

Orphaned Kitten Feeding Problems, Issues and Solutions

PROBLEM	ISSUE	SOLUTION
Improper feeding position	Aspiration of milk into lungs	Position kitten with feet down (sternal) with head slightly flexed and slightly stretched out
Milk too hot	Burn kitten's mouth/stomach	Check temperature to make sure between 97-100° F. Milk should feel slightly warm when dripped onto back of wrist.
Milk too cold	Chilling of kitten and slowing down heart rate and digestion resulting in gas formation, colic, bloating, regurgitation and aspiration ¹	Check temperature of milk to make sure between 97-100° F. Milk should feel slightly warm when dripped onto back of wrist.
Milk coming out too fast	Vomiting, bloating, aspiration	Make sure milk coming out of nipple is at a drip (1-2 drips per second) and not a stream.
Overfeeding (ad lib feeding)	Diarrhea, bloating, regurgitation and aspiration	Determine stomach capacity and feed accordingly. Comfortable stomach capacity is 4 ml/100 g body weight ²
Nipple longer than 5/8"	Aspiration into lungs	Use a shorter nipple
Kitten not taking the bottle	Kitten may be chilled	Warm the kitten up slowly 2° F per hour, then try again
	Milk too cold	Warm milk to 97-100° F
	Kitten may not be hungry	If kitten is alert and responsive and acting okay otherwise, wait a half hour to an hour and try feeding again
	Sick, lethargic kitten	Try a drop of Karo syrup under tongue and seek veterinary attention ASAP
Unclean equipment	Diarrhea, vomiting, infection	Clean bottle and nipple thoroughly between feedings.
Sour milk	Diarrhea, vomiting, infection	Store milk replacer in clean storage container in refrigerator for no longer than 24 hours

¹Fitzgerald KT, Newquist KL, Husbandry of the Neonate, in Small Animal Pediatrics: The first 12 months of life, 1st edition, ed, Michael E Peterson. Elsevier/Saunders, China, 44-52, 2011

²Stomach capacity reference: Lawler DF. *Neonatal and pediatric care of the puppy and kitten*. Theriogenology 70 (2008) 384-392.

Peterson ME, Care of the Orphaned Puppy and Kitten, in Small Animal Pediatrics: The first 12 months of life, 1st edition, ed, Michael E Peterson. Elsevier/Saunders, China, 67-72, 2011