

## Transitioning Bottle-Babies to Slurry:

Around 4 weeks of age, it is good to start transitioning your kittens off of the bottle and onto eating real food. They should have all of their teeth and otherwise well developed enough to begin eating real food. At first, you will be offering them both the slurry (a mixture of paté wet kitten food and KMR), as well as the bottle. However, the bottle should be completely gone after about a week. Remember to **always** include a dish of dry kibble and clean water as well. Here are some recommendations to help with the bottle to slurry transition period:

- 1) Stop feeding them overnight.
  - a. This will cause them to be *very* hungry for the first meal, and therefore more likely to want to try the new food.
- 2) Make sure they are housed in a large sink, bathtub, laundry basket, or other easy to clean space.
  - a. Slurry babies tend to be a rather large mess at first as playing with ones food is substantially more fun than eating it, so it is best to have them somewhere where you can pretty easily rinse out the mess left behind.
- 3) Plan on offering them the slurry 3-4 times daily. You are also welcome to offer them the bottle, but only **AFTER** they have eaten their fill of the food mixture.
  - a. The bottle will start to become less and less important to the kittens as the days progress. Around 4-5 days after starting the transition, no one should be interested in the bottle anymore. Again, this will only be effective if the bottle is only offered **AFTER** the slurry.
- 4) Keep a close eye on their hydration levels as the transition means they may be getting less liquid.
  - a. Signs of dehydration include: sunken eyes, pointy 'siamese' faces, skin tents (when you pull up on their skin, it stays 'tented' and takes some time to snap back), and constipation.
    - i. If you notice any of these signs, please let the Foster Department know before it becomes too big of a problem.
- 5) When you first offer them the slurry, dunk their heads into the food bowl and walk away for at least 5 minutes.
  - a. Dunking their heads makes them aware that the food is there, it should smell good to them and they will likely start eating fairly quickly.

- b. By now, they probably associate you as the source of food and will likely start clammering for the bottle instead of their food if you are present. Walking away allows them to concentrate on the new food and start to dissociate them from the bottle.
  - c. Keep food available until next feeding. Also include clean water and kibble for them to try.
- 6) After they are finished eating, be sure to clean the KMR and food debris off of their skin and fur to avoid 'milk-burn' and hair loss. No one wants to panic because they think their kittens might have ringworm!
- a. You can bathe the kittens with a de-greaser shampoo or Dawn dish soap to get everything off of them. Just make sure to keep the soap and water out of their ears and eyes!

Hopefully this is helpful for you! If you are having trouble, or have any questions, please feel free to contact the Foster Care Department!

### **Litter Box Training**

Around 3-4 weeks of age, you should be able to start training your kittens to use the litter box. While this behavior is mostly instinctive and you generally should not need to litter train them, occasionally they need a little encouragement.

After feeding, you should place each kitten into a shallow litter box (plastic surgical trays or a glass pie pan work well) with a small amount of **non-clumping** clay or pine litter. Once they are in the box, scratch the litter with your finger\* and then tickle their bottoms with your finger or a moist cotton ball (as you have been doing to stimulate them) until you get a stream of urine into the litter. You can clean the kitten(s) off, but leave the wet litter in the box so their smell will help connect them to 'doing their business' in the proper place. It should only take a few times for them to start getting the idea. Some are early learners, but others can take some time to get the idea. Just keep trying until they get it!

**\*\*Do NOT scratch the litter with the kitten's paws as it may be unpleasant to them. The dig/bury instinct will come in time.\*\***