

## Feeding Orphaned Kittens

If you are using a powdered formula (KMR), you must mix it very well. The best way is to put it into a container with a lid and shake it up. Then, you must pour it through a strainer at least twice. If you do not do this, the nipple of the bottle will get clogged. You will know the kitten isn't getting a good flow of milk when he starts fussing and chewing on the nipple.

The hole in the nipple should be made with a hot pin. Do not cut an 'X' into the nipple. The formula will come out too fast. You may have to remake the hole a couple of times until it is a good size. When the bottle is turned upside down, it should drip SLOWLY on its own. After melting the hole into the nipple, run water through it to get rid of the burnt taste.

**IMPORTANT TIP** - Do not screw the cap onto the bottle all the way. It must be somewhat loose so that air can enter the bottle (through the loose cap) as the kitten sucks. When the kitten sucks on the nipple, you should see a small stream of bubbles going up into the bottle from the cap area. This means that the kitten is getting a constant flow of milk. If the cap is on too tightly, a vacuum will be created and the flow of milk will stop. The kitten will fuss and have to release its grip from the nipple to allow air to enter the bottle. If there is not a good flow of milk, the cap is on too tightly, or the nipple is clogged with thickened formula.

The first few feedings will be the most difficult. The kitten will not want the rubber nipple or this 'new milk'. It will just chew on the nipple and cry. You can GENTLY squeeze some drops of formula into the kitten's mouth. If you squeeze too much, the kitten could get milk into its lungs. Once it gets hungry, it will accept the bottle more readily and be more willing to suck on the nipple. The kitten will nurse more readily if you cup one hand around the kitten's face with just its muzzle poking through. This keeps the kitten from trying to put the whole nipple into its mouth and it keeps the kitten from continually pushing forward as it nurses. This is how a kitten naturally nurses from its mother.

Do not over feed the kitten. When it is full it will stop eating. Do not force more food, you could aspirate them.

- Newborn kittens will drink less than one teaspoon every 4 hours round the clock
- One-week-old kittens will only drink about a teaspoon of formula every 5 hours
- Two-week-old kittens will drink almost three teaspoons every 6 hours
- Three-week-old kittens it will drink about 5 teaspoons every 8 hours
- Four-week-old kittens it will drink about 7 teaspoons every 8 hours

There are tips for treating diarrhea in books and on the internet. One tip is to weaken the formula by adding extra water or Pedialyte. Also, over feeding causes diarrhea. Here are two tips that I usually don't find anywhere, but have been useful to me. One is to give the kitten a little amoxicillin. This can help with the bacteria in the intestines that cause diarrhea. If the diarrhea is white, that indicates lots of bacteria and the amoxi helps with that. Another tip- mix some KMR Second Step Weaning Food into the formula. (I do that regularly.) This is a kitten cereal used for weaning kittens. (PetSmart carries it) When

added to the formula, it helps to form solid stools. If you add too much, the formula will be too thick to pass through the nipple. It seems to thicken up the longer it sits. Do not add too much as you want the formula to remain liquid. At first the kittens will notice the new taste and may fuss, but they will get used to it. The weaning food can be used later to help wean the kittens.

Just a reminder- do not make the kittens too warm - *it will dehydrate them*. The area where they sleep should just feel slightly warm. They also need an area that is not heated to be able to move onto.

Potty them at least every time you feed them.

Burp the kittens.

If the kittens try to suckle on each other, they must be separated. They aim for the genital areas as these are fleshy and warm. If they are not separated they will cause swelling and soreness.

Always feed a kitten while it is in an upright position. Do not hold it on its back like a human baby.

Do not feed a chilled kitten formula. It cannot digest it. You can give it water or Pedialyte. If it is too weak, you can rub honey or karo syrup on its gums.

Aging a kitten:

- If the umbilical cord is still attached, it is probably less than 4 days old.
- If the eyes are still closed, it is probably less than 10 days old. Eyes open around 10 days old.
- If the ear canal is still closed, it is probably less than 10 days old. Ears open around 10 days old.
- A two-week old kitten starts to stand. It walks shakily with its belly close to the floor (we call it the "army crawl"). It has no teeth. The ear flaps are still downward.
- A three week old kitten walks with belly all the way up off the floor. It still loses its balance easy and is wobbly. A three week old kitten has small teeth. The ear flaps are almost erect, but still point down or forward a bit. It will start to go potty on its own.
- A four week old kitten walks and runs. It jumps onto its littermates to play. Its ears are fully erect and getting a more pointy look. It still weighs around one pound. It has sharp teeth and can start to eat soft food. It should have water available. It can start to use a low litter box at this age. Do not use clumping litter for kittens, use clay litter.

The above information has been provided by Debbie Mason who has hand-raised hundreds of kittens. The above has been learned by years of experience.