

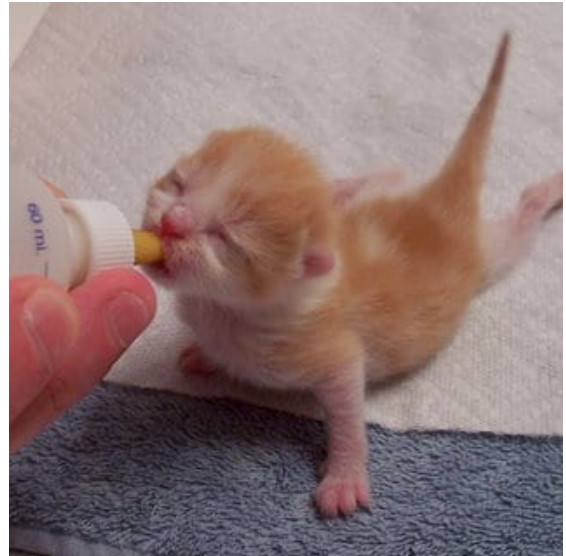
FAQ: It's Kitten Season! What should people do when they find kittens? See our favorite new resource.

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MSMP at Cornell

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Feline advocate Hannah Shaw, better to known by many as the Kitten Lady of YouTube fame, has published a four episode “Kitten Care” webinar series sponsored by Royal Canin. The first three are entertaining and educational as usual: Caring for Itty Bitty Bottle Babies, Beyond the Bottle: Caring for Growing Kittens, and Keeping Kittens Healthy. The final webinar, published at the end of April, is one of the best resources we’ve seen about what to do when a person in your community stumbles upon a kitten outdoors—a question we’re answering all too frequently this time of year. Feral Felines and Kittens Found Outdoors provides finders, fosters, rescuers and shelter staff strategies to respond in a variety of situations, and is a great educational tool for animal welfare gurus and for the general public. Here are some highlights for those of you who don’t have 2 hours to spare (or who want a teaser before you watch the whole thing.)



“I found a kitten- what do I do?”

Not all outdoor kittens and their living situations are the same. The litter on a construction site, the feral family in a neighborhood window well, and the kitten whose mom has just been hit by a car have vastly different levels of need. Shaw suggests using the “CASA” method to determine the best course of action for the kitten or litter in question.

- **Condition:** what does the kitten look like? Is it dirty, unkempt, underweight, in medical distress? Or is it fluffy, happy, bright, feisty? If the former, it may truly be an orphan and need care. If the latter, it’s probably already being well cared for.
- **Age:** Is this kitten still nursing (0-5 weeks), weaned and in the socialization window (5-10 weeks), or past the socialization period (>10-12 weeks)?
- **Situation:** Is the site relatively stable, safe, protected? Or are there hazards, exposure, dangers posed by the location and activities there?

- **Ability:** What are **your** resources and those of the rescue community around you? Are you unable to care for these kittens, are the rescues full, are the shelters euthanizing for space? Or do you have an empty nest, time on your hands, and an internet connection to access all the Kitten Care webinars?

The correct response when finding a kitten depends upon careful consideration of each of these four factors. For example, a healthy 12-week old kitten is not in need of foster- they need TNR. Leave them in place until you can trap. In contrast, a 2-week old kitten that looks dirty and unkempt should be scooped up and bottle-fed ASAP; preferably by the finder, and brought to the shelter only as a last resort. A thriving litter of 4-week old kittens with their feral mom nesting in the engine block of a truck needs relocation. Shaw says to consider fostering the whole group in an indoor enclosure (including mom!) until the babies are 5 weeks old. The mom can be then spayed and released, and the kittens socialized in foster until 8 weeks old when they can be adopted out. Finally, that 3-week old kitten brought to the shelter who looks perfect? Get the finder to physically show you exactly where it was found, and reunite the kitten with mom. Monitor them closely; “kidnap” the kitten again for socialization a few weeks later when weaned if it’s safe and if resources are available. Otherwise, return to trap and sterilize everyone later when resources are less scarce. Every kitten, finder, and shelter have a different CASA, and each requires evaluation on a case-by-case basis.

Shaw’s webinars are full of kitten-age-specific advice, trapping tricks, socialization strategies and a healthy dose of realistic acknowledgement of our own capacities for care. One of the most important points from Shaw’s webinar is that kittens are the “holes in the bucket” of our community cat problem. Wherever there are kittens, unaltered parents are nearby. Whenever kittens are found in the community, trapping and TNR need to be arranged for the adults. Otherwise this bucket will continue to leak.

Further resources recommended in this webinar:

The whole webinar series: <http://www.kittenlady.org/webinar>

Kitten Lady’s website: www.kittenlady.org

Hannah Shaw’s book: *Tiny but Mighty: Kitten Lady’s Guide to Saving the Most Vulnerable*

Royal Canin’s Kitten page: <https://www.royalcanin.com/us/cats/kitten>

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