

ORPHANED KITTENS



**Aurora
Animal
Shelter**

April through September is what many in the animal welfare industry know as 'kitten season'. At the Aurora Animal Shelter, we get in dozens and dozens of kittens each year during this time. It is with the best intentions that people bring in these babies, often without realizing that when kittens are particularly young, their best chance at survival is to be with their mothers. This hand out is to discuss how to proceed if you see a litter of kittens and how to know when to intervene.

If the litter of kittens is in immediate danger, it is safe to move them out of harm's way. Ensure that you do not move them too far from their original location. Too much distance will make it hard for the mother cat to find them. Be sure to handle the kittens with a clean towel and avoid transmitting your scent onto the kittens. Their new location should be away from direct sun, rain, or traffic. Check back a few hours later to verify that the mother cat has returned.

It's important to note that mothers will rarely abandon their kittens. If a mother cat leaves her kittens alone, she is usually searching for food or she is locating more of an ideal "home" for her and her kittens. Mother cats may move their litters often to keep them safe. If you happen to

locate a litter of neonatal kittens, avoid touching them and leave the area. Mother cats who are not socialized to humans may avoid returning to the litter if they see you. Wait at least four hours to recheck the area again. You want to give plenty of time and space for the mother cat to return. If the mother cat has not returned at this point, it is safe to say that the mother cat is likely not returning.

If you have waited several hours and the mother cat has not returned, bring them to your jurisdictional animal shelter. It is a great idea to call around to nearby shelters to determine who has the best resources for the kittens at that time, as neonatal kittens require constant observation and care.

