



Found kittens? Found a cat?

If you find a lost cat, we want the best possible outcome for lost or found animals, but we are not the first step in the recovery process.

Take the animal to the San Francisco Department of Animal Care and Control located at 1200 15th Street (at Harrison), San Francisco, CA 94103. This shelter is the central location for lost/found animals in San Francisco. If you are unable to transport the animal or if the animal is sick or injured, call Animal Care & Control and an officer can provide assistance. 415.554.6364.

If you have found a litter of kittens:

Thankfully, most discoveries of newborn kittens do not call for human assistance, and in fact, no intervention is generally the best thing you can do.

1. Remember that Mom knows best. The goal is to keep the mother and kittens together to ensure their best chances for the kittens' survival. In the first weeks of their lives, kittens need their mother's care and antibodies from her milk. And as they grow, the mother will begin to give her kittens the critical training they will need to survive outdoors, on their own.

2. Determine the age of the kittens:

Under 1 week: Eyes shut, ears flat to head, skin pinkish. Part of umbilical cord may be attached.

10-14 days: Eyes begin to open, ears flat. Smaller than your hand.

3 weeks: Eyes fully open – blue in color, ears erect, tooth buds visible. Walking but wobbly.

4 weeks: Teeth erupt. Possible interest in canned food. Walking.

5-6 weeks: Eyes changing from blue to adult color. Playful – begin to pounce and leap.

8-9 weeks: Weigh about two pounds and really look like small cats. These kittens are of age to be spayed or neutered, and may be [brought into the Community Cats Program for TNR](#).

3. Quietly observe from a safe distance to determine if the mother is present. Though the mother stays continually with her litter for the first day or two after giving birth, she will need to leave them for short periods of time in order to find food for herself. If the kittens are clean and sleeping in a heap, mom is most likely out scouting for something to eat. Note that it is instinctual, and rather common, for a mother to move her kittens to a new "safer" location, especially in the first few weeks of their lives.

If after four hours, she has not returned, you may conclude she has abandoned her kittens. As tiny kittens easily become chilled and dehydrated, this would be the time we recommend human intervention. At this point, call us at (415) 522-3539 or SF Animal Care and Control at (415) 554-6364 for advice or assistance.

4. Above all, do not interfere with the kittens or the space they are occupying. It is essential that you do not handle them, try to create a shelter, keep them warm, or feed them, as long as the mother is around. **These interventions may stress the mother and cause her to abandon her family.**

5. You can help the mother by providing food and water. Be sure to place dishes far enough away from the nest that you do not disturb mom and her kittens, or draw predators such as raccoons to the nest area. And of course, keep dogs and children far away.

6. The mother needs to be trapped and spayed, but not now. Give us a call, and we will work with you to determine the best time to begin trapping the mother. Once her kittens are weaned (typically no earlier than 4 weeks), we can safely separate kittens from mother, begin the socialization process for the kittens to be adopted, and trap, spay and return the feral mother to her outdoor home.

Can the SF SPCA find homes for the kittens?

The Community Cats Program focus is TNR – trap, neuter, return and management of feral and free roaming colonies. However, often times, young kittens are a part of these colonies, and we want the best possible outcome for these young ones.

Kittens under the age of 8 weeks are often easily socialized, and can be placed into adoptive homes. If you've found kittens around this age, and are able to pick them up and place them in a carrier, we recommend bringing them to San Francisco Animal Care & Control or calling our re-homing line for information on availability for intake.

SFACC: (415) 554-6364 1500 Harrison Street, San Francisco.

SF SPCA re-homing and adoption intake: (415) 522-3541

Once kittens have reached 10-12 weeks, the socialization process can be much harder, with the likelihood of success lower. You may have success socializing the kittens on your own; please see our handout on this here ([LINK TO SOCIALIZING FERAL KITTENS](#)).

Cats over the age of 12 weeks are likely best spayed or neutered, vaccinated, and returned to their colony.