

ALLEY CAT ACTION

Alley Cat Allies Newsletter • alleycat.org • SPRING 2017

For Alley Cat Allies' Over 650,000 Supporters and Activists Across the Nation and Around the World



YOU CAN BE A KITTEN CAREGIVER

Gina was in her backyard last April when she heard faint cries. She didn't immediately see anything out of the ordinary, but she followed the sounds to her old shed, where she was surprised to find four tiny, meowing kittens. Gina knew they must be very young—they were smaller than any kitten she'd ever seen—but their mother was nowhere in sight. She wanted to help, but wasn't sure how.

In the spring and early summer months, known as “kitten season,” stories like this are very common. This is the time when female cats go into heat and when most litters are born. That means an abundance of kittens! Although that sounds amazing, it's actually a very uncertain time for all those kittens. Most people who find kittens outside hand them over to shelters. Most shelters do not have care programs for kittens who are neonatal (less than four weeks old), so instead many kittens are killed. It's up to compassionate individuals to step up and save these kittens' lives by keeping them out of shelters.

Taking care of neonatal kittens is a round-the-clock job for several weeks. The great news is, if mom can't be found, humans can step in to help and anyone can learn how. Caring for kittens means you are saving lives. It's an invaluable learning experience for you and your family, and it can be a truly fulfilling journey. Alley Cat Allies can guide you through every step, with plenty of online resources at alleycat.org/Neonatal.

Tip: Not sure how old your kittens are? Our Kitten Progression Guide can help! Visit alleycat.org/KittenProgression.

You found young kittens outside. Now what?

Do *not* take the kittens to a shelter, unless the shelter has a neonatal program. First, try to find their best possible caregiver: their mother. Monitor the kittens from a distance for a few hours to see if mom comes back. If she does, leave the kittens with her. If you believe they are in danger, trap her and take them all in. Visit alleycat.org/FindFeralFriends to see if there is a Feral Friend in your area who can help you trap.

If the mother doesn't return, take the kittens inside. You can contact local cat advocacy groups to see if they can take the kittens. However, if you're ready to care for them yourself, we have the basics you need to know.

(continued on page 3)



Neonatal kittens like one-week-old Corduroy require special care and attention.



Always wait and see if the mother returns before taking kittens into your care.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Kitten Season Is Here!

Every year at this time, Alley Cat Allies is focused on saving kittens. Why? Because this is the time of year when most kittens are born—a time of abundant life and, sadly, death. The harsh truth is that most animal shelters cannot keep up with the number of kittens that come in during these months. Young kittens are usually killed—often within minutes of arriving—because they require constant care, which most shelters cannot provide.

It doesn't have to be this way. We have the power to protect kittens' lives. With your support, Alley Cat Allies works every day to change shelters and helps create neonatal kitten programs. We couldn't do it without you.

You have the power to keep the kittens you find outdoors out of shelters and to provide the love and care they need! In this issue of Alley Cat Action, we walk you through the basics of caring for kittens, from their youngest days until they're old enough for adoption. It's one of the most rewarding experiences you can have, and everyone can learn how!



Every day, I'm inspired by the many compassionate people who dedicate their time and energy to caring for cats. I hope this newsletter inspires you to take that next step and save a life yourself! Be sure to share this newsletter with your friends and family so that even more lives can be saved.

For the Cats,

Becky Robinson, President and Founder

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Alley Cat Allies

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It is Alley Cat Allies' practice to exchange the names of our donors with other charities that share our values. We do this in order to both expand our donor base and spread our mission and to support those charities that we feel are working toward the good of animals and our community. Please notify us if you would prefer that we not share your name. We would be happy to remove your information from our exchange list.



Alley Cat Allies is proud to have earned the highest rating of four stars from Charity Navigator, the nation's largest and most respected charity evaluator. Join us and our more than 600,000 supporters at www.alleycat.org.



OUR MISSION: To transform and develop communities to protect and improve the lives of cats.

OUR GOALS: 1) Reform public policies and institutions to serve the best interests of cats; 2) Expand and promote cat care; 3) Increase understanding of cats to change attitudes and eliminate misconceptions.

YOU CAN BE A KITTEN CAREGIVER ... (continued from page 1)

Taking care of neonatal kittens

First, make sure the kittens are warm and hydrated. Young kittens get cold easily, which can become life-threatening. Provide kittens with a soft nest, such as fleece fabric in a box.

Tip: A cool way to keep kittens warm—place them in an open cooler with a heating pad! Make sure they have some space to move away from the heat.

Susan Spaulding, co-founder of the National Kitten Coalition (kittencoalition.org) and a celebrated neonatal kitten expert, has advice to help you keep your kittens safe and healthy.

“Kittens should feel very warm if you pick them up, and their gums should be bright pink and moist,” says Spaulding. “If they are not warm, start providing warmth immediately and seek veterinary help.”

Feeding your kitten

Neonatal kittens under four weeks old must be fed around the clock. They should only be fed kitten formula, which can be purchased at most pet supply stores. Make sure to pick up kitten bottles at the store too, as they’re specially designed for kittens. For more information on the supplies you’ll need, check out alleycat.org/KittenCareKit.

Tip: A four-ounce kitten will need to be fed every two hours. A six-ounce kitten, every three hours. An eight-ounce kitten, every four hours.



At six weeks old, Topanga is beginning to eat wet food, but also requires supplemental bottle feeding.

When feeding kittens, place them on their stomachs and arch the bottle so less air gets in. Do **not** feed kittens on their backs, as you might a human baby, or they may inhale formula and choke. After feeding, put them on your shoulder or on their stomachs and pat them gently to burp them.



Neonatal kittens must be manually stimulated to go to the bathroom.

Balancing your life and your kittens

Caring for kittens is a round-the-clock job for a few weeks. Try to build a network of caregivers with family, friends, and neighbors. As the saying goes: it takes a village!

Some shelters provide resources to those who want to raise kittens. With help from Alley Cat Allies, the Hillsborough County Pet Resource Center in Florida created a Wait Until 8 Program to help empower the community. When someone brings a young kitten to the shelter, the staff offers a Kitten Survival Kit and instructions to care for the kitten.


The next steps of kitten care

When the kittens are eight weeks old and at least two pounds, they’re ready to be spayed or neutered and vaccinated. Take them to your local veterinarian or find a low-cost spay/neuter clinic near you. After the kittens recover, you can work on finding them loving homes of their own!

Tip: Spread the word to get your kittens adopted! Talk about your kittens with your friends, family, coworkers, organizations, and clubs, or your local veterinary office.

You have the power to save lives!

Caring for kittens is a big responsibility, but it’s worth it. Remember, *you* have the power to bring your family and community together to help a kitten grow up healthy and strong. All it takes is commitment and care.

The basics in this article are just the start. You can find information, resources, and advice you need to become a kitten expert at alleycat.org/KittenGuide. You can also check out our kitten care webinars at alleycat.org/Webinar. For the full story on being a kitten caregiver, visit alleycat.org/KittenCaregiver. 



IN YOUR BACKYARD

With your support, Alley Cat Allies is bringing humane education and lifesaving programs for cats to communities across the nation.

DC Washington, DC—Community Cat Medical Fund Saves Lives

Alley Cat Allies supported the Humane Rescue Alliance (formerly the Washington Humane Society and the Washington Animal Rescue League) in establishing a special Community Cat Medical Fund. The fund was created to treat complicated medical issues and save cats who would have otherwise been killed due to a lack of resources. Now when sick or injured cats are brought in during a Trap-Neuter-Return effort, they can be treated and sent back to their colonies healthy and safe. The fund has already paid for surgeries that changed cats' lives, and the community is quickly seeing the impact. Now people are donating to the fund so more cats can receive the treatment they need.




Community cats Caspey and Miss Grey lounge on a porch. Caspey was diagnosed with a diaphragmatic hernia. His life was saved thanks to the Community Cat Medical Fund, which was created with support from Alley Cat Allies. Caspey has a long road to recovery but seems to be doing very well.

MI Michigan—Taking TNR Around Metro Detroit

The nonprofit organization All About Animals Rescue (AAAR) and Alley Cat Allies have been working together for years to protect cats in Metro Detroit. AAAR is a member of our Feral Friends Network and the largest high-quality, high-volume, and low-cost spay and neuter clinic in Michigan. Recently, AAAR staff reached out to us for help launching a Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) program in the city of Roseville. We provided them with model TNR ordinance language and educational materials, and sent letters of support for their TNR proposal to Roseville city officials. In December 2016, Roseville approved the proposal for free TNR services for up to six months. We look forward to seeing the program's success!

SC South Carolina—Collaboration Creates Lasting Change

The nonprofit group Animal Allies, the City of Spartanburg Animal Services, and the Spartanburg community came together, with the aid of Alley Cat Allies, to help 200 cats in seven months with Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR)! In those same months, the public came to embrace TNR and the city's euthanasia rate fell to zero—for the first time ever. Their success was so inspiring that the Spartanburg County Council authorized a TNR program for all cats in the county, which kicked off in November 2016. This remarkable accomplishment proves that collaboration is the key to saving cats, and we're so proud of their progress. This has laid the groundwork to expand TNR and help countless more cats in the future. 

ASK THE EXPERT: SUSAN SPAULDING



Are you ready to take care of kittens? Our friend Susan Spaulding, co-founder of the National Kitten Coalition

(kittencoalition.org) and a neonatal kitten expert, has the answers to some of the most common questions about neonatal kitten care.

Q: What should I feed my neonatal kitten?

Never feed a kitten cow's milk. It will cause digestive upset and diarrhea. I recommend kitten formulas such as Breeder's Edge (my favorite), KMR, GNC, or 21st Century. You can find those and bottles at most pet supply stores.

Q: My kitten won't eat. What do I do?

Kittens won't eat if they're dehydrated or cold. Do not force a kitten to eat! Warm her with your body heat and give her warm water by dropping it on her tongue slowly, then try feeding again. If you have one or two failed feedings, seek veterinary help *immediately*.

Q: What do I need to know about training kittens to use a litter box?

You can start litter training when a kitten is around four weeks old. It's instinctive, but putting a piece of cloth in the litter box that they've relieved themselves on helps.

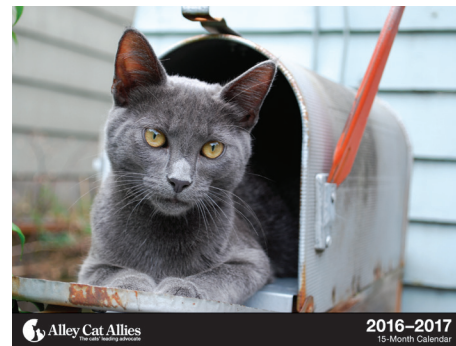
Use a shallow litter pan and non-clumping litter until your kittens are seven weeks old. Clumping litter can be dangerous if it's ingested or sticks to their eyes and nose.

Alley Cat Allies is working hard to drive change and accelerate protection for cats! Your support makes it possible. 🐾

VOTE FOR OUR NEXT COVER CAT!

Soon you'll have the chance to pick the photo that you think should be on the cover of our 2017–2018 calendar! Voting for the cover cat for our award-winning calendar will open in early June.

Don't miss out! We'll notify you when the poll opens—just sign up for our email alerts at alleycat.org/SignUp.



Gaius was the cover cat chosen for our 2016–2017 calendar!



HOW OLD IS THAT KITTEN?

Alley Cat Allies®

NEW RESOURCE: KITTEN POCKET GUIDE

How old is that kitten? Our popular and informative Kitten Progression poster is now a handy pocket guide, so you can have a resource at your fingertips if you find a litter of kittens outside. With the tips and pictures in this easy-to-read booklet, you'll learn how to judge a kitten's age

from newborn to 10 weeks. Kittens have different needs as they grow, so you'll need to know their age to give them the best care possible. The "How Old Is That Kitten?" pocket guide is now available to purchase (4 for \$5, 8 for \$10) at alleycat.org/Shop.

MEET SAKI: THREE LEGS DON'T HOLD HER BACK

When Saki was found in a dumpster behind a restaurant last December, her leg was in bad shape. A birth defect meant that she couldn't put weight on her paw, causing her to drag it across the pavement. The veterinarian had to amputate her leg. Saki recovered in a foster home and became a happy, mobile cat, and it didn't take long for her to find her forever home! In February, she was adopted and is now loved in her new home! 🐾



Saki was saved thanks to you and Alley Cat Allies! She now lives happily in her forever home.

FORGET-ME-NOT LEGACY SOCIETY: GIVE THE GIFT OF LIFE TO CATS AND KITTENS

Lieutenant Colonel Robert M. Urdal (U.S. Army, Ret.) has been a cat lover since the 1960s and a generous supporter and donor to Alley Cat Allies since 2008. As one of our most active donors and a member of our monthly giving program—the Cat-alyt Society—he hopes to also leave a lasting legacy of positive change for cats by participating in our planned giving program, the Forget-Me-Not Legacy Society.

Joining this program is a way for Alley Cat Allies' donors to help cats for generations to come.

In addition to donating, Robert gives back in many other ways. He volunteers with a local county's animal control to match dogs and cats with the right adopters and help people looking for lost pets. He and his wife LaVerne live with their two cats, Enzo and Turbo. They've also fostered about 30 kittens in the last two years.

Robert is very familiar with Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), and has offered to assist with transport for a local rescue's new TNR program. He strongly supports Alley Cat Allies' work to spread the word about TNR. Even at 80, Robert keeps his life exciting—and many cats will live full, happy lives because of that.

Generous donors like Robert give us the resources to continue saving cats' lives around the nation and the world. You have the power to invest in the future health and well-being of cats and kittens by naming Alley Cat Allies as a beneficiary in your will.

Your gift of a lifetime would be a meaningful way to help us continue to save cats. By naming Alley Cat Allies in your will, you can feel confident that your contribution will be used wisely. We take pride in spending 87 cents of every dollar on programs, which is one of the many reasons Alley Cat Allies earned the top four-star rating from Charity Navigator, America's largest and most respected nonprofit oversight organization.

Visit alleycat.org/PlannedGiving for more information. To learn about your giving options, contact us at **1-866-309-6207** or plannedgiving@alleycat.org.



Lieutenant Colonel Robert M. Urdal and his wife LaVerne with Sully—a cat they fostered as a kitten, adopted out, and frequently visit.

HISSES AND PURRS The stories of those who deserve to be celebrated...and scorned.



PURRS to **Washington, DC**, for protecting Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR) in the city. Alley Cat Allies started there, and we're proud that the city has the longest-running TNR program in the United States—27 years!



HISSES to **Australia** for starting its plan to kill 2 million feral cats. Killing cats is inhumane, ineffective, and doesn't save declining wildlife populations.



HISSES to **Elkhart, IN**, for considering an ordinance that puts severe restrictions on colony caregivers and requires them to buy special insurance because they care for cats.



PURRS to the **council of Halifax, Canada**, for funding a five-year Trap-Neuter-Return program. The program will provide \$50,000 each year for spay and neuter.

SAVE A CAT WITH A MOUSE With just a few clicks, you can make a difference in cats' lives and help transform communities. Here are some online resources to help you on your way:



CONNECT—Join us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. alleycat.org/SocialNetworking



DONATE—Support cats nationwide. alleycat.org/Donate



LEARN—Advocate for cats in your community. alleycat.org/CommunityChange



TAKE ACTION—Receive our *FeralPower!* action alerts and other emails. alleycat.org/SignUp