



► Fostering is an ideal activity for people that love animals but cannot commit to having a lifelong pet in China.



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JAR's

Cat Cerebral Hypoplasia

This condition is an underdevelopment of the cerebellum in newborn kittens. It is also known as congenital cerebellar hypoplasia since it is a condition that kittens are born with; it is not treatable. The cerebellum, sometimes known as the hindbrain, is the smaller part of the brain which lies at the back of the skull behind the cerebrum, and is responsible for controlling balance, and muscle tone and co-ordination.

Damage to the kitten's brain whilst in the uterus can be put down to a number of causes.

Infection by the feline panleukopaemia virus or feline distemper during pregnancy will almost certainly result in damage as the virus passes through the placental barrier to the foetus in the uterus. If the queen has been pregnant for only a short space of time the kittens are likely to die before being born and will be reabsorbed into the queen's body, whereas pregnancies which occur later will result in either stillborn or brain damaged offspring. It is also important to note that vaccinations for these diseases if given during pregnancy will almost certainly cause birth defects. A queen should therefore not be vaccinated until she has given birth and her kittens are weaned, and during her pregnancy it is wise to try and keep her inside the home so as to lessen the risk of her contracting a disease.

The other main cause for this condition is the absorption of Griseofulvin prescribed for ringworm, and if the queen has been given this as treatment during pregnancy it is highly likely that one

or more of her kittens will be born brain-damaged. If ringworm is to be treated during pregnancy the vet will be able to prescribe an alternative treatment for the duration of the pregnancy, and the Griseofulvin can be given once weaning has finished and there is no risk to the kittens.

Symptoms and Treatments

The signs and symptoms of a kitten with cerebellar hypoplasia are that he will have tremors and jerky movements. He will find it very difficult to stand or to co-ordinate movements because the muscles and balance will be compromised, and he will have a curious way of picking up his paws higher than usual to walk. He will exhibit a shaky head and unfocused gaze if he tries to look at something, and when jumping he will look uncontrolled and will have difficulty negotiating tricky walls and fences and generally getting about.

Some cats with hypoplasia have trouble eating because they can't coordinate themselves well enough to avoid kicking food out of their bowl when they have tremors.

The good news about cerebellar hypoplasia is that it's not a progressive disease like Parkinson's in human beings. The kitten's symptoms will stay at about the same level throughout his life, and as he learns to compensate for his disability you may find that he even does better.



Jaiya's Animal Rescue

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Because cats with hypoplasia can be very uncoordinated while eating, it's best to use food and water dishes that can't be tipped over. Stainless steel dishes that are wider at the bottom and have rubber grips are a good choice. Just don't forget to remove the rubber ring and wash it periodically.

The kitten should have a litterbox that's high on the sides, but with a low entry. This will be helpful to him because he may need to lean against the side of the box while doing his business. You will also want to make sure the litter box is very hard to tip over. Nevertheless, you will still have litter scatter, though, so you will probably want to put litter catch mats under the box. Plastic carpet runners are very helpful in containing most of the litter. The plastic mat will also make it easier to clean up any accidents.

Cats with cerebral hypoplasia can have a good life and live as long as any other cat. Cats don't worry about their disabilities. They don't spend a lot of time pondering why their littermates can walk easily and they can't. They just live their lives, and like any other cat, the more love and care they get, the happier they are.

These cats can have long, wonderful lives. You just have to make sure to accommodate their special needs.

Prevention

The thing about cerebellar hypoplasia is that it can be prevented by simply vaccinating your cats on a regular basis. The regular cat

vaccination schedule includes a vaccine against panleukopenia, the disease that causes hypoplasia. This is particularly important for cats that will become pregnant (basically, any unsprayed female cat).

If you think that your kitten might have hypoplasia you must take your kitten to the Vet for a checkup and make sure on what is causing your cat's coordination problems. Your Vet will also be able to give you more information on how to take care of him.



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