



# Foster Care Program






Foster Kitten Manual



# Are You Ready to Foster?

Before you decide to foster, ask yourself these important questions. If you can answer YES, fostering may be a great volunteer opportunity for you.

## Can I:

-  **Spend quality time—around two hours per day—with the animals to help with their socialization?**
-  **Get to the SF SPCA within 30 minutes in an emergency?**
-  **Commit to regular appointments—usually every two weeks, but as often as once per week?**
-  **Keep foster animals separate from my own animals?**  
Foster animals must be kept isolated in an enclosed area away from all resident pets.
-  **Commit to the entire foster period—usually two to four weeks?** If something unexpected happens, you can contact us to arrange an early foster return.
-  **Handle the death of a foster animal?** The sad truth is that it sometimes happens, and it can be difficult.
-  **Cope with clean-up or possible damage to my home?**  
Foster animals can ruin furniture, carpeting, and clothing, and the SF SPCA will not be held responsible for any damage incurred while fostering an animal.

The foster program allows us to have an impact on the lives of many kittens every year, particularly sick and shy ones. At the same time, foster kittens fill our home with joy, love, and laughter.

—Kay Harnish-Ladd, foster parent for 20+ years





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Fostering helps save lives  
and enriches mine.

—Mary Godfrey

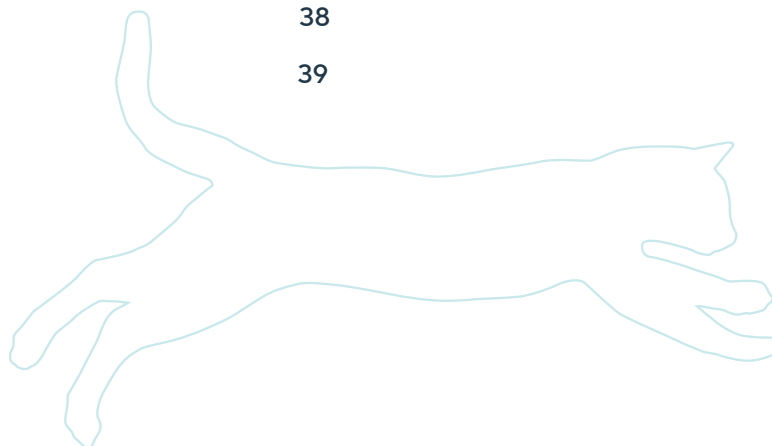
## Medical Concerns and Emergencies

### Foster Emergency Line:

415-740-1646

- To make a medical or vaccine appointment, email foster help  
fosterhelp@sfspca.org
- For non-urgent medical concerns, email us at  
**fosterhelp@sfspca.org**

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# Welcome

Thank you for your interest in the San Francisco SPCA Foster Volunteer program!

The SF SPCA has approximately 2,000 volunteers who donate their time across the organization, making it possible for us to fulfill our mission to:

**Save and protect animals, provide care and treatment, advocate for animal welfare, and enhance the human-animal bond.**

As the fourth-oldest humane society in the United States and the founders of the No-Kill movement, the SF SPCA has always been at the forefront of animal welfare. As a result of our efforts and those of our community partners, San Francisco has the lowest euthanasia rate of any major city in the United States. No adoptable dog or cat in San Francisco goes without a home, even if they have medical or other issues. By fostering animals that are too young or sick to be housed in the shelter, our foster volunteers play a huge part in helping us reach our annual lifesaving and adoption goals (5,250 animals were adopted in 2016). Many of our foster animals come from disadvantaged shelters throughout northern California where they are at high risk of euthanasia, and placing them in a foster home helps save their lives.

Kittens in the Foster program are largely those that have not yet reached the appropriate weight to undergo the spay/neuter surgery required to move on to our adoption floor. These kittens are small and require more individual care than they can receive in a shelter environment, making a foster home an ideal placement. Foster volunteers care for the kittens in their home, ensuring that their basic needs for food, warmth, safety, and socialization are met, while closely monitoring their health and growth. As caretakers, foster parents schedule and bring in their kittens for regular vaccine appointments every two weeks and monitor their weight and well-being daily, bringing them in for additional medical care if needed. Our knowledgeable and dedicated Foster team and Shelter Medicine staff are here to ensure that you have the tools and support that you need every step of the way.

Although fostering kittens can be a lot of work (a minimum of two hours per day), it is an amazing experience. You get to help these tiny babies grow to become confident, well-adjusted family pets. You also get the fun of raising a kitten without the responsibility of lifetime care! Most importantly, you are saving lives.

Thank you for considering this important and rewarding volunteer opportunity!

The Foster Team

## Keep in Touch

**Join our Facebook group!** This private group allows foster parents to share photos and stories of their foster animals and also allows you to troubleshoot any issues you may be having with experienced foster volunteers. **Search San Francisco SPCA Foster Parents Support Group and request to join!**

**Keep an eye out for our newsletter!** It's the easiest way to stay informed about the Foster team as well as training, events, and foster animal availability.

## Social Media Disclaimer

We know that you can't wait to share your foster animals with the world, but we ask you to refrain. Our foster animals are underage and not yet available for adoption, and legally should not be promoted externally. But don't fret! You can share foster animal photos endlessly on our private Facebook page with other SF SPCA foster parents. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation.

**Facebook: San Francisco SPCA Foster Parents Support Group**







# FAQs

**Q: Can I let the kittens play with my resident pets?**



A: NO. Foster kittens must be kept away from resident pets. Your pets can introduce diseases to the foster kittens, or the kittens could introduce diseases to your pets. It is best to consider the health of all the animals under your care. The SF SPCA cannot be responsible for the health of your resident pets.

**Q: Can I foster kittens if I have a full-time job?**



A: Most of our foster parents do work full-time, but it will depend on your job and the flexibility of your schedule. You don't have to be home with the kittens all the time, but you do need to have enough time to commit to their well-being, socialization, and medical care. We ask that you spend a minimum of two hours per day with your foster animals, but the more time you spend with them, the more you will help with their socialization. You'll also be more likely to spot signs that your kittens are not feeling well and seek immediate medical attention—and with kittens this young, that could be critical.

**Q: How many kittens will I foster?**



A: Generally, you will foster at least two kittens so they can teach each other kitty manners, but we sometimes have a single kitten in need of fostering.

**Q: How long will the kittens need to be in foster?**



A: Kittens need to be fostered until they are healthy, weigh 0.7 kilograms and are up to date on their vaccines. At that time, email the Foster Team to schedule a return appointment.

**Q: Will I need to give medications?**



A: Almost every kitten will need medications for something, and it's important that you are able to give them as needed. It's not difficult, and one of our medical technicians can show you how to administer them.

**Q: Where do the kittens come from?**



A: Our main channel for kitten intake is San Francisco Animal Care and Control, the city's municipal shelter. We also take in kittens found on the streets by our Community Cares program, from our sister shelter Stockton Animal Shelter, and from disadvantaged shelters in places like Merced and Fresno.

A: All underage animals at the SF SPCA are on a two-week vaccine cycle until they are 20 weeks of age since the shelter environment can expose them to a high number of diseases. Each animal undergoes a healthy quarantine period before it is available for adoption to ensure that they are not ill or undersocialized.



**Q: What are your vaccine and quarantine protocols?**

A: While not a requirement of the program, we recommend that you speak to your veterinarian about vaccination recommendations for your family pets. The shelter animals you are fostering are at high risk for disease, and it may be wise to ensure your own animals' safety.



**Q: Do my resident animals need to be up to date on their vaccines?**

A: We understand that things come up that require you to leave town before your foster kittens are ready to be returned. If this happens, email the Foster team to arrange for the kittens' return. You cannot hire someone to baby-sit. You alone are responsible for the care of the kittens and we cannot work with someone who is not associated with the SF SPCA.



**Q: What if I have to leave town and the kittens aren't ready?**

A: If you feel that you are unable to give adequate care to the kittens, email the Foster team right away and make arrangements to bring the kittens back. Fostering is not for everyone and we appreciate the effort.



**Q: What if I decide that fostering isn't working out for me?**

A: It's usually better to return kittens together, but this can vary by case. If there is a kitten that is much larger than its sibling, the larger kitten may play more roughly or be more aggressive about eating, which can overwhelm the smaller kitten. It's best to email the Foster team to discuss what's best for all the kittens.



**Q: If one kitten is ready but the other is not, do I return just one?**

A: Sadly, a small percentage of kittens won't survive, even with all the care they receive in a foster home. Kittens are very fragile, and nature did not intend for them all to survive. Happily, the number of kittens that don't make it is extremely small compared to the number of kittens who thrive through the dedication and care of the foster parents here at the SF SPCA.



**Q: Do kittens always survive?**

# Foster Fundamentals: Logistics

By socializing the kittens at a young age, you are helping to increase their adoptability. Fostering also helps to save lives by increasing the number of animals that the SF SPCA is able to take in.

## Application and Orientation

In order to begin fostering kittens, you must:

- ☒ Submit a completed application
- ☒ Attend a foster kitten orientation
- ☒ Let the Foster team know when you're ready!

**Please visit [sfspca.org/foster](https://sfspca.org/foster) to view the application and current orientation schedule.**

## Types of Kitten/Cat Fostering Opportunities

- Self feeders: kittens that are reliably eating on their own (these are the most common type of kittens in foster)
- Bottle feeders: neonatal kittens that require bottle feedings every few hours (contained in carrier)
- Feeding school: kittens who may need help learning how to eat solid food reliably
- Mothers with kittens (see page 31)
- Shy/undersocialized kittens (see page 20)
- Medical: sick or injured kittens or adult cats



## Preparing Your Home

### Creating a Safe Kitten Room

Kittens are babies, and they will try to get into everything! It helps to lie down on the floor on your stomach so that you can see the kittens' room from their point of view and identify potential hazards. Create a safe space for your kittens by following these guidelines:

- Choose a space that is free of things that can hurt a kitten. Be sure to block any electrical outlets put away anything a kitten could swallow or get tangled in, and hide any breakable items.
- You must be able to control the temperature of the room to ensure there are no drafts.
- The space should be able to withstand litter box accidents, vomit, and spilled medicine. A bathroom is often a good choice (don't forget to close the toilet lid and hide the toilet paper).
- Any windows in the space should be kept closed or securely screened.
- Kittens must be kept separate from resident pets.
- Kittens should be kept in areas that are easy to clean. Avoid areas that are difficult to thoroughly clean, like carpets and couches.
- Between litters, you must wash linens and disinfect porous surfaces with a 1:32 bleach and cold water solution (1 oz. per quart or 4 oz. per gallon).



The kitten room should also contain everything the kittens will need to eat, drink, eliminate, sleep, and play:

- The space should have at least one bowl for water, one for wet food, and one for dry food. If you have several kittens, provide additional bowls so kittens are not competing for access to food.
- Place the litter boxes as far away as possible from food, water, and bedding. Be sure to provide enough boxes so each kitten has a clean place to eliminate.
- Old towels and blankets tend to work well as bedding. A secure sleeping area, such as a cat carrier with the door removed or a box on its side, will help the kittens feel safe—this is especially important for shy kittens.
- To entertain kittens when you are not with them, provide safe, disposable, or easily sanitized toys, such as ping pong balls and wine corks.
- Finally, provide some type of scratching post or cardboard scratch pad.

I love dogs and cats, but I can't keep one because I travel a lot so fostering is perfect for me. The SF SPCA kittens get a home and loads of attention and I get to play with ridiculously cute kittens without long-term responsibility. This is like the best program ever!

—Long-time foster parent who wishes to remain anonymous

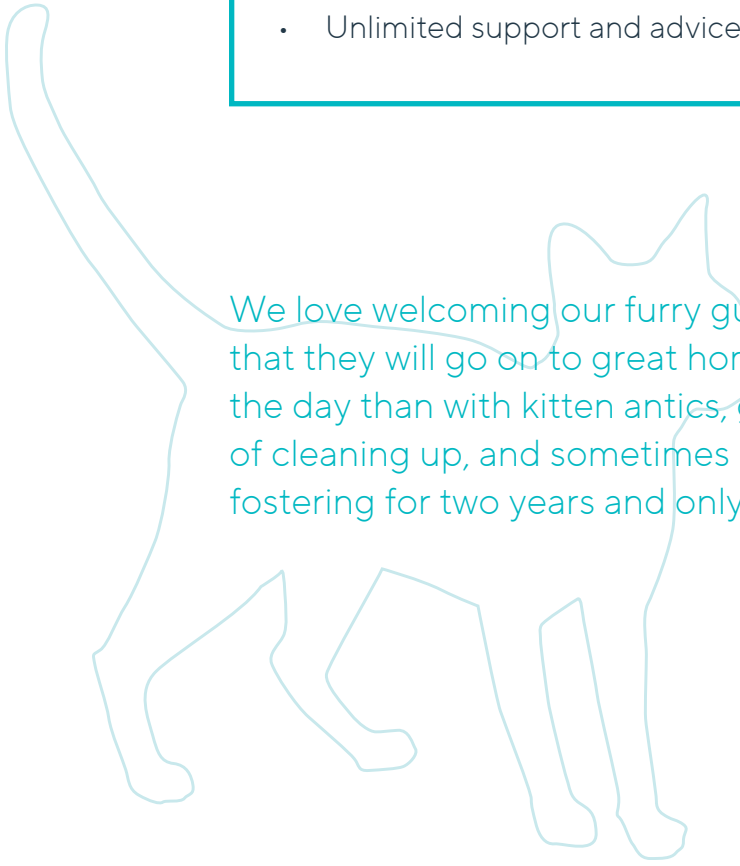
## Supplies

### Provided by the SF SPCA:

- Food
- Medical care
- A small carrier
- A scale for daily weighing
- Extra collars
- Fecal analyzers for stool samples
- Unlimited support and advice

### Foster parent to provide:

- A litter box, litter, and scooper—use only unscented clay litter (like Tidy Cat), which can be purchased at the kiosk (first floor of 201 Alabama Street)
- Food and water bowls
- Towels and/or linens for bedding
- Toys
- Socialization



We love welcoming our furry guests—it's great to see them grow and know that they will go on to great homes. There's no better way to relax at the end of the day than with kitten antics, games, and kisses. Yes—there's feeding, a bit of cleaning up, and sometimes medicines, but it's so, so worth it. We've been fostering for two years and only wish we started earlier.

—Frances and daughter Isabella Hochschild

## Recommended Supplies

Below you'll find suggested toys and enrichment items as well as necessary supplies for your kittens. Please keep in mind that all items should be used by only one set of kittens at a time and should be machine washable or easily sanitized.

### CAT TOYS



### WAND TOYS & INTERACTIVE TOYS



### DIY TOYS



### LITTER BOXES

Use only unscented, clay-based litter and do not use litter box liners



### SCRATCHERS



I believe animals should be given a chance to grow and become strong, and express the joyfulness they naturally have. Fostering gives them the chance to start life knowing they're appreciated and respected as the beautiful beings they are. Being foster parent gives me a chance to share love and caring with each animal I bring home, and to receive a splash of love from them before they leave my care!

—Patricia Parra



All foster appointments occur at the SF SPCA Spay/Neuter Clinic, which is located on the **second floor** of the Leanne B. Roberts Animal Care Center at **201 Alabama Street**

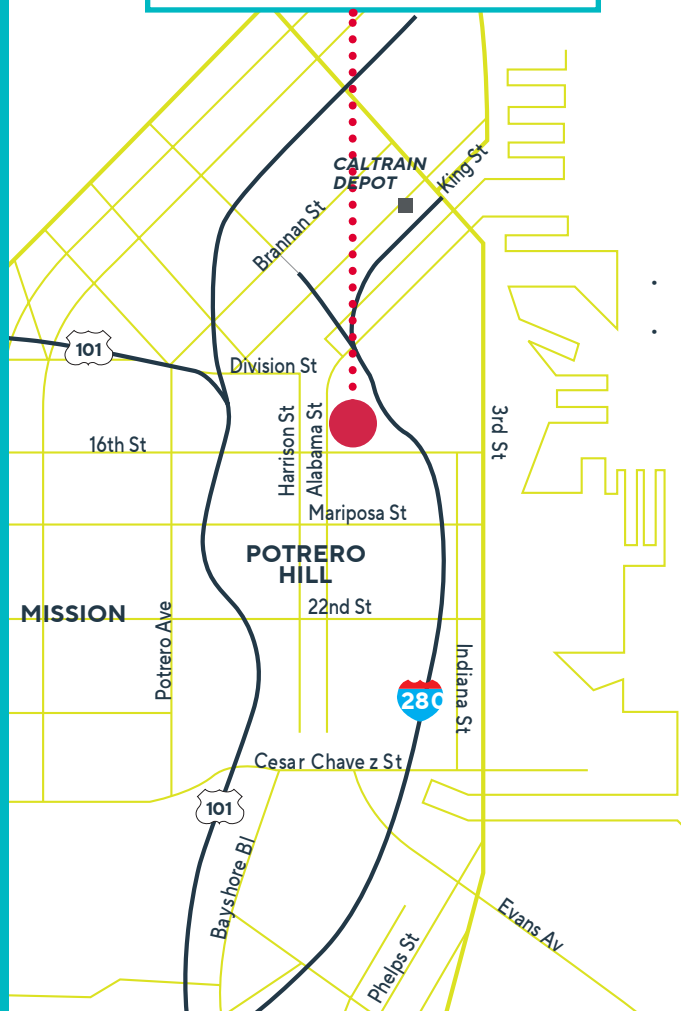
## Kitten Pick-Up

We rely on our foster parents to let us know when they're available to foster kittens. This is especially important during kitten season (spring through early fall), when we have a sustained influx of kittens. You'll also see calls for foster homes in our newsletter.

- When you're ready to pick up foster kittens, send an email to [fosterhelp@sfsPCA.org](mailto:fosterhelp@sfsPCA.org) with the dates and times that work well for you to pick up kittens. When appropriate animals are available, the Foster team will contact you to schedule a pick-up appointment. Pick-ups generally occur in the afternoon.
- When you arrive to collect your foster kittens, go to the Spay/Neuter lobby on the second floor and let the front desk know that you are a foster parent picking up animals.
- The Foster team will:
  - Review the animals' medical history
  - Answer your questions
  - Discuss diet, feeding, and care instructions
  - Explain and have you sign required paperwork
  - Provide you with supplies
  - Let you know about next steps, including arranging the next vaccine appointment and estimated return date
  - Give you kittens!
- Do not let kittens out of their carrier until they are safely in the kitten space in your home.
- Pick-ups must occur during SF SPCA business hours.

I find people worry about being able to give them back. For me it's always been easier knowing that every year that I foster I made room for the SF SPCA to save 20 to 30 more kittens than they would have been able to otherwise. I might personally be able to adopt and save two or three cats over a 20-year period, but in that same time I can save 500 cats by fostering. Whoa!

—Brittany and David Fritsch



## Caring for Your Kittens

### Health Monitoring

It is important to monitor a kitten's health and weight daily. You will be given a "daily foster journal form" to record each kitten's weight, eating habits, and overall health. A thriving kitten will be bright and playful with a healthy appetite and normal stool. If you notice consistent diarrhea, vomiting, decreased appetite, lethargy, green or yellow discharge from the eyes or nose, and/or consistent weight loss, please alert the Foster team via email at [fosterhelp@sfspca.org](mailto:fosterhelp@sfspca.org). See Medical and Emergency Protocols (page 27) for more detailed information about medical concerns.

### Feeding

Please feed your foster kittens only what is provided to you by the SF SPCA. Kittens have new and rapidly growing digestive systems that can be irritated by introducing too many food choices. Some human foods can be toxic to cats, so it is best not to experiment.

If your foster kittens refuse to eat the food you were given, email the Foster team for advice. We will help determine whether this is a medical problem or a preference issue, and will advise you of the next steps to take. Do not attempt to make this decision yourself.

Fostering with the SF SPCA is the perfect balance of volunteer work and cute kitten time! I, without a doubt, feel happier and healthier spending time with my foster kittens. It's so fun, it doesn't feel like 'work.'

### Weighing Your Kittens

You will be given a scale to measure each kitten's weight. You should weigh your kittens at the same time every day and keep track of their weight gain/loss in your daily foster journal. Keep this log current, as it will be the easiest way to tell when you have a serious problem and need to seek help for the kittens. Ideally, your foster kittens should be gaining 10–15 grams (1/4 oz.–1/2 oz.) per day. If your kittens are losing weight for more than 24 hours, contact the Foster team immediately.

### Cleaning

Your kitten space will require daily cleaning with an irritant-free, non-toxic cleaner that is free of harsh chemicals. Make sure all cleaners are rinsed and dried thoroughly to prevent kittens from being exposed to or ingesting any cleaner. Please keep the kitten space sanitary, warm, and dry. Regular cleaning is important for the health of the kittens, and will also help you notice kittens' habits and stool patterns.

### Revaccinations

Regardless of their health, kittens require routine visits to the SF SPCA to be vaccinated every two weeks. Please check with the Foster team to find out what your kittens' revaccination schedule is and be sure to keep your kittens on this schedule. You are responsible for remembering to make the appointments—no one will call and remind you. Kittens have a seven-day window from the due date to receive their vaccines.

Kittens receive an FVRCP vaccine (feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, and panleukopenia) and routine dewormers.

## Daily Routine



### Feeding

- Feed kittens twice per day—it's important not to overfeed
- Unless otherwise directed, feed each kitten ½ can of wet food per meal (one can per kitten per day); leave dry food out for kittens to free feed
- Change food daily
- Please use only the chicken baby food provided by the SF SPCA as a treat or to encourage kittens to eat
- Pick up dirty wet food dishes
- Provide clean water daily
- Monitor appetites



### Cleaning

- Scoop litter box at least two times per day
- Monitor kittens for diarrhea
- Clay litter should be dumped and changed every two to three days, more often if kittens have diarrhea
- Make sure kittens are clean and dry
- Refresh bedding when soiled



### Health Check

- Look over your kitten each day for any changes or potential medical problems
- Check body and fur
- Look closely at their eyes and in their mouth and ears
- Check collars to ensure they are not too tight
- Weigh kittens daily (same time each day, if possible) and keep track of their weight in the log
- Check energy levels







### **Socialization and Handling**

- Handle kittens several times each day for at least 10 to 20 minutes per visit—undersocialized kittens will need additional visits and handling
- Encourage affectionate behavior by gently holding and petting
- Kittens should meet a few new people each week if possible
- Kittens (especially those with medium or long hair) may benefit from limited daily exposure to brushing
- Gently handle paws in preparation for nail trimming
- Expose your kittens to being picked up and held



See pages 16–23 for more information on socialization and enrichment!



### **Enrichment and Mental Stimulation**

- Kittens should receive one to two daily play sessions (or more!) with interactive toys
- Remember to discourage play with hands by directing kittens to toys instead
- Kittens should not be left unattended with interactive toys
- You can and should provide your kittens with safe solo toys like ping pong balls and wine corks, which can be left out at all times
- Every few days, change up the kittens' environment in small ways by adding or adjusting cardboard boxes or moving things around the kittens' room



Even though it's often heartbreaking to return foster kittens to be adopted out, it means that we get to save more kittens in the future!



## Kitten Return

Kittens are ready to be returned for their spay/neuter surgeries when they weigh at least 0.7 kilograms, are healthy, and are up to date on their vaccines. You will likely need to bring kittens in for vaccines (even if they are at the appropriate weight) before they can return for surgery and even if those appointments are only one or two days apart.

- Email [fosterhelp@sfpca.org](mailto:fosterhelp@sfpca.org) when your kittens reach 0.7 kilograms. If they are healthy and currently vaccinated, we will help you schedule a return appointment.
- **Kitten returns are generally scheduled between 10:00 am – 5:00 pm** so the kittens can have their surgeries the same day and move on to the adoption floor the following day. Please plan on returning your kittens within this window of time.
- Please note that we can only accept a limited number of kitten returns each day so it's best to schedule your returns early enough to ensure the date you need.
- **Please make sure kittens are wearing ID collars that display their names when you return them.**

- ☒ 0.7 kilograms
- ☒ Healthy
- ☒ Up to date on their vaccines

## Cleaning Between Litters

After returning foster kittens, you will need to sanitize the kitten space before it can house new kittens. These measures should prevent new kittens from catching anything from the previous kittens:

- Remove everything the kittens slept on, ate from, played with, and eliminated in.
- Create a weak bleach solution by mixing one ounce bleach per quart of cold water or four ounces per gallon (cold water reduces any harmful vapors).
- Clean once to remove organic material (hair, fur, etc.), make a second pass on all surfaces the kittens could reach (don't forget the walls!), and wait at least 10 minutes before rinsing.
- Food and water bowls can be washed in the dishwasher (the heat will help disinfect the bowls). Alternatively, you can soak the bowls in the bleach solution for approximately 10 minutes and rinse thoroughly before reuse.
- Clean the litter box and any reusable toys with the bleach solution and rinse well.
- Throw away any toys made of cardboard or other non-cleanable materials.

I foster with the SPCA because I love helping critters in need. Over the last two years, fostering kittens has become an important part of my life and has shown me so much about love, caring, and patience for others. I encourage any animal lover to give fostering a try: you'll be helping to socialize kittens that will go on to bring joy to families all over the Bay Area, and have a super fun time doing it.

—Lewis King

## Litter Box

- **Use only unscented clay litter**, like Tidy Cat.
- To make it easy for kittens to get in and out, provide a litter box with low sides. Plastic boxes are best because they can be sanitized often.
- Litter boxes should be kept as clean as possible and scooped at least twice per day, unless you have lots of kittens or the kittens are sick, in which case you may need to clean more often.
- If you're using a plastic litter box, make sure to dump out all litter regularly, and wash with hot soapy water. This should be done about every two to three days. Consider this a rough guideline since your cleaning routine will depend on how many kittens you are fostering, how many litter boxes you have, and whether the kittens have normal stools.
- A clean box (or two!) will encourage good litter box habits and limit the kittens' exposure to germs from a medical concern (usually diarrhea).

## Kittens Missing the Litter Box?

Litter box issues are not uncommon. If your kittens aren't using their litter box reliably, consider these options:

- Are kittens having diarrhea or soft stool? If so, take a fecal sample using the provided fecalyzer (see page 26) and bring it to the SF SPCA.
- Keep the kittens confined to a small territory. If kittens have too much space, they may not make it to the litter box in time to eliminate.
- Add additional litter boxes. If kittens are eliminating in particular spots, add litter boxes there.
- If urine and fecal matter gets outside the box, clean the area well with an enzyme cleaner such as Nature's Miracle.
- Never yell at or punish a kitten for urinating or defecating outside the box.

If you've tried these options and your kittens still don't use the litter box reliably, please contact the Foster team for further advice.



## Playtime

Playtime is an important part of kitten development. To develop appropriate play and socialization skills, it's ideal for young kittens to have other kittens to wrestle and frolic with, so we aim to send kittens out in pairs when possible. Always provide safe toys for kittens to play with and, when visiting with your kittens, discourage them from biting hands or feet or using body parts as toys by directing them to toys instead. See page 9 for recommended kitten supplies.

Kittens need toys to play with so that they can occupy their minds and get exercise. They should have both solo and interactive toys.

- **Solo toys** should be easy to clean and impossible for the kittens to consume. Ping pong balls, toilet paper tubes, and wine corks are great examples of solo toys. These toys can be left for the kittens to play with even when you aren't there.
- **Interactive toys** include anything with string or parts (like buttons or feathers) that could come off and cause harm to the kitten. Never leave interactive toys with an unsupervised kitten. These toys are great for encouraging kittens to exercise and use their natural hunting skills, but watch them closely so they don't eat or get tangled in them.

Fostering adds so much joy to my day. Watching the kittens grow and develop is incredible and there is nothing better than coming home from work to little balls of fluff. They are also a constant source of entertainment.

—Caroline Doyle

## Appropriate Play

- Take it slow—encourage play, but don't frighten or startle them.
- Don't hang a toy right in the kitten's face, or hit the kitten with the toy; instead, drag it away enticingly!
- Always use toys, never hands.
- Don't punish or scold kittens.
- If a kitten bites or scratches you during play, redirect it to an appropriate toy. If scratching or biting continues, give a time out or end the visit.

## Claw Sharpening

Encourage good habits by providing your kittens with a cardboard scratching pad. Encourage kittens to use it by dragging toys across or up the post. Never "make" the kitten scratch by holding their paws and doing the scratching motion. Cardboard scratchers should be changed between foster litters (there may be some more permanent options, but you must be able to sanitize them between litters).

Kittens are babies—they are just learning how the world works. Help them become well socialized by exposing them to proper socialization and enrichment.





## Visual and Environmental Enrichment

If your kittens are comfortable in the safe room and you have the ability to kitten-proof other spaces in your home, you can expose them to other rooms as long as those spaces can be disinfected afterward. Use treats and interactive play when allowing kittens to explore new spaces to create a positive association with these novel experiences. Keep the sessions brief and return the kittens to the safe room if they seem overwhelmed. Keeping kittens in a large dog crate or kitten playpen for a short period of time is another way to safely expose them to other situations. Not all kittens will be ready for these adventures, but many will benefit.

To help kittens get used to unusual household items, you can expose them to the following as long as you can sanitize or throw them away after contact or between litters:

- Yoga mats
- Mirrors
- Nightlights
- Christmas ornaments
- Old CDs or DVDs
- YouTube videos of birds, fish, squirrels, etc.

## Food Puzzles

Keep your kittens mentally engaged with some DIY food puzzles! Place their normal kibble in some of the following items:

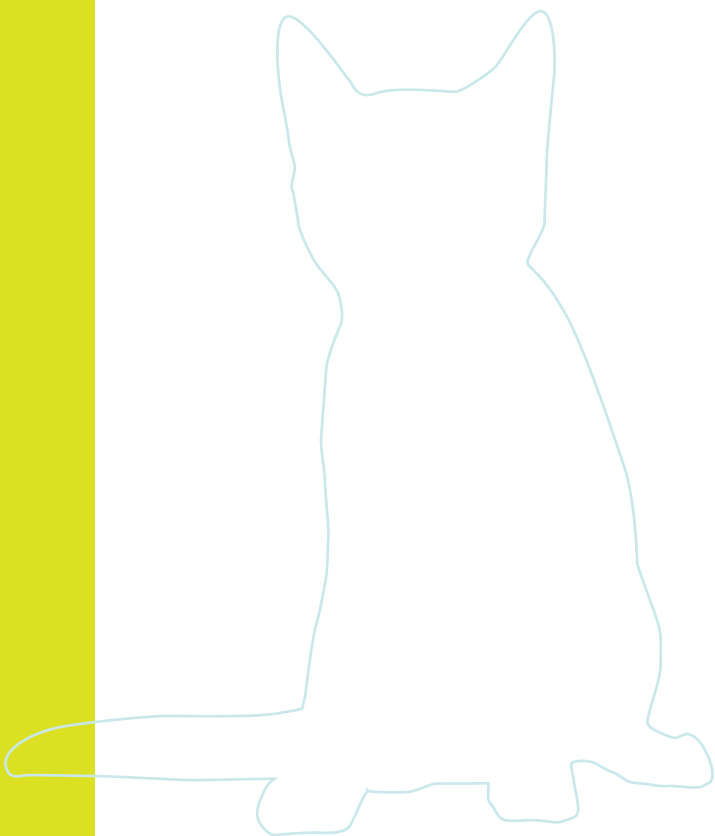
- A paper bag
- An egg carton or ice cube tray
- Toilet paper roll with ends folded in, or several toilet paper rolls in a box

## Scent Enrichment

The following approved scents can be sprayed on a towel, a sanitizable toy, or placed in a paper bag or fabric pouch to help expose your kittens to novel scents:

- A small amount of perfume
- Cinnamon
- Pumpkin spice
- Ginger
- Lavender
- Chamomile tea bag

Never spray any scents directly on any of your foster animals.



## Noises and Auditory Enrichment

It is beneficial to expose kittens to normal household noises as much as possible—the trick is to do it without traumatizing them. For example, start out with the TV or radio at a very low volume; if the kitten is fine with that, increase the sound gradually over a period of days to a normal volume. You can run the vacuum briefly on the other side of the CLOSED door to the kitten space and, once the kitten is acclimated to that noise, you can crack the door open. This process can be repeated with other household appliances.

Auditory enrichment is highly recommended, but please do not play recorded sounds or music for longer than two hours at a time. You can expose your kittens to

- Classical music
- Bird call applications
- Meditation applications
- Audiobooks

Visit [sfspca.box.com/v/ThroughtheCatsEar](https://sfspca.box.com/v/ThroughtheCatsEar) to explore some of the auditory enrichment we use here in the shelter.



Seeing the difference from when the kitten first arrived in our home, to when they are ready to be adopted out, is totally mind-blowing. It's awesome to see the babies' personalities bloom, especially when a kitten starts out super shy and is a social butterfly by the end!

—Miranda Jones



## Why is Socialization Important?

- It helps kittens become confident, friendly, happy adult pets.
- Socialized kittens get adopted more quickly and stay in their homes!
  - Socialization starts the moment kittens arrive.
  - The sooner they get socialized, the sooner they'll get adopted and the more lives we can save!
  - We do the hard part so adopters don't get frustrated and return the kitten.



## What's the Difference Between Social and Undersocialized Kittens?

### Social kittens:

- Can be petted, safely handled and moved.
- Eat, drink, and use the litter box normally in an appropriate environment.
- Are able to play with humans and toys while humans are present.
- Will explore a new environment with minimal stress.

### Undersocialized kittens:

- Avoid being pet.
- May panic or react if picked up.
- Will likely not play if humans are present (at least initially) and may not know what toys are.
- Will hide (and potentially panic) in a new environment.
- May not eat, drink, or use the litter box if they are extremely stressed.



## Car Trips and Carriers

Help your foster kittens acclimate to the cat carrier when they are young. Make the carrier a pleasant place, not something that only comes out when it's time for shots! Remove the door for safety, and keep a blanket in the carrier, adding treats and toys on occasion. You can help acclimate kittens to car rides and travel by making short trips with the kittens in the carrier. These should be separate from their veterinary check-ups and can be as simple as a trip around the block.

## Introduction to Other Foster Kittens

If you need to introduce a new foster kitten into your home, you'll want to do it gradually. You will want to see that both kittens are initiating play and that neither kitten seems intimidated. Kittens that get along are generally distractible with toys if hissing or batting starts to escalate. The kittens should also be able to eat and use the litter box normally around the other kitten.

Occasionally, kittens may have negative reactions to a new kitten. The following are normal reactions that will usually pass within a few days if you leave the kittens together to work it out:

- Small hisses, especially when the kitten gets close
- Batting at the other kitten when it approaches
- Rough play, including some vocalizing

## Grooming and Body Handling

It is important for young kittens to get handled frequently so they become accustomed to it, particularly with more sensitive areas like toes, paws, chest, belly, and the mouth.

- Pick up and hold your kittens several times each day, petting gently to encourage purring and affectionate behavior.
- Pet and hold their paws gently to help prepare them for nail clipping—pair this with a treat to build a positive association.
- Brush your kittens gently, especially medium- or long-haired kittens.

## New People

Controlled interactions with new and varying types of people are good for the kittens. Make sure everyone washes their hands. Ensure that the petting is gentle, and that people use interactive toys for play. Children should always be supervised when interacting with the kittens and should be old enough to understand how to handle kittens gently. If a kitten seems hesitant or fearful, it's best to use safe and positive ways to play, such as using interactive toys.

## Signs of Serious Problems

- Persistent “bullying” by one kitten that always initiates rough play, especially if the less dominant kitten seems scared of the more aggressive kitten and hides or tries to get away.
- The aggressor is difficult to distract with toys.
- There is a significant mismatch in size.
- One kitten keeps the other kittens from using the litter box or eating food.
- One kitten is sicker/weaker and seems unable to keep up with the play.

When in doubt, separate the kittens temporarily by setting up a carrier with a disposable litter box, towel, food, and water and keep one kitten in there. Contact the Foster team for more guidance.

## Working with Undersocialized Kittens

Some of the kittens in need of foster are undersocialized, meaning they were born outside and have had minimal contact with humans. Undersocialized kittens may show fearful behavior such as hissing, swatting, scratching, or biting and some may simply attempt to run away. Most kittens learn to trust people quickly, but some kittens can take longer than others. With lots of positive interactions in their early socialization period, undersocialized kittens can turn out to be wonderful companions.

## Learn to Interpret Body Language

### Fearful body language includes:

- Ears back
- Moving or shrinking away
- Hissing
- Swatting
- Dilated pupils
- Spitting
- Stomping
- Hiding
- Tense or frozen body

### Signs that socialization efforts are working:

- Follows toys with eyes
- Ears forward
- Willing to eat
- Smaller pupils
- Engages with toys
- Seems curious or willing to approach
- Relaxed or loose body language
- Purring
- Kneading
- Leans in for pets or scratches

### Always

- Observe the kitten's behavior before approaching and take note of where the kitten is located and what the body language is suggesting.
- Approach slowly and quietly with relaxed body language and don't stare at the kitten.
- Notice negative reactions and back off as needed.
- Keep your voice low and calm at all times.
- Pique the kitten's curiosity and allow the kitten to make choices.
- Reward interactions with food—food is your friend!
- Keep visits short and always end on a high note.
- Be patient and remember that setbacks happen. Success is incremental and any relaxation, curiosity, resilience, playfulness, or willingness to approach is excellent!

## Undersocialized Kitten Flowchart

Use this chart to help your undersocialized kitten progress. If you haven't seen any progress after three to five days, please let the Foster team know.

### First Days



- Select a small, quiet room so that your kitten can adjust gradually.
- Set up safe hiding spots for the kitten that are easily accessible to you.
- Close off or stuff any areas into which kitten can wedge.
- Set out plenty of solo toys: ping pong balls, wine corks, mouse toys, etc.
- Sit quietly on floor.
- Speak softly to kitten.
- Handfeed wet or baby food—pairing food with hands is always encouraged.
- Use interactive toys to encourage kitten to approach you, but don't force play.
- Don't push interactions with the kitten for the first one to two days.
- Remember that any relaxation is important.

### Days 3–7



- Continue to observe behavior.
- Continue handfeeding wet and baby food.
- Encourage kitten to approach you with toys or food.
- Practice picking up and repeatedly returning kitten to a safe space.
- Create a "burrito kitten" by wrapping it in a towel, holding it close to your body, and petting in short increments.
- Use toys and food to build curiosity.
- Pet the kitten while it is eating if the kitten is comfortable.
- Be aware of its behavior and then pick up the kitten gently but firmly and hold in your lap.
- If you've seen no change in behavior, please contact the Foster team for further advice.

### Days 7+



- Continue to observe behavior.
- Encourage kitten to approach you with food or toys.
- Remember that any relaxation or playfulness is progress.
- Continue to pair food with hands and, if kitten is relaxed, experiment pairing food with novel sounds.
- Continue short petting sessions.
- Establish a routine of play time, feeding time, and handling time.
- Increase handling time gradually.
- Work on touching the kitten's paws and ears.
- Introduce the kitten to new people using toys and food.
- Remember that some kittens will remain a bit shy.
- Congratulate yourself on doing a great job!

# Medical Concerns and Emergencies

## Medical Concerns and Emergencies

**Foster Emergency Line:** 415-740-1646

- To make a medical or vaccine appointment, email [fosterhelp@sfspca.org](mailto:fosterhelp@sfspca.org)
- For non-urgent medical concerns, email us at **[fosterhelp@sfspca.org](mailto:fosterhelp@sfspca.org)**

## Medical Musts

- Please program our emergency phone number into your cell phone and keep it posted somewhere easily accessible, like your refrigerator.
- All medical care must be provided exclusively by our medical team. The SF SPCA cannot be responsible for charges incurred at other veterinary hospitals.
- Do not give kittens any medications unless they were prescribed specifically by the SF SPCA veterinarians. You may be asked to try several different medicines before finding one that works so please be patient. It may take some time, but with care and attention, kittens will usually rebound from illness and be up and about in no time.

I live in a small studio and don't want to have a permanent pet, so getting to have kittens now and then is a great treat. I get to play and cuddle and take care of them for a couple of weeks, then I can return them knowing they'll find a good home. I like cleaning up the kitty litter and toys and having the calmness back. Taking care of kittens is a great way to get my mind off myself for a while and think about something else.

—Grace Sargent



## Vaccine Appointments

All SF SPCA kittens are on a two-week vaccine schedule. Kittens have a seven-day window from the time vaccines are due to receive their vaccines.

- When you pick up foster kittens, the Foster team will let you know when their next vaccine is due. You are responsible for remembering to make the appointments. No one will call to remind you.
- Kittens may need more than one vaccine if you are fostering them for more than two weeks.
- Kittens should be current on their vaccines before they are returned to the shelter for surgery.
- To schedule a vaccine appointment, call the Spay/Neuter front desk at 415-554-3084. Voicemails will be returned promptly.
- Please make sure to have identifying collars on the kittens during appointments.

## When Is It Okay to Monitor a Situation?

- Coughing or sneezing should pose no immediate problems unless accompanied by colored discharge, blood, or symptoms such as lethargy or dehydration.
- If an animal is vomiting or has diarrhea but remains active and is still eating and drinking, it can probably wait until the next day to receive help. If the animal is lethargic and shows no interest in food or water, it is wise to seek emergency help immediately.

Please contact the Foster team to discuss any medical concerns.

My favorite part is coming home in the evening and having 2 or 3 or 4 kitties falling asleep on me.

—Mary Godfrey

## General Criteria for Emergencies

### Emergency situations include:

- Continuous weight loss for more than 24 hours
- Continuous diarrhea
- Continuous vomiting
- Bleeding of any kind—nose, urine, stool
- Any trauma—hit by a car, dropped, limp, stepped on, unconscious
- Difficulty in breathing/blocked airway
- Lethargy
- Dehydration

**In these instances, please call 415-740-1646 to receive advice from the Foster or medical team.**

## Signs of a Sick Kitten

Kittens have fragile immune systems and can easily catch colds or other illnesses that range in nature from mild to life-threatening. The SF SPCA provides treatment for any illnesses that occur.

Healthy kittens have a lot of energy when they are awake. They are playful and rambunctious, their eyes and nose should be generally free of any discharge, and their stools will be firm and well-shaped. Kittens eat a lot, but the amount they drink depends on how much wet food they consume (the more wet food, the less they will drink). Kittens may sneeze occasionally, and may also scratch a little—these are normal kitten behaviors.

It is not always obvious when kittens are sick, but you should take note and alert the Foster team if you see any of the following signs.

### Common Kitten Issues:

-  Diarrhea/loose stools
-  Upper Respiratory Infections (URI)
-  Ringworm
-  Panleukopenia Virus
-  Calicivirus

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## Diarrhea

There are three types of cat stool: normal, soft, and diarrhea.

- Normal stool will be firm and well-shaped.
- If you notice consistent soft stool, you should drop off a fecal sample to the Spay/Neuter front desk.
- Diarrhea is completely liquid—there may be some color to it or it may even appear that the kitten is excreting plain water. Please bring us a sample if your kittens have diarrhea.
- If diarrhea is persistent, make a medical appointment by calling the Spay/Neuter front desk at 415-554-3084 and, if possible, bring a fecal sample with you to your appointment.
- Diarrhea can lead to dehydration and become serious rather quickly, so monitor kittens closely.

## Parasites

### Coccidia

- Most prevalent in kittens, but occasionally found in adult cats.
- Causes diarrhea in kittens, which can cause them to get dehydrated quickly—dehydration is a serious medical issue and can be fatal to underage kittens.
- Diagnosed through a fecal test—if positive, you must make an appointment to bring your kittens in so the doctor can prescribe medications.

### Roundworms and Tapeworms

- Both are common in kittens, despite regular deworming while at the SF SPCA.
- Roundworms look like spaghetti and will come out in vomit or stool.
- Tapeworms are white and segmented, and most often look like dried rice or sesame seeds stuck to the kittens' hindquarters.
- Worms can be easily treated. If you see any, please make a medical appointment.

## Vomiting

- Vomiting is serious if it happens more than once.
- If your kittens are vomiting persistently, please call the Foster Emergency line at 415-740-1646.

## Eye Issues

### Eye Discharge

- It is normal for kittens to wake up with a little dark crust in their eyes.
- If you notice continued yellow or green discharge, make a medical appointment.
- Until the appointment, you can treat the symptoms of the eye infection by wiping the kitten's eyes with a warm, wet towel.

## Upper Respiratory Concerns

### Sneezing/Nasal Discharge/Congestion

- A kitten won't eat when it cannot smell so be sure it is eating.
- Occasional sneezing is common in small kittens and is safe to monitor. If the sneezing becomes frequent, look for a discharge.
- If discharge is clear, it is probably a viral infection and medication may not be needed—continue to monitor the kittens in case the problem gets worse.
- If discharge is green or yellow, it may be a bacterial infection and you should make a medical appointment.
- If a kitten sounds congested or makes a rattling sounds when breathing, please contact the Foster team.
- If a kitten is struggling to breathe or breathing with its mouth open, call the Foster Emergency Line immediately at 415-740-1646.

- Healthy kittens are normally active when they are awake so low energy may be a sign of illness.
- If you notice a drop in a kitten's energy level, it is best to make a medical appointment.
- Some undersocialized kittens may move less because they are frightened.
- If you are not sure whether your kitten is lethargic or just being quiet and still, email the Foster team or call the Emergency Line.
- If a kitten can't be roused or seems weak, **this is an emergency**—call the Foster Emergency Line at 415-740-1646 immediately.

## Lethargy

- Fleas are common in the shelter environment—many kittens in the foster program were born outdoors so they may come to us with fleas.
- Kittens with fleas will scratch a lot.
- Daily brushing with the flea comb and daily bedding changes will reduce and maybe even eliminate the fleas.
- If you see lots of fleas despite these efforts, email the Foster team to decide the next step; you will likely need to make a medical appointment to have us apply a topical flea treatment.
- Lice are species-specific, and you cannot catch or see them.
- If you see white dots on the kittens' fur and can brush the dots off, it is dandruff; if not, it is probably lice.
- Make a medical appointment to have the lice treated.
- A kitten with ear mites will scratch its ears and shake its head, and you will see a dark discharge resembling coffee grounds in its ears—make a medical appointment to get it treated.

## Fleas, Lice, and Ear Mites

- The fur around a kitten's lips, eyelids, and ears is a little thin and is nothing to worry about.
- If you notice hair is thinning or coming out in patches, please make a medical appointment—fur loss is the first indicator of ringworm, which is a fungus that can spread to humans and other household pets.
- While not fatal, ringworm causes itching and is hard to get out of your home—the young, the elderly, and people and animals with suppressed immune systems are most susceptible.
- If kittens are diagnosed with ringworm while you are fostering them, you can return the kittens to the SF SPCA for treatment, which takes six to eight weeks to complete.
- You can also treat the kittens in your home for the duration of their treatment and the Foster team will provide protective gowns, gloves, booties, and heaps of support!

## Ringworm

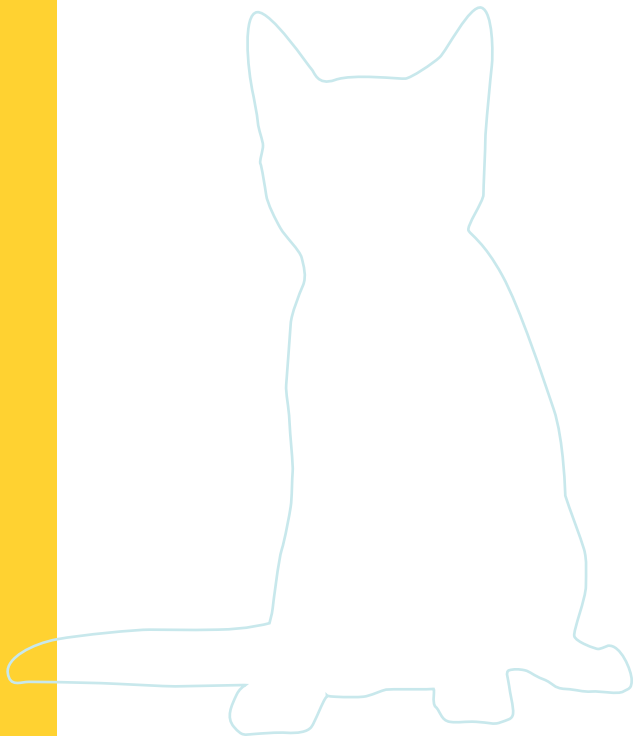




## Dealing with Kitten Death

While rare, not all kittens will survive, even with advanced medical care. We work hard to identify kittens who may be struggling and bring them back into our facility for close monitoring by medical professionals. Unfortunately, an extremely small percentage of kittens crash suddenly or overnight, through no fault of any person. If this happens, call our Emergency Line immediately for further instruction. We will provide you with as much information as we can to help you understand what happened.

We understand that this is a difficult scenario to imagine happening in your home. Most foster parents will never experience this, but we understand that this may affect your decision to foster.



Fostering a mom cat with kittens is a very exciting and rewarding job! You will get to see intimately how a mom cat cares for her kittens, as well as the stages of development in their relationship. This section will address what to expect, what's normal behavior, and how to troubleshoot problem behavior.

## What Type of Setting Does a Mom Cat Need?

- In one word: CALM. Instinct tells mom cats to keep their kittens safe and, in order to feel safe, they need privacy, quiet, and minimal activity.
- Stress can cause cats to become aggressive or not take care of their babies properly.
- Every household that intends to foster a mom cat with kittens should have a separate room away from the hub of daily activity.
- A home with no other pets is ideal but, if you do have pets, you should be able to prevent your pets from going up to the door of the fostering room.
- Mom cat fosters are not recommended if you have a dog unless it is a very mellow and quiet dog.
- If your home environment is loud or active, you may want to consider a different type of foster.

## Home Introduction

- You will need to set up the room for your foster mom and babies before you let any of them out of the carrier. Ideally, you should do this before you get them from the SF SPCA.
- The room should have one or two larger “safe spaces,” which can be nests, boxes on their sides, or an empty litter box lined with towels. Mom will want to choose somewhere to keep her kittens. The SF SPCA may provide you with a vari-kennel which, once you take the door off, can make a nice cubby for mom and babies.
- When you first let mom out, do not pet her or make too many advances. Leave her alone with the kittens to explore their new home. Adult cats can take a while to adjust to new places and mom cats are no exception. They may take a few days to come out of hiding.

### Litter Box

- Keep the litter box as far away from the food and water as possible. Use regular, unscented clay litter, scoop twice a day, and dump litter once weekly.
- Once kittens start using the litter box, be sure to provide low-sided boxes that offer easy entry, and clean them more frequently.



Fostering is a great solution for anyone that loves animals, but isn't ready for their own lifelong pet. You get all the best parts of having a pet, without having the financial aspect or having to commit the next 20 years.

—Caroline Doyle

### Handling and Socialization

- Proceed slowly with any mom cat you do not know. Let her come to you, pet her only as much as she is comfortable with, and stop petting at the first signs of discomfort, including a swishing tail, ears laid back or to the sides, jerking her head jerk towards your hand or the area where you were petting her, tensing up, a cranky overdrawn meow, moving away, hissing, or growling.
- Even a momma cat needs playtime—make sure to have solo toys available and have interactive play sessions. After kittens are two to three weeks old, she may show more interest in play. Please refer to the Playtime section on page 17 for more info on the importance and the how-to's of playtime.



## Mom's Care of Kittens

For their first few weeks of life, mom should do everything necessary for the kittens. After that, you can start sharing some of the kitten care duties with her if she is willing. All cats are slightly different, with some being more attentive than others, but if she fails to care for her babies in any of the important functions below, let us know as soon as possible so moms and kittens can be evaluated by medical staff.

### Nursing

- Kittens begin to nurse one to two hours after birth. Though born with their eyes closed, they can find their mother by her warmth, and she should make this easier by lying near them on her side.
- The nursing/suckling relationship occurs over three stages:
  - In the beginning, mom initiates each nursing episode, waking the kittens by licking them and then encircling them with her body. After a little searching, kittens quickly latch on.
  - The second stage occurs after the second or third week, when the kitten's eyes and ears are functioning and they can interact with the mother both inside and outside the nest. At this stage, the kittens also initiate some of the nursing episodes. The mother generally cooperates by lying down and taking up the nursing position.
  - In the third stage, starting at about five weeks postpartum, the kittens initiate virtually all nursing. The mother becomes gradually more evasive and uncooperative. Near the end of this stage, the mother begins to wean her kittens by becoming less and less available. In wild cats, this is the time when the mom would begin to provide them with fresh killed prey. You can help in the weaning process by encouraging the babies to eat canned and, later, dry food.

We call it the “refundable kitten program” or “kitten leasing”. You get the tiniest cutest kittens, and then when they start to turn into crazy teenage cats you get to give them back and get new tiny kittens.

—Brittany and David Fritsch

### Grooming

- Kittens receive a lot of grooming and licking from their mothers during their first two to four weeks. Grooming stimulates elimination, and the fecal matter and urine are consumed by the mom. This is effective in keeping the nest and babies clean.
- Later, as the young are able to leave the nest area, the licking subsides, and the young deposit feces and urine nearby. At this point, providing low-sided litter boxes will teach them to use the litter box. You generally do not need to intervene at this point, but there will be more cleaning as things certainly get messier!

## When to Separate Kittens and Mom

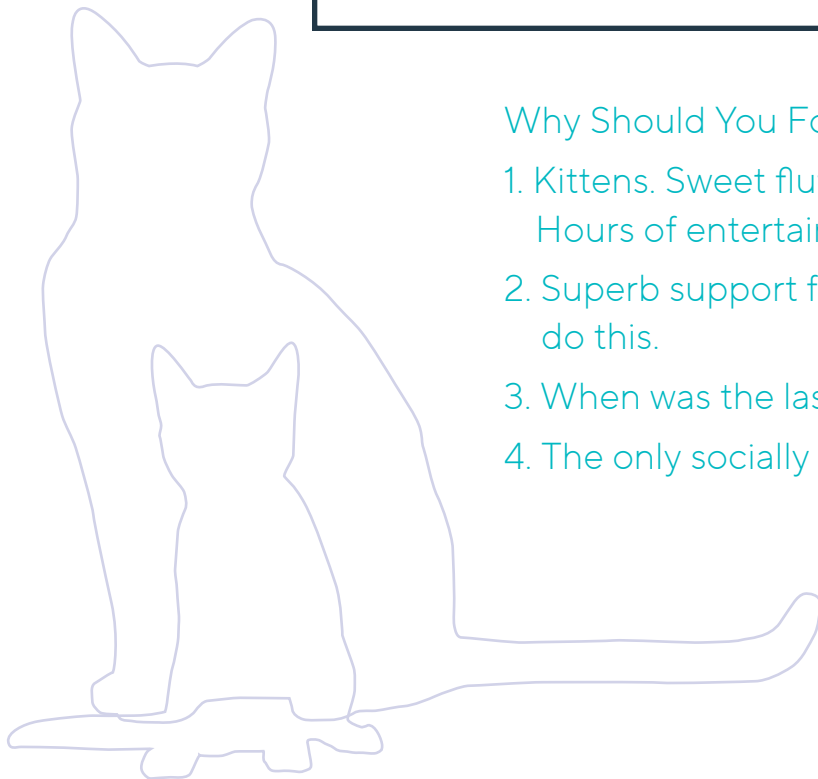
If all members of the feline family are healthy and well socialized, there may be no reason to separate the babies from the mother. There are medical or behavioral reasons that may require separating mom from kittens before seven weeks. If any of the following occur, work closely with Foster to determine how to handle:

- Mom is not taking care of the babies. Warning signs include not nursing, not responding to the kittens' crying, staying away from babies that are under five weeks, and not grooming the babies.
- Mom is undersocialized or has other behavior concerns and will not allow handling. Mom may also prevent kittens from being handled if she has maternal aggression or if the foster parent is scared to approach. We do not want kittens picking up on this behavior pattern (imprinting) so we will separate babies from the mom as soon as medically advisable, usually when the kittens are eating on their own at four to five weeks of age. We also may want to get the mom back to the SF SPCA so she can be spayed to avoid the discomfort of going into heat.
- Mom is taking care of the babies, but there are medical concerns that warrant separation. This is not very common, and the Foster team will alert you to this if it is necessary.

## Why Should You Foster?

1. Kittens. Sweet fluffy kittens learning to purr, play, eat and socialize. Hours of entertainment.
2. Superb support from the foster office. Still can't believe I don't have to pay to do this.
3. When was the last time you saved a life?
4. The only socially acceptable way to be a crazy cat lady/dude.

—Tuula Delaney





## Problem Behaviors in Mom Cats

### Maternal Neglect



About 8% of kittens die from inadequate or improper maternal care. Some cats lack maternal instincts and, in some cases, if kittens have birth defects or are otherwise weak, the mom may ignore them. In many cases, environmental stress plays a role so it is very important to keep the setting quiet, calm, and to limit visits in the two weeks following birth.

- Mom cats should be left alone except to feed, clean, and briefly check in on the babies to make sure they are growing well.
- You will need to watch for signs that a mother is neglecting her young, especially in the first few weeks.
- Call us if:
  - The mother spends all her time away from the kittens.
  - She does not groom or nurse them frequently.
  - The kittens cry and she seems not to respond.
  - The kittens have lost weight for more than 24 hours.

### Maternal Aggression toward Other Animals



Aggressive behavior towards cats or dogs is very common, as mom cats are trying to protect their young. Please do not try to introduce your foster cats to other animals. This can be very stressful and offers no advantages.

- Strictly enforce separation from your resident pets and block mom cats from seeing other animals.
- If, for some reason, the mom cat sees another animal and is upset, quickly remove the source of anxiety (cover up window, etc.) and leave the room. Do not attempt to comfort or reassure the mom cat or babies. Come back in 20 minutes to check on them.

### Maternal Aggression toward People



Occasionally, mother cats have strong protective instincts against humans. They may hiss, growl, or strike out if you approach the kittens. We try to screen for these behaviors, but they sometimes develop later. Contact the Foster team at the first sign of maternal aggression for individual advice and evaluation of your situation. In some cases, we may advise the return of mom and kittens, or just the mom, depending on the age and health of the kittens.

## Foster Care Agreement

By signing below, I, the foster parent, agree that I will foster the animal(s) identified below on the basis set out in this Foster Care Agreement.

<b>SF SPCA Contact Information</b>	201 Alabama Street, San Francisco Email (preferred): Fosterhelp@sfsPCA.org Emergency line: 415.740.1646
<b>Foster relationship</b>	I understand that I am not adopting the animal, and that the foster relationship is solely to provide temporary care for the animal. I understand that SF SPCA maintains legal guardianship of the animal.  I understand that I am a volunteer, not an employee or contractor, and will not be paid for fostering the animal.
<b>Supplies</b>	SF SPCA will provide a carrier, which I will use to transport the animal, and food and medical care for the duration of the foster relationship. I will pick up food at SF SPCA's facility.  I will supply food bowls, water bowls, toys, bedding, and litter (for cats). I will clean and disinfect all supplies and indoor spaces used by any previous foster or animal.
<b>Daily Care</b>	I will be responsible for the daily care and feeding of the animal. I will feed the animal only the food provided or approved by SF SPCA.  I will keep the animal separate from any resident pets and confined to a kitten/puppy-proofed space indoors at all times.
<b>Return</b>	I will return the animal prior to the stated date if requested by SF SPCA, or if circumstances develop where I am unable to give the best possible care.  Upon the end of the foster relationship, I will immediately return the animal and any supplies provided by SF SPCA.
<b>Vaccinations</b>	I will keep the animal current on its vaccinations and bring the animal only to the SF SPCA Medical Department for vaccination.
<b>Health and Behavior</b>	I will notify SF SPCA if the animal has not eaten for more than 24 hours, or if the animal experiences diarrhea for more than 24 hours.  I will notify SF SPCA if the foster cat/kitten is not using the litter box in an appropriate fashion.
<b>Medical Care</b>	I will give the animal medications only as prescribed by the SF SPCA Medical Department.  Should the animal become ill, I will take it to the SF SPCA Mission Hospital during business hours, or to the SF SPCA night emergency hospital after SF SPCA Mission Hospital business hours. I understand that SF SPCA is not responsible for charges incurred at any other veterinary hospital.

### Volunteer Tetanus and Rabies Waivers

SF SPCA encourages all foster volunteers to be current on tetanus vaccinations. SF SPCA also offers volunteers who handle animals a reimbursement of up to \$50 to complete a rabies pre-exposure vaccination series. I am advised to discuss this series with a physician in advance, at my own expense. SF SPCA will reimburse me only if I provide written

## Interested in Volunteering Elsewhere Within the SF SPCA?

If you'd like to expand your volunteer horizons, we have no shortage of opportunities! Read below for a brief summary of each, and visit our Volunteer Opportunities webpage for details.

### **Puppy Fostering**

Foster parents help save the lives of fragile animals at high risk of euthanasia at other shelters. We are looking for people who can commit two to four weeks of fostering to take in underage puppies or nursing moms with puppies that are too young or sick to be spayed or neutered and offered for adoption. Foster parents will monitor the health and well being of the puppies and must be able to keep them in a safe space separate from other pets.

### **Animal Assisted Therapy Volunteer**

Take your trained and certified pet to visit hospitals, nursing homes, schools, and even the airport to bring the therapeutic value of animals to those in need.

### **Community Cares Volunteer**

Help trap feral and free-roaming cats for the trap-neuter-return (TNR) program by assisting with the intake of cats and by providing training and education to the community on TNR.

### **Shelter Volunteer (Dog, Cat, and Smalls Socializing and Training)**

Help make animals' stay less stressful and ready them for a loving home by spending time socializing, training, and, for dogs, making sure they get their daily walks. Advanced volunteer opportunities include adoption matchmaking, animal photography, dog training class assistance, and food preparation and feeding.

### **Shelter Medicine Volunteer**

Our Shelter Medicine Volunteer program offers volunteers the chance to work directly with our Shelter Medicine department—the veterinarians, vet techs, and vet assistants who care for our shelter animals—by helping to administer medical treatments to our dogs and cats. This is a unique volunteer program that includes comprehensive instruction, lots of hands-on work with the animals, and endless opportunities to learn. It is a wonderful fit for those who have an interest in veterinary medicine—professionally or otherwise—and can commit to fairly extensive training and a regular shift each week.

**For more information on these programs or any of our shorter-term volunteer opportunities, visit [sfspca.org/volunteer](https://sfspca.org/volunteer) or email [volunteers@sfspca.org](mailto:volunteers@sfspca.org).**

The SF SPCA is always saying, 'Thank you volunteers for all the work you do!', and it always makes us laugh because fostering doesn't feel like work at all. It's the most enjoyable, rewarding thing we've ever done. We would pay to do this.

—Brittany and David Fritsch



## Procedure for Foster Emergencies

**SF SPCA Foster/Shelter Medicine**  
201 Alabama Street  
San Francisco, CA 94103  
Foster Emergency Phone (415) 740-1646

### When to call Foster or VetTriage:

- Sudden drop in energy that's out of place, lethargic
- Vomiting 3x within 1 hour
- Diarrhea (score 7) combined with vomiting and/or lethargy
- Sudden loss of appetite if combined with any of the above symptoms
- Difficulty breathing
- Seizure
- Trauma of any kind
  - Stepped on
  - Stuck in door
  - Dropped
  - Hit by car
  - Bleeding profusely

### When to take directly to emergency care:

- Not breathing
- Laying on side, not responsive
- Unconscious

### When to monitor and wait for daytime care:

- One instance of vomit
- Diarrhea (score 7) without any other symptoms
- Coughing or sneezing
- Nasal/ocular discharge
- Superficial wound

Contact	Sun - Sat
<b>8 am – 6 pm</b> Please Call	Foster Phone
Emergency Hospital	SF SPCA
<b>6 pm – 8 am</b> Contact	<b>Vet Triage</b>
Emergency Hospital	See Red Box Below

### Vet Triage

Video Call/Contact: [vettriage.com/sfspca](https://vettriage.com/sfspca)  
Use coupon code SFSPCA50

If you call VetTriage or take your foster animal in for emergency care, please text the foster emergency phone or email [fosterhelp@sfspca.org](mailto:fosterhelp@sfspca.org)

### Overnight Emergency Vet Hospitals

*\*Please bring this form with you to the hospital*

**OakVet Animal Specialty Hospital 1133 7<sup>th</sup> St, Oakland, (510) 879-4888**

**SAGE Veterinary Center 600 Alabama St, San Francisco, (415) 566-0540**

**ACES Animal Care & ES 1333 9<sup>th</sup> Ave, San Francisco, (415) 578-5405**

**\*\*Please note that if you do not follow our emergency protocol and/or bring your animal to an unlisted vet hospital, SF SPCA can NOT reimburse you for any expenses incurred\*\***

documentation from a physician that I have completed the series. I understand that my decisions regarding these vaccinations are at my own risk.

## **Insurance**

As I am not an employee, I understand that I am ineligible for state workers' compensation coverage. SF SPCA maintains an alternative medical insurance policy that provides limited coverage for injuries that are sustained while a volunteer is helping SF SPCA. If I am injured during while fostering the animal, I will complete an injury report as soon as possible, whether or not I intend to file a claim. If I intend to file a claim, I must notify SF SPCA in writing within ten days of the injury. If the ten-day requirement is not met, I understand that I may not receive benefits.

## **Understandings about Risks**

I understand that serving as a foster parent and participating in SF SPCA activities may be dangerous or result in damage to my property. I understand that the animal, or other animals with whom I may interact, may be unpredictable and may bite, scratch, or transmit zoonotic diseases. Other risks may arise from the other behaviors of the animal, my own actions or inactions, physical exertion, the actions or inactions of SF SPCA or others present at SF SPCA facilities, traveling to or from SF SPCA facilities, or being present at an SF SPCA facility.

## **Assumption of Risks**

I confirm my understandings of the risks stated above. With that information and awareness, I assume and accept the risks of all injury, illness, disease, death, property damage or loss, financial obligation, loss of privacy, and all other consequences that may result, directly or indirectly, from my service as a foster parent and volunteer, my presence at SF SPCA facilities, or my participation in other SF SPCA activities, regardless of the cause.

## **Waiver; Release of Legal Claims**

In consideration for my participation as a foster parent and in other SF SPCA activities, I waive and release any and all claims against SF SPCA's directors, officers, agents, employees, volunteers, and affiliates (collectively, "Released Parties"), for any liability, loss, damages, claims, expenses, and attorneys' fees, resulting from death, property damage, financial obligation, loss of privacy, and all other consequences that may result, directly or indirectly, from my service as a foster parent and volunteer, my presence at a SF SPCA facility, my participation in SF SPCA activities, or my failure to obtain a tetanus vaccination or complete the rabies pre-vaccination series, regardless of the cause and even if caused by negligence, whether passive or active. I waive the protections of Section 1542 of the California Civil Code, which provides that a general release does not extend to certain claims not known to me at the time I signed this Agreement. I will not sue any of the Released Parties on the basis of these waived and released claims.

## **Publicity**

I consent to the use by SF SPCA of my name, city and state of residence, biographical and personal background, statements, voice, image, and likeness story in any format, including photos, video, audio, print, or electronic (collectively, "Materials"), as SF SPCA may deem appropriate to promote its activities. SF SPCA may make the Materials available on its website, in its publications, or through any other media, including social networking platforms. I understand that I am not entitled to inspect or approve the use of the Materials, receive notice of their use or publication, or receive any payment.

Checking the box at the end of the sentence means I do not agree to the publicity consent: ☐

## **Non-Disparagement**

Subject to applicable law, I will take no action which is intended, or would reasonably be expected, to harm SF SPCA or SF SPCA's reputation, or which would reasonably be expected to lead to unfavorable publicity for SF SPCA.

# Agreement and Waiver

## Termination of Foster Volunteer Status

I understand that SF SPCA may terminate my foster parent and volunteer status at any time, for any or no reason.

## General Provisions

This agreement will cover all my foster parent activities for SF SPCA, whatever their nature or location. This is the final, complete, and exclusive agreement between SF SPCA and me, and supersedes all prior or contemporaneous communications or understandings, either oral or written. This agreement will be binding to the fullest extent permitted by law. If any provision of this agreement is found to be illegal, invalid or unenforceable, the remaining terms will be effective.

\* \* \* \* \*

**I have read this agreement and understand its terms and that I am giving up certain legal rights by signing it. I sign it freely and voluntarily.**

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**Volunteer Name**

**Volunteer Signature**

**Date**

\* \* \* \* \*

SF SPCA is deeply grateful for the vital services contributed by our caring foster volunteers. Thank you for volunteering to serve as a foster parent.