



**Welcome to the
Humane Society of Greater Miami's
Foster Care Program**

KITTEN CARE

INTRODUCTION

The goal of the Humane Society of Greater Miami's (HSGM) Foster Care Program is to increase the number of adoptable dogs and cats at the shelter and improve the quality of adoptions by making sure that animals sent home are healthy and of the proper age, giving them the best possible chance to remain in their future home as a well-adjusted pet.

Why is foster care needed?

Pet overpopulation is a serious problem animal shelters face across the United States. It is estimated that 6 to 8 million dogs and cats are relinquished to shelters in the U.S. each year (from HSUS statistics). In Miami-Dade County, at least 30,000 dogs and cats are relinquished to area shelters annually. Shelters struggle to care for as many homeless animals as they can, but there are simply too many of them! Often, shelters are forced to euthanize animals because they don't have enough space for all of them. Most shelters are filled with healthy, socialized animals that are ready and able to be adopted. As soon as one of these animals finds a home, another healthy, socialized animal is ready to take its place. Because there are so many healthy animals that are ready to find homes immediately, there is no space in most shelters for sick, injured, or underage animals.

These helpless sick, injured, and underaged animals require round-the-clock care, special food requirements, and weeks (sometimes months) of rehabilitation. Shelters are often not able to provide the necessary time, cage space, money, and attention necessary for development and/or recovery of these special-needs animals. Many shelters are forced to euthanize such animals, because caring for them in a shelter often prevents the adoption of healthy animals. For example, an orphaned three week-old kitten would require at least four weeks of hands-on care. If that kitten were kept in a cage at a shelter for four weeks, that would prevent the adoption of about 8-10 healthy, socialized kittens that could have been in that cage and found homes, one after the other. That's where fostering comes in.

What is a Foster Parent's job?

A foster parent assumes the responsibility of caring for an orphaned animal until it is physically and socially ready to be adopted into a permanent home. The foster parent provides the time, space, physical care, financial support, and social attention necessary for development of these special-needs animals.

Becoming a foster parent can be a wonderfully fulfilling experience. To know that you have contributed to saving the life of an animal that otherwise may not have had a chance is a rewarding feeling that you will enjoy.

Raising Orphaned Kittens

Modified from

Maddie's Shelter Medicine Program *Guide to Raising Kittens*
Center for Companion Animal Health, UC Davis School of Veterinary Medicine, et. al

BEFORE THEY ARRIVE: SUPPLIES YOU WILL NEED

Remember, foster parents are needed because they can provide the space, attention, food, grooming and financial support necessary to raise the animal. Therefore, foster parents are responsible for acquiring all of the supplies needed to care for their foster pet. The Humane Society of Greater Miami offers a variety of pet care supplies for sale, and foster parents are entitled to 50% off of items needed to care for your foster animal. From time to time, pet supplies are donated to the Society that we may be able to pass along to foster parents to help with the cost of fostering. However, foster parents should anticipate the need to purchase all of the necessary supplies.

Box, carrier or crate

You may want to use the carrier in which you took the litter home. It will provide a familiar-smelling, dark, quiet home for your foster kitties. However, a bigger box may be desirable, as it will allow you to see in, as well as provide plenty of room for the growing litter of kittens.

Newspapers

Keep several layers in the bottom of the box. Also, newspapers should be shredded and used as bedding material in the box overnight.

Litter box for kittens

Use a plastic litter box big enough for the litter of kittens or use cardboard boxes.

Cat litter

Any non-clumping variety of litter will be fine. The clumping litter may be dangerous if ingested by a kitten.

Water bowls

They should be heavy and impossible to tip and should be stainless steel, porcelain or ceramic. Do not use plastic, as plastic is porous and difficult to disinfect.

Food bowls (at least 2)

One is for the eat-at-will dry cat food, the other for canned food. You can use TV dinner trays, paper plates or whatever you have; any relatively flat plate or saucer will do. The larger the litter, the larger the plate should be so that no one gets crowded out. For large litters, feeding each kitten from their own individual plate may help discourage aggressive behavior.

Food

Depending on the age of the kittens, you may need: a kitten milk replacement (such as KMR), high-quality dry kitten food (Purina Kitten Chow, Iams Kitten Formula, and Hill's Science Diet Feline Growth, to name a few), and high-quality canned kitten food (such as canned Iams Kitten Formula, and canned Hill's Science Diet Feline Growth). Offer several choices to weaned kittens to determine their preferences..

Heating pads or lamps

Kittens cannot regulate their own body temperature, so you will need a heat source, such as a heating pad or lamp set on "low". They should be placed below the box, but only under the nesting area where the kittens sleep. This will allow the kittens to move away from the warmth if they get too hot. Be very careful! Heating pads can become dangerously hot and should never be placed in direct contact with the kittens. The nest box temperature should be approximately 85° F.

Pedialyte

This is used as drinking water for dehydrated kittens. (A veterinarian must tell you when and how to use this.)

Toys

Durable, disinfectable toys are good to reuse for new litters. Kittens can also amuse themselves with empty toilet paper rolls. Empty 12-pack cardboard soda boxes are good for an inventive number of games. Clean tennis balls, old stuffed socks, caps from soda bottles and paper bags are marvelous toys as well. Kittens will also 'play' with anything they can find. Be sure to "kitten-proof" your home. As they grow, their climbing abilities will develop, so anything irreplaceable should be kept out of reach.

Living quarters

Your foster kitten will need its own crate to sleep in. You must pet-proof any part of your home where the animal will go. Remove all cleaners, insecticides, chemicals and any other poisonous products. Remove all fragile or breakable items, small knick-knacks and valuable items. Tape electrical cords out of the animal's reach. Put the lids down on all toilets.

PROTECTING YOUR RESIDENT PETS

Although the foster animals are given a health check before being placed into a foster home, many viruses have an incubation of 7-14 days, so there is a risk that you are exposing your own pets to disease. To protect your own animals, foster kittens should be separated from household pets for at least two weeks, and they should not share food or water bowls or toys. If your own pet becomes sick for any reason, you are responsible for the cost of their veterinary care. The Humane Society of Greater Miami will provide the necessary medications, care and feeding instructions for your foster pet at no charge if it becomes ill.

- **Young children should not handle the foster kittens** and everyone should wash their hands after handling the kittens, fecal waste, and litter boxes as well as before

handling your own pets or children.

- Kittens should be de-fleaed before they enter your home and as often as necessary to keep fleas off of them, because fleas can spread disease among cats.

WARNING: check with your veterinarian before using any chemicals, shampoos, or flea control products on your fosterling. A kitten could easily be poisoned or burned by even a small amount of these products. A flea comb may be helpful. Do not use flea collars.

- Routinely disinfect the foster kittens' quarters and disinfect the entire area before new kittens are introduced. The best way to disinfect the area is to remove all organic material and fecal debris and then soak with a mild bleach solution (1 part bleach to 32 parts water) for at least 30 minutes. Then rinse thoroughly with clean water. Place the kittens in a separate area until their living quarters are dry. All surfaces, bowls, toys etc need to be disinfected (so you probably want to keep kittens in a room without carpeting, hardwood floors and so forth).

- It is possible even with these precautions that resident cats could be exposed to mild infections. Ask your veterinarian for more information if this is a concern.

GENERAL CARE OF THE KITTENS

KEEPING THEM SAFE

Do not let the kittens go outside. Kittens are not fully protected from disease until after they have completed their series of vaccines, at about four months of age. Until then, they are in danger of catching potentially life threatening diseases.

Indoors, the young kittens should be kept in a large box or cat carrier lined with newspaper for easy cleaning. It is very important to keep the kittens warm. The heating pad should be placed under HALF of the newspaper and set on "low." The more kittens in your litter, the better able they will be to keep warm by sleeping together in a heap. Small litters and singletons need more help keeping warm. Keep kittens away from heaters or cold drafts.

SOCIALIZATION

Part of your job is to convince the kittens that humans are kind and loving. Outgoing, friendly kittens can be cuddled and played with freely, after spending a day or so to accustom themselves to a comfy box in a quiet room. Shy kittens will need more encouragement. Try sitting on the floor with a kitten held against your chest, supported underneath, and facing outwards, so he can't see how big and scary you are. Stroke him and speak gently, telling him how cute and brave and fabulous he is. Continue this for about 30 seconds and then put him down before he starts squirming. You want this to be a pleasant experience. The kitten will not be impressed, but if you cuddle him often enough, he will learn to love it. Sometimes holding a pair of kittens helps - they seem to reassure each other. Feral kittens are a special challenge to socialize. The earlier the feral kittens are separate from their mother, the more likely they are to adapt to people. If your kittens are fearful and run away when you approach, try sitting or lying

quietly on the floor near them and let them come to you. Spend time quietly in their presence to get them accustomed to your company. Stroke them and talk to them gently while they are eating to further reinforce positive associations.

Any introductions of kittens to other animals should be made with great care and under constant supervision.

There is no such thing as a “bad” kitten. It is useless to punish a “naughty” kitten. Their little minds do not grasp deductive reasoning. Try distracting a mischievous kitten with something else until he forgets whatever he was doing. If a kitten is doing something that you don’t want (like scratching the furniture or going potty on the floor) then firmly tell them “no!” and then redirect them to where you do want them to act out those behaviors (on the scratching post or in the litter box, respectively).

GENERAL CONCEPTS OF FEEDING

NEVER give a kitten cow’s milk (or anything else besides the specified formula). Commercially available kitten formula should be given at the kitten’s body temperature, about 100 degrees. Once the can is opened or the powder reconstituted, unused formula should be kept refrigerated and discarded after 24 hours.

It is best to feed the kittens one-by-one, and on a counter top. This allows them to feed with all four feet on the counter, and their heads level, much as they would if they were nursing from their mom. Some kittens prefer to nurse standing on their hind legs while holding the bottle. They will require a little support from you in this position. Gently open a kitten’s mouth with one finger and place the tip of the nipple on his tongue. If he won’t eat, try stroking him. Pull lightly on the bottle to encourage vigorous sucking. Be sure to tilt the bottle up slightly to prevent the kitten from swallowing too much air. Do not force the kitten to nurse, or allow him to nurse too fast. Avoid feeding a kitten while he is cradled on his back to prevent milk from getting in his lungs.

After each feeding, the kitten should be burped. Hold him against your shoulder and gently massage his back or pat it lightly.

Overfeeding is as dangerous as underfeeding kittens! Keep an eye on your kittens at feeding time and monitor how much each is eating. If you see signs of diarrhea, separate them until you find out which one is sick. Your kittens will generally regulate their own food intake. If they need more food, they may whine or suck on their litter mates. A good indication that they are getting enough to eat is the size of their bellies. They should be filled out after a meal, but not bloated.

If kittens are not urinating and defecating on their own, they will need to be stimulated. This should be done every few hours (often right after feeding) by gently rubbing a warm wet paper towel or cotton ball on the kitten’s anus and genital area. They will pee and poop into the paper towel.

GROOMING

A mother works hard to keep her kittens clean, grooming them thoroughly to remove any sticky messes they may get into, such as kitten food or feces. Keeping kittens clean in the absence of their mother can be a messy business, but it is extremely important. A flea comb will get rid of dried feces in the fur. You can also stroke a kitten with a warm, damp cloth, using short strokes to mimic a mother's tongue. Be sure to dry him well so he won't chill. Sometimes cat litter and dried feces can become caked on the underside of the tail or between the kitten's toes. This may be softened and removed by dipping the kitten's back end and toes into a basin of warm water.

EXPECTATIONS AND CARE AT EACH AGE

Birth - 1 Week

Feeding: If you are nursing orphaned kittens, bottle feed 1/2 tablespoon (7.5 ml) formula every 2 - 3 hours until kittens are full but not bloated. If the queen is with the kittens, they should nurse vigorously and compete for nipples. Newborns can nurse up to 45 minutes at a time. Be sure to watch kittens nursing at least once a day, if the queen will permit it. Check that everyone is nursing and that there isn't too much jockeying for position. A great deal of activity and crying could indicate a problem with milk flow, quality or availability. When the queen reenters the box, there should be some fussing for only a few minutes before everyone has settled down to serious nursing.

Environment: The temperature of the nest box should be nice and warm at 88° - 92° F. Chilling is the number one danger to newborn kittens.

Behavior and training: At one week of age, the kittens should weigh 4 ounces, and should be handled minimally. Kittens will sleep 90% of the time and eat the other 10%.

1-2 weeks

Feeding: Bottle feed 1/2 tablespoon (7.5 ml) of formula every 2 - 3 hours.

Environment: Floor temperature of the nest box should be 85°.

Behavior and training: Kittens at 2 weeks of age will weigh about 7 ounces. Ear canals open between 5 and 8 days. Eyes will open between 8 and 14 days. They open gradually, usually starting to open from the nose outward. Short-haired cats' eyes will usually open earlier than those of Persian ancestry. All kittens are born with blue eyes, and initially no pupils can be distinguished from the irises. The eyes will appear solid dark blue.

Healthy kittens will be round and warm, with pink skin. If you pull the skin on the back of their neck gently, their skin should spring back into place. If the skin returns to its normal shape slowly, this is a sign that the kitten may be dehydrated. Healthy kittens seldom cry, except when hungry.

To determine the sex of the kittens, hold a kitten tummy-up in your hand. In females, the

vulva is a vertical slit above the anus; they are very close together. In males, the penile opening is above the anus, but they are separated by a raised scrotal sac and thus seem far apart. It is easiest to see the differences between the sexes if you examine all the kittens and then find two who don't have matching equipment.

2-3 weeks

Feeding: Bottle feed 1 tablespoon formula every 3 - 4 hours

Environment: The floor temperature of the nest box should be 80°.

Behavior and training: If there is a queen, she will begin to spend larger periods of time out of the nest, though she will not go far from it.

Kittens will weigh about 10 ounces. Their ears will become erect. Kittens begin to crawl around day 18. Kittens can stand by day 21. Kittens will begin to play with each other, biting ears, tails and paws even before their teeth have come in. Their milk teeth are cutting through the gums during this period. Kittens learn to sit and touch objects with their paws.

Kittens begin their socialization phase. They will be strongly influenced by the behavior of their mother for the next six weeks. To further socialize kittens, increase the amount of handling, and get them accustomed to human contact. It is important not to expose them to anything frightening such as loud noises. Children may seem intimidating and should not be handling the kittens.

3-4 weeks

Feeding: Bottle feed 2 tablespoons formula every 4 hours. Kittens may start lapping from a bowl.

Environment: The floor temperature of the nest box should be 80°F.

Behavior and training: Continue to increase gentle socialization with the kittens.

4-5 weeks

Feeding: 3 tablespoons (1-1/2 oz.) formula every 8 hours. They can usually drink and eat from a saucer by 4 weeks. Weaning should be done gradually. Introduce them to solid food by offering warmed canned food mixed with a little of the liquid formula in a shallow saucer. You can begin by placing one kitten by the plate of this canned food-formula "gruel". If she starts eating her littermates will probably copy her and do the same. The kittens will walk in it, slide in it, and track it all over the place. Sometimes one will begin lapping right away, and in its anxiety to consume as much as it can, it will often bite the edge of the plate. Some will prefer to lick the gruel from your fingers. Some will start licking your finger after they sniff it, then slowly lower your finger to the plate and hold it to the food. The kittens need to learn to eat with their heads bent down. Sometimes it takes two or three meals before they catch on. If they do not seem interested enough to even sniff your finger, try gently opening the kittens' mouth and rubbing a little of the food on their teeth or roof of their mouth. Hopefully then they will

start licking your finger. If they're still not getting the idea, you can take a syringe (without a needle) and squirt a small amount of gruel into their mouths.

Be sure that the kittens have access to fresh water in a low, stable bowl.

Environment: The floor temperature of the nest box should be between 70° - 75° F from this point onward.

Behavior and training: Begin litter training at four weeks. Use a low box with one inch of non-clumping litter. Do not expose the kittens to the clumping variety of litter, as it is harmful if ingested. After each feeding, place the kitten in the box and use your finger to scratch at the litter, mimicking how the kitten should do so. Usually the sound of your finger scratching at the litter is enough to make the kitten want to give it a try. Be patient! Bringing a portion of their feces or a napkin with their urine on it to the litter box may help. The kitten may not remember to use the litter box every time or may forget where to find it, but he will learn quickly. Be sure to give the kittens lots of praise when they first start using their boxes. Most will use it from the start, but like other babies, might make an occasional mistake. It is a good idea to confine the kittens to a relatively small space, because the larger the area the kittens have to play in, the more likely they will forget where the litter box is. You may also want to keep various litter boxes around the house, but don't change them from place to place. Keep the litter box clean and away from their food.

5-6 weeks

Feeding: Feed gruel 4 times a day. Thicken gruel gradually. Introduce dry food and water.

Behavior and training: At about five weeks, kittens can start to roam around the room, under supervision. They will weigh 1 pound and the testicles of male kittens will become visible. The strongest, most curious kitten will figure out how to get out of the nest. The others will quickly follow. Play with your kittens daily! It is a good idea to wear long sleeves and pants, as they can play roughly and their claws are sharp. If you sit on the floor they will play "King of the Mountain," using your knees and shoulders as vantage points. This game is lots of fun and good exercise for them. Some kittens may be fearful at first; do not force yourself upon them. You can get them used to your presence by sitting in the middle of the room making phone calls; this way they hear your voice but do not feel threatened. Make them an important part of your household activities: accustom them to the sounds of the TV, dish washer, dryer and other household sounds.

6-7 weeks

Feeding: Should be eating canned and dry food well. Feed the kittens at least three meals daily. If one kitten appears food-possessive, use a second dish and leave plenty of food out so that everyone is eating or you may want to have a separate plate for each kitten. Bear in mind that a kitten at this age has a stomach roughly the size of an acorn, so they may not eat much at a single sitting. They like to eat at frequent intervals throughout the day.

Behavior and training: By this time, you have “mini-cats.’ They will wash themselves, use scratching posts, play games with each other, their toys, and you, and many will come when you call them. Be sure to reintroduce them to their litter box after meals, during play sessions, and after naps. These are the usual times that kittens need to use the litter box.

7-8 weeks

Feeding: Offer canned and dry food 3 - 4 times a day (each kitten will be eating a little over one can of food per day). Leave down a bowl of dry kibble and water for them to eat and drink at will. DO NOT feed the kittens’ table scraps.

8+ Weeks

Feeding: Offer canned food 2 times a day. Leave down a bowl of dry food and water for them to eat and drink at will.

Behavior and training: By the end of this week, kittens should weigh 2 pounds each. If all the kittens weigh two pounds, take a deep breath, and prepare yourself to return them to the Society so that we may find them a new home. They are also old enough for early spay or neuter.

A KITTEN’S HEALTH

A healthy kitten has bright eyes, a sleek coat, and a plump belly. Younger kittens are content to sleep between feedings. As they approach 5 weeks they begin to spend more time playing. A kitten’s health can deteriorate at an alarming rate. A kitten can go from a healthy looking animal to being a gravely ill animal in only a matter of hours. If you have a sick kitten, you should call your veterinarian and discuss the problem as soon as possible or bring it to the shelter veterinarian for a check-up.

Normal Rectal Temperature for Healthy Kittens: 100° - 102.5° F

Normal Heart Rate for Healthy Kittens (while at rest): 120 - 180 beats per minute

Normal Respiratory Rate for Kittens (while at rest): 16 – 26 breaths per minute

How To Tell If A Kitten May Need Medical Care

This section modified from *How to Tell if a Cat or a Dog May Need Veterinary Care* from the Humane Society of the United States’ Animal Sheltering magazine.

GENERAL APPEARANCE

Animal SHOULD BE bright, alert, responsive, hydrated, balanced, coordinated, oriented, interested in its surroundings and the temperature is should be normal.

Animal SHOULD NOT BE very thin or showing any wounds, abscesses, swelling, lumps bumps, or umbilical hernias. Other abnormalities are when animal appears uncoordinated, tilts head, repeatedly turns around in circles, has a bloated abdomen,

abnormal temperature, appears lethargic, hyperactive, disoriented or dehydrated (skin does not spring back immediately after being raised).

EYES

SHOULD BE clean, clear, bright and responsive to stimuli.

SHOULD NOT BE watery, red, filmy, cloudy, discolored, showing third eyelid, dry, swollen, hypersensitive to light, painful, itchy, constricted or showing discharge. Pupils should not be different sizes, overly dilated or constricted.

EARS

SHOULD BE clean (both outer ear and canal), the inner ear should be pink and they should be responsive to noise.

SHOULD NOT BE showing discharge, be crusty, inflamed, red, scabby, swollen or itchy (the animal will shake its head or scratch ear).

NOSE

SHOULD BE clean and free of discharge.

SHOULD NOT BE scabbed, crusty, cracked, congested, blocked or showing discharge (clear, mucous, blood or pus).

MOUTH

SHOULD BE free of odor and teeth should be clean. Gums should be pink and have good capillary refill time (pink gum color returns within 1-2 seconds after being pressed with finger) and the animal appears to swallow normally.

SHOULD NOT BE unusually red, drooling, characterized by a foul odor or showing discharge. Gums should not be pale, purple, white, or inflamed. Teeth should not be broken or loose and the animal should not have trouble swallowing.

BREATHING/RESPIRATION

SHOULD BE clear-sounding with a normal respiration rate.

SHOULD NOT BE irregular or rapid, shallow, labored, coughing, wheezing or excessive sneezing.

SKIN/FUR

SHOULD BE bright, glossy and appears to be well-groomed, skin is clean, free of oil, swellings, lumps and lesions.

SHOULD NOT BE dull, oily or dirty, coat should not be thinning or matted, skin should not be dry, flaking, red, irritated, scabbed or bleeding and should not be infested with mites, fleas or ticks.

LEGS/FEET

SHOULD BE functioning normally, pads should be clean and smooth, nails should look healthy.

SHOULD NOT BE limping, weak or uncoordinated. Pads should not be cracked, hard or have matted fur between them.

ANAL/GENITAL AREA

SHOULD BE clean and free of discharge.

SHOULD NOT HAVE discharge, lumps or swelling. Stool should not be bloody or watery, animal should not be constipated, both testicles should be descended and should be approximately the same size.

PROBLEMS TO WATCH FOR

Poor appetite is an early symptom of a potentially serious problem. If your kitten has not eaten in 6 - 8 hours, call your veterinarian or HSGM.

Diarrhea in kittens is usually caused by parasites, viruses, bacteria, food changes, stress, overfeeding and overfeeding. If the diarrhea is mild and the kitten is otherwise alert and playful, you can try giving it less food but more often. If it is an older kitten, you may want to switch it to dry food until it gets better. Kittens can become dehydrated very quickly. If the diarrhea is severe, lasts more than 3 or 4 feedings, or contains blood or obvious parasites, you should bring the kitten to HSGM immediately for an exam.

Vomiting If your kitten is vomiting, it is possible that the kitten is eating his meals too quickly or is being overfed and may also be a sign of poisoning. If the kitten vomits 2-3 times in a row, call your veterinarian or bring in the kitten to HSGM.

Parasites The most common parasites seen in kittens are roundworms, hookworms, tapeworms, Coccidia, Giardia and bacteria. In large numbers, they can cause anemia, diarrhea and death. The eggs of roundworms and hookworms can persist for months in soil and be spread to other animals or children, so it is important to deworm kittens as directed by your Humane Society veterinarian. If you see worms in the stool or anal area, or your kitten has diarrhea, bring it to the Humane Society for treatment.

Ear mites are tiny parasites that live in the ear canal. They cause intense itching, noted by scratching behind the ears and violent head shaking. Inside the ears you may see a crumbly, dark brown discharge, which may smell bad (the discharge closely resembles coffee grounds). Ear mites are very contagious to other dogs and cats. Ear mites may be treated with ear drops or an injection.

Fading kittens Once in a while, one or more kittens in a litter that were healthy and vigorous at birth will begin to "fade" after a week or two of life. They will stop growing; begin to lose weight, stop nursing and crawling. They may cry continuously and lose the

ability to stay upright. Kittens fade very quickly - they will not last 48 hours without veterinary care, and probably will not recover even with intensive care. There is no clear cause or reason for this condition. It has been linked to birth defects, environmental stress and infectious disease. Early veterinary treatment is imperative, but even with tube feeding, rehydration and monitoring, many, if not most fading kittens will die.

Fleas are insects that love to feed on kittens. Although each flea only consumes a small drop of blood, fleas commonly attack in large numbers and an infestation can literally lead to anemia and even death. It is essential that your home be free of fleas before bringing home a small kitten. Adult fleas lay eggs, which usually drop off their animal host and accumulate in alarming numbers where the animal spends a lot of time. Carpets, sofas and other such places are often good nesting grounds for flea eggs. Under ideal conditions, eggs hatch in 1 - 2 days but can take as long as 3 - 4 weeks before hatching. Flea eggs hatch into a larval stage which feeds on debris and organic matter and lives freely in the environment outdoors or your home. Fleas and flea larvae can be eliminated with Borax powder and then vacuuming the area.

If your foster kitten already has fleas, it is important to remove them without harming the kitten. One safe way to remove fleas from very young kittens (less than 6 - 8 weeks) is daily flea combing. For all kittens, frequent combing with a flea comb is extremely important. Keep a jar of soapy water near you to dip the comb into as it comes off the kitten full of fleas. If the kitten is less than 6 weeks old and heavily infested, a flea bath may be necessary to save its life. This should only be done at HSGM. It is very dangerous for the kitten to be exposed to certain products and keeping it warm and dry is very important. If the kitten is older than 6 weeks, you can use topical one-time/month applications available from HSGM clinic.

WARNING: check with your veterinarian before using any chemicals, shampoos, or flea control products on your fosterling. A kitten that is very young could easily be poisoned or burned by even a small amount of these products. Do not use a flea collar.

All bedding needs to be washed in hot soapy water as soon as fleas are spotted.

The most effective way to remove eggs from the house is by using a vacuum cleaner. The vacuum bag should first be treated by placing flea powder, a piece of flea collar, or flea spray inside it. The bag should be emptied immediately after vacuuming.

TAKING THE TEMPERATURE

If it is necessary to take the temperature of your kitten, you will need a regular human thermometer and some KY Jelly. Don't forget to shake down the mercury in the thermometer first. Wipe KY on the thermometer and insert just the tip into the kitten's anus. Hold it there for at least a minute and then read. If the kitten's temperature is over 103° or under 99°, it is important to call the veterinarian.

My veterinarian's phone number is: _____

My 24-hour emergency vet's phone number is: _____

For further reading on the care of young orphan kittens, refer to the following:

Carlson, Delbert and James Giffon. Cat Owner's Home Veterinary Handbook. New York: Howell Book House, 1995.

McGinnis, Terri, D.V.M. The Well Cat Book: the Classic Comprehensive Handbook of Cat Care. New York: Random House, 1993.

Morris, Desmond. Catwatching. New York: Crown Publishers, 1986.

Pugnefti, Gino. Simon and Schuster's Guide to Cats. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1983.