

FLAT CHESTED KITTENS

ONE TREATMENT OPTION

By Jennifer Herr

What is a flat chested kitten?

- ▶ **There are two types of flat chested kittens.**
- ▶ **Type 1: The ribs that are connected to the sternum are pushed upward and the ribs are angled on the sides**
- ▶ **Type 2: The ribs that are connected to the sternum are pushed upward and the sternum is also pushed upward, curling the ribs on each side forming a heart shaped rib cage.**
- ▶ **Treatment is appropriate for Type 1 kittens but not Type 2. Type 2 kittens have not responded to this treatment and have actually gotten worse. These kittens usually die of congested heart failure from the decreased space between the sternum and spinal column.**

What is the Goal?

- ▶ **The goal is to allow the ribs in the front along the sternum to drop down and the ribs along the side to straighten out. This will provide an adequate space in the chest cavity for the heart.**
- ▶ **Ribs are very pliable and can easily be molded. The younger the kitten the faster the ribs will change.**

How to Reach the Goal?

- ▶ **To make changes to the rib cage we need to brace the kitten and move the side ribs toward the center of the body and the front ribs downward.**
- ▶ **The amount of time that the kitten will need to be braced will be different for every kitten and as the kitten grows the brace may need to be made bigger or just adjusted.**
- ▶ **The following slides will show step by step how to make and apply the brace.**
- ▶ **The kitten in the slides was one of our flat chested kittens and was about 6 weeks old. She stayed in the brace for two weeks and has grown with a normal shaped chest.**

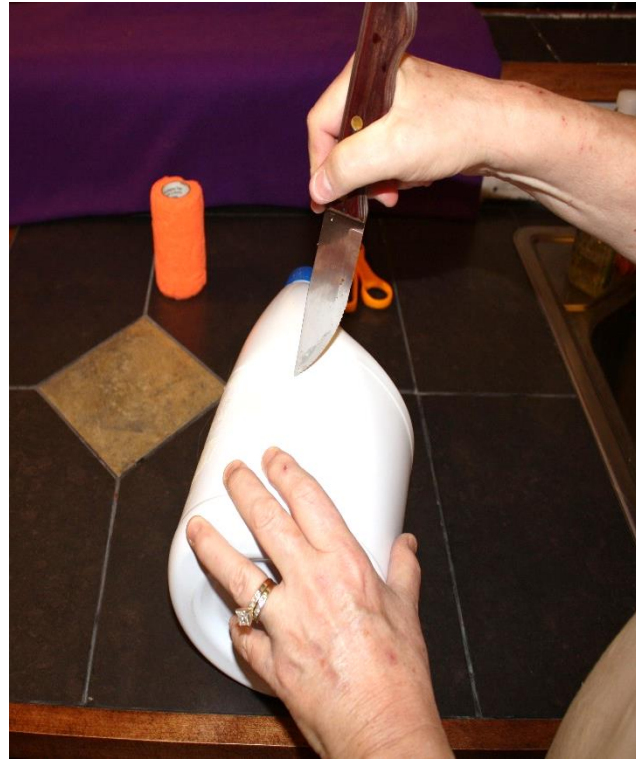
Making the Brace

- ▶ **Supplies:**
- ▶ **Empty bleach bottle**
- ▶ **Vet Wrap**
- ▶ **Sharp Knife**
- ▶ **Scissors**
- ▶ **Kitten**



Step One

- ▶ **Using the sharp knife cut into the side of the bleach bottle making a horizontal slit.**



Step Two

- ▶ **Use the scissors to make a longer cut in the same direction as the slit.**



Step Three

- ▶ **Cut down the bottle to make a 3 inch wide cut and then go along the bottom of the strip about 8 inches.**



Step Four

- ▶ **Make the final cut along the short end of the strip and you will have the rough strip of plastic.**



Measuring the Kitten

- ▶ **At this point you will need to have the kitten to measure the length and width of the brace.**



Measuring the Kitten

- ▶ You want to measure the width of the brace by measuring from the armpit to the bottom of the rib cage. Measure the length by going around the rib cage and adding about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch.



Trim to fit the kitten



Measure again to make sure it fits properly.



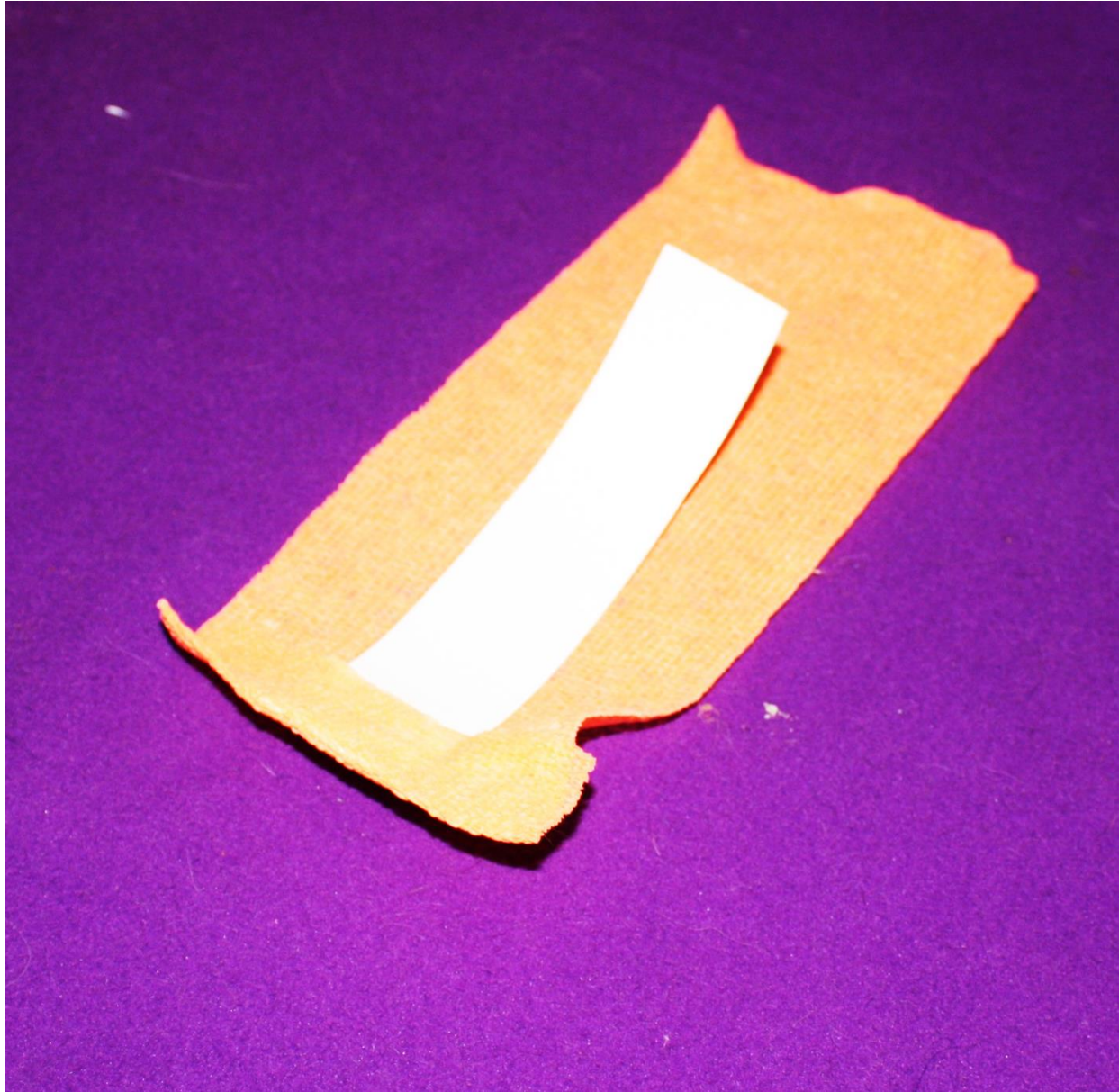
Make sure you have some overlap to allow for adjustments as the kitten grows.



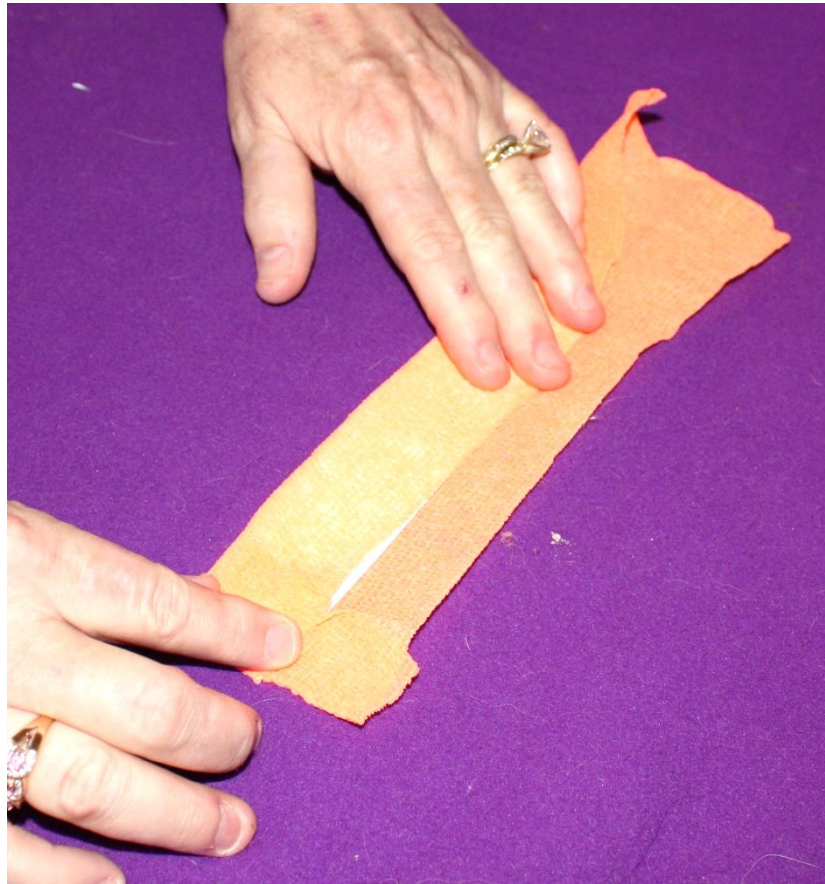
Roll out some vet wrap making sure to have extra on the ends and sides.

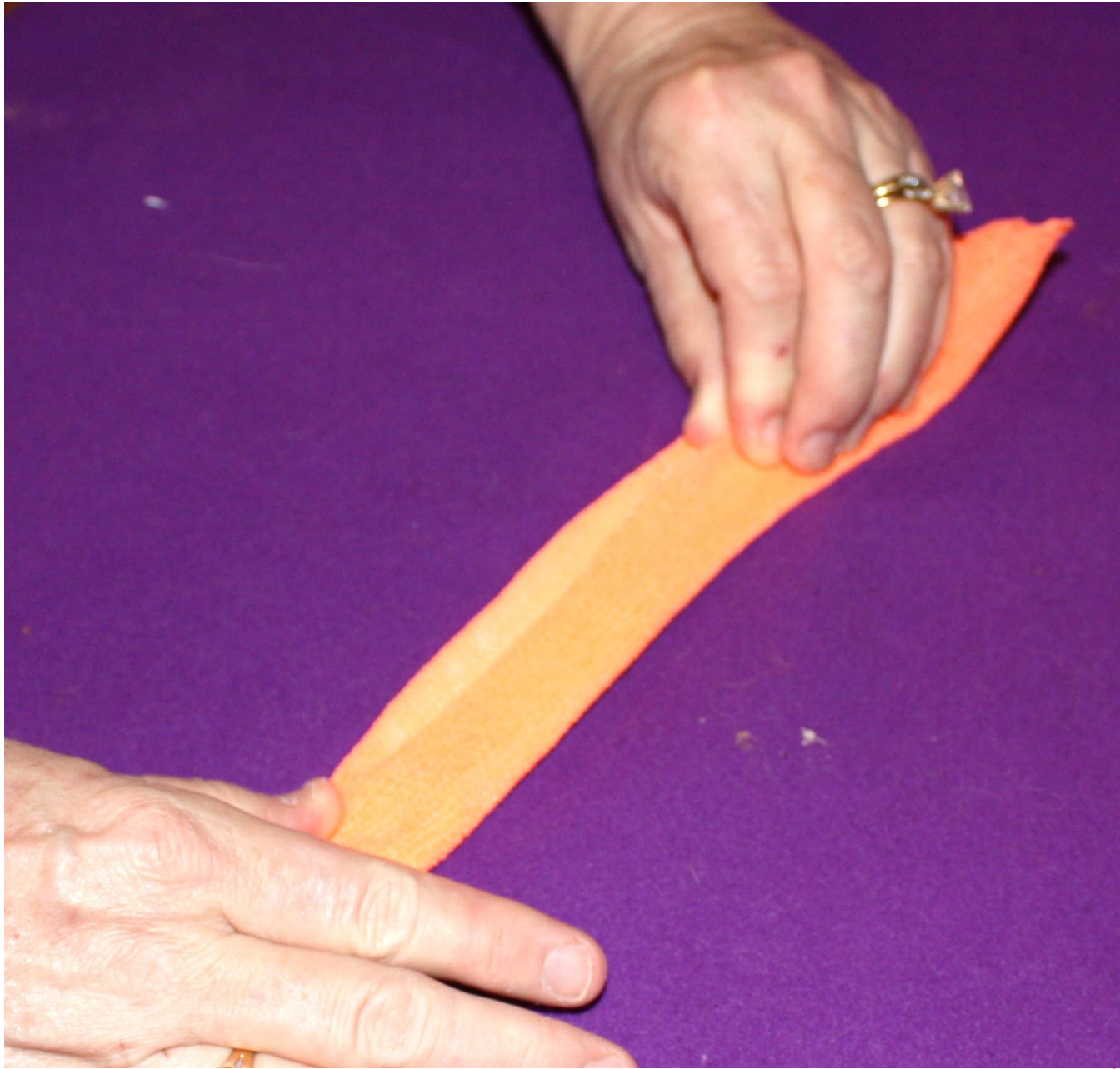






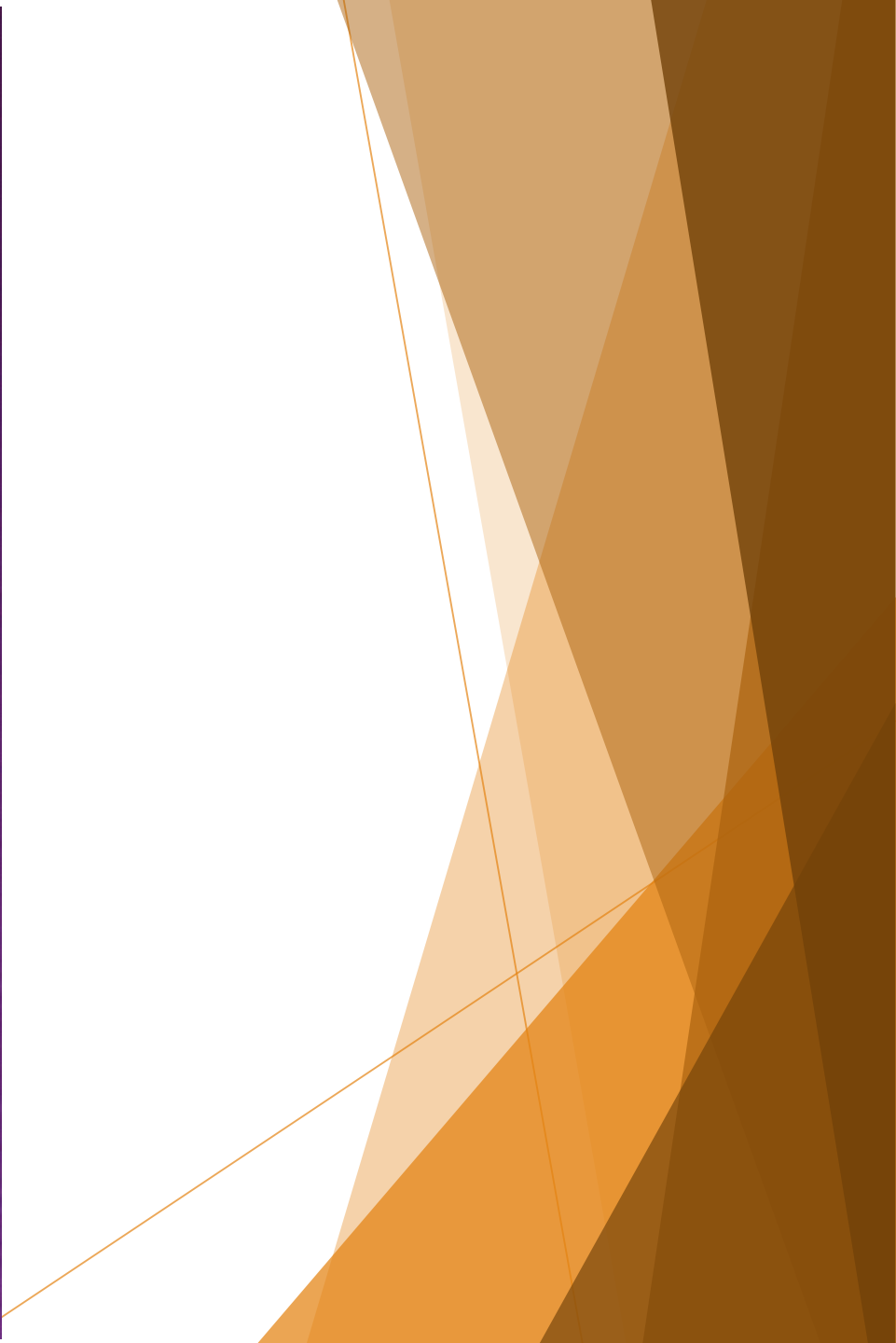
Cover the plastic brace by folding the long sides to the middle and pressing them together, then fold one end inward and press together with the other part of the vet wrap.





Wrap the brace around the kitten just under the armpits with the overlap on the back of the kitten and gently press the tail of the wrap onto the vet wrap so that it sticks together.



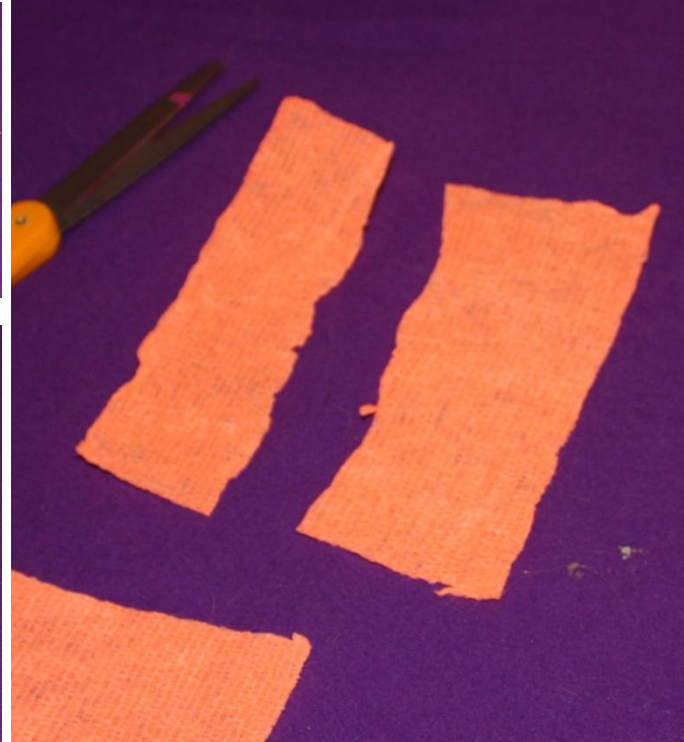
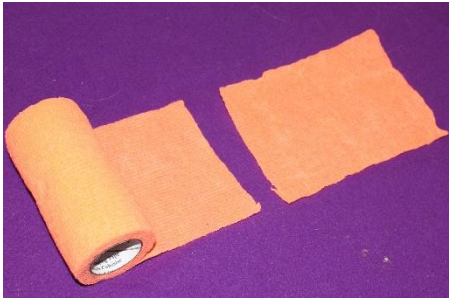


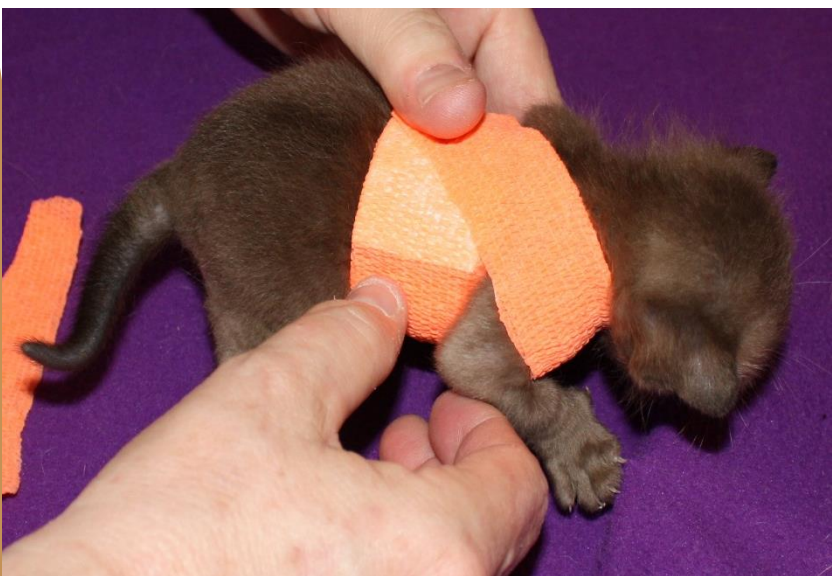
Now the kitten has been braced, check to make sure the brace is on tight enough but not too tight.

- ▶ **If the kitten has been having difficulty breathing before he was braced he will continue to have difficulty for a while once braced. The brace needs to be snug but not so tight that the kitten is unable to take a deep breath.**



Make suspenders by cutting strips of vet wrap and folding them over on themselves to stick together. Do not make them too wide.



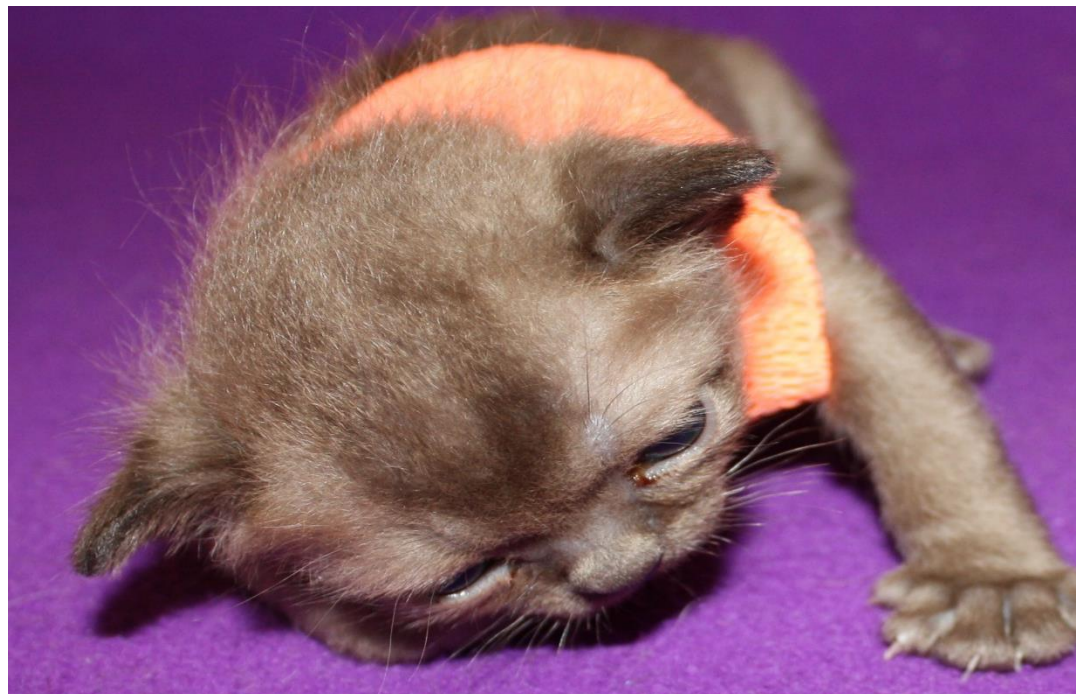


Now you have a little school crossing guard in his little orange vest.



The next step is to cut a wrap that will hold the suspenders in place.







Problems with bracing a kitten.

- ▶ **Sometimes a kitten will not handle being braced and will cry continuously, roll over on its back like an upside down turtle, or have a very difficult time breathing. In these case I will stay with the kitten for a few minutes to see if it will calm down. If the kitten does not calm down then I remove the brace because I am doing more harm than good at this time. I will try again when the kitten is calmer and usually after 2-3 tries the kitten will accept being braced.**

How long do you leave the kitten in the vest/brace?

- ▶ **My experience has been that the younger and soon you get the kitten in the brace the faster they improve. So for very young kittens about 10-14 days old I would say a week should do but it could take longer. Older kittens about 6-10 weeks can take 3 weeks in the brace. You will need to take the brace off every 2-3 days and make sure the kitten is improving and is not developing any skin issues, this also allows you to adjust the brace frequently.**

Other Treatment Options

- ▶ **This is just one treatment option that has worked for me and some other breeders that I have share this with have had success as well. I am sure that there are other options available and I would love to hear what has worked for others.**