



# Fading Kitten Syndrome & Protocol

## **What to do in a Neonatal Kitten Emergency**

Fading kitten syndrome is not a disease, but rather a collection of symptoms that develop in neonatal kittens due to many possible underlying causes. Most often Fading Kitten Syndrome is escalated due to hypothermia (low body temperature) and hypoglycemia (low blood sugar), and correcting these can save the kitten. If not dealt with immediately, kittens may decline rapidly and die. If your kittens are 12 weeks or younger, please familiarize yourself with our fading kitten syndrome (FKS) protocol below.

### **SYMPTOMS:**

- Extreme Lethargy (unable to stand, hold head up, not responding when touched)
- Low body temperature (feels cold to the touch or below 100 degrees F on rectal thermometer)
- Increased respiratory effort (gasping for breath)
- Pale gums (white)
- Odd vocalizations (cries of pain)
- Muscle wasting (loss of muscle tone in the face and body, causing the kitten to look gaunt or frail. The kitten may develop a triangular looking face.)

**When this happens, it is vital that you take immediate steps!**

### **STEP 1- GET THEM WARM!!**

Create a "burrito" towel. Immediately wrap the kitten up in a towel like a burrito, leaving only their face exposed. DO NOT take the kitten out of the towel to adjust them. Every time you take them out, you will make them cold again.

### **You MUST apply an external source of heat:**

Heating Pad- if you have an electric heating pad, turn it on low and wrap it around the towel. Use tape to secure the heating pad. Don't let the heating pad touch the kitten directly. A snuggle disc is less ideal than a heating pad as it cannot surround the kitten.

If you don't have a heating pad:

- 1) Fill 2 socks full of rice and tie the ends so rice doesn't spill out. Throw the socks in the microwave for 3 minutes. Place the warmed socks next to the kitten on the outside of the burrito towel, reheat one sock every 30 minutes to provide continuous warmth. Rice socks can easily overheat in the microwave, check the temperature on your own skin

before placing a heated rice sock next to the kitten burrito. Do not let the rice socks touch the kitten directly.

- 2) Keep your dryer running full of towels. Grab a new hot towel every 5 minutes and wrap around the “burrito” towel. After 5 minutes, trade that towel out for a new hot one.

### **STEP 2- GET THEIR BLOOD SUGAR UP!!!**

- 1) Mix a few tablespoons of sugar or Karo syrup (light corn syrup) in ½ cup hot water. Stir it until you get a solution that is just a little runnier than maple syrup. Use a syringe or your finger to give the kitten **3 DROPS EVERY 3 MINUTES** into the mouth. If the kitten is not swallowing, put the solution on the tongue or gums. Do NOT put the solution down the kitten’s throat. Set a timer to make sure you are giving drops **EVERY 3 MINUTES**.
- 2) **BE PATIENT!** It can take a while for the kittens to warm up, regulate blood sugar and “come out of it”

### **STEP 3-CONTACT THE FOSTER OFFICE!**

Once the kitten is holding its head up and responding, please text the PAWS Foster Emergency Phone (215-650-7281) and email [Foster@phillypaws.org](mailto:Foster@phillypaws.org) (please cc your foster coordinator). The foster staff will not have any extra advice for you that is not on this handout, but communicating about the condition of your kittens is essential and an appointment with a PAWS veterinarian should be made ASAP to identify and treat any underlying illness such as respiratory infections or internal parasites.

**\*\*We do not recommend that you rush to the vet with your kitten!! Focus on stabilizing the kitten’s temperature and blood sugar first!!\*\***

**If you choose to take your kitten to a non-PAWS veterinarian, it will be at your expense!**

If you decide to move the kitten and take it outside in order to go to the vet, it may become colder and less able to recover. It is best to take the time and follow the steps above. This protocol is based on what would be done if you took your kitten to the clinic.

Keep in mind that even with all the love and attention and perfect treatment, some kittens will not make it. Don’t blame yourself during this difficult time, kittens are very fragile and have limited internal resources to combat illness. Just by fostering you are giving these kittens a chance.