



Feline Acute Diarrhea in Kittens

Acute diarrhea can be a common clinical sign seen in neonatal and weanling kittens. It can be caused by a variety of factors, including weaning, diet, stress, parasites, bacteria, toxins, and viruses. Whenever a kitten breaks with diarrhea, it is crucial that food sources, the environment, and stress are all evaluated when initiating treatment.

Veterinarian care and treatment is needed for all kittens experiencing acute diarrhea.

Recognition and diagnosis

Diarrhea can be normal during weaning periods, but profuse liquid or bloody stool, lethargy, depression, and prolonged anorexia are not normal.

Diagnosis for the underlying cause of diarrhea may involve additional testing on feces or rectal swabs from the kitten for panleukopenia, parasites, or bacteria.

Notification

Kitten parents who identify diarrhea in their otherwise healthy kittens should alert a veterinarian. If there is a delay, treatments as listed below may be enacted.

If the diarrhea is accompanied by lethargy, anorexia, vomiting, and/or dehydration, call an emergency contact and further instructions will be given. This may include medical advice by phone from a veterinarian, a medical appointment at the shelter, or a visit to the emergency hospital. A stool sample should be collected.

Treatment

Treatment can include dry and canned food and/or formula, de-wormers, probiotics, litter and disposable litter boxes -- and in some cases sterile fluid syringes and needles or feeding tubes to have on hand. Please see below for treatment options kitten parents may enact.

1. Evaluate the kitten's attitude, temperature, and hydration status.
2. Collect a stool sample and refrigerate it for submission to the shelter.
3. Check deworming schedule – is it time for another deworming?
4. Check food for spoilage.
5. Add probiotic to feedings or formula.
6. If the kitten is lethargic or not eating, or has severe diarrhea or bloody stool, alert medical staff immediately or the after-hours emergency line.
7. Administer medications recommended by Vet. (Treatments here, as determined by the vet. These may include antibiotics, subcutaneous fluids, anti-parasitics, even tube feedings or other treatments as outlined by the veterinarian).

Documentation

Parents should complete daily monitoring logs that include information on weight, stool consistency, signs of illness, and other issues. Please note details for medical staff.

