

# Welcome to Our Volunteer Kitten Team!

Thank you for volunteering with CARE's Kitten Team! We are so excited that you will be helping us raise more kittens this year! Tallahassee is an area with a large feral cat population, so it is easy for all rescues, including CARE, to become overwhelmed. Through fostering, our kitten team volunteers make it possible for us to help so many more litters of orphaned/abandoned cats; we cannot thank you enough! Please review this packet of information PRIOR to arriving to pick up your first litter.

**What is included in this packet:**

1. General CARE volunteer expectations
2. CARE animal transportation policy
3. Caring for orphaned kittens
4. Kitten development milestones

**If you have questions or concerns at any point, please contact:**

Northwood Animal Hospital (850) 385 - 8181

# Kitten Team Volunteer Description & Expectations

## **Volunteer Description:**

This exciting volunteer position is ideal for volunteers who would like to work directly with the CARE newborn kittens. The goal of the kitten team is to foster and hand-raise each litter of kittens with the utmost care. Volunteers make it possible for CARE to raise more kittens each year. Volunteers will learn about and implement proper kitten care, including some aspect of veterinary care. Although volunteers will not be working within the veterinary hospitals, they will have the opportunity to work closely with our doctors and technicians to ensure that each of their kittens is healthy and growing well.

## **We expect our kitten team volunteers to:**

- Commit to the litter
  - It is a large time commitment to hand-raise kittens. We expect our volunteers to do everything they can to provide for the kittens they are entrusted with.
  - Kittens need to be fed & stimulated every 4-6 hours around the clock until they are 6 weeks old.
- Bring the litter to either Northwood Animal Hospital or The Animal Hospital and Pet Resort at Southwood once every 7-10 days to be weighed and receive any necessary medical care.
- Only use CARE supplies to raise kittens who have already been accepted into the CARE program and that were distributed by Northwood Animal Hospital.
  - If you find a litter of kittens, you may surrender them to Northwood Animal Hospital. However, if the CARE program already has the maximum number of kittens of that age, the surrendered kittens will be transferred to a local shelter or possibly euthanized if sick (based on quality of life assessment after a doctor's examination).
- Be kind and respectful to the cats, kittens, other animals, and all people at all times.
  - If you have a difference of opinion or concern regarding another volunteer or staff member, please do not address this issue yourself. Any/all concerns should be discussed directly with Dr. Crutchfield.
- Follow all CARE policies
  - The most up to date version of all CARE volunteer documents can be found on the CARE volunteer website.
- Review this packet in its entirety and please ask us any questions that you have. No question is too small.

## **Our volunteers can expect us to:**

- Be excited to see you! We simply cannot raise this many kittens without you!
- Provide all the resources that our kittens and volunteers need to succeed

- Listen closely and work diligently regarding any concerns that arise

## CARE Animal Transportation Policy

- Dogs & Cats:
  - NEVER leave any pet in a car while you are not inside vehicle, for any length of time.
  - No pets should be transported in the back of pick-up trucks, *unless* confined to an approved carrier / crate (dogs only; check with staff prior to transporting this way).
  - Use caution when unloading pets from car - check that cat carriers are securely closed, and make sure that dog leashes are looped over wrist, prior to removal from vehicle.
  - Be careful to avoid driving distraction by pets - may lead to accidents.
- Cats:
  - Must be confined to a cat carrier - never let run free in the vehicle
  - Carrier must be inside of temperature-controlled vehicle
  - Notify staff if cat seems overly distressed on car rides (heavy panting, severe vocalizing, etc.)
- Dogs:
  - Must be confined inside of vehicle, ideally in rear seat area (to avoid distracting driver).
  - Must be on leash, and if available, secured to dog safety belt / harness (ask staff if equipment available).
  - Car windows must not be opened more than 2 inches (to prevent dog from escaping vehicle / falling from window).
  - Notify staff if dog is overly anxious or becomes nauseous during car rides.

Thank you so much for volunteering to help CARE transport our adoptable pets! Getting these dogs and cats out to events is the best way to get them a home and educate citizens about CARE. We truly appreciate your help!

# Caring for Orphaned Kittens

Kittens have 4 basic needs: warmth, food, assistance urinating/defecating, and frequent monitoring.

## Need #1: Warmth

- Kittens under 3 weeks of age cannot autoregulate their body temperature.
- Keep the kitten's box half-on, half-off of a heating pad (set to low). The heating pad should be used until the kittens are 4-5 weeks old, or until they begin to avoid it.
- Do not feed a kitten if it is cold - warm them up first.
- Make sure to keep the kittens in a warm, draft-free area, completely isolated from other animals.

## Need #2: Feeding

1. Wash your hands
2. Prepare the formula
  - If in powder form, reconstitute according to package directions. Fill the bottle with formula and fit with an appropriately sized nipple. Ensure that the hole in the nipple is not too large.
  - Warm the formula by placing the bottle in a bowl of hot water for a few minutes
3. If possible, weigh each kitten (in grams or oz) prior to each feeding.
  - Although CARE cannot provide each foster with a scale due to the limited finances of a nonprofit, several models of gram scales are available on Amazon for \$10-20. It is NOT mandatory that you purchase a scale.
  - Shameless Plug: If you purchase a scale, or anything else, from Amazon, please consider using Amazon Smile instead, and setting CARE as your benefiting nonprofit - you will pay the same amount, but Amazon will donate a percentage of their profits to CARE. More info at [www.CAREinTallahassee.org](http://www.CAREinTallahassee.org)
4. Kittens feed best if they are in a natural nursing position (as they would be to nurse their mama cat). Place the kitten on its stomach on a warm towel and offer the bottle at a 45 degree angle. You may need to gently open the kittens mouth with your finger and slip the nipple inside to start the nursing process.
  - If the kitten will not suckle, ensure that he/she is warm and that the formula is not too hot/cold. If the kitten does not suckle/eat for two consecutive meals, please call Northwood Animal Hospital to discuss/for specific advice.
  - If the kitten aspirates, or inhales some of the formula, you will see bubbles/milk around the nostrils. Stop feeding and hold the kitten upside down. Use the bulb to suction the fluid from the nostrils.
  - How much to feed:

5. At four weeks of age, place a small dish/lid with ~1 tablespoon canned food in the box with the kittens. They may begin to eat some on their own at this age, but continue to bottle feed as well. Replace the canned food with fresh food three times daily.

Age in weeks	Average weight	Amount formula per day	Number of feedings per day	Amount per feeding
1	4 oz	32ml	6	5ml
2	7 oz	56ml	5	11ml
3	10 oz	80ml	4	20ml
4	13 oz	100ml	3	33ml
5	16 oz	120ml	3	40ml

**Need #3: Stimulation (assistance urinating/defecating)**

- When raised by their mom, kittens are stimulated by the mama cat licking their abdomen/gentital regions. This process cues the kitten to urinate/defecate.
- We mimic mom's licking pattern by gently rubbing the kitten with a cotton ball moistened with warm water. Rub gently and only enough to produce urine/feces as the kitten's skin is sensitive. Make sure the kitten is clean and dry prior to replacing in box.

**Need #4: Monitoring for common problems:**

- Failure to thrive: lack of growth, lack of weight gain, or any weight loss is a poor sign in kittens. The kittens should gain weight rapidly. If you do not have a gram scale and are unable to purchase one, please bring the litter to Northwood Animal Hospital once weekly for weight checks (this will only take ~5 minutes).
- Suckling on the littermates: some kittens have a very strong urge to suckle/nurse and will suckle on their littermates ears, penis, etc. If this occurs, you may need to separate the aggressive suckler.

**If you have a kitten you feel needs a medical examination...**

- First, please call Northwood Animal Hospital to discuss the situation with a technician.
- If the technician directs you to bring the kitten in for evaluation, plan to drop the affected kitten (but not the healthy kittens from the same litter) off at Northwood Animal Hospital. The kitten will receive immediate care from a trained technician and will receive a doctors examination as soon as possible (during normal business hours). A treatment plan (which may include euthanasia depending on the severity of illness, prognosis, and quality of life assessment) will be formulated after the doctor's

examination. The kitten will then be treated in hospital based on this plan. You will be notified when/if the kitten is healthy enough to return to foster care.

**Please Note:**

No matter how attentive and careful a foster parent you are, some kittens are too young, too sick, or just too unlucky and will not survive until they are 6-8 weeks old. If you ever feel that a kitten is not breathing normally, not gaining weight well, or otherwise sick, please bring them to Northwood Animal Hospital immediately for evaluation. Should you have a kitten pass away while in your care, please bring them back to Northwood Animal Hospital for proper after-care.

## Milestones in Kitten Development

Age	Milestone
5 days	Ears open, but kitten is still deaf
7-10 days	Eyes open
14 days	Sense of smell starts to develop
3 weeks	Ear canals open - can hear/understand sounds
4 weeks	Able to eliminate on their own, sense of smell fully developed, baby teeth start erupting, able to walk without stumbling
6 weeks	Permanent eye color starts to set in, social play developing, full set of baby teeth erupted.
6-7 weeks	Drop-back off at Northwood Animal Hospital to prepare for adoption! Thank you for fostering!

# Kitten Health Record

Use one per kitten, print additional copies as needed. Each day, record the weight prior to the first feeding and the approximate amount consumed at each meal.

**Kitten Name:**

**Unique markings/characteristics of this kitten:**

[illegible]

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