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QUEEN & KITTEN CARE

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CARING FOR QUEENS

Before taking in a pregnant or lactating cat (a Queen) you first need to consider if you have the set up and knowledge to look after her.

It is important to remember that when they come into care Queens have usually just been trapped off the streets or spent eight days in a pound. They are a typical stressed cat, but with the added stress of carrying or caring for their precious babies.

With a normal stressed cat coming into care we put them into a low traffic room with everything they need and walk away. We give them the time and space they need to calm down, come to terms with their new situation and settle in. Then we start to slowly introduce ourselves to them and start gaining their trust. Queens should be no different, even if they have cute, cuddly kittens that we just want to pick up and smooch.

Provide your Queen with her own private bedroom or crate where she can settle and start to relax. If using a crate cover half of it with a towel or blanket to give added privacy.

RULE NUMBER 1: Keep Queens in a room of low use

A Queen's number one priority is her kittens, she wants to make sure they are safe and healthy. To this point she will seek out a quiet, low traffic room with a hidey hole to create a bed for her kittens.

RULE NUMBER 2: Prove your Queen with a hidey hole

Provide your queen with a hidey hole such as a dark cupboard with blankets in it, a cardboard box cubby, a draw - otherwise they will find one themselves

Queens will often move their kittens anytime their hidey spot is discovered. You should not actively try to find, visualise or touch the kittens in the first seven to ten days after their birth. This is when the Queen will be suffering the most anxiety over her kittens because she knows just like we do that this is their most vulnerable age. If you do find that the Queen has kittens in two separate spots, leave the room and give her an hour to finish moving them. She can only carry one at a time and you have likely interrupted her during moving day. She will also not appreciate you helping. Transfer of human smells can make the kitten unrecognisable to the mother and play trick with her fragile mind which can lead to kitten abandonment.

RULE NUMBER 3: Don't touch the kittens unless absolutely necessary

There are occasions that the Queen will purposely remove kittens from the nest. Feline mothers, just like human mothers, can sense when something is not quite right with their kittens. However, they have others to care for and will often chose the healthy kittens over the sick ones.

In the first ten days of life kittens are at most risk of dying due to contracted illness or internal deformity. They often fade without warning or signs that might make us suspicious that they are ill. However, their mother often knows something is wrong and by removing the kitten from the nest she is cutting ties. If you place the kitten back in with mum and she removes it again or won't feed it take it straight to the vet.

This kitten may require bottle rearing. Before trying to bottle feed please read the [Kitten Care Sheet](#). It is also recommended not to get attached to this kitten.



RULE NUMBER 4: Mum knows you cannot save them all and generally knows best

Exceptions to this rule is if the Queen herself is sick or stressed.

A sick Queen will generally try to continue looking after her kittens if she can but at some point her own health must come first. If you notice your Queen is sick, box her and her kittens up, place a towel over the carrier and get her to the vet. Always seek veterinary advice if your mother cat and/or small kittens are sick.

A Vet may recommend if your Queen is very sick that the kittens be removed from her and hand reared. Please read the [Kitten Care sheet](#) before trying to bottle feed kittens. Hand rearing is a big commitment and a 24/7 job, if you do not feel you are able to commit to this please let us know so arrangements can be made.

Alternatively, an over stressed Queen (one who is not given the space she needs) can become mentally unstable and may retreat into herself forgetting her motherly responsibilities. Please see rules number 1-3 and don't be the cause of her stress.

RULE NUMBER 5: If the Queen is sick, she must see a Vet

If the queen is sick, she must see a vet as quickly as the human Queen would see her physician

Queens have a number of requirements differing to when they are a regular adult cat. These include diet and parasite control.

Firstly, once you know you have a pregnant Queen a kitten diet should be introduced (transitioned over a few days) to help ensure she is receiving the correct nutrition required for creating life. Her meal frequency will need to increase the closer she gets to birthing and once she has birthed constant access to kitten food and fresh water should be provided. Once the kittens start eating solids on their own and she begins to wean them a Queen's meals should be reduced down in size and transitioned back to her normal diet by the time the kittens are eight to ten weeks. (Please see the Kitten Care information sheet for more information)

We recommend that lactating Queens be fed Royal Canin "Mother and Baby Cat" dry and wet food. Royal Canin kitten foods included added Lysine supplements for immune support.

RULE NUMBER 6: Ensure your Queen is receiving adequate nutrition

On a side note a Queen that is about to give birth or who has just given birth may not eat for the first couple of days for fear of leaving her kittens. A plate of wet food next to the bed can help with this but you should not become overly stressed or hover. She will eat when she is hungry.

Parasite control is important for Queens because she will be the only source of protection for her kittens until they are four to six weeks of age.

A pregnant Queen should be wormed with an all intestinal worming tablet two weeks prior to birthing (or when she comes into care) and every two weeks after until the kittens are old enough to start treatment of their own. She should also receive a topical flea treatment five days prior to giving birth (or when coming into care) and then every month after as usual. It is recommended using Advantage as this product is safe to use on pregnant or lactating animals.

RULE NUMBER 7: Prove your Queen with a pest free existence

If you receive a cat that is suspected to be pregnant a quick health check at the Vet is in the cat's best interest. Vaccination prior to having kittens is highly recommended as the Queen proves her kittens with their immunity to illness via the milk.



When the kittens reach four weeks of age mum and bubs should have a check up to make sure they are all healthy and growing normally.

If you are unsure if your Queen is pregnant or how due she is an ultrasound can be performed between 15 to 40 days post conception to confirm pregnancy. An x-ray can be performed after day 40 to estimate the kittens approximate due date and numbers. (However, x-rays and Ultrasounds are expensive and should only be performed when necessary and recommended by one of our Vets)

RULE NUMBER 8: Vaccinate your Queen for immunity onto her kittens

Vaccinating your Queen allows her to pass the immunity onto her kittens

Once the kittens are two weeks of age you may start building up the Queens trust that your presence will not harm them. Spend time in the room (read a book, dust the shelves, take a nap) without directly interacting with them. By three weeks of age the kittens will start wanting to explore outside of the nest and you should have built up enough trust to be able to start handling them.

When handling small kittens, it is best to sit close to the ground when picking them up as the mother may stress that you are going to drop her delicate babies and get very upset.

RULE NUMBER 9: Patience is rewarded with furry love

Kittens become very active at five to six weeks of age and become very tiring for mum.

Make sure when the kittens reach this age that your Queen has somewhere she can go for a break. For example, a high up shelf or bed that she can hop up onto. If she has been in the crate this whole time and is able to be handled this is a good age to start letting her and her kittens have some time outside the crate.

Your Queen will likely stress over the kittens for the first few times out of the crate making sure they don't get lost or injured but once she has piece of mind, she will enjoy some "me" time much like human mothers.

RULE NUMBER 10: Allow for normal behaviour

Queens will start to wean their kittens around six to eight weeks of age however very needy kittens may try to delay mum's attempts.

You can assist her with this by separating your Queen from her kittens for a few hours every day once the kittens are six weeks of age. This will also help her to start to dry up her milk.

Each week extend the time you are separating them.

Once the kittens reach 900g-1kg in weight they are ready for de-sexing. Separate your Queen and kittens from each other completely two days before the kittens get de-sexed. Your Queen can be de-sexed that week also and should be sent home with antibiotics to help prevent mastitis. Alternatively you can give your Queen one to two weeks for her milk to dry up prior to de-sexing.

Do not put mum and kittens back together after de-sexing as your Queen will likely try to pull out the kittens stitches and the kittens will try to feed off her. (Note this may cause mild distress for the Queen and her kittens but this is a necessary step to their rehoming)

You should now have what you need to successfully care for a lactating Queen. If you have any questions or concerns please just ask the wonderful Maneki Neko support team.



Kitten Care Fact Sheet

Written by Dr Sarah Thorpe and Joanne Amos for Maneki Neko Cat Rescue

Kitten Facts

- Kittens are blind when born and their eyes open between 7- 10 days of age
- They usually weigh around 100g when born
- Kittens are born without immunity to illnesses. Instead they receive antibodies from their mother's colostrum milk to help protect them against illnesses she has been exposed to and their own immune systems then slowly develop over time
- For this reason, it is best for kittens to remain with their mothers until at least 4 weeks of age, as they will have protection against illnesses their mother may be shedding but not those shed by other cats
- Kittens under 14 days are very fragile due to their lack of immune systems and their total reliance on their mother. It is not uncommon for kittens to fade away in this period of life
- Mammals make a special milk called colostrum just prior to giving birth which contains antibodies, white blood cells, high amounts of protein and other sources of nutrients, immune boosters and system starters required for newborn infants. Kittens removed from their mothers at 4 days or less should be given artificial colostrum (can be purchased in a powder)
- Kittens coming into care at 3 weeks or less will need to be bottle fed with a cat specific milk formula
- Kittens 3-4 weeks of age should be tested with solids, ideally RC baby cat mousse mixed with a little warm water (can also sprinkle a small amount of milk powder), if they won't eat then bottle feed
- Kittens can be started on a kitten specific dry food at around 5 weeks of age
- Kittens are susceptible to internal and external parasites more so than adult cats. They can be infected with these parasites from a very young age from their mothers. This is why parasite control is so important

Bottle Feeding

- Kittens 3 weeks and under require bottle feeding every 4-5 hours, including through the night.
- A teat appropriate to their mouth shape (kitten specific) should be used. When making a hole it should be big enough to allow milk out when squeezed but not so big that milk will flood out when upside down
- Recommended milk formulas include DiVetelact, Formula One, Wombaroo Kitten and Biolact
- Follow instructions on the tin when preparing milk. Most start off with a weaker concentration to allow for the kitten's stomachs to adapt to digesting the formula. The concentration is then increased after 4-5 days on the formula but slowly over a couple of days. Eg DiVetelact starts with 1 scoop of formula mixed with 60 ml of water, it then needs to be increased to 1 scoop formula mixed with 40ml of water. We recommend feeding kittens on the 1:60 concentration for 4 days then increase to 1:50 for 3 days then 1:40 from day 7
- The teats and bottle should be sterilized with hot water in between feeds
- Always feed kittens in their natural position. On their stomach with their head level and allow kitten to knead with their front paws (never feed on their back). Prior to feeding gently handle and position the kitten to help stimulate muscular activity
- Kittens prefer milk at a temperature similar to what mum makes, around 37 degrees
- Place the bottle in a mug of boiling water to heat the milk, test on the underside of your wrist, reheat when kitten gets fussy and starts chewing the teat in the side of their mouth (if it burns you it will burn them)



- At the end of a feed use a soft moist cloth or cotton ball to wipe the kittens bottom to “toilet it”. Kittens require stimulation to help them pass urine and faeces when they are under three weeks of age. Dry well afterwards
- Kittens need to be kept in an ambient temperature of 31 degrees if with mum or 37-39 degrees if without a mum, and the temperature gradually reduced to 34 degrees by week 4. External warmth sources can be a heat pad, hot water bottle, wheat bag, heated bed, etc. Ensure there are a layer of blankets between the heat source and kitten to prevent burns
- Bedding will need changing every 4-6 hours, or every feed
- Keep bottle babies isolated from other cats and kittens to reduce the likelihood of illness and use a disinfectant to clean your hands before and after handling
- Nutrigel is a foster carer’s best friend. Apply a small amount of nutrigel to a kitten’s gums with a cotton bud when ill or not feeding well. It will help give them a much needed nutrient boost.
- Bottle babies get messy and require regular baths. Use warm water and dry with a gentle hair drier. Do not leave a kitten under 3 weeks old wet as their body temperature drops quickly. Pop them into a nice warm bed afterwards
- Weigh your kitten daily or every few days to check that it is growing. It is handy to keep a record of this and how much they are drinking
- Offer 3-week-olds access to a litter tray, as at this age most kittens will start controlling their bowel movements
- Offer 3-week-olds a small amount of watered down baby cat mousse every day on a flat plate before offering the bottle. This will help start the weaning. Once they are eating solids well, meals can be alternated between solids and the bottle for a few days then wean them off the formula
- Milk formula can be mixed in with the mousse for the first week for added nutrients
- Once weaned onto solids meal frequencies can be reduced down slowly to 4 times a day at around 6 weeks of age



Feeding and weight specifics - Queens

- Queens require a diet with protein levels > 25% and fat content of 10-25%
- To achieve these figures a kitten food should be added into a pregnant queens diet when pregnancy is confirmed or as soon as she comes into care
- Whilst pregnant feed the queen a combination of her regular adult food and kitten dry food in small but more frequent amounts to her usual feeding (4 times daily)
- After birthing allow the queen constant access to the combined food for the first 4 weeks
- From 4 weeks of age the kittens will start to eat solids and therefore mum's feeding can slowly be reduced and returned to her normal diet once the kittens are 8 weeks of age

Feeding and weight specifics – Kittens

- Kittens are born weighing around 100g
- A healthy kitten will gain 50-100g a week

Age	Calorie req. (Kcal/kg/day)	Wt (grams)	Di-Vetelact (100kcal/10mL)	Wombaroo/Formula One (kitten)
0-3 days	300	80-100	30ml=(2.5ml x 12 feeds)	21ml=(1.7ml x 12 feeds)
3-7 days	300	100	30ml=(5ml x 6 feeds)	23ml=(3.8ml x 6 feeds)
1-2 weeks	280	200	56ml=(9ml x 6 feeds)	39ml=(6.5ml x 6 feeds)
2-3 weeks	265	300	80ml=(13ml x 6 feeds)	55ml=(9ml x 6 feeds)
3-4 weeks	250	400	100ml=(20ml x 5 feeds)	67=(13.4ml x 5 feeds)
Weaning	225		Solids x 5 meals	Solids x 5 meals



Parasite Control

- Cats and kittens need regular flea and worming preventatives and treatments
- This is because these parasites can be detrimental to their health and development and can even cause death
- Worms can cause vomiting, diarrhoea, a bloated belly, lethargy and weight loss
- Fleas can cause skin irritations and allergies, and in small kittens and cats anaemia. Fleas are also the intermediate hosts for a number of parasites that can be spread between pets by fleas
- Please see the tables for frequency and MNCR recommended products
- Products can be picked up from Neko HQ during opening hours

Flea Treatment Protocol

Age	Kittens 2 days – 4 weeks		4 - 8 weeks	8 – 12 weeks	12 weeks +	Queens
	With queen	Without queen			Juveniles and adults	Pregnant and lactating
Product	Nil	Frontline spray	Frontline	Advantage	Advocate	Advantage
Frequency	Nil	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly	Monthly and 5 days prior to birth

Worming Treatment Protocol

Age	Kittens 2 -12 weeks	12 weeks +	Queen
Product	All-wormer paste	Advocate	All intestinal wormer tablet
Frequency	Fortnightly	Monthly	Fortnightly whilst pregnant and until kittens 6 weeks