



Jan. 2017

Kitten Mom's Corner

Brrr...It's cold out there!

As we move further into the cold winter months, it is important to remember that one major cause of neonatal deaths is hypothermia. Kittens cannot regulate their own body temperature until about four weeks old, so ambient temperature can drastically affect them. If they have been without mom or in a cold environment, their body functions may begin to shut down as their core temperature decreases.

If you find a cold kitten, your first priority is warming. When cold, the kitten cannot metabolize food or medications so do not feed as this can be dangerous and even lead to death. You should begin warming the kitten immediately but without using extreme heat. Holding kittens against your body, is only partially helpful as our body temperature is still lower than the 100 – 102 degrees F that a kitten's body temperature should be. Use a warm (not hot) SnuggleSafe, heating pad on low, warm water bottle, heated rice bag, etc. All heat sources should be covered with a towel so as to moderate the heat and prevent direct contact with the kitten. Constantly monitor the kitten's temperature, adjust the little one's position to warm all areas of the body, and never leave a debilitated kitten alone with a heat source as overheating and burns could occur.

Get the kitten to a veterinarian ASAP – even if the kitten seems to be responding to the warming techniques. A thorough exam will be needed to help determine if the kitten suffered any temporary or permanent injury to its organs and if additional treatment is needed.

Susan Spaulding is known as the 'Kitten Mom' in the shelter and rescue community. She has 25+ years' experience caring for kittens and is widely celebrated for her expertise with neonatal orphans and special-needs kittens who others have given up on. She is also a co-founder of the National Kitten Coalition.

For more information on Susan, visit www.kittencoalition.org/about-us/leadership.