



 **Multnomah
County
Animal Services**

MCAS Foster Care Handbook: Kittens



Introduction

Welcome to the foster program at Multnomah County Animal Services (MCAS). As our most at-risk population, kittens require consistent, individualized attention to overcome health and fragility challenges. We rely on foster volunteers to provide a safe environment until these kittens are old enough and healthy enough for adoption. Fostering is a demanding but deeply fulfilling role, and your support is vital to the hundreds of kittens we serve each year. Thank you for becoming part of the MCAS foster family. We are excited you've joined us in the commitment to help animals.



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Fostering Process

Notification

The Foster Team sends all requests for kitten fosters as the need arises. Notifications include information regarding each animal. These include age, breed, weight, special needs, anticipated time length, a photo if allowed, and any other pertinent information. Interested parties should respond to the email or call the Foster Team.

Pickup

At this time, we cannot facilitate meet and greets between fosters or personal pets and eligible foster animals.

1. You will collaborate with the Foster Team to establish a pickup time. Notify them of the need for any supplies. The shelter can generally provide food, litter, a litter box, toys, a scale, heating disk, blankets, and a carrier for transportation.
2. Upon arrival, enter through the administration entrance.
3. Use the buzzer button to notify the front desk staff you have arrived. Tell them you are there to pick up a foster.
4. Once inside, check in with the front desk staff. This team will provide you with the foster agreement to read, sign, and date. If available or necessary, they will provide you with paperwork including medical records, medications, and any other supplies needed.
5. Once signed, the front desk will notify the appropriate team to bring your foster to the lobby.



Follow-up Appointments

Each foster has different follow-up appointment needs. In general, kittens need updated treatments every If the foster requires frequent medical appointments, the foster team will note this in the request summary. At minimum, you should expect to come to MCAS at least once a month for rechecks. Please contact Animal Health, at foster-medical-help@multco.us to schedule these appointments.

Adoption

Medical and Behavioral Clearances

Kittens fostered for **medical reasons** must be officially cleared by Animal Health before they can be listed for adoption. This typically happens during a scheduled recheck appointment. Once cleared, these kittens may return to the MCAS shelter for adoption or be listed for adoption out of a foster home.

The adoption timeline for **behavioral foster** kittens is guided by their socialization progress; they are typically made available for adoption once they reach a consistent level of handleability.

Preparing the Adoption Profile

Before a kitten is listed online, foster parents must provide the Foster Team with a clear photo and a compelling biography. To better engage potential adopters, please write the biography in the first person (from the kitten's perspective).

Be sure to highlight the kitten's unique quirks, enrichment needs, and how they interact with people or other pets. If a kitten does not receive interest within the first two weeks, please send a new photo or suggested edits to the bio. Highlighting a different characteristic can often help the right adopter find their perfect match.

The Adoption Process

Once an animal is cleared and the profile is live, foster parents are encouraged to network their foster pets to help find a home. All potential adopters must apply through the official website. Please note that adoptions are processed on a first-come, first-served basis for all qualified applicants.

The Basics

Feeding

Nursing mothers and weaned kittens under six months old require a diet of dry kibble formulated specifically for growth. Starting at three weeks of age, both moms and kittens should receive daily portions of canned food as outlined in the Kitten Development Chart (pg. 11). Additionally, all cats and weaned kittens must have constant access to fresh, clean water.



Cleaning Up

To maintain hygiene during the "messy" learning stages, prioritize spot-cleaning with a warm cloth rather than full immersion. This approach is less stressful and mimics maternal grooming. Should a full bath be necessary, you must ensure the kitten is thoroughly dried before returning them to their enclosure. Use a low-heat blow dryer or a low-setting heating pad to help maintain their body temperature during the drying process.

Foster kittens must always have a clean home environment. Wash bedding, blankets, toys, and materials in which they come into contact. In general, you should assume that anything you cannot clean with a 1 to 32 parts bleach and cold-water solution, could have the potential to transmit germs to other pets. Areas that cannot be disinfected could hold onto germs that could be spread to other animals or even people. Carpet cannot be properly disinfected and we strongly discourage allowing foster kittens to have access to it.

Learning About the Litter Box

Kittens often need a little guidance to master the litter box. A great way to build this habit is to gently place them in the box immediately after every meal. Once kittens reach four weeks of age, provide them with a low-sided box—items like cake pans or sturdy cardboard trays work perfectly. To keep them safe, always use unscented, non-clumping litter, as young kittens may try to eat it, and clumping varieties can cause dangerous internal blockages. Keep the bathroom area well-separated from their food and bedding, and scoop at least twice daily (or more for larger litters) to ensure a clean environment.

Life Skills

Make time for socialization! We recommend spending at least one hour a day with your kittens, ideally broken into three or more separate sessions. To help them become well-adjusted adults, aim to introduce them to 7–10 new people during their stay.

Socialization isn't always about high-energy play; "quiet time" is just as valuable. Try reading aloud or watching a movie nearby to get them used to human voices and household sounds. You should also help them prepare for future vet visits and grooming: practice gently handling their paws to mimic nail trims and use treats or toys to make their carrier feel like a fun, safe space.



Setting Up Your Foster Space

Setting up your foster space to allow for easy clean up and a safe play area will make fostering easier and more fun. This is an example of a well set up space with some tips to consider when picking your own space.

Environment & Safety

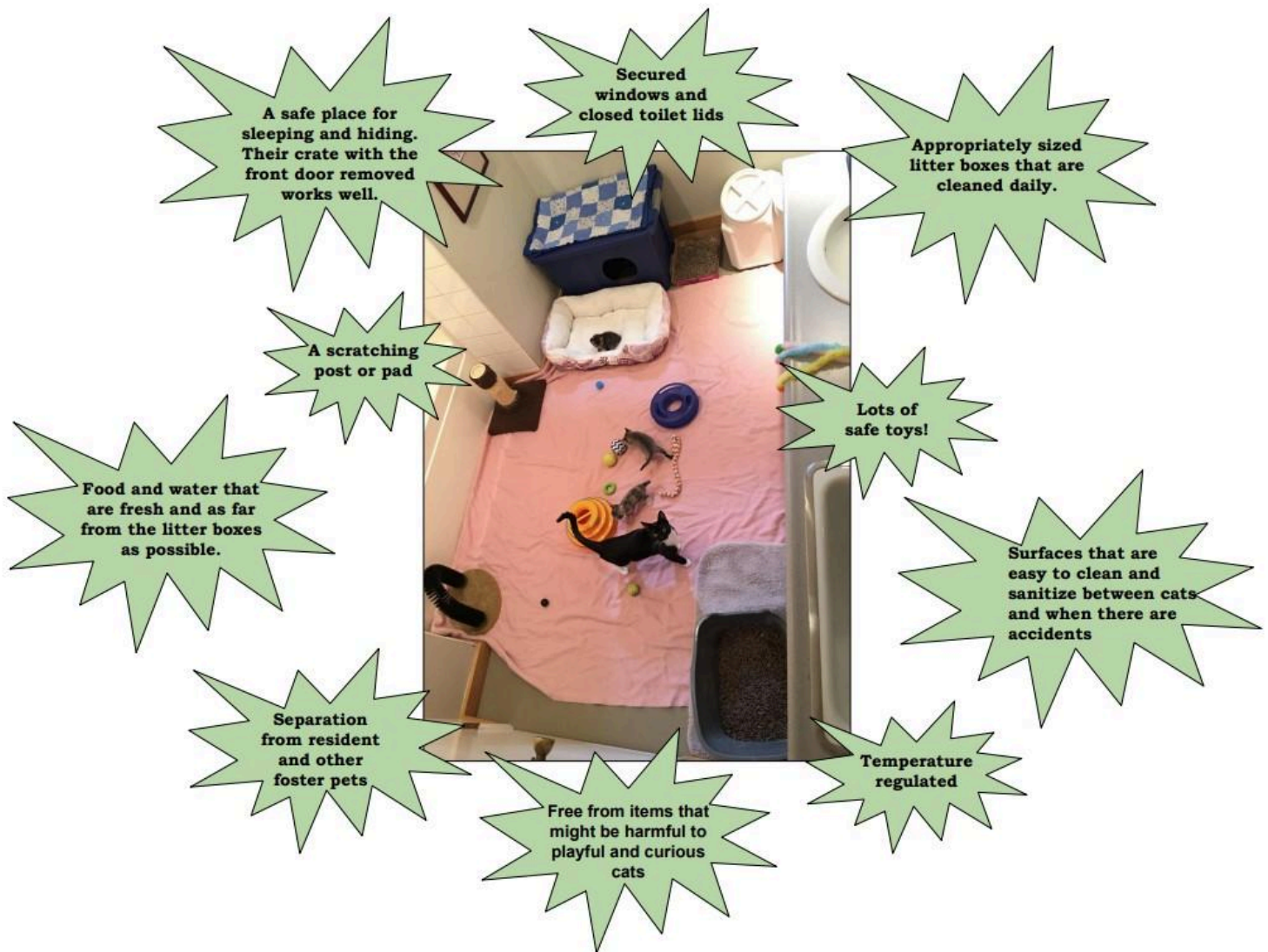
- **Secure Area:** Ensure all windows are locked and toilet lids remain closed at all times.
- **Kitten-Proofing:** Remove any small objects, toxic plants, or dangling cords that could be hazardous to curious kittens.
- **Temperature Control:** Maintain a warm, regulated temperature to prevent kittens from chilling.
- **Sanitation:** Utilize surfaces that are easy to clean and sanitize between litters or in the event of accidents.
- **Separation:** Keep kittens completely isolated from resident pets and other foster groups.

Essential Gear

- **Bedding & Hiding:** Provide a safe place for sleeping and retreating. A crate with the door removed makes an excellent "safe zone."
- **Litter Boxes:** Provide low-sided, age-appropriate boxes. Use only **unscented, non-clumping litter**. Scoop at least twice daily; large litters may require multiple boxes.
- **Scratching Surfaces:** Include a scratching post or pad to encourage appropriate behavior.
- **Toys:** Provide a variety of safe, kitten-appropriate toys for enrichment.

Feeding & Hydration

- **Proper Placement:** Keep food and water bowls as far away from the litter box area as possible.
- **Freshness:** Ensure kittens have constant access to fresh water and food according to their developmental stage.



Kitten Development Chart

Age (wk)	Wt.	Feeding Instructions	Average Development
0-1	.25 lb.	Monitor that mom is nursing everyone. If any of the kittens seem in distress, this could mean that they are hungry and may need additional feeding.	Kittens will spend most of the day eating and sleeping. They cannot hear or see yet. They are reliant on their mother or you for warmth, food and assistance with elimination. Handling should be limited.
1-2	.4 lb.	Kittens will continue to gain all nutrition from the mother or formula.	Kittens will start to move around and their eyes and ears will begin to open. All kittens' eyes are blue at this stage and they are not fully developed yet. They remain unable to regulate their own body heat.
2-3	.6 lb.	Kittens will continue to gain all nutrition from the mother or formula.	Kittens will begin to stand and move around more efficiently. They will begin to play with each other. Gentle handling should happen about an hour a day and be divided into several sessions. Kittens remain unable to maintain their own body heat.
3-4	.8 lb.	Kittens will continue to gain all nutrition from the mother or formula.	Kittens will begin to see well; they may start grooming themselves and begin to show interest in the litter box. They have developed incisor teeth. Kittens still need one more week before they can regulate their own body heat.
4-5	1 lb.	Kittens begin to wean.. Refer to the "Weaning Kittens" page for specifics.	Kittens should begin litter box training. They will be confidently walking and playing. They will be growing premolars
5-6	1.5 lb.	Kittens should be fed four small (one Tbsp) meals of gruel per kitten per day.	The kittens are beginning to play more efficiently. They can wander away from mom now with supervision and she will begin to spend more time away from them. Begin socialization process.
6-7	1.7 lb.	Feed canned food at least three (one Tbsp) meals a day and have fresh, dry food at all times. Watch for any guarding of food and add another feeding station if needed.	Kittens are becoming "tiny cats" and are moving efficiently. Continue practice with the litter box. They will begin to show their adult eye colors and have molars.
7-8	1.9 lb.	Offer canned food three times daily and have fresh dry food available at all times.	Continue to socialize, play, and enjoy.
8+	2 lb.+	Offer canned food two times a day and have fresh, dry food available at all times.	Kittens are ready for altering and adoption once they reach two pounds.

Bottle Baby Kittens

Our bottle-fed kittens are some of the most vulnerable residents at the shelter, often arriving just hours after birth. These tiny lives depend entirely on the dedication of our foster families. Because neonatal care is specialized, we require fosters to attend a brief supplemental training session before taking these little ones home. This class offers hands-on practice and essential tips to ensure you feel confident and prepared. If you're ready to save lives, please reach out to the Foster Team today!

Getting Ready



Feeding Equipment & Technique - Use a specialized kitten nursing bottle for feedings. Since new nipples are sealed, use a sterilized hot needle to create a small opening. The hole is the correct size if the formula drips slowly on its own without needing to be squeezed. During feeding, watch the kitten's nose closely; if milk appears there, the flow is too fast and could cause aspiration. Switch to a new nipple immediately if this happens.

Preparing the Formula - Mix kitten-specific formula exactly as directed on the packaging. To warm it, place the bottle in a hot water bath or a bottle warmer—**never use a microwave**, as it creates dangerous hot spots. Test the temperature on your inner wrist to ensure it is warm but not hot. Prepare fresh formula every one or two feedings and keep any unused portions refrigerated.

Essential Nutrition - Only use professional-grade kitten milk replacer (KMR), which we can provide. Avoid homemade recipes, cow's milk, or dairy alternatives, as these can be fatal to kittens.

Feeding Schedules - A kitten's nutritional requirements change as they grow. While the provided chart offers a general baseline for volume and frequency, kittens that are ill or underweight may require more frequent feedings to thrive.

Age	Weight	Amount Per Feeding	Frequency
<1 week	<5 oz.	2-6 mL	2 hours
1-2 weeks	5 oz.-9 oz.	6-10 mL	2-3 hours
2-3 weeks	9 oz.-12 oz.	10-14 mL	3-4 hours
3-4 weeks	12 oz.-1 lb.	14-18 mL	4-5 hours
4-5 weeks	1 lb.-1.2 lb.	18-22 mL	5-6 hours
>5 weeks	>1.2 lb.	Weaning	6 hours

***Never feed a kitten who is cold! If the kitten's temperature is less than 98°F, they should be warmed prior to offering food.**

Bottle Feeding

1. Place the kitten on its stomach with its head tilted slightly upward and its neck extended. This mimics their natural nursing position with their mother.
Important: Never feed a kitten on its back like a human infant, as this can lead to life-threatening aspiration.
2. Use your non-dominant hand to steady the kitten's head. Place a finger gently against their throat so you can feel for consistent swallowing motions.
3. Offer the nipple with your free hand. It may take several attempts for the kitten to successfully latch. Avoid squeezing the bottle; instead, allow the kitten to suckle and draw the formula out at their own pace.
4. Let the kitten nurse until they pull away on their own or until they have reached the recommended volume for their age and weight.

Syringe Feeding

If a kitten is having trouble transitioning to a bottle, syringe feeding is an effective alternative. To ensure safety, always use a small 1 mL syringe, especially for neonates or if you are new to the process. This size allows for precise measurement and prevents the formula from being delivered too quickly.

Place just a few drops of formula into the kitten's mouth at a time. It is vital to pause and wait for the



kitten to swallow completely before offering more. Continue this slow, patient process until the kitten has consumed the required amount for their weight.

Once a kitten begins to suckle or "latch" onto the syringe, you can attach a Miracle Nipple to the tip. This allows you to dispense the formula at the kitten's own nursing pace. After they are feeding confidently with the syringe and nipple attachment, you can successfully transition them back to a standard nursing bottle.

Burping

After feeding your kittens, you will want to burp them. You can do this by rubbing their sides and stomachs or gently patting them on the back. You will not be able to hear it.

Elimination

Until they are about three weeks old, kittens cannot go to the bathroom on their own and require manual stimulation. In the wild, a mother cat handles this by licking them; in foster care, you will need to step in after every meal.

The Process:

- **Stimulate:** Using a soft tissue or a warm, damp cloth, gently rub the kitten's genital and anal area in a circular motion.
- **Timing:** They should urinate after every feeding and defecate at least once or twice a day. Continue the motion for a few extra seconds to encourage a bowel movement, but be careful not to over-rub, as their skin is very delicate and can become irritated.

What to Watch For:

- **Urine:** Should be pale. Dark urine is often a sign of dehydration.
- **Stool:** Healthy stool is typically brown to yellow with a "soft-serve ice cream" consistency.
- **Red Flags:** Contact Animal Health immediately if you see blood or diarrhea. Diarrhea can be life-threatening for kittens under four weeks old. You should also reach out if a kitten has not had a bowel movement in over 48 hours.

Environment

Warmth is a top priority for growing kittens! Because they can't regulate their own body temperature until they are about five weeks old, they rely entirely on you to keep their environment cozy and safe.

Ideal Room Temperatures:

Birth to 7 days	88° to 92°F
8 days to 14 days	80° to 85°F
15 days to 28 days	80°F
29 days to 35 days	75°F
Older than 35 days	70°F

To keep the kittens warm, set up a small, temperature-controlled space using a heating disk or a heating pad—**always use the lowest setting**. Place the heat source inside a crate and cover the crate with a blanket to help trap the warmth. To prevent accidental burns, ensure the heating pad is well-wrapped in towels or blankets. Crucially, only cover half of the floor space with the heat source; this allows the kittens to move to a cooler area if they become too warm. You can use a thermometer to monitor the air temperature and ensure it stays within the recommended range.



Hypoglycemia (Low Blood Sugar)

Young kittens are highly susceptible to hypoglycemia, which can be life-threatening. Symptoms include lethargy, being cold to the touch, or labored breathing.

Immediate Steps:

1. **Warm the Kitten:** Slowly bring the kitten's body temperature up. Their bodies cannot absorb nutrients or process sugar if they are cold.
2. **Raise Blood Sugar:** If the kitten is unresponsive or extremely weak, rub a small amount of Karo or maple syrup onto their gums every few minutes. Continue this until they become alert, which may take several hours.
3. **Seek Help:** Contact Animal Health immediately if you suspect a kitten is suffering from hypoglycemia.



Overall Health

There are several ways that you can tell if your kittens are happy and healthy. In general, your kittens should sleep around 90% of the time the first two weeks. Kittens that are crying or restless may need more to eat or they may be struggling with an illness. Kittens should not be cold to the touch or withdrawing from the other kittens in the group. Contact the Animal Health team if you are experiencing any of these symptoms.

Feeding Tips and Tricks

- Wrap the kitten in a warm towel, leaving their head out and front feet loose enough to knead.
- Check the bottle to confirm that it is warm but not hot and that the flow is slow and not clogged.
- Cover one of the kitten's eyes with your hand to help them focus.
- Gently rub the kitten's forehead or back.
- If the kittens are less than 3 weeks old, try using a Miracle Nipple.
- Burp the kitten. Sometimes an air bubble can cause kittens to reject food.
- Potty the kitten. Some kittens prefer to go before a meal or they may just really need to go, causing discomfort.
- It is ok to skip one feeding if these do not work. Contact the Foster Team if more than one feeding in a row is missed.
- Try syringe feeding.

Weaning Kittens

The transition from formula to solid food is a gradual process that usually takes about two weeks. While every kitten develops at their own pace, most begin weaning around four weeks of age and are finished by six weeks. You'll know they are ready when they start biting the bottle nipple or trying to taste their mother's food. Since diarrhea is a common side effect of this diet change, please monitor them closely and consult the "Common Kitten Health Concerns" section if you have concerns.

1. **Introduce "Gruel":** Create a smooth, liquid mixture of canned pâté and water. If they are picky, you can mix in a little KMR (kitten formula) or a single-ingredient meat baby food to make it more tempting.
2. **Encourage Tasting:** Provide a separate dish for each kitten. To spark interest, you can gently dab a tiny bit of the mixture on their mouths with your finger or warm the food slightly. If they aren't interested, don't force it—just try again in a few days.
3. **Thicken the Texture:** Over the next week, gradually reduce the amount of water in the mix until the consistency becomes thicker. Offer these meals several times a day, following the quantities listed on your Kitten Development chart.
4. **Introduce Crunch:** Provide a bowl of dry kitten food at all times so they can graze. You can pulse the kibble in a food processor or soak it in water to make it easier to chew. Ensure they also have constant access to a shallow bowl of fresh water.

Mom and Kittens

Our goal is always to keep mothers and their unweaned kittens together whenever possible. Fostering a 'nursing family' is a wonderful experience because Mom does the vast majority of the heavy lifting! However, there are a few unique considerations to keep in mind when hosting the entire family in your home.

A Space For Mom

By the time a mother cat and her litter reach your home, they have already experienced a great deal of change. It is natural for her to feel anxious or protective in a new environment. To help her settle in, provide a quiet, warm, and secluded space where she can feel secure with her babies. We recommend keeping your interactions with the family to a minimum for the first few days to allow her the peace she needs to relax.

Understanding Her Behaviors

It is normal for a mother cat to be more defensive or "on edge" than usual while she is nursing. Her primary instinct is to protect her litter, and she may view humans or other household pets as potential threats. Pay close attention to her body language for signs that she needs space:

- **Visual Cues:** Dilated pupils, pinned-back ears, a tensing body, or a swishing tail.
- **Vocal/Action Cues:** Hissing, growling, or physically moving away from you.

Safety Protocols:

- **Isolation:** Always keep other resident pets completely separated from the mother and her kittens.
- **Respect Boundaries:** If she displays any of the signs above, limit your contact and give her privacy.
- **Support:** Contact the Foster Team if her behavior makes you feel unsafe or if her agitation does not improve after one week of decompression.



Maternal Neglect

Maternal neglect occurs when a mother cat fails to provide the necessary care for her kittens' survival. Without her attention, kittens can quickly succumb to hypothermia or malnutrition. While rejection can happen for various biological reasons beyond our control, **stress** is a leading cause. Because the transition to a foster home is a high-stress event, it is vital to monitor the family's bond closely.

Signs of Neglect:

- The mother consistently stays away from the kittens.
- She fails to groom or nurse them regularly.
- The kittens are crying or distressed, and she shows no interest or response.

If you suspect the mother is neglecting her litter, please contact the Foster Team immediately so we can provide guidance on supplemental care.

Common Behavior Concerns

Even with the best set-up and the most attention to detail, occasionally there are kittens that struggle with some behavior. Each kitten is unique but these tips are a great place to start. Start here, but if the problems continue, please contact the Foster Team for further guidance.

Not Using the Litter Box

While most kittens instinctively learn to use a litter box, some require additional guidance. For kittens over six weeks of age who are struggling with appropriate elimination, please follow this intervention plan:

- **Increase Accessibility:** Add more litter boxes to their environment. Specifically, place them in the exact locations where the kittens have been having accidents.
- **Prioritize Cleanliness:** Scoop the boxes more frequently. Many kittens are fastidious and will avoid a box that has been previously used.
- **Experiment with Texture:** Some kittens have a preference for certain materials. Set up a "litter bar" with different options, such as non-clumping clay, pine pellets, or potting soil. You may also try a specialized product like "Kitten Attract."
- **Environmental Management:** If the kittens are consistently targeting a specific item (like a rug or towel), remove that item from their area entirely.
- **Temporary Confinement:** If the issues persist, limit the kittens to a smaller space, such as a large dog crate. This encourages their natural instinct not to soil their sleeping area. You can gradually reintroduce more space once they are consistently using the box.
- **Seek Guidance:** If these steps do not resolve the issue, contact the Foster Team for further support.

Rough Play

It is important to teach kittens that hands are for petting, not for play. We want to avoid encouraging any biting or scratching, even when it seems gentle. To promote safe boundaries, use toys that create distance between the kitten and your body, such as wand toys or "feathers on a string."

If a kitten does bite or scratch your hand, immediately make a high-pitched "Ouch!" or "Owe!" sound and stop



all interaction. After a few seconds of silence, you can resume play with an appropriate toy. This teaches the kitten that rough play causes the fun to stop.

Scratching the Furniture

All kittens need access to proper surfaces for scratching and stretching. If your kittens begin targeting furniture or other unwanted areas, you can redirect them using two main strategies:

- **Make the "Right" Spot Exciting:** Guide the kittens toward their scratching posts using wand toys, or try a sprinkle of catnip for older kittens to spark interest.
- **Make the "Wrong" Spot Unappealing:** Use double-sided sticky tape on furniture to create a texture kittens dislike, or temporarily cover/move the item until the kitten has established better habits.

Confident Kitten Program

Some kittens arrive at the shelter having had very little positive interaction with humans. These kittens require a patient foster to help them gain the confidence they need for a successful adoption. The following program is highly effective for building that trust.

Consistency is key: plan for several short sessions each day rather than one long one, as extended sessions can overwhelm them. If a kitten under three months old does not show significant progress within two weeks, please contact the Foster Team. Early intervention is critical for their development.



Set-up

Your socialization space should be a secure area where the kittens cannot hide out of your reach, such as a large kennel or a small bathroom. (The shelter can provide a kennel if you don't have one.)

Position the kittens where they can observe the sounds and rhythms of a normal household without being flooded by them. While they should have a hiding spot within their enclosure for "breaks," ensure you can still easily access them for sessions.

Handling

Start by assessing how fearful the kittens are. Offer a small amount of high-value food—like meat-based baby food (onion/garlic-free) or canned kitten food—on your finger. If they won't approach, offer it on a spoon or a dish while sitting quietly nearby. Start at whatever distance they require to feel safe, and gradually move closer each session until they are eating from your hand.

Important: High-value treats should only be available while you are working with them. "Food is your friend"—do not leave treats out for free! Once they are comfortable eating near you, use the food to lure them into your lap. Gently begin to touch their backs or bellies as they eat. If they are wary of your bare hand, you can try wearing a soft glove or using a small towel to bridge the gap.

Picking Up

Once a kitten is comfortable being touched, start lifting them just an inch or two off the ground. Be patient; leaving the safety of the floor requires an immense amount of trust.

If you must handle a kitten before they are fully ready (for medical care, etc.), or if they are particularly wiggly, use the "burrito" method. Securely wrap the kitten in a small towel so only their head is out. This helps them feel safe, prevents scratches, and gets them accustomed to the sensation of being held.

Moving Towards Adoption

As the kittens progress, begin handling them without using food as a distraction. This is often easiest at the end of a session when they are full and sleepy.

To prepare them for their forever home, it is vital to introduce new people. Kittens need to learn that *all* humans are friends, not just their foster parent. Expect a slight "setback" in confidence when someone new visits—this is normal and just takes practice.

Continue exposing them to everyday life by moving their crate to busier areas where they can hear the TV or the dishwasher. Remember: not every kitten will become a "social butterfly." A little initial hissing or squirming is okay; as long as they can be handled, they are ready for adoption. Their new owners will continue the socialization journey you started!

Court Case Animals

MCAS operates as a branch of law enforcement for Multnomah County. As a result, at any time, we are actively investigating a portion of the animals housed.

The law considers these animals as “evidence” in an active court case. Because of this, they must remain in the care of MCAS until case resolution. We have no control over hearing timelines. Cases may last a few days or up to a couple years.

Whenever possible, we try to place the animals into foster homes to minimize the time that they have to stay in the shelter. Foster parents **do not have to commit to the entire time of the case**. If you foster a court case animal, and have another commitment, you can collaborate with the Foster Team to provide alternate temporary or permanent placement.

In the same way that evidence is very carefully tracked and handled in the legal system, these animals must also be very carefully handled. Some examples include, but are not limited to:

- No photographs – No social media posts
- No discussions with outside parties about their cases or condition

These animals come with some extra work and rules, but they are often some of the most grateful creatures in our care. Your home may be the first family that has ever provided them with stable affection or a warm bed to call their own.

Common Kitten Health Concerns

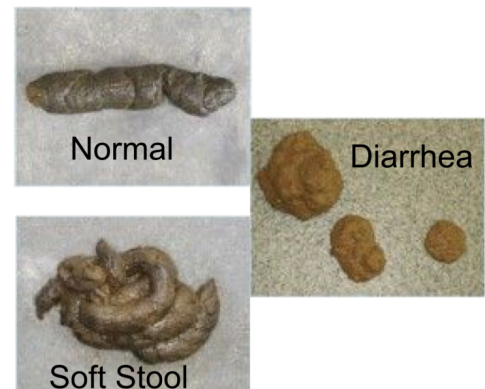
All kittens should receive health exams before going into foster care. Any known health concerns will be discussed with the foster parent prior to pick up. However, it is possible for symptoms to develop after the kittens are taken home. Because of this, it is very important to keep your foster kittens in a separate area, with separate bedding and without contact to your other household animals for two weeks. MCAS is not responsible for treating any other animals in the foster home, even if something is shared from a foster pet

It is expected that all veterinary care will be provided by MCAS or the approved emergency veterinarian (see pg.) under an emergency situation only. A foster parent may not take a foster pet to any other veterinarian. No medications, prescription or otherwise, are allowed to be given to foster pets unless previously authorized by MCAS veterinarian staff. Failure to follow this rule may result in no longer being a foster parent with MCAS. Any unauthorized veterinary care will not be reimbursed by MCAS.

Diarrhea

Because their systems are so sensitive and still developing, diarrhea is a common occurrence in young kittens. It is often triggered by simple factors, such as the diet changes that occur during weaning.

- **When to Monitor:** If a kitten is over four weeks old, eating well, acting normally, and gaining weight, you may monitor them for 24 hours to see if the diarrhea resolves on its own.
- **When to Seek Help:** Contact Animal Health immediately if the diarrhea is accompanied by vomiting, weight loss, lethargy, or a loss of appetite. If the diarrhea persists beyond 24 hours even without other symptoms, a medical appointment may be necessary.



Vomiting

Like diarrhea, vomiting in kittens can have several causes. Occasionally, it is simply the result of a kitten eating too quickly. If you suspect this is the case, try offering smaller, more frequent meals to slow them down.

- **When to Monitor:** If the kitten is otherwise energetic and healthy, and only vomits once or twice, it is safe to monitor them closely at home.
- **Contact Animal Health:** Reach out to the medical team if the kitten vomits more than twice in a short period. Immediate contact is also required if vomiting is accompanied by diarrhea, weight loss, lethargy, or a lack of interest in food.

Upper Respiratory Infections (URI)

An Upper Respiratory Infection (URI) is essentially a "cat cold." These are typically viral, though they can sometimes involve bacterial infections, and stress often makes cats more susceptible. Common symptoms include sneezing, congestion, coughing, or discharge from the eyes and nose.

Managing Mild Cases - Most mild cases resolve on their own within seven to ten days and do not require a veterinary appointment. If your foster kitten has clear nasal discharge but is eating well, maintaining their weight, and acting normally, you can simply monitor them at home.

When to Contact Animal Health - Please reach out to the medical team if the URI symptoms persist beyond ten days, or if the kitten develops any of the following:

- Lethargy or unusual tiredness
- A decrease in appetite or weight loss
- Colored (yellow or green) nasal discharge
- Severe congestion or difficulty breathing
- A fever

Fleas

MCAS will administer flea treatment before sending your foster kitten home with you. You may still see live fleas or flea debris for the next 24 hours as treatment works through the system. Contact Animal Health to schedule follow up treatments.



Ear Mites

A kitten with ear mites will have crusty black debris that looks like coffee grounds in their ears. The kitten may scratch their ears, shake or tilt their head and/or have a foul odor. Treatment is simple with medication, though sometimes more than one treatment is required for complete resolution.

Lice

While lice are relatively rare in kittens in our region, they are occasionally found. You can identify them by looking for tiny white flecks in the fur. Unlike dandruff, which brushes away easily, lice eggs (nits) are firmly attached to the hair shafts.

Fortunately, cat lice are **not contagious to humans**. If you suspect your kitten has lice, contact Animal Health. We will provide a combination of topical medication and a specialized comb to help resolve the infestation.



Ringworm

Ringworm is a common fungal infection (not an actual worm) that typically appears on a kitten's head, ears, or legs. It usually presents as circular patches of dry, crusty skin or localized hair loss.

Ringworm is contagious to all mammals, including other pets and humans. Children, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems are at a higher risk of contracting the infection. If you suspect a kitten has ringworm, contact Animal Health immediately. We will begin a treatment plan, which typically involves medicated baths and topical care, and provide guidance on how to prevent it from spreading in your home.

Emergencies

For emergencies between the hours of 8AM and 5:30PM:

1. Email the medical team at foster-medical-help@multco.us **AND** call 503-988-9075. Leave a message.
2. Come to the shelter **immediately!** Do not wait for a response.
3. Please have the animal ID number with you and provide this number at all points of contact whenever possible but do not let it delay you.

For emergencies between the hours of 5:30PM and 8AM:

- In case of an emergency or suspected emergency, call and/or take the animal to the following approved, after-hours veterinary clinic:

<p style="text-align: center;">Dove Lewis 1945 NW Pettygrove St Portland, OR 97209 503-228-7281</p>
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- If possible, bring your foster's medical records with you.
- Upon arrival at the ER clinic, tell them the animal is a foster with MCAS. This ensures that the care goes under MCAS's file along with follow-up and billing. They will not charge you for the care provided.
- Notify MCAS as soon as possible that you have taken an animal to an after-hours veterinarian via email at foster-medical-help@multco.us and a call to 503-988-9075. Please include the animal number in your message.
- **DoveLewis Emergency Animal Hospital** is the only authorized outside facility for emergency care.

Not Immediately Concerning - Appropriate to Monitor

- Upper respiratory infection (mild to moderate)
 - Clear ocular/nasal discharge, sneezing or coughing
 - Kitten is otherwise eating and active
- Poor appetite of less than 24 hours (kitten is otherwise doing well)
- Lethargy (low energy) of less than 24 hours
- Vomiting of less than 24 hours (kitten still active and eating) ● Diarrhea of less than 48 hours (kitten still active and eating)
- Lack of bowel movement for less than 24 hours
- Weight loss of less than 10%

Non-Emergency - Notify Animal Health at foster-medical-help@multco.us

- Upper respiratory infection (severe)
 - Significant ocular/nasal discharge, sneezing or coughing
 - Any degree of signs where the kitten is also lethargic or anorexic
- Diarrhea
 - No stool improvement after 48 hours (if eating and active) ○ Diarrhea of less than 24 hours (if lethargic and anorexic)
- Vomiting
 - No improvement after 24 hours (if eating and active)
 - Vomiting of less than 24 hours (if lethargic and anorexic)
- Poor appetite of over 24 hours
- Lethargy of more than 24 hours
- Lack of bowel movement of over 24 hours
- Weight loss of more than 10%
- Hair loss
- Skin or ear infections
- Swollen or closed eyes (may be an emergency, contact for guidance)
- Mild trauma, pain or lameness
- Mild bleeding that is no longer active
- Seizures (a single, short-lasting one)

Emergency - Requires Immediate Attention – See “Emergencies” on previous page for guidance

- Unresponsive or collapsed
- Severe trauma or pain
- Labored or difficulty breathing
- No urine production after 24 hours of straining to urinate
- Significant active bleeding
- Seizures (more than 3 in a 24 hour period or one lasting more than 3 minutes) ● Continuous vomiting over 24 hours and unable to hold down food/water

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can I let my foster cat interact with my personal pets?

A: We do the best we can to notify foster parents of all known illnesses that a kitten may have. Unfortunately, they may be carrying a disease or parasite without showing symptoms for quite some time. We highly recommend keeping foster kittens and personal pets separate at all times. At a minimum, we recommend a two-week quarantine period. Personal pets must be up to date on vaccines, parasite preventatives and be healthy.



Q: How much time will I need to dedicate to fostering kittens?

A: Kittens are typically ready for adoption at six weeks of age, but the time required to get them there varies significantly based on the age and health of the litter. Generally, you should expect to spend one to two hours daily with weaned kittens. However, newborn bottle babies require much more intensive care, often totaling up to eight hours a day. Factors such as litter size, medical needs, and socialization goals will also influence your daily schedule.

Q: What are the common reasons that kittens need fostering?

A: The majority of kittens just need time to grow until they are old enough to be adopted. Some kittens may also need socialization or specialized care for an illness or injury.

Q: How does medical treatment work with an MCAS foster pet?

A: As an MCAS foster parent, you will be required to work with our onsite veterinary staff for all routine care and emergencies that occur during the hours of 8AM and 5:30PM. This may mean several visits to our location throughout the time you have the foster animal.

Q: Will I get reimbursed for things that I buy for my foster?

A: While we truly appreciate the extra care you provide, our policy does not allow for the reimbursement of outside purchases. To support you, we will continue to supply all necessary basics—including food and litter—for as long as your foster animal is with you.

Q: What should I do if my foster kitten bites someone?

A: If your foster kitten bites someone and breaks the skin, please notify the Foster Team within **24 hours**. Per legal requirements, all bites must be documented and the kitten must undergo a 10-day quarantine. This applies to all bites, including accidental or "play" bites. During this period, the kitten must remain either at your home or the shelter, depending on the severity and circumstances of the incident. In either location, the kitten must be kept strictly isolated from new people and pets. The final determination regarding the quarantine location is at the discretion of the shelter. We are here to guide you through this process and support both you and the kitten.

Q: What if I want to adopt one of my foster kittens?

A: We love it when our fosters decide to make it official! Foster parents are always eligible to adopt the kittens in their care. If the animal is already **listed for adoption**, please note that we review applications in the order they are received. However, if they **aren't listed yet**, simply reach out to the Foster Team; they'll send you a direct link to apply. Once you've submitted your application, an adoption counselor will contact you to walk you through the final steps.

Q: What if one of my friends or family members wants to adopt?

A: We invite you to share your foster's story with friends, family, and your social networks to help them find the perfect match. If you find a potential match, please send the person's full name, email, and phone number to the Foster Team. We'll follow up with a link to our application. If the animal is already listed on our website, please ask them to apply directly there.

Additional Resources

- www.aspcapro.org - A resource for a variety of topics regarding shelter animals and their care.
- www.maddiesfund.org - A great resource for a wide variety of information including many how-to videos.
- www.kittenlady.org - The Kitten Lady has several videos for bottle and syringe feeding kittens.
- www.sfspca.org - San Francisco SPCA has an online cat behavior library as well as resources for kitten fostering.