



ORPHAN KITTENS

It is very hard to find a foster mother to adopt a litter of kittens. If one does find a foster mother, she must be producing milk and have kittens born around the same time. If not, then you will need to be their mother for the next six to eight weeks.

The quantity to feed will depend upon the age of the kittens as well as the amount of times the kittens are to be fed in a twenty-four hour period. We recommend feeding milk replacer. It comes in a liquid or powder form. A pet nurser, an eyedropper, or a syringe can also be used to feed the kittens. These products are available through your veterinarian or pet stores.

Kittens will need to be fed milk replacer until they are approximately four weeks old. Reconstituted milk replacer should be fed daily at the rate of two tablespoons for every four ounces of body weight per day. The feedings should be divided into equal portions. Large kittens being fed every eight hours and small kittens being fed every three to four hours. Weigh your kitten three times a week. Be sure to warm the milk replacer liquid before feeding, but be careful that it isn't hot enough to burn them. Test a couple of small drops on the inside of your wrist. It should be slightly warm, not hot. When the kitten reaches four weeks, mix milk replacer with quality canned food to make gruel. This can be warmed, but again make sure it is not too hot. Place it in a shallow pan. Start teaching the kittens to eat, by placing their front feet into the gruel. Gradually decrease the amount of milk replacer in the gruel, until the kittens are eating the canned food only. You may also introduce the dry food. When the kittens are eating the straight canned food on their own, you may discontinue the hand feeding. Offer water at all times once solid foods have begun to be mixed with the formula.

For the first three to four weeks, you will need to stimulate the genital areas for urination and defecation after feeding. Use a warm washcloth and gently rub the genital and anal areas. At four weeks, you may introduce the kitty litter pans.

The kittens must be kept warm. DO NOT put the kittens directly on a heating pad. Place the kittens in a box with lots of towels or blankets. You may place a heating pad on low under one half of the box. As they get larger you may gradually decrease the warmth, if the kittens are kept indoors. As they get older, a larger box or area will be needed. Be sure they can get in and out of the box easily. To introduce a litter box, place each kitten into the box after eating. When the kittens are learning to eat on their own, wash them after eating since they have a hard time cleaning themselves at this age.

Kittens can be weaned at six to eight weeks of age. At this time, they will be ready for their first examination, vaccines and deworming.