

# Fostering A Pregnant Cat:

## What to Know When They're Expecting

### Beforehand:

Pregnant cats are one of the longer foster opportunities that NEAS offers. Our medical team will use a variety of methods to provide you with the best guess for a due date, but keep in mind this is still just an estimate. A cat's gestation period is 58-67 days, so you could have this cat and her kittens for several months to cover the pregnancy, the weaning of the kittens, and the mother's recovery.



### Setting Up:

- Make sure to block off any major areas your pregnant foster cat could hide in- closets, heating/AC vents, under the bed, behind appliances. You will want an unoccupied room in the home like a spare bedroom or bathroom to get her set up in. You will not want any resident pets to have access to this room, as it will unsettle the mother-to-be and could put her babies at risk.
- Prepare a birthing area for her to nest in- a smaller, semi enclosed space that the mother-to-be can come and go from. This could be the bottom half of a dog's airline crate, a spacious cat carrier, or a box with a side cut out. Provide enough blankets to provide comfort and warmth but not too many that will hide the kittens. Make sure not to disturb her when she investigates it. **\*Do not use terrycloth as the kitten's claws can get caught in the loops.**
- You may want to set up a nanny cam, or pet camera to watch the birth and her progress remotely!

### Things to Notice Before the Birth:

- Mammary glands will increase in size during the week or so before birth.
- About two days before birth, the mother will begin producing milk.
- The mother may become more affectionate or become unsettled.
- She remain in one place or may move to another place she has previously not shown interest in.

## Please Call the Shelter or Foster Care Coordinator If You Notice:

- Your foster cat has diarrhea, vomiting, lethargy, tremors, excessive panting or seizures
- If the cat is having contractions and has not passed a kitten within 45-60 minutes.
- If you can see part of the fetus protruding and she does not pass the kitten within several minutes.
- Mother cat is ignoring the the kittens and they are crying or she is acting aggressively towards them. (Mom will typically clean the new kittens very quickly and begin nursing within minutes of birth. Cleaning will include eating the placenta and fluids surrounding the newborn kitten. If the mother cat seems very tired and is not cleaning the kittens, try to pat them dry softly with a clean cloth and move them closer to one of her nipples, however try to intervene as little as possible.)

## **After Birth:**

- Count the number of kittens immediately. When they are 3 days old do a quick visual check for size and major problems- then put them right back with mom.
  - After week one, weigh kittens daily to every few days. You should see a steady 1/2 Oz increase in the kitten's weight every day. Call the shelter if any kitten is not gaining weight or has decreased weight. Refer back to the "Kittens, Kittens, Kittens" and "Common Medical Concerns" pages in the foster manual.
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## **Kitten Development:**

### **Week One- Three:**

- Kittens 0-2 weeks should increase in weight from 4 to 10oz, gaining roughly 4 oz/week.
- Kittens are born with their eyes and ear canals closed.
- Newborn kittens spend 90% of their time sleeping and 10% eating.
- After about a week, kittens will begin to wiggle around on their own and their eyes will start to open.

### **Week Three- Four:**

- Kittens 3-4 weeks should weigh between 12 oz-16oz.
- The kitten's eyes should be open and blue.
- Kittens older than 3 weeks should be starting to use the litter box by themselves. Place them into the litter box a few times to insure they get it- make sure to use a non-clumping litter so they don't ingest it.
- Kittens should receive positive, gentle handling

### **Week Four-Six:**

- Kittens 4-6 weeks are weaning and can eat a slurry mix of kitten wet food and kitten formula, and can leave some dry food down for them to try.
- The kitten's teeth are coming in, and their visibility and motor functions are improving.
- The kittens should be 16 oz-1.25 lbs at this age.
- At 6 weeks, the kittens should be scheduled to come into the shelter for their first round of FVRCP vaccines. Your Foster Coordinator will reach out to you to set up a time for this.

### **Week Six -Eight:**

- Kittens should be handled often for a few hours a day and exposed to toys, children, sounds, and other pets beginning at 4-5 wks old.
  - Kittens should be transitioning to dry and wet kitten food.
  - You should continue to see an improvement in their coordination and motor functions.
  - Kittens at eight weeks (provided they weigh at least 2 lbs) will come back into the shelter for their second health check, their second FVRCP vaccines and to search for their forever homes!
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**After kittens are adopted, the mother cat will often need 2-3 weeks to dry up any remaining milk and fully recover before coming in the shelter to be spayed and adopted.**