

CATS AND KITTENS: Orphaned Kittens



When it comes to finding a litter of kittens, sometimes you can help them by NOT taking action. Mother cats don't often abandon their kittens, but they will leave them to search for food or to find a more suitable location to move the family. If the kittens are not in any obvious danger and appear cozy and clean, simply leave the area. Don't hide nearby because the mother cat can still smell or notice your presence. Check back in a few hours to see if the kittens have been moved and/or the mother has returned. Keep in mind that kittens have the best chance of survival with their mother. If they look healthy and well cared for, leave them for the mother cat to raise.

Don't remove the kittens from the area.

Shelters and rescues are inundated every spring and summer with underage kittens brought in by well-meaning good Samaritans. Please, if you see what appear to be abandoned kittens, don't remove them from the area if they are not in immediate danger.

Determine if moving the kittens is necessary.

If the kittens are in immediate danger, such as underneath a car or in an area that is flooded, find the nearest safe area to which you can move them while still allowing the mother to find them. Place them in a sheltered area, away from direct sun, rain, or traffic and check back later to see if the mother cat has returned.

If you determine the mother is friendly, the best approach is to take her and the kittens indoors until the kittens are old enough

to be weaned. Once the kittens are at least two pounds, they can be brought to the shelter for vaccines, sterilization and adoption.

Determine whether the mother is returning.

After you have observed the kittens for 12 to 24 hours and are sure the mother is not likely to return, or if the kittens are clearly in poor health or injured, it is okay to pick them up and care for them. Be aware that sometimes, no matter what you do, neonatal kittens do not survive and can fade very quickly. You can only try to be the best surrogate guardian possible.

VISIT [KITTENLADY.ORG/SAVEKITTENS](https://www.kittenlady.org/savekittens) FOR
TIPS ON CARING FOR ORPHANED KITTENS.



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