

HUMANE
ANIMAL RESCUE

Baby & Mum Foster Handbook



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Introduction

Please refer to cat foster handbook for general information about fostering with us, caring for cats & general fostering information.

This handbook is just information about cat mums & bubs.

About caring for mums & bub cats

Following birth, newborn kittens and their mother are very vulnerable. Risks include post-birthing complications, infections, eclampsia (low calcium), hypothermia (low body temperature), hypoglycaemia (low blood sugar), and dehydration (low fluids).

Kittens and their mother need extra special care, including appropriate environmental conditions, proper nutrition, adequate socialisation, vaccinations, desexing, microchipping, worming and external parasite prevention.

What's different about caring for mum & bubs than a usual foster cat?

Mum & Babies are more vulnerable and high risk, they will need more monitoring and support than a usual cat or kitten in foster carer.

Some mum & baby litters are simple and the mum will do most of the care for the babies, however some can be complicated and we may need to step in.

Complications that are common with mum & bubs are; illness including fatalities, mastitis or feeding issues, cleaning & toileting issues.

Important to consider:

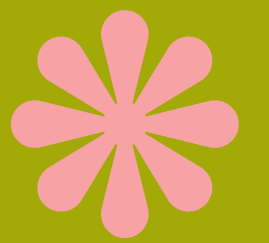
All cases who take on a mum & baby case, are asked to expect that in the event that the mum cannot care, to be prepared to care for the bubs.

Humans cannot care for cats as well and even with mum there are commonly fatalities.

Resources you will need

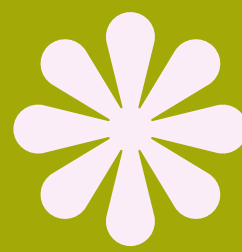


Kitten milk formula



- Pen / nesting area for kittens
- Calm pet free room that is cat proof
- Food & water bowls
- Blankets & towels
- Pet safe heat pack
- Kitchen scales
- Measuring cup to make milk
- Royal canin mum & baby food
- Kitten milk - Diavet milk or Womberoo kitten milk
- Hypoallergenic baby wipes
- Hand Sanitiser
- Cardboard boxes
- Kitty litter
- Syringes or kitten bottles for feeding

Baby & Mum food



Kitchen scales



Pet safe heat pad



Kitten set up

Appropriate environmental conditions (e.g., temperature, air flow, good hygiene) are essential for the health of newborn kittens. Mothers and their kittens should also be kept separate from other cats to give them peace and quiet, and protect them from infections.

Before bringing home the mama and babies, you'll want to get set up:

Choose a quiet, confined space.

Mama cats shouldn't be given free access to the house due to the abundance of hazards, and because they may decide to bring their babies into an unsafe or hard-to-find spot. Instead, choose a room with a door like a guest room, bathroom, or laundry room where you can keep her safe and separate from the rest of the house.

As kittens can commonly carry illnesses & diseases as they are often rescued being stray, are young and vulnerable and unvaccinated, we recommended a carpet free room.

Baby-proof the space.

Many items that seem innocuous can become a hazard when fostering a mama cat and babies. Avoid deep cat beds where a kitten may get stuck or suffocate. Tie up strings on blinds. Remove tall cat trees and limit access to furniture that can be climbed, (like tall shelves) or hidden inside (like pull-out couches.) In general, the space should be extremely minimalist, with access only to kitten-safe items like baby blankets.

Please see cat foster handbook for toxic plants or more information how to cat proof your home.

Don't introduce other animals. Even if your cat or dog is very friendly, introducing him to the mama will create a stressful and potentially dangerous situation. Mama cats can be fiercely protective of their young, and may attack an animal who gets too close. Her kittens will also have fragile immune systems and should be quarantined from other animals to protect the health of all.

Ideally mum & bubs are in pet free homes, as smelling or hearing other animals can be stressful. If you do have other animals ensure they have more distance than a single door. If you are unsure about this, chat to your case manager.

Kitten set up

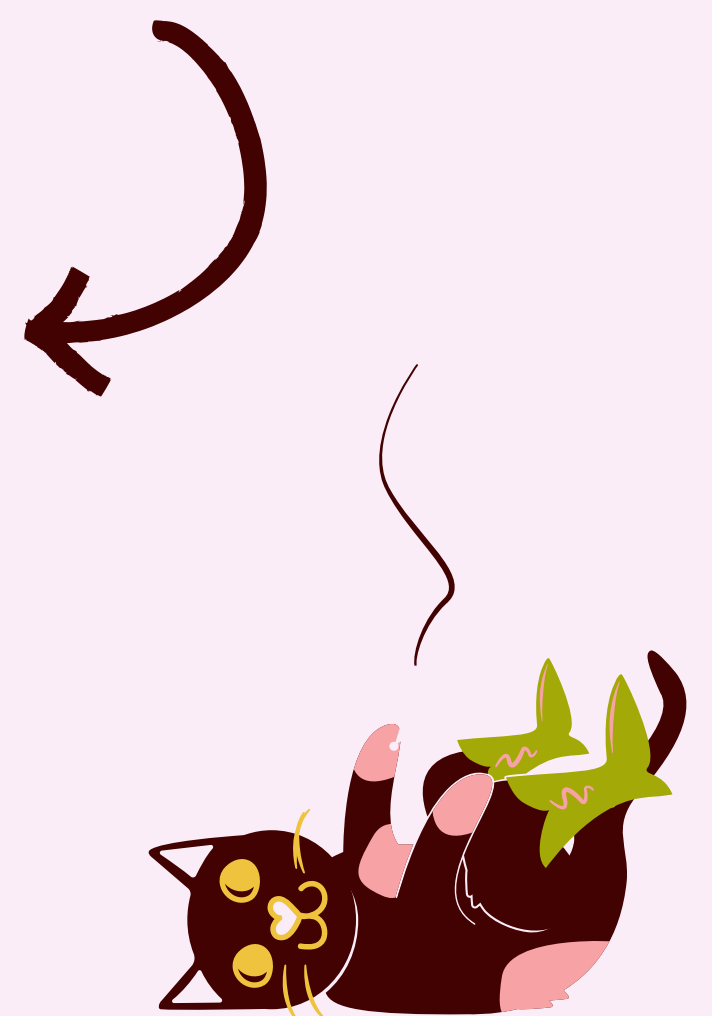
Create a purrfect nesting box. Mama cats will seek out an area to keep their babies, so get one step ahead of her and create a nesting box. This can be a large kennel, crate, or even a large box on its side; the important thing is that there is enough space for both mom and babies to stretch and lay comfortably during the first weeks of life. Place the nesting box into the corner of the room and line the bottom with a flat, soft blanket (no deep beds or bunched blankets, which can cause suffocation.) If mama is stressed, place a large blanket over top of the kennel to create a cozy cave.

Put out food, water, and a litter box for mama. Place these items in adjacent corners as far from where the babies will be as possible. Ensure that you are using a kitten-safe litter and that all food and water dishes are very shallow.

Keep the babies warm. Neonatal kittens cannot thermoregulate, and rely on external heat sources in order to stay a comfortable temperature. In general, they will stay warm through contact with their mama's body heat, but if the room is more than 21 degrees please provide them with a heat pad on low.



Dog crate or puppy ben make a great nesting box!



Caring for kittens

While mama does much of the work, you should think of yourself as her sidekick—a co-parent to the babies.

Monitor the kittens' weight

It is very important it is to weigh your kittens once per day, even (and especially!) if they are being cared for by a mama cat. It's important to track their weight so that you can ensure they are getting enough food and are on a healthy track. If a kitten's weight is stagnate or dropping, you should be prepared to step in with supplemental feeding.

Use the tracking sheet on page X to track their weight

Monitor the kittens' health

While tracking weight is often the number one indication of a kitten's health, you should also be monitoring them visually for any signs of illness or injury. If a kitten appears to be having a health issue, contact a veterinarian without delay. Neonatal kittens can (and should!) receive veterinary care regardless of their age or size.

Signs of unwellness in kittens:

- Weepy or watery eyes
- Running nose
- Sneezing or coughing
- Diarrhea
- Lethargic
- Loss of appetite
- Not playing
- Behavioural changes
- Mouth open breathing
- Vomiting
-



Prevent disease spread

Always wash hands before and after interacting with the little ones. Wear booties or special socks when entering their space, especially during their first two weeks with you.

Handle the kittens daily. It's important to interact with the kittens so that they will develop a fondness for humans and good social skills.

Caring for Mumma

Feeding mum

Feed mama ample amounts of kitten food. Kitten food is higher in protein and fat, which the mama will need as she is nursing her young. Be sure to provide large amounts of food at least three times a day, offering both wet and dry kitten food.

Provide a shallow dish of fresh water. Please never put a deep dish of water into a space with neonatal kittens, as this can be a drowning hazard. Provide water in a low, shallow dish.

Always have a full bowl of dry baby & mum food available.

Mums Health

Monitor mama's teats daily. Lactating cats can occasionally develop a painful mammary infection called mastitis, which requires immediate veterinary intervention. If you notice signs of swelling, redness, inflammation, bruising, or tenderness to the mammary glands, contact your case manager.

Care for mama's health needs. If mum shows any signs of unwellness contact your case manager so we can organise a vet check.

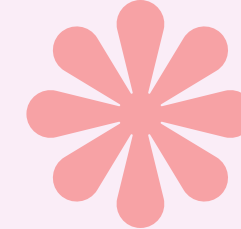
Interactions

If mama is friendly, give her affection. This part is easy and fun! Pet her, talk sweetly with her, and encourage her to occasionally come out and stretch her legs, sit in your lap or even play.

It's important to practise pat consent and watch her body language. When a mum first moves into a new home this will be very stressful for her as she decompresses.



Feeding Guide



Kittens should only be fed by mum, or as they start to wean off themselves they may drink or eat mums food that is available.

Unless mum is unable and we are intervening, never feed the kittens.

Mum & kittens are only to have Royal canin baby & mum wet & dry food and if we are intervening a kitten formula such as Diavet or Womberoo kitten.

It is so important for their nutritional needs that kittens and mum doesn't have treats, human food or cows milk during this time.

Things to check:

- Does mum have enough nipples? (Cats can have different amounts of nipples and in some cases they may have less nipples than cats)
- Does it look like mum has milk from each nipple? If you are unsure, send a photo to your case manager.

How do we tell the kittens are being fed enough? We weigh them!

We weigh the kittens daily to ensure they are getting enough food & growing well. It is so important we track this daily on the sheets provided on page X.

Mum cat

Mum should always have fresh water and royal canin baby & mum kibble. Three times a day place wet royal canin baby & mum food available to her.



kitten weight and feeding chart

AGE	WEIGHT	AMOUNT PER FEEDING	SCHEDULE
0-1 week	50-150 grams	2-6 ml	Every 2 hours
1-2 weeks	150-250 grams	6-10 ml	Every 2-3 hours
2-3 weeks	250-350 grams	10-14 ml	Every 3-4 hours
3-4 weeks	350-450 grams	14-18 ml	Every 4-5 hours
4-5 weeks	450-550 grams	18-22 ml	Every 5-6 hours
5-8 weeks	550-850 grams	(weaning; offer ample wet food)	Every 6 hours

Feed guide for babies



How long is a mum & baby in care?

Mum & Babies will depend on how old and how their health is. Kittens will start to natural wean around 5-8 weeks. We let them naturally wean and then when they are ready, we will place the kittens in separate foster homes.

Kittens average often 3-4 months in care from coming in with a mum.

When can kittens have vet work?

Kittens can get their first vaccination at 6 weeks old.

Kittens will need a second vaccination 4 weeks after their first

Kittens can get desexed when they are over 1kg. Usually a kitten will get their first vaccination at 6 weeks old and get their second vaccination and microchip with their desexing at 12 weeks old.

Do I need to flea & worm the kittens?

If the kittens are feeding from mum, when we flea & worm treat mum the kittens will get the immunity from the milk. We only start to flea & worm kittens when they are not being fed by mum.

Why is there no poo or wee?

Kittens can't toilet themselves for the first few weeks of their lives. The mum cat will toilet the kittens by licking them, which is why you won't see any wee or poo.

If the mum is unable to care for the kittens, we need to toilet the kittens using tissues.

Can I bath the kittens

Under no circumstances can you bathe a kitten, this can be extremely dangerous as they can become too cold after a bath. If you need to clean a kitten, use a safe baby wipe.

Can I adopt the kittens or have a friend adopt the kittens?

We love when foster carers adopt, we call it foster failing!

Foster carers can always adopt if they meet the adoption criteria (for kittens this is having a resident cat, being a permanent resident or citizen). Kittens can't be adopted until they are fully vet worked which will be around 12 weeks of age. We don't recommend choosing to adopt until we have had a vet check to ensure they are healthy and adoptable.

Mum & Bub Daily checklist

- Check weight
 - Change water
 - Scoop litter for mum if needed
 - Feed mum 3 x per day
 - Play with babies
 - Check general health of kittens
 - Check general health of mum
- Message case manager weight updates
- Check you have enough food & supplies to last a 14 days
- Heat up heat pad

Kitten Weight Check

It is crucial

we weight the kittens every day to ensure they are getting enough food from mum.

The kittens should increase around 20grams per day.

We always want weight gain, if there is ever weight loss please contact your case manager

Example how to complete weight check sheet:

Name	1/11/24	2/11/24	3/11/24	4/11/24	5/11/24	6/11/24	7/11/24
Kitten 1	500g	520g	540g	560g	580g	600g	620g
Kitten 2	440g	500g	540g	590g	620g	635g	670g

Kitten Weight Check

This sheet can be printed and weight checks for one week for up to 12 kittens.

Please the dates along the top row and the names of the kittens along the left column

Date:							