

# Can goat milk be used as a milk replacer for puppies and kittens?

Dr. Ellis explains why using goat or cow milk is not suitable as a replacement milk for puppies and kittens. Unpasteurized milk should be avoided especially in high-risk individuals.

## Question:

Hi,

I am the foster coordinator for an all-volunteer, all-foster home rescue group. There has been some controversy about raw goat milk and its safety for use in bottle feeding kittens. Another shelter in our area swears by the use of raw goat milk for both bottle fed kittens and puppies. Others have argued that it does not have the complete nutritional requirements needed for kittens that kitten formula does, and that there are potential bacterial infection risks since it has not been pasteurized.

I was wondering if you had an official stance and recommendation on this subject. It is really difficult to find solid, unbiased information on this. We have many goat farms in this area who donate to rescue groups during their surplus season, and I would just like to know what recommendation (accept or deny donation offer) you have for us.

Thank you very much for your time!

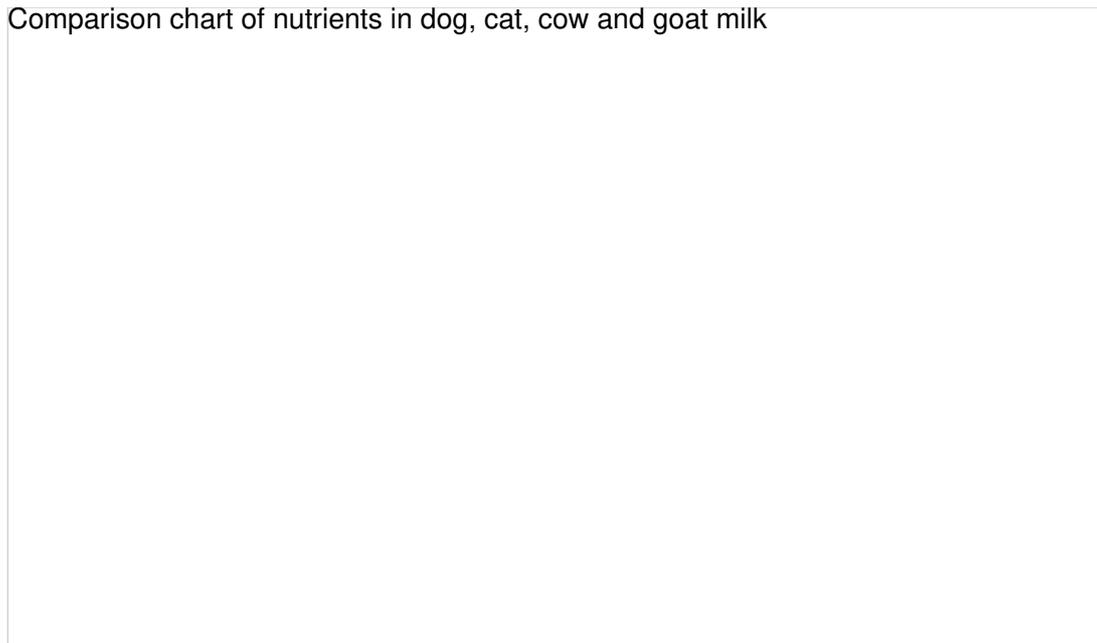
## Answer:

Thanks for reaching out! A quick internet search shows that there is a lot of controversy on the subject and many different 'homemade' recipes.

As you mentioned, goat milk, just like cow milk, does not provide the proper nutrients for omnivores (dogs) and carnivores (cats) and therefore should not be used as a replacement milk. Unpasteurized milk should also be avoided, due to its [known health risks](#) and especially considering that kittens and puppies have undeveloped immune systems, predisposing them to infection.

Here is a table that shows nutritional differences between milk of different species.

Comparison chart of nutrients in dog, cat, cow and goat milk



As they mention in the legend, the protein is too low in ruminant milk, which makes it inadequate for cats and dogs. They would need about twice as much milk to reach their energy requirements, which can predispose to diarrhea or other imbalances. If no other option is immediately available, you could consider using a different species's milk in a pinch, but to promote normal growth it should not be used long-term.

For unweaned kittens and puppies, we instead recommend giving a species-appropriate commercial milk replacer. The San Diego Humane Society has a robust nursery program and they have found Breeders Edge to be the most effective replacement in their hands. However other commercial formulations, such as KMR, are also both balanced and relatively hassle-free.

If you choose to use a homemade milk replacer recipe, we highly recommend consulting with your veterinarian or a veterinarian nutritionist to ensure that you provide a safe, balanced alternative. You can find more information on raising underage kittens in the excellent [SDHS Kitten Resource Center](#) and our very own [Guide to Raising Underage Kittens](#).

I hope that helps you clear up part of the debate, please let me know if you have any additional questions!

## References

1. Cline, Jill. "Cattery Management and Nutrition of the Queen and Her Offspring." Management of Pregnant and Neonatal Dogs, Cats, and Exotic Pets, edited by Cheryl Lopate, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2012, pp.15-24
2. Lawler DF. Neonatal and pediatric care of the puppy and kitten. Theriogenology 2008;70(3):384–921.

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