



NEONATE FOSTER HANDBOOK

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WELCOME



Who are we?

Neonates (puppies and kittens less than 6 weeks old) are the most vulnerable population in city shelters, and out in the community. Like human children, they require more one-on-one care than older and adult animals. Due to this level of care, most shelters simply do not have the time or resources to devote to these fragile lives. To help this vulnerable population, OK Humane made the decision to start taking in neonatal animals.

Starting small and with no expectations, we officially took in our first neonates in 2015. These two little kittens, Batman and Robin, were the start of our neonate journey. Quickly we realized the gravity of the need far outweighed our original thoughts.

Over the past four years, the Neonate Program has not only been able to take in over 3,500 neonatal kittens and puppies, but we have been able to provide safe housing for nursing mothers to raise their litters. None of this would have been possible without the help and support of our amazing network of foster homes.

Our Goal

The Oklahoma Humane Society's mission is to end the needless euthanasia of adoptable pets in our community. Our neonate program supports that by working closely with Oklahoma City Animal Welfare to save at risk neonatal puppies and kittens. Almost all of the animals that come into our program come from OKCAW, but many also come from other shelter partners or from the community as well.

The purpose of our nursery is to serve as a stopping point for neonates on their journey into a foster home. Neonates do far better in a foster home with individualized care. This is where you come in! Without the support of our foster homes, we could not achieve our life saving goals.

Thank you for helping save lives in your community! Fostering neonates can be a hard journey, but the destination is filled with tremendous reward. This handbook was designed to help assist you as you care for neonates in your home. Please read through the handbook and ask questions. We are here to help you along on this amazing adventure!

A NEONATE'S JOURNEY

1

INTAKE

- We provide dewormers, vaccines, a microchip, test for FIV/FelV in cats and kittens or heartworms in mom dogs, and evaluate the best we can for signs of illness.
- Please note: what we do at intake depends on their age and wellbeing. **It can take up to 10-14 days for signs of illness to develop. Symptoms may start in the home.**

2

UPDATES

- We need to see your neonates back every two to three weeks. This is to ensure they are on the right track developmentally and for them to receive any medical updates they may need. You can set up an appointment with the nursery via phone, email, during pickup, or at the end of an appointment.
- Essential appointments for neonates include:
 - **4 weeks old** - orphan kittens and puppies will receive their first set of vaccines
 - **6 weeks old** - neonates with a nursing mother will receive their first set of vaccines
- At 6 weeks old, neonates graduate from the Neonate Program into the Adoption Program and enter the Adoption Prep phase of their stay with us.

3

ADOPTION PREP

- At this stage, the foster team will be your main point of contact. Write a biography for your foster and snap some good pictures. Unsure of what to write or having trouble getting a good picture? Ask the foster team - they can help! Remember that a good picture and bio helps get your foster adopted. Please email bios and pics to foster@okhumane.org.
- Call or email the Adoption Center to get your foster on the list to visit/stay after surgery is done.
 - Adult cats and kittens must complete a four day post-surgery hold before visiting the AC.
 - Dogs and puppies can be scheduled as early as the next day after surgery if they are feeling well.

CONTACTS

NURSERY DIRECT: (405) 548-7612 or nursery@okhumane.org

We are your main point of contact. Text messages are an option for the nursery number.

- Please note that in the height of kitten season we can get pulled away from the phone often. Please leave a voicemail and we will return your call as soon as possible.

IN HOUSE CLINIC: (405) 724-9839 or medical@okhumane.org

If you have any medical questions or concerns, please call the nursery first. However, if you are experiencing an emergency during business hours and cannot reach us, please call the In House Clinic.

AFTER HOURS EMERGENCY PHONE: (405) 830-3780

This is our after hours emergency number. Call the number and leave a detailed voicemail. If your call is a true medical emergency you will receive a call back that evening, otherwise we will return your call the next business day.

FOSTER TEAM: (405) 286-1229 x 401 or foster@okhumane.org

Once a neonate graduates at 6 weeks old our foster team steps in to help out. They are the team to speak with if you need to schedule spay and neuter surgery, a foster swap (if animals are over 6 weeks old), have photos and bios ready to add to your foster animal's profile, or would like to foster older animals in general!

NURSERY HOURS:

Monday - Friday 10 AM to 6 PM. Staff is not in on weekends - please call the emergency phone if needed.

OUR LOCATIONS

IN-HOUSE VETERINARY CLINIC (IHC) & NEONATE NURSERY

Hours: M-F 8:30am - 5:00pm (by appointment only)

Address: 4301 Will Rogers Parkway OKC, OK 73018

E-mail: medical@okhumane.org

Phone: (405) 724-9839

OK HUMANE SPAY+NEUTER CLINIC (S/N)

Hours: M-F 7:30am - 5:30pm by appointment only

Address: 4301 Will Rogers Parkway OKC, OK 73018

E-mail: clinic@okhumane.org

Phone: (405) 947-SPAY (7729)

MARY EDDY JONES ADOPTION CENTER (AC)

Hours: Tuesday-Saturday 11:00am-7:00pm, Sunday 12:00pm-5:00pm, Closed Mondays (fosters make their own appointments)

Address: 7500 N. Western Ave. OKC, OK 73116

E-mail: adoptions@okhumane.org

Phone:(405) 286-1229 x 201 or 202

WHAT SUPPLIES DO I NEED?

OK Humane will issue the following supplies to help care for your neonates. Depending on the age of the neonates, some items may be included and some may be omitted:

- KMR/Esbilac (refills provided as needed)
- Heating pad (no auto shut off feature)
- Digital kitchen weight scale
- Bottle, nipples, brush kit
- Rectal thermometer and lubricant
- Karo syrup (light or dark)
- Syringes (3, 10mL)
- Dry baby cat/puppy food/baby food provided to age appropriate neonates
- Probiotic/fiber to help with digestion



We recommend that you provide the following additional items to complete the kit:

- Cotton balls/makeup remover pads/baby wipes (no added dyes, fragrances, alcohol)
- Extra nipples (these can be found at PetSmart, Walmart, PETCO, Amazon, etc.)
- Soft, warm bedding (fleeces and blankets)
- Suction bulb (a regular 2oz suction bulb can be purchased at many major retailers in the baby section of the store)
- New toothbrush (for orphan kittens)
- Litterbox and non-clumping clay litter
- Low sided/shallow bowls
- Rice sock (used to provide heat source when transporting)
 - Fill a tall tube sock with 1.5 cups rice and knot the top of the sock
 - Microwave for 3-5 minutes
 - Place under the blankets
- Unflavored, clear Pedialyte (used to help with dehydration)



WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN YOU'RE EXPECTING NEONATES

You can do it!

Neonate care can be extremely overwhelming at first. However, we are here to provide you with support! Neonate fostering does take a special kind of person. That person is someone with a big heart, and determination to care for these babies on their journey to adoption. It comes with trials and tribulations, but in the end you have given a second chance to a young animal that deserved a shot at life!

How long will I have my neonate(s)?

Depending on the age of your neonate(s), you may have them for anywhere from 3-8 weeks. At 8 weeks and 2 pounds they are eligible to receive their spay/neuter surgery. After that final step, they will become available for adoption. Remember: cats and kittens have a 4 day post-surgery hold in your home before becoming officially available.

Separation

It is important to keep neonates, and moms, separate from personal pets. This is for the safety and well-being of the babies, but also your personal animals. Most animals that come into our program come from unknown backgrounds and illnesses may not show signs or symptoms for up to 14 days. Nursing mothers tend to be extra protective of their young, and may not wish to meet other animals during this time.

Cost of Care

OK Humane provides fosters with the necessary supplies to care for neonates in their homes. We provide vaccines, medicine (as needed), food, and a kit for younger neonates. Other items such as litter, puppy pads, toys, etc. are based on donations we receive from the public. It costs approximately \$250 to provide basic care for one healthy neonate. This includes food, typical medical updates like vaccines, spay/neuter surgery, and a microchip. This does not include added expenses if the neonate becomes sick.

Even with limitations, we try and support our fosters as much as we can! Never hesitate to ask if you are in need of something; we may have it to share!



INTRODUCING THEM TO YOUR HOME

It is best if neonates are kept separate from your personal animals in a safe, quiet, and secure location.

Bottle babies should be kept in a warm, secure place away from drafts. You can get creative with this setup - a cat kennel or a clear plastic storage tub (without the lid) works well for this.

- Place clean bedding, such as a fleece blanket or linens, on the bottom of the housing.
- A heating pad or Snuggle Safe disc should be placed inside the housing under one fold of the bedding or placed underneath the housing. If using a heating pad inside the housing, set the heating pad on low. If it is underneath, set on high. **Never allow a neonate to come into direct contact with a heat source.**
- Drape a towel or blanket over the housing to protect from drafts and keep the area incubated.
- When they become more mobile (about 4 weeks) you can provide a bigger space for them.

Neonates 4 weeks and older should start in a smaller space like a pop-up playpen with a top closure or a spare room like a bathroom or closet.

- Be sure the area is draft free, relatively warm, and secure from personal pets.
- Once kittens get bigger, you can let them explore more if you like. Of course, every cat/kitten is different and some may not want to explore right away. Be sure to monitor to ensure they don't get into trouble!
- With puppies, a wire playpen or large crate with some linens helps keep them secure and avoid unwanted chewing while you are away.
- Please do not leave puppies crated for long periods of time as it hinders their development.
- Typically you can keep puppies crated while you are at work, and let them out for play time when you are home.

Remember: The setup for bottle babies is the only one that is required. This is to ensure the neonates are warm and secure. Every foster eventually finds what works best for their situation. You will find what works best for you too! The important thing to remember is that the area is warm, draft free, and secure. If you think there may be even a slight chance they could get to something they should not, move it.



GROWING UP NEONATE



Newborn - 1 week old: Their eyes are completely closed, and ears folded shut. Their umbilical cord may still be attached. They will rely completely on scent to find their way. They cannot regulate their body temperature, so they must be kept warm! Handling must be minimal. Feed them and/or weigh them, stimulate if needed, then place them back in the nest. Too much handling can cause stress on their fragile bodies.

2 weeks old: Neonates' eyes will begin to open between 8-12 days of age. By the end of the first 2 weeks their eyes should be fully open and their ears will be opening. They cannot see or hear very well at this point. They themselves will begin to make more sounds, like grunts, yelps, whines, and barks going into the third week. Still cannot regulate their body temperature on their own.

3 weeks old: You will start to see a lot of change at this point! This is the transitional period. Halfway through the third week you will begin to notice incisors coming in as well as their ears opening fully. Once their ears open, noises can startle them. They will start to eliminate on their own (but still may need some help). At this point the "shiver response" will begin when they are too cold, but it is still work for them to regulate their body temperature. Kittens will begin to discover the litter box. You can start paper/potty pad training puppies. They will start to move around more and explore. Get ready to enjoy some super cuteness!

GROWING UP NEONATE CONT.

4 weeks old: They will be a lot more active now, but will still be cautious! You can begin to handle them more (like petting and holding), but always supervise when introducing to new people. We do not want them to become fearful of new experiences. Canine teeth should be emerging fully by this point, so this is when we can start introducing gruel/wet food. For bottle babies, their formula should be phasing out, with some softened kibble offered. Every neonate transitions to food from formula or from nursing differently. It is always good to keep an eye out for what suits each neonate. If you have a question about transitioning food, please let us know! It can take a few weeks to fully transition into solid foods.

5 weeks old: Puppies can now be introduced to the yard. Make sure your yard is well kept, puppies will find things you did not even know existed! They must always be supervised while in your yard. Remember, at this stage new things can scare them. Introducing them to new things is a process, so never force them onto the kittens/puppies if they are uncomfortable. Their food will be becoming more solid now.

6 weeks old: You will have a proper puppy or kitten on your hands! At this age your puppies/kittens can be introduced to your personal pets. These introductions should always be supervised! Even the nicest, most complacent animal can have different reactions to different animals. Remember, neonates are still small and fragile. Moms may still be protective of their young, so it is best if their introductions are done separately if not at all. Be careful to not let kittens roam freely unsupervised. They are small and can end up in places they shouldn't.

7-8 weeks old: At 8 weeks old and 2 pounds, puppies and kittens are eligible for surgery to be spayed or neutered. Double check with nursery/IHC staff that your neonates and/or mom are up to date medically (dewormers, flea preventative, microchip, and vaccinations). Be sure they are 2 pounds, or they cannot get their surgery performed. If you need tips or tricks on what you can do to help them hit that mark, please ask and we will gladly help!

Remember, puppies should not leave the home and kittens should be kept inside ALWAYS. Puppies are not fully vaccinated until about 4 months old.



CARING FOR NEONATES

Neonates have 3 basic needs: warmth, nutrition, and elimination.

Warmth

The need for warmth is the foundation that nutrition and elimination are built on. Neonates less than 3 ½ weeks old cannot maintain their body temperature and require an external heat source to keep them warm.

An appropriate body temperature is necessary for proper digestion and a cold neonate will not eat efficiently (appearing “picky” or not wanting to latch on the nipple) or even quit eating in severe cases. GI stasis (intestinal tract stops functioning properly) occurs at and below 94°F. The risk of hypothermia persists up to 4 weeks of age, although it is good practice to provide supplemental heat during weaning (5-8 weeks of age). If the neonate is determined to be cold, it should be warmed slowly over 2-4 hours back to 97-100°F.

It is better to prevent a neonate from getting cold than to have to warm it back up. If your neonate's temperature is less than 97°F, start warming!

Neonate Parameters

- Normal Neonate Temperatures Week-by-Week
 - Week 1-2: 97-99°F
 - Week 2-4: 98-100°F
 - Week 4+: 100-101°F
- Keeping the neonate's environment warm: for context, incubators in the nursery are set at the following:
 - Week 1: 86-90°F
 - Week 2-3: 80-85°F
 - Week 4+: 70-75°F

**A neonate's temperature should always be around 100°F.
Over 102°F is considered a fever.**

Heating pads and space heaters work great helping keep a neonate warm. Remember to be sure it is not too hot and that the neonates do not come in direct contact with the heat source. Creating a nesting area helps maintain a good climate for neonates without having to change your whole home. Closing the vent in the room they are in helps prevent cold air drafts, particularly during the summer when the AC is going.

CARING FOR NEONATES CONT.

If you are concerned that your neonate is not warm enough, use your digital rectal thermometer to take a temperature. You do not have to constantly take their temperature.

- Apply a small amount of lubricant to the tip of the thermometer.
- Lift their tail and insert only the tip (the silver part) of the thermometer into the rectum.
- Gently hold them still. They can get wiggly. Sometimes having someone hold them while you take the temperature is helpful. Wait for the thermometer to beep. This indicates it is done reading.
 - Refer to the “Normal Neonate Temperatures” above.
 - Clean thermometer with soap and hot water and let dry after each use. Be sure to sanitize with bleach after the litter has moved along from your care.
- If the temperature is below normal (97°F or less), please turn to “Fading Kitten/Puppy Syndrome Protocol” on the following page.



FADING KITTEN (PUPPY) SYNDROME AND PROTOCOL

Fading Kitten (Puppy) Syndrome is a life threatening emergency. It can be a kitten/puppy that has been healthy and suddenly begins to fade. It can be one that has been unthrifty but doing ok. Either way, if not immediately dealt with it can cause death or sometimes despite all efforts, they can still pass.

What causes it?

It is caused by hypothermia (low body temperature) and hypoglycemia (low blood sugar).

What are the symptoms?

- Low body temperature - the neonate feels cool or cold to the touch. A rectal temperature can also be taken if unsure. Temperature reads below 97 degrees.
- Extreme lethargy, not getting up, inability to stand, unresponsive to petting.
- Gulping or gasping for breath, hoarse meowing or crying out.

If you see any of these symptoms it is vitally important to take the following steps immediately!

1. Get them warm:

- Wrap (or "burrito") the neonate up completely, leaving only their face exposed. The entire body, including the tail, ears, and paws should be covered by the towel. The nose and mouth should be the only body parts exposed. Small towels or blankets about the size of a hand towel work best for this.
 - Do not unwrap the neonate or take them out to adjust or check on them. Every time you take them out it will make them cold again. Recheck rectal temperature again when they become more active or every 30 minutes, whichever comes first.
- Turn a heating pad on low and wrap around the burrito towel to provide external heat.
 - Never put the heat pad in direct contact with the kitten. Always provide a buffer between the kitten and heat source.



FADING KITTEN (PUPPY) SYNDROME CONT.

2. Get their blood sugar up:

Once they are prepped in their heat burrito, dilute some Karo syrup with warm water – 1:1 ratio. Start with a small amount at first, and make more as needed.

- Pull Karo syrup mix into a 1 mL syringe.
- Gently open their mouth. Slowly give 0.1 mL's every 3 minutes by mouth. Be sure not to hurt their gums with fingernails and the syringe.
- If the kitten is not swallowing the mixture, undiluted Karo syrup can be rubbed on the gums and tongue with a finger. Use only a small drop, like if it's coming out of a dropper.
- Set a timer! You must give the sugar every 3 minutes.

This is the only treatment for a fading neonate. You will continue treatment until their temperature is back to normal and they are active and lively again. It may take hours to return to normal, other times it may be quicker. Note the time you started treatment, call the nursery or emergency phone (if after hours) if you have any questions. Neonates should only warm up a degree or two every hour!

If a neonate is below a normal temperature, but not fading, we will still follow these steps. This helps them get warm safely while keeping their blood sugar up, avoiding a crash.



FORMULA PREPARATION

Neonates should be fed replacement formula exclusively for the first 3 ½ to 4 weeks of life until they are ready to transition to gruel. Never substitute cow, goat, almond, or soy milk for replacement formula, as it does not have all the nutrients needed for healthy growth. These can also cause dehydration and diarrhea, which can be fatal to a neonate.

Mixing Formula (Breeder's Edge or KMR/Esbilac)

- Use 2.5 parts water to 1 part formula.
- **KMR/Esbilac only:** add 2 ML Karo syrup to small bottles (kittens) and 4 ML to big bottles (puppies).

Mixing Formula

Neonates are prone to constipation when transitioning to formula. A ratio of 2 1/2 parts water to 1 part formula is used until weaning.

- Corn syrup (Karo) will also help prevent constipation: add corn syrup (Karo) to the formula at 2mLs in the small bottles (60 mL – kitten bottles) and 4 mLs for the large bottles (120 mL - human baby bottles used for puppies). Adjust accordingly if bottles are not full.
- When mixing formula, use a measuring cup or spoon to mix the amount you need.
- KMR/Esbilac has a tendency to clump. For fresh batches use hot water from the tap and stir thoroughly. Clumps can clog the nipples and prevent the neonate from getting its food; some of the small clumps could also lodge in the neonate's throat.
- Try not to mix more KMR/Esbilac than can be used in a day's time. It will spoil, so it should be thrown out after 48 hours. Mix the formula in a separate container from the bottle being used to feed, and label with the date/time it was mixed. Blender bottles work great for this!
- After mixing, store in a covered container in the refrigerator. Do not leave mixed KMR/Esbilac out while feeding. Bacteria can grow quickly, so put it back in the refrigerator after filling the bottle.
- KMR/Esbilac powder should be refrigerated after opening the container or bag.
- Use only clean bottles and nipples. Wash with hot water and soap after each feeding. Rinse thoroughly and air dry.
- Occasionally we will use Pedialyte to mix with formula. This is if we feel the neonate needs the extra support. Nursery staff will let you know if that is to be added.

FORMULA PREPARATION CONT.



Visit [Petag.com](https://www.petag.com) for informational videos on mixing formula and more. There are several correct ways to mix formula. The important thing to remember is proper storage of the powder and mixed formula.

Warming Formula

Formula should be warmed for feeding. Neonates will not eat cold formula and cold formula can in turn make them cold as well! Cold formula powder or refrigerated mixed formula will need to be brought to an appropriate temperature before feeding.

- Hot water bath
 - Run very hot tap water in a bowl, deep enough to submerge the bottle. A bigger coffee mug or similar container works great so the water stays warm. You can also warm the water in the microwave for 30 to 60 seconds (depending on how cold your formula is).
 - Place the bottle in the bowl or mug to warm gradually.
 - Be sure to shake bottle gently to avoid hot spots in the formula.
 - Tip: rewarm water and use to keep bottle warm as you feed!



Don't forget to perform the "skin test":

- Drop some of the warmed formula on the inside of your wrist.
- Formula should be slightly warmer than room temperature.
- If the formula burns you or feels too warm for you, it's too hot for the neonate to drink.
 - If you get the formula too warm, add a small amount of cold formula and test again.
 - Repeat until formula is not hot. Stop before formula gets too cold.



HOW MUCH DO I FEED MY NEONATE?

Neonates should consume a minimum of 5g of formula per 100g of body weight. This breaks down to 1g of formula per 20g of body weight. Alternatively, they should consume 5% of their current body weight each feeding. You can use this formula for bottle babies and for gruel!

Formula: (initial body weight in grams/20) = how much neonate should consume or weight gained during feeding.

The goal is to get your neonate to consume the amount calculated out. It is just as important to not overfeed, as underfeed. **Do not overfeed!**

Weigh Every Day!

Weighing is the only way to be absolutely sure your neonate is getting enough food. Often, it looks like they are eating enough but they end up wearing most of it. Daily weight gain is an indicator that the diet is meeting their nutritional needs. Keep a daily log of their weights! For bottle babies, log their urine and fecal output also! This is great for reference and to visually see if your neonate is gaining weight each day.

If your neonate is not gaining weight (staying the same) in a 24 hour period or is losing weight please call the Nursery!

Neonates should be weighed at roughly the same time daily; not only to ensure adequate weight gain but also to calculate the amount they should be eating with each feeding. They should gain about 10 – 15 grams per day. This is where the scale in your kit comes into play.

For bottle babies we will weigh them, feed them, then weigh again each feeding. For neonates transitioning to gruel/wet food we can continue to Weigh-Feed-Weigh to ensure they are eating enough. Once your neonate gets the hang of eating on their own, we can weigh once or twice a day, depending on how they're doing.

Remember: if you ever feel worried a neonate is not eating enough you can always use the formula above. Calculate out how much they need to consume, then Weigh-Feed-Weigh.

FOR EXAMPLE:

Neonate weighs 132g before feeding.
 $132 / 20 = 6.6$ (round up to 7)
Add 7 to the initial weight of 132g
 $132g + 7 = 139g$ (the amount they should weigh after feeding)

HOW MUCH DO I FEED MY NEONATE? CONT.

AGE	FEEDING FREQUENCY
0-2 weeks	Every 2-3 hours , 24 hours a day (through the night) 7-8 times a day.
2-3 weeks	Every 3-4 hours , 24 hours a day (through the night).
3-4 weeks	Every 4-5 hours , gruel is introduced at 4 wks. Still bottle feeding. By 4 wks, can go over night if feeding consistently throughout the day. Sleep!
4-5 weeks	Every 5-6 hours , more gruel, only bottle feeding here and there depending on neonate.
5-6 weeks	Every 6 hours , from morning until 10 or 11 PM. 4 times a day.
6-8 weeks	Every 8 hours. They should be on kibble with wet food offered. Feed 3 times a day.

NOTE: Each neonate is different! We accommodate them and their needs. You may see information that may not 100% line up - this is because each neonate is different and research on neonates is ongoing. Try to view a lot of this information as parameters. Remember, if you have any questions, please ask!



HOW MUCH DO I FEED MY NEONATE? CONT.

Kitten Bottle Feeding and Stomach Capacity Chart

Estimated Kitten Age (Weeks)	Kitten Weight (Lbs, Oz)	Kitten Weight (Grams)	Daily Caloric Requirement	Amount Of Formula Per Day (ml)**	Amount Per Feeding (ml)*	Approximate Number Of Feedings Per Day***
< 1 WEEK	2 oz	57 g	11 kcal	15 ml	2 ml	7
	3 oz	85 g	17 kcal	23 ml	3 ml	7
	4 oz	113 g	23 kcal	31 ml	5 ml	7
1 WEEK	5 oz	142 g	28 kcal	38 ml	6 ml	7
	6 oz	170 g	34 kcal	46 ml	7 ml	7
	7 oz	198 g	40 kcal	54 ml	8 ml	7
	8 oz	227 g	45 kcal	61 ml	9 ml	7
2 WEEKS	9 oz	255 g	51 kcal	69 ml	10 ml	7
	10 oz	283 g	57 kcal	77 ml	11 ml	7
	11 oz	312 g	62 kcal	84 ml	12 ml	6-7
3 WEEKS+	12 oz	340 g	68 kcal	92 ml	14 ml	6-7
	13 oz	369 g	74 kcal	100 ml	15 ml	6
	14 oz	397 g	79 kcal	107 ml	16 ml	5
	15 oz	425 g	85 kcal	115 ml	17 ml	5

** Concentration 0.74 kcal/ml. Most commercial kitten milk replacers in the US provide less than 1 kcal/ml (0.74 kcal/ml), acting to increase the volume of milk required to meet caloric needs. This can be problematic in terms of the number and size of feedings given relative to stomach capacity and more likely to result in gastrointestinal disturbances. This may also account for why bottle fed kittens grow slower than kittens that nurse off a mother.

*** As the kitten is adjusting well to the milk and the feeding volume, you may be able to increase the volume fed to help reduce the number of feedings per day. Be aware that exceeding the stomach capacity (amount per feeding) may put the kitten at risk of aspiration, vomiting, diarrhea, and gas build-up in the stomach and intestines.

Information and chart provided by Maddie's Fund

HOW MUCH DO I FEED MY NEONATE? CONT.

Puppy Bottle Feeding and Stomach Capacity Chart

Puppy Weight (Lbs, Oz)	Puppy Weight (Grams)	Daily Caloric Requirement	Amount Of Formula Per Day (ml)**	Amount Per Feeding (ml)*	Approximate Number Of Feedings Per Day***
2 OZ	57 g	11 kcal	13 ml	2 ml	6
4 OZ	113 g	23 kcal	25 ml	5 ml	6
6 OZ	170 g	34 kcal	38 ml	7 ml	6
8 OZ	227 g	45 kcal	50 ml	9 ml	6
10 OZ	284 g	57 kcal	63 ml	11 ml	6
12 OZ	340 g	68 kcal	76 ml	14 ml	6
14 OZ	397 g	79 kcal	88 ml	16 ml	6
16 OZ (1 LB)	454 g	91 kcal	101 ml	18 ml	6
2 LB	907 g	181 kcal	202 ml	36 ml	6
3 LB	1,361 g	272 kcal	302 ml	54 ml	6
4 LB	1,814 g	363 kcal	403 ml	73 ml	6
5 LB	2,268 g	454 kcal	504 ml	91 ml	6
6 LB	2,722 g	544 kcal	605 ml	109 ml	6
7 LB	3,175 g	635 kcal	706 ml	127 ml	6
8 LB	3,629 g	726 kcal	806 ml	145 ml	6

** Concentration 0.9 kcal/ml. Most commercial puppy milk replacers in the US provide less than 1 kcal/ml, acting to increase the volume of milk required to meet caloric needs. This can be problematic in terms of the number and size of feedings given relative to stomach capacity and more likely to result in gastrointestinal disturbances. This may also account for why bottle fed puppies grow slower than puppies that nurse off a mother.

*** As the puppy is adjusting well to the milk and the feeding volume, you may be able to increase the volume fed to help reduce the number of feedings per day. Be aware that exceeding the stomach capacity (amount per feeding) may put the puppy at risk of aspiration, vomiting, diarrhea, and gas build-up in the stomach and intestines. Puppies at that are between 3.5 -5 weeks of age are usually eating some solid food, decreasing the amount of milk replacer required to meet daily caloric requirements. This may result in less frequent milk feedings.

Information and chart provided by Maddie's Fund

FEEDING YOUR NEONATE

Positioning and feeding tips

Hold or place neonates on their stomachs and arch the bottle to about 45 degrees so less air gets in. Remember: do not feed neonates on their backs and never feed a cold neonate! They must be warm to the touch and active. Their body temperature should be above 97 degrees.

If you are having trouble getting a neonate to “latch” onto the bottle, try pulling back gently on the nipple when they start to suck. This will encourage them to suck harder and latch on. You can also try moving the nipple back and forth in the neonate’s mouth.

Kittens’ ears will often wiggle during feeding and bubbles will form in the bottle. These are both positive signs that the neonate is properly latched on. You can use a toothbrush to stroke kittens with short, brisk strokes to imitates mom’s licking and can encourage suckling.

They should be allowed to drink at their own pace. Do not squeeze the bottle. When a neonate has had enough formula, it will usually get some bubbles around its mouth and its tummy will be very rounded, almost pear-shaped. They will usually unlatch on their own once they are full.

- Please visit: maddiesfund.org/orphaned-kitten-care-how-to for awesome videos to help visually. Kittens and puppies are very similar when they are bottle babies, so the care will be the same. The main difference is the type of formula used. **Avoid “googling” and random youtube searches. There is a lot of wrong information out there!** The leaders in shelter medicine and animal care are the ASPCA and Maddie’s Fund.

ALERT CLINIC:

If you see bubbles coming out of the nose or hear gurgling, the neonate may have accidentally sucked formula into the lungs (aspirated). If this happens, hold it upside down until it stops choking. Contact the nursery to determine if it needs to start antibiotics for aspiration.

Syringe Feeding and Tube Feeding

Sometimes a neonate may need to be syringe fed or tube fed. Syringe feeding is only done if a neonate is not eating. This is usually because the neonate is not feeling well, or is having trouble breathing through their nose due to illness. If they cannot smell, they cannot find the food. Cats and dogs, like humans, are obligate nasal breathers, which means they prefer to breathe through their nose instead of their mouth. Ultimately it can become a decision of breathing or eating.

This applies to tube feeding as well. This should only be done if staff deems it necessary! At that point we will explain how to properly do so.

ELIMINATION

Mother cats and dogs groom their babies to stimulate urination and defecation on a regular basis. If you are acting as the babies' new mom, you get this important duty. Very young orphan kittens and puppies will not be able to urinate and defecate without your help, so this is a crucial part of the process.

To stimulate, gently rub the neonate on its lower abdomen, as well as the genitals and rectum, with a cotton ball/pad or fragrance-free baby wipe dipped in warm water. Make sure you rub only enough to get them to eliminate — over stimulation will irritate the area. Keep an eye out for chafing and lingering dirt, and do not let them get chilled.

- Bottle babies should be stimulated before and after each feeding.
- Bottle babies will usually urinate every time and defecate at least once daily.
- Use a new wipe for each bottle baby each time you stimulate.
- Start with the belly rub and move to genitals and rectum.

Please note that bottle babies will not have solid or formed stool while they are on a formula only diet.

When neonates get to be about 3 ½ - 4 weeks old, they don't usually need our help and will start to go on their own. Continue to monitor urine and fecal output. Keep in mind that transitioning from milk to soft and hard food may cause constipation or diarrhea for a short period of time.



ELIMINATION CONT.

House/Litter Training

For kittens, place a litter box in their area, near them, with **non-clumping** litter. **Clumping litter can create blockages in their stomachs and respiratory passages if ingested and should be avoided with young kittens.**

- When introducing a litter box, you can also introduce some dry kitten food as well. This gives them something to chew on instead of the litter.
- When you are teaching a kitten to use a litterbox, it can help to place their feces in the box so they know where to go. If you have a kitten that is defecating outside of the box, move the feces in the box. This can help them figure it out a little easier.

For puppies, paper training or puppy pads can be used to help keep their area cleaner.

- At 3 weeks old, when puppies begin to urinate and defecate on their own, you can start placing them over a potty pad or newspaper when stimulating. This will begin the association of using the bathroom on pads or paper.
- For puppies 4 weeks and up you can do the same. When you see a puppy sniffing a lot in a particular spot, this indicates they are trying to find a place to potty. Pick them up and place them on the potty pad. Even if they have started the process of using the potty, you can pick them up and place them on the pad. Repetition is key. They will begin to associate the pads/paper with going to the bathroom. Never scold or push their face in it. They do not associate the discipline to the act. Be sure to reward them for doing a good job!
- At 5 weeks, when the puppies can start going outside, you can begin getting the puppies on a routine for using the bathroom outside.



CLEANING

Bottle and Nipple Care

The nipples that come in the animal bottle kits will need to have holes punctured in them. There are different methods to accomplish this but remember: you can make the hole bigger but you can't make it smaller. When you hold the filled bottle upside down, the formula should form a drop on the end of the nipple. **It should not drip fast or pour out of the bottle.** Snipping a small "X" in the nipple works best. Maddie's Fund Orphaned Kitten Care videos are helpful here too. Remember: human baby bottles and Miracle Nipples come with a hole already in them. Do not alter, unless told otherwise by staff.

Bottles and nipples should be cleaned with dish soap and hot water, rinsed thoroughly, and dried **after each feeding**. Formula left in the bottle and nipple will grow bacteria very quickly so keeping them clean is essential to keeping neonates healthy.

Linens and Nest

Keeping their space clean and dry is very important to keeping neonates happy and healthy. When blankets become damp, wet, or otherwise soiled, remove them and replace with clean and dry blankets. The heating pad can be wiped off with soap and water and then dried. Blankets need to be washed with fragrance-free detergent and bleach.

You can use Simple Green for spot cleaning while the neonate is still in your care. Be sure to not spray the neonate. You can also use bleach for heavier soiled areas. A ratio of 1 part bleach to 30 parts water should be used. If ringworm is present, a ratio of 1 part bleach to 10 parts water should be used. **Be sure the neonate and/or mom is not in the area when cleaning with bleach. The area has to be completely dry before placing them back in that area.**

Bathing Neonates

Neonates tend to get messy, especially from gruel. You can over bathe a neonate, so it is best to bathe only when necessary. Warm wash cloths can be used for spot cleaning. It is important we only use plain, regular Dawn Dish Soap or tearless kitten/puppy shampoo. Most adult pet shampoos are not approved for use on any animal less than 8 weeks old. **Please watch Maddie's Fund "Orphaned Kitten Care" video on proper bathing!**

Some things to remember:

- Ensure water is warm - not hot and not cold.
- After rinsing, **dry completely with a towel**. It would be best if the towel was warmed in the dryer. Have a heating pad warmed and ready in their nursing area (if not on already). You can also warm the area with a space heater. You can use a blow dryer on low to help dry them. **Be sure the blow dryer does not get too hot.**
- **Remember: if a neonate remains wet, their body temperature can drop dramatically.**

WEANING NEONATES & GRUEL FEEDING

Weaning a neonate off of a bottle can be easy or difficult depending on the puppy or kitten. Some will figure out wet food and kibble easier than others. Luckily, they all eventually get it, though it may take longer for some.

Never hesitate to reach out to us if you have questions! We are here to help you through the process.

What is gruel?

Gruel is a mixture of milk replacer (KMR/Esbilac) mixed with wet canned food and water. If the neonate was not fed formula before (if they were found as an older orphan instead of as a bottle baby), only wet food and water is used for gruel.

This is then mixed to a soupy, applesauce consistency, warmed for about 10 seconds at a time (in the microwave) until it is the appropriate temperature, and served in a low sided bowl.

How do I know if they are ready for gruel?

- Teeth begin to break through the gums.
- They can fully support themselves — standing, keeping their head up, and beginning to walk.
- Making lapping motions with their tongues or chewing on the nipple as they nurse.

How do I make gruel?

If the kitten or puppy is being weaned from a bottle, the first gruel feeding will mainly be formula.

1. Calculate/make how much formula your neonate needs (weight in # / 20).
 2. Instead of placing formula in a bottle you will put it in a shallow dish, then add about ½ to 2 teaspoons of wet (can) food. Mix well. Think chowder-like consistency.
 3. Place your neonate in front of the dish. Some will try right away to eat it. Others you may have to encourage, by placing a small dab on their nose or gently guiding their face down to the dish. Sit back and enjoy the messy fun!
- Alternatively, if your neonate has not figured out how to lap out of a dish yet, you can add the wet food to a bottle. Make the formula, like usual, and then add the ½ to 1 teaspoon of wet food to the bottle. This can be very clumpy! The blender bottle works great at mixing or you can use a Magicbullet/Nutribullet. Be careful using blenders or immersion blenders! They can add a lot of air and can break down/deplete essential nutrients. Just slowly pulse with a blender.

WEANING NEONATES & GRUEL FEEDING

- The ½ to 2 teaspoons is dependent on how many neonates you have. Puppies tend to have bigger portions, unless they are a small breed. Generally we will add 1 teaspoon of wet food to a 60 mL bottle of formula for kittens or 1 ½ to 2 teaspoons of wet food to a 120 mL (human) bottle of formula for puppies. Be sure not to fill the bottle all the way to the top line with formula. Leave some space to compensate for the wet food.
- You may still need to feed a bottle to ensure proper nutrition. Remember Weigh-Feed-Weigh. The weaning process can take a while. We gradually will make the food thicker and thicker each day until formula is completely phased out.

If your neonate is coming to you as a “true gruelie” (around 4 weeks old) then we will mix the canned food with water. Remember each neonate is different, we will tell you at pick up what they need to eat. Neonates with moms can follow the same at this point.

1. Start with ½ a tablespoon of wet food and mix in enough water to make it an applesauce consistency.
 2. Warm, place in a shallow dish, and place neonate in front of dish. You can put some on your finger, if they are unsure, or gently guide their face to the dish.
- Whether feeding gruel with formula or just water, it always best to warm. They tend to like warmed food better. You can warm water gruel in the microwave (at 10 second increments). **Formula should always be warmed with a hot water bath.** Warm canned food separately, then mix. Always stir with a clean finger to ensure no hot spots and that it is not too hot.

If your neonate is over 4 weeks, they should be able to eat wet food on their own without being watered down. Simply feed about 1 tablespoon, per kitten, each feeding of wet food. Puppies can range from 2 to 4 tablespoons of wet food, per puppy, each feeding. Once again, ask if you are not sure. Remember each neonate is different and you may need to feed more or less than is written here!

Feeding Dry Food (they can start eating dry when back molars come in)

- **Kittens** should eat 1/8 cup up to 1/4 cup of dry food per day.
- **For puppies**, they should eat 1/2 a cup of dry food per 2 pounds of body weight. Please be sure to feed puppies small bites to start. Once a kitten/puppy is about 6 weeks old we will start to phase out wet food more and more.

As they get older we can still offer neonates wet food, especially if they are having a hard time gaining weight or are having a hard time transitioning. By 8 weeks their diet should mainly consist of dry food.



MOM WITH NURSING BABIES

Typically taking care of a mom with babies is easier than bottle babies, because mom does all the work!

Keeping her comfortable

They will need to be set up in a kennel or crate in a warm, draft free area. Alternatively, you can set up a nesting box or use a kiddie pool. It is important that mom has a way of getting away from her babies, but babies are secure in a smaller area.

Make sure you have comfy bedding for her and the babies. Fleece blankets are always a great option. A heating pad on low underneath one layer of the blanket will help mom keep her babies at an optimal temperature. Always remember to have a buffer between them and the heat source! Be sure to provide comfy bedding but do not add too many layers or make it bulky- babies tend to squirm into the layers and folds, and get trapped. You can always use a space heater to warm the area. Please use caution with this. **Make sure the mom and babies cannot get to the space heater.**

Mom should be placed in a low traffic area, like a spare bedroom or bathroom. It is important that mom feels safe and her stress level is low. Sometimes mom cats will be overwhelmed by large spaces, which is why a bathroom or spare closet work very well. She will need to be kept separate from your personal animals, sometimes all the way until the babies are weaned and separated from her.

A nursing mom can be very protective of her babies (what mom wouldn't be?). As with bottle babies, nursing neonates should have minimal handling the first few weeks of life. Handling babies too much can stress the mom and babies out. So as tempting as it may be, let them be.

Moms should have 24/7 access to food and water. Mom dogs will need access to puppy food and mom cats will need access to kitten food while nursing. Kitten/puppy food is higher in calories and mom will need all those extra calories to help stay healthy as she nurses. Unfortunately, a portion of moms are found malnourished if they are strays. In that case staff will talk to you about a diet to help her gain weight as she nurses.

The first couple weeks of life a mom will rarely want to leave her young. Have her area set up already before bringing her home. That way she can enter a calm environment. Place them in the area, then leave them alone. **Some moms may want you to stay, which of course is fine, but step away from the nest.**

- Cats may want to remain in the carrier to nurse. Just place the carrier in the area and open the carrier door. If not big enough, place in a nesting box.
- Dogs: gently place puppies in nesting area. Mom will follow the puppies on her own.



MOM WITH NURSING BABIES CONT.

- It is important to protect babies from drafts and cold, even if they have a mom.
- Some moms will not like having the heating pad under them while they lay in the nursing area. Be sure she can lay down in a spot without the heating pad, but the babies can crawl to the warmth if needed. Keep heating pad on low.
- Sometimes moms may not seem interested in nursing their babies. There can be many reasons why; new mom, stress, they enjoy your company. This only becomes an issue when the babies start losing weight as this can indicate they are not eating enough. **Please call the nursery so we can discuss options.**
- Although rare, maternal neglect can happen. The main factor is stress. This is why it is important to maintain a calm environment.
- If you see no weight gain or you see weight loss in any of the neonates, you may need to provide supplemental feedings. If you are concerned about weight loss please call the nursery. We will discuss an action plan.
- It is common for animals coming from a sheltering environment to develop an upper respiratory infection. This can affect the babies, as well. If you notice any coughing, nasal or eye discharge, trouble breathing, or congestion, please call the nursery.

Helping mom care for her babies

Nursing neonates will still need to be weighed every day to make sure each is gaining as it should. Record the weight each time so you can track for weight loss, gain, or no change. Mom can be weighed once a week on a personal scale or at the nursery during her wellness exams every 2 weeks. Unless mom becomes ill and stops eating or drinking, weighing at her checkup should be adequate.

Things to look out for:

- Weight loss or not gaining weight, just maintaining
- Mom does not seem to be producing enough milk; teats do not look full. They could just need time to reduce stress levels and to receive better nutrition than they were getting previously.
- Signs of illness in mom or babies: coughing, sneezing, runny nose, eye discharge, etc.
- Mom seems stressed (a stressed out mom can stop producing milk).
- Unusual discharge from mom's breasts. Milk should always be white.
- Mom seems to be ignoring a kitten or puppy, or acting outwardly aggressive towards them.

Weaning their babies

Mothers will begin to wean their babies when babies are around 3-4 weeks old. It is a gradual process that lasts until the litter is about 8 weeks old. By 8 weeks a puppy/kitten should fully be weaned from their mother. This is why we encourage mom and babies to stay together until at least 8 weeks of age. When teeth start to come in, nursing will become uncomfortable for mom. This is when you will see her spend less and less time with her young. This is normal. At this point we will introduce soft food/gruel to help mom along the process. **We will follow the same guidelines in the gruel section.**

MOM WITH NURSING BABIES CONT.

- During the weaning process you will hear mom growling, snapping, or “being mean”. This is normal! She is teaching them to be gentle and to give her space. Those teeth are sharp!
- 6-8 weeks is a critical socialization time. At this time she will be teaching them a lot. This is why orphans tend to be more bitey and not understand normal dog/cat language. Mom, along with littermates, is critical in teaching these things. You will see her pinning them down, barking, snapping, swatting, playing, growling, and more. The puppies and kittens may cry out. It is rare but sometimes young moms can play too rough. If you are concerned about certain behaviors, please call the nursery.
- The weaning process is gradual so mom’s teats can dry up over time. It is normal to see some puppies and kittens nursing until 8 weeks of age. This is mainly for comfort, like a pacifier. Some moms will continue to produce milk all the way through 8 weeks. It is important to give mom time away from her babies (cats can roam in a different room, dogs playtime/walks away from babies) so her milk production will slow.



MEDICAL CONCERNS

If you have any concerns about your neonate(s) please contact the nursery! **If it is after normal nursery hours please call the emergency phone.** Please leave a detailed message and someone will return your call.

Please note that most vet medicine is not approved for use in neonates. There are a limited amount of medicines that can be safely used to treat young puppies and kittens. **This is the reason we do not send neonates to emergency veterinarians.** Humane euthanasia will be performed if we believe the neonate is suffering and not responding to treatment.

Monitor Symptoms	Get in immediately
<p>Call the Nursery if it worsens or if you have questions. 405.548.7612</p>	<p>Call to bring in same day! 405.548.7612 Emergency phone if after hours: 405.830.3780</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild discharge from eyes or nose • Mild swelling in eye or eye lid closed • Lack of appetite; not eating much, skips a meal • Mild lethargy (somewhat tired, sluggish) • Sneezing and/or coughing • Weight loss; a few grams • No bowel movement for 24-36 hours; straining using litterbox; bloated • Decreased appetite • Loose stool • Hair loss; scaly and red skin 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuous, repeated vomiting • Diarrhea lasting longer than 24 hours • Bleeding of any kind; nose or in urine/stool • Any trauma; dropped, unconscious, wounds • Difficulty breathing • A lot of greenish (not clear) nasal or eye discharge • Loss of appetite; will not eat/has not eaten in 24 hours. • Extreme lethargy; won't get up, no activity • "Fading"

What do if your neonate passes away?

Neonates are a very fragile population, therefore a percentage of them will not survive. While we recognize it is painful to lose one, it is not your fault! Most of the time it is not related to anything you did or did not do and it couldn't be helped, despite your very best efforts. Each neonate you saved by volunteering is a neonate that received a second chance because of you!

If they die during business hours, please take to the Nursery/IHC. If they die after business hours, place in a plastic bag, then the freezer, and return to the Nursery/IHC during business hours. Staff must see the animal to properly confirm identity prior to entering the disposition in our database. The neonate may be returned to you for burial as long as you live outside of Oklahoma City limits. It is against the law to bury animals in your yard within Oklahoma City limits.



SOCIALIZING AND ENRICHMENT

Socializing and enrichment is an important part of puppy and kitten development. Once a neonate becomes more mobile and learns to walk around, they begin the learning process. Once you start to see your puppy or kitten get more curious about their surroundings you can introduce them to some new things.

Start early!

Enrichment can start as early as them learning to walk. This a good time for you to put down different textures for them to walk on. Up until this point they have mainly only felt a fleece texture or blanket.

- Do not take them out of the nest to put them somewhere new, let them find it on their own. If they are in a room with hard floors (tile, wood, etc) put down a small towel near the nest, or another carpet like material. This way they can have a better grip while they walk.
- It is okay to let them walk on the hard floor. It is all part of exploring!
- You can put some toys out too. They may not play with them just yet, but they are great ways for them to feel different textures and to navigate around. Remember, while they are learning to walk and wobbling around, keep their area small. This helps prevent injury.

Socializing is an important part of development. Puppies and kittens will learn a lot from their littermates and their mom (if they have one). Another part of socializing is the human/other animal interaction. Most bottle babies get used to handling very easily, but may be wary of strangers. Neonates with moms will look to you for food and fun, but may still be nervous about new things.

When your puppies and kittens are around 4 weeks old let them meet new people! Then when they are closer to 6 weeks you can introduce them to your personal pets. Remember, always supervise interactions, especially with children and other pets, so you can step in if the neonate becomes overwhelmed. Stress can cause health issues, so always make sure they are enjoying themselves. We do not want to imprint bad situations onto them.

Some fun examples of enrichment and socialization:

- Set up a sensory obstacle course for them to explore.
- Praising during interaction and exploration.
- Cuddling!
- Photoshoot (have fun, snap some cute shots)
- Spatial awareness – keep litterbox and puppy pads in one spot. Helps them become familiar with what separate areas are for.
- Once old enough, let them learn from personal pet's behavior.
- Routine! A routine helps mold a good family member.



ABOUT YOU!

It takes a special person to foster, and a very special person to foster neonates. We get it, it can be tough sometimes. This is why it is important to take care of yourself! You are so AMAZING!

Self-Care

Compassion fatigue is a very real condition. Sometimes caring too much can hurt. If you ever reach a point of exhaustion let us know. We are here to support you!

- Get plenty of rest, drink water, and eat healthy foods.
- Find support through us, other fosters, family, and friends. Build a tribe of positive support. It takes a community to save these animals!
- Remember why you started! You are in this to save lives and that is awesome. Don't forget, it shouldn't be your whole life; be sure to keep up with your hobbies and relationships.
- Take breaks when needed!

Getting Attached & Letting Go

If you didn't get attached, we would be surprised! It is tough not loving these babies, especially since you raised them. Not to mention, they are so cute! Each time we say goodbye it is hard, but try not to focus on the sad part of it. Instead, pat yourself on the back and congratulate yourself on this accomplishment! You just saved this tiny animal! Instead of sitting back you spent your time making an impact on your community. Because of you this animal will now go on and find their forever home. Imagine the impact that kitten, puppy, cat, or dog is going to have on that person or family! It feels good, doesn't it?

- Advocate for your foster! You have put in so much hard work keeping them alive, work on them finding a great home. Network among friends and family so you can see them as they continue to grow into a healthy adult animal!

