FOSTERING UNDERAGE KITTENS

HOW TO BOTTLE OR SYRINGE FEED

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXlaoLfEXjY>



To prepare to look after bottle-fed kittens you will need the following:

* Kitten formula (Please note: Whiskas cat milk and cow’s milk do not have enough nutrients to sustain kittens)
* A nursing kit containing bottles, extra nipples and a cleaning brush (cut an ‘X’ in the tip of your first nipple with scissors)
* A kitchen scale
* A carrier or cage with fresh, washed, bedding and a hot water bottle or mild heat pad
* Baby wipes
* Towels

Note: Bottle-fed kittens need to be kept separated from other pets to stop the transfer of disease. If they aren’t with their Mum they should be kept in a carrier or cage with bedding and a heat source to keep them warm (make sure the carrier is large enough for the kittens to have an area to move away from the heating pad if they are too warm).

Keeping kittens warm is equal to keeping them fed as they use their mother and litter mates to keep warm when they are young as they can’t generate their own body heat. Never feed a kitten that is cold. Instead warm them up slowly first using a heat pad/bottle and 3 layers of bedding.

FEEDING

Bottle-fed kittens need to be fed around-the-clock

* every two hours for kittens 0 - 1 week old
* every 3 hours for kittens 1 - 2.5 weeks old
* every 4 hours for kittens 2.5 - 3 weeks old
* every 6 hours for kittens over three weeks that are learning to eat solids.

For this reason you need to make sure you can commit to the time. To bottle feed the kittens, follow these steps:

1. Follow the directions on the formula pack to make up the formula. Kittens should be consuming 32 milliliters (mls) per 100g of weight, per day. Use the measurements on your bottle or syringe to keep track.
2. Never feed a kitten on its back as kittens fed on their back can easily swallow the milk into their lungs and asphyxiate. The kitten should be on their stomach in a position similar to how they would lay next to their mother to nurse. You may try holding the kitten upright swaddled in a warm towel or have the kitten lay on a towel in your lap. Experiment with what position works best for you and the kitten.
3. Turn the bottle upside down and allow a drop of formula to come out. Place the bottle nipple in the kitten’s mouth and gently move it back and forth, holding the bottle at a 45-degree angle to keep air from getting into the kitten’s stomach. This movement should encourage the kitten to start eating. If at first you don’t succeed, wait a few minutes and try again. Usually the kitten will latch on and begin to suckle.
4. Allow the kitten to suckle at their own pace. If a kitten refuses to suckle, try stroking the kitten’s back or gently rubbing her on her forehead. This stroking is similar to momma cat’s cleaning and it may stimulate the kitten to nurse.
5. If you are feeding multiple kittens, feed the first kitten until they stop nursing, then begin feeding the next kitten and so on. Once you have fed all the kittens, feed the first kitten again and repeat with all the kittens. Do not overfeed as this can cause diarrhea and bloat.
6. Kittens need to be burped, just like human babies. Lay the kitten on their stomach, on your shoulder or in your lap, and very gently pat their back until you hear a little burp. You may need to burp a couple times per feeding.
7. Formula that has been kept in the refrigerator must be warmed to just above room temperature. Place the bottle in a bowl of shallow water, then heat in the microwave for 10 seconds. Or you may place the bottle in a bowl of hot water for a few minutes.

WEANING

When the kittens are ready to be weaned (4 weeks old), you can follow these steps, as well as keeping out a bowl of fresh water:

1. Start by offering the kittens formula on a spoon or your hands.
2. Once they are lapping off the spoon, try putting some formula in a saucer.
3. As they master lapping up the formula out of the saucer, you can gradually add a small amount of canned food to the formula in the saucer.
4. Increase the amount of canned food slowly, adding more food and less formula. Some kittens catch on right away, others may take a few days. To be sure the kittens are getting enough food, you may need to continue bottle feeding them a few times a day, until they are eating well on their own. Be sure to feed them what they need to be full, but don’t overfeed them.
5. Monitor the kittens’ stools to make sure they are tolerating and digesting the mix well. If the kittens have loose stools, reduce the amount of canned food and increase the formula until their systems have adjusted.
6. You can also start leaving out dry food for them to try once they hit 5 weeks. It’s best to start with kitten biscuits as they are smaller

TOILETING

Mother cats toilet their kittens by stimulating their bowels until they are able to do it themselves (around 4 weeks of age). Kittens without a mother therefore require your help in this department.

1. After each feeding, use a warm, moist cotton ball, tissue or soft cloth to gently rub and clean the kitten’s lower belly, genital and anal area. The kitten should begin eliminating within a minute. Do not continue to rub the kitten for more than a minute or so, since this could irritate their delicate skin. If you find your kitten becomes sick and regurgitates the milk back up after toileting then toilet before feeding for the first week.
2. Gently wash the kitten after they’re done eliminating using a clean, damp, soft cloth. Record the kittens’ elimination type and frequency in a logbook.
3. When they are between 3 and 4 weeks of age, kittens can be introduced to the litter box. Use a small cardboard box or plastic litter box with just enough clay litter to cover the bottom - Don’t use clumping litter. Adding a used cotton ball (from when you helped them urinate) to the box will help them get the idea of what to do next.
4. Put the kittens in the box, allowing them to get the feel for the litter. Natural instinct will generally prevail and the kittens will begin investigating, scratching, and, within a few days, using the box. If they are having trouble understanding how to use the litter and you have an older cat, you can scoop some soiled litter into the kittens tray so they will smell that and start to understand where they are supposed to go. If they do have an accident it is best to clean it up ASAP as the longer the smell stays around the more likely the kittens will be to think that is the appropriate place to toilet.