KITTENS

How to Tame a Feral Kitten: Ages, Steps and Limits

Kittens 8 weeks or younger can be tamed by almost anyone; past 4 months, Alley Cat Allies recommends TNR instead. The vet visit, the room and cage, the food method that builds trust, and how long it takes.

By Catt County Cat Nippers • Reviewed October 28, 2026 • 7 min read • 3 cited sources

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The short answer

Feral kittens can become friendly pets if they are socialized young. Kittens 8 weeks or younger can usually be socialized by almost anyone. Older kittens take more time and skill, and Alley Cat Allies doesn't recommend trying with kittens over 4 months old or with adult feral cats: healthy kittens of 4 months or older can stay in their colony, after TNR.

The method is slow and simple: a vet check, a small safe room with a cage and a hiding box, two quiet days to settle, then food as the bridge. The kittens eat wet food while you sit nearby, then from a spoon, then on your lap, and you pet them while they eat. Plan on about two hours a day for a few weeks to a month or longer.

AT A GLANCE

- Use a small, quiet room you can close, with a cage or crate inside it.
- Sit quietly at their level and let them come to you. If they are very timid, offer wet food on a spoon through the cage.
- Young kittens often make progress within about a week.

Age decides the plan

The most receptive period for socialization is about 2 to 7 weeks of age, and every week after that makes it harder. Our **kitten age guide** helps you tell how old a kitten is.

WHAT AGE MEANS FOR TAMING A FERAL KITTEN

Age	What to expect	The plan
8 weeks or younger	Almost anyone can socialize them; most receptive at about 2 to 7 weeks	Socialize them, vaccinate, spay or neuter, then find homes
8 weeks to 4 months	It takes more time and skill, and gets harder every week	Socialize if you have the time and experience, or ask a rescue for help
Over 4 months, and adult ferals	Alley Cat Allies doesn't recommend trying to socialize them	TNR: spay or neuter, vaccinate and return them to their colony

Ages from Alley Cat Allies' guide to socializing kittens. Every kitten is different, and some take longer.

Before you start

Take the kittens to a vet first. Alley Cat Allies says to make sure they get the FVRCP vaccine and are dewormed if needed; the rabies vaccine can't be given until they are 4 months old. Get veterinary care right away if a kitten becomes lethargic, stops eating or has diarrhea.

Be sure you can commit: taming takes one-on-one time every day for a few weeks to a month or longer. If you have found very young kittens on their own, check first whether the mother is coming back: see **found kittens: what to do**. For kittens too young to eat on their own, start with **caring for orphaned newborn kittens**.

This quick sheet is the start of the guide. Still to read: Set up a safe room, The first two days, Use food to build trust and 5 more sections, plus the Foster Kitten Care Log: Feeding Chart & Weight Tracker. Read it all free when you join our pet health emails at cattcountycatnippers.org/articles/feline-socialization-window-taming-feral-kittens-guide

Sources

1. Alley Cat Allies — Socializing Feral Kittens (PDF)
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2. Alley Cat Allies — The Cat Socialization Continuum
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3. Fear Free — From Hiss to Kiss: Feral Kitten Socialization
   https://www.fearfree.com/2021/06/from-hiss-to-kiss-feral-kitten-socialization/