



Findings from a national survey: Orphaned Kitten Care

Summary Report

September 2013

Together we can better nurture, support and save the lives of these vulnerable animals.

Orphaned kittens are the most fragile of homeless animals, and many shelters consider it too resource-intensive to care for them. For that reason, they often make up the largest single group of animals euthanized at many shelters.

In the spring of 2013, Maddie's InstituteSM conducted an online survey that asked administrators, staff members and volunteers of animal shelters and rescue groups in the United States to comment on their organization's approach to the care of orphaned kittens.

"Caring for kittens seems very scary but can be handled with some guidance and training.

People enjoy fostering if given the right tools to help."

Anonymous Respondent

Our principle aim in conducting this study was to gather baseline data on several key areas concerning orphaned kitten care, including:

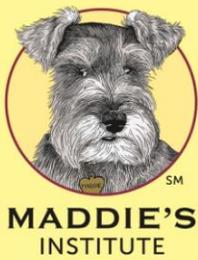
- 1) Parameters of care and housing.
- 2) Prevalence of health issues.
- 3) Training given to individuals who provide care.
- 4) Challenges organizations may face.

We intend to suggest useful strategies and provide tangible resources to help organizations create or improve an orphaned kitten care program.

To see the full report click [here](#).

How did we define "orphaned kitten"?

A kitten less than 6 weeks of age and without their mother – to include those categorized as neonatal (0-2 weeks), pre-weaned (2-4 weeks) and early post-weaned (4-6 weeks).



Our Top 5 Findings & Resources

*Please note that our findings only represent respondents who indicated that their organization provides at least *some* care to orphaned kittens.

1

Housing:

Fifty-three percent of respondents reported that their organization primarily utilizes *foster home care* to house orphaned kittens, while 39% reported to use *a combination of in-house and foster home care* and only 6% reported to primarily provide shelter for orphaned kittens *in-house*.

2

Health:

Of nine pre-listed health issues, the most frequently reported in orphaned kittens were the following: *internal parasites, diarrhea, upper respiratory infection* and *external parasites*. The least frequently reported were: *aspiration pneumonia, injury, fading kitten syndrome, ringworm* and *anorexia*. [Click here for examples of health protocols established by Austin Pets Alive!](#)

3

Feeding:

Forty-two percent of respondents reported that their organization uses feeding guidelines to determine stomach capacity when feeding orphaned kittens; however, 24% reported to *sometimes* use feeding guidelines, while 34% reported to *not* use feeding guidelines at all. [Click here for the Maddie's Institute Feeding Chart and Stomach Capacity Table.](#)

4

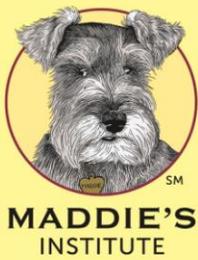
Training:

Sixty-nine percent of respondents reported that their organization *always* offered information or training to individuals who provide care to orphaned kittens, while 23% reported to *sometimes* provide guidance and only 8% reported to *not* provide guidance. Seventy-eight percent reported the availability of *informal in-person training* and 52% reported the availability of *written information developed in-house*. [Click here to see an example of a foster care handout crafted by the Sonoma Humane Society.](#)

5

Challenges:

Of 9 potential challenges listed, respondents reported that the following were the greatest in terms of providing care for orphaned kittens: *an insufficient number of foster homes, an insufficient number of volunteers, an insufficient number of staff, insufficient facility space* and *insufficient funding*. [Click here to learn more about great volunteer management practices.](#)



Our Top 5 Findings & Resources

Maddie's Institute Newsletter:

- *Advance*, Volume 4, April 2013 Issue
http://www.maddiesfund.org/Maddies_Institute/Institute_Newsletter/April_2013.html

Maddie's Institute Online Video Collection:

- *How to Examine an Orphaned Kitten*
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4R13Ei0YyXQ&feature=youtu.be>
- *How to Bottle Feed an Orphaned Kitten*
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QXlaolFEXjY&feature=youtu.be>
- *How to Stimulate an Orphaned Kitten to Urinate and Defecate*
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KExOXnZHT50&feature=youtu.be>
- *How to Bathe an Orphaned Kitten*
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gqxzUan3AP8&feature=youtu.be>
- *Giving Orphaned Kittens Probiotics*
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ma_jqc-HzvA&feature=youtu.be
- *How to Wean Orphaned Kittens onto Solid Foods*
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=22_kn_8gNWI&feature=youtu.be

Maddie's Institute Webinar:

- *Orphaned Kittens: How Saving the Tiniest Lives has the Biggest Impact*
http://www.maddiesfund.org/Maddies_Institute/Webcasts/Orphaned_Kittens.html
 - Including:
 - Part One: Ellen Jefferson, DVM, on Austin Pets Alive! Bottle Baby Program
 - Part Two: Heidi Beyer, CVT, on orphaned kitten care