

Sonoma County  
Animal Services  
**FOSTER PROGRAM**



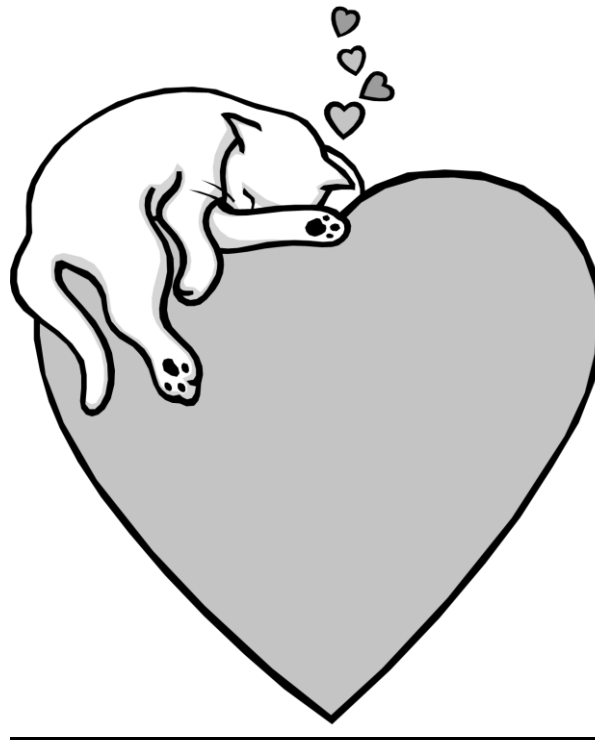
# Goals and Objectives of the Foster Program

## Goal:

- To reduce the euthanasia of potentially adoptable kittens by providing kittens with a safe environment in which to mature, develop social skills and/or recover from injuries or illnesses.

## Objectives:

- To raise the standard of health in kittens available for adoption by fostering ill, injured or behaviorally challenged kittens.
- To insure that all kittens have reached the proper level of maturity before being placed up for adoption.
- To increase the adoptability of kittens with behavior issues by providing behavior modification and training in a home environment.



# Volunteer Foster Family Job Description

## **Major Objective:**

- To provide temporary shelter and care for kittens in the volunteer's home.

## **Responsibilities:**

- To feed, socialize, medicate, groom and train fostered kittens according to the guidelines of the foster program.
- To insure the safety of all foster kittens under the foster family's care.
- To isolate foster kittens from household pets as necessary for the health and safety of the animals.
- To ensure that the foster family's own pets are currently vaccinated according to the guidelines of their veterinarian.
- To observe and report any problems to the Shelter Staff in a timely manner.
- To return kittens to Sonoma County Animal Care and Control at there scheduled time(s).
- To comply with Sonoma County Animal Care and Control policies and procedures for care.
- To return foster kittens to Sonoma County Animal Care and Control should the foster parent be unable to care for them (never turn care over to a third party).

## **Qualifications:**

- A willingness to learn and abide by the standards of care set forth by Sonoma County Animal Care and Control.
- All foster families must allow a home inspection performed by an Animal Care and Control staff member at any time.
- A background in animal husbandry is desirable.

## **Training:**

- Completion of a Foster Training class is required prior to taking foster kittens.

## **Commitment:**

- Each foster contract typically lasts between 1 week and 2 months.
- Foster families must agree to complete 3 foster care contracts or be available for fostering for a 6 month period.

## **Supervision:**

- Direct supervision is by the Shelter Supervisor.
- Indirect supervision by all other shelter personnel.

# General Policies and Procedures

In order to provide maximum service to our foster families and to ensure the health and safety of foster kittens, we require your cooperation with the following:

Please make an appointment for picking up and returning kittens, and call immediately if you will not be able to make this appointment for any reason.

Call the shelter if a foster kitten is sick or injured and follow the shelter's instructions for care, treatment, and/or transportation of the kitten.

Cats and kittens are to be kept indoors only. No outdoor time is allowed, even if supervised.

Immediately inform Sonoma County Animal Care and Control of any changes in address or phone number.

If leaving town or unable to care for your foster kittens for any reason, the kittens need to be returned to Sonoma County Animal Care and Control. Please call as soon as you know of such a situation so that we can arrange for their continuing care. It is acceptable for a spouse to care for the kittens, but DO NOT relinquish their care to a friend, relative, pet sitter, etc.

Arrangements for routine and emergency health care need to be made through Sonoma County Animal Care and Control. If you take a foster kitten to a veterinarian without prior authorization from Sonoma County Animal Care and Control, you **will not** be reimbursed for expenses.

Cats and kittens must be confined in a carrier while in vehicles. Cats and kittens must also be confined in a carrier while being carried to and from the vehicle- please do not carry them in your arms out-of-doors or let them ride loose in your car!

Notify Sonoma County Animal Care and Control immediately if a foster kitten gets lost.

To report problems/ask questions, call the shelter at (707) 565-7103. For after-hours emergencies, call the Sheriff's Dept at 565-2121 for unincorporated and Santa Rosa Police Dept at 528-5222 for city of Santa Rosa, they will contact the on-call officer who will call you back for further instructions.

## Suggested Items for Foster Families

Sonoma County Animal Care and Control will attempt to provide foster families with some of the items that they will need. However, all equipment belonging to the shelter must be returned between foster engagements since our equipment is limited. The products listed below were recommended by experienced foster families as supplies that you may wish to keep on hand:

- Digital thermometer- all animals suspected of being ill should have their temperatures taken daily.
- Vaseline is needed to lubricate the thermometer.
- Scale (postal type), kittens are to be weighed daily up to 3 wks of age.
- Notebook to record daily feeding patterns, weights, temperatures, behaviors, questions, etc.
- Blankets and towels for warmth and comfort. No open-weave blankets or bedding with holes that little paws can get caught in. No frayed edges with strings that can be ingested.
- Newspapers for protecting the floor or lining litterboxes.
- Plastic bottles to use as hot water bottles for young or ill fosters.
- Heating pad to be used to warm young or ill fosters (to be used on **LOW** setting only).
- Ceramic or weighted bowls help reduce spills and messes.
- Stain and odor remover for accidents (such as Nature's Miracle or Get Serious).
- Brushes and nail clippers for grooming, (styptic powder for nail bleeders).
- Toys that are disposable or that can be sanitized between foster groups.
- White rice for mixing in with regular food if stools are soft. Rice should be prepared without added salt or butter. (always check with shelter vet or tech if signs of illness before changing diet).
- Baby rice cereal, same as above.
- Baby food in jars for finicky youngsters or very sick cats. Use turkey or chicken flavor without sodium added. If warmed in the microwave, be sure to check for hot spots before feeding.
- KMR (for kittens), is used for feeding newborns, (bottle babies), that aren't being nursed by a mother.
- Cat carrier/crate, baby gate, exercise pen, or playpens to restrict activity and restrict access to off-limits areas.

# Physical and Psychological Development of Kittens

The following charts provide general guidelines for the stages of development of kittens. Individuals and litters will differ somewhat in their development.

## KITTEN DEVELOPMENT:

### **0 - 2 weeks = Neonatal**

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- ❖ Dependent on mother for warmth and nourishment (mother must adjust her position to suit the needs of the litter and will help them find nipples. Handling should be kept to a minimum.
- ❖ Newborns may spend nearly 8 hours a day suckling, but this decreases as they grow older.
- ❖ Learning to orient toward sound.
- ❖ Eyes usually begin to open between 7 and 10 days of age, and are usually completely open by two weeks of age.
- ❖ Competition for territory begins (seen as fighting for the best suckling location). Separation from their mother and littermates at this point can lead to poor learning and social skills, which may cause aggression toward people and other pets (including other cats) later in life.

### **2 - 7 weeks = Socialization**

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- ❖ By the third week smell is well developed and they can *see* well enough to find their mother.
- ❖ By the fourth week smell is fully mature and hearing is well developed. They start to interact with their littermates, they can walk fairly well, and they're teeth are erupting.
- ❖ By the fifth week sight is fully mature, they can right themselves, run, place their feet precisely, avoid obstacles, stalk and pounce, and catch "prey" with their eyes.
- ❖ Start to groom themselves and others.
- ❖ By the sixth and seventh weeks they begin to develop adult sleeping patterns, motor abilities and social interaction.

### **7- 14 weeks = Most active play period**

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- ❖ Social and object play increases their physical coordination and social skills. Most learning is by observation, preferably from their mother.
- ❖ Social play includes belly-ups, hugging, ambushing and licking.
- ❖ Object play includes scooping, tossing, pawing, mouthing and holding.
- ❖ Social/object play includes tail chasing, pouncing, leaping and dancing.

### **3 - 6 months = Ranking period**

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- ❖ Most influenced by their "litter" (playmates now include companions of other species).
- ❖ Beginning to see and use ranking (dominant and submissive) within the household, including humans.

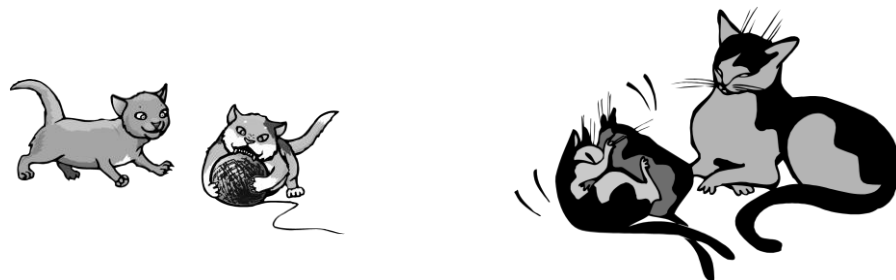
## Socialization

A great deal of time and effort is required to properly socialize kittens. The prime “socialization window” is thought to last from 4 to 12 weeks of age. Daily socialization sessions are genuinely important in shaping the kitten’s future personality and emotional growth. Well-socialized mothers are more likely to have well-socialized offspring since young kittens “feed” off of their mothers’ calm or fearful attitude toward people. It’s also vital to include petting, talking and playing in order to build good “people-skills.” Kittens that are handled 15 to 40 minutes a day (in 5-10 minute sessions) during the first seven weeks are more likely to develop larger brains. They’re more exploratory, more playful and are better learners. Skills not acquired during the first twelve weeks may be lost forever. The environment should be mentally stimulating to help the kittens develop properly. Provide foster objects such as cardboard boxes, tennis balls, squeaky rubber toys, stuffed toys, paper bags (without handles), etc. to play with and explore. Avoid string toys and toys with small pieces that can be chewed off and swallowed. Allow fosters to explore a variety of flooring surfaces, such as carpeting, hardwood floors, cement, linoleum, and tile. Expose your fosters to as many sounds as possible. Blow whistles, clap your hands, jingle bells, turn on the vacuum cleaner, etc. Encourage kittens to explore and sniff the noisemakers.

From four weeks of age on, kittens should be handled individually by different people: men, women, and supervised children. At first, keep handling sessions short- about 5 to 10 minutes per session for a total of 40 minutes per day. As they mature and become accustomed to handling these sessions can become longer and more frequent. Let the kitten’s reaction to the interactions guide you. Combine your play sessions with handling and restraint exercises. This familiarizes the kittens with having their paws touched, mouths opened, muzzles held, and ears touched. Combining this with regular training sessions and body massages helps prevent aversion to touch.

Whenever you are introducing a kitten to something new, maintain a casual and matter-of-fact attitude. Do not force a kitten to approach anything they are afraid of, but also do not coddle a kitten that shows fear. Making sure that kittens have positive experiences with a variety of sights, sounds, textures, and people will help prevent fearful or nervous reactions later in life.

Ideally, kittens should stay with their littermates for at least 12 weeks. Offspring are usually weaned at six or seven weeks, but may continue to suckle for comfort as their mother gradually leaves them more and more. Orphans, or those weaned too soon, are more likely to exhibit inappropriate suckling behaviors later in life. In addition, kittens that are orphaned or separated from their mother and/or littermates too early often fail to develop appropriate “social skills,” such as learning how to send and receive signals, what an “inhibited bite” means and how far to go in play. Please call the shelter immediately if your orphans are developing behaviors that concern you. We may be able to provide you with exercises to improve your foster kittens behavior and make them a more adoptable kitten.



# Caring for a Mother and Litter

## Whelping box environment

A clean, warm, quiet and dry site must be provided for the raising of newborns. A whelping box needs to be set up that is large enough for the mother to comfortably lay away from the litter if she chooses, but small enough so the newborns are easy to reach. The sides need to be high enough to prevent the young from wandering, but low enough for Mom to be able to come and go with ease. The bottom portion of a plastic dog crate works well as a nesting box and is easy to disinfect. Cardboard boxes can also be used if a door is cut at one end at the mother's chest height. Cardboard boxes must be thrown away after use. Crates can be disinfected with a mixture of 1 cup bleach per 1 gallon of water, rinsed thoroughly, and re-used for the next litter.

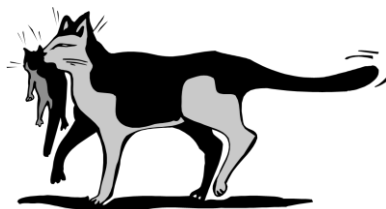
The whelping box should be lined with newspaper, and then covered with clean, dry bedding such as blankets, mattress pads, or towels. Make sure bedding is of a tight-woven fabric that is free of holes or frayed edges. Never place newborns in loose bedding such as straw, hay or shavings; these materials can obstruct breathing and cause respiratory infections if inhaled.

The whelping box needs to be maintained at a temperature from 85-95 degrees Fahrenheit. Do not use electric blankets as they can become too hot and cause burns. Heating pads can be used on low, or plastic bottles can be filled with warm water, covered in towels, and placed around the edges of the box. Do not place the whelping box directly on concrete; this will draw a large amount of heat from the box. Also make sure that the whelping box is in an area that is free of drafts; kittens are not able to maintain their own body temperature and are easily chilled. Handling of newborns should be kept to a minimum to prevent stress and chilling. Over handling can cause serious illness or even death.

## Caring for the mother

Any factor that influences the mother's health will affect the health of her newborns; so making sure Mom gets adequate nutrition is vital. Because milk production requires so much energy, the mother's food should be increased to 2-4 times her normal intake. A high quality canned food should be mixed with the dry food to increase calories and palatability. Fresh water should be available at all times and fresh food should be offered 3-4 times a day. Place food and water dishes just outside of the whelping box where the mother will be able to reach them easily without moving far from her newborns.

Make sure the litter box is placed outside of but nearby the whelping box.





## **Weaning and Feeding Kittens**

Weaning time depends upon the size of the litter, the condition of the mother, and the availability of mother's milk. Generally, it is best to start weaning at 3 to 4 weeks of age. Weaning should be a gradual process that is completed when the litter reaches 6 to 8 weeks of age.

Begin introducing 3 to 4 week old kittens to semi-solid gruel made from one part canned food with three parts hot water three to four times daily. Make sure the gruel is warm but not hot. Mash the food well with a fork or puree it in a blender, then place it in a shallow dish, (flat saucers work well for kittens) for serving. You may need to dip your finger into the gruel and let the kitten lick at it, or smear a small amount on the kitten's lips to encourage them to start eating. Youngsters will often start following their mother to the food dish and eating her canned food on their own. Once weaning begins, also make sure that there is a water dish available that the kittens can reach.

At around five weeks of age, kittens should be reducing their intake of mother's milk and consuming more gruel. Once they are eating the gruel well, gradually decrease the amount of water used to make the gruel. All changes in amounts and consistency of food should be gradual to prevent digestive upset. Always provide plenty of fresh water in clean bowls. Never give milk, as many kittens do not tolerate milk (it often causes profuse diarrhea and weight loss).

Some kittens take longer to acclimate to the supplemental feedings. It is important to always watch the litter to make sure all are eating a good amount of food. Also, it is a good idea to feel their tummies to see if they are full after eating.

## **Supplemental Feeding Guidelines:**

### **Kittens**

3-6 weeks old- Gruel 3-4 times per day & Dry kitten food always available

6-8 weeks old- Canned food 2 times per day & Dry kitten food always available



## **Drying-Up Process/Mastitis**

Mastitis is an inflammatory process involving one or more mammary glands. If it occurs, it is usually within six weeks of giving birth. Mastitis can cause fever, listlessness, loss of appetite, and neglect of the young. Affected mammary glands are usually swollen, warm, and painful to the touch with firm nodules within the tissue. Often, the cause is from a bacterial infection in the mammary gland and may require antibiotic treatment. Hot-packing the affected glands will encourage drainage. If you suspect that your foster cat has mastitis, call the shelter and set up an appointment for the animal to be evaluated and treated.

Nonseptic mastitis results from a buildup of milk and most commonly occurs after weaning. Lactation can be stopped by withholding food for 24 hours, then slowly reintroducing food over the next four days (25% of normal on day 1, 50% on day 2, 75% on day 3, and a full ration on day 4).

## **Maternal Protective Aggression**

Females with young may show a strong protective reaction toward their offspring. This is an instinctive/ hormonal reaction and is not necessarily a reflection of the cat's normal temperament. Neonatal distress vocalization is often the trigger for maternal aggression, but the mere approach of a person or animal may be enough to initiate the response. Over time, the intensity of the reaction should decrease as the mother's hormone levels return to normal and the offspring become more self-sufficient. To decrease the possibility of maternal aggression, nursing mothers should be housed away from any other household pets and only adults should work with the mother and litter during the first few weeks of life. Notify the shelter immediately if your foster cat shows signs of maternal aggression. We will evaluate the situation and set up an environment in which the mother will be able to safely raise her offspring.

# Rearing Orphaned Kittens

Caring for newborns is the most difficult and time-consuming of all foster care commitments. It requires nighttime feedings and constant attention to their needs. Even with diligent care, many of the babies get sick and/or die. It is a tough, tiring, selfless job. However, the job is also infinitely satisfying and rewarding when your little ones survive and are placed in loving homes. By following the guidelines below, you can give bottle-fed kittens their best chance of survival.

## Housing

Bottle-fed kittens must be protected from drafts and noise. Newborn kittens should be kept in a small flip-top carrier lined with soft bedding. Kittens benefit from having stuffed animals available to snuggle up against. Since they are unable to regulate their own body temperature, newborns are easily susceptible to extremes in their environment. For the first few weeks of life, a steady ambient temperature of 86 to 90 degrees Fahrenheit is needed. Over the next few weeks, the temperature can gradually be lowered to and maintained at 75 degrees Fahrenheit. An electric heating pad on the lowest setting can be placed under one corner of the bedding or hot water bottles wrapped in towels can be placed along the edges of the carrier. This gives the kittens the option of moving away from the heat source should they get too warm. Soiled bedding should be changed immediately. Your foster kitten's world is limited to the nest you have provided. If it is wet or smells bad, you can be sure it is affecting their well-being. Wet bedding may also be enough to give them a chill. Expect to change bedding at least once a day for kittens.

Quiet is very important too. Newborn kittens need lots of sleep to keep up with their bodies' developmental demands. If they are unable to get an adequate amount of rest due to the noise and disturbances of the household, they may develop physical or psychological problems. It is always best to keep newborns in the part of your home that is least used (provided that it is draft free). It is vital that handling of newborns be limited to what is required to keep them clean and well-fed. Over handling in the first few weeks of life can lead to the kittens becoming stressed and/or chilled. If you observe a mother with her litter, you will see that the kittens stay in one place and the mother moves to them to supply all their needs. It is important that we follow this example and resist the temptation to hold and cuddle the newborns. Instead, add stuffed animals to their nest to provide the warmth and cuddling they need. Over handled kittens do not thrive and will often die! As the newborns mature, you can gradually increase the size and activity level of their world. As kittens become mobile, they can be moved into increasingly larger carriers. At 6 weeks of age, kittens are usually ready to have free roam of a large cage or a small room, such as a bathroom. Be careful to baby-proof all areas that your fosters will have access to. For example: unplug electrical cords, tie up drapery blinds, remove toilet paper rolls, keep toilet lids closed, and remove all plants from the area.

## Feeding

Kittens are normally 3-4 oz when born. They should gain 7-10% of their body weight daily, doubling their weight in a week. They typically should gain ¼ pound each week, reaching 2 pounds at about 8 weeks of age. Bottle babies are slower to gain weight than those being nursed by a healthy mother. It is important to weigh bottle-fed infants daily (using a kitchen or postage scale) to monitor weight gain.

Milk replacer, (KMR for kittens), is used to feed orphans 4 weeks or younger. These commercially prepared formulas simulate the mother's milk and have been used with good success. NEVER FEED COW'S MILK! When preparing the formula, always follow the manufacturer's directions on the label. Do not prepare more than a 48-hour supply of formula at a time, and store the unused portions in the refrigerator until needed. Once it is prepared, formula is only good for 72 hours. The kitten should receive the following approximate amounts of formula every 24 hours:

- 1<sup>st</sup> week of life = 3 ½ to 4 cc per ounce of body weight. Feed every 2-3 hours.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> week of life = 5 cc per ounce of body weight. Feed every 3-4 hours.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> week of life = 5 ½ to 6 cc per ounce of body weight. Feed every 4-5 hours.
- 4<sup>th</sup> week of life = 6 to 6 ½ cc per ounce of body weight. Feed every 5-6 hours.

These amounts of formula should be fed in equal portions divided between the appropriate number of daily feedings. Before each feeding, the formula should be warmed to around 100 degrees. Place the bottle in a pan of warm water to heat the milk; do not use a microwave. After each feeding, the abdomen should be enlarged but not tight or distended. When a formula is first fed, less than the prescribed amount should be given per feeding. The amount should slowly be increased to the recommended feeding amount by the second or third day. Feed the kittens using a pet nurser bottle. When feeding, a newborn should be on its stomach with its head lifted up, never on its back (this could cause formula to enter the lungs). The bottle should be held at about a 45-degree angle. You may need to gently squeeze the bottle at first to release a small amount of milk replacer into the mouth to encourage suckling. Milk replacer dries like glue, so be sure to gently wipe their faces with a damp cloth after each feeding.

### **Elimination**

After each feeding, gently wipe around the genito-anal area with a washcloth dampened with warm water. This will stimulate them to eliminate. Kittens should also be washed gently with a soft cloth dampened with warm water for general cleansing of the skin about once a week. More frequent "spot cleanings" can be done as needed.

### **Suckling on Each Other**

Newborns have a strong instinct to suckle, and will nurse for as many as 8 hours a day. It is not surprising, then, that bottle-raised babies may end up suckling on each other. Besides being messy, this type of suckling can cause serious health problems, especially if they begin suckling each others' genitalia. If you see evidence of suckling, first try spraying the areas being sucked with Bitter Apple, a commercial taste deterrent. If this doesn't work, then the suckers will have to be separated from the rest of the litter. Do not allow them to continue nursing on each other!

### **Single Bottle Babies**

Sometimes a single newborn will come in and need a foster home. Unfortunately, this "only child" does not get the social interaction and discipline that it should receive from its mother and littermates. These singles usually grow up to be very demanding of people and intolerant of others of their species. It is important to treat the singleton as if it were with a litter. Do not over handle the kitten; instead, provide her with plenty of stuffed animals to keep her company. Do not tolerate suckling on your hands, neck, etc. If your little one starts to play roughly as she gets older, refer to our handouts on dealing with rough play in kittens for tips on modifying the behavior. It is important to address these behavior problems as soon as they appear.

## **Weaning**

You can begin to wean kittens at four weeks of age. Begin by placing a shallow pan of formula in the bottom of their bedding box in lieu of the expected pet nurser. It may take a few tries before they get the idea. They will often “discover” the formula by walking through it and then licking it off of their paws. This method is messy but effective- bath time often becomes a daily task when weaning little ones! Your foster kittens need to have fresh water available at all times once the weaning process begins.

Once your fosters are drinking formula from a pan, you can gradually mix canned kitten food in with it. The texture should initially be gruel-like or soupy. During the next two weeks, continue to increase the ration of solids while decreasing the amount of liquids. Weaning should be completed by 6-8 weeks of age. Feed your weaned fosters 3-4 times per day.

Once they are eating wet food without formula mixed in, begin offering free-choice dry food. If they aren't eating the dry food on their own after a few days, then mix some canned food in with the dry and pour a little warm water over the mixture. Once they are eating dry food, slowly decrease the amount of wet food offered over the next one or two weeks until your fosters are eating dry food only. Ideally, fosters will be eating dry food only by the age of 8-10 weeks of age.

When you introduce semi-solid food, it is also time to introduce the concept of housetraining. Place a litter box in the far corner of their area. Place the kittens in the box, one at a time, after each feeding.

# Common Signs of Illness

## Some of the typical signs of illness in kittens:

Frequent crying

Restlessness

Weakness

Hypothermia (low body temperature) or Fever, (normal temp is 100-102.5 degrees Fahrenheit.

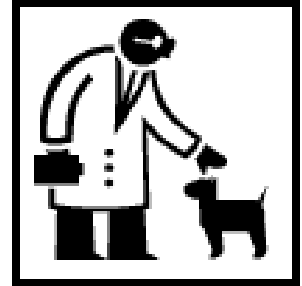
Diarrhea

Dehydration (dry gums, loss of skin elasticity, yellow urine)

Altered respirations (labored or shallow breathing)

Cyanosis (white or bluish color of mucous membranes)

Hematuria (blood present in the urine)



## Management of illness:

Be attentive. Familiarize yourself with your foster kittens normal habits so that you will recognize any changes in behavior right away.

Look for specific clues. Shelter staff and veterinarians will want to know details such as time of onset, how often the problem occurs, the color and consistency of feces, etc. Keep track on your copy of each kitten's health record and bring with you to exams.

Watch the clock. If mild symptoms do not disappear in 24 hours, call the shelter for an appointment.

**If symptoms are severe, then immediate care is required.** Call the shelter at (707) 565-7100 and talk with a technician. If the shelter is closed, the Sheriff's dept at 565-2121 or Santa Rosa Police Dept at 528-5222 to contact the on-call officer who will call you with further instructions.

## Fading kitten:

A "fading" kitten is one that appears healthy at birth but fails to survive beyond 12 weeks of age.

Losses generally occur because of one of the following:

congenital defect(s)

low birth weight

nutritional diseases (resulting from inadequate diet fed to the mother)

infectious diseases

Kitten losses due to "fading" are common and most times are unavoidable. Raising foster kittens can be very rewarding, but there is always the chance of a heartbreak, too.

## **Diarrhea**

Diarrhea is a common ailment among young kittens. It is a potentially serious condition because the increased loss of water and electrolytes can quickly lead to dehydration and death in a young kitten. The causes of diarrhea include overeating, bacterial or viral infections, parasite infections, intestinal diseases, and stress. A sudden change in diet, eating table scraps or rich snacks, ingesting plants, or scavenging spoiled food from the trash can will cause diarrhea as well.

Normal stools for bottle-fed babies will be yellowish-brown and pasty. If your bottle babies develop diarrhea, first try cutting the formula in half with unflavored pedialyte. You can also add a little baby rice cereal to the bottle. As the diarrhea improves, slowly return the milk to full strength. If diarrhea persists through 2 feedings, call the shelter immediately. Diarrhea can kill young kittens quickly!

Overeating is actually a common cause of diarrhea in young kittens and is easily remedied. Weaned kittens with diarrhea should have their wet food rations cut in half and have baby rice cereal mixed in with it. If diarrhea persists more than 24 hours, call the shelter for an appointment. Bring in a fresh sample of the feces in a plastic bag so shelter staff can check for parasites.

# Common Internal Parasites

## **Roundworms**

Roundworms are a very common parasite in cats and dogs of all ages. Adult roundworms live in the stomach and intestinal tract and attain lengths of up to 5 inches. One female adult roundworm can lay up to 200,000 eggs per day. Fresh eggs are not infectious immediately; they take about 3-4 weeks to become infectious. The eggs are protected by a hard shell and may live for months or even years in the soil. Transmission occurs by direct contact with contaminated soil, ingestion of a roundworm host (rodents, beetles), and from mother to offspring during lactation or in utero. Heavy infestation causes puppies and kittens to appear thin and pot-bellied. Coughing, diarrhea, and vomiting may occur. There is a chance of pneumonia due to larval migration from the bloodstream to the lungs. The worms are white and spaghetti-like in appearance and may be seen in feces or vomit. Roundworms can infect humans if contaminated feces or soil is ingested. Good sanitation can be maintained by keeping stools picked up and is important in preventing reinfestation. Infected animals need to be seen at the shelter for deworming. Bring a sample of the worms in a sandwich bag so shelter staff can make an accurate diagnosis.

## **Tapeworms**

Tapeworms have an intermediate host (fleas or rodents) in which the larval stage develops. Transmission occurs when an animal ingests an intermediate host that is harboring tapeworm larvae. Tapeworms rarely produce well-defined symptoms. In cases of heavily infested, malnourished animals, symptoms may include dullness, irritability, increased appetite, dry coat, and mild diarrhea. Diagnosis is usually made possible through the observation of the tapeworm body (flat, white, rice-like worms that are about ½" long) in fresh feces or around the animal's anal region. Prevention includes vigorous flea control, not allowing the animal to ingest rodents or rabbits, and not feeding raw meat. If tapeworms are suspected, the animal needs to be seen at the shelter for deworming. Please bring a sample of the worms in a sandwich bag so shelter staff can make an accurate diagnosis.



# Common External Parasites

## Fleas

Fleas are the most common external parasite found on cats. The adult flea is a dark brown insect which has powerful legs and can jump great distances. Fleas feed on the animal's blood, and severe infections can cause anemia and death. Some animals are sensitive to the flea's saliva and will develop hair loss and scabby skin. Signs of flea infestation include seeing numerous fleas and/or flea feces (black specks) in the animal's fur. Flea feces consists primarily of digested blood which turns reddish brown when it comes into contact with water. Fleas mate on the animal's body, then the eggs drop off and incubate on furniture, carpet, the animal's bedding, around floor boards, and in cracks. After a few days the eggs hatch into larvae which feed on the flea debris and develop into adults. Depending upon environmental conditions, this cycle may take only a few days or up to two years to complete. If you suspect that your foster kittens have fleas, please call the shelter for an appointment. DO NOT treat the animals yourself, as many flea control products contain ingredients that can be harmful to the kittens.

## Ear Mites

Ear mites are tiny white parasites that live on the surface of the ear canal and feed upon skin cells and debris. They reproduce quickly and produce numerous offspring. Ear mites produce a flaky, dark brown, sometimes waxy discharge in the ear canal. Kittens can get ear mites from their mother while still in the nest. Infected kittens will shake their heads and scratch or rub their ears. Ear mites are highly contagious to other dogs, cats, and rabbits. Ear mite treatment may include applying a topical miticide medication to the ears, cleaning the ears, and giving an injection of Ivermectin, which kills ear mites systemically. If you suspect your foster animal has ear mites, please call the shelter for an appointment.

## Demodectic Mange

Demodectic mange occurs in two forms. Localized demodectic mange is extremely common in puppies but not in kittens. It causes thinning of hair around the eyelids, corner of the mouth, or on the front legs, giving the fur a moth-eaten appearance. Usually there are fewer than five small hairless patches present. Generalized demodectic mange results in numerous large patches of hair loss appearing on the head, legs, and body. Often secondary bacterial infections occur which produce open, seeping sores and crusts. Demodectic mange does not cause the animal to itch. It is NOT contagious to humans and other animals. Diagnosis is confirmed by performing a skin scraping. If you suspect your foster animal has demodectic mange, please call the shelter for an appointment.

## Sarcoptic Mange (Scabies)

Sarcoptic mange is highly contagious to humans and other animals. A microscopic, spider-like mite which burrows into the skin and causes the kitten to scratch and bite with intensity is responsible for scabies infection. Sarcoptic mange mites develop from eggs into adults in 10 to 14 days, depending upon environmental temperature and humidity. All stages of mite development can survive off of the host animal. Because these mites produce intense itching and cause the kitten to scratch and bite at itself, scabs, crust and hair loss patches occur. Most scabby, crusty lesions are located on the earflaps, legs, face, and elbows. In advanced stages of infestation, the skin becomes thick and darkly pigmented. If you suspect that your foster kitten has sarcoptic mange, please call the shelter for an appointment.

## **Ticks**

Ticks are beige to brown, multi-legged parasites that look like flat, spider-like bugs. After feeding on the blood of an animal, their bodies become engorged and expand to many times their normal size. The brown dog tick is primarily a parasite of dogs, although humans and cats are also susceptible. Preventing the animal from roaming in open wooded areas and around livestock helps reduce the chance of getting ticks. If you suspect that your foster kitten has ticks, please call the shelter for an appointment. DO NOT treat the animal yourself, since many tick-control products could be harmful to the animal.

## **Ringworm**

Ringworm is a fungal disease that produces dry, scaly, hairless patches, usually around earflaps, face and toenails. Transmission occurs by contact with fungal spores in the soil and infected hair of other animals. Dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, and humans are susceptible to ringworm. The minimum incubation period for developing ringworm lesions is two weeks. Children and immune-suppressed individuals are especially at risk of acquiring ringworm from an infected animal. Simple ringworm is not normally itchy; however, in advanced cases where scabs and lesions appear, the animal may lick and/or scratch the area.

Ringworm is contagious to humans and other animals and requires extensive, time-consuming treatment. If you suspect your foster animal has ringworm:

Isolate the animal immediately.

Limit your handling of the animal.

Wash thoroughly and change clothes after handling the animal.

Call the shelter immediately.

Discard all toys, towels, blankets, etc., that the animal has had contact with.

Disinfect all food and water bowls, carriers, etc. by soaking them in a solution of 1 cup of bleach per gallon of water for 20 minutes.

Vacuum all upholstery and rugs thoroughly.

# Administering Medication

Proper administration of medications is essential for the recovery of an injured or ill foster kitten. It is essential that medications be given as prescribed, and until the full treatment time has been completed, even if the pet starts to look and act better. With cats, it may be necessary to have an assistant hold the animal or you may need to wrap the cat securely in a towel or pillowcase.

## Administering pills

When giving pills, tilt the animal's head back, gently open the mouth (reach over the animal's muzzle, grasping one side of the upper jaw with your thumb and the other side with your forefinger; gently lift the upper jaw while holding the front of the lower jaw still with the middle finger of the hand that is holding the pill), and drop the pill to the back of the throat. Gently hold the mouth closed, with the head pointed straight upwards and blow on the nose to get the pet to swallow.

## Administering pastes

The easiest way to administer a paste is to place the appropriate amount on your finger, open the animal's mouth, and smear the paste on the roof of the kitten's mouth. If the paste is premeasured in a syringe, it may be placed on the animals' tongue where it will adhere and be swallowed.

## Administering liquids

Tilt the animal's head back, open the mouth, and slowly dribble the liquid from a syringe or dropper onto the back of the tongue. If the kitten coughs or sputters, decrease the amount of head tilt and/or give the medication more slowly. If the medication is bitter tasting, the kitten may foam at the mouth.

## Eye drops and ointment

To administer drops, tilt the kitten's head back slightly. Bring the bottle of drops over the eye and drop in the prescribed amount. To administer ointment, tilt the head back slightly. Squeeze a small amount of ointment inside the lower eyelid. Close the eyes to distribute the ointment evenly over the surface of the eye. (Do not touch ointment tube tip to eye).

## Ear drops and ointment

Grasp the tip of the ear with one hand and hold the earflap open. With the other hand, drop in the prescribed number of drops or amount of the ointment. Continue to hold the ear firmly (to prevent head shaking) and massage the base of the ear to work the medication down inside the ear canal.



# Checking Heart Rate, Pulse and Temperature

## Checking heart rate and pulse

Normal heart rates in cats range from 60 to 140 beats per minute.

Each kitten has its own normal heart rate and pulse. To know what is normal for your foster kitten, it is a good idea to check when the kitten is resting quietly. To feel the pulse, place a finger (not your thumb) on the inside of the thigh in the groin area. The femoral artery is located in this area just below the skin. If you cannot find this pulse, you can feel for the kitten's heartbeat by placing your hand on the chest of the kitten just behind the left elbow between the third and sixth ribs. Count the number of beats felt for a period of 15 seconds and multiply by four. This will give you the pulse/heart rate of the kitten. If it is outside of normal range, report this to the shelter.

## Taking a temperature

The normal temperature for cats is from 100 to 102.5 degrees Fahrenheit.

To take your foster kitten's temperature, you will need a rectal thermometer. Digital thermometers are best, as there is little chance of breakage or misreading. Use petroleum jelly to lubricate the end of the thermometer. Place the thermometer  $\frac{1}{2}$  to 1 inch (depending on the kitten's size) into the rectum of the kitten and leave it in until the digital model beeps. For a glass thermometer, leave it in for about one minute. Use a tissue dipped in rubbing alcohol to clean the end of the thermometer and read the temperature displayed. Contact the shelter staff immediately if the temperature is 103 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.

# Grooming

Coat and skin care start from the inside. Proper nutrition, exercise, and medical attention ensure a healthy kitten with a full, glossy coat and supple skin. A dry, lackluster coat or excessive shedding indicates a kitten that is not receiving proper attention or is possibly ill. Establish a grooming routine with your foster kitten. A young kitten may not have enough coat to make this necessary, but accustoming him to the procedure will be worth the effort. In a few months, he will need regular grooming, and will also be able to put up a serious struggle if he doesn't like the idea! Keep first grooming sessions short. Keep one hand on the kitten during grooming to provide reassurance and give you better control. Praise him and pet him during grooming. Repeat this daily, and he'll soon react to grooming as a pleasant time when he receives extra attention. He'll also learn to enjoy the sensation of being brushed.

Mats and tangles are best removed by slowly working them loose with the fingers, helped with a wide-toothed comb. Don't yank at a tangle. Do not use scissors to remove mats- you could easily end up cutting the kitten's skin. Frequent grooming will prevent mats from forming.

Get your foster accustomed to having his mouth opened for inspection and his ears handled. Pick up one foot at a time, touching the paws. Later, when his nails need clipping or his teeth and ears must be cleaned, he will be used to such handling. This training also makes kittens more easily examined by vets.

## **Brushing short-coated kittens**

Short-coated kittens should be brushed 2-3 times a week. Brush firmly but gently with the grain of the hair, using a medium-soft brush or a glove with short nubs set in the palm. Often a residue of loose hair will be left on the coat surface that can be wiped off with a soft cloth.

## **Brushing medium-coated kittens**

Medium-haired kittens should be brushed 3-4 times a week. Brush with the grain of the coat, paying special attention to any areas with longer or fine hair that will tangle more easily. Use a wire or firm-bristle brush.

## **Brushing long-coated kittens**

Longhaired kittens must have daily grooming with a firm, long-bristle brush. Never use a wire "slicker" or fine-tooth comb as these tools will tear the hair. Take one handful of hair at a time and brush it from the skin out. This is an essential technique because mats form at the roots of the hair.

## **Bathing**

Animals should only be bathed when it is needed. Too frequent bathing removes natural oils that protect the animal's skin and coat. Bathing a young or ill animal can lead to a chill and health complications. A healthy cat will usually keep itself clean and will only need to be bathed if it gets into something messy. Many properly brushed and tended animals remain clean and sweet smelling without ever needing a bath.

When a bath is necessary, first place a rubber mat in the bathtub or sink to provide secure footing. Steel wool over the drain will prevent clogging with loose hair. Place a cotton plug in each ear to protect them. Wet the animal with lukewarm water, use your fingers to work shampoo into the coat, then rinse thoroughly. The shelter will provide you with an appropriate shampoo if your foster animal needs a bath. Wash the animal's face with clean water only.

Brush out snarls before bathing your foster. Do not try to comb out a wet coat. A hand-held hairdryer is helpful for quicker drying, but use caution, kittens can scare easily. A quick drying is essential if you are bathing a young or sick animal. Keep your foster away from drafts for at least three hours after a bath.

If you want to avoid a soap and water bath, commercial foam shampoos, dry shampoos, or cornstarch rubbed into the animal's coat are somewhat effective.

## **Eye cleaning**

Keep your foster's eyes clean of any discharge. Wipe the eyes with a soft cloth moistened in a mild saline solution. Work from the eye corner out, never across the eye. White animals and animals with white face markings may have unsightly stains caused by tearing, unless their eyes are kept scrupulously clean. However, excessive, continuous weeping may be caused by ingrown eyelashes, eye disease, or deformity, and it needs to be checked by shelter staff.

## **Ear cleaning**

Check your foster's ears at least once a week. Carefully clean any wax deposits from the inside of the earflap with a cloth-wrapped finger or a cotton-tipped swab dipped in baby oil. Never, ever probe deeply into the ear, as you may permanently injure the canal or other delicate inner parts. If the ears are red, inflamed, have a foul odor, or are full of debris, call the shelter for an appointment. Do not attempt to clean ears in this condition yourself.

## **Nail trimming**

Nails grow continuously and, when not worn down naturally by activity, they need to be trimmed. Human nail clippers or special-made cat nail trimmers work well on cat nails. Heavy-duty animal nail clippers are needed for use on dogs. Animals' nails are made of keratin (a solid, protein-like substance) encased in a hard sheath, the cuticle. Beneath the cuticle is the kwik, the pink portion of the nail which contains blood vessels and nerves. If you accidentally cut the kwik, the animal will feel pain and the nail will bleed. Apply pressure over the bleeding nail with a cotton ball for a couple of minutes until the bleeding stops. Do not apply pressure to the toe by squeezing, as this will cause the nail to keep bleeding. If bleeding persists, dip the nail in flour, cornstarch, or a commercial styptic powder such as kwik-stop to stop the bleeding. If you are uncomfortable trimming nails, do not attempt it. Ask for assistance from the shelter staff.

**Trimming a cat's nails:**

Cutting off the sharp tip of a cat's claws will dull the nail and prevent extensive damage to household objects and skin. Apply a small amount of pressure to the cat's paw with your thumb on top of the paw and your index finger under the paw. This will extend the claw. Cut well in front of the pink kwik.



# First Aid Directory



The following information is intended ONLY as a guide on how to deal with some common first aid situations. It is NOT a substitute for veterinary treatment. ALWAYS CALL SONOMA COUNTY ANIMAL REGULATION TO ARRANGE FOR VETERINARY TREATMENT following first aid attempts.

## **Bite wounds**

Approach the animal slowly- muzzle her to prevent getting bitten yourself. Clean the wound with large amounts of water. If it is a large and open area, bandage it to keep it clean. If a wound is bleeding profusely, apply direct pressure and transport the animal to the shelter for treatment.

## **Bleeding**

Apply firm and direct pressure over the bleeding area. Do not affix bandages tightly enough to affect circulation.

## **No Breathing**

Make sure the animal does not have a foreign object lodged in the throat (see choking). If an object is removed from the throat and the animal still is not breathing, place the animal with its right side down. Close the animal's mouth and exhale directly into the nose until the chest expands. Exhale 12-15 times per minute. Check for a heartbeat by placing a hand over the animal's chest between the third and sixth ribs for 30 seconds. If you do not feel a heartbeat, continue artificial respiration while beginning chest compressions. Place your hand over the heart and compress the chest 1-2" for large animals and ½-1" for small animals. Apply heart massage 70-90 times per minute. Call the shelter immediately.

## **Burns**

Chemical, electrical and heat burn areas must be promptly flushed with large amounts of cold water. Cover with a wet cloth. Bring the animal to the shelter immediately.

## **Choking**

If an animal is having difficulty breathing, excessively pawing at the mouth, and/or turning blue around the lips and tongue, it may be choking. Look in the animal's throat (you may use a gauze pad to gently pull the tongue outwards). If you see an object, try to remove it with your finger. Be careful not to push the object farther down the throat. Bring the animal to the shelter immediately.

## **Eye irritations**

If an animal has runny eyes, inflamed eyes, or eye discharge, or is squinting or pawing at an eye, then there could be a foreign object in the eye. Try to open the eye gently and check for an object. If you



see an object, try to flush it out with normal saline solution or warm water. Bring the animal to the shelter immediately.

### **Fractures**

An animal who is in pain and unable to use a leg and/or has swelling in a leg may have a fracture. Muzzle the animal and control any bleeding. Watch for signs of shock. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO RESET A FRACTURE.** You may apply cold compresses (plastic bags filled with ice cubes) until you can get the kitten to the shelter for veterinary care.

### **Heat stroke**

A kitten who is breathing rapidly and with difficulty, vomiting, has a high body temperature, and/or has collapsed may be suffering from heat stroke. Put the animal in a tub of cold water, or gently soak with a garden hose, or wrap in a cold, wet towel. Bring the animal to the shelter immediately.

### **Insect bites**

Insect bites manifest themselves through an onset of swelling, itching and/or pain within one hour of the bite. If there is a stinger present, remove it by scraping it out and apply cold packs.

### **Poisoning**

If your animal is vomiting, salivating, having convulsions, diarrhea, weakness, pain, or depression, she may have ingested poison. Write down any information you have, such as what was ingested, when it was ingested, and how much was ingested. In case of poison on the skin or fur (from oil, paint, etc.), wash the animal with mild soap and rinse well. Bring the animal to the shelter immediately.

### **Seizures**

If your animal is salivating, has loss of urine and stool control, violent muscle twitching, and loss of consciousness, she may be having a seizure. Move the animal away from objects that could be harmful. You may use a blanket for padding. Do not attempt to restrain the animal during the seizure. Time the duration of the seizure (typically seizures last 2-3 minutes). Afterwards, keep the animal calm and quiet and bring her to the shelter immediately.

### **Shock**

Signs of shock are irregular breathing, dilated pupils, and weakness. Shock may accompany severe injury/trauma. Keep the pet warm and quiet. You may wrap her in a blanket. Move the animal quietly and carefully. The head should be kept slightly lower than the body. Bring the animal to the shelter immediately.

### **Snakebite**

Signs of snakebite include acute pain, swelling, heavy panting, fang marks with a trickle of blood, and weakness. Keep the pet calm and quiet. You may wrap the animal in a towel or blanket. Apply a cold pack to the bite area. Bring the animal to the shelter immediately.

## Sample Foster 'Resumes'

Use these hints to help your foster animal put his 'best paw forward'.

If the dog is not good with young children:

Don't say he "cannot go to a home with children"

Say

- "who would do best in a home with adults"

If the dog needs obedience training:

Don't say he needs obedience training

Say

- he "enjoys learning and responds well to training"
- "A dog with a lot of potential, he will do great with some basic training"
- "He is ready and willing to start training classes"
- he "will be easily trained and will quickly fit into your family."
- he "is already responding to basic obedience commands."

If the dog is hyperactive

Don't say he is hyperactive

Say

- "high-energy friend"
- "your jogging partner"
- "enthusiastic, spirited, eager to please"

If the animal needs to be a single pet

Don't say he doesn't like other animals

Say

- "looking to be the top dog in a one-dog home"
- "can't wait for your full attention and will do best if she is the only cat"
- "enjoys the status of being the only dog in the home"

If the animal is nervous:

Don't say he has separation anxiety ( unless officially diagnosed)

Say

- "he is eager to find a quiet household"
- "is looking for a patient person who can help her become more self-confident"
- "will do best in an adult household"

If the dog isn't housetrained

Don't mention it; staff members will advise adopters on effective housetraining methods.



# Common Poisonous Plants



Following is a list of the most common plants and flowers which may be deadly for your dog or cat if ingested. In some cases, only certain parts of these are poisonous. Use this list as a guideline to make your home safe and secure for pets. A note of caution: even non-toxic plants may cause physical irritation to the gastrointestinal system. Also, plants that have been sprayed with insecticides or treated with fertilizers can be toxic to pets. If you suspect your pet has been poisoned, call your veterinarian or the National Animal Poison Control Center (NACAP) immediately. NACAP can be reached at: 1-800-548-2423 (credit card payments only) or 1-900-680-0000 (charged per minute).

## **Common Poisonous Plants**

Aloe Vera	Cornstalk Plant	Jack-in-the-Pulpit	Poison Ivy
Almond	Crocus, Autumn	Japanese Plum	Poison Oak
Anemone	Croton	Java Beans	Pokeweed
Amaryllis	Cuban Laurel	Jerusalem Cherry	Poppy
Apple seeds	Cycads	Jimson Weed	Potato
Apricot	Cyclamen	Jonquil	Pothos
Arrowgrass	Daffodil	Kalanchoe	Precatory Bean
Asparagus fern	Daphne	Lantana	Primrose
Avocado	Delphinium	Lily of the Valley	Privet
Azalea	Dieffenbachia	Lily (most forms)	Red Emerald
Baby's Breath	Dragon Tree	Locoweed	Red Princess
Balsam	Dumb Cane	Madagascar	Rhododendron
Baneberry	Eggplant	Dragon	Rhubarb
Bird of Paradise	Elaine	Marble Queen	Ribbon Plant
Bittersweet	Elderberry	Marigold	Rubber Plant
Black-Eyed Susan	Elephant Ear	Marijuana	Sago Palm
Black Locust	Emerald Feather	Mistletoe	Schefflera
Bleeding Heart	Euonymus	Monkshood	Scotch Broom
Bloodroot	Fiddle-leaf Fig	Morning Glory	Skunk Cabbage
Boxwood	Flax	Mountain Laurel	Star of Bethlehem
Buckeye	Florida Beauty	Mushrooms	String of Pearls
Burning Bush	Four O' Clock	Narcissus	Sumac
Buttercup	Foxglove	Nephtytis	Sweetpea
Cactus	Geranium	Nightshade	Swiss Cheese Plant
Caladium	Golden Glow	Nutmeg	Taro Vine
Calla Lily	Henbane	Oleander	Thorn Apple
Castor Bean	Hemlock	Onion	Tobacco
Ceriman	Hibiscus	Peach	Tomato
Cherry	Holly	Pear	Tulip
Chinese Evergreen	Honeysuckle	Peony	Virginia Creeper
Christmas Rose	Horse Chestnut	Periwinkle	Walnut
Chrysanthemum	Hurricane Plant	Philodendron	Weeping Fig
Cineraria	Hyacinth	Pimpernel	Wild Barley
Clematis	Hydrangea	Pikeberry	Wisteria
Cordatum	Indian Laurel	Pimpernel	Yew
Corn Plant	Iris	Plumosa Fern	
Cornflower	Ivy	Poinsettia	