

Kitten Development Timetable

Approximate Age	Characteristics
Gestation Period	63 days
Birth	Closed eyes/folded ears
5 Days	Loses umbilical cord
5-13 Days	Eyes open
14 Days	Teething begins
18 Days	Litter box use begins Ears straighten Crawling begins
21 Days	Litter box training complete Starts eating wet kitten food
28-35 Days	Kitten stands Weaning process begins Able to chew dry food Eyes become clear Ears stand fully upright
14-49 Days	Critical socialization window
42 Days	Deworm & vaccinate (FRTC)
56 Days	Littermates can be separated.

Kitten Health Emergencies

Experts agree that chilling is the greatest single threat to neonatal kittens. If you find one cold to the touch, hypothermia has set in. Warm him slowly using your own body heat through a heavy coat to protect yourself. Never feed milk or formula to a chilled kitten — give him .01 ml of corn syrup or honey to stabilize him. Other health emergencies include difficulty breathing, gray or white stool or diarrhea, vomiting, listlessness, not eating, high fever, open wounds or lesions, losing balance or having trouble walking, pale gums or heavy flea (or other parasite) infestation.

— from **The Guide To Handraising Kittens** by Susan Easterly.

About TLC



We provide community funding for sterilization and vaccination of managed outdoor cats (feral and barn) regardless of caregiver income — and pet cats in families with limited incomes. These are the primary sources of kittens born each year that flood the adoption pool.

We're a 501(c)3 private operating foundation formed in 1980. We started our work with cats in 2000 and are presently sterilizing cats at the rate of over 1,000 per year.

Complete program information is posted to our web site. Applications are available by calling us during weekday business hours.

We welcome donations from kindred spirits.



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ZIMMER FOUNDATION

Found Kitten Tips



What To Do If You Find A Litter of Feral Kittens



Kitten Season



It happens every year — from late winter to early fall. People find feral mom cats with kittens in their garage, under their porch, or in a bush. Al-

though they look recently abandoned, the mother and father have probably been living there all along but, fearful of people, came out only at night. Now with needy kittens, they become more visible. If you find kittens on your land, your first impulse may be to call a shelter but you'll soon learn they are already full. What can you do to help?

Evaluate the situation. If the kittens are in a relatively safe spot leave them where they are until you have a plan. Observe them from a distance, but don't disturb the mother's care of them. If she senses you may approach, she'll quickly hide them.

If you find kittens without their mother, watch more intently. They may have gotten permanently separated — but, more likely, the mother may be moving the litter (one at a time) or taking a “mommy break”. As long as it's relatively warm and the kittens are in a protected area, they are okay alone — but only for awhile. After that, you may need to intercede.

Determine their age. The options open to kittens depend on their age. The *Kitten Development Timetable* (inside flap) is a rough guideline. The ideal

Caring For Feral Kittens

age to find them is between 4-8 weeks — when they're old enough to leave their mother, yet young enough to still socialize to people. If you find orphaned kittens younger than that, find a surrogate mother (check vet clinics and rescues) or find someone who's able to provide round-the-clock feedings.

Helping Kittens Over 8 Weeks Old

If the kittens haven't been socialized to people before they are 8 weeks old, they will likely stay feral no matter how hard someone later tries to tame them. At best, they *may* socialize to one person — a caregiver they consider “mom cat” — but even that is somewhat conditional. Because of this, feral cats are best left where they are to live as wildlife. If this happens to be in your yard, you may want to “manage” them — get them sterilized and provide daily food, water and dry shelter.

This practice, called “TNR” (trap-neuter-return), helps you, the cats, and the community. Once sterilized, the cats stop unsavory behaviors — yowling and spraying — and their overall health improves — males no longer fight and females no longer emaciate from repeated pregnancies. And, their territorial presence keeps other intact roaming cats away. Best of all, your land becomes a *kitten free zone* — a place where pro-active cat sterilization replaces the reactive practice of homeless cat euthanasia.

Socializing Tame-able Kittens

Helping Kittens Under 8 weeks Old

Baby kittens have more options. One, of course, is to leave them where they are and manage them as outdoor cats — same as you would if they were older. This option is best when the alternative is to take them to an animal control shelter. There they will almost certainly be euthanized as shelters cannot adopt out unsocialized kittens. And, even if they could keep them, their immature immune systems wouldn't fight off the viral and bacterial disease in the air of *all* shelters and they could become very ill.

Ideally, kittens should live in a foster home receiving love, attention and security while they learn to enjoy both human and kitten companionship. For anyone that enjoys kittens, this is a very rewarding experience. It takes only a few weeks, and while the kittens are becoming adoptable house cats, you can typically find them permanent homes. No special education or skills are needed. All you need is a big heart and a small room to foster them.

To learn how to socialize feral kittens to be indoor pets — or to manage outdoor feral cats — visit our web site and click on Handouts. And, whichever way you decide to help, remember the kittens — and mom, dad and any other adults in the colony — need to be sterilized — the sooner the better. Nothing you can do for the cats is more important than that.