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## Of Tiny Toes & Bottle Feeding Blunders

Thu, 2012-04-19 14:12 — Robin Olson

April and her kittens have been here for a few weeks and every day I enjoy seeing them making progress. It's a slow change, from being blind, to opening their eyes, to struggling to stand, to taking awkward steps. Their tiny, sharp cries alert their mama who attends to them constantly. **She's a very small cat and regardless of how attentive she is, as the kittens grow, I grow more concerned about her ability to provide for them.**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *Brave blue world.*

April has been very fussy about her food. I've even gone against my own better judgement and put down grain free dry food for her in case she'll eat it. Right now she has to eat and eat a lot or the kittens will be adversely effected. I've been trying every sort of food I can find, but few things tempt her. She loves fish based food. I don't love that for her, but at this point, she's got to eat.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *The sole tuxedo in this litter. I've chosen a name for her and will announce it soon!*

A few days ago, I brought three of the kittens to my Vet so they could show me how to bottle feed them. **I decided if I supplement the smallest kittens it will help them and help mom, too.** The problem is getting the kittens to drink the formula.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *Poor April. She's just wiped out from all the feedings.*

The entire process of bottle feeding is very daunting to me, but I had to push through my fears. I've never had kids or bottle fed or even seen it been done. I did some research, watched videos. **They make it look so easy, but looking down at the 10 ounce lifeform in my hands, wriggling around, not wanting to sit still, realizing she could die if I screw up, is not my idea of a good time.**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *Pattycake!*

**“Okay...relax. You can do this.”**

©2012 Robin A.F. Olson.

**First problem was getting the formula OUT of the bottle.** The rubber nipples are made of some sort of self-healing material so no matter how many times I took a match, heated the tip of a big needle and poked repeated hole after repeated hole into it, I couldn't get the formula OUT. It was VERY ANNOYING. I used a knife, but I could only get a tiny tiny stream out of the nipple if I used both hands to squeeze the bottle.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *Who is that peeking over April's shoulder?*

I was told to try using a syringe, which did end up working a bit better. The problem is it's easy to accidentally shoot a stream of formula into the kitten, which could cause her to aspirate and there's MATH involved..how much does the kitten weigh? How much formula should she have in a day? Her mother is feeding her so she should not be overfed, but what is enough? What if she won't eat it all? **The ratio of food to water is 1:2, until they get older than it changes. Weights are in cc's. Syringe is in mL. My scale weighs in ounces! Ugh.**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *Talk to the paws.*

Somehow it worked out kinda...sorta. I started with the littlest kitten. She has bizarre polydactyl toes and has a tiny white spot on her chest. I put her onto a towel on my legs, placing her at an angle so she is sitting up. I tried not to jam the tip of the syringe into her mouth. I almost stabbed her eye. Then I worried I was going to drown her in formula if I pushed the plunger on the syringe too hard. The formula was very warm, but cooling off fast. I had to get this done. **She licked at it, then turned her head away from me. I couldn't see where her mouth was because her fur is black and my close up vision is lousy.**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *Baby belly! Squeeeee!*

I took a breath and relaxed, trying not to panic. She will eat what she will. I'm doing my best. I wiped off her face and tried

again. She licked at the syringe, but turned her head again.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Attack!

I learned how to help her eliminate and I read somewhere that the kitten may not eat because they need to empty out their bladder first. I held her over a few paper towels and lightly rubbed her back end with a warm, moist cotton ball. She wriggled and cried, then the pad got a light yellow stain on it and a few drops of urine fell out onto the paper towel. At least I was doing something right. **April, alerted to the kitten's distress, sat up and looked at me, ready to pounce.** I dried the kitten's behind and showed her that the kitten was fine. The kitten calmed down. I tried feeding her again, but it was like trying to throw a dart into a moving target when you're drunk. Good luck with that.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. April getting her kitten to eliminate. I give April a snack afterwards to "cleanse her palette."

After what seemed an eternity, the kitten lapped up the contents of a syringe and part of a second one. **It comforted me to see her eat. I remembered to tap her back with one finger to help burp her.** She obliged me. I gave her a kiss and lifted her wriggling tiny self back into her bathtub home. She joined her sisters who are trying to get fed. Some were struggling to get to a nipple. I grabbed a second kitten who began the process all over again.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. A kiss for Mama.

I only got three kittens fed before the formula was cold. I decided to make certain I weigh the kittens every day. I have to stay on top of this. **With six kittens and a tiny mama, it would be very easy to lose one or more of them. Even at three weeks, they are not out of the woods.**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *Cutie.*

I've been supplementing the feedings for a few days. I'm still not great at it, but some of the kittens will wriggle a bit less and let me feed them. **The runt, who I am calling, Cutie, recognizes me when I walk into the room.** She runs over to the side of the bathtub and stands up on her hind legs. She furiously scratches her big, clumsy paws on the side of the tub. **She's reaching up to me, crying. I lift her into my arms and she quiets down. I think she is bonding with me, her surrogate mother. It melts my heart. Surely she is too young to have any idea who or what I am but I am lost in her expression. Her big round eyes, so dark and sweet, look right into my soul. Her paws, not much bigger than my fingertip, rest on my left hand while I feed her with my right. I am as in love with her as she with me. Here we go again. No foster fail this time. I must remain aloof.**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *Painful cuteness. Make it stop!*

Well...perhaps I'll put off being aloof for a few more weeks and just feel love for this small soul. I'm rooting for her and her sisters (*and maybe one brother?*). **I hope their journey will be a long one, filled with good things and that I'm helping them get off on the right paw, even if it has a crazy number of extra toes of on it.**

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**Use the ChipIn Widget, below if you'd like to help this family. They'll need vetting (*times seven*) in the next few weeks and supportive care like cotton balls to help them eliminate, paper towels and cleaning supplies, kitten formula, baby food and new kitten-specific toys. We'd also like to invest in getting a web cam so we can broadcast the kittens on the net! We figure that will add about \$200.00 to our fundraising.**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Lunch time.

The donation you provide April's Family is **TAX-DEDUCTIBLE**. The money will go to my 501©3 Non-Profit Cat Rescue: [Kitten Associates](#) (1).

If you'd prefer to send a check, please make it out to: *Kitten Associates* and please note on the check the funds should go to "April's Family" mail it to:

**Kitten Associates**  
**P.O. Box 354**  
**Newtown, CT 06470-0354**

Any funds not used for the care of this family will go into our General Fund.

**If you can't make a donation, you can help us by getting the word out. Every dollar helps and every Re-tweet or FB Share does, too. THANK YOU for caring about this very special family!**



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## Comments

Thu, 2012-04-19 14:24 — KF (not verified)

### **Yay Babies!** [10]

These pictures are just adorable!! I love Cutie, she's just precious. I donated and hope many more will too! So glad you're taking such good care of April and her babies. :)

Thu, 2012-04-19 14:25 — susanbellnc (not verified)

### **Kittens and Bottles** [11]

We did the bottle feeding thing years ago when a cat had kittens under our back porch steps. We kept an eye on her, figuring once the kittens were old enough we would take them to the shelter. But then, the mama disappeared. So, we scooped up the 2 week old kittens and brought them in. We'd never bottle fed anything in our lives either, but we quickly learned that the whole "poking a hole in the nipple" thing does not work. So we took a pair of scissors and cut the nipple at an angle. Problem solved. Worked like a charm. That was 12 years ago and the litter of six all survived. Two went to new homes and we kept four, and they are a loveable mess. I loved watching them grow up, one of them even stood up for the first time in the palm of my hand. So special. I will never forget taking care of them, watching them grow and discover the world around them. So wonderful.

Thu, 2012-04-19 15:42 — [Random Felines \(not verified\)](#) [12]

### **bottle feeding** [13]

I have done it too and agree that the hot pointy need NEVER works. I ended up using scissors to cut an x in the nipple of the bottle.

I have done the bottle feeding thing and thankfully didn't worry about the math - cause your made my head spin just thinking about it. :) I decided early on that I would feed her when she was hungry and so long as she was growing and healthy, we couldn't be doing too bad. She did end up bonding with me....I jokingly called her the baby duck as she would follow me around when she was hungry "quacking" at me to hurry the heck up with that bottle.

Purrs to April and you.....

Thu, 2012-04-19 18:23 — RogueFiccer (not verified)

### **Figuring out the mL and cc thing** [14]

1ml=1cc. Hope that makes it easier for you. When I've bottle fed, I did the same as Random Felines, and cut an 'x' in the end of the nipple with scissors. The hot needle thing is ridiculous.

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Robin @ [Google+](#)

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