



# Shelter Spotlight

By Amy Chilson, Staff

## “Kittens and Their Development”

Kittens are abundant this time of year, and we get many calls for answers and advice on dealing with kittens. Cats are very social creatures, so it is very important to start socializing kittens at a young age. A mother cat, or queen, will play a large part in this process, as kittens will mirror their mothers' behavior. A fearful cat will have scared kittens, whereas a cuddly mommy will most likely have snuggly kittens. Ideally, kittens should stay with their mother until a few weeks or so after weaning at six to seven weeks, and with their littermates (or other “role-model” cats) for at least 12 weeks. They will learn their social skills at this time. Most cats are “kittens” through the first two years of life in mind and in body. The stages of kitten development are:

**0-2 weeks - Neonatal Period:** Kitten learns to orient toward sound. Ears and eyes begin opening (usually open by two weeks). Competition for rank and territory begin – separation from mom and littermates at this point can lead to poor learning skills and aggression.

**2-7 weeks - Socialization Period:** By week 3, kitten can see well enough to find mother. By week 4, the sense of smell is fully mature. The kitten will start to interact with littermates and can walk fairly well. The teeth start to come in. By week 5, eyesight is fully mature and kitten can run, place feet precisely, avoid obstacles, stalk and pounce. The kitten will start to groom itself and others. By week 6-7, the kitten begins to develop adult sleeping patterns, motor skills, and social interaction abilities.

**7-14 weeks - Most Active Play Period:** Social and object play increases the kitten's physical coordination and social skills – most learning is by observation of mother or other cats. Social play includes belly-ups, hugging, ambushing, and licking. Object play includes scooping, tossing, pawing, mouthing, and holding. Combined social/object play includes tail chasing, pouncing, leaping and dancing.

**3-6 Months - Ranking Period:** Kitten is most influenced by its “litter,” which may now include playmates of other species. The kitten begins to see and use ranking (dominance or submission) within household, including humans.

**6-18 Months – Adolescence:** Kitten increases exploration of dominance, including challenging humans. If not spayed or neutered, the kitten experiences beginnings of sexual behavior. Altering your kitten at an early age (14 weeks -5 months) will greatly increase the health benefits of the surgery and increase the lifespan.

Our featured pet of the week is Gilligan. She is a spayed, long-haired dilute calico. She is 4-5 years old and has been with us for over a year. Gilli can be a very sweet girl when she is feeling safe and secure, and when she is **not** around other cats. She loves to have her own space, and is a good mouser. She would be very happy in a nice warm barn, as a shop cat or house cat. She loves to be Queen of her domain! You can visit Gilli at 1612 Carr Lake Rd SE, Bemidji, MN.

Are you interested in a great trail companion? Max is a purebred German Wirehair Pointer who is 2-3 years old. He is very friendly, neutered, and has had his basic kennel vaccinations. He has a good nose

on him, does some pointing, and we think he could easily be trained as a hunting dog. He loves to play fetch, and will bring the ball directly back to you and place it in your hand. He knows some commands. He has good speed, and has high energy. He gets along well with other dogs and cats. He loves to be out on the trails. He would like a large yard to play in, or to be out on a large farm. He is currently in foster care, but call ahead and he will meet you at the shelter.

Our hours of operation are Tuesday-Saturday, 12-5:00 p.m., or by appointment. You can call us at (218) 751-7910 with any questions. You can also visit our website photo gallery at [www.beltramihumane.com](http://www.beltramihumane.com) or see our pets on [www.petfinder.com](http://www.petfinder.com). Enjoy photos of our pets at your friendly local WalMart (We are participants of the Very Best Pet Network), our "Pets of the Month" at Pamida, or catch our "Pet of the Week" on KKBJ Mix 103 (the early morning show). We welcome your visit at anytime, and remember...all donations are tax deductible as we are a 501c3 licensed facility.

If you are interested in Volunteering or still need to attend a Volunteer Training session, our next scheduled training will be on Saturday, July 14th, 1-2 p.m. at the shelter ~ hope to see you there!

A special thank you goes out to Cecil and Shirley Chilson for their recent donation of a brand new power washer for our dog kennels. It will be put to "great use". Thank you for caring about our animals!

Upcoming Events: July 2007 – We will be celebrating our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at Beltrami Humane Society. We invite you to help us celebrate 30 years of serving Bemidji and our "surrounding environs" with animal care and adoptions.

September 15<sup>th</sup> – Annual "Walk for Animals". Join us at the Waterfront. More information to come.

Shelter Wishes: We are in **DIRE** need of Dog, Cat, Puppy and Kitten Food! We also need clay cat litter, bleach, paper towels, disinfectant spray, copy paper, ink cartridges for computer printers (call for details), air fresheners and odor absorbers, and donations to help pay Medical Bills. "Thank You!"