, weight loss, diarrhea etc.

You will need to call or text your foster kitten's weights to A-PAL (209)223-0410 by Thursday of each week. This will allow A-PAL to schedule their spay/neuter surgeries in advance.

The shelter will give you your first weight on all of your kittens but it is very important for them to be weighed on a regular basis. If your kittens are under 4 weeks old you will need to weigh them daily to make sure they do not lose weight. This is very critical and can tell us if there is going to be an issue. By weighing them regularly we can catch problems much quicker and it may be as simple as changing their diet to put on the 4 oz. they should gain a week. We have included a weight chart to help you know where your kittens should be.

Age appropriate food and litter will be provided by A-PAL Humane Society and can be picked up at A-PAL 12360 Trade Center Dr., Jackson.

Your kittens may be de-wormed and given a vaccine to protect them at the time you pick them up from the shelter depending on the age. You will be given a schedule for follow-up vaccinations at the shelter. It is important that you keep track of this schedule and adhere to it.

Follow the directions and information in this manual to make sure your kittens grow and thrive.

A-PAL Humane Society will cover any medical expenses and schedule any necessary veterinary appointments needed while your kittens are in foster care.

THE BASICS--WHAT YOU NEED TO FOSTER KITTENS

ENVIRONMENT -A SAFE, warm environment separate from your own pets is ideal for your foster kittens. When you first get your foster kittens they are usually stressed and need to be quiet. Additionally, we don't know what illnesses these kittens could have. Observe them for the first two weeks. Let A-PAL know if you have any concerns about the health of your kittens.

-- Tiny kittens can do very well in a dog crate -- older kittens who are healthy and active need to exercise, so they require a larger area— a spare bathroom, laundry room, bedroom or a larger cat condo

-- Their bed should be soft and warm--ideally, in a place where the kittens can get away from any noise or confusion. A cardboard box with a piece of old blanket or towels works well -- keep your kittens separate from other family pets for 2 weeks to make sure they don't harbor any diseases that could be passed to your pet cats; additionally, make sure your pet cats are up-to-date on their vaccinations before fostering kittens

IMPORTANT: DO NOT foster more than one litter (max of 4 kittens) at a time!!

A healthy litter can quite easily become contaminated by an unhealthy one, and sometimes you won't know which is which until it is too late. We have had this happen. The results can be heartbreaking.

WATER & FOOD -it is very important to keep them hydrated, fresh water needs to be available at all times. We are now using Taste of the Wild dry cat food which should be available at all times (unless being bottle fed)

--It's important for kittens to get as much nourishment as possible to remain healthy. If your kittens are ready to be weaned and graduate to kibble, feed them approximately 1T of warm, softened kibble several times per day. (To soften kitten kibble, add hot tap water to it, and then mash it with a fork. It should resemble mush) In addition, always keep a bowl of dry kibble available for them to nibble on throughout the day. Taste of the Wild is what we feed at A-Pal and will provide for your kittens.

Remember, nothing is written in stone. Your kitten may have a voracious appetite or a very small one. When fed adequately your kitten's stomach will feel full, not tense or distended. A steady weight gain of 10 grams or 1/3 ounce per day and a normal stool are indications you are feeding them the correct amount.

Overfeeding OR Change of Diet = loose stool

LITTER BOX- Even very small kittens will attempt to use a litter box. Be sure to clean the box frequently. Contact A-PAL if you see loose stools for more than 3 days.

BATHING -Don't be afraid to bathe your kittens if necessary. Having dirt, food, urine and fecal matter on their tender skin is far worse than bathing them. As long as your kittens are 2 weeks old you

can use kitten shampoo (avoiding their eyes). Prior to that, use an antibacterial Dawn soap or a warm towel to wipe their face.

Dry kittens well with a towel, followed by a hair dryer set on LOW. Keep them warm and don't let them get chilled. A heating pad (on LOW) covered with a towel or blanket works well. Also, provide a "cool spot" for them to crawl to if they get too warm.

If you notice blood in the water when you bathe them, don't be alarmed. It is probably just "flea dirt" from fleas on your kitten.

Don't forget to clean your kittens' bottoms every time they have diarrhea. You may need to soak their bottoms in warm water to clean them. You can apply a thin layer of Desitin or Vaseline for a protective layer. Animax is another ointment A-PAL may provide to help soothe and heal sore bottoms.

LOVE THEM -Give your kittens lots and lots of affection. Nothing can take the place of gentle handling and socialization for the health and well-being of your kittens. Gradually introduce them to your children and other pets. This will insure their eventual ease of adoption into their permanent homes.

KITTEN HEALTH CHECK LIST

(For use with each litter you foster) and report to A-PAL

- Weights—weekly/daily if small**

- Stools—especially notice ongoing diarrhea**

- Skin—**FLEAS**, sores, ringworm....**

- Eyes—runny, crusty....**

- Ears—should be pink and clean**

KITTEN HEALTH CHECK LIST—DETAILS

(Note: check your kittens on a weekly basis for any of the following conditions)

\ **WEIGHING** kittens regularly is an important part of determining how well they are doing and report weights to A-PAL weekly. In addition, it is important information for A-PAL to determine when the kitten needs to be spayed/neutered.

\ **STOOLS** are normally solid. However, disruptions in routines, loss of their mother, new environments, etc., can all cause kittens to have diarrhea for a short time. If diarrhea persists, kittens can easily become dehydrated

—a serious condition for them. Intestinal parasites are common in kittens and most are easily treated—the earlier the better! Contact A-PAL for advice and/or a possible vet appointment.

\ **SKIN** should be clean and without sores. --FLEAS can be a particular problem for small kittens. Fleas should be eradicated ASAP and with the appropriate products. Check for fleas by running your fingers backwards over their fur, especially on their rumps and tummies. The presence of actual adult fleas, or a “dirt-like” substance indicates a flea infestation.

At the same time that you treat the kittens for fleas, their bedding must also be cleaned to prevent more flea eggs from hatching and continuing the cycle.

If your kittens are under 4 weeks of age, they must be flea-combed. If they have a heavy infestation (crawling with fleas), try submerging your kittens very gently up to their necks in warm body temperature water. Then, when the fleas try to crawl up their necks, pick them off with tweezers. For kittens over 4 weeks of age contact A-PAL for appropriate flea treatment.

--Report any unexplained SORES. A vet may need to check for infection or the presence of ringworm --RINGWORM is extremely contagious. There are several indications of ringworm (**dry patches on the skin or an area where the fur is not growing**), contact A-PAL immediately for testing. Wash your hands after handling the suspect kitten(s). If your kittens are diagnosed with ringworm, their environment must be kept very clean to prevent spread while they are undergoing treatment. Further information will be provided if your kittens test positive for ringworm. We will black light your kittens before they go home with you to try to prevent ringworm in your home.

\ **EYES** should be clear and bright. The presence of runny, crusted eyes is common in kittens. Try gently cleansing their eyes with warm water on a washcloth. If the problem persists, or the discharge turns green or yellowish, it can be treated with twice/day application of Terramycin eye ointment. Call A-PAL to pick up.

\ **EARS** should be pink and clean. If they are just dirty, use a warm damp cotton swab to clean them. The presence of a dark, dirty, wax-like substance indicates the presence of ear mites. Contact A-PAL for treatment.

\ **ALSO, WATCH FOR AND REPORT ASAP TO A-PAL:**

- Persistent sneezing and/or droplets coming out of their noses....
- Many kittens sneeze once in a while. Infrequent sneezing could just be a reaction if they had a nasal vaccine from the Shelter.
- If your kitten's sneezing becomes persistent (e.g. several times a day) or if they also have runny eyes, a crusty nose, difficulty or labored breathing or wheezing, they may have an Upper Respiratory Infection (URI). Contact A-PAL ASAP for care instructions.
- Persistent vomiting: a healthy kitten may throw up occasionally; but persistent vomiting (when a kitten can't keep anything down) is a cause for concern since dehydration can be lethal to kittens
- Persistent loss of appetite in kittens indicates that something is wrong....

**CALL A-PAL SO THAT WE CAN ARRANGE VETERINARY CARE FOR YOUR KITTENS
BEFORE THEIR CONDITIONS BECOME SERIOUS**

WHEN IT'S TIME FOR ADOPTION

WHEN?

When your kittens are healthy and about 2-2 1/2 pounds in weight, they must be spayed/neutered prior to their adoption. Try not to keep them too long after that time, as they are easier to place when they are younger. A food scale is very helpful in determining their weight. An inexpensive food scale can be found on Amazon. Or you can use the scale at the facility.

HOW & WHERE?

Please contact A-PAL when your kittens weigh about 1½ pounds. If they are healthy and well socialized, we will make the appointment for their spay/neuter surgery.

Most commonly you will be asked to bring your kittens to Jackson Creek Veterinary Clinic around 8 a.m. on the day of their surgery. The clinic is located at 12340 Trade Center Drive. Trade Center Drive is the street between McDonalds and Jeff Holman Auto Center, just off Hwy 49.

There are several local veterinarians who are skilled at early age spay and neuter procedures that may be utilized based on surgery date availability. A-PAL will notify you of where to take your kittens for their surgeries.

WHO ARE THEY?

A-Pal will supply you with a cover sheet, and adoption form for each kitten. You will need to fill these out with all the necessary information making sure to note the dates of all vaccinations etc. as these will be the medical records for the new family. You can pick these forms up from A-PAL when your kittens are fixed or before.

Families interested in adopting kittens want to know all they can about them and no one is in a better position to give this information than their foster family. People want to know if the kittens get along well with dogs, other cats, children (ages?), etc. They want to know about personalities, activity levels, anything you can tell them to help them make their decision as to which kitten to choose.

So, please use the cover sheet to write a short description of each kitten. Include any names you have given them or special traits. Pictures are great and really help potential adopters see them outside of the cage. This information will be placed on the front of their adoption condo, and will aid in a successful adoption.

THEN WHAT?

After your kittens are spayed/neutered, you will pick them up from the vet. You can keep them for a few days (try to keep it to a maximum of 3 days as long as they are recovering well) after their surgery for recovery. Contact A-PAL once your kittens recover from their surgeries to arrange for space at the Feed Barn.

“BUT THEY'RE SO TINY”

Just how do you raise a newborn? The most important thing to remember is: treat these babies just like they are newborn humans.

KEEP THEM CLEAN

Clean, clean and clean some more. Wash your hands with antibacterial soap before and after handling the babies. Wash all bedding, blankets and towels daily using hot soapy bleach water. This will insure that you are not harboring or spreading any disease or bugs. Don't be afraid to bathe the kittens regularly. Having dirt, food, urine and fecal matter on their tender skin is far worse than bathing them. Use an antibacterial soap (avoiding their eyes) for the first couple of weeks. Then, graduate to baby shampoo. Dry them well, followed by a hair dryer set on low. *Do not let them get chilled,*

KEEP THEM WARM

The second most important thing to remember is that kittens need to be kept warm as well as hydrated and fed. There are several proven methods to keep kittens warm. First, make a nest for them using soft and warm blankets. Then, place a heat disk into the carrier they are kept in. Another method is to use a heating pad, on LOW, covered by a towel and then a blanket. Be sure to provide a "cool" spot for them to crawl to if they get too warm.

LOVE AND AFFECTION

If the kittens do not have their eyes open, they are under 10 days old and they should be held upright when feeding. When raising an "only" child, place a small stuffed toy in the nest with him. He will snuggle up to it. Another trick is to empty out the contents of a stuffed animal and place an alarm clock in it. Then, put the stuffing back in to muffle the sound.

FEEDING

Newborn kittens do not drink cow's milk.

Use FOX VALLEY KITTEN FORMULA for tiny unweaned kittens (powdered formula). The formula is given at body temperature, never cold, through a nursing bottle or syringe with a miracle nipple. To place it in the kittens mouth, simply open their mouth and stick the bottle in. The kitten should naturally suckle. You may have to give the bottle a little squeeze to start the milk flowing. Do not hold the kitten as you would a newborn baby. Kittens should be placed feet down on your lap and fed in that position. Another position, which seems to work, is upright against your chest. One thing that is very easy to do, but you must avoid, is overfeeding. Overfeeding produces diarrhea. It is far better to err on the side of underfeeding, rather than overfeeding. Please consult the kitten feeding chart for more information.

Follow the chart and you should have no problems:

Age	Weight- in ounces	Amount per feeding	Feeding Schedule	Vaccinate
0-1 week	1.75-4.5	2-6 ml	2 hours	No
1-2 weeks	4.5-8	6-10 ml	2-3 hours	No
2-3 weeks	8-12	10-14 ml	3-4 hours	No
3-4 weeks	12-16	14-18 ml Introduce dry food	4-5 hours	Nasal
4-5 weeks	16-20	18-22 ml	5-6 hours	Nasal
5-6 weeks	20-24	Weaning-wet food	6 hours	Injectable
6-8 weeks	24-32	Weaning-wet food eating dry food	6hours	Injectable

Remember, nothing is written in stone. Your kitten may have a voracious appetite or a very small one. When fed adequately a kitten's stomach will feel full, not tense or distended. A steady weight gain of 10 grams or 1/3 ounce per day, and a normal stool, are indications that you are feeding the correct amount. Overfeeding is indicated by a loose stool.

If stool is loose, add more water to the formula to rehydrate the kitten. Standard mix of the formula is a ratio of 1 part powder to 2 parts water. To rehydrate the kittens use a ratio of 1 part powder to 3 or 4 parts water. Unchecked overfeeding leads to a depletion of digestive enzymes. Eventually, when there is no digestion of the formula, you will see a stool which looks like curdled milk. At this point stop all formula and give only "pedialyte" and water until the kitten has a normal stool. Pedialyte is available at grocery stores.

If you have a kitten that is showing signs of distress and not eating, try putting a little dab of Karo syrup in their mouth. Sometimes this is all they need to give them the added energy boost to get them eating. Kittens that are taken from Mom at the age of 1 or 2 weeks may have trouble adjusting to the bottle. This is simply a matter of persistence on your part. You must keep offering the bottle and they will learn that this is where food comes from, not Mom. Hold them close, so they get warmth while nursing. Remember, you are their new Mom. Don't give up on them. Keep offering the bottle. They may go as much as 24 hours with very little nourishment. Place the nipple in their mouth and squeeze the bottle, letting a little formula seep into their mouth. Any baby that has not been eating for more than 12 hours is probably getting very low on blood sugar. Mix Karo syrup with warm water and give it to them. It's surprising how much this will help. Put a dish of water out for them

beginning at about 2 weeks. They may play in it at first, but will soon learn to drink. It is very important to keep kittens well hydrated.

After bottle feeding a kitten, put it on your shoulder and gently pat to burp them, just like a human baby.

About those nipples - There are two methods for poking a hole in the end. Heat the end of an ice pick and poke a hole in the nipple with it. The hot end makes the hole more defined. Another method is to use a pair of scissors to cut a small slit diagonally (a small X) in the end of the nipple. You don't want the milk to run out - just make it easier for the baby to suck on. If the hole is too big, the formula may come out too fast and be aspirated into the kitten's lungs, which could possibly lead to the death of the kitten.

At weaning many times the babies simply do not have all the nutrients needed to make them healthy. You can add a little Gerber's Baby Cereal to their formula. This tends to stay with them a little longer, especially at night. Besides the cereal, try adding baby strained chicken. This will add protein and weight to a struggling kitten. Please be sure the baby food does NOT contain Onion Powder. This can be very harmful to kittens.

WEANING

Weaning should begin between 3 and 4 weeks of age. Often kittens aren't ready to give up the nipple and have to be coaxed into eating on their own. Start by putting their formula in a bowl mixed with just a little of either Taste of the wild dry food (softened with formula) or canned food mixed with formula. To soften the dry food, add a little boiling water and let it sit for about 20 minutes, then add the formula. You can also try putting a little on your finger and hold it to the kitten's mouth. Once they are eating from your finger, let them follow your finger back to the bowl. In the beginning, supplement with a bottle feeding to ensure they are getting enough nutrition. Remember, every time you introduce something new to eat, it will probably show in their stool.

BATHROOM STIMULATION

Until between 2 and 3 weeks of age, stimulation is required for the release of both stool and urine. Using a warm, wet wash cloth or paper towel, slowly massage the genitals until the kitten has peed and pooped. It often helps to hold their rear ends under warm running water as you stimulate. The stool should be soft but formed, not runny. If the stool is runny, it is likely you are overfeeding or that the kitten has a parasite. It is better to feed more often and give less food each time than to overfeed a kitten. Potty them before and after each feeding. Don't forget to burp each kitten after feeding. It is very important that a kitten urinates daily and has a bowel movement at least every other day. If your kitten is constipated, try putting a drop or two of mineral oil in their formula. Another method to treat constipation is to dilute their Fox Valley formula with more water than is stipulated in the instructions.

LITTER BOX TRAINING

When the kitten is old enough to start moving around on their own, put them in a cardboard box with newspaper or cat litter on the bottom. While you are feeding one, let the others play in the box. You will notice that they will start going on their own on the paper. When this happens, you can stop stimulating them. Now you can add a small container with cat litter. At first they will play in it. Then, they will start using it as a litter box. If you use the clumping type of litter observe to see any indication they may be eating it which can prove harmful. If you observe the kittens eating the litter contact A-PAL so we can switch you to Johnny Cat litter.

DIARRHEA

More often than not the babies will get the runs. If they have diarrhea for several days, it may be caused by exposure to parasites. Contact your Foster Coordinator so the stool can be checked by a vet. They will usually give them antibiotics. When they have diarrhea, many times their little bottoms are red and raw. Desitin or Vaseline provides a protective coating on their skin and prevents any fecal matter from burning them. This will relieve the pain quite a bit and prevent further irritation. Animax ointment may also be recommended by you A-PAL coordinator.

FLEAS

Do NOT USE FLEA SHAMPOO on These babies. Bathe them regularly and use a flea comb. Fleas can be deadly to a newborn, so be diligent. Flea combing and bathing with an antibacterial soap is very effective. Advantage Flea Treatment can be used on kittens starting at 4 weeks of age. For up-to-date information on flea prevention products for kittens less than 4 weeks of age, contact A-PAL. A-PAL will make every effort to give you kittens that are free of fleas and ticks.

NURSING ON OTHER KITTENS

When raising more than one baby, at about 2 to 3 weeks of age they may start looking in their nest for something to nurse on. Invariably, they find each other. Kittens can get sick from ingesting urine or can cause damage to other kitten's genitals. After cleaning them, spray their bottoms with Bitter Apple. This is a foul tasting, but harmless spray, which can be purchased at the Feed Barn. If this doesn't stop the behavior, separate them. DO NOT allow them to nurse on each other.

DEHYDRATION

When kittens stop nursing they dehydrate quickly, causing them to lose weight, become chilled or fail to survive. Look into their mouth for a lack of moisture, a very pale pink tongue or mucus membranes. Pick the kittens' skin up at the back of the neck. If it doesn't bounce back, this is a sign of dehydration. Watch the kitten's urine. If it is not clear, but a distinct yellow, this is also a sign of dehydration. Please contact A-PAL if you fear your kitten is dehydrated, as we can give the kitten subcutaneous fluids which may save their life.

FADING KITTEN SYNDROME

Some kittens die, and there is nothing we can do about it. Sometimes, this is referred to as "Fading Kitten Syndrome". It can be very common in young kittens. Sometimes, they are born with congenital defects, which means there isn't anything anyone can do for them. They may have become chilled or malnourished before being brought to the shelter. If this is the case, despite the very best treatment, there is still a fairly high mortality rate. This is one reason to watch them carefully. Once they start to fade they can go very quickly

Where you can pick up your supplies:

Paws Center (A-PAL):

12360 Trade Center DR
Jackson, CA 95642

- Litter
- Taste of the wild dry food
- Fox Valley Kitten Formula
- Bed
- Towels
- Sheets
- Toys
- Condo (A-PAL can loan you one for your litter)
- Hammock (A-PAL can loan you one for your litter)
- Dog Crate (A-PAL can loan you one for your litter)

Feed Barn (A-PAL has an account set up at the feed barn for the following items):

11261 Prospect Drive
Jackson, CA 95642

- Kitten bottles
- Canned food
- Litter Boxes
- Litter Scoops

If it is after hours for the paws center or more convenient for the foster you may also pick up and charge on A-PAL account:

- Litter
- Taste of the wild dry cat food
- Fox Valley Kitten Formula
- Toys

THANK YOU FOR FOSTERING!

You are saving lives with your time, love and hard work.