

Your Guide to Your New Kitten



Congratulations:

Owning a cat is an enriching experience, but it is also a big responsibility. We hope this booklet will give you the information needed to make good decisions for your kitten.

Making Your New Kitten Feel Welcome:

When welcoming a new kitten into your home, it's important to start off right by making sure you have everything you need for your kitten to settle in well.

'Kitten-proof' your home by clearing potentially dangerous items away from reach, such as string, plastic bags, electrical cords, plants, and fragile or breakable items.

Show your kitten the special places where she can eat and sleep, and where her litter box will be kept. Provide a climbing/scratching post as well as a comfy place to hide.

If there are young children in your home, make sure they know how to be respectful and gentle with the kitten

Diet and Nutrition:

Diet is critical during the growing months of a kitten's life. There are many commercial foods specially formulated to meet your kitten's unique nutritional requirements. Your kitten should be fed a good quality kitten food until 9 – 12 months of age. Adult formulations are not recommended as they do not provide the nutrition a kitten needs.

When choosing a food for your kitten, we recommend a balanced food made by a reputable company; preferably one who employs a veterinary nutritionist. Foods with an



AAFCO statement are required to contain at least the minimum nutritional requirements for cats depending on life stage.

Cat foods are available in dry and canned formulations, both have advantages and disadvantages. It's best to feed a combination of dry and canned food so your kitten becomes used to both types of food. Follow the recommended feeding guide on the package or ask one of our staff.

Socialization and Training:

The optimal socialization period for cats occurs between 2 – 12 weeks of age. During that time, a kitten is very impressionable to social influences. If kittens are introduced to as many different social situations as possible during this critical period (men, women, children, dogs, other cats, etc.), they will likely accept them throughout their life. Keep the experiences positive and in a controlled, calm environment to avoid having your kitten develop any negative associations.

Many dog training methods also work well with cats, such as treat rewards and praise. The trick is to start early! Inappropriate behaviour can be corrected by making a loud, startling noise or saying 'no' in a firm voice. Be consistent



with your response to bad behaviour and ensure that everyone in the family learns to use the same word every time. If your kitten starts scratching furniture, you can try saying 'no', attaching double-sided tape to the area, or closing off the room when you are not home. Ensure that your kitten has access to a scratching post or an alternative, so you can redirect scratching behaviour.

Introducing your kitten to other pets requires patience; supervision and caution should be always used, even when your other pets are well behaved.

On the first day, introduce your pets slowly by keeping them separated in different rooms so they can get used to each other's smell. On the second day, allow them to see each other and by the third, allow them to interact. The introduction period usually lasts 1 - 2 weeks.

Never leave your pets together unsupervised until you are 100% sure that they get along and play gently together. This is especially true with dogs and kittens, as a dog can accidentally hurt a kitten with rough play.

Litter Training:

Litter training is usually very straightforward; kittens and cats instinctively learn to use it as soon as they know where it is. Place your kitten in the litter box when you bring them home and scratch their paws in the litter. Litter boxes should be kept in a low traffic,



quiet area. You should have one more litter box than the number of cats in the household. The litter should be deep enough that your kitten can dig at least 1 inch down. The litter should be cleaned daily. If your kitten does not use the litter box consistently, they may need to be examined by a vet to rule out medical problems.

Grooming and Nail Care:

Grooming needs are usually breed and lifestyle dependent. Medium and long-haired cats require regular brushing to avoid matted fur, but all cats can benefit from regular brushing. We recommended introducing your kitten to brushing by using a soft brush.

Kittens' nails can be trimmed with nail trimmers made for cats. Nail trims are most comfortable with two people; one person holding while the other clips the nails. Nails have a pink 'quick' which supplies blood to the nail and can be seen through the nail. If you take too much off the nail, you will cut into the quick which is painful and will cause the nail to bleed. If this happens, your kitten may become resistant to nail trims in the future. Many cats, especially

indoor cats, will require regular nail trimmings throughout their life. Handling your kitten's feet frequently will help your kitten become used to having them handled and trimmed. Use positive reinforcement during and after nail trims and stop if they become agitated. Keep initial sessions short.

Vaccinations:

Vaccinations are usually given at about 8, 12, and 16 weeks of age, but this schedule may vary depending on your kitten's individual needs.

The core vaccination schedule will protect your cat from several common diseases: FVRCP (rhinotracheitis, calicivirus and panleukopenia), rabies, and FeLV (Feline leukemia virus).

See the chart for when each vaccine is due and how each disease is transmitted.

Deworming:

Intestinal parasites are common in kittens. Symptoms include poor overall health, chronic soft or bloody stools, change of appetite, a pot-bellied appearance, poor coat, and weight loss. Common parasites include roundworms, hookworms, whipworms, and tapeworms.



Tapeworms are a common intestinal parasite of cats. Cats infected with tapeworms will pass small segments of the worms in their stool. The segments are white in color and look like grains of rice. They are about 3 mm long and may be seen crawling on the surface of the stool or stuck to the hair under the tail.

Except for tapeworms, very few internal parasites are visible in the stool. A fecal test can reveal the eggs of internal parasites, but these tests can be falsely negative. For this reason, our veterinarians elect to treat all kittens for worms.

We recommend the use of a deworming product, such as Milbemax or Profender. Deworming treatment should be given every 2 weeks until your cat is fully vaccinated. It is essential that the treatment is repeated as these medications only kills adults in the intestinal tract. Within 2-4 weeks, the larval stages, which migrate through tissues in the body, become adults and need to be treated. The frequency of deworming throughout your cat's life will depend on his or her lifestyle.

Spaying and Neutering:

Part of responsible pet ownership is ensuring that your cat does not contribute to pet overpopulation. The best way to do this is to have your female cat spayed and your male cat neutered. The operation is done in a single day (dropped off in the morning and picked up later that day) and with adequate pain control, a full recovery is made within a few short days.

Female cats will have a heat cycle every 3 weeks starting at 5-6 months of age, unless they are spayed. In many cases, the urge to mate is so strong that your indoor cat will attempt to escape and despite your best efforts, your cat may become pregnant. Therefore, the



best time to spay your cat is before her first heat at 5-6 months of age. As well, spaying a cat before her first heat virtually eliminates the risk of mammary cancer and uterine infections later on in life.

Male cats undergo a significant personality change when they mature. They become territorial and mark with their urine, which develops a powerful odour almost impossible to remove from your house. Intact male cats will fight continuously with other male cats in the neighbourhood which results in infections and abscesses and increases the risk of spreading diseases. Neutering will protect your cat from testicular cancer.

Tattoos and Microchips:

Tattoos and microchips are excellent permanent and traceable forms of identification for your pet. It is highly recommended that one or both be done for your pet.

A microchip is a tiny electronic implant inserted under the loose skin on a pet's neck using a special needle. It can be implanted without the need for anesthesia. Each microchip has an associated identification number which is stored in a computer database with your name, address, and phone number. Animal shelters and veterinary hospitals throughout North America are equipped with scanning devices that read the microchip. If your pet is found, they will be able to notify you quickly with your stored information.

Tattoos are etched into one of your pet's ears usually at the time of spaying or neutering when your pet is under general anesthesia. The tattoo number is associated with the vet hospital that gave the tattoo, allowing your pet to be traced to the clinic where your details are kept. Tattoos are a visible and permanent method of identification.

Pet Insurance:

Pet health insurance can help by sharing the cost of veterinary care in unexpected situations. It also gives you peace of mind that you don't have to worry if you will be able to provide your pet with the medical attention they require. Most policies cover veterinary fees for diagnosis and treatment of any accident, injury, or illness. However, there are many different plans available, so it is important to research the right plan for you and your pet.

Most pet insurance companies offer 1 month of free insurance for kittens – ask our Client Care Team how to take advantage of this free offer.

If insurance is not an option for you, consider putting some money aside monthly for those unexpected visits to the vet.

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