

K.C. CAT CLINIC
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HAND REARING KITTENS

Congratulations on your decision to hand rear your new kitten! Even if the decision was forced a bit by extraneous circumstances, we understand the amount of commitment that is involved in taking on such a job. We want very much for your effort to produce a happy and healthy kitten, so here is some information that may be of some help to you in your new and exciting adventure.

Things you will need:

- 2 oz kitten nurser
- kitten formula or goat's milk
- a stuffed animal
- a hot water bottle or a plastic container of rice

Feeding

The nurser can be purchased at a veterinarian's office or at most pet supply stores, along with the kitten formula. Goat's milk can be found at your nearest supermarket, (cow's milk does not have high enough fat content to properly nourish your kitten). Your kitten must be fed every 2-3 hours day and night until the age of 2 weeks. Allow the kitten to decide when it has had enough to eat, overeating is not a problem when there is so much growing to do! But do be sure that your kitten is vigorously sucking and getting at least 1 - 2 teaspoons per feeding during its first week of life. As they get older, they will eat a greater volume. At 2 - 3 week of age, kittens should be consuming close to an ounce per feeding.

Helping your kitten Go to the bathroom

Before or after your kitten eats you must help it go to the bathroom. At very young age kittens cannot go to the bathroom on their own, they require the stimulation of their momma's grooming in order to urinate and defecate. It is very easy to simulate with an old dampened towel or washcloth. Just take the towel and gently rub the kittens little behind and tummy area right between its back legs. This should stimulate the kitten enough to achieve the desired effect. Kittens easily urinate when their bottom is stimulated. Getting them to defecate takes a little more perseverance. You may need to rub right around the rectum with a stroking manner. Think about what Mama Cat would be doing with her tongue and try to mimic the pattern with your rag. You need to be a little firmer in your actions to stimulate defecation than urination. Kittens that are on the liquid diet do not defecate as much as they urinate, so do not worry if the kitten doesn't have a bowel movement every time.

Housing and heat source

You will want to keep the kitten in a box with some sort of a heat source, especially if you have only 1-2 kittens by themselves as they won't have the mama cat to snuggle against.. This can be a very difficult project, as you need to be very aware of the danger of burning your kitten, so ***use extra caution*** when setting up the heat source. A hot water bottle wrapped in several towels works very well, but must be re-heated every couple of hours. You can heat a plastic container that is filled with uncooked rice in the microwave and wrapped in several towels. We suggest using a container that holds 2 cups, and heat on high power between 2-4 minutes depending on the wattage of your microwave. This will need to be re-heated every 3-5 hours. Make sure that the container is well padded when you put it in the box. It will get very hot. These heat sources are meant to radiate heat to keep the ambient temperature in the box warm, not to heat from the bottom. Do not use heating pads. If an animal sits on the heat source, it greatly increases the likelihood of a burn.

*****Check the heat source on a regular basis to avoid burns!!*****

A stuffed animal may be placed in the box for your kitten to snuggle up to, but do not use your favorite one as it may not be returned to you in the same condition that it was given.

Cleaning

Kittens inevitably become dirty. Cleaning your kitten is an important part of your daily kitten routine. The best way to clean your kitten is to use a dampened towel and mimic the licking movements that a mom kitty would use. Gently go over the whole kitten--eyes, ears, legs, paws, etc. to make sure that it gets a good dose of motherly love. If, however, your kitten's bottom becomes soiled with stool, you may need to rinse the bottom area with a gentle stream of water and a little mild non-medicated pet shampoo.

Weaning

Around 2-3 weeks of age, you can lengthen the time between feedings and should be able to discontinue night feedings altogether. At 3-4 weeks of age, you may start to feed your little bundle/s of joy canned kitten food. We suggest you start this project in the bathtub, as the little cuties don't have any idea what the food is and will probably walk through it several times before licking their paws and realizing that the stuff is pretty darn good! You may also try mounding a tablespoon or so of food on a dish, putting some food on your finger to get your kitten started and then slowly move your finger down until your kitten is eating off the dish.

Litter training

Around 3-4 weeks of age you can introduce your kitten to the litter box. They will lose the response to void when stimulated around that time. Use a low edged box, maybe a lid from a box of copy paper, and fill with regular clay litter. Do not start your kitten with the clumping type of litter, as kittens tend to eat the litter for a couple of days and we don't want them to develop a problem from a huge solid ball of clumping kitty litter in their tummy! Litter training will probably work best if your kitten is confined to a small area, such as a bathroom. If your kitten has the run of the house at this time it may know where the box is, yet find something interesting to play with on the way there, and not quite have enough time left to actually make it to the box when it remembers nature's call. So to avoid accidents a smaller area will help. If

your kitten does have an accident, if it's the kind you can pick up, go ahead and put it in the litter box so there is a smell to stimulate using the right area to deliver nature's call.

We hope this information will help you along the path of raising a happy and healthy pet that will bring you years of love and companionship! Good luck!