

Shelter Logo Feline Acute Diarrhea in Foster Kittens (Example)

*Standard Operating Procedure
Created Date*

Shelter policy

Acute diarrhea can be a common clinical sign seen in neonatal and weanling kittens. It can be caused by a variety of factors, including weaning, diet, stress, parasites, bacteria, toxins, and viruses. Whenever a kitten breaks with diarrhea, it is crucial that food sources, the environment, and stress are all evaluated when initiating treatment.

The shelter's policy is that treatment will be provided for all kittens experiencing acute diarrhea except in extreme situations where the animal is otherwise in critical condition (i.e.: a very sick kitten that is positive for panleukopenia). In the latter scenario, humane euthanasia may be considered to alleviate suffering.

Recognition and diagnosis

Foster parents are given a Purina fecal scoring chart, a scale, a monitoring chart, and a gram scale at the time they assume responsibility for each kitten. Diarrhea can be normal during weaning periods, but profuse liquid or bloody stool, lethargy, depression, and prolonged anorexia are not normal.

Diagnosis for the underlying cause of diarrhea may involve additional testing on feces or rectal swabs from the kitten for panleukopenia, parasites, or bacteria. These will be performed by the shelter medical staff in most cases.

Notification

Foster parents who identify diarrhea in their otherwise healthy kittens should alert the shelter medical staff during normal business hours. If there is a delay, treatments as listed below may be enacted.

If the diarrhea is accompanied by lethargy, anorexia, vomiting, and/or dehydration, the shelter's emergency contact should be notified, and further instructions will be given. This may include medical advice by phone from a veterinarian, a medical appointment at the shelter, or a visit to the emergency hospital. A stool sample should be collected.

Treatment in foster care

Foster parents are given supplies, including dry and canned food and/or formula, de-wormers, probiotics, litter and disposable litter boxes -- and in some cases sterile fluid syringes and needles or feeding tubes to have on hand. Please see below for treatment options foster parents may enact. (This will vary by shelter and by level of training.)

1. Evaluate the kitten's attitude, temperature, and hydration status.
2. Collect a stool sample and refrigerate it for submission to the shelter.
3. Check deworming schedule – is it time for another deworming?
4. Check food for spoilage.
5. Add probiotic to feedings or formula.
6. If the kitten is lethargic or not eating, or has severe diarrhea or bloody stool, alert the shelter medical staff immediately or the after-hours emergency line.
7. Administer XXX. (Treatments here, as determined by the shelter's vet and in-line with the foster's training. These may include antibiotics, subcutaneous fluids, anti-parasitics, even tube feedings or other treatments as outlined by the veterinarian working for/ in collaboration with the shelter).

Documentation

Foster parents should complete daily monitoring logs that include information on weight, stool consistency (see Purina fecal scoring chart), signs of illness, and other issues. Please note details for medical staff.

Medical staff members are responsible for entering all medical information into the shelter's software record system. This includes documentation of phone conversations with foster parents, which may include referral for after-hours emergency care.

Housing and decontamination

Kittens that develop diarrhea will be housed either individually or with their litter in the isolation ward at the shelter or in a foster home until the diarrhea resolves.

Kittens should be housed in areas that can be easily cleaned and disinfected according to standard cleaning protocols. This is especially important with kittens experiencing diarrhea. Kittens with diarrhea should have disposable litter boxes that are completely replaced daily.

Outcome decisions

Treatment will be attempted for all kittens experiencing acute diarrhea. However in cases where the animal is critically unstable (i.e.: a very sick kitten that is positive for panleukopenia) humane euthanasia may be considered.

Adoption Counseling

Kittens that respond well to therapy do not require a medical memo and can be moved forward to adoption. Kittens with recurrent or ongoing diarrhea or those that must stay on a special diet (i.e. grain free or bland I/D diet) should have a medical memo detailing the therapies attempted, responses to treatment, special instructions to follow at home and any other pertinent information for the new owner.