

# I Found a Kitten Outside! Should I Bring Her Into My **CASA**?

Before picking up a kitten, assess the scenario using the CASA method. Consider the following 4 factors: Condition, Age, Situation, and Abilities.

## CONDITION

If a kitten is in good condition, she has likely been cared for by her mother recently.



### GOOD CONDITION

- Clean and alert
- Chunky and well-fed
- Not in distress

Mom is likely right around the corner!  
Try your best to reunite if unweaned.



### BAD CONDITION

- Dirty or covered in waste
- Visibly underweight
- In distress or medical crisis

These kittens may truly be orphaned,  
and need swift intervention!

## AGE

A kitten's age will help you determine the right course of action.



### 0-5 WEEKS

- Uncoordinated
- Closed or baby blue eyes
- Unweaned; dependent on nursing

These kittens should be kept with mom,  
either by trapping the family for foster care  
or by leaving with mom until weaned.



### 5-12 WEEKS

- Playful and coordinated
- Able to walk and run
- Eating food independently

These kittens are within the socialization  
window, and are an ideal age to take in  
and socialize for adoption.



### 12+ WEEKS

- Typically 3+ pounds
- No longer nursing
- Proportionate or lanky body

If feral, these kittens will be more difficult to  
socialize, and they may have the best outcome  
if sterilized and returned to the colony.

## SITUATION

Every situation will be different, and it's up to you to use  
your best judgment about when and how to intervene.



### SAFE SITUATION

- Mother is present
- Caregiver is present
- Family has food and shelter



### UNSAFE SITUATION

- No one is caring for the kitten
- Kitten is exposed to extreme  
weather or hazards

## ABILITY

Your abilities and access to community resources will factor into  
how you respond. Give the kitten the most positive outcome  
possible, while working within your means and capacity.

### ASK YOURSELF

- Are you or someone you know able to provide foster care?
- Does your local shelter have a lifesaving program that can help?
  - Can you access sterilization services for the family?



Remember that no two scenarios are alike, and there are numerous lifesaving pathways depending on  
the kitten's condition, age, situation, and the abilities and resources at your disposal.

**AND DON'T FORGET:** Wherever there are kittens, *there are cats!*

Always work to sterilize the local community cats in order to prevent future births.

For Kittens Under Six Weeks Old: Wait for the mother cat to return

You want to help, and your first impulse may be to swoop up the tiny kittens and bring them straight to a shelter. *However, a mother cat will periodically leave her nest to hunt for food.*

If you see young kittens without their mother, ***it is likely she will return.*** The mother should return to the nest within a few hours- if you watch quietly from a distance (at least 35 feet).

Tips

- Sprinkle flour or baby powder around the nest to see the paw prints of a mother cat who may be coming and going from her kittens. Check it throughout the day.
- **Don't put food by the kittens:** Do NOT place food near the kittens to lure mom. Mom almost always purposely hides her litter away from food sources as she knows that food will attract other cats and even bigger predators!
- If the kittens appear healthy and comfortable, you can safely wait 4-6 hours for a mom to return if the kittens are six weeks and under.

Assess the kittens' apparent health

While you are observing from a safe distance, pay attention to the kittens' appearance and their surroundings. If the kittens appear healthy, and in a relatively safe location, they can survive without mom longer than if they are sickly, and in the middle of a muddy yard.

- Does their fur look healthy, full and fluffy? OR Are they dirty? Sickly? Eyes crusty?
- Are they sleeping quietly? In a heap? OR Are they crying? Squalling?
- Are they dry? OR Are they wet/soaked?

Assess the environment

**Are the kittens in IMMEDIATE danger from:**

- Heavy rain? Standing water/flooding?
- Wild animals? Dogs?
- Traffic – pedestrian foot traffic? Bicycles or cars?

If the kittens appear healthy, but are not in a safe location, try placing them in a box or similar shelter in a safe spot as close to where you found them as possible, and continue to observe for mom.

Know that healthy kittens can survive several hours without food as long as they are warm. Neonatal kittens are much more at risk of hypothermia than they are of starvation. During typical 'kitten season' (during the late spring and summer months), waiting a longer time to see if mom will come back is usually very safe.