

# **Humane Society**

**Hastings Prince Edward**

**Foster Care Program**  
**Orphaned Kittens Handbook**  
(Caring for unweaned kittens without mothers)



**We're Connected  
by Compassion.**

# Bottle Baby Manual

## Table of Contents

### Preparations

Supplies	2
What to Expect	2

### Orphaned Kitten Daily Care

Caring for Orphaned Kittens	3
Preparing Formula	4
Eliminating Before & After Feeding	4
Feeding Chart	4 - 6
Cheat Sheet	6
	7

### Emergencies

What Constitutes an Emergency?	8
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## Preparing for Orphaned Kittens

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### You Supply:

- Digital Scale (postal or food)
- Heat source – heating pad on low with **no auto shut off**
- Cotton balls, baby wash cloths, Kleenex/toilet paper

### We supply:

- Miracle Nipples (minis)
- Syringes
- KMR powder
- Towels and Blankets

## What to Expect

Orphaned kittens require the same care that kittens with mothers require, but with no mother to nurture these orphans, it is the Foster Families duty to ensure the kittens thrive. Before they are eating on their own (4 weeks old), and without a mother present orphans will need around the clock care. The majority of a young kittens' day is spent sleeping and eating.

Kittens should put on weight steadily, gaining as much as 1/2 oz. per day during a rapid growth period.

Veterinary literature reports shocking mortality rates for orphaned kittens up to 12 weeks of age. Deaths may be attributed to birth defects, trauma, infections and nutritional deficiencies. The biggest determinants of natural kitten loss are low birth weight and poor growth rates. For dedicated caregivers, it can be heartbreaking and frustrating to lose kittens, but it is worth remembering that up to 60% of low-birth-weight kittens under natural conditions will fail to survive.

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## Caring for Orphaned Kittens

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Orphaned kittens that are under 3 weeks of age will not survive without human intervention. They cannot produce enough body heat on their own, and a heating pad is required. Make sure the heating pad doesn't have a shut off feature, and that it is set to the lowest setting. **DO NOT** place the kittens directly on the heating pad, always ensure there is blanket/towel between a kitten and its heat source.

### **Keep Them Warm**

Keep kittens in a place in your home that is warm, draft-free, and isolated from small children and your owned pets. Kittens are very vulnerable to illness when this young, and they are not receiving antibodies from their mothers' milk. Kittens 3 weeks and younger must have a steady heat source. Infant kittens are unable to regulate their body temperature, and they can quickly succumb to hypothermia. It is of the utmost importance that they be kept warm. Kittens cannot digest food if they are too cold, and must be warmed prior to feeding. Ideally, the kittens can live in a carrier with several layers of towels. Be VERY careful to place adequate padding between the kittens and the heating pad to avoid burns. Be sure to tuck the towel under the pad so the kittens cannot crawl between the towel and the pad. Too much heat can cause injury and has the potential to kill. It can be as dangerous for a kitten to overheat as it would be for them to become chilled so make certain that the heating pad is placed in such a manner that the kittens can move off of the heat.

### **Elimination**

During the first weeks of a kittens' life, they are completely dependent on their mother to stimulate all bodily functions; her licking prompts the release of the bladder/bowels. Just as she tidied the nest at birth, the mother cat consumes all of the kittens' waste products. Orphaned, infant kittens will need your help in this department! Kittens will need to be stimulated in order to urinate and defecate. Place a cloth in warm water and gently massage the kittens' genitals before, and after a feeding. Your help will be needed until the time that kittens begin to be weaned, and sometimes beyond that point.

### **Weaning**

Beginning at approximately 4 weeks of age, you can start to offer the kittens KMR Milk Replacer in a shallow bowl or saucer. In the beginning, once you've offered the milk replacer and allowed kittens to feed on their own, you can offer a bottle to ensure they're receiving adequate amounts of food. Once they've learned to drink from the bowl add wet kitten food in small amounts to the formula. Gradually increase the amount of wet kitten food and decrease the amount of formula. You can encourage kittens to try wet kitten food by putting a small amount on a front paw where they will "clean" it off or, by placing a small amount of food in their mouths. Once they are eating on their own and no longer take a bottle, they are weaned!

### **Deworming and Vaccinations**

Kittens are dewormed at 3 weeks old, and again 10 days later. If you could please call the HSHPE and schedule a time to come in for deworming, vaccinations and wellness checks. Once the kittens are 4 weeks of age, we can begin routine vaccinations. After the first vaccine is administered, you will need to return the kittens every 3 weeks to HSHPE for booster vaccines. You are responsible for scheduling appointments with the Humane Society Hastings Prince Edward. Vaccination/deworming and wellness checks should only take 15 -20 minutes.

## Keep Them Clean

Kittens should be kept clean and free from debris such as food, urine, and feces. Use a damp cloth and dab the areas that need cleaning. If the genital area is soiled, rinse their hind end in warm water, soap isn't usually necessary, and towel dry. You can use water and a little blue dawn dishwashing soap (original), or kitten shampoo if necessary. Wipe gently with a cloth, avoiding the ears and eyes. Rinse thoroughly with warm water. You can blow them dry with the dryer set on low and held a safe distance from the kittens' bodies. Make sure to always dry kittens completely or they may develop an illness.

## Preparing the Bottle Baby Formula Mixture

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The easiest way to prepare formula for your orphaned kittens is to make a large batch of formula that you will pull from throughout a 24-hour period. The amount depends on how many kittens you have and how much they are eating, you will need to increase the amount you prepare as they get older and require increased amounts of KMR.

- Find a mason jar or medium size Tupperware container; make sure the container has a lid that prevents spilling.
- Mix one part KMR (Kitten Milk Replacer) to two parts water. The amount you make should reflect how many kittens you have and how much they eat. **Keep in mind whatever you do not use after 24 hours will need to be thrown away.** Mix the KMR and water thoroughly until all the clumps are gone.
- **DO NOT** use boiling water! This will destroy nutrients in the milk.
- The opened powdered KMR container must be refrigerated as well.
- **DO NOT USE COW'S MILK!** (or anything other than the specified formula provided by the QHS)
  
- **Young kittens generally do NOT wake up and cry to be fed. You must wake them up.**

## Stimulating Your Kittens to Eliminate Before & After Feeding

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Before and after each meal, use a cotton ball, facial tissue or soft towel- wet with warm water, and gently massage genitals to stimulate urination and bowel movements. **DO NOT RUB**; this will cause the area to become raw and sore.

Kittens should (and almost always will) urinate during each stimulation. You may need to use several cotton balls on each kitten as you assist them in elimination of feces and urine. They should defecate once a day, but some kittens go several days before they have a bowel movement. Slowly count to 60 while you're stimulating a kitten; at that point, you'll know if they've gone, or are about to.

## Feeding Steps

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We recommend two types of feeding for orphaned infant kittens: bottle and syringe feeding. Bottle feeding takes longer but probably provides more satisfaction to the kitten. Syringe feeding is somewhat faster but can be messy at times. Syringe feeding is recommended with really young kittens. A start up of kitten formula of KMR will be provided. Mix only enough to use within a 24-hour period. Discard any remaining formula after 24 hours.

Keep the formula mixture in the fridge until you are ready to feed your kittens.

- 1) Use the *Feeding Guide* below to determine how much to feed and how often. Find the stomach capacity for the related weight. Overfeeding KMR milk can also cause diarrhea, as well as regurgitation and aspiration of milk into the lungs, resulting in life-threatening pneumonia.
- 2) Pour the formula mixture into nursing bottle, or syringe. Place the rest of the formula (that is in a mason jar or similar container) back in to the fridge.

- 3) Fill a coffee cup up with water and place in the microwave for about 1 ½ minutes or until the water is hot (time depends on power of microwave).
- 4) **DO NOT** microwave the formula; although you may microwave the water in a glass cup before placing the bottle or syringe in the water. **DO NOT ALLOW THE FORMULA TO BOIL.** Any formula that boils must be thrown out, **HIGH HEAT WILL DESTROY THE PROTIEN IN THE MILK REPLACER.**
- 5) Place the feeding bottle, or syringe - full of formula mixture into the coffee cup with hot water. Allow the formula to warm up for a few minutes. Test formula temperature by squeezing a small amount on the inside of your wrist. The formula should be warm **NOT** hot!
- 6) **While waiting for the formula to warm up, you can stimulate the kittens to urinate/defecate prior to feeding.**
- 7) The formula should feel warm when tested on your wrist, warm formula will encourage a kitten to nurse.

If you are using a syringe—fill the syringe to the amount you want to feed EACH kitten (each kitten should have its own syringe), then pull up a little air into the syringe. Place a nipple on the end of the syringe and place the syringe in the cup of warm water to heat. The formula will expand as it heats—that’s why we leave an air space. The syringe tip prevents formula from mixing with the water and becoming diluted. Express any excess air prior to feeding the kittens.

- 1) Be sure the babies are warm to the touch. If they are cool to the touch, **DO NOT** try to feed them. Wait until they are warmed up and active. Cold kittens will be lethargic and cannot digest properly.
- 2) All nipples except, the Miracle Nipples, come without holes. Take care in creating a nipple hole if needed. Use the smallest cuticle scissors you have and start small, making a crisscross; once the hole is cut too big, it cannot be corrected. The hole is perfect when you hold the bottle upside down and has a slow, steady drip – drip – drip. Gushing out might cause the kitten to aspirate the formula; a hole too small will keep the kitten from getting adequate amounts of formula.
- 3) **To feed your kitten, place it stomach down on a towel or other textured surface, such as in a blanket, to which it can cling.** This is similar to the position when nursing on the mother. Kitten positioning for feeding is very important; this is where the crucial surrogate-mom bonding happens.
- 4) Grasp the kitten gently under its armpits. Gently open its mouth with the tip of your finger, then slip the nipple between its jaws. You may have to wiggle it, and squeeze out a bit of milk so the kitten gets the idea. You may also find that gently holding their head steady is helpful. Kittens have a nursing reflex – if you gently place your finger over the muzzle/nose, they will push into it and search out the nipple.
- 5) Kittens should **NOT** be laid on their backs to nurse but should nurse with tummies facing down. This will help prevent aspiration of the formula into the lungs, a situation that could easily cause the death of or serious illness in a kitten. **NEVER TURN THE KITTEN ON ITS BACK TO FEED. KEEP BOTH THE KITTEN AND THE BOTTLE IN AS UPRIGHT A POSITION AS POSSIBLE.** Hold the bottle at 45-degree angle, keeping a light pull on the bottle to encourage vigorous sucking.
- 6) Draw up the appropriate amount in an (ideally) slip tip syringe or baby bottle with nipple and insert just the tip into kitten’s mouth—you are **NOT** syringing in the formula, most kittens will start to lap at it and very quickly will actually suckle. Don’t force it! If kitten isn’t eating well, drip formula in the kitten’s mouth.
- 7) **NEVER SQUEEZE THE BOTTLE OR SYRINGE TO FORCE MILK DOWN THE KITTEN’S THROAT!** This could force the formula into the lungs and causing the kitten to aspirate.
- 8) If the kitten does not start nursing right away, or if it seems to have trouble getting the milk, check the nipple again. It may also be helpful to stroke his head gently or pet his back to start his nursing reflexes. Pulling lightly on the bottle or twisting the nipple while in the kitten’s mouth can also encourage the kitten to suckle.
- 9) Take your time; some kittens nurse slower than others.
- 10) The kitten will let you know when it has had enough simply by refusing more, or bubbles will form around its mouth.
- 11) Once babies are fed, they must also be stimulated again to urinate and defecate. Note: it is **VERY** normal that they don’t defecate at every feeding. If they are eating and sleeping they are fine. If they are constipated they will be cranky and not eat well. You should encourage the kittens to urinate/defecate prior to feeding, once again once the feed is complete.
- 12) After feeding your kittens if you have any leftover formula mixture in the nursing bottle discard it immediately. Wash the bottle and all its parts thoroughly with warm soap and water.
- 13) At the next feeding repeat the feeding steps listed above. Continue this process until you have used all of your pre-made formula or it has been past 24 hours since you made the formula mixture.

**\*Never reheat formula that has already been heated up once. ANY HEATED FORMULA REMAINING SHOULD BE DISCARDED. Reheated formula can harbor bacteria.**

**\*It helps to write the date and time on the container, or a notepad listing the time the formula was prepared. This way you'll know exactly when to discard it at the 24-hour mark.**

Kittens have a strong instinct to suckle and are generally not satisfied when nursing on a bottle. Consequently, they will nurse off one another's genitals, sometimes causing real discomfort to one another. If this happens you can do a couple of things, first increase the number of feedings per day, feeding the same daily total amount. A Second option would be to separate the kittens when they are not supervised, several small boxes work well for this. The kittens should be allowed some time together when they are supervised so they are properly socialized. Also, providing them with a stuffed animal they can snuggle with. After feeding gently wipe the kitten's face with a warm, damp cloth and then dry, to imitate their mothers grooming, until they can groom themselves.

**\*\*OVERFEEDING A KITTEN CAN LEAD TO DIAHRREA WHICH CAN CAUSE DEHYDRATION AND BECOME FATAL. UNDERFEEDING CAN ALSO CAUSE DEHYDRATION AND CHILLS WHICH CAN BECOME FATAL. REMAIN ALERT TO EACH KITTENS NEEDS. \*\***

### **Feeding Chart**

Age	Weight	Amount per Day	<u>Amount per feeding</u>	<u>How often?</u>
<1 week	2-5 ounces	13-30mL	3-5 ml	2 hrs
1-2 weeks	6-9 ounces	40-60mL	7-9 ml	3-4 hrs
2-3 weeks	10-12 ounces	65-88 mL	10-14 ml	4-5 hrs
3-4 weeks	13 oz-1 pound	95-110 mL	Weaning!	Weaning!

# Kitten Development

## TEENY TINIES The tiniest, most vulnerable kittens require gentle and frequent care.

NEWBORN



- umbilical cord attached, eyes closed, ears folded
- can't regulate body temp.

1 WEEK



- eyes closed, ears folded, no umbilical cord
- eyes open at 8-12 days

2 WEEKS



- eyes completely open, blue color
- wobbly on their feet

## TEENY WEANIES As kittens age, you'll help them reach important developmental milestones.

3 WEEKS



- incisors emerging, ears unfolded
- discovering litterbox

4 WEEKS



- canines emerging
- vision improving; walking confidently

5 WEEKS



- premolars emerging
- weaning slowly onto wet kitten food

## BIG KIDS CLUB These social, independent, and coordinated kittens are almost ready for adoption.

6 WEEKS



- all milk (deciduous) teeth have emerged
- eating confidently

7 WEEKS



- transitioning to adult eye color
- coordinated and playful

8 WEEKS



- once 2 pounds, kittens can be spayed/neutered and placed in their forever home!

## Orphaned Kitten Quick Reference Guide

Situation	What to Do
Kittens are lethargic.	Ensure the kittens are warm to the touch. If they are too cold they may be lethargic. It is very important to warm them up. Call the staff at the HSHPE ASAP if the lethargy does not improve within an hour.
<p>Kittens are acting normal, are not losing weight but are having diarrhea or are constipated.</p> <p>Feces is white or very pale. Kittens have not defecated for several days, but are acting normal</p>	The most common cause for all of these is overfeeding or intolerance of the KMR. Try diluting the KMR mixture in half with water for 24 hours to see if the issue resolves. Call the HSHPE if it persists longer than 2 days or worsens. If there is weight loss call the HSHPE to schedule an appointment to have the kittens seen.
Kittens are losing weight, have diarrhea, AND are not acting normal or no longer gaining weight.	Call the HSHPE to schedule an appointment to have the kittens seen ASAP. Orphaned kittens are so fragile, any weight loss is significant.
Bottle Babies are sneezing and having thick or yellow/green nasal discharge.	Call the HSHPE to have the kittens seen.
Kittens eyes are weepy and are red or producing yellow/green discharge.	Call the HSHPE and arrange to bring them in. In the meantime, use a cotton ball or soft cloth to gently clean the eyes (don't rub, instead dab them) remove any discharge and apply a warm compress for a few minutes once or twice a day.
Kitten isn't interested in eating.	<p>Check the nipple again. It may also be helpful to stroke his head gently or pet his back to start his nursing reflexes. Pulling lightly on the bottle or twisting the nipple while in the kitten's mouth can also encourage the kitten to suckle. You may have to wiggle it, and squeeze out a bit of milk so the kitten gets the idea. Take your time; some orphans nurse slowly. Kittens that come into care with their eyes open are sometimes a bit slower to take to bottle feeding.</p>
Kitten feels cold to the touch.	<p>Wrap them up in a towel like a burrito, leaving their faces exposed. Wrap the heating pad turned onto low around the towel – duct tape it or secure it around the towel so it stays wrapped. Don't let the heating pad touch them directly as it can cause burns. Make sure the heating pad is never directly touching the skin. If the kittens do not warm up within an hour- call the HSHPE for further guidance.</p>
Kitten feels hot.	Remove heating pad and continue to monitor, call HSHPE if you require further guidance.

# PROCEDURE FOR EMERGENCIES

If your foster is having a Medical Emergency call the HSHPE between 8:00am-5:00pm **613-968-4673**.

When you call be prepared to:

- describe what's happening, condition, etc.
- Give age of the kitten

Staff will advise if you should bring the kitten(s) to the HSHPE for a wellness exam, or a local Veterinarian.

## General Criteria for Emergencies

- Continuous weight loss
- Continuous diarrhea
- Continuous vomiting
- Bleeding of any kind — nose, urine, more than 2 days in the stool, any unclear discharge
- Any trauma — hit by a car, dropped, limp, stepped on, unconscious
- Difficulty breathing/blocked airway — open mouthed breathing/struggling to breathe
- Lethargy
- Dehydration
- If the animal has vomiting or diarrhea, but is still active, eating and drinking, please call the QHS to advise
- Mild coughing or sneezing should pose no immediate problems unless accompanied by blood or symptoms such as lethargy or dehydration

***When possible, it's better for us to know of any issues that arise Monday-Sunday between 8:00am-5:00pm, during our hours of operation. Our trained staff can handle any issues, and seek medical attention, if required. We contract and pay a premium fee to send animals to after hours emergency clinics.***