

TEXAS LITTER CONTROL NEONATAL NURSERY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES FOR BOTTLE FEEDERS



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WELCOME TO THE TEAM!

Congratulations! You have joined the Texas Litter Control life-saving team! You have one of the most critical positions with our team. Orphaned neonatal kittens must eat every 2 to 3 hours. If a team member does not show up for a shift, kittens do not eat. The policies are very structured and must be followed to the letter in order to save the most lives. The nursery staff is the creme de la crème of the TLC team. It is hard work, but well worth it! We hope you enjoy the endeavor and find it rewarding.

ABOUT TEXAS LITTER CONTROL

TLC Mission

Texas Litter Control is a high quality, low cost spay/neuter/wellness clinic, adoption center, pet food bank, and shelter support program for companion animals and their owners. Our mission is to eliminate the suffering of companion pets by preventing animals entering into shelters in Harris, Montgomery and surrounding counties in Texas by:

- a. educating the public on the importance of spaying/neutering and proper pet healthcare;
- b. providing a low cost solution available to the general public for spay and neuter and basic wellness services;
- c. providing adoption options for fully vetted pets to the public;
- d. providing alternative solutions such as healthcare, food and other basic needs to pet owners considering surrendering a pet to a local shelter, and
- e. mentoring other animal welfare groups to open clinics in other under serviced areas.

Accomplishments

High Volume Spay/Neuter

Texas Litter formed in September of 2012. The doors to the spay/neuter clinic opened on February 5, 2013 with no help from grant or government funding. TLC was 100% funded by charitable contributions from the public. We performed our 25,000th sterilization surgery in August of 2016. The clinic achieved a 10,000 per year surgery capacity as of 2016. Since the high volume spay/neuter clinic opened, the Montgomery County Animal Shelter has experienced a drop in the shelters intake by 600 animals per month for 2016!

Adoptions

TLC established our adoption program in March of 2014. We believe in getting the cats out of the shelters and into homes as quickly as possible. We maintain low adoption fees and stress the fact that we will always take our cats back if they should ever need to be returned. Our second adoption center opened in January of 2015, our third in August of 2016, and we added 4 additional centers in January of 2017! As of December of 2016 we have performed over 1,100 adoptions!

Community Cats

This program targets healthy outdoor cats to prevent them from being euthanized at our local shelter. The cats may or may not be friendly. In May of 2016 TLC rallied to get the Montgomery County Animal Control ordinance changed to protect ear-tipped cats and establish a Community Cat Program for the county.

The concept is very simple. When a cat is brought into the shelter, it is evaluated. If the cat is healthy and has been living as an outdoor cat, the shelter staff will take down all of the information where the cat came from. Rather than the cat entering into the shelter, it is diverted to the TLC spay/neuter clinic to be fixed and then it is returned to where it was found. This program frees up much needed cage space for owner turn ins and cats not fit for outdoors.

Library Programs

Texas Litter Control participates in several “Library Programs.” These programs will be expanding as we add volunteer transport resources. We take dogs from other organizations and take them to our adoption centers. We do adoptions on their behalf. Any of these animals who are not adopted are returned to the other organization at the end of the day. These organizations are other rescue groups and shelters. We also sometimes send our cats to their adoption events. This doubles the capacity for getting animals out of the shelter.

Programs

Low Cost Spay/Neuter

Texas Litter Control’s primary purpose is to provide low cost spay/neuter and wellness services to the general public. Anyone can use our clinic. Wellness services are basic vet exams, heartworm testing, vaccinations, and selling flea and heartworm prevention. The physical clinic is located in the Woodlands at 24950 Spring Ridge Drive, Bldg B, Spring 77386. It is open Monday through Saturday. Pricing, services and hours of operation can be found on our website: TexasLitterControl.org.

Help Me Keep My Pet

HelpMeKeepMyPet.com is a website we maintain to help people who are thinking of surrendering their pet to a shelter. We do not take pets. Instead, we try and provide solutions for a problem the pet owner is experiencing. The website is on the back of all of the Animal Control trucks in Montgomery County. We have a food pantry, we provide basic Veterinary services, and we provide alternatives for rehoming an animal.

Voucher Programs

TLC applies for grants for free surgeries for targeted demographics. We look at what areas and types of animals are effecting the shelters intake numbers the most. All of our programs are updated on the Need Help tab of our website and are announced regularly via our email distribution and Facebook. If someone is looking for free services, tell them to subscribe to our email list on our website for updates. TexasLitterControl.org

Community Cats and Trap Neuter Return

Any member of the community can participate in Community Cats and TNR. If an individual is feeding a stray cat, we have a reduced rate for spay/neuter surgery. The cats must come in a live humane trap and we must be allowed to ear tip them. The ear tip is the universal indicator that a cat has been spayed/neutered and vaccinated for rabies. For \$50, TLC will spay/neuter and vaccinate the cat. TLC has loaner traps if the person needs one.

TLC KITTEN NURSERY MISSION

The mission of the Texas Litter Control Kitten Nursery is to meet the needs of the community by providing support to the Montgomery County Animal Shelter in caring for orphaned neonatal kittens in order to achieve the highest possible survival rate so these cats can be adopted into permanent homes.

NEONATAL STAFF RESPONSIBILITIES

Nursery Staff Responsibilities

The Neonatal Program includes the nursery where kittens reside until they transfer to foster homes, as well as the Foster Team. Along with Neonatal Program Manager coordinates training for all volunteer feeders and all other positions.

Scheduling

Volunteers and paid staff must follow the assigned schedule. If a staff member works in excess of 15 minutes past their scheduled shift, the Nursery Management must be notified immediately. Due to the critical nature of the Bottle Feeder positions, excessive tardiness and/or absences in the nursery are grounds for immediate termination for both employees and volunteers.

Schedules will be posted weekly in the ASM Rota.

Physical Security

Restricted Areas of the TLC Clinic

Kitten nursery staff are restricted to the Kitten Nursery, Lab Area, and Bathroom. Bottle feeders should not wander the clinic. The clinic is a full surgical center and federal law prohibits certain security policies remain in place. Cameras are operating 24/7 and anyone found in a restricted area will be terminated as a volunteer or employee immediately. The only time you are allowed in the back surgical suite is to leave the building at 3am.

Do not use the Director's desk in the office adjacent to the Nursery. Do not remove office supplies or leave anything on the desk.

Locking Doors

The back door should remain locked at all times.

The bottom lock on the front door should remain locked after regular business hours. This lock can be released with one push of the lever. The top lock must remain unlocked at all times anyone is in the building. If there is a problem with the locks, you need to contact Nursery Management immediately. We do not want anyone getting hurt in a robbery.

NEONATAL PROGRAM TRAINING GUIDELINES

Overview

Properly caring for our neonates is an immense task. For our feeders to keep up with demand, the training we provide is an essential first step, and we have to make the best use of the limited time we have to devote to this. With your guidance and direction, our new feeders will learn the skills necessary to move into this role comfortably and effectively. This guide will ensure new feeders are consistently and thoroughly trained and will provide a meaningful experience for both the trainee and the nursery.

Before setting foot in the nursery as a feeder, trainees are invested in our team. Likewise, before trainees have contributed anything to us, we have invested a considerable amount of time and effort into qualifying and teaching them. The trainer must show the trainee where everything is and carefully explain how to do each part of each task associated with feeding the kittens, all while keeping the nursery operational and observing the trainee's performance. Your excellent skills in caring for our kittens are the reason you have been invited to the training team.

Please use the following guidelines consistently with each shadow to ensure all training is uniform and comprehensive. Contact the Nursery Manager any time you have questions about the training process.

Be mindful of the example you set, both with your shadows and in front of our other feeders. You set the standard for the trainees and for your fellow volunteers.

The Training Process – for the Trainee

We have a carefully developed and regimented training process. We have more trainees than we do trainers or time to train, and we need to keep the nursery on track while we are training, so **our process does not allow for any deviation**. Please keep in mind that both the process and the job itself may intimidate some trainees-it can be a delicate balancing act.

Attend 2 Hour NeoNatal Program Class on Policies and Procedures

Classes start on time. If a trainee is more than 15 minutes late, they will not be allowed in class. There will be no exceptions.

Trainees must complete training and begin the weekly schedule and must be able to start immediately.

Shadowing

A trainer will shadow you for 2 shifts before you will be left alone. You can request a 3rd shift if you need to but most pick up the training in 2 shifts.

GENERAL SANITATION PROTOCOLS

Overview

Due to the fragile nature of our kittens, the Neonatal Program has many sanitation protocols in place to protect their health and to prevent and contain contagion. These protocols also help keep our feeders from transmitting contagion from the nursery to their personal pets, though feeders are advised to have their pets vaccinated as the possibility of transmission always exists. The Neonatal Ward operates under the supervision of the TLC clinic staff. **All protocols are strictly enforced.**

When You Arrive at the Nursery

Check with the people feeding and find out what supplies they are short on. Retrieve the appropriate supplies and begin your shift.

Feeder Cleaning

- Wash your hands at the beginning of each shift and between each litter of kittens.
- Using hand sanitizer is allowed, but it is not part of nursery sanitation protocol due to its very limited effectiveness. **Hand sanitizer may be used but never in place of washing hands.**
- If you come into direct contact with feces, urine, or vomit, wash your hands thoroughly. Scrub under your fingernails with the provided brushes and disinfectant.
- Be careful when handling kittens and anything in their crates that may be contaminated and then handling clean supplies and food.
- A smock is provided for each litter. Change smocks between litters. One smock can be used with the same litter until it is soiled. When a smock is soiled, shake any solid matter into the trash and place it in the laundry hamper.
- If kittens have ringworm, be extra diligent about touching things. Wash your hands more frequently.
- When feeding kittens, always cover your lap with a towel or a clean puppy pad. As with smocks, towels can be used with the same litter until soiled. When a towel is soiled, shake any solid matter into the trash and place it in the laundry hamper.

Work Surfaces and Feeding Supply Cleaning

- Odoban cleanser is the only approved cleanser for the nursery, as it will cling to and remove organic matter that other cleansers will not.
- Clean work surfaces with Odoban when soiled, and then wipe down with ParvoClear Disinfectant or diluted bleach. Odoban cleans but it does not disinfect.
- Surfaces can be cleaned with Clorox wipes or with other cleaning wipes. **These are not to be used in place of disinfectant.**
- Bleach that is diluted at a 1:10 ratio, bleach to water, can be used in place of ParvoClear, but it does tend to cause respiratory problems in the kittens.
- Diluted bleach must always be used when working with ringworm.
- All surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected between litters. This includes but is not limited to: scales, pens and markers, snuggle discs, work surfaces, tablets and chairs.
- DO NOT spray the tablets with anything. To clean the tablets, spray the ParvoClear on a paper towel and gently wipe the tablet.

- Once a utensil has touched the food of one litter, it should not be used to mix food for another litter. If it does, that food cannot then be shared amongst other litters. Clearly label the food for that litter and put it back in the refrigerator.
- Once a spoon or other dish has been used for one litter's food, do not use it for another litter- wipe off any solid matter in the trash, place it in the dishpan to soak, and wash before using it again.

Carrier, Cage, and Collapsible Crate Cleaning

- Empty crates are not permitted in the nursery. They need to be cleaned in the lobby.
- Clean thoroughly with Odoban cleanser.
- Spray completely with diluted bleach; let soak for 10-15 minutes, then wipe clean.
- Spray with disinfectant, wipe clean, and put away in the cat adoption room on top of the stainless steel kennels.
- Empty carriers and cages should not be left out in the nursery or in the Director's office; always sanitize and put them away to prevent the possible spread of contagion.

Nursery Area Cleaning

- Clean thoroughly with Odoban cleanser.
- Spray completely with diluted bleach; let soak for 10-15 minutes, then wipe clean.
- Spray with disinfectant, wipe clean, and put away in storage room.
- Empty carriers and cages should not be left out in the nursery; always sanitize and put them away to prevent the possible spread of contagion.

When You Are Finishing Your Shift

Dishwashing and laundry should be done at the end of your shift to avoid as much contamination as possible in the Nursery.

GENERAL DISWASHING AND LAUNDRY PROTOCOLS

Equipment Overview

The nursery does several loads of dishes and laundry every day, which is far more than these appliances were built to do. These appliances were a gift to our team, and it is up to us to take care of them and use them correctly. The Nursery team does not have a budget for repairing or replacing appliances, so please be diligent about proper usage.





Dishwashing

- There is a dish bin for sanitizing dirty dishes before washing them.
- Each dish bin will be filled with bleach diluted at a ratio of 1:32, bleach to water.
- Pour any remaining KMR out of bottles and rinse before placing them in the dish bin.
- Wipe off any gruel from dishes into the trash before placing them in the dish bin.
- Hand-wash all nipples and bottle caps - do not

put them in the dishwasher.

- Do not wash any type of solid matter, no matter how small it is, down the sink.
- Put away clean, dry dishes neatly where they belong so that other feeders can find them easily and quickly.

Laundry

- Shake out all laundry into the trash before putting it into the hamper. No solid matter should be left on laundry in the hamper, as it can attract flies and spread contagion, and can also clog the washing machine filter.
- Before taking dirty laundry to the washer, check to see if the washer is available. If it is in use, do another chore.
- Shake laundry a second time over the trash before putting it into the washer.
- Put dirty laundry in a laundry bag and take it to the washer. Load the washer to capacity before starting. Items should be placed loosely in the washer and not packed in tightly. Put the laundry bag in the washer with the laundry to be washed.
- Never leave dirty laundry sitting out in the washer area.
- Put soft toys in the washer; put hard toys in the dishwasher. Hard toys can get caught in the washer and cause damage.
- Use one cup of bleach with every load of laundry.
- If rice socks are found in the laundry, throw them away-we do not reuse them.
- Always wash your hands before handling clean laundry, wet or dry.
- Always clean the lint filter in the dryer before starting.
- Fold laundry and properly store it where it belongs so others can find it easily.



MANAGING BODY TEMPERATURE OF KITTENS

Keeping Kittens Warm

A kitten's body temperature ranges from about 102° – 104°F. Kittens under three weeks of age cannot regulate their own body temperatures – they have littermates and a mother to help them. It is crucial to keep the kittens' crates warm, dry, and draft-free. If a kitten feels cool or cold, warm it immediately; never try to warm a kitten with your own body heat, as your body temperature is lower than that of a kitten and the kitten's body temperature could continue to fall. If its body temper falls too low, a kitten can fade and may not survive.



- Place heated snuggle disc in a snuggle cover, or cover it with a single layer of towel or blanket in the kitten's crate. Do not place the warm disc directly on the metal crate – the metal will quickly draw the heat out of the disc.
- Snuggle discs are heated for 4 minutes in the microwave, based on microwave wattage, and will stay warm for hours. Heat them only when they are cool, as too much heating can deteriorate them.
- If a Snuggle disc is not available, use a heating pad on a low setting. Be certain it is not a type of thermostat that automatically shuts off, or the kittens will lose their heat source.
- Be sure the crate is not in a draft and that air vents or fans are not blowing on the kittens. Cover the front of the crate with a cloth if necessary.
- There should be a small space in the crate where the kittens can go if they get too hot; the back of the crate is probably best. Take care, however, that the kittens cannot get too far away and that nothing obstructs their path to the heat.
- Check the bedding at each feeding to be sure it is dry; change if it is wet. Damp bedding can chill the kittens despite the heat source in the crate.
- If kittens are soiled, clean them gently, taking care to dry them with a towel thoroughly before returning them to their crate.
- If a kitten feels cold, determine if it is fading. If so, immediately begin the fading kitten protocol.
- If a kitten feels cold but is determined not to be fading, warm it immediately by wrapping the kitten in a towel, and then place the towel in a bin with a heating pad set on low.
- Never place a kitten directly on an uncovered snuggle disc or heating pad.
- If a kitten becomes chilled during feeding, warm it before continuing. Kittens might stop eating if they are cold.
- Food should be warm so that the kitten does not become chilled.

Your body heat is lower than the kitten's, so never try to warm a kitten with your own body heat-it will not work, and the kitten's body temperature will plummet.

Alternative Heat Sources

Rice Socks

A sock filled with rice that is warmed in the microwave can be used to keep babies warm, but it will only stay warm for up to an hour. Rice socks can easily get overheated and must be checked carefully before they are placed in a carrier so they do not burn the kittens.

- *This is not an approved means of keeping kittens warm in the nursery; this heat source is used only during transport or other temporary situations.*
- Once a rice sock is used, throw it away, as it cannot be effectively sanitized.
- Rice socks are kept in the nursery so that fosterers will have something to take with them when they pick up kittens.

Heating Pads

- There are heating pads in the nursery to be used for fading kittens, when a snuggle disc is not available, or when an additional heat source is needed.
- Heating pads are not preferred for use in the bins. If a heating pad is being used in a bin, make sure it is not one with an automatic shut-off thermostat; these heating pads will turn off and the kittens can suffer a serious loss of body temperature, which can lead to fading.
- After using a heating pad, always sanitize it and return it to its proper place after use – *do not leave used, un-sanitized heating pads out in the nursery.*

Note: Snuggle discs and heating pads are the property of the nursery and should never be taken out of the nursery by volunteers, staff, or fosters. If someone comes to the nursery and asks to borrow one, politely refuse and refer the person to nursery management.

If someone needs to keep kittens warm during transport, they can take a rice sock (which does not need to be returned to the nursery) if there is one available. Once they get home, fosters must provide their own heat sources for the kittens in their care.

FEEDING NEONATAL KITTENS

Overview

Orphan kittens need to be bottle fed until they are ready to be weaned and can eat on their own. It is imperative that all kittens are consuming enough food at each feeding to ensure proper nutrition, hydration, and weight gain. Ideally, kittens are fed every 2-3 hours; they can make it about four hours overnight as long as they have been eating regularly throughout the day and have been gaining weight steadily. The only milk that is approved for use through the TLC nursery is Kitten Milk Replacement (KMR) by PetAg. We use a powder KMR mix that we make as needed. Open containers of KMR should be kept in the refrigerator before and after mixing.



Cow's milk and other types of milk replacements are not nutritious enough for our kittens and their use can lead to slow starvation or other detriment to the kittens. They also cause diarrhea, which is extremely dangerous for young kittens. Once a certain type of milk has been started for a group of kittens, it must be continued until they are weaned. Changing formula brands can cause major GI illness.

Identifying Who to Feed and When

Identify the litter that needs to be fed. Update the Feeder Board with the time you start to feed, not after feeding, making sure you use the correct color pen for that day.

- Bottle babies are fed every 2-3 hours, and gruel kittens are fed every 4-5 hours. Prioritize feeding according to the times litters were last fed. Never skip gruel kittens in favor of bottle babies.
- The 6am feeders will always start with bottle babies, feeding the smallest and most critical first and then moving to the oldest and independent eaters.
- Look at what the kittens are eating. Look at the time and add the recommended feeding times to the time. SO, if it is 11am and you have a bottle baby fed at 8am and gruel babies fed at 3am, you will feed the gruel babies first.

Bottle Babies: 8am + 3 hours = 11:00am

Gruel Babies: 3am + 5 hours = 8:00am – **These are way overdue!**

The Feeder Board

- The Feeder Board shows you the litter number, the bin the kittens are located, the times fed, what they eat and notes. There are 4 spaces for feeding times. Add the feeding times to the end. When all of the squares are full, erase the first square. Record the last feeding time in the first square, then erase the other 3 squares.
- The Feeder Board should always be logged with the time you BEGIN feeding.
- The Feeder Board is color coded by day of the week so we don't get confused with yesterday vs today.

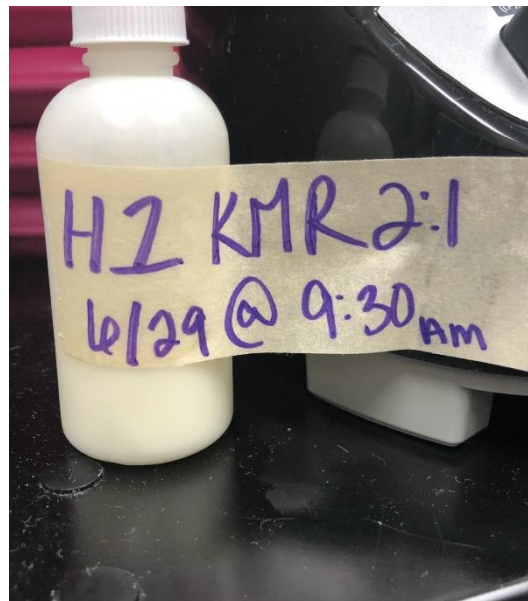
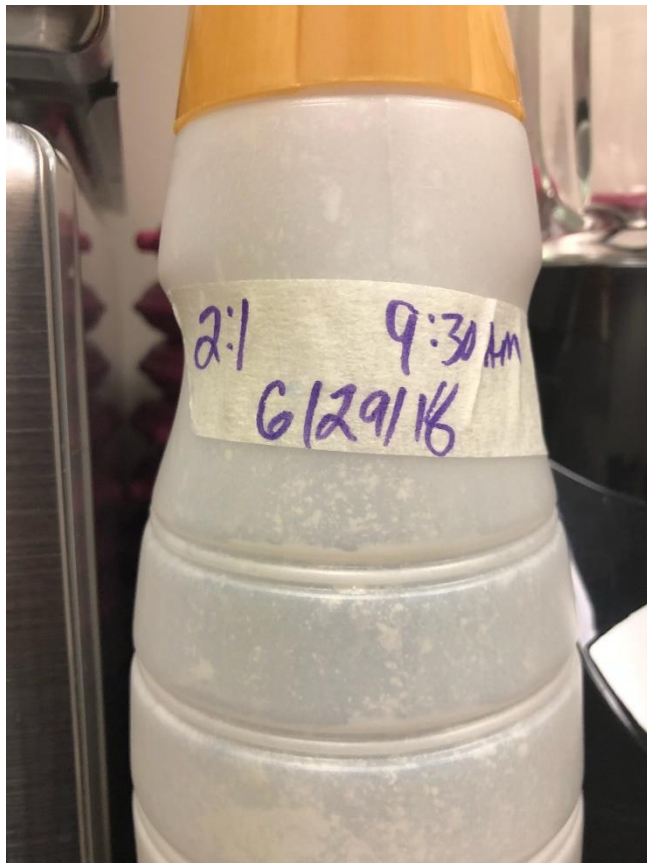
Mixing KMR

- KMR is mixed in graduating ratios of water to KMR to ease the kitten's transition from its mother to bottle-feeding. This is done to prevent diarrhea, which commonly occurs whenever there is a change to a kitten's diet.
 - The first day of feeding are at a ratio of 8:1, water to KMR.
 - The second day of feeding are at a ratio of 4:1, water to KMR.
 - Remaining feedings are at a ratio of 2:1, water to KMR.
- KMR clumps badly and clumps can clog a bottle's nipple and prevent the kitten from getting its food. Mix the KMR thoroughly with warm water; strain if necessary. If you strain the KMR, be sure to break up the clumps and stir the powder back into the KMR mixture so the nutritional value is not depleted.



- After mixing, store KMR in a covered container in the refrigerator. Label the container with the ratio of water to KMR and the date and time it was mixed. Try not to mix more KMR than can be used in a day's time; it will spoil and should be thrown out after 48 hours.
- Do not leave mixed KMR out while feeding, as bacteria can grow quickly. Put it back in the refrigerator after you have filled the bottles.
- Use only clean, sanitized bottles and nipples. Label all bottles with the litter number, the ratio of KMR, and the date and time the KMR was made, NOT the date and time you are filling the bottle.
- Do not refill a bottle with KMR that was mixed on a different day/time. If there are not clean bottles, thoroughly rinse the bottle and nipple before re-using it for the same litter. Remember to put a new label on the bottle-do not write on an old one.

Proper Labeling of KMR



Bottle Feeding Techniques

Kitten positioning for feeding is very important; this is where the crucial surrogate-mom bonding happens. Different people have different "styles" of bottle-feeding. Kittens are most comfortable in a position similar to the position they would be in if they were nursing from their mother. One option is simply to place the kitten on its stomach on a towel or cloth that it can cling to. Always use a lap pad or towel



for the kitten to lie on while feeding – the kitten should never come into contact with the surface of the table or the skin or clothing of the feeder.

- Open the kitten’s mouth gently with the tip of your finger and slip the nipple in. Once your kitten gets the hang of it, it will search out the nipple.
- To keep air from getting into the kitten’s stomach, hold the bottle at a 45 degree angle and keep a light pull on the bottle.
- The kitten should be allowed to suckle at its own pace.
- If a kitten refuses to take the nipple or won’t suckle, try rubbing its forehead or stroking its back; this replicates a mother cat’s cleaning and can effectively stimulate the kitten to nurse.
- Use the correct nipple. The long, thin nipples are for young kittens up to 6-7 days old; the short round nipples are for kittens over 6 days old. As a general rule, if the kitten’s eyes are still closed, it can use the long nipple; if the kitten’s eyes are open, it should use the short.
- If the milk comes out of a kitten’s nose, it is aspirating. Kittens are pretty good at clearing milk from their lungs on their own. Set the kitten down and allow it to begin breathing normally, which should take a few seconds. **Note any aspirating incidents on the Log under “Fed” in the comments and alert the Nursery Manager so it can be placed on antibiotics immediately.**
- When a kitten has had enough formula, it will usually unlatch from the nipple on its own and its tummy will be very rounded, almost pear shaped.

When you are ready to feed your kitten, remember: **SANITIZE – WEIGH – FEED – WEIGH – STIMULATE - SANITIZE**

Bottle Feeding Kittens and Care

- Feed only one litter at a time.
- Use tablet to access Shelter Manager to enter weight.
- There should be a bottle in the refrigerator for the litter you are about to feed. If not, fill one with the correct ratio of mixed KMR, making sure to label it correctly.
- Fill the bottle about 1/2-1/3 full. Label the bottle with the litter number, the ratio of water to KMR, and the date and time the KMR was made – NOT the date/time you are filling it.
- Return the KMR to the refrigerator. It should never be left out, as bacteria can grow.
- With the cap and nipple off, heat the bottle in the microwave. Start at around 10 seconds and then check the temperature on the underside of your wrist. If it is too hot, you can add cold KMR. If it isn’t hot enough, heat until it is. Attach the nipple.
- Make sure you have a sanitized scale. See General Sanitation Protocols Section of this manual.
- Wash your hands between litters.
- If there is a smock in the litter’s bin, wear that; if not, get a clean one to wear while feeding. Use a towel or clean puppy pad while feeding kittens – they should not come into contact with the table surface or the feeder’s skin or clothing.
- Weigh the kitten and input the weight into the ASM Log. Do not “remember” the weight to record after feeding – it is too easy to forget the correct weight.
- Wrap bottle babies in a towel or blanket to create a “burrito.” This helps to control the kitten’s movements and also helps to keep the kitten warm while feeding.
- Offer the nipple to the kitten. Once it latches on, let it eat as much as it wants.

- Weigh the kitten. The kitten must consume a minimum of 5g per 100g of its body weight. Once the kittens is fed, record its weight and update the ASM Log.
- If the kitten is sated and has consumed an adequate amount of food, stop feeding. Overfeeding can lead to vomiting, diarrhea, and other problems.
- If the kitten did not eat enough on its own, supplement with syringe feeding.
- Stimulate the kitten. See page 19 for instructions.
- Return the bottle baby to its crate, making sure its face and body are clean.
- Refill the bottle for the next feeder and return it to the refrigerator.
- When a bottle needs to be washed, empty any remaining KMR into the sink and rinse the bottle and nipple. Remove the nipple from the cap and soak the bottle, nipple, and cap in bleach water.
- Remove all tape from the bottle (it can come off in the dishwasher and cause clogs).
- When hand-washing, use a small brush to clean the bottle and nipple.

Some kittens will not take easily to bottle-feeding. When they are with their mother and littermates, kittens rely on scent and instinct to guide them to proper feeding. Always try to let the kitten eat on its own from a bottle first; if a kitten is not eating a sufficient amount on its own, or is not eating at all, then it must be supplemented with syringe feeding.

Syringe Feeding and Care

- Weigh the kitten so that you know how much it needs to consume.
- Fill a clean 1cc syringe with warmed KMR.
- Push a few drops into the kitten's mouth. Wait for the kitten to swallow, and then repeat this until the kitten has consumed a sufficient amount.
- Kittens should consume a minimum of 5g per 100g of body weight. Consult posted charts for help with calculations.
- Be sure to gently clean any KMR off the kitten's fur and face. Dried KMR can cause sores and hair loss.



It can seem like you are giving a kitten a lot of KMR, but the kitten may not be swallowing much of what you are feeding it. Be patient – syringe feeding can take a while. The only accurate way to determine if a kitten is eating enough is to weigh the kitten, then feed it, then weigh it. Always weigh, feed, weigh.

Proper Bin Set Up for Bottle Babies



Stimulation for Urination and Defecation

By nature, mother cats lick the “back end” of their babies to stimulate the bowels and bladder on a regular basis.

- After each feeding, gently rub the kitten’s genitalia and rectum with a baby wipe or a cotton pad dampened with warm water, using a front-to-back motion and very gentle pressure. You are trying to imitate the mother’s licking.
- Once the kitten has finished eliminating, stop rubbing. Overstimulation will irritate the area – watch for chafing.
- Kittens will almost always urinate during stimulation. They should defecate about once every 1-2 days.
- Make note of diarrhea if the kitten is not already being treated for it.
- Record the kitten’s elimination on the ASM Log. Please note anything abnormal.



Look at the kitten's urine and feces and make sure they look normal. Note any abnormalities on the kitten's chart and on the Feeder Board.

Possible abnormalities include:

- Blood in the urine or feces
- Dark yellow or brownish yellow
- If the kitten has not defecated for 2-3 days and its belly is bloated

Once kittens begin transitioning to solid food and independent eating, they no longer require stimulating.

Suckling

It is natural for kittens to suckle on each other or on your fingers, even after they are finished eating. This is harmless unless you notice that this activity is causing irritation to other kittens' fur or skin. It is a good idea to check each kitten's genitals to ensure that the suckling activity is not causing problems such as redness, irritation, sores, swelling, penis hanging out, etc. If any issues occur, contact Nursery Management right away. Excessive suckling can cause scar tissue to form over a male kitten's penis, which can ultimately require surgery to correct; it can also cause hair loss and sore spots at the site of the suckling.

Dehydration

Water drives all metabolic functions in kittens (and in people), so adequate hydration is essential. When a kitten is not getting enough water in its diet, or it is vomiting or has diarrhea or another illness, it can become seriously dehydrated. Just as with people, proper hydration levels are critical to a kitten's good health.

- If you believe a kitten is dehydrated, alert nursery management.
- If a kitten is dehydrated, nursery management will administer subcutaneous fluids, Feeders are not authorized to administer subcutaneous fluids.

Feeders should not give kittens Pedialyte unless it is approved by the Nursery Manager. Pedialyte given orally to a kitten won't cause any harm, but it offers no real benefit to a truly dehydrated kitten.

Pedialyte can be mixed with the kitten's KMR to add electrolytes back to the kitten's system, but it is usually not necessary. Pedialyte should be thrown out if it is not used within 3 days. Pedialyte should be labeled with the date it is opened.

FEEDING KITTENS POST-BOTTLE

Gruel Babies

Gruel babies are kittens that have outgrown the bottle. At about 3 ½ weeks, a kitten's teeth will begin to break through the skin. Around that time, kittens may begin to bite the nipple, may seem hungry yet not want to suckle, and will have greatly increased appetite. This usually means they are ready to be weaned and begin eating on their own. In the nursery, we want to wean these kittens as soon as they are ready, because gruel babies typically take less of our time to care for than bottle babies and they are easier to find fosters for.



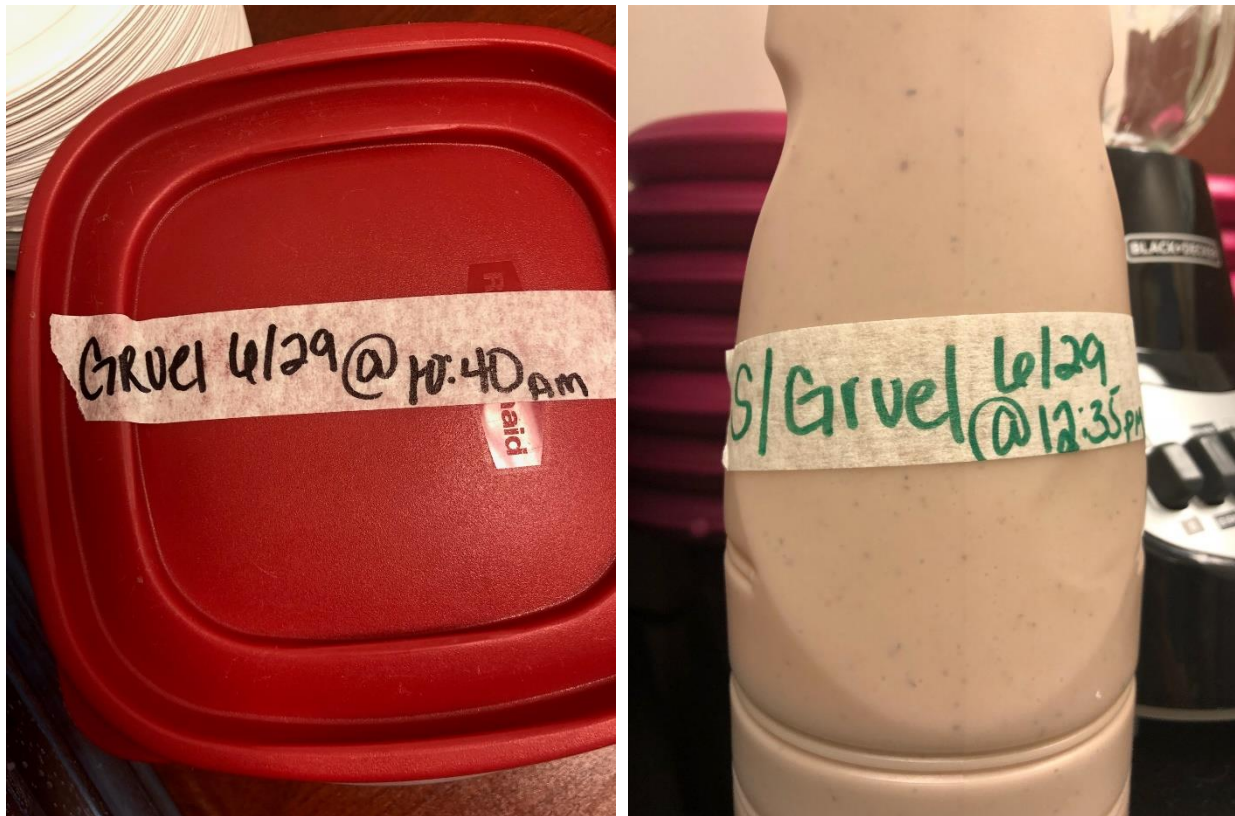
When the kittens' teeth are fully developed, nursery management will make the decision for the litter to transition from the bottle to solid food. Place kittens in a bin with a few shallow saucer – not bowl – of warmed gruel and let them “discover” it. Some will take to it right away, others not so much, but they will be curious. If this is their first time to experience gruel, they are not going to know what to do with it, so be patient and allow them to get used to it. If they do not take to it right away, go ahead and syringe feed them. At this point, put a small dish of gruel, a small dish of kibble, and a small bowl of water in the crate with them so they can begin to eat on their own.

Making Gruel

Gruel is made with canned food and water mixed together until it reaches an applesauce like consistency; this ensures the kittens are getting enough water in their diets while giving them proper nutrition. If gruel is too watery, it will not have enough nutrition. Usually, the correct ratio is 2 cans of food to one can of water. Always make gruel according to directions posted in the feeding area.

- Gruel that is to be used for syringe feeding can be blended in a blender; the ratio of food to water is the same.
- Always store gruel in a covered container in the refrigerator. Do not leave gruel out in the work area after filling bowls or plates, as bacteria can grow.
- The nursery uses donated canned cat/kitten food and Royal Canin Baby Cat Kibble. These are the only approved kitten foods to be used. When other brands are used, they should be slowly mixed in with the nursery brand to get the kittens used to it and to prevent diarrhea.
- Be sure to alert nursery management if you notice the nursery is low on food.
- Changing the brand or type of food you are feeding a kitten can temporarily cause diarrhea.
- Fill a dish that is the appropriate size for the litter about 1/2 – 2/3 with gruel – do not overfill. Warm the gruel in the microwave; check for the correct temperature by stirring it a bit with your finger. Gruel can get hot spots in the microwave that can burn the kittens' mouths, so be sure to check it properly before giving it to the kittens.

Proper Labeling of Gruel



Teach the Kittens About Gruel

Weaned kittens need to be fed every 4-5 hours to ensure their blood sugar stays up. They can go up to 6-8 hours overnight, but not during the day.

- Identify the litter needing to be fed and update the Feeder Board.
 - Feed only one litter at a time. Clean a bin to put the kittens in a while they eat the gruel.
 - Change smocks between litters.
- Weigh the kittens as you place them in the bin, recording the weights on their ASM Log.
- Place some gruel and kibble in the bin with the litter.
 - The kittens may bite the edge of the plate or walk in the food. Sometimes it takes several meals before they catch on. If a kitten does not seem interested in the gruel at all, try gently opening the kitten's mouth and rubbing a little of the food on its tongue or teeth. Be patient. The weaning process takes time.
 - If necessary, place a cover on top of the bin so the kittens cannot climb out. While they are eating, you can clean their crate.
 - If the kittens have toys in their crate, you can put those in the bin with them while you clean.
- Clean the crate, making sure to wipe off all feces and food particles with Odoban. Follow cleaning with a thorough wiping of ParvoClear disinfectant.

- Clean the litter box. Dump the litter. Spray the litterbox with Odoban and wipe with paper towels. Use paper towels, paper cups, or other disposable material to take feces out of the litter box. Litter scoops are not used in the nursery.
 - Kittens should only be given non-clumping litter at this stage of development. Kittens are very curious and will consume bits of litter, which will expand in their stomachs. Litter dust can also coat kittens' lungs.
 - Clumping litter can be introduced after 6 weeks of age.
- Check the bedding in the crate; if it is wet or soiled, replace it with clean bedding.
- Reheat the snuggle disc, making sure to sanitize the disc before warming it.
- If the kittens have been gaining weight regularly and are eating, you can weigh them and put them back in their clean crate.
 - Check to see if kittens are eating on their own. If the kittens are losing weight or are not eating enough by themselves, supplement them with syringe feeding and return them to their crate after they have consumed the appropriate amount.
- Place gruel and kibble in the crate, along with a small bowl of water. Bowls should not be overfilled and should be an appropriate size for the litter.
- Update the ASM Log with the end weight and the food type.
- Clean and sanitize the feeding bin and put it back where it belongs so it can be used again.
- Sanitize the food preparation area, change your smock, and wash your hands before moving on to the next litter.

Proper Bin Set Up for Gruel Babies



USING ANIMAL SHELTER MANAGER “ASM” FOR LOGGING FEEDING HABBITTS

Tablets

Tablets are for TLC business use only. Please do not conduct any personal business on the tablets. Do not change the settings or put photos on them. Tablets should only be cleaned by spraying some parvo clear on a paper towel and gently wiping the screen. The tablets should remain plugged in at all times. DO NOT SPRAY THE TABLETS DIRECTLY.

Notebooks are Prohibited in the Nursery...Tablets only...Log as you feed!

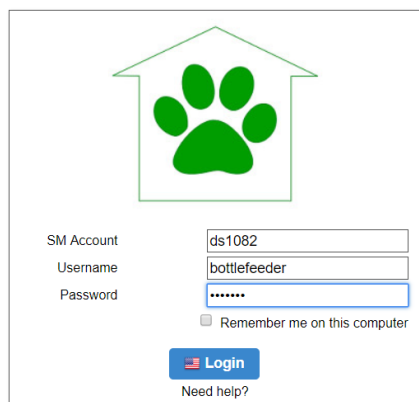
There is no way to clean paper. The tablets have stands and there is no reason you should not log the feeding logs as you go. It may take some getting used to. Many people lover paper. Notebooks are strictly prohibited in the nursery. If you want to log all kittens activity at once, you can use the provided white boards, HOWEVER, you must enter the entire litter into ASM as soon as you are done. Do not wait until the end of your shift to enter everything you did. It causes confusion and is dangerous for the kittens.

Create 3 Different Logs for each feeding session

You will create logs for: 1.Beginning Weight, 2.Ending Weight and 3. What Was Fed. This is CRITICALLY important. These logs are monitored daily to ensure the kittens are gaining weight appropriately.

Log in by entering your Username and Password then click Login. The URL is:

<https://us06.sheltermanager.com/login?smaccount=ds1082>. There will be a link on the home screen of the tablets.



SM Account ds1082

Username bottlefeeder

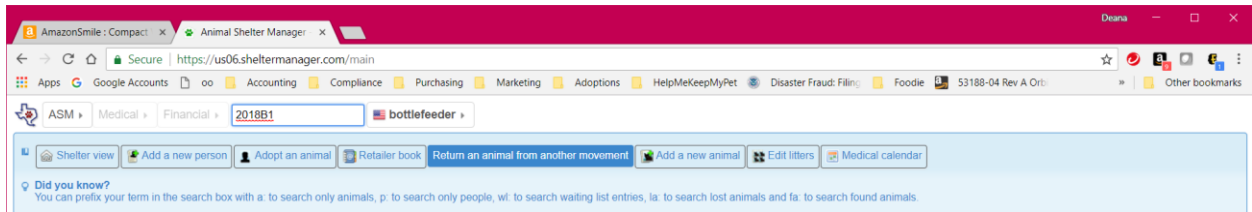
Password *****

Remember me on this computer

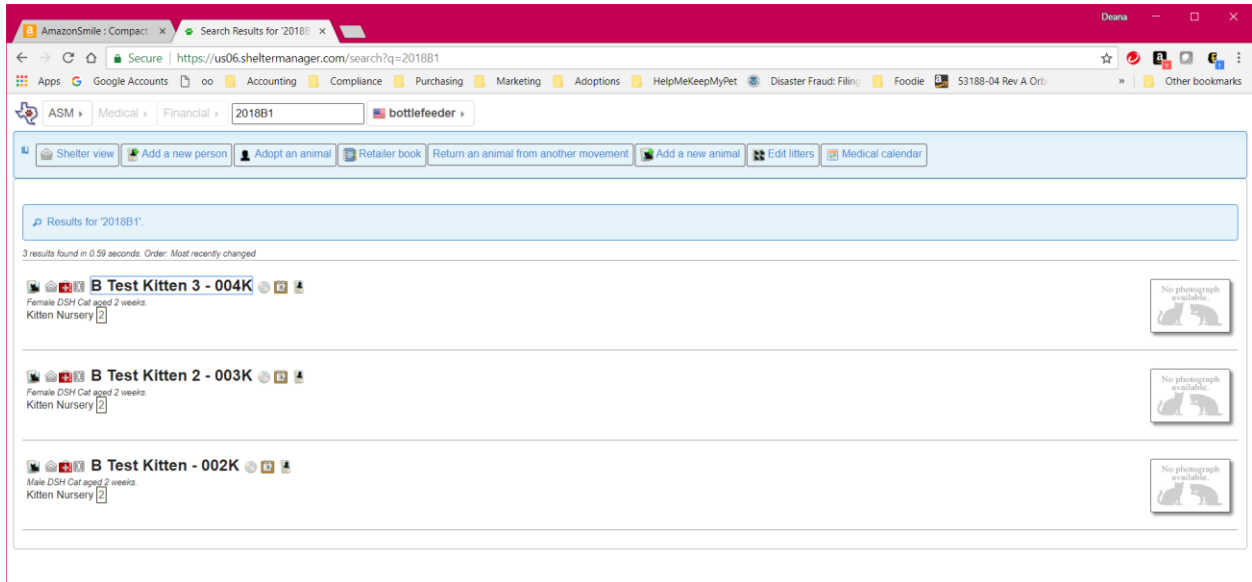
Login

Need help?

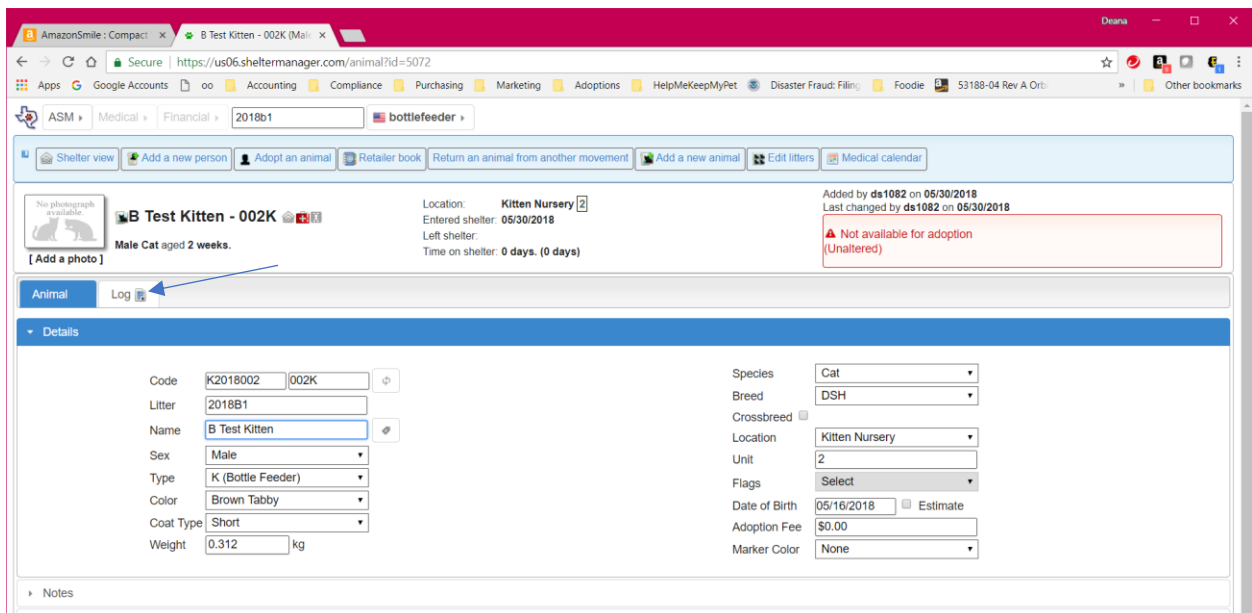
To log weights. Enter the Litter Number into the search box and hit enter.



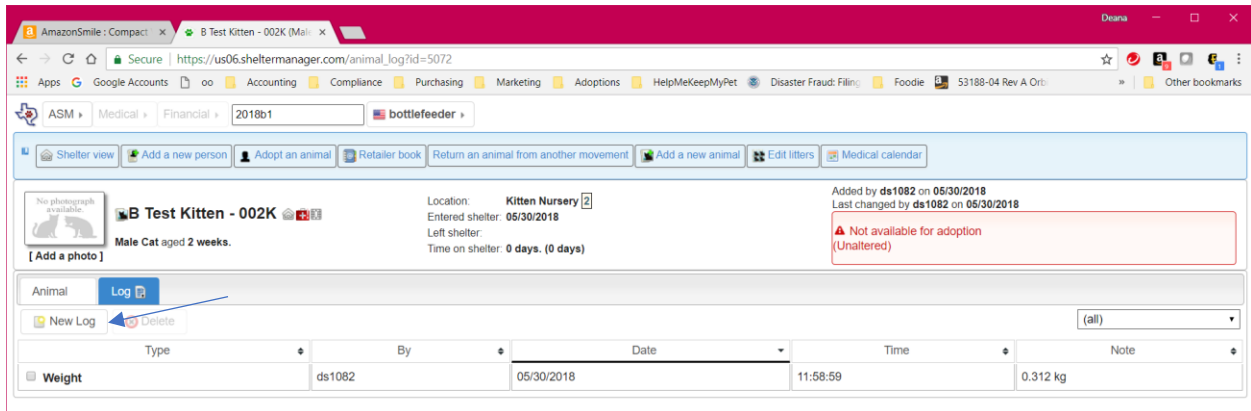
This will bring the litter up.



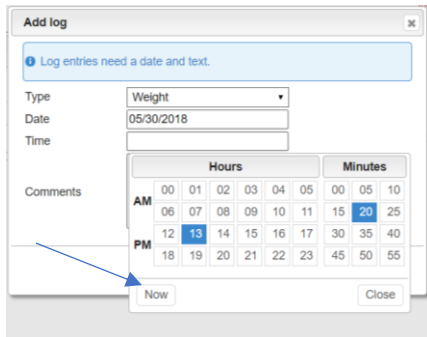
Click on a kitten. Look at the description of the animal. If more than one kitten looks alike, there will be a colored mark inside both ears. This color is listed by the kitten's name. Once you have identified the kitten, you will go to the log screen by clicking on the Log tab.



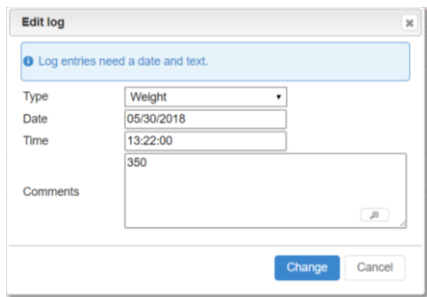
Once on the log screen, click New Log.



To enter the weight before you feed. Select Weight, the date and click “Now” for the time.



Under Comments, type in the weight in grams. Then click Add.



Once fed, click New Log. Weigh the kitten again. Select Weight and enter the kitten’s end weight in grams and click Add.

Stimulate the kitten, then enter a log for comments and what was fed. Select how the kitten was fed. Enter any notes or concerns under Comments. Click Add.

NEONATAL HEALTH AND MEDICAL OVERVIEW

Common Medical Issue Overview

Neonates do not have fully developed immune systems and are susceptible to many illnesses and parasites, some of which they get from their mother at birth. Kittens need proper care and attention to ensure they grow up happy and healthy.

Alert the Nursery Manager if you notice:

- Aspiration (milk coming out of nose during feeding)
- Sneezing
- Coughing
- Eye and/or nasal discharge
- Wheezing; difficulty breathing
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Straining to urinate or defecate
- Bleeding from any part of the body
- Abnormal twitches
- Walking in circles; walking into things
- Loss or decrease of appetite
- Steadily losing weight
- Change in attitude or behavior
- Lethargic or depressed
- Head slumped in food or water bowl
- Neurological symptoms such as excessive wobbliness (as determined by manager), circling, falling over, head bobbing, tremoring, etc.
- Any unusual behavior

Common Illnesses in Kittens

Alert Nursery Management if you see any symptoms.

Upper Respiratory

The term “upper respiratory infection” is used to refer to any illness that affects a cat’s upper respiratory system; it is basically a kitty cold. URIs are common in shelter cats. Common symptoms include sneezing, runny nose and/or eyes, fever, and loss of appetite. URIs are treated with antibiotics. If kittens are having difficulty breathing, they may also need to be nebulized. Be certain to keep kittens warm until they have recovered from a URI. URIs are very contagious to other cats and kittens warm until they have recovered from a URI. URIs are very contagious to other cats and kittens through direct contact and can also be airborne. Feeders should be especially diligent about sanitation protocols when tending to sick kittens and should wash their hands after handling kittens with URIs.

Calicivirus

Calicivirus, also known as “calici,” is a viral infection that can occur in cats and kittens that are not vaccinated or are newly vaccinated. Calici is spread between cats through direct contact with eyes and noses, or through contact with contaminated objects that an infected cat has sneezed on or otherwise been in contact with, such as carriers, feeding dishes, and even food. Humans that have come in contact with an infected cat or kitten could potentially pass the virus through contact with other cats.

The virus can have multiple forms, the most common being an upper respiratory tract form. Other forms include the joint form, which can cause fever and swelling of the joints, and the mutant virulent form, which can cause URI signs and ulcers on the face, among other symptoms.

Due to the ease of transmission of this virus, cats and kittens with calici should be immediately quarantined in a separate area from healthy cats. Those who treat the affected cats and kittens must follow strict sanitation protocols to ensure that the virus is not spread.

Panleukopenia

The Kitten Nursery is currently housed within a very small room at the Texas Litter Control clinic. The clinic’s primary purpose is to spay and neuter public animals. Panleukopenia kittens will not be housed in the clinic because we do not want to expose peoples’ pets to panleuk which is very similar to the Parvo virus in dogs. Our first year is a small pilot program. If no panleukopenia foster home is available, these kittens will have to be euthanized. We do not take this decision lightly. As the program grows and we have more room and resources to treat these kittens, we will be doing so. The survival rate is typically very low, however our mentor group has had some good luck in saving a better than average amount.

Eye Infections

Eye infections are quite common with kittens – sometimes a kitty cold can move into the kitten’s eyes, and some kittens come to the nursery with eye ailments. These are usually treated easily with medicated eye drops or ointment.

- If you notice any eye discharge and the kitten is not currently being treated for any eye issues, note this on the kitten’s chart for evaluation.
- Clean discharge matter from a kitten’s eyes with a cotton ball or piece of gauze dampened with warm water or with a diluted solution of iodine or betadine, wiping gently so as no to hurt the kitten’s delicate eye area.
- Never double-dip a cotton ball or gauze in the warm water or medicated solution; always use clean gauze or cotton so as not to contaminate the water or solution.
- Feeders do not treat a kitten’s eyes unless asked to do so by the Nursery Manager.

If a kitten has something more serious than simple conjunctivitis, other eye medications or treatment may be required. Shelters often see kittens whose eye infections or injuries will leave them partially or completely blind, and in some cases even require removal of the eye itself. These kittens are still highly adoptable and adjust very well to their condition.

Medications and Treatments

Feeders are not authorized to give medications or injections. The medical staff will administer all medications and injections. All medications are logged in ASM.

Ringworm Overview

Overview

Ringworm is a fungal infection affecting the skin, hair, and occasionally nails of animals and people. It is in the same family as athlete's foot and is not life-threatening condition at all; in fact, it does not affect the health or well-being of animals or people. Three species of ringworm fungus most commonly affect cats and dogs. The species that affect cats and dogs can be passed between these two species, as well as passed to humans. It is contagious for people; the young, old and immune-compromised are more likely to get it. Ring worm is also contagious to other animals.

Most often it will cause a circular area of fur loss that is red and may be slightly raised. Ringworm can also have other characteristics, but these circular, hairless lesions are most common.



When kittens in the nursery have ringworm, it should be noted on their crate and on the Feeder Board so that feeders know to take extra precautions. Feeders can get ringworm from nursery cats and can also pass it to their pets and kids at home. If the following established procedures are followed, the risk of doing so is minimized.

Risk Factors

- Animals of any age are susceptible to ringworm, but animals less than one year old and geriatric animals have the highest risk. Cats have a greater risk than dogs.
- Animals with compromised immune systems and conditions such as feline leukemia, pregnancy and lactation, malnutrition, cancer, and stress, or those on anti-inflammatory drugs, can have a higher risk.
- Animals with preexisting conditions that compromise grooming, and those with external parasites such as fleas, are at an increased risk.

How is Ringworm Spread?

Ringworm is most often spread through contact with an infected animal or a contaminated environment. Ringworm is very durable in the environment. Ringworm can be spread readily through grooming implements, contaminated toys and bedding, or by humans' clothing and hands. It can be found on the hair of animals from a contaminated environment even when the animal itself is not showing any symptoms. In nature, the incubation period for ringworm is between 4 days and 4 weeks. Close contact with the infected animal or its bedding is usually required for transmission.

Signs and Treatment

Irregularly shaped areas of fur loss; the skin in these areas can appear rough and scaly, and the bald patch is often round. TLC does not treat neonatal kittens for ringworm.

Lymdip is the most common treatment and we do not run the risk of hypothermia. Kittens should not be given antifungal oral medications due to long term damage to the liver. We may spot treat with an antifungal cream, but ringworm typically just needs to run its course. The main thing is we need to make sure we are all following sanitation protocols so that we do not spread it to all litters.



Sanitation

- If a litter has ringworm, put a note on the crate and on the Feeder Board.
- Use diluted bleach mixed at a ratio of 1:10 bleach to water, on any surface that you or the infected kittens touch – bin, scale, table, pen, microwave, snuggle disc, refrigerator, your arms, etc. Leave it on for 10 minutes and then wipe with paper towels before moving to the next litter.
- Gloves may be worn with the understanding that they do not prevent the spread of ringworm.

Parasite Overview (Internal and External)

Alert Nursery Management if you find any of the following symptoms of parasites.

Fleas

Fleas are bloodsucking parasites and, as with ringworm, a flea infestation is a nuisance in a single animal but can be devastating in a shelter. On a mature cat, fleas are not particularly serious, but young kittens do not have that much blood and they are virtually defenseless; they do not groom themselves yet, so they are not scratching. Young kittens can easily get anemia from flea infestation, which can be life-threatening.

- Flea treatments that are meant for older cats can kill a kitten, so if you find fleas or flea dirt on kittens of any age, alert nursery management so the correct treatment can be administered.
- Over-the-counter flea treatments are not used in the nursery because they are not effective and are much more toxic than what our veterinarians use.

Ticks

We rarely see ticks on our kittens or mother cats. If you think you see ticks, alert nursery management for further evaluation and treatment.

Ear Mites

Ear mites are tiny parasites that live in the ear canal. If you see a dark brown discharge (which can look like dirt or coffee grounds) in a kitten's ears, it is probably ear mites.

- If you see dirt in a kitten's ears, alert nursery management so it can be evaluated and treated.
- Do not clean a kitten's ears without first checking with nursery management. A kitten's ear canal can easily be damaged by the improper use of cotton swabs.
- Ear mites can be passed from one kitten to another, and transmission usually requires direct contact.

Roundworms, Tapeworms, and Hookworms

Worms affect a cat's digestive system and are very common in kittens. You can sometimes see worms in or around a kitten's rectum; you may see a long worm or what looks like rice protruding from its anus. Indications of worms are a large belly, diarrhea, and an inability to gain weight even when eating well. If you see signs of worms, alert nursery management. There are various medications given to the kitten, depending on the type of worm, that easily take care of the problem. Worms can be passed through the feces to other animals.

Coccidia and Giardia

Coccidia and Giardia are very common. They are protozoa that invade a kitten's digestive system and cause diarrhea. These are highly transmissible and can be spread through feces. These parasites are easily treated with oral medications.

Parasites can cause digestive problems as well as diarrhea for the kitten. Diarrhea can be dangerous for a kitten and should be treated as soon as it shows up. Not all diarrhea is related to illness or infections – sometimes it can be a result of a change in diet – but all diarrhea should be reported to the Nursery Manager for evaluation.

FADING KITTEN SYNDROME

Overview

Fading Kitten Syndrome is a life-threatening emergency in which a kitten, sometimes one that was previously healthy, “crashes” and begins to fade. This can occur with kittens who have a mother, as well as those who do not, so watch for mother cats pushing away a kitten and not caring for it. If not dealt with immediately, this can result in death. There is not always a clear reason for this condition. It has been linked to birth defects, environmental stress, and infectious disease. Early detection and treatment are imperative, but even with tube feeding, rehydration, and monitoring, many of these kittens still die.

Symptoms

- Low body temperature; the kitten feels cool or cold to the touch
- Extreme lethargy; not getting up, unable to stand, not responding when pet, can't hold its head up.
- Gaspings for breath; mouth breathing
- Meowing, crying out

When a kitten is fading, two things are happening: hypothermia (being too cold) and hypoglycemia (low blood sugar). You must get the kitten's body temperature up and raise its blood sugar, or it will die.

Act Immediately!!!

Process

- Get the kitten warm.
 - Immediately wrap it up in a towel like a burrito, leaving only the kitten's face exposed. Its whole body – tail, ears, and paw—should be in the towel. Do not take the kitten out of the towel to adjust it or check on it. Every time you take the kitten out, you will make it cold again, even if it is only for a second.
 - Wrap a heating pad set on low around the towel (to avoid burns) as an extra source of heat. Secure it around the towel so it stays in place.
 - The kitten's body cannot warm itself with only a towel; you have to apply extra heat. Your own body heat won't work because it is lower than what a kitten's should be.
- Raise the kitten's blood sugar
 - Put some Karo syrup in warm water at a 1:1 mixture. Put some of this solution in a syringe and give the kitten 3 drops every 3 minutes.
 - If the kitten is not swallowing, try rubbing some Karo on its gums and tongue.
 - Take care not to contaminate anything by double dipping syringes.
 - Be sure you are administering the sugar every 3 minutes.
- Administer 1 drop of Vitamin B Complex. If a kitten has started fading and seems to snap back, 3 drops of Vitamin B Complex will need to be added to the KMR.

It may seem like you are not doing enough to help the kitten, but this is the only treatment for a fading kitten. The medical team cannot and will not do anything other than these steps above for a fading kitten. Be sure to alert the Nursery Manager that the kitten was fading and make clear notes about the

episode in the kitten's ASM Log and on the Feeder Board. If the kitten passes, follow the deceased kitten protocol and be sure to alert the Nursery Manager.

If the above steps are followed, we generally have success with these kittens. Keep in mind that it can sometimes take hours for them to come out of it and start acting normal again. Know that even with love, attention, and the perfect treatment, some fading kittens still won't make it.

DECEASED KITTEN PROTOCOL

Overview

It is never easy to lose a kitten, and it affects each person differently. Understand that we are operating against nature most of the time, and the statistics are against us. If you ask a veterinarian, they will tell you that an orphan kitten has a less than 10% chance of survival. Even against the most incredible odds-remember, most of the kittens and cats we take into our program arrive sick or injured-our survival rates have been 80% and higher since the inception of this program. We focus on the positive outcome of the work we do, but we do not pretend that we can save every kitten we rescue.

Process

- Make sure the kitten has passed. If you are not sure, check with the Nursery Manager or a more experienced feeder. A very cold, hypoglycemic kitten can appear to be dead, but may not be.
- Wrap the kitten in a cloth and place it inside a Ziploc bag.
- With a Sharpie, write the kitten's name and Animal Code from ASM on the bag. Tag the kitten in ASM as Deceased by entering the Deceased Date under Death under the Animal tab. This is very important, as all deceased kittens must be accurately reported in TLC records. If the kitten is not properly identified, someone will have to inspect the kitten later to determine its true identity.
- Place the kitten in the freezer.
- If this was the only kitten in the litter, remove its information from the Feeder Board so subsequent feeders will not be alarmed that it is missing.
 - Do not write on the board or in the litter's file that the kitten has passed; do not send any messages to the group that the kitten has passed.
- Notify the Nursery manager that the kitten has passed.

When you arrive for your shift and find that a kitten is gone from the nursery, please refrain from asking other feeders if the kitten has passed. This is often distressing to other feeders and is not conducive to a pleasant atmosphere in the nursery. If you are particularly interested in the fate of a kitten, ask the Nursery Manager about it directly.

BITE PROTOCOL

Process

The following is the TLC Bite Protocol and is to be followed by all staff, volunteers, fosters, and the public.

1. Wash bite wounds with soap and water immediately.
2. Stop bleeding with pressure. If bleeding is severe, call 911.
3. Report the bite to the Nursery Manager the same day of the incident.
4. Fill out an incident report.
5. Did the bite break the skin?
 - a. If no, no further action is required.
 - b. If yes, is it punctured or scratched?
 - i. If scratched, keeping an eye out for redness or infection should be sufficient.
 - ii. If punctured, you will need oral antibiotics. Please see your personal physician as soon as possible to prevent sepsis, loss of function, or even death.

Bites are very dangerous issue and must be reported to TLC management. An infected bite can cost well over \$10,000 if it is not treated immediately and can even cause loss of function. If the animal has rabies, a bite can cause death for the human, as rabies is 100% fatal.

Although TLC is not responsible for medical bills associated with bites, we can often instruct you on what to do after a bite, and we need to keep records for any bite that occurs.

If you choose not to seek medical help, TLC cannot be held liable for any consequences that result from not taking appropriate action.

Neonatal Staff Q&A's

How do I communicate with the team or with team leadership?

Most of your questions can be answered by the Nursery Manager. If you are unsure who to contact, check the team roster or the "Go-To" chart posted in the nursery.

What do I do if I am unhappy or confused about nursery operations?

Contact the Nursery Manager. See the "Go-To" chart for contact information.

Who do I contact in an emergency?

If you have a medical emergency with a kitten in the nursery, contact the Nursery Manager right away. If neither of them are in the nursery and cannot be reached by phone, contact the clinic right away. If an emergency concerns your immediate personal health or safety, call 911 before attempting to call anyone from TLC, especially if it is outside normal business hours.

I'm on the team – now what?

All scheduling issues are addressed with KittenNursery@TexasLitterControl.org. To maintain a schedule of feeders in the nursery, all volunteer feeders must commit to a minimum of one 3 hour shift per week. All missed shifts must be made up.

Can I bring my pets or foster animals to the nursery with me?

Due to the possibility of spreading disease to cats and kittens residing in the nursery, you cannot bring any personal pets or foster animals into the nursery at any time. If you believe it is necessary to have a foster animal with you for some reason, you must get prior approval from the Nursery Manager.

Why is it so important to keep kittens warm?

A very young kitten cannot regulate its body temperature. If a kitten becomes chilled to the point that its body temperature drops, this can cause the kitten to fade. If it steps are not taken to prevent this, the kitten can die.

Why do we dilute the KMR in ratios of 8:1, then 4:1, then 2:1?

This helps the kitten avoid diarrhea or other digestive problems as it is introduced to a new environment and a new diet.

How much should a kitten eat?

The general rule is for kittens to consume 5% of their body weight at each feeding. To verify that a kitten has consumed enough, compare its weight before feeding with its weight after feeding (but before stimulation). There are feeding charges posted in the nursery to help you with these calculations.

How do I force-feed?

Force-feed a kitten with either formula or gruel using a syringe – a small one for bottle babies and a larger one for gruel babies. Some kittens take to this easily, while others do not; exercise patience. Always be careful not to let the kitten aspirate (get food or liquid into its lungs). If the kitten is mouth breathing, do not force-feed, as this can lead to choking. Alert the Nursery Manager right away if a kitten chokes or aspirates.

What do I do if a kitten won't eat or gain weight?

If the kitten is healthy, it may be having a hard time adjusting to life without its mother. Be patient – syringe feeding may be required to supplement what the kitten eats on its own, or may be required completely if the kitten is not eating at all. If the kitten has a URI, diarrhea, or other illness, it may not be able to swallow or may be too weak to eat properly on its own. Be sure to note eating habits on the kitten's ASM log and on the Feeder Board.

How do I know when a kitten is ready to eat gruel rather than KMR?

If a kitten has teeth, including incisors, it can usually move onto gruel. Nursery management will determine when a litter is ready to be weaned. All kittens in a litter should be eating the same food, whether it's KMR or gruel and kibble.

Who do I tell if I see fleas or other parasites?

All animals have fleas and frequently have parasites. While these are normal and almost unnoticeable in older animals, they can cause serious illness in very young kittens. Bring these conditions to the attention of nursery management.

Will my pets at home be safe from contagion that is in the nursery?

If your pets are current on all of their vaccinations and you adhere to sanitation protocols, your pets should be safe from contracting illnesses you come into contact within the nursery. Be advised that your pets could contract an illness if their own health is compromised in some way, if they are not vaccinated, or if you do not follow all sanitation protocols.

Are the kittens in the nursery healthy?

Many of the kittens we rescue are sick, and some of them are injured. Most of these kittens were found out in the elements where they were exposed to every type of parasite and contagion imaginable. They are also exposed to predators and other means of injury that are not common to housecats. They are evaluated at intake and treated for any known illnesses or injuries at that time.

What do I do if a kitten vomits or has diarrhea?

If the kitten has diarrhea and is already being treated for it, watch for any changes that signal a problem; alert the Nursery Manager. If the kitten is not already being treated for diarrhea, note it on the kitten's ASM Log and on the Feeder Board. If the kitten is soiled, so clean it gently with warm wipes and dry the kitten well. If the kitten's bedding is damp, wet, or soiled, clean the crate and replace the bedding.

What do I do if I am bitten?

Cat bites can be serious. If a cat or kitten in the nursery is feral or has shown signs of aggressive behavior, there should be a note on the Feeder board and on the crate so that feeders use caution when tending to these cats. It should be noted that ALL ANIMALS CAN BITE, and while there have been few instances of biting in the nursery, as a feeder and someone charged with the care of cats and kittens, you should be aware that the possibility is ever-present. If you are bitten, the procedure to follow is posted throughout the nursery and in the operations manual, and it should be followed precisely.

NEONATAL METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

Group Communication

You will need to join the Texas Litter Control Kitten Warriors Closed Group. This group will be used to communicate between the team.

How to call out

If you don't show up, kittens do not eat. Chronic absenteeism and tardiness will not be tolerated. You will be asked to leave.

Employees see Employee Handbook.

If you need to call out, you will need to call and actually speak to someone. DO NOT TEXT AND ASSUME SOMEONE WILL SEE IT.

| | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Sue Probost | 713-703-1501 |
| Deana Sellens | 713-822-4368 |
| Trudy Bennett | 713-826-2429 |
| Jennifer Hamada | 972-754-4487 |

NEONATAL STAFF ROSTER

Please be respectful of everyone's personal information and their time away from the nursery. If your matter is not urgent, email the person first before calling.

If your matter needs immediate attention but is not critical, send a text message before calling. In an emergency, call the appropriate person for help. Never give out contact information to anyone other than Nursery team members!

Authorized to administer medications, injections, subcutaneous fluids and tube-feed

| | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Sue Probost | 713-703-1501 |
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| Trudy Bennett | 713-826-2429 |
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Contact in Case of Emergency

| | |
|-----------------|--------------|
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Stages of Kitten Development

Overview

A kitten is born both deaf and blind. The kitten's ears remain in the folded position that they were in while the kitten was in the womb, and the eyes are still sealed shut. Normally, a small bit of the umbilical cord will still be attached to the midsection of the kitten. Newborn kittens are completely helpless and rely on their mother for all of their needs. In addition to nursing the kittens, the mother will also groom her kittens (this also stimulates the intestines to start functioning). Since the kittens cannot yet regulate their body temperature, they will stay close to their mother to keep them warm.

Developmental Milestones

- Kittens weigh approximately 90-100g at birth and should double their birth weight in about a week.
- Within a couple of days of birth, kittens will begin to hear muffled sounds.
- At about 3-5 days, the umbilical cord will dry and fall off.
- At about 7-10 days, the eyes will begin to open. Kittens are usually born with bluish eyes; they will stay blue until the kittens are about 6-7 weeks old, but true color won't settle in until the kittens are about three months old.
- If eyes seem to be pus-filled or sealed shut, alert the nursery management.
- At around two weeks old, kittens will start moving around, crawling, and standing more.
- Around 3 ½ weeks of age, the kitten's teeth will begin to break through the skin. The ears will also start to stand up around this time.
- Teeth should be fully in around 4 weeks of age. Once their incisors are in, kittens can eat kitten food and start using a litterbox.
- Kittens will start to gain weight rapidly around 4-5 weeks. Kittens will also start to play around this time.
- By six weeks, they are beginning to regulate their body temperature.

How to Age Neonatal Kittens

| Kitten Age | Characteristics |
|---------------------------|--|
| Less than 3 days old | Eyes completely closed and wet umbilical cord still attached |
| Less than 5 days old | Eyes completely closed and dry umbilical cord still attached |
| Less than 7 days old | Eyes completely closed |
| Between 7 and 10 days old | Eyes mostly closed or beginning to open, no umbilical cord attached |
| 2-3 weeks old | Eyes completely open, no umbilical cord, "rounded" ear shape, no incisors |
| 3 1/2 - 4 1/4 weeks old | Eyes completely open, no umbilical cord, "pointed" ear shape, small incisors not all the way through |
| 5-6 weeks old | Eyes completely open, no umbilical cord, "pointed" ear shape, incisors all the way through, weigh about 1 1/2 pounds |

Minimum Feeding Requirements for Kittens Based on Weight
(5g food per 100g body weight/1g per 20g body weight)

| Weight of Kitten Before Feeding | Weight of Kitten After Feeding | Amount of Food Consumed | Notes |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| 60 | 63 | 3 | Feed bottle babies as much as they will take on their own from the bottle; syringe feed when they do not eat enough on their own. |
| 80 | 84 | 4 | |
| 100 | 105 | 5 | |
| 120 | 126 | 6 | |
| 140 | 147 | 7 | |
| 160 | 168 | 8 | |
| 180 | 189 | 9 | |
| 200 | 210 | 10 | |
| 220 | 231 | 11 | |
| 240 | 252 | 12 | |
| 260 | 273 | 13 | When bottle babies have been syringe fed previously, try to bottle feed them first, then syringe feed if they won't eat from the bottle. |
| 280 | 294 | 14 | |
| 300 | 315 | 15 | |
| 320 | 336 | 16 | |
| 340 | 357 | 17 | |
| 360 | 378 | 18 | |
| 380 | 399 | 19 | |
| 400 | 420 | 20 | |
| 420 | 441 | 21 | |
| 440 | 462 | 22 | |
| 460 | 483 | 23 | When gruel kittens have been syringe fed previously, see if they will eat on their own in a bin. If not, then syringe feed them. Be sure to chart their weights accurately. |
| 480 | 504 | 24 | |
| 500 | 525 | 25 | |
| 520 | 546 | 26 | |
| 540 | 567 | 27 | |
| 560 | 588 | 28 | |
| 580 | 609 | 29 | |
| 600 | 630 | 30 | |
| 620 | 651 | 31 | |
| 640 | 672 | 32 | |
| 660 | 693 | 33 | If gruel kittens lose weight from previous feedings but have been eating on their own, syringe feed the required amount. Be sure to accurately record beginning and ending weights. |
| | | | |
| | | | If the kitten eats on its own in a bin, be sure to record the beginning and ending weights accurately. |
| | | | |