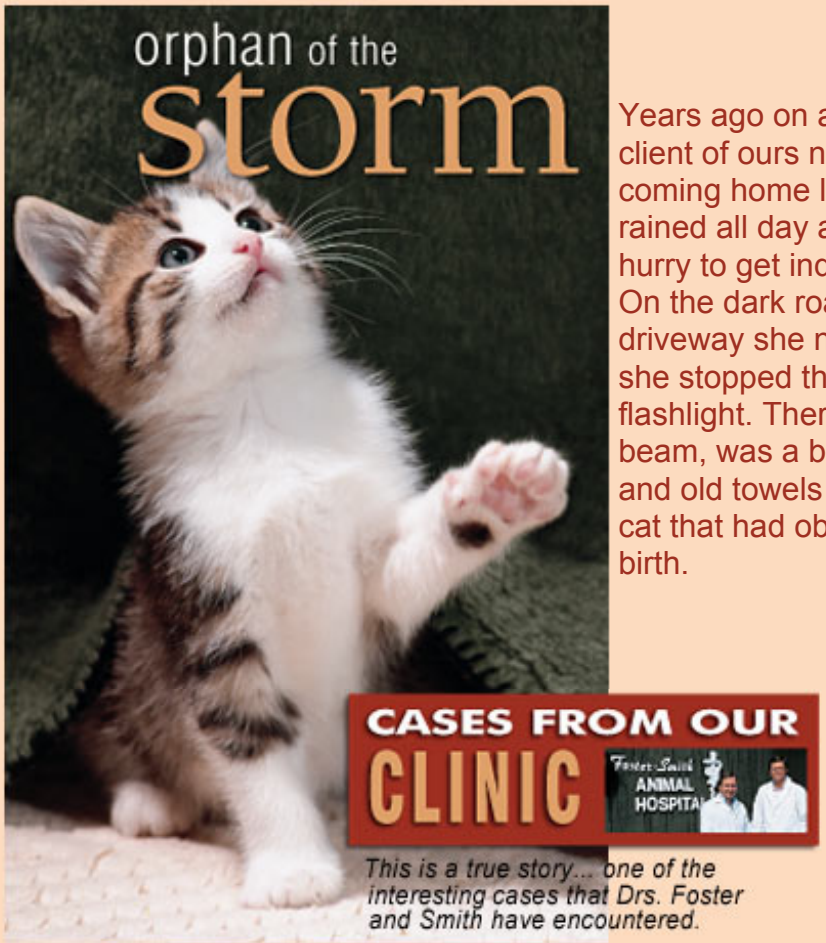
Cases From Our Clinic: Orphan of the Storm

Drs. Foster & Smith Educational Staff



Years ago on a cold evening, a client of ours named Marie was coming home late from work. It had rained all day and she was in a hurry to get indoors, out of the cold. On the dark road leading up to her driveway she noticed something, so she stopped the car and got out her flashlight. There, in the bright beam, was a box lined with straw and old towels containing a listless cat that had obviously just given birth.

Looking more closely, she could see a tiny kitten, huddled up against her mother. She quickly picked up the box and brought it into her heated car - the two needed warmth if they were going to survive. Marie was a close friend and called us immediately.

We had her come in and we examined the pair. Sadly, we couldn't save the mother. Since we knew Marie was a competent animal caretaker, we told her what she could do for the kitten.

First, we encouraged her to keep the kitten dry and warm. Newborns cannot maintain a sufficient body temperature on their own; they rely on their mother's 102°F temperature. If their mother is unavailable, they must be kept between 90 and 95°F. We gave her a heated pet bed made especially for pets.

WE RECOMMEND:

- **Heated Pet Pad** helps you provide constant, thermostat-regulated heat for your kitten.
- **Oral Syringes** are an ideal way to deliver nutrition to kittens not receiving mother's milk.
- **KMR Kitten Milk Replacer** contains L-arginine to prevent cataracts in newborns.

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We said to keep the kitten isolated from the other animals in her home to prevent disease transmission. An orphan's immune system is not as strong as one getting mother's milk.

We gave Marie some oral syringes and a special feeding bottle so the kitten could get some vital nutrition. We cautioned against using cow or goat milk, since neither will supply the proper nutrition. Commercially prepared nutritional replacements are made specifically for this purpose, so we gave her some KMR Kitten Milk Replacer. We told her how to feed the kitten - making sure she knew not to feed too fast or overfeed, since that could cause disastrous results. We also told her not to feed the kitten anything else until she was at least 4 weeks of age, when she could gradually add moist kitten kibble. We also explained that young kittens cannot urinate or defecate on their own, and so the kitten would need to be stimulated after each feeding. We showed her how to do this with a cotton ball moistened with warm water.

To avoid behavior problems, we advised that the kitten be handled for 30-40 minutes a day in addition to the feeding time. We also explained the importance of socialization during these first few weeks of life. We made appointments for rechecks, deworming and vaccinations, and Marie faithfully came to every one. Marie followed all our suggestions and the kitten, named Storm, survived and lived to a ripe old age.

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