

Off to the Right Start: Nutrition for Kittens

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EveryCat Health Foundation (formerly known as Winn Feline Foundation)**

Session Description: Kittens are dependent on the queen to provide food during the neonatal or nursing period. The transition from queen's milk to solid food (weaning) is a gradual process and is an integral part of the nursing period. However, the veterinary team must be prepared to care for orphaned kittens as well. Kittens are considered orphaned if they lack sufficient maternal care for survival from birth to weaning. Several physiologic needs normally provided by the queen must be met to ensure survival of neonates: heat, humidity, nutrition, immunity, elimination, sanitation, security and social stimulation. A foster queen or the caregiver must meet these needs for orphaned kittens.

The post weaning period through the first year of life is a critical time for development. It is important for the veterinary team and the pet owner to impart a strong nutritional foundation to help to support the growth and development of the kitten throughout the demanding neonatal and post weaning period.

This presentation will discuss feeding and nutrition for nursing kittens and orphaned kittens, and it will also cover integrating the weaning process. Additionally, we will discuss nutritional assessment, key nutrients for a healthy kitten, and feeding to achieve healthy growth, optimize trainability and immune function, and minimize obesity.

Speaker Bio: Kara Burns is a licensed veterinary technician with a master's degree in physiology and a master's degree in counseling psychology. She began her career in human medicine working as an emergency psychologist and as a poison specialist dealing with human and animal poisonings. Kara is the Founder and Past President of the Academy of Veterinary Nutrition Technicians. She teaches nutrition courses around the world. Kara is an independent nutritional and well-being consultant and is the Editor in Chief of *Today's Veterinary Nurse*. She is a member of many national, international, and state associations and holds positions on many boards in the profession: American Academy of Veterinary Nutrition executive board; Western Veterinary Conference Technician Education Manager; NAVTA Past President; Society for Veterinary Medical Ethics board member; Collaborative Care Coalition executive board; and the Pet Nutrition Alliance President, to name a few. She has authored many articles, textbooks, and textbook chapters and is an internationally invited speaker, focusing on topics of nutrition, leadership, and technician utilization. Kara and her wife Dr. Ellen Lowery developed the Pet Nutrition Coach Certification course through NAVC. Ms. Burns has been featured on the cover of the *Veterinary Technician Journal* and the *NAVTA Journal* and most recently has been featured in *PetVet Magazine*. She was named the North American Veterinary Conference Technician Speaker of the Year in 2013 and in 2016. She was granted an honorary VTS (Internal Medicine) in 2011. She was also granted an honorary VTS (Dentistry) in 2012. She is the 2010

NAVTA Veterinary Technician of the Year, as well as the 2011 Dr. Franklin Loew Lecturer. Kara has also been named the National Association of Professional Women 'Woman of the Year' for 2010-2011 and the Cambridge Who's Who in Professionals V.I.P. for 2010-2011. She was accepted into the International Women's Leadership Association in 2012.