



# Kitten Care

A new kitten! How exciting! Kittens make wonderful pets; they are so cute and entertaining. Owning a cat is not a seasonal commitment though as most cats live for 10-15 years and you need to be responsible for their health and well being. Even though cats are more independent than dogs, they will still need time and money spent on them.

You will need to keep your kitten **inside for at least the first 4-5 weeks**, so have a litter tray ready for your kitten's first night. Keep the kitten confined to a small space for the first little while with a litter tray, food, water and a warm bed then slowly let it have more access to the house. Providing you don't move the litter tray, they will soon learn where they need to visit for a toilet stop. We do recommend that you keep your kitten inside at night until they are old enough to defend themselves.

**Worms** - All kittens are born with **worms** so it is recommended that they be **wormed every two weeks until they are 12 weeks old, then every three months for the rest of their lives**. Worm your pet with a **broad-spectrum wormer** that kills all types of worms that cats carry. These wormers are usually only found at vet clinics or pet shops.

**Fleas** - It is a rare cat that doesn't have fleas. One flea can lay 2000 eggs, which then fall off your cat into your home! A very heavy flea infestation may cause anemia, which could kill your kitten. Start your flea programme now. We have a number of products we can recommend.

**Vaccinations** - Your kitten can have its **first vaccination between 8-12 weeks with a booster injection 4 weeks later**. These vaccinations provide protection against Feline Rhinotracheitis virus, Feline Panleucopaenia virus (highly contagious disease) and Feline Calicivirus virus. While kittens do receive temporary immunity from their mothers, this immunity is unpredictable and they will outgrow it by 9-12 weeks of age. Vaccination is an economical protection against costly and often fatal diseases. Many of these diseases cannot be cured but may be prevented. Up to date vaccinations are required by all catteries.

**Diet** – Diet is very important for kittens. It is essential that while the kitten is growing it receives a **nutritionally balanced diet** that contains the right balance of vitamins and minerals. We recommend a premium kitten dry diet such as '*Royal Canin*', '*Hills Science Diet*' or '*Advance*' kitten food. **Kittens need growth foods for the first year**, then they can go onto an adult formula. Fresh water must be available at all times. Milk is not necessary and we don't recommend it at all for kittens (over 6 weeks of age) as the lactose in milk can upset their tummies.

**Spaying and Neutering** - you should spay or neuter your cat from the age of four to five months (females will come into season at about 6 months). Entire male cats are prone to fighting which leads to abscesses that can be an expensive problem and the spread of other diseases like Feline Aids. A neutered male does not smell and is a more enjoyable pet. It is not necessary for a female to have a litter of kittens before she is spayed. There are no benefits to her but you are adding to the population of unwanted kittens. If you choose not to spay your female cat, it is your responsibility to find caring homes for the kittens, which is not easy. Consider the unwanted animals the SPCA and Cat Protection League are left to deal with each year. Desexing your pet means you are not contributing to this problem. Cats that have been neutered or spayed are generally healthier and tend to live longer.

**WE HOPE YOU ENJOY YOUR NEW KITTEN!**

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