Cleft Palate in Kittens

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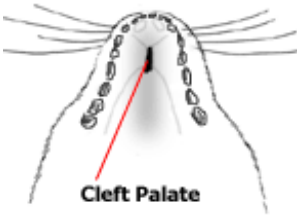

Cleft palate is a skeletal disorder occasionally seen in kittens of all breeds. A cleft palate results when the bones forming the roof of the mouth do not grow normally. This results in an opening in the roof of the mouth that communicates with the nasal cavity.

What are the symptoms?

Kittens as young as one day old will often have milk come out their noses as they nurse. They may also inhale milk into their lungs, causing a difficulty in breathing or even pneumonia. When the kitten's mouth is examined, a slit will be seen in the roof of the mouth.

What are the risks?

The milk tends to enter the nasal passages and lungs. Most kittens will die at an early age from pneumonia and/or malnourishment.

What is the management?

Mild openings in the mouth roof can be surgically corrected. More severe instances cannot. Frequently, if the cleft palate cannot be surgically closed, euthanasia is advised.

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