

The following guidelines are provided to help you ensure that your kittens are healthy and that they receive the medical care that they need when there is a problem.

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STANDARD PROTOCOL FOR HALO KITTENS

1. **Assess General Appearance**

When a new kitten is taken in by HALO, a caretaker will assess their immediate health. Please use the following guidelines to determine when your kitten needs additional medical support.

**General Appearance/Behavior** – The kitten should be active, alert, and interested in its surroundings. Any kitten that sits hunched over, is unresponsive, and doesn’t play with the other kittens is probably very ill. If a kitten is lethargic, contact your Foster Coordinator immediately.

**Eyes** – The eyes should be consistent and clear; the conjunctivae should be pink, not red or swollen. There should not be discharge coming from the eyes. If the eyes look normal EXCEPT for redness, contact your foster coordinator for medication. Terramycin is the first line of defense given.

If you see any other abnormality (e.g., hazy cornea, ulcer), contact your foster coordinator immediately as the kitten will need to see our vet tech. Do not take chances with a kitten’s eyes – it is better to be safe than sorry.

**Ears** – The ears should be clean. There should be no discharge or foul smell and the kitten should not be shaking its head and scratching its ears. Dirt tends to be present at the top of the earflaps and is brown. Ear mites look like dark brown/black coffee grounds and extend deep into the ears. If you suspect your kitten has ear mites, contact your foster coordinator for evaluation and medication.

**Skin/Coat** – There should be no hair loss, redness of the skin or injuries.

If you see hair loss, the kitten may have ringworm or body mites. Both of these conditions are easily treated. If you see defined areas with no hair that are scaly and red but the rest of the coat is fine, contact your Foster Coordinator for verification and treatment plan.

Use a flea comb to check for fleas. If your kitten has fleas, contact your foster coordinator for last flea prevention and treatment plan.

If your kitten has a hole in its skin, contact your Foster Coordinator immediately. He/She could have a bot fly lodged and we will need to remove.

**Eating** – Kittens do not have reserves. If you suspect that a kitten is not eating, separate it from the litter so you can observe it. If a kitten does not eat or drink for 12 hours, contact your Foster Coordinator immediately to implement a treatment plan. Watch to ensure that all kittens in the litter are eating well.

**Vomiting** – If kitten vomits once but is active and alert, do not be alarmed. If, however, a kitten vomits more than once or the kitten also has diarrhea, contact your Foster Coordinator immediately. Remember, if the kitten is lethargic (especially if vomiting and/or diarrhea are present) the situation is serious and the kitten needs medical attention.

**Stools** – Kittens stools should be formed (hold together in log form). Anything that is not formed is considered diarrhea (i.e., consistency of thick pudding or consistency of coffee.) The more liquid the stools, the more serious the condition because a kitten with diarrhea can easily become dehydrated. If your kitten has diarrhea, contact your Foster Coordinator immediately for a treatment plan.

**Nose** – There should be no discharge from the nose and your kitten should not be sneezing. If either condition exists, contact your Foster Coordinator immediately and follow the procedure for URI.

**Anal Area** – Watch for tapeworm segments that look like small pieces of rice or sesame seeds (if dried out). They may also be white and wiggle. If you see evidence of tapeworms, the treatment is easy. Contact your Foster Coordinator.

1. **Maintain a History of Each Kitten’s Weight**

A healthy kitten should have a good appetite and should be eating frequently. On average, a kitten should gain about 4 ounces per week during the first 8 weeks of life. A 6-week-old kitten should weigh approximately 1 1/2 pounds. An 8-week-old kitten should weigh approximately 2 pounds. If the kittens had a stressful beginning (e.g., lost mom early or mom was not healthy herself), the kittens may lag behind this average. Tracking a kitten’s weight gain is a good way to monitor progress. You can buy a kitchen scale that will weigh up to 5 pounds. These scales are available for between $10-$20. Be sure to select one with a relatively wide tray so that the kitten will fit comfortably on it. Weigh your kittens every 3 days and track weights. You may have periods of no change, but a kitten should not be losing weight. Contact your Foster Coordinator if your kitten does not gain weight over a period of a week or if your kitten loses more than an ounce or two.

1. **Routine Deworming**

The vast majority of kittens are born with worms that impact their overall health. Furthermore, the treatment is not risk prone. For this reason, all kittens should be treated as follows:

- Obtain Panacur from the Foster Coordinator starting at 4 weeks of age

- Give the kitten 0.1ml per pound plus 0.1ml (a 2lb kitten would get 0.3ml)

- Give 1xday for 5 days, repeat in 2 weeks

-Follow the last treatment with bringing a stool sample to the Foster Coordinator to send to the lab. You will be called if your kitten tests positive for any parasites and given a treatment plan.

1. **FVRCP Vaccinations**

A SICK KITTEN SHOULD NOT BE VACCINATED! Wait until your kitten is well to begin vaccinations. If a kitten is healthy, HALO recommends FVRCP vaccinations at 6 weeks, 9 weeks, and 12 weeks (if a 3rd vaccination is given.)

The rabies vaccination should be given at 4 months and is generally vouchered to the adopter.

1. **Early Spay/Neuter**

When your kittens reach 2 pounds, they can be spayed or neutered. They should be healthy and should have had their first vaccination at least 2-3 days prior to surgery to avoid a vaccination reaction at the same time the kitten is recovering from surgery.

Food and water should be taken away at midnight before surgery. It is important that they do not have food in their stomachs when they are given the anesthesia.

NOTE: If your kittens have not been eating regularly, they must not be spayed/neutered. Notify your Foster Coordinator.

Also if you did NOT remove food, you must notify your Foster Coordinator and do not take your kittens to the vet.

1. **Socialization**

“The more the merrier”. Studies show that kittens who have exposure to multiple people will grow up to be more comfortable with different people and adjust more easily in their new homes. If you live alone, invite friends over to meet the kittens if you can.

1. **Sanitation and Hygiene**

Kittens do not yet have developed immune systems, which makes them particularly susceptible to infections and parasites. Furthermore, the kittens we rescue often come from unhealthy situations and may be harboring a disease or parasites that are not yet evident. It is very important for the well being of the kittens and all other cats in the environment that good hygiene is maintained. Don’t underestimate the risks of allowing kittens from separate litters to mingle. Most folks who have worked in shelters or in rescue groups for years can tell you heart-breaking stories of situations where one sick litter has infected other healthy litters and many kittens have been lost. The following industry standards are important:

>Keep litters separated. They should not share food bowls, litter, bedding, or have any contact with one another.

>Obtain separate medications for different litters. DO NOT MIX! Use different utensils or sanitize between litters (rinsing in the sink is NOT sufficient).

>Keep your HALO foster kittens separated from your resident pets. Keep your resident cats up to date on their vaccinations.

>Always wash your hands or change gloves after you handle kittens in a litter. YOU CAN SPREAD DISEASE! If you have sick kittens, consider wearing a smock while caring for the sick litter. Leave it hanging in the “sick room” and always put it on with the same side facing out.

>Use bleach to clean between litters (10% Clorox bleach – 90% water). Rinse after bleaching to eliminate bleach residue.

>Completely change litter AT LEAST once per day and clean the litter box and scoopers with an anti-viral germicide.

>Change and wash the bedding, towels, blankets as often as possible but at least every other day (use bleach in the laundry.) HALO has plenty of bedding should you need!

1. **Treatment Guidelines – Provide Required Medical Care**

>**Conjunctivitis** – If the only symptom is redness around the eyes and/or runny eyes, start treatment for conjunctivitis. Contact your Foster Coordinator for Terramycin ointment. IF NO IMPROVEMENT in 3 days the kitten may have herpes, chlamydia, or an opportunistic bacterial infection, contact your Foster Coordinator immediately because the kitten should see a vet. Remember that diseases of the eye can cause irreparable damage very quickly.

>**Diarrhea** – The most common causes of diarrhea in kittens are coccidia, giardia, or bacterial overgrowth. Some kittens will develop diarrhea as a side effect of some antibiotics. The standard protocol is:

- Bring a fresh stool sample to HALO for in-house and/or lab test

- If the kitten is not eating OR if the kitten is lethargic, contact your Foster Coordinator immediately and evaluate the kitten for dehydration. The kitten may need fluids. This is very important. A kitten can die quickly from dehydration.

- If the kitten has a fever of over 102 degrees, place rubbing alcohol on pads of feet and tips of ears and contact your Foster Coordinator immediately. This kitten should be monitored closely.

- If you have been on an antibiotic, e.g., Amoxicillin or Clavamox for 7 days and the kitten is not doing better, contact your Foster Coordinator to discuss switching antibiotics.

- Start Albon, which is an antibiotic effective for treating coccidia or bacterial overgrowth. Treat all kittens in the litter.

- **NOTE** if a kitten has URI and diarrhea, you do not need a second antibiotic for URI. If after 3 days, the URI is not improved, add Amoxicillin. - If no improvement is seen in 2-3 days, take a fecal sample to HALO for diagnosis.

- When a kitten has diarrhea, the litterbox should be changed AT LEAST daily to decrease the chance for reinfection.

**>Ear Mites** – Ear mites should be treated with the Ivermectin cocktail that is provided by your Foster Coordinator. Treat all kittens in the litter.

**>Fleas** – Apply Advantage. Your kitten(s) should have been treated at intake but contact your Foster Coordinator if you notice live fleas. Treat all kittens in the litter.

>**Ringworm -** If you see a small number (1-3) small areas (often around the ears or face) where there is loss of hair and redness, contact your Foster Coordinator and set up an appointment to verify and have the hair carefully removed from around the lesion - Apply an anti-fungal lotion to the lesions 2 times per day given by HALO.

-If a larger number of areas of hair loss or very large areas, your Foster Coordinator will guide you through treatments using dips, anti-fungal lotion and fungal oral medication.

**>Tapeworms** – Fleas carry tapeworms. Make sure that you treat your kittens for fleas at the same time you treat for tapeworms. Tapeworms are treated with Droncit. Contact your Foster Coordinator for treatment.

**>URI –** If the discharge from the nose is clear and/or if the kitten is just sneezing, is active, eating and there is no fever, contact your Foster Coordinator for Lysine and Nutrical supplements to add to the food. Just monitor the kitten and make sure that it continues to eat, be active and playful.

If the discharge is yellowish or greenish or if there is fever, contact your Foster Coordinator immediately and start treatment with Clavamox, nebulize 3x/day and supplement feed with AD diet. HALO will provide. Be sure to monitor your kittens weight daily, eating and bowel movements. It may be necessary to separate from the litter to do so.

If the condition worsens, contact your Foster Coordinator to discuss a treatment plan. Should your Foster Coordinator feel your kitten is declining rapidly, they may remove them from your care until stabilized.

Antibiotics can trigger diarrhea in some kittens. If your kitten develops diarrhea immediately after you initiate an antibiotic, contact your Foster Coordinator to discuss changing to a different antibiotic.

If the kitten has a fever of over 102 degrees, place rubbing alcohol on pads of feet and tips of ears and contact your Foster Coordinator immediately. This kitten should be monitored closely.

**>Vomiting** – There are many reasons that a kitten may vomit. Remember, if the kitten is lethargic, contact your Foster Coordinator immediately. If the kitten is alert and active and vomits more than once, the first thing that you need to do is to determine what is being vomited. In some cases, you should contact your Foster Coordinator immediately because the kitten may need to be seen by a vet. In other cases, it will be appropriate to rest the stomach and then introduce bland food.

If the vomit is one of the following: - Undigested food - Mucous only - A few specs of fresh blood - Leaves, grass (Warning – many plants are poisonous; ensure this is not the case) NO LILLIES!

Remove food for 6-8 hours. Leave water down. If the kitten vomits water, contact your Foster Coordinator as the kitten may be dehydrated. After 6-8 hours, give the kitten a small amount of bland food (e.g., meat based baby food with some white rice for carbohydrates). Make sure that the baby food does NOT contain onion. If the kitten does not keep the food down, contact your Foster Coordinator as the kitten may need to see a vet.

If the vomit is one of the following: - Bile (greenish or yellowish liquid) - Digested food - Old blood (brown) - More than a very small amount of fresh blood (red) - Foreign bodies that could become entangled in the kitten’s intestine (e.g., thread) contact your Foster Coordinator immediately as the kitten should see our vet tech.

**Foster Notes of Importance:**

House plants can be toxic

Recliners can kill or crush

Too much room for a kitten can be a hazard. Kittens can fall or get thrown off tall objects and significantly hurt themselves. If you are not there to monitor, confine to crate or smaller space.

Do not medicate or flea treat your foster without consent

If you cannot reach your Foster Coordinator and you feel it is a life and death emergency, contact Highlands Animal Hospital at 772-388-1883 before 10PM. Please ensure you have texted and called your Foster Coordinator prior.

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| Medication | Use | Side Effects |
| Advantage | Topical Flea Treatment  Dosage: .05ml per pound. Very small amount for a small kitten.  After 8 weeks of age, Selarid can be applied. | Skin irritation, hair loss.  If you notice a reaction, contact your Foster Coordinator and bathe kitten in Dawn dish soap.  Fully dry your kitten not to drop temperature. |
| Albon | General antibiotic used for diarrhea caused by coccidia or bacterial overgrowth. It helps restore intestinal balance.  Dosage: .25ml per pound (**double the first dose**) for 7-10 days. | Diarrhea and/or vomiting in some cats. Very rare- dry eye or skin reaction.  If side effect occurs, contact your Foster Coordinator and stop medication. |
| Amoxicillin (Amoxy) | General antibiotic commonly used for URI.  Dosage: .2ml per pound 2x/day for 7 days. | Diarrhea and/or vomiting.  If side effect occurs, contact Foster Coordinator and switch to Clavamox. |
| Clavamox | Boosted Amoxicillin (added ingredient to increase ptency) most generally used for severe URI, abscesses, UTI’s.  Dosage: .2ml per pound 2x/day 7 days. For adult cats, dose is generally 1ml 2x/day for 7 days. | Diarrhea and/or vomiting in some cats.  If side effect occurs, contact your Foster Coordinator and stop medication. |
| Lotrimin | An anti-fungal lotion for ringworm. Can be obtained over the counter.  Dosage: apply locally 2 x/day. | No side effects |
| Droncit | Used to kill tapeworms.  Dosage:  <4lbs ½ pill repeat in 2 weeks  5-11lbs- 1 pill repeat in 2 weeks  >11lbs- 1.5 pills repeat in 2 weeks | Uncommon- at higher dosages, vomiting, anorexia, lethargy, or diarrhea.  If side effect occurs, contact your Foster Coordinator and stop medication |

