

Feral Kitten Socialization Tips

By Jess Johnson

Some things to note before you attempt to foster/socialize a feral kitten:

-A feral Kitten is NOT like a domestic kitten. There is no established trust of humans as with a domestic kitten. To them a human is a dangerous predator and should be avoided at all costs!

-No, your other cats will NOT teach the kittens that humans are good. You should also until they are vet checked allow your fosters to mingle with your pets as they can pass on viruses and parasites to one another.

-Do NOT let your fosters roam the house! Please see my foster guide to learn how to setup a room/safe space for your fosters.

-Remember at first you are dealing with a WILD ANIMAL so be respectful! they are cute and look cuddly but they can and will do damage to you and others if they are scared.

-Holding them when they do not want to be held will NOT tame them! you must earn their trust

First few days:

If you have followed my setting up the foster room guide then you should have the following in the room:

- 1) A wire dog cage with pee pads on the bottom of it and at the end a box with a hole cut out of it and a towel set up as a bed in the box, a litter box, food and water.
- 2) the towel should be sprayed with a calming spray
- 3) (optional) a feline diffuser
- 4) A cat tree so the kittens can observe you from a high place of safety.

The kittens will begin to feel secure if they have all these things

For the first few days of having your fosters keep your visits somewhat brief: bring in food change litter and water if it needs changing.

DO NOT look directly at the kittens if you do blink very slowly this shows that you are not a threat to them.

DO NOT make any sudden movements keep your movements very slow as to not startle the kittens.

When you talk to them keep **your voice low and quiet**. Remember loud noises mean danger and will only frighten the kittens.

When you let the kittens out of the cage sit quietly in the room with the food bowl near you. Read a book or browse the internet but keep the sound off. when a kitten gets near you for the food bowl make **NO** movements to pet them or hold them let them get comfortable being near you and show you are not going to do any harm to them.

Feral kittens do not work off at set time table so do not get frustrated if your kittens are not acting a certain way by week three or four. We as foster parents have to work off their comfort level. Remember patience is key!

As time goes on:

Once you feel that the kittens are a bit more confident to be near you. You can attempt the following things:

While the kitten is eating their food gently stroke their body not their heads just their body. This will associate humans touching them with good things.

Use a string drag it around while you remain sitting still to get them to interact with you.

While sitting still as a kitten goes past you gently pick them up a few inches from the floor for a few seconds then set them down. This will get them used to being picked up as time goes on increase the duration of time you hold the kitten.

Add in a special snack time using wet food. For this i use the pate wet cat food. Others use Baby food that is meat based and does not contain Onion or Garlic in it work off what the kitten likes and will be motivated to go for.

At first put the food on your finger tips in large amounts. then leave you hand palm up on the ground. Keep still let the kittens come to you and eat the food.

Slowly move you hand towards you as the kittens get more comfortable with the eventual goal of getting the kittens to put their paws on you and eventually go into your lap to get the food.

You can also use a string pulling it close to you to get them to put their paws on you and go in your lap as well.

Once the kittens are comfortable with you in the room and being near you you can offer them wet food as a snack to get the kittens to come to you. This associates you with good things increasing their trust.

Over time you will need to work with your kittens again at their pace to do the following:

- Hold the kitten without them being afraid or squirming away
- Getting them to come to you
- socializing them with common noises they hear in the house you can use a radio or a cd soundtrack for this exercise.
- Get the kittens used to humans standing up and moving at normal speed and using a normal (not shouting or yelling) Tone of voice.

- once they are cleared of any viruses, or parasites and test negative for Felv and FIV. You can have monitored socialization times with an older calmer dog or cat **if your pet is not able to remain calm or acts aggressive please do not attempt this step.**