

What is Kitten Season?

You've heard of the dog days of summer; what about "kitten season"?

No, it's not a fifth season—it's the time of year when cats give birth, flooding animal shelters with homeless litters. Kitten "season" starts in spring, peaks in late spring or early summer, and ends in the fall. During peak months of kitten season, as many as 100 cats can be surrendered to the shelter on a busy weekend day. Most of these cats are found roaming the streets, or are unwanted litters.

So why does kitten season occur?

When the warm weather comes and the days get longer, a cat's reproductive hormones become very powerful. When female cats go into heat, male cats come running from near and far. The easiest way to help reduce the overwhelming numbers of unwanted cats is to spay and neuter your own cat and encourage others to do the same. Because unaltered cats are driven by their hormones and tend to sneak outdoors primarily in search of a mate. Mating just once can start a domino effect that can result in dozens, even hundreds or thousands of unwanted animals. These unwanted cats and kittens, when not left on the street to fend for themselves, often turn up in high volume at the Humane Society.

Shelter Strain

Kitten season presents many challenges for shelter staff and the cats in their care. Resources already hard to come by—like food, money and space—are often stretched to their limit, as the Humane Society is inundated with homeless cats.

Typically, the adult cats feel the most immediate effects, as they are often overlooked by potential adopters when kittens are in abundance. During kitten season it becomes more difficult to place adult cats. Even when people come in with the intent to adopt an adult, their heads are turned by the cute, active kittens, and the adult cats are passed by.

As we struggle to take in as many cats as possible, the risk of illness also increases. As we reach our capacity, the close quarters cause the cats additional stress, and they begin to spread germs, get sick—and the whole population suffers. This is why available foster homes are so important.

What can you do?

- Talk to others about the importance of having their cat spayed/neutered.
- Promote cat adoption — showcase an adult cat at the shelter or take a cat to an adoption event.
- Open your home to a cat in need — sign-up as a foster family.
- Donate supplies to help care for the cats at the shelter and in foster homes.
- Spread the word — Talk to others about the cat crisis in our community and what they can do to help. Ask them to pledge their support by registering as an AdvoCAT.

Be an AdvoCAT!

For more information about cat overpopulation in our community and what you can do to help, visit www.cahs-pets.org.

