



## **FOSTERING: Mama and Nursing Babies Guide**

*For any topic covered here or for questions about something not listed, please contact the Foster Coordinator at (707) 576-7999 x 218.*

### **Set Up**

When fostering an untamed Mother with nursing kittens, you must use a cage. A double rabbit cage is best as it's big enough for mom and her babies.

After you have found an appropriate place in your home for the cage, cover the entire bottom of the cage with sheets, blankets, or towels. This will keep kitten feet off the wire grating.

When the mom and kittens arrive, give them a day to calm down and adjust to their new surroundings. During this time, cover the cage completely with a sheet or blanket to help them feel extra secure.

Set up bedding on one side with food and water. Use the other side for the litter box. Place the litter box as far from food as possible as cats do not like to eat near their toilet.

### **Water and Food**

**Water:** Clean water should always be available. Nursing mothers drink a lot. Never feed cow's milk as this could cause diarrhea or constipation. Use bowls that cannot tip. We want to keep the cage as warm and dry as possible. Food and water dishes should be cleaned daily.

**Food:** Forgiven Felines feeds Purina Kitten Chow to all kittens and recommends high-quality food to all adults. The dry kibble should always be available to Mom. Once you start weaning your kittens (at about four weeks) you can start introducing soft kitten food. Initially, mother's milk is the best for them. Her milk contains antibodies which help protect them from diseases.

Kittens who do not receive enough milk usually cry constantly and are either restless or extremely inactive. If the mother does not appear to be taking care of her kittens, consult a veterinarian.

### **Weaning Kittens**

At about four weeks of age, you'll notice the kittens starting to become interested in Mom's food. This is the time to introduce them to solid food.

Make the kitten kibble soft by adding hot or warm water to it and allow it to sit for 10 minutes to absorb the moisture. Then using a fork, mix it up adding a touch of wet food to create a soupy mixture or gruel. Place kittens in front of the food bowl. If they don't lick on their own, place a bit of food on the tip of your finger and offer it to them. If they still don't lick, open their mouth, and place the food from your finger on the roof of their mouth. This will give them a taste of the food. Now offer them food from your finger again and eventually lead them with your finger closer and closer to the bowl. When they're ready, they'll lap it up.

Kittens five to six weeks old need 2-3 small meals a day with the last meal just before bedtime. Kittens six weeks plus need two meals a day (about one-two tablespoons of softened food per kitten for each meal) plus free choice dry kibble.

**See Kitten Care Guide for tips on general care, litter, bedding, illness, socialization, and hazards.**