

Coyote Ridge prisoners nurse orphaned kittens to health

By Nicole Fierro | Published: Aug 18, 2015 at 5:30 PM PDT

Recommend 23 +1 0 Tweet 0 Print Email



Inmates at Coyote Ridge have helped train hundreds of stray and orphaned dogs to get them ready for adoption and now, they're welcoming cats. KEPR saw how the prisoners are welcoming kittens to their cells.

James Guthrie spends most of his day in his cell with his five new roommates.

"It's like having a pet in prison," said James.

James didn't want to share why he's at Coyote Ridge, but he's been locked up three years.

A new program that has him raising orphaned kittens has James feeling at home.

"I come from a farm, I have helped raise baby calves, and you got to bottle feed them. I think, you know,

they deserve a chance just like everything else."

The kittens come from the Benton-Franklin Humane Society. They're in need of full-time care to survive.

The inmates are feeding cats every two hours. Some would say, it's like a full time job

"Every two to three hours like clockwork and if I'm a minute late they'll let me know," said one of the helping inmates.

It's a 24 hour responsibility that just couldn't be provided at local shelters.

Benton-Franklin Humane Society knew about the Coyote Ridge program for dogs that helped make them more adoptable. The non-profit figured the inmates could help with cats, too.

"The kittens need a lot of care; they are able to provide that care. It helps the men; it helps the kittens, win-win. And the adopting public, they get a great kitten," said Benton-Franklin Humane Society's Operation Manager Elaine Allison.

The cats are returned highly sociable which makes them much more likely to be adopted.

"Big men just turn into goo when it comes to kitties," said Allen Root, an inmate involved in the project.

Inmates say the kittens are giving them a new sense of purpose.

"It gives you a sense of accomplishment you know to see them go from just a little baby that's got to drink out of a bottle to now they are playing they are eating solid food," said James.

This is the second round of kittens that have come through the prison since the program was launched. After seeing the positive response, the plan is to extend it into more cells.

Coyote Ridge is a medium security prison.