



WEANING KITTENS

Policy

It is the Kitten Alliance's policy that foster parents should begin the weaning process at approximately 4-5 weeks of age, or once the kitten's back teeth emerge.

Purpose

To ensure kittens remain healthy and continue to gain weight throughout the weaning process.

Procedure

1. The following instruction is included in the foster manual for foster parents to use as guidance for the weaning process.
2. Other methods of weaning can be advised on a case by case basis by ENKA staff.
3. The wet food to be used during the weaning period is Royal Canin Mother & BabyCat. After kittens are weaned, they will be moved to pate-style poultry-based cat food (Friskies, Fancy Feast, etc.) unless otherwise directed by ENKA staff.
4. In the event that a kitten refuses to eat or begins to decline due to weaning, the foster parent must inform ENKA staff as soon as possible for further support.

Basic Weaning Method

Once kittens are 4-5 weeks old, it is time to start the weaning process. The foster's goal is to have the kittens eating on their own consistently by the time they graduate out of our neonate program at around 6-7 weeks old.

Beginning at 4-5 weeks old, fosters will offer warm gruel (two parts wet food, one part formula) at all times along with dry kitten food and water. Every 2-4 hours, discard any uneaten gruel and provide a fresh batch. Do not leave gruel with the kitten overnight as it will spoil.

The foster shall still supplement the kittens with a bottle every 6-8 hours to ensure that they are getting all the nutrients they need, but encourage them to eat gruel before you offer a bottle.

To get a kitten interested in trying the gruel, fosters may have to offer the gruel with a spoon or use their fingers to place a small amount on the kitten's tongue or gums. Ideally, by the end of five weeks, the foster kittens will be happily eating dry and wet food on their own. Gradually decrease the amount of formula being mixed into the gruel. This can take hours or days. Be patient with the kittens and go at their speed.

It is important to continue weighing the foster kittens every day, after each feeding, to ensure that they are always gaining weight. During the weaning stage, kittens will also be introduced to the litter box and will be eliminating on their own without help.

Making formula

Mix two parts water with one part formula. Mix the powder and water until all clumps are gone. This can be done using a blender bottle, whisk, or hand mixer. Keep mixed formula refrigerated when not in use. After 24 hours, discard any unused formula and make a fresh batch to avoid bacterial growth.

Making gruel

Mix 1/2 can of wet food with 1/4 cup of formula per kitten. You can add a little water if the kittens seem to like a looser consistency. It's OK to make gruel in bulk and refrigerate it for up to 24 hours, but you'll need to warm it before offering it to the kittens. Warm in a microwave for 5 seconds at a time until room temperature. Mix well and check for hot spots before offering to the kittens.

Approved by:
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