



Discover the Palm Beaches, the Best of Everything

For immediate release:
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It's Kitten Season, But What Does That Mean?

The weather is starting to warm up and that means kitten season is on the way, but what is kitten season?

Kitten season runs from March to October, but much like the hurricane season in South Florida, it can happen at any time! Come across a litter of young kittens – Don't Kit-Nap! Scooping them up and taking them into their local shelter is not the best option for the kittens as, in most cases, the mother cat is nearby. Their best chance of survival is with their mom! It's also important to know that once kittens have been removed from their mother, she will go into heat again immediately resulting in more kittens.

Free-roaming female cats, also known as community cats that have not been spayed, often leave their kittens alone for a few hours each day. She may spend time away hunting or searching for a new place to move her kittens. Sometimes the mother cat has simply been scared away by a loud noise and is nearby waiting for a safe return. Although she may not be visible, she may be close and will wait until it is all clear of humans to return to the nest. For this reason, it is best to leave the kittens where they are and monitor from a distance. If the kittens are in an unsafe location, it's okay to move them to a safer area nearby where the mom can easily find them. It is a common misconception that a mother cat will not care for her kittens if they are touched, but don't worry, she doesn't mind. However, don't be surprised if they're moved the next time someone checks on them. Found neonatal kittens? The best thing to do is leave them alone. Mom will most likely come back. If the kittens are content and not constantly meowing, then mom has probably been there recently.

A few ways to know if mom has been caring for them are:

- They have full bellies. - They have eaten recently if their bellies are slightly firm and round.
- The nest is clean. - Mother cats don't allow their nests to be overly soiled.
- The kittens are warm and content, possibly sleeping and they respond when disturbed.
- If the kittens are cold or don't respond to touch, they are not healthy and need help.

Still unsure whether the mother is returning? Place a ring of flour around the nest and check it after a few hours for paw prints or for other signs of being disturbed.

If the mother returns, celebrate! Great job keeping them safe! Continue to help them by keeping tabs on mom and kittens until they are eight weeks old and can be trapped, spayed or neutered, and returned to the area they came from. This practice of Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return to Home (TNVR) is the most humane and most effective way of preventing cats from entering the shelter system. If the mother cat hasn't returned for 24 hours, the kittens are likely orphans. In this case, becoming their foster parent is the next best thing. Fostering kittens frees space in the shelter as well as increasing the kittens' chances of survival by providing the one-on-one care and attention they need.

Palm Beach County Animal Care and Control (PBCACC) is here for fosters that need assistance with supplies or have questions regarding their care. Fosters can contact PBCACC Foster Program at 561-233-1281 or accfoster@pbc.gov. Fosters can also visit resources.bestfriends.org for more information about caring for orphaned kittens.

See community cats in the neighborhood and want to help before they start having kittens? Participate in TNVR by becoming a trapper or getting connected with trappers already working in the area. Learn more about PBCACC's TNVR program at <https://discover.pbcgov.org/publicsafety/animalcare/Pages/Spay.aspx>

Ensuring the safety and well-being of these babies during kitten season takes a village. Education is key! Talk to friends and family about ways they can help support Palm Beach County's feline population.

PBCACC is dedicated to promoting the health, safety and welfare of both people and animals the community.

For more information on PBCACC's services, please visit the website or contact the office directly. Join PBCACC in making Palm Beach County a safe and compassionate place for all animals.

Contact Information: pbcgov.org/animal, 561-233-1200, 7100 Belvedere Road, West Palm Beach, FL, 33411.

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