



NOCO
HUMANE



SUMMER 2024

PET SPECTIVE

A publication of NOCO Humane to further the compassionate, safe, and responsible relationship between animals and people.

I FOUND KITTENS - NOW WHAT?

Discovering a litter of kittens outdoors can evoke a mix of emotions – concern, compassion, and sometimes confusion about the best course of action. It can be tempting to scoop them up and bring them indoors, but it's important to understand what is (and what isn't) in their best interest.

Cats can have litters any time of the year, but during the warmer months – typically March to October – cats are particularly prolific. An unsprayed female can have anywhere from 2-4 litters per season, with an average of four kittens per litter. Given those statistics, it should be no surprise that shelters like NOCO Humane can expect to provide care to hundreds of newborn kittens every year. Here's how you can help!

In the event you find stray kittens, there are several factors that may dictate your course of action, and we'll talk through common scenarios to help guide you. First, determine if any of the kittens are visibly sick or injured. If yes, call your local veterinary clinic for guidance, or take them there right away. Be sure to wear proper personal protective equipment (PPE) to avoid spreading disease, as kittens are considered "immunocompromised" until about six months old. Signs of sickness and injury include: thin stomachs and gaunt faces, visible ribs and spine; cold ears, bellies, and paws, which will appear pale pink, white, or yellow, or constant shivering; pale gums and tongue; lethargy/almost no movement; excessively crusted eyes or nose; diarrhea or vomiting; struggling to breathe; limping; and visible wounds or sores.

If the kittens appear healthy and intact, your next move is to determine if their mother is around. It's best not to assume that the kittens are abandoned as their mother will temporarily leave the nest for good reasons, including looking for food. Kittens who are healthy and thriving with their mother outdoors do not need to be "rescued." A mother cat's instincts make her the best possible caregiver to her kittens, and give them

the best chance at survival. Remember, mother knows best. No matter how many years of experience we may have with bottle-baby feeding and caring for kittens, we will never be able to match a mother cat's instinctual care.

To determine if the mother is still around, wait several hours, or even a full day to see if she returns. Watch from a hidden spot or from inside so you don't scare the mother away – your presence may keep her from returning to the nest.



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Even if you don't see the mother for a long time, check on the kittens periodically. If they are cuddled together and sleeping quietly, look pink, warm, and clean, and have full bellies, then their mother has very likely been back. Community cats are good at staying out of sight when they want!

Helpful tip: *sprinkle flour around the kittens' nest, and if the mother returns, she will leave paw prints.*

If the mother has returned, leave them be. You can help by ensuring they have regular food and water, an outdoor shelter for warmth and safety, and peace and quiet by discreetly checking on them regularly and not letting other cats, dogs, or pests nearby.

Unless the kittens and their mother are in immediate danger (natural disaster, in the road, etc.) or you're concerned about extreme weather conditions rolling through, it's best to leave them right where they are. Moving them into your home can further stress the mother cat, which can compromise her ability to properly and instinctively care for her kittens. If they do need additional protection, consider giving them a hard-shell carrier they can use as a hiding place. If absolutely necessary, move them to a quiet and small room in your home.

Helpful tip: *a kitten's ideal body temperature is 100 to 102 degrees Fahrenheit. If it's appropriate to move kittens into your home, consider a pet-approved heating pad in a hard shell carrier, and cover the carrier with a blanket to protect from drafts.*

If you have reason to believe the mother is no longer around, step in to help. If you are able to care for them yourself, that would be much appreciated! Call your local veterinary office or animal shelter for guidance to determine how old they are and to ensure you have the proper supplies on hand. Neonatal kittens (four weeks old and younger) will need special supplies and round-the-clock care to survive. Dependent on their suspected age, they may require feedings every 2-6 hours, and need stimulation to empty their bladder and bowels after each feeding.

Helpful tip: *contrary to popular belief, cow's milk does not contain the appropriate nutrients for young kittens, and may even cause severe diarrhea. When feeding kittens, always use kitten milk replacement (KMR) at a ratio of one part formula to two parts water.*

If you are unable to provide this level of care, consider a friend or neighbor who may be available to provide care, or you can take them to a local animal shelter. Many animal shelters facilitate foster care programs, allowing shelter animals who are not yet ready for adoption or need round-the-clock care to live in a temporary, loving home.

This is another area where you can help! To help create a safety net for neonatal kittens who arrive at our shelter, NOCO Humane is always looking for more Foster Care Volunteers to open their hearts and their homes to animals in need. Led by a team of supervisors and coordinators, all foster volunteers are provided with the necessary supplies, information, and training needed to care for these precious babies. "Being able to see a pet in need blossom right in front of you is an incredible journey to be part of. It truly is a life-saving program." – Alice Hamlin, Foster & Transfer Coordinator.



Interested in becoming a Foster Care Volunteer?
Scan the QR code or visit nocohumane.org

While encountering a litter of kittens outdoors can stir a range of emotions, patience and thoughtfulness are our greatest allies. Remember, mother knows best and provides the best chance at her kittens' survival. We realize that not every situation is alike, so please feel free to contact NOCO Humane with questions or concerns – 970.226.3647. Thank you for taking great care of homeless animals in your community!

WELD CAMPUS UPDATE

We've had our hands full getting our Weld Campus in Evans, CO, up to speed! Here are some highlights of the progress:

- ✓ Added two modulars to increase office space and animal capacity
- ✓ Replaced kennels in two of our dog rooms, and our puppy and kitten rooms
- ✓ Installed visual/sound barriers in dog adoption room
- ✓ Upgraded veterinary equipment and surgery suite
- ✓ Installed new commercial dishwasher
- ✓ Installed all new computers, phones, and networking system
- ✓ Installed new commercial laundry units
- ✓ Repaired the roof and cleaned out the attic
- ✓ Laid 10,500 sq. feet of asphalt outside

BY THE NUMBERS (as of March)

- 763** families created
- 591** strays returned to owners
- 32** active volunteers
- 400+** AmeriCorps volunteer hours



HAPPY TAIL

On a sunny afternoon in December, Kelsey Creager of Greeley had just finished visiting with her horses in Fort Lupton and was heading home. Waiting to cross a busy highway, Kelsey happened to look to her right and spotted a ball of fur laying on its side next to the stop sign. Realizing soon after that she was looking at a cat, Kelsey pulled over to the nearest lot.

“Something just told me to go check on him,” said Kelsey. She approached the cat and noticed that he was breathing. He looked up at Kelsey and let out a meow. “Poor guy,” thought Kelsey. “I figured he couldn’t move otherwise he would have run away from me.” Not knowing where he was injured, she gently scooped him up with both arms and brought him to her passenger seat. “He meowed like he was in pain.”

Kelsey and her newfound friend took a moment to get acquainted in the car – Kelsey gave him pets and he started to purr. Wanting the best for him, Kelsey started thinking what her next move should be, and decided to take him to the nearest humane society. “I gave NOCO Humane a call and they said their vets can take a look at him right away.” Kelsey drove to NOCO Humane’s Weld Campus and a staff member assisted with handling and carrying the injured kitty inside.

“Our Animal Care Team came running back and said ‘we think this cat has broken legs,’” said Dr. Gail Rapport, DVM (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine). To relieve his pain, Dr. Gail administered sedatives and then took his X-Rays, discovering that both of his front legs were indeed broken.

Thanks to Dr. Gail’s experience and longevity in veterinary medicine, she had a promising solution. “I started practicing shelter medicine before there were Orthopedic Specialists, so I got to play around doing orthopedics and I learned how to use pins to fix fractures.” After diagnosing him with simple fractures (clean breaks), Dr. Gail was confident that using pins to heal his legs would work perfectly.

Until this precious kitty could go into surgery, our Veterinary Services Team kept him comfortable with splints and pain medication. “He remained an incredibly affectionate and sweet cat, walking around with his splints on and seeking human attention,” said Dr. Gail. The veterinary team affectionately named their new feline friend Baxter. When the time came for Baxter’s surgery, pins were successfully inserted into each leg acting as supports in place of the more temporary splints.

After receiving exceptional care from our Veterinary Services Team, Baxter needed time to heal and recover. One of our Foster Care Volunteers answered the call and lovingly welcomed him home. “When we first got Baxter, he had no stability on those two front legs,” said June, Foster Care



Volunteer. “We set up a kennel for him so he could be secluded from everyone else and not get overstimulated.” Already home to two cats and a dog, Baxter had foster siblings who were eager to play with him!

Baxter received daily pain medication and returned to NOCO Humane every few days for a pain-relief shot. By week three, June let him wander and get some exercise. “But that’s when we really had to keep an eye on him because he wanted to jump on everything,” laughed June. Baxter integrated well with his foster siblings, and it didn’t take long for June’s German Shepherd mix, Sophia, to cuddle with Baxter. “He just thrived,” said June.

Eight weeks after Baxter’s surgery, he returned to NOCO Humane one final time to have the pins removed. “Once he woke up from anesthesia,” said Dr. Gail, “I could tell he seemed relieved they [the pins] were gone. He was walking more freely and just seemed more comfortable after they were out.”

Baxter’s surgery was a success, and with a clean bill of health, he was ready for his forever home — but he didn’t have to wait long. “Already at week two, my husband said ‘can we keep him?’” laughed June. “When you take care of them and watch them heal and grow, you fall in love and just want the best home for them.” June and her husband decided they were the best home for Baxter and officially adopted him immediately after his pin-removal surgery.

Baxter is now happy and healthy in a loving home. While we’ll never know how Baxter came to be in such a sad state, we have Kelsey, June and her family, and the caring staff at NOCO Humane to thank for making all the difference in Baxter’s life. Thanks to our community’s unconditional love for this sweet kitty, he rests easy in a tall cat tree, plays endlessly with his pet siblings, and his story serves as a testament to the power of community and the boundless capacity for healing and hope.




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MISSION
 To further the compassionate, safe, and responsible relationship between animals and people.

VISION
 NOCO Humane is a trusted, responsive community leader, providing programs and services essential to the high quality of life for animals and people in northern Colorado.

ABOUT NOCO HUMANE
 NOCO Humane is an independent nonprofit agency. We are not a division of any county or city and are not funded by any national animal-welfare organizations. We are a 501(c)(3) corporation and we are governed by a volunteer board of directors. We turn no animals away.

NOCO HUMANE.ORG