



Whiskers on the Way

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Preparing for Kitten Arrival

Supplies

Ensure you have appropriate kitten food and feeding supplies.

Comfort

Create a comfortable, low-stress, and safe environment.

Medical Needs

Have a plan for veterinary care, vaccinations, and deworming.

Preventing Disease Spread

Clean Environment

Regularly clean and disinfect living areas, litter boxes, and products used.
Create and implement cleaning SOP's.

Hygiene

Maintain proper hygiene by washing hands thoroughly before and after handling kittens.

Isolation

Isolate cats with infectious diseases.

PPE and Vaccination

Wear Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and vaccinate kittens as recommended.

Kitten Development Stages

Pre-Natal Conception to birth

Neonatal: Birth to 9-14 days

Transitional: 10-21 days

Socialization: 2-7 weeks up to 10 weeks

Juvenile: 2 months to sexual maturity
(avg. 4-10 months)

Establishing Policies

Guidelines and SOPs

Establish guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for medical, behavioral, and emergency situations. SOPs are essential for promoting efficiency, safety, quality of care, and emergency responses in animal rescue operations, ultimately benefiting both the animals and the organization as a whole.

Feline-Friendly Handling

Implement feline-friendly handling techniques to build trust and reduce stress.

Meeting Individual Needs

Consider mobility and medical requirements of each kitten and provide appropriate accommodations.

Providing Enrichment

Enrichment is meeting all of an animal's mental, physical, and emotional needs in order to empower them to perform species-typical behaviors in healthy, safe, and appropriate ways.

Provide a variety of toys and activities. Encourage climbing, scratching, and hunting behaviors.



Socialization / Life Skills

Effects of poor or no socialization include:

- Fear
- Phobias
- Hyperactivity
- Increased sensitivity to new experiences
- Often fearful of people and/or other animals
- Higher emotionality (Emotionality is the observable behavioral and physiological component of emotion)
- Lack of health care
- Abandonment
- Relinquishment
- Euthanasia
- Decreased human-animal bond

People think of socialization as exposure, instead, we should think of it as concepts to train and life skills. Socialization helps to prepare kittens to cope with the human world, develop appropriate social behavior and coping skills for changing environments, and improves the foundation for lifelong learning.

Exposure and Positive Associations

Gradually expose kittens to various stimuli and environments, ensuring positive experiences.

Socialization during a sensitive period is critical in reducing fear response and teaching appropriate social behaviors. This is important for older kittens as well.

When socializing, you want to avoid force and/or flooding and instead, assess and respect the kitten's body language, go at their individual pace, and set up the environment to be less stressful and for them to succeed.

Setting Up for Successful Socialization

Start Small, Work Up

Begin with small steps and gradually increase exposure.

One Thing at a Time

Introduce new stimuli gradually to avoid overwhelming the kitten.

Pair with Good Stuff

Associate new experiences with things the kitten enjoys.

Reward Interaction

Reinforce the kittens for exploring and interacting with various stimuli and people.

Understand, assess and respect body language

Continuously monitor the kitten's body language for signs of stress or discomfort.

Keep interactions below the kitten's stress threshold to maintain a positive experience.

Keep It Fun

Make socialization enjoyable with toys, treats, and playful interactions

Key Socialization Period

2-7 weeks up to 10 weeks

Adequate socialization during the key period is crucial for development. At this time, they are most receptive to learning from new experiences, social learning is enhanced, and social attachments are formed more easily and rapidly.

By preparing for kitten season and providing necessary care and socialization, you're giving these kittens the best chance for a happy and healthy life.

Thank you for your dedication!