

Orphaned Kitten Physical Exam

EXAM	NORMAL FINDING	ABNORMAL FINDING
Weight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth: ~100 g (2-4 oz.) • Gain 7-10% of birth weight each day (10-15g) • Weight doubles by 2 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Underweight for age • Not gaining weight
Attitude	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bright and alert • Hardly cries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lethargic, unresponsive • Cries a lot
Body condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-6 weeks: Plump and round • Symmetrical body and limbs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thin body condition • Taut, over-distended abdomen • Asymmetry
Coat condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hair shiny and free of debris 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hair loss, skin irritation, cuts, fecal stained hair
Muscle tone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak, flaccid
Rectal temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-2 weeks: 95-99°F • 2-4 weeks: 97-100°F • 4+ weeks: 100-101.5°F 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anything below 95°F is abnormal. Warm kittens up slowly at 2°F per hour to prevent organ failure. • Anything above 101°F may be a fever
Heart rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 220-260 beats per minute 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slow or irregular heart rate. Chilled kittens heart rate will slow down.
Respiratory rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Birth: 10-18 BPM • After 1 week: 16-32 BPM 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Labored breathing
Reflexes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0-14 days: Rooting, and suckle reflex • 0-39 days: Elimination reflex • 0-7 days: Gag reflex • 3-17 days: Startle reflex • 6-8 days: Shiver reflex 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weak, fading kittens will have diminished reflexes. • Chilled – Newborn kittens do not shiver.
Oral exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Palate closed • 2-3 weeks: Incisor 1 and 2 • 3-4 weeks: Incisor 3 and canine • 4-5 weeks: Lower premolar • 5-6 weeks: Upper premolar 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleft palate
Mucus membranes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pink, moist and slippery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dark red, dry and tacky • White, pale membranes
Eyes and ears	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5-14 days: Eyes open • 6-17 days: Ears open • 4-6 weeks: Iris color and normal vision 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swelling, discharge or pain around area
Abdomen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slightly plump and enlarges after nursing • 2-4 days: Umbilical stump falls off 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distended and painful with excessive crying • Redness, pain and/or swelling around umbilicus
Anus/Genital exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present and patent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Red, swollen • Yellow or green discharge • Not present or patent
Urinary exam	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dilute yellow • 3-4 weeks: Urinating on own 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dark yellow
Gastrointestinal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsive to bottle • Interested in solid food at 3-4 weeks • Eating dry food by 8 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unresponsive and weak • Poor appetite • Vomiting • Diarrhea
Ambulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1-10 days: Forelimb support • 4 days after forelimbs, hind limb support • 16 days: Walking • 21 days: Normal gait 	

REFERENCES:

- 1) Greco DS and Partington BT, The Physical Examination and Diagnostic Imaging Techniques, in *Veterinary Pediatrics: Dogs and Cats from Birth to Six Months*, 2nd edition, ed, Johnny D Hoskins, WB Saunders Co, Philadelphia, 1995
- 2) Zambelli D, Feline Neonatal Physiology, Behavior, and Socialization, in *Management of Pregnant and Neonatal Dogs, Cats, and Exotic Pets*, 1st ed, ed, Cheryl Lopate, Wiley-BlackwellAmes, Iowa, 2012, 145-158.
- 3) Root Kustritz MV. History and physical examination of the neonate, in *Small Animal Pediatrics: The first 12 months of life*, 1st edition, ed, Michael E Peterson. Elsevier/Saunders, China, 20-27, 2011