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Pet Industry Association

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Fact Sheet



Bringing home your first kitten

Puppy checklist/Items you will need:

- Purchase a good quality age appropriate kitten food, both wet and dry
- Soft comfy bedding
- Climbing and scratching pole
- Collar and bell
- An age appropriate kitten all wormer
- Flea treatment
- Stainless steel feeding dish
- Ceramic water bowl
- A kitty litter tray
- Kitty litter and litter scoopy
- Some toys
- Pet carry case (for vet visits)
- Grooming tools
- Grooming items e.g. shampoo or powder
- Car Harness
- Fishy treats

Bringing your kitten home

While it's exciting bringing a new kitten home, remember the environment is new and your kitten may be very apprehensive or scared. Act calm, not too rowdy, and provide a warm, soft and cosy area for your kitten to feel secure. Kittens are very curious creatures so let them explore everything in their own time.

What to feed and how often

Firstly, remember kittens are not little puppies and should not be fed puppy food. They are 'obligate carnivores' and require more protein and other nutrients than dogs. Feed the kitten their current diet for the first 2 weeks before aiming to integrate a premium quality kitten food (if your kitten is not already on one). Wet food is fine but it is important to always feed some dry food too, as it's much better for your kitten's teeth! Feed your kitten 3-4 times per day until 12 weeks of age, then 2-3 times daily until they're 5- 6 months old. Check the premium food package recommendations as your kitten grows to ensure you adjust it accordingly. Premium kitten food is recommended as it is full of the right nutrients in the right proportions, unlike many supermarket foods. Make sure you give your cat the correct portion of food each day and avoid topping up the bowl every time they meow or ask for more, as this can easily make you cat overweight. Table scraps and homemade diets can never achieve the right balance of nutrients that premium foods can. Usually your kitten can stay on growth or kitten diets until 12 months of age before switching to an adult cat food. After a kitten is weaned from their mother, there is no need to give milk. Fresh water is far better and helps with digestion.

Protect against fleas

Fleas carry tapeworm and can cause severe scratching and allergic reactions, known as flea allergy dermatitis. Cover your kitten with a good quality flea control product on a monthly basis, all year round. You can start from 6- 8 weeks of age and continue for life.

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Get your kitten vaccinated

Kittens are at risk of a number of serious diseases, including feline enteritis, feline respiratory diseases and feline immunodeficiency virus- AIDS. These diseases are debilitating and can be fatal so vaccinating against them is vital. Your vet will guide you on the right vaccination regime for your kitten. The first vaccination is generally given at 6 - 8 weeks of age, then at 12-14 weeks for the second vaccination, some vets recommend a third, others don't so consult your vet for current recommendations. Boosters are then recommended yearly. Feline AIDS (FIV) is a serious problem among the cat population. It is highly recommended you vaccinate against this deadly disease. It is transmitted via biting and scratching and in some areas, up to 25% of outdoor cats are carrying this disease. Feline AIDS is extremely serious and can be prevented by vaccinations. Ask your vet for more information the next time you visit.

Worming

Your kitten should be treated for intestinal worms every two weeks until 12 weeks of age, then every four weeks until six months of age. After six months, worming should continue every three months for life. The most common intestinal worms include roundworm, hookworm and tapeworm. All wormers' are a good way to protect your kitten from all types of intestinal worms. Remember, worms can transfer from cat to humans, so be diligent- especially if you have children.

Heartworm - is it required?

Cats are about 2,000 times more resistant to heartworm than dogs, meaning the general consensus is that it's less vital to protect against it in cats. However, heartworm disease has been associated with sudden death in cats, so prevention is available

Microchipping

A microchip is a permanent identification device implanted under the skin, allowing a quick and easy return if your kitten ever gets lost. Pet microchipping is mandatory in most Australian states, so ask your local council if this is a requirement in your area. Your kitten can be microchipped at any age but the earlier the better. Microchipping is quick and easy, causing very little discomfort. It's essential to inform the microchip registry if you move, or your contact number changes. As well as microchipping, it's a good idea to purchase an I.D tag for your kitten's collar, engraved with their name and your contact number. This will also increase their chance of finding their way home if they should get lost!

Toilet training your kitten

Toilet training should start as early as possible and kittens usually learn to use a litter tray very quickly. Place the tray in a secluded, yet easily accessible place away from the kitten's bed and feeding areas. You should place your kitten in the tray every morning, night and after meals, until they get the hang of it. If you are having trouble training your kitten, try a different type of litter, ensure the tray is in a quiet, secluded place and ensure you're cleaning it regularly.

Desexing

Due to various health and behaviour problems it is highly recommended your kitten is desexed at 5- 6 months of age. This will not change the personality of your kitten. Female cats can get pregnant as early as 5 months so it's best not to let them out doors until they are desexed. Male cats must be desexed unless they are in a breeding colony. Otherwise, they can be uncontrollable in a normal household or stray for large periods of time.

Keeping your kitten indoors at night

Cats are nocturnal animals and are most active at night when they love to hunt and fight other cats. One of the most common illnesses seen in cats is abscesses caused by fighting. Keep your kitten indoors from dusk til sunrise to ensure they stay out of trouble. Many councils will also enforce fines if your cat is found roaming at night. Check with your council for more information on this.