

What is Fading Kitten/Puppy Syndrome?

Fading Kitten/Puppy Syndrome refers to a kitten or puppy's failure to thrive during the newborn period between birth and weaning. Sadly, failure to thrive is often fatal, however recognizing early warning signs may allow for potential supportive or lifesaving intervention.

What are signs and symptoms of Fading Kitten/Puppy Syndrome?

Fading Kitten/Puppy Syndrome can onset quite rapidly and unexpectedly. Unfortunately, this may mean that a young kitten or puppy may be found deceased when they appeared normal when last seen. Early warning signs and symptoms to monitor for may include:

- decreased appetite or anorexia
- weakness
- lethargy
- inability to gain weight
- vomiting and/or diarrhea
- labored breathing
- distressed vocalization

Daily monitoring and weight checks of kittens and puppies are both important to catch many early warning signs.

What causes Fading Kitten/Puppy Syndrome?

There can be many causes, however, most often, a specific cause is not known or identified. If the kitten or puppy has a mother, poor nurturing instincts, large litters, or birthing difficulties may play a part. Genetics may also play a role. Other potential causes may include infection, parasites, lack of maternal antibodies, birth defects, trauma, malnutrition.

What do I do if I am concerned about my foster kitten or puppy?

If your foster kitten or puppy is found to be in critical condition, the Foster Care Manager should be contacted immediately for direction on next steps. However, immediate steps that can be taken at home may include warming them up, as hypothermia is often a complicating factor, and applying Karo syrup to their mucous membranes as hypoglycemia is often a concern. To warm them, they can be wrapped snugly in a towel or blanket. The towel or blanket may be placed in the dryer to help warm it up. A warming disc, bag or pad may also be used to help. Never apply a warming element directly to the kitten or puppy without a barrier in between, and ensure it is warm and not hot. Karo syrup can be rubbed on their gums using a cotton tip applicator every 3 minutes. Never attempt to feed or give fluids to a critical kitten or puppy.

For any non-emergent medical concern, email fostertech@hshv.org

In case of emergency, call the foster department at 734-717-4424.