

Santa Rosa County Animal Services

Cat/Kitten Foster Program Handbook



4451 Pine Forest Road, Milton, FL 32583

www.santarosa.fl.gov/animals

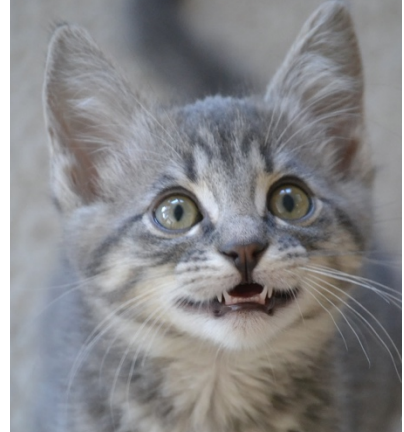
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Santa Rosa County Animal Services Thanks YOU!

Thank you for opening your heart and home to a cat or kitten(s) in need. Whether you foster a kitten who needs some time to grow, or an adult cat who needs a little extra TLC, you make it possible for us to provide the very best care possible for all of our residents at Santa Rosa County Animal Services. Fostering is messy, rewarding, stinky, adorable and sometimes a heartbreaking job. We certainly could not provide the level of care we do without valuable foster homes like yours.



From all of our cats and kittens, thank you!

Greetings, Foster Parents!

Thank you for participating in the foster care program. We appreciate your willingness to open your heart and home to homeless mother cats and kittens. Your dedication allows our organization to rescue cats we would otherwise have to turn away due to limited space in our shelter.

The guiding mission of the kitten foster care program is to give mother cats and kittens the individualized care and socialization they need to prepare them for adoption. Information gathered during the foster process helps us place cats and kittens in homes and with families who can best meet their needs. Specific goals of the program include:

- Providing a safe, healthy, nurturing environment for mother cats to raise their kittens.
- Socializing shy or timid cats, and kittens.
- Giving our long-term residents time away from the shelter in a home setting.
- Allowing mother cats to recover in a relaxing, uplifting environment.

This manual outlines the responsibilities and expectations of Santa Rosa County Animal Services foster volunteers. This should serve as a resource throughout your foster care experience.

Before taking your assigned foster cats/kittens home, please:

- Review the overview of key responsibilities and policies.
- Complete a foster application online or at the shelter.
- Read and sign the foster care agreement.

At any time you can change your foster preferences by clicking here:
www.shelterluv.com/public_foster_profile/sas

Overview of Key Responsibilities and Policies

To ensure a successful foster program, we ask that you follow our general policy guidelines to ensure that each foster home is responsibly providing a wonderful home for these kittens to grow up and explore the world in. To this effect, you will want to keep in mind the following:

1. Keep cats/kittens inside at all times.
2. Cats/kittens should be in a carrier at all times when leaving the house.
3. Always keep doors/windows closed, unless covered with a screen that is securely in place. The window should only be open no more than one inch with a support in place so the window cannot be opened any further. A frightened cat/kitten can escape through the tiniest holes!
4. If a cat/kitten does manage to get outside, you must attempt to get the cat/kitten back inside immediately. If you delay, the cat/kitten may get frightened and run away, decreasing your chances of getting the kitty back inside. Do not chase the cat/kitten as this may make him/her run further away from your home. The easiest way to get your mother cat back to your home is to put her kittens in a secure carrier by the door or window that she went out. The kittens should cry for her, and her maternal instincts will kick in bringing her back to them. Often mother cats will come back in to the house or foster room to be with the kittens. If this is not working, you can also place her litter box outside your door so she will smell where she needs to come back in. Most mother cats were strays and are familiar with being outside, but that does not mean that they all have 'street smarts'. Some will hide and be scared as soon as they get out. Look under bushes, decks, foundations, etc. If the mother cat is injured, she may be silently hiding as to not attract predators. If you cannot get the kitty yourself within one to two hours, call the shelter to determine a strategy to recapture the kitty. Santa Rosa County has humane traps available for this purpose.
5. When fostering a cat/kittens with a contagious illness the cat/kittens must remain segregated from the other animals in your home for the duration of the stay.
6. When fostering a cat or kittens, it is important to keep them separated from your other animals for at least two weeks to ensure they are healthy. A seemingly fine cat can become ill due to stress from a move. Foster kittens must not be introduced to your resident cats unless your resident cats are indoor only cats. Kittens should receive two vaccinations before they can meet any of your household pets and these visits should be limited and supervised. Food dishes, water bowls, and litter boxes must be picked up so they do not use each other's boxes or bowls, or they should meet in an area where litter boxes and food/water dishes are not present.

Kitty-Proofing Your Foster Room and Home

Cat-proofing and especially kitten-proofing your home is much the same as child-proofing it! That means hiding or removing cords, removing small items that kittens can choke on, etc.

To begin, your foster room should be completely cleared out and only consist of basic cat necessities (i.e. bed, food, water, litter box and toys). This means removing all toiletries and decorative items from the bathtub, counters or any other surface the kittens can access. Kittens love to play with anything they can get their paws on and could be injured by heavy or sharp items.

Make sure to put your baby bag up. Please do not leave it out for your foster kittens to get into as the items inside can be very dangerous to them.

Once your kittens are vaccinated and clear of any illness, you may decide to have them visit other areas of your home or interact with your resident pets. These visits should be short and well supervised. Do not give the kittens free reign of your home unsupervised. They can get injured, lost, have accidents outside the litter box, etc.

Before introducing your kittens to other areas of your home, please do a thorough walkthrough, and keep the following concerns in mind:

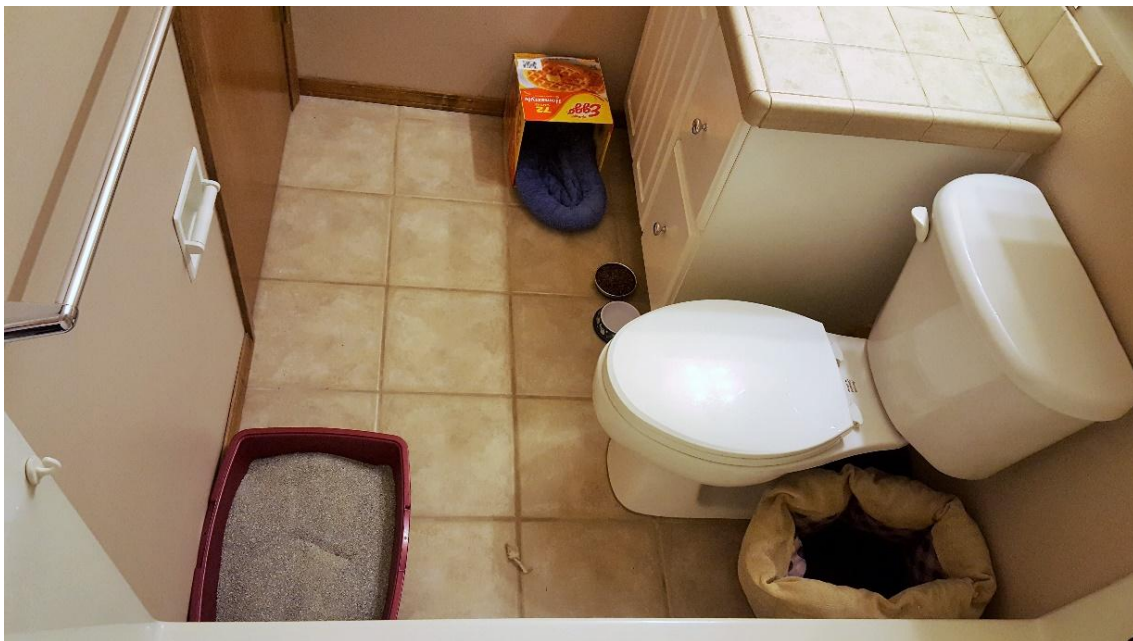
- Kittens might chew on electrical cords resulting in burns or even death. Protect your electrical cords with plastic tubing or by spraying them with a [bitter apple](#) tasting deterrent that you can find at pet stores.
- Kittens can choke on small items. Keep rubber bands, paper clips, needles, – anything kitty can swallow – out of reach.
- Keep plastic bags, which can cause suffocation, out of reach.
- Secure any heavy items that could fall and potentially injure them.
- Refrain from using any hot appliances while the kittens are out. Kittens are naturally curious and could get burned.
- Review the [toxic houseplant list](#) and remove all poisonous plants from reach of your kittens. Or, to deter kitties from munching on poisonous and non-poisonous plants, you should spray the plants with a product sold at pet stores for this very purpose.

Housing

You must provide a clean, safe environment for your foster cats/kittens. SRCAS recommends that you always start your kittens in a non-carpeted, easily sanitized room in the unlikely event that your kittens have a contagious illness that cannot be removed from carpeting. If you end up with a contagious illness in a carpeted room, you will either have to remove the carpeting or not use that room for fostering ever again. Kittens can be moved to a carpeted room after a two-week quarantine period if they are not showing signs of illness. SRCAS recommends a bathroom or an unused bedroom as your foster room.

If you are fostering a pregnant cat or young kittens, keep the following tips in mind:

- Consider protecting your furniture and carpet with sheets or plastic table covers. Kittens can be messy, especially when they're learning to use the litter box! Make sure sheets/covers are securely tacked down so kittens can't get under them.
- Until the age of three to four weeks, the mother cat will clean the genitals of her young to stimulate the bowels and bladder. Kittens without a mother will need assistance from you. As the kittens start showing interest in the litter box, provide them with an easily accessible box – such as a shoebox lid, cookie sheet, or cake pan. Once the kittens are more mobile, you should give them a larger litter box. Dollar stores have lots of inexpensive options.



Litter Box

Kittens should be introduced to the litter box when they start eating solid foods. They need a box with shallow sides: a cookie sheet or cake pan is perfect. After they have eaten, place them in the box. They will learn how to use the litter box very quickly. Sometimes they learn how to use the litter box without any help from us, as they have been watching mom use her box.

Observe how the kittens watch all of mom's actions: they find her quite fascinating and are learning how to act like cats by observing her.

Orphans may need a little more assistance from you. Simply pick them up and place them on the litter after each meal. When you bring home your foster kittens, show them where you placed their litter box. Keeping the box clean is very important...daily cleaning is a must. SRCAS recommends cleaning the litter box at least two or three times a day. No cat or kitten wants to use or smell a dirty litter box. Make sure the litter box is as far away from the food and water as possible. Place the bed near the food, not the litter box.

When first learning to use a litter box, kittens do best with store-bought recycled paper litter or clay litter. Once the kittens are older (around eight weeks old) you can give them clumping litter. Please do not use clumping litter with kittens under eight weeks. They can accidentally try to eat it or may inhale the dust and it could irritate their respiratory system.



Clumping litter for older kittens



Recycled paper litter for younger kittens

Expenses and Donations

SRCAS covers all medical care expenses for foster pets if performed at SRCAS on-site veterinary clinic, or at other veterinary clinics approved in advance. SRCAS will not reimburse any personal expenses incurred by foster parents for unauthorized veterinary care; seeking veterinary care for your foster cat or kittens at a clinic other than SRCAS on-site hospital is not permitted without explicit SRCAS director's approval.

Items to keep track of:

- Food
- Food/water bowls
- Litter
- Litter box
- Scratchers/scratch posts
- Mileage to and from the shelter or adoption events

Expenses that you incur during your term as foster parent, whether for supplies or medical care, cannot be applied to an adoption fee. These expenses, however, may be considered a tax-deductible donation. Keep all receipts and ask for an in-kind donation form once your litter is adopted.

SRCAS will provide you with food and litter, along with basic foster supplies. You are welcome to provide any supplies that you are able to but that is not a requirement in order to foster our shelter animals.

Always consult a tax professional to determine whether your foster expenses are tax-deductible.



Facebook Group

Want to Connect with other fosters, volunteers and staff?

Join the "[Santa Rosa County Animal Shelter Staff, Volunteers and Fosters](#)" Facebook Group! This group is open to current, active volunteers, fosters, and staff members. There are several ways this page can be used:

- Take candid, cute photos and videos of shelter pets. We can use these, along with your stories and observations to construct posts for the shelter's public Facebook page. This helps find homes for more difficult-to-adopt animals. Always include the Animal ID of the pet you are photographing at the end of your post so they can be easily identified at the shelter.
- Have non-urgent medical or behavioral questions about a foster pet? Ask it to the group and you are likely to get immediate responses.
- Want to share a happy story or informative article with the group? Go ahead. We all love to learn and there are so many great resources out there! Consider following [Santa Rosa County Animal Services](#) our public page.
- Also, [Maddie's Fund](#) offers an abundant amount of information that may be helpful for specific topic areas or just to browse around their website to gain more knowledge on your foster animal or general questions you may have. Another wonderful resource that deals with kittens is [Kitten Lady](#).

The Facebook group is a wonderful tool and is a key part of our Volunteer and Foster program. There are two things we ask you NOT to post on the Facebook page, as they are better addressed with the management team:

- Concerns or complaints about a staff member, another volunteer, or an issue at the shelter.
- Complaints, suggestions, or concerns about shelter policies or procedures.

All group members are expected to conduct themselves with respect and compassion towards everyone else on the page. The shelter reserves the right to moderate comments and posts. If you have a Facebook account, you can request to join here:

www.facebook.com/groups/SRCASFostersAndVolunteers

How to Pick Up Your Foster Kittens

Once you are assigned a group and called to make sure they are ready for you to pick up, please go to the front desk at the shelter. From there, the front desk staff will get a staff member to gather your supplies and kittens. If you have a carrier, please bring it with you. Ensure you have properly cleaned and sanitized the inside to prevent the spreading of illnesses, parasites, or disease.

Make sure that each of these steps is completed while you are at the shelter picking up your kittens:

- You will receive a baby bag full of supplies, a carrier (if needed), and your kittens
- You will also receive appropriate food for the age of your kitten and litter if needed
- You will need to sign the foster agreement (only needs to be signed once and we keep a copy on file at the shelter)
- Please make sure you take a copy of the medical records home with you, if you prefer, those records can be emailed instead.



The "Cheese" Group. Photo by Laura Murphy

Naming Your Kittens

If you are taking home kittens, then your kittens may already have a name. You are welcome to rename them but will need to let us know so we can update it in the computer system. Please email fostering@santarosa.fl.gov once you have chosen names. Please use names that are friendly, non-offensive and not too difficult to pronounce or spell. Try to make them unique so that we don't have 10 Fluffies.

Quick tips on naming your kittens: Theme your kittens' names for easier marketing. The "Cheese-Group," above, were named Cheddar, Provolone, Gouda, Parmesan, and Mozzarella.



Socializing Your Foster Cats and Kittens

First and foremost, we ask that you treat your foster cats/kittens with the same love and care that you give to your own companion animals. Daily attention (at least one full hour a day) from you and other family members or friends makes them more people-oriented and more adoptable. This includes petting, playing, cuddling, trimming nails and grooming.

By spending time with your foster cats on a regular basis, you will not only increase their chances of being adopted quickly, but you will also be able to determine their likes and dislikes – this helps us place them in homes with families that best meet their needs.

Special Care

Semi-feral kittens are a special challenge. These kittens can be socialized, but only with daily handling. Sometimes they will hiss and spit when you attempt to pick them up. Gently pick them up and hold them close to your body, giving them a sense of security. Speak softly as you pet them. These kittens need plenty of reassurance and attention. do not give them a room in which they can hide from you. They need a box or crate in which to feel secure, but you must have access to them at all times. They will not become socialized unless they are handled many times each day. They need to become accustomed to the sights and sound of people and a working home. This should be done gradually but consistently.

You should also monitor your foster cats for behavior problems, such as inappropriate urination or scratching furniture. If problems arise, contact the shelter to discuss behavior modification strategies. SRCAS is not responsible for damages that might occur to yourself, others in your household, or your personal property as a result of feline behavior problems while in foster care.

If you have “cat-friendly” dogs in your household, feel free to introduce them but please use caution with introductions. Felines who have been raised with dogs and adult cats who enjoy (or at least tolerate) the company of canines, often have an advantage on adoption days!



Mimzy and her Newborn Kittens - Photo by Madeleine Barker

Feeding and Growth

Kittens with mom: The recommended diet for pregnant or nursing cats and their kittens is a diet of canned and dry kitten food. Kittens generally start showing interest in “real” food around four to five weeks of age. Canned food should be fed three to four times a day in small amounts (one quarter of a three oz. wet food can). Dry food should be left out all day for them.

Kittens without mom: Newborn to four weeks: Often, unweaned kittens are brought to SRCAS without their mother. As a foster parent you will have the double responsibility of bottle-feeding and socialization.

Bottle Feeding

When to bottle feed a kitten

If we receive a kitten that is too young to eat on their own, has been abandoned, refuses to eat or if the mother cat is no longer nursing her kittens or her milk has dried up, we then need to bottle feed the kitten. A mother cat’s milk can dry up when mother cats are sick, on medications, or too stressed. (Please make sure that mom cat is getting proper care). Supplemental bottle feeding can also be helpful when a kitten loses weight or fails to gain weight for a three-day period, even if it is still nursing on mom. In this case, you will only be “topping off” the kitten after it nurses.

Note: If you have kittens that need to be bottle fed and you are needing a little instruction, watch this [webinar](#). This can be a tricky process! Be patient with yourself and your kittens. It gets easier with practice.

Foster parents will need the following supplies for bottle feeding:

- Snuggle Safe disc or other device designed for animals
- Cat carrier or cardboard box for kitten nest
- Fleece blankets, cloth diapers, etc. for bedding
- Milk replacer formula (in baby bag)
- Nursing bottle with nipples (in baby bag)
- Cotton balls or gauze pads
- Thermometer (in baby bag)
- Scale (in baby bag)

How to bottle feed a kitten

Warmth first! Heat kittens slowly so that you do not put them into shock. You can do this with a towel that has been heated in the dryer, place them on a towel that is resting on a Snuggle Safe disc, or tuck a kitten under your shirt and use your own body heat. While heating the kitten, gently massage the body and extremities to get blood flowing throughout the body.

Never let a kitten lie on a heat source without cover. Make sure that they have space to crawl off the heat source if they get too warm. Constantly check the warmth of the heat source to make sure it cannot burn the kitten, and that it is staying warm enough.

Kittens cannot maintain their own body temperature. The average rectal temperature of a newborn kitten ranges between 92-97 degrees. Between 2-21 days old, a kitten’s temperature will be about 96 – 100 degrees. You will need to build the kitten a nest to keep it warm. The temperature in the nest where the kitten is kept should be 86 degrees. The temperature can be lowered 5 degrees a week thereafter until a mild 75 degrees is reached. To create a good nest, place them in a carrier and put a towel or blanket over the carrier to trap in the heat. You can also do this with a cardboard box.

| 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 |
| | 9 oz | 255 g | 51 kcal | 69 ml | 10 ml | 7 |
| 2 weeks | 10 oz | 283 g | 57 kcal | 77 ml | 11 ml | 7 |
| | 11 oz | 312 g | 62 kcal | 84 ml | 12 ml | 6-7 |
| | 12 oz | 340 g | 68 kcal | 92 ml | 14 ml | 6-7 |
| 3 weeks* | 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 |
| | 16 oz (1 lb) | 454 g | 91 kcal | 123 ml | 18 ml | 5 |
| 4 weeks* | 1 lb, 1 oz | 482 g | 96 kcal | 130 ml | 19 ml | 4 |
| | 1 lb, 2 oz | 510 g | 102 kcal | 138 ml | 20 ml | 4 |
| | 1 lb, 3 oz | 539 g | 108 kcal | 146 ml | 22 ml | 4 |
| 5 weeks* | 1 lb, 4 oz | 567 g | 113 kcal | 153 ml | 23 ml | 4 |

Table by Maddie’s Fund

It is important not to overfeed or underfeed your kitten. Overfeeding can cause serious health problems that begin with diarrhea and end with dehydration. One way to tell whether you’re consistently feeding too much is the appearance of grayish stool. On the other hand, a kitten who is not fed enough will cry continuously, appear restless, and then listless. Refer to the above table for how much and how often to feed your kitten.

Check your bottle’s nipple to see if formula drips from its tip. If it does not, you will need to widen the hole. You can do this by using a hot needle to poke a larger hole or use a razor blade to make a small “x” in the top. Do not make it too wide though. You only want the formula to drip slowly, not pour, out of the nipple. Be sure you sterilize the bottle and nipple before each feeding, and warm the formula to no more than 100 degrees. Test the formula on your wrist – it should feel warm, not hot.

Start feeding

Place your kitten on its stomach on a towel so they can grip the towel with their nails. Lift their head to a 45-degree angle. Squeeze a small drop of formula on to the tip of the nipple. Insert the nipple into their mouth (you may have to open their mouth for them). The angle will help keep air from entering their stomach and will keep milk at the front of the nipple. Never hold the kitten on their back or in the air when you feed them!

When your kitten is full, their tummy will be slightly rounded, and bubbles will form around their mouth. If the kitten has not finished the bottle, do not force the kitten to swallow the rest of the milk.

If the kitten is not drinking well, you can use a toothbrush to brush down their sides. This mimics a mother's tongue and will often soothe them. They should nurse from the bottle better using this technique.

Burping your kitten

Just like human babies, kittens need to be burped. Hold the kitten up against your shoulder, pat and rub them gently on their back. Not all kittens will burp every time. If the kitten did not finish her bottle, you can offer it to them again.

Stimulating your kitten

Kittens younger than three weeks of age cannot eliminate by themselves – they need your help. After feeding and burping the kitten, take a washcloth or gauze moistened with warm water and rub over the kitten's stomach and bottom. The action mimics a mother cat's licking and stimulates the kitten to relieve themselves. Kittens need to be stimulated to eliminate after every meal. Rub until you see evidence of urine and/or stool. A kitten should urinate with every feeding, but it may only defecate two to three times daily.

Washing your kitten after the meal

Make sure you wash your kitten(s) after every meal. Kittens are messy and will need the simulation of the mother's tongue. To mimic this, you will need to get a damp warm washcloth and stroke the kitten from head to tail with short "licks" like mom would. Make sure you gently towel dry the kitten when you are done. Never submerge your kitten in water.

Dietary habits with growth

- At four weeks, you can start introducing canned food (they usually start showing interest in what mom is eating). Mixing a little warm water with the canned food and placing it in a container with low sides (plate, small dish, etc.) will usually do the trick. Expect them to walk through it too. No one ever said kittens were neat. After a few attempts, they will get the idea. Feed them their last meal just before bedtime. They usually eat and then go straight to sleep. You can warm the food in the microwave for about six seconds. Make sure to stir the food and test it with your finger. Do not give hot food to kittens.

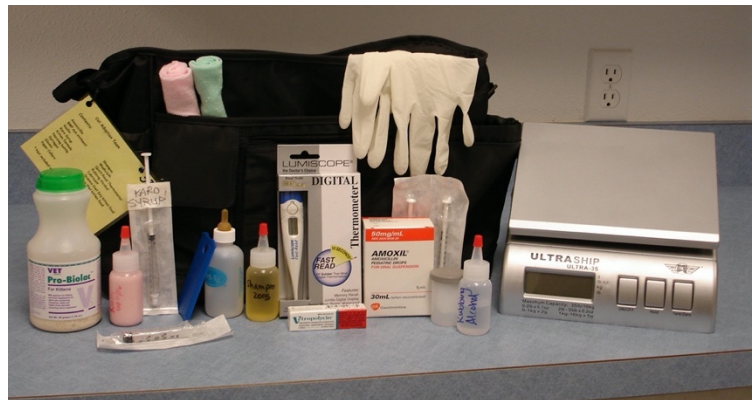
- Five to six weeks old: three small (approximately one quarter of a three ounce can) meals of canned food per day per kitten. If that is too much food in the beginning, you can adjust accordingly. Always leave plenty of dry food out for them to eat during the day.
- Six to eight weeks of age: three meals a day (about one quarter of a can) per kitten, and free feed dry food. Always keep dry kibble out at all times for the kittens to eat.



Overfeeding can cause digestive problems. Frequent small meals are preferred to large meals. All cats and kittens need fresh water at all times.

The Baby Bag or Box

SRCAS wants you to know how much we appreciate you and we want you to feel supported. To that end, we loan fosters some supplies with each group to use during your fostering experience, and we want to be sure you have the following information to answer frequently asked questions.



The baby bag holds all your supplies and is a good place to keep your medical records, so everything is together. A laminated card on the outside tells you what number baby bag or box you have, what should be in it, and gives SRCAS phone number, which will usually get you a live person during normal shelter hours. Please be sure to return the baby bag or foster box when you return your fosters, so that it can be cleaned, stocked, and passed on to the next foster parent!

You should find these supplies inside:

- Gloves
- FortiFlora Probiotic Powder/Benebac
- Baby Shampoo
- Washcloths
- Thermometer
- Alcohol
- Lubricant
- Baby Bottles (if applicable)
- Formula (if applicable)
- Flea Comb
- Syringes
- Karo Syrupz
- Pyrantel
- Diaper Rash Ointment
- Nail Trimmers
- Snuggle Disk
- Scale

The following sections will provide more information on each of these supplies, including their intended use and when to use each item.

Gloves

Some folks have trouble with the “EEEWWW” factor; these will help. Let us know if you want more.

FortiFlora/Benebac

You should start giving FortiFlora or Benebac to your kittens as soon as they get home if they are four weeks or older. This will help with any diarrhea that may occur due to food changes, medications, etc. If your kittens have had FortiFlora or Benebac for three days and are still experiencing diarrhea, see the diarrhea protocol for more information.

Baby Shampoo and Washcloths

If you have to bathe your kitten, be aware that water temperature is really important! A cat’s normal body temperature is between 100-102.6° F, so the water needs to be pretty warm, like your bath water. Try not to do full immersion baths unless you have to. If you can get away with just a bottom or a face, or a leg, do that. Imitating as best you can the firm licking motion of a mom cat’s tongue will help the kitten feel more comfortable about the whole thing. And remember a little shampoo goes a long way! A general rule of thumb is once you have rinsed them off really well, rinse once more. Make sure they have a place to dry off that is toasty warm and not drafty and keep them there until they are completely dry. Call the shelter with any questions or post to the Facebook group as your question may also be able to help someone else.

Thermometer, Alcohol, and Lubricant

Quick tips on temperature taking: Thoroughly clean the end of the thermometer with alcohol. Thermometer covers can also be used. Then, put a little lubricant on the end. Have another person hold the kitten for you or wrap him in a towel like a burrito to keep him still. Support the hind end while the thermometer is inserted in the rectum. Insert the thermometer ½ inch into the kitten’s rectum, enough to cover the metal tip. Keep the thermometer in until it starts beeping, then remove and clean with alcohol. Normal kitten temperatures are as follows: newborns 97-98F, 2-4 weeks 98-100F, 4+ weeks 99-102.6F. Call the shelter with problems or questions.

Use distractions – kittens will almost always struggle while their temperature is taken.

- Use a sock to cover their head and front legs briefly to prevent scratching or biting.
- Bob their heads.
- Blow on their head or face.
- Tap on a glass or metal object.

Baby Bottles and Formula

Bottle feeding supplies will only be in your baby bag if you take home kittens under four weeks. See pages 12-14 for instructions. This video is also helpful when caring for neonatal kittens.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=zr0jVNeLavs&feature=youtu.be

Flea Comb

Occasionally, kittens will come in with fleas. We do give them a diluted mixture of Capstar to treat them. We ask you to flea comb the babies daily until the fleas are gone, usually between 12-36 hours. If you are still noticing fleas, please contact the shelter so we can give them an additional dose.

Syringes

There should be two 1 ml syringes and one 3 ml syringe in your baby bag. These are for mixing and administering medications if needed, and for syringe feeding if required.

Medical Supplies

Please contact the shelter before using these supplies.

- Karo syrup (for extreme hypoglycemia)
- Pyrantel dewormer
- Additional medications not prescribed that you are wanting to give

Diaper Rash Ointment

Diaper Rash Ointment can be applied to the kitten's bottom and down their legs if they are having diarrhea and are experiencing redness or irritation. Apply a very thin amount as a barrier. This can be applied after cleaning and as often as needed until resolved.

Snuggle Disk and Scale

These will be used often with young kittens. Please use the disk to keep the kittens warm. Please weigh your kittens daily to ensure proper weight gain.

Medical Records and Maddie's Pet Assistant App

When you pick up your kittens, you should receive copies of their medical records. Their records can also be emailed to you if you prefer. These records give you an approximate date of birth, weight at time of intake, what medical services have been done and what things your mom cat and kittens still need to have done, such as vaccines, deworming, etc., and when these things are due. We need your help to make sure these things get done on time and that the records get updated.

SRCAS does its best to track this, but there are hundreds of moms and kittens in foster care at any given time during kitten season. Things happen and necessary medications/ procedures get missed. It is YOUR responsibility as a foster parent to help us make sure that your foster cat and kittens are vaccinated and de-wormed when they are due. When you take kittens home, you should receive an email inviting you to join Maddie's Pet Assistant. While this isn't a requirement, it is encouraged. The app will help to remind you of vaccinations, allow you to share information on your foster animals, and will provide advice with issues you may be experiencing.

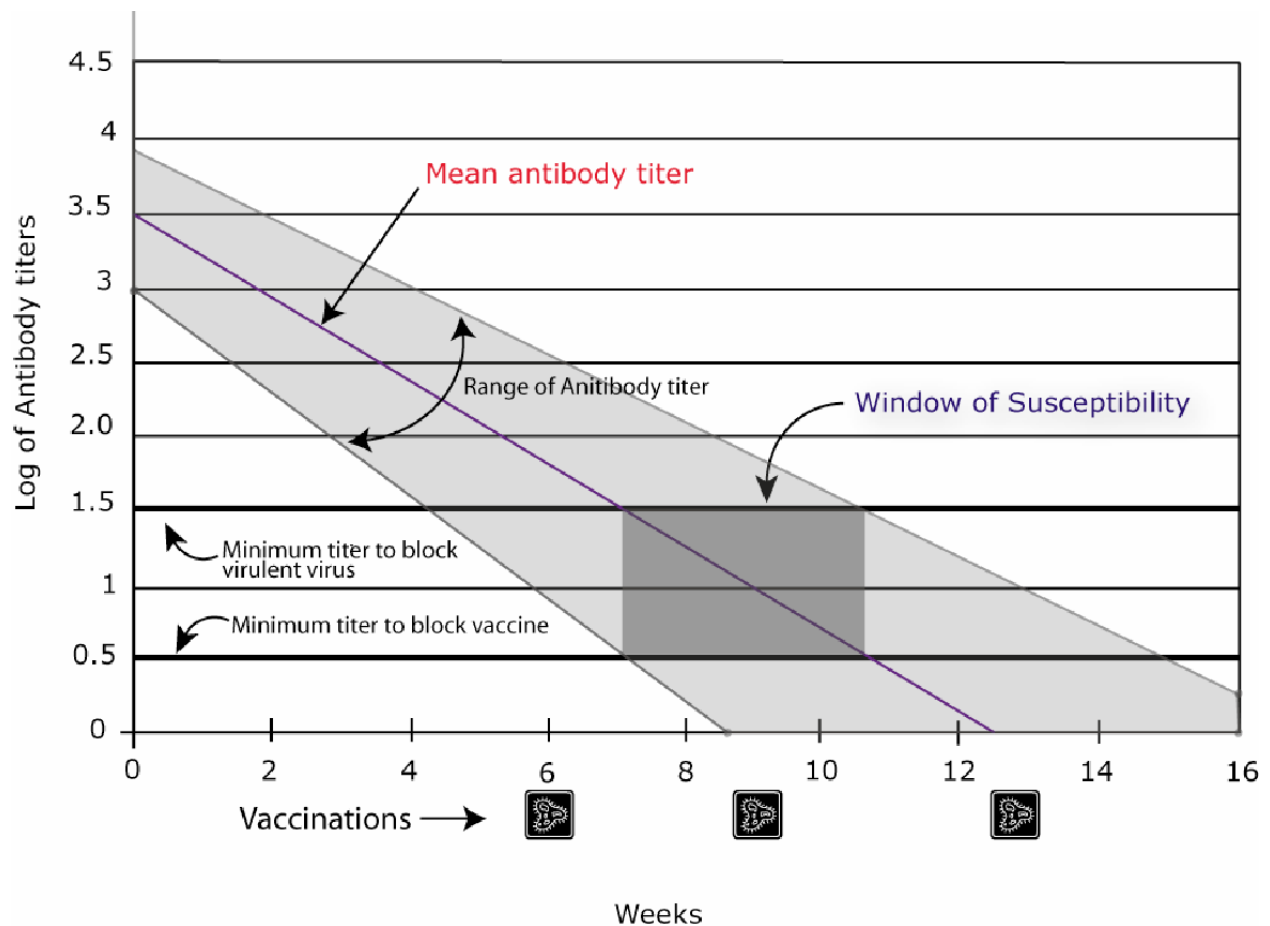


Photo by Debbie Brusius

Kittens and Vaccinations

When a kitten is born and first nurses on the mother, the kitten gets a dose of colostrum from the mother; this colostrum is filled with good immune cells, also known as Maternally Derived Antibodies (MDA), to protect the kitten from common feline illnesses. MDA will interfere with the kitten's ability to make their own protective immune cells. This dose of colostrum starts to disappear from the body of the kitten between four to eight weeks of age, but can last in the kitten up to 16 weeks, and we cannot predict the exact timing in the loss of the protection they receive from the MDA.

The idea of using a Modified Live Vaccine (MLV) is to stimulate the kitten's own immune system into making more protective immune cells, as the MDA disappears. By giving the dose of vaccine every two to four weeks, we are able to minimize that "window of susceptibility", which is the time when the MDA disappears and when the kitten is able to make their own immune cells to fight infectious disease. When we vaccinate kittens at 6 weeks of age that did not get any colostrum, the vaccine may be effective immediately. Kittens that received a large dose of colostrum, or MDA, may not be able to have a response to the vaccine until they are 18 weeks old; the best strategy then is to give the dose of vaccine every two to three weeks until the kitten is 18 weeks old.



Vaccine Reactions

Vaccine reactions can include, but are not limited to:

- Limping
- Not eating or drinking the normal amounts for 1-2 days
- Lethargy
- Pain at the sight of injection
- Unwillingness to play
- Low-grade fever



If any of these symptoms do not improve by 48 hours after the injection, please contact the shelter.

A more serious reaction happens fairly instantaneously and includes severe vomiting, diarrhea, facial swelling, and difficulty breathing. The kitten will need to be seen by a vet IMMEDIATELY.

Kitten Development and Vaccine Schedule

The following is some general information about what to expect at each stage of development. Remember that these are averages and depending on when kittens arrive at the shelter, the vaccination schedule may be slightly different than this chart. Please weigh your kittens regularly to keep an eye on development. Daily is best for the first three weeks or at any time if the kittens get sick, otherwise every two to three days is fine. Kittens should gain about four ounces per week, on average.

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Newborn | Completely dependent on mother. Eyelids closed, ears folded forward – cannot see, or hear. Sense of smell is the first to develop completely and is the most developed sense of birth. |
| 2-3 Days | Umbilical cord falls off. |
| One Week | Eyes begin to open – all kittens have blue eyes. Kittens huddle together for security and warmth. |
| 10 Days | Ears unfold, hearing will develop. Can move along with belly on the ground, “paddling” limbs for movement. |
| Two Weeks | Beginning to play with littermates, learning how to socialize. Can stand and balance, but cannot walk easily. Teething begins. Eyes are fully open. First deworming. |
| 16-18 Days | Incisors (tiny front teeth) break through. |
| 20-24 Days | Canine teeth break through. |
| Three Weeks | Mobile and eager to explore, making mock-aggressive rushes and stalking littermates. Cannot retract claws. Weigh the kittens regularly to keep an eye on development. Should be played with and handled at least 1 hour every day for good socialization. |
| 24-28 Days | Molars begin to break through. |
| Four Weeks | Introduce solid food in 3-4 small meals per day. Begin litter box training. Will begin wrestling with littermates. First vaccination for kittens. Kittens are vaccinated against common viruses that cause upper respiratory infection and feline distemper (FVRCP). Second deworming. |
| Five Weeks | Learning to hunt by pouncing on toys and each other. |
| Six Weeks | Adult eye color begins to appear. Second vaccination for kittens. |
| Eight Weeks and Older | mom and kittens need to be brought to the shelter for their scheduled surgery appointment. The exam will include: spay or neuter (if weight is at least 2 pounds and kitten is healthy), microchip, treatment for fleas and ear mites as directed by the veterinarian, another vaccine, and another deworming. They will remain at the shelter after surgery and placed into adoption as soon as possible. |

Vaccines and Deworming Treatments

Vaccines:

FVRCP is the vaccine for Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus, and Panleukopenia (URI and Distemper)

- FVRCP is given at 4 weeks of age or older depending on when they went through intake.
- 2nd FVRCP is given 14-21 days after the first FVRCP. No later than 30 days after or you will need to restart the series.
- 3rd FVRCP is given 14-21 days after the second FVRCP. No later than 30 days after or you will need to restart the series.
- 4th FVRCP is given 14-21 days after the third FVRCP. No later than 30 days after or you will need to restart the series. This vaccine may not be given if the kitten was vaccinated after its 18 week date with the 3rd FVRCP.

Deworming:

Pyrantel is for Roundworms. You might see these pass in the stool after treatment - they will look like spaghetti.

- Pyrantel is given at 2 weeks of age or older depending on when they went through intake.
- 2nd Pyrantel is given 14-21 days after the first dose. This series is repeated every 2-3 weeks until the kittens have returned for adoption. If you are more than 21 days late you will need to restart the dosing series.

Panacur is for hookworms. Hookworms can cause a kitten to be lethargic, refuse to eat, and lose weight.

Drontal or **Cestex** is for Tapeworms. You will see rice-looking segments in their stools. Drontal or Cestex is given at surgery time if needed (noted by the foster parent). Tapeworms usually do not cause significant problems and may be treated at time of altering.

Health Concerns

The following is a list of common medical issues you may encounter as a foster parent with your mother cat and/or kittens. This information is not meant to be extensive, just to give you an idea of what common ailments may look like and how they might be resolved. This is not a substitute for the expert advice of a trained medical professional.

If your foster kitten displays any of these symptoms, call the shelter immediately:

- Sneezing and/or congestion with green or yellow discharge from the nose and/or eyes.
- Coughing, wheezing, or heavy breathing.
- Diarrhea or vomiting – this can be life threatening to kittens!
- Straining to urinate or defecate – this can be life threatening, especially for male cats!
- Bleeding from any part of the body.
- Lethargy – kitten seems sleepy all the time.
- Fever.
- Paralysis.
- Extreme change in attitude or behavior.
- Not eating or drinking regularly.
- Temperature too low (below 98°F) or too high (above 104°F).



Photo by Barbara Pirk



Please have specifics ready to give when contacting the shelter. You will also need to take your kitten's temperature and weight before you call if your kitten is showing signs of illness.

Common Ailments

Upper Respiratory Infection

Upper respiratory tract infections (URI) or “kitty colds” are common occurrences in shelters. The majority are caused by one of two viruses, although they can have some bacterial components. Signs of URI include congestion, excessive sneezing, fever, discolored (green or yellow) nose or eye discharge, and/or a fever.

Please contact the shelter if you suspect your kitten(s) of having an Upper Respiratory Infection. They can get you in quickly for a medical foster exam and start your kittens on a proper treatment plan.

If your foster cat/kitten is showing signs of URI, please do the following:

- Make sure the cat/kitten is eating. Cats that are congested often won't eat because they can't smell the food. If they are not eating well, warm up a strong-smelling canned food, and offer it to them. You can also provide them several different options to ensure there is one they like.
 - Cats and kittens should be eating at least 50% of the food offered to them.
 - After 24 hours of not eating or eating less than 50% and no weight gain or loss of weight, please contact the shelter to arrange for a foster medical appointment.
- If the cat/kitten has eye or nose discharge, clean their nose/eyes at least twice daily with a wet, warm washcloth. Gently wipe the eye from the nose side out to the side of the face. If needed, the shelter will provide eye medications.
- If the cat/kitten is congested, place them in a room with a humidifier, or in a carrier in a bathroom with the hot shower running (steam) to aid congestion. You can also hold the kitten on your lap. Nothing should ever be added to the water like Vic's Vapor Rub or similar products. Also, never leave a kitten alone in a bathroom with the hot shower running unless it is in the carrier.
 - Place nasal saline drops in the cat/kitten's nose to aid congestion (1 drop per nostril, two to three times daily).
 - A product called “Little Noses” can also be used on URI kittens. Please use Little Noses without decongestant (saline-only solution). This product can be used as long as needed, and can be used in both nostrils up to three times daily.
- Provide supplemental warmth, especially for young kittens (rice sock, snuggle safe warming disk, etc.).

Conjunctivitis

Conjunctivitis is characterized by swelling and/or yellow or green discharge around the eyes. An eye ointment or drops are typically prescribed to treat the infection. **DO NOT ADMINISTER WITHOUT BEING ADVISED TO DO SO.** To administer the ointment, hold the kitten's eye open and squeeze the ointment into the eye moving across the eye without touching the tip of the tube to

the eye. To administer eye drops, hold the kitten's eye open and let then let the drop fall into the inside corner of the eye near the tear duct. Open and close the eye a few times to get ointment or drops worked in well.

To clean the kitten's eyes, use a cotton ball or gauze that is clean with warm water. If the eye is sealed shut, you will need to use the warm cotton ball as a compress and let it sit there for a few minutes. This will soften the crusted material around the eye. Once it is soft and pliable you can wipe it from the eye. Start at the area closest to the nose and wipe outward. Don't force the material off of the eye. You may need to continue to let the cotton ball set on the eyelid to soften the material for longer. Once everything has been cleaned around the eye you can administer eye medications. It will be helpful to the kitten if you can gently wipe the eye clean multiple times a day. If you do not have a cotton ball or gauze square you can use a soft washcloth. Make sure that you use a clean washcloth each time. Never share between kittens either.

Vomiting

Vomiting can be very dangerous for kittens because they dehydrate so quickly. Vomiting is not as common as diarrhea, so it's especially troubling, especially if the kitten is vomiting repeatedly. Call the shelter right away.

Dehydration

Dehydration can kill a small kitten quickly. Shelter staff can train you on how to do a skin tenting test, if you are interested. With smaller kittens another way to test hydration is to feel the gums. If they are sticky instead of slippery, the kitten is dehydrated. Also look at the color of the gums. If it is white with no color, please report this when you call the shelter.

Diarrhea

A few things too keep in mind when examining your kitten's poop:

- A little bit of bright red blood on poop is ok. So is a little bit of bright red blood on a kitten's bottom. It's usually a reaction to something that they ate, new food, stress, new location, etc.
- A lot of blood is not ok.

Diarrhea is probably the most common problem with kittens. Runny poop seems to be a kitten's preferred response to almost all stress or illness. It can be dangerous for kittens because the water lost in the stool tends to dehydrate them rapidly.

Diarrhea Protocol

All foster kittens will be sent home from SRCAS with a supply of FortiFlora. This is an oral supplement that helps with digestive health. Kittens should be given FortiFlora (sprinkled on wet food) if stools start to seem looser than normal. Keep in mind, changing diets can cause diarrhea.

If diarrhea persists for 3 days, contact the shelter:

- Contact the foster coordinator to set up a medical foster exam. Bring a stool sample with you. It will help us to rule out parasites or illnesses that may be causing the diarrhea.
- Optional: In addition to medication, give each kitten one teaspoon of canned pumpkin each day. Be sure to use plain canned pumpkin only, not pumpkin pie mix or spiced pumpkin mix.
 - If your foster kittens need medication, you will be given the medications along with instructions on when to administer.
 - If at any time you have questions regarding your foster's treatment plans, please do not hesitate to contact the shelter.

If there are no parasites found on the fecal test and still no improvement in diarrhea, then:

- Call the front desk and schedule an appointment with the shelter vet tech.
- If the kittens are eating well, gaining weight, active, and not dehydrated, the diarrhea may not need treatment and may be something the kittens just need to outgrow as their immune system matures.

Please note that any time during this protocol, if your kittens are vomiting or dehydrated, have liquid (not forming) diarrhea, diarrhea dripping from their bottoms, refusing to eat for more than 8 hours, or acting lethargic, you should immediately alert the shelter.

General and Emergency Veterinary Care

- SRCAS covers all approved medical expenses for the cats and kittens in the shelter's foster program. General medical care for SRCAS foster cats is provided at the direction of the veterinarians and veterinary technicians at SRCAS on-site hospital. You should contact the shelter during regular hours at 850-983-4680 or 850-281-5737 if it is an after-hours emergency.
- Once a foster cat or kitten is in your care, you are responsible for transporting him or her to the shelter veterinarian for necessary medical care. Always use a secure carrier, designed specifically for companion animals, when transporting cats.
- Should foster cats require care from veterinary specialists, SRCAS will arrange appointments with approved veterinarians in the Escambia/Santa Rosa area.
- Foster parents must not medicate or shave any cats in their care without prior approval from the shelter.
- If the onsite veterinarian is not available, then you may be able to seek emergency medical care. However, emergency care must be approved PRIOR to the vet visit. Call the shelter for guidance and approval from the shelter's director. Otherwise, SRCAS will not reimburse the veterinary expenses. On approval, you will be directed to one of the local emergency clinics. Upon arrival at an emergency vet clinic, you MUST tell the veterinary staff that you cannot approve any treatment or charges. All treatments will be authorized by the shelter director over the phone.



Be sure to get copies of the medical records of the emergency visit for the file.

Adoption Procedures for Cats/Kittens in Foster Care

- Kittens are available for adoption after eight weeks of age as long as they are two pounds, healthy, and spayed/neutered.
- Foster parents who wish to adopt their foster cats are required to pay the adoption fee and go through the adoption process. You do get first option to adopt but please let us know as soon as you know you plan on keeping so we can make a note of it.
- Occasionally, we allow adoption holds but this is on a first-come, first-serve basis. If two potential adopters view a kitten the same day, the first to get to the shelter and complete paperwork will receive the kitten.
- We strongly discourage adopting animals as gifts and require the potential adopter to physically see the animal and submit their own paperwork into the shelter.
- Santa Rosa County Animal Shelter typically adopts to indoor only homes. Because we believe cats live longer, safer lives indoors – and because we believe cats can live happy, active lives indoors – we adopt to indoor only homes unless a cat has been determined to be indoor-outdoor by the shelter.
- Santa Rosa County Animal Shelter will not adopt to a family that is planning on declawing a cat. Declawing a cat involves the removal of the claw up to the first knuckle joint. If someone is interested in a declawed cat the staff or adoption counselor will direct them to the cats in our care that have been previously declawed if any are available.
- All cats and kittens must be spayed or neutered before they are adopted. No exceptions!

“Test Driving” a Kitten

While some people may want to take a kitten home and first see how it works in their household, “trial adoptions” are not allowed while the pet is being fostered by you. The entire adoption process must be completed before a cat/kitten is taken to an adoptive home. **We do encourage you to post on social media and look for homes while they are in your care but please don’t send them with someone else until we are able to complete that person’s adoption.**

Showing Kittens at SRC Animal Services Offsite Adoption Sites

Foster families may want to show their kittens at the various offsite locations to facilitate the adoption for their foster animals. Sometimes this can be an emotional time with letting them go into another home. Please keep in mind, the care you have given them has helped to save their lives and you have been a very important part of their journey and to the goal of finding a forever home. We recommend kittens be around two lbs. and have been vaccinated for at least five days before going out in public. If you choose to participate in adoption events, you will work closely with the volunteer coordinator who oversees these events. Please note that these opportunities are currently very limited, and we highly encourage pre-adoption marketing from your home instead.



When you bring your foster cats to Santa Rosa Animal Shelter for adoption purposes, you are welcome to do a brief write-up about each cat's personality, and the kind of household that would be most suitable. You can fill this information out on the personality profile page we provided you with when you picked up your kittens from the shelter. If you have photos of your foster cats, please consider providing those as well. Many adopters love to receive "baby" photos of their newest family member!

Pictures

What kind of pictures? Digital only, jpg formats. Pictures should be less than 250kb, which is pretty small. Try to crop just around the cat itself. Please make sure the background is free of clutter. You don't need posed shots, but they do help. It's also great to show kittens with a resident dog, or maybe being held by a child. This helps adopters immediately identify which animals are most compatible with their own families. Pictures can be shared via email at fostering@santarosa.fl.gov, please also include their animal number so we can identify the picture. Your pictures that you post can be extremely helpful with them finding new homes.



Sibling Shot



Face Shot



Body Shot

Returning Your Foster Cat/Kittens

When your foster cats and kittens are ready for adoption, you can either schedule them for surgery so that you may take them home with you to market them, or you can bring them back to the shelter to stay until they are adopted. The following describes what steps to take for either scenario.

Bringing Them in for Surgery

- Spay/neuter appointments are typically made in advance during a foster exam. If your kittens are all over 1.75lbs and you do not have a surgery date set yet, please email the foster coordinator to request one. If you need to cancel an appointment, please email the foster coordinator with as much notice as possible.
- Please contact pre-adopters and let them know the day their kitten is being altered. Kittens can be picked up the day after their scheduled surgery.
- We may use collars to help identify the kittens. Please put collars on your mom and kittens at home the morning of surgery. If you do not have collars with you, then you will need to put them on once you reach the shelter. Collars should be snug enough so they cannot pull them over their head, but loose enough that you can fit two fingers in between the neck and collar. Cut off any excess collar carefully with scissors. This simple step is a huge help for us!
- Food and water can be offered normally with no fasting required.
- Bring kittens to the shelter for surgeries. If you cannot make the appointed time, please make arrangements through the shelter ahead of time to drop off the night before.
- Please complete the Feline Personality Profile sheet for each of the kittens. Your information and recommendations are a big help in finding them the perfect forever homes.
- Fill out the Foster Return Form completely. There is a place on the form to mark whether a kitten is pre-adopted, if you are picking them up after surgery, etc. This will only take a couple of minutes.
- Hand in your baby bag, scale, and Snuggle Safe warming disk (if applicable) to a staff member or volunteer who is checking you in. Please make sure they check it back in so you are not responsible for replacements.

Bringing Them Back to the Shelter

- Please email the foster coordinator to make an appointment for your kittens to return to the shelter. This way we will make sure they have a kennel when they arrive. Also, if your kitties are coming back to stay at the shelter to be adopted and have not yet been altered, please be sure to mark it on the Foster Return Form so we can make sure they get put on the hospital 'needs surgery' list.

- Bring in your completed Medical Records Sheets (attached to the kennel card) with your kittens the day of surgery.
- Please complete and turn in the Feline Personality Profile sheet for each of your kittens.
- Fill out the Foster Drop-Off Information Sheet completely. There is a place on the form to mark whether a kitten is pre-adopted. This will only take a couple of minutes.
- Hand in your baby bag, scale, and Snuggle Safe warming disc (if applicable) to a Shelter Associate.

Cleaning Between Your Foster Groups

The joy of letting go of one foster group is knowing that they will be going to loving homes while you are able to take in another that may not otherwise be able to find shelter to grow in such a loving environment. Please consider the following guidelines when transitioning between groups.

Once you have taken the kittens back to the shelter for surgery it is time to clean and prepare your kitten room for your next foster group. You will need to remove all bedding and wash it in hot water with bleach added. Follow your machine's guidelines for adding bleach to the wash load.



You will also need to clean the litter box. Empty all of the contents, and wash with hot soapy water. Rinse well and then fill with hot water, add one cup of bleach and let it sit for at least 10 minutes. Rinse and dry well.

For food and water dishes you can run them through the dishwasher, and they will be cleaned for your next group. Or you can clean them as you did the litter box if you don't have a dishwasher.

If you have carpeted floors you will need to vacuum well and spot clean any areas that need it. If you have a carpet cleaner you should use it between groups. If you do not have carpet, sweep and mop the floor. Once the floor is dry, mop again with a bleach water solution (1 cup of bleach to 1 gallon of water) and let it sit for ten minutes. Afterwards you will want to rinse with clear water and then let it dry.

You will need to wipe down all surfaces with a bleach water solution or Clorox Cleanup. You should also wipe the walls down. You do not have to do all of the wall but at least the bottom three feet.

If you have a bed in the room, change the covering on it. If you have a chair or couch in the room, you will need to vacuum it and spot clean if needed. Ideally, your foster room will be void of anything covered in material like a chair or couch unless it is covered with a plastic sheet designed to protect them.

Foster Program FAQ's

How do I become a foster parent?

You will need to fill out an [online foster application](#) or a paper application at the shelter. You will also need to sign a Foster Care Agreement that we keep on file. Animals needing foster care are listed on our website as well as on our [Volunteer/Foster Facebook page](#).

What is required of me as a foster parent?

Providing a safe, 'kitten-proofed' room in your home that contains the kittens' necessities, food, water, bedding, litter box, toys, etc. You are responsible for ensuring that your kitten receives any scheduled medical treatments on time, is healthy, and well socialized. It can be very rewarding knowing you are saving lives and the shelter thanks you for your help.

I found a litter of kittens. Can I foster them through your program?

Possibly, with approval and appointment. We will try to work with you on setting an appointment if you are the foster parent. If you cannot foster this litter it may take us some time to find a foster home. We will do our best to work with you. Please understand that during kitten season, our foster homes are limited.

What are the requirements for a foster room?

The foster room needs to be a designated place for your foster kittens to live the entire time. SRCAS recommends a bathroom for ease of cleaning. A spare bedroom, or other room could work as well. This room will need to be 'kitten-proofed' and have plenty of space for a litter box, food and water dishes, as well as sleep and play areas.

What supplies do I need to provide myself?

SRCAS will provide you with a baby bag full of basic medical supplies as well as provide all vaccines and medication necessary for your kittens. We will also provide you with formula, dry food, and wet food, depending on the age of the kitten(s). Litter is also available if needed. Foster parents can be given a litter box, food dishes, toys, bedding, and other small incidentals. If you need specific supplies, let us know which ones and we can make sure we have them ready when you come to pick up your litter of kittens. Any supplies you are able to provide on your own is greatly appreciated and it will help us to be able to spread our limited shelter supplies further.

How do I get a group of foster kittens?

After you have completed your foster application, please check out our website and our Foster/Volunteer Facebook group to see the latest postings and foster animals available.

How much do I need to supervise my foster group?

You need to do welfare checks on your foster group three times a day. This is to make sure everyone is healthy, eating, and using the litter box. You need to spend about one to two hours

per day interacting with your foster group so that they become well socialized. The younger the kittens, the more care that they will require.

Can my foster kittens and mom cat interact with my resident pets?

You must wait at least two weeks before introducing vaccinated foster kittens to your resident pets. You cannot introduce unvaccinated kittens to your resident pets until five days after the kittens receive their first vaccines. If your kittens or resident pet are sick, they cannot interact with each other. While we prefer the resident pets and foster pets to remain segregated throughout their stay with you, we understand that this is not always possible. You must supervise all interactions between your kittens and resident animals.

Can my children interact with the foster kittens?

We encourage your children to have supervised interaction with foster kittens. Children should not be permitted to handle newborn kittens. Caution and direct supervision is a must!

Do we bottle feed kittens?

SRCAS does not intentionally take in young kittens who will need to be bottle fed. However, occasionally a situation arises where kittens need to be bottle fed. If this is the case, we will need foster homes that are able to provide constant care for them. Bottle babies tend to eat frequently and will require weight checks and more medical care than larger kittens.

How will people know that I have kittens?

SRCAS will change the status of your foster kittens to “available” once they are fixed and ready to be adopted. We encourage you to share pictures of your kittens to your social media sites and to your friends. You are welcome to try to find them homes while they are in your care. The potential adopter will not be able to officially adopt though until the kitten is either spayed or neutered.

Do I have to have people come to my home?

Having prospective adopters come to your home is up to you as it helps to see the kittens in a relaxed home environment. It also allows you to answer any questions they may have and also allows you to meet the future owner of your foster kittens. However, it is not required. Also, many people do not prefer strangers to visit their homes and that is fine as well.

What is the next step for potential adopters once they meet my foster kittens?

They are welcome to fill out an adoption application online or you can give them a paper application that they can bring with them when they pick up their kitten. You will need to let the foster coordinator or staff member know that someone is interested in adopting them. We will need their name and contact number along with which animal they are interested in so we can place a memo in the computer. We do our best to ensure that the potential adopter is able to

adopt but are not able to hold animals for extended periods of time as the ultimate goal is to get them to their forever homes quickly after surgery.

Who do I call for help?

Please call the shelter 850-983-4680 for foster assistance from 8am-4pm M-F. If it falls outside of these times, you are welcome to post on the Foster/Volunteer Facebook page. If it is an absolute EMERGENCY that cannot wait until the next business day, the foster coordinator can be reached via text or calls at 850-281-5737.

If my foster kittens get sick do I take them to my own vet?

All veterinary care will be provided through SRCAS. Foster parents are not permitted to seek veterinary care from outside clinics. Any visits to outside veterinarians that are not pre-approved will be the financial responsibility of the foster parent.

What do I do if my own cats get sick?

Your kittens should be housed separately from your resident cats. However, we do recognize that cross contamination can happen. If your own cats get sick it is your responsibility to seek veterinary treatment. Remember there is always an inherent risk of disease when you bring new animals into your home. This is why we require that all animals in the home are current on vaccinations.

Do my resident pets have to be up to date on their vaccines?

For everyone's protection and safety your resident pets are required to be up to date on vaccines.

Do my resident pets have to be spayed or neutered before I foster kittens?

SRCAS does encourage all pets to be spayed and neutered to help control the pet population. This is not a requirement to foster kittens. We may be able to provide you with resources in our area to assist you, should you be interested, please ask.

Can my resident pets come to SRCAS for care?

Presently, we do not have the licensing to enable us to treat the public's owned pets. We will be happy to provide you with a list of local vets if you need it.

What if I have to leave out of town unexpectedly?

Contact the foster coordinator as soon as possible so that we can find alternate placement for your kittens.

Where can I get more information?

www.santarosa.fl.gov/867/Foster-Parent-Resources

Santa Rosa County Animal Services Foster Care Provider Agreement

I, _____, make the following statements and voluntarily enter into this Foster Care Agreement (hereinafter "Agreement") to provide temporary care as a foster caregiver for the Santa Rosa County Animal Services (hereinafter "SRCAS").

1. _____ I have never been convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment. I agree to notify SRCAS if I am convicted of animal cruelty, neglect, or abandonment in the future.
2. _____ I agree to comply with all other federal, state and local laws that pertain to companion animals and pet ownership in the jurisdiction where I reside.
3. _____ I understand that SRCAS reserves the right to check on the welfare of my foster animal, which may include a visit to my foster home. I further understand that if SRCAS finds a direct and immediate threat to my foster animal, SRCAS may remove the animal from my care.
4. _____ I agree to not take my foster dog(s) or my foster cat(s) to dog parks, off-leash areas, daycare facilities, crowded public areas, or any similar locations, unless given prior approval by the SRCAS Supervisor. I understand that I will be solely responsible for any injury or damage caused by my foster animal if I do not comply with this provision.
5. _____ I understand that SRCAS recommends that my foster animal(s) is to be kept separate from any other animals currently living in my home. I agree that if I choose to introduce my foster animal(s) to any other animal living in my home, I will be solely responsible for any illness or injury to other animals.
6. _____ I agree that the animal(s) that I foster will reside in my home and will be kept as a household pet(s).
7. _____ I agree to notify SRCAS by phone and in writing at 850-983-4680 or after hours emergency number 850-281-5737 immediately if my foster animal(s) becomes lost or separated from me.
8. _____ I agree to notify the SRCAS immediately by phone at 850-983-4680 or by email fostering@santarosa.fl.gov, if my foster animal demonstrates any aggressive behavior, including, but not limited to, biting a person or another animal.
9. _____ I agree to seek immediate medical attention if I am bitten by my foster animal, or if I receive any other physical injury resulting from interaction with my foster animal. I further agree to seek immediate medical attention for any member of my household who is bitten or suffers any other physical injury resulting from interaction with my foster animal.
10. _____ I agree to return my foster animal(s) at any time upon the request of any SRCAS staff member.

11. _____ I agree to receive and respond to calls and emails concerning my foster animal(s), from SRCAS.

12. _____ I agree to transport the animal to SRCAS or an approved veterinary clinic to receive medical treatment as requested by the SRCAS Foster Coordinator or SRCAS staff. If my foster animal experiences a medical emergency, I agree to follow the instructions outlined under “In Case of an After Hours Emergency” in manual.

13. _____ I understand that SRCAS will not reimburse me for any routine or non-emergency care for my foster animal that is not pre-approved in writing by the SRCAS Supervisor.

14. _____ I agree to contact the shelter at 850-983-4680 or fostering@santarosa.fl.gov for other any other emergency or non-emergency matters.

15. _____ I agree to assume the risks implicit in working with animals who may have been abandoned, neglected, mistreated, or who may suffer from an illness or disease. My participation in the SRCAS Foster Program is entirely voluntary and without the promise or expectation of compensation. I have no known physical or mental condition that would impair my ability to participate in the SRCAS Foster Program. I understand that while SRCAS staff carefully monitors all animals, SRCAS may have limited knowledge of their behavioral and medical backgrounds. Therefore, I understand that SRCAS makes no warranties or representations regarding my foster animal’s health, behavior, temperament, age, or breed. I further understand that environmental changes may affect and change the temperament of my foster animal(s).

16. _____ I understand and agree that Santa Rosa County, its members, officers, directors, agents and elected officials have no liability or responsibility of any nature for injuries or damage to any person, animal, or property which may be caused by my foster animal(s) or my participation in the SRCAS Foster Program. I, for myself and my heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, hereby release, indemnify and hold harmless Santa Rosa County, its members, officers, directors, agents, elected officials, and their heirs, administrators, executors, successors, and representatives from all liability for and all risk of damage or bodily injury or death that may occur to me (including any injury based on negligence) now or hereafter in connection with my foster animal(s) and my participation in the SRCAS Foster Program. I expressly agree that this release, waiver and indemnity is intended to be as broad and inclusive as permitted by the State of Florida and that if any portion is held invalid, the remainder shall continue in full force and effect.

By my signature below and, and by my initials beside each numbered paragraph above, I affirm that all statements and stated agreements contained in this document are truthful, I affirm that I have read and understand this Agreement in its entirety, and I agree to abide by the terms of this Agreement.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____