

Kitten / Cat

The domestic cat is a small, typically furry, carnivorous mammal. They are often called house cats when kept as indoor pets or simply cats when there is no need to distinguish them from other felids and felines. They are often valued by humans for companionship and for their ability to hunt vermin. There are more than seventy cat breeds recognized by various cat registries.

- **Common Name:** Cat, Kitten, Kitty, Pussy, Pussycat, and Kittycat
- **Scientific Name:** *Felis catus*
- **Distribution:** The domestic cat's distribution now covers nearly every corner of the globe.
- **Size:** 5-20 pounds
- **Life Span:** About 15-20 years

A new kitten can be exciting. Start life with your new friend off on the right foot with proper veterinary care, nutrition, and socialization.

Bringing your kitten home

The best time to bring a kitten home is when you have at least one or two days to focus on helping him adjust to new surroundings. Before you bring your kitten home, prepare a small room or space that will be her own for the first few days or weeks. Having a smaller area to explore at first will help your kitten get comfortable with her new home. Be sure to secure all electrical and blind cords because they can cause harm to your new kitten. Have all the supplies needed available and ready, such as water

and food bowls, kitten food, a litterbox, a scratching post, safe toys, a bed, a breakaway collar and nail trimmers.

Cats don't like to eat next to the litterbox, so place the litterbox on one side of the room and the food and water dishes on the other.

Make sure that your kitten can get in and out of the litterbox without help; it might be necessary to provide a litterbox with low sides. To help your kitten feel secure, make sure that the room has hiding places. If there isn't furniture to hide beneath, place cardboard boxes on their sides or cut doorways into them.

Providing a warm and comfortable bed is essential. You can purchase a pet bed or line a box with something soft; using a sweatshirt that you've worn will help your kitten get used to your scent.

When you bring your kitten home, put the box or pet carrier in the room you've prepared. Open the box or carrier door, but let your kitten come out when he is ready. After your kitten comes out, leave the box or carrier in the corner as another hiding place.

Each day, scoop out the litterbox and provide fresh food and water.

Your kitten may hide at first, but he will explore when no one is watching, becoming more comfortable with his new home. Your kitten will likely want plenty of attention from you.

After your kitten has been checked by a veterinarian, becomes comfortable in his room and develops a regular routine of eating, drinking and using the litterbox, you can let him venture out into the rest of your house. At this point, you need to make sure that your kitten stays safe and has enough privacy to eat, sleep and use the litterbox. Keep your kitten's bed, litterbox and food/water dishes in the same place so that he knows where to find them.

Veterinary Care

Before your kitten has contact with other cats, he needs to visit the veterinarian to be tested for feline leukemia virus and feline immunodeficiency virus, given a physical examination, tested and treated for parasites, and vaccinated. This will prevent the spread of a disease or parasites to other pets. If you have other pets, talk to your veterinarian about how to introduce your kitten to them.

Kittens receive some immunity (protection against disease) from their mothers at birth and through nursing. Because this immunity slowly wears off, kittens should be vaccinated against various diseases on a schedule, beginning at two to three months of age. Eight weeks is the best time to start vaccines. If you've gotten your kitten from us then it will be up to date on their vaccines.

Intestinal parasites are common in kittens. Fecal examinations and treatments (dewormings) are repeated until two consecutive fecal examinations have negative results before they are sold. External parasites (fleas, ticks and mites) are treated with products approved for use on kittens.

Kittens should be spayed or neutered by six months of age. This helps to control pet overpopulation and reduces the chance of behavior problems and some medical conditions. Have your kitten microchipped as well when he or she gets neutered or spayed.

Nutrition

Proper nutrition is especially important for kittens because they need two to three times as many calories and nutrients as adult cats. A mother cat's milk provides everything a kitten needs during the first four weeks of life. Cow's milk (the kind most likely in your refrigerator) should never be given to kittens or cats because it can give them diarrhea. Most kittens are completely weaned between eight and ten weeks of age. At six to seven weeks of

age, kittens should be able to chew dry food. Feed your kitten a high quality kitten food until she is approximately nine to twelve months old. When your kitten is between three and six months old, feed it three times per day, and once it turns six months old, you can start feeding it twice daily.

Socialization

Cats learn how to socialize with each other from their mother and littermates; therefore, if possible, kittens should remain with their mother and/or littermates until they are about eight to ten weeks old. Kittens that have human contact before they are ten to 12 weeks old are more likely to interact well with people throughout their lives. Handling and playing with your kitten can help you bond with him. Feral (wild) cats haven't been socialized with people as kittens and may fear and avoid people throughout their lives. Your kitten should be gradually introduced to other pets with care and supervision.

This is only a basic care sheet,

Please continue to educate yourself on your new family member.

Enjoy your new kitten, and be sure to schedule a yearly check-up with your veterinarian.