

OMG IT'S KITTEN SEASON AGAIN!

by Cheryl Wicks
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Right up front I'll let the reader know this is a plea for help. Sammie's Friends needs foster parents desperately to get through the kitten season. You're probably saying "I didn't even know there was a kitten season. Do they grow like plants in the spring?" Wonder no more; for the last two years we have received over 400 kittens per year. If you read my February article you know that February is prime mating time. Since the gestation period is approximately 8 weeks that means the first kittens arrive around mid-April and continue to arrive through September. The time is fast approaching. We know of some shelters that have already gotten kittens. Kittens are birthed during spring and summer; this is Mother Nature's way of making life safe for the little critters. They would not survive in freezing temperatures. A newborn kitten weighs only about 3 1/2 ounces and is very vulnerable.

Unless you are someone's pampered pet, life as a cat can be difficult. We receive babies that have been left in other people's mailbox, that have been born in sheds and barns and fields. Some of the litters come with MaMas and some are found helpless and alone. The kittens we need help with are anywhere from a day old to 8 weeks old.

If this sounds fun and interesting to you please come to Sammie's Cat Facility, 14647 McCourtney Road, Grass Valley and fill out a foster application. If you have questions please call Ruth, the Cat Facility Manager, at 530-274-1955. Ruth has tons of experience and will be an enormous mentor/guide through this process if you have never done it before.

Sammie's Friends will pay for all medical care, vaccines, spaying/neutering (when kittens are old enough and when MaMa has stopped nursing) supplies of food and milk supplement, beds and whatever else is needed. Fosters are there to provide love, socialization, and care for the kittens and MaMas. If you have other animals at your home be very sure that those animals are safe around your foster animals. Safety is one of the key responsibilities of a foster. Children can be a great asset in helping with care and socializing kittens. If you have very young children they will need to be supervised to ensure the safety of the fragile and vulnerable little kittens and your children. Even little kittens can bite and scratch (most of them don't, but they can) Many times it is best to keep the fosters from your own menagerie just to be safe on lots of levels. We don't want any of our fosters being attacked by a foster home animal. It is for the safety of your animals too. We do vaccinate the mother cats and the kittens have immunity through their mothers for the first six weeks, at which point we vaccinate them. When these cats are stray cats we do not know their history, so you may want to keep them separate. It is required that our animals be housed indoors.

Sammie's Friends staff will match you up with the right fostering situation for you. For instance, if you are experienced and know quite a bit about cats, you might take a litter of feral kittens. If those kittens are worked with and socialized in the first few weeks of their lives they can often become household pets. Once they get older they remain feral. If you have never bottle fed a tiny infant you will need training. There is an art to it. The staff is always there to answer your questions and you will also be given a foster manual to use for guidance.

We have had several fosters who enjoy this so much they do it year after year. We sometimes have fosters who can only foster for a little while during the summer (i.e. teachers who are off for a couple of months). Bottle babies must be fed every couple of hours so there needs to be someone around to feed them or occasionally people have jobs where they can take them with them and feed them throughout the day. Don't do this without your employer's approval, please.

Although, this article focuses on fosters for kittens, we do need foster parents for puppies and adult animals also. We often need help with animals that are sick or injured and need a safe place to stay during recovery. We sometimes have older animals that would do better in someone's home. Sometimes we're just plain crowded and need to get a few animals out of the shelter until we can reduce the population through adoptions. If you are interested in puppy/dog fostering call Debbie at the dog facility 530-471-5041.

Right now the "2019 Cat Crisis" program is going on so please take advantage of this program. For spaying/neutering information for dogs and cats go to www.sammiesfriends.org

Come on out to Sammie's Friends Animal Shelter and join in the fun! We need you - the animals need you and you'll have a darn good time! Many thanks to those of you who have fostered animals over the years. We couldn't do it without your help.

Cheryl Wicks is the Co-Founder and President of Sammie's Friends