



KITTEN CARE

Having a kitten is a rewarding experience. The joys of owning are many; just gently stroking a cat can reduce your blood pressure and decrease stress. Having a kitten also entails responsibilities to ensure the kitten's health, your sanity and your leather lounge remain in one piece.

- **Vaccinations** are for **respiratory disease ('flu')**, **enteritis** and **Feline Leukaemia Virus**. Paddington Cat Hospital recommends vaccinations at 6-8 weeks of age (flu and enteritis, only) and then at 12 weeks and 15 weeks old; vaccination boosters are then needed every year for his or her life. We also take into account the special needs for vaccinating purebred and aged cats.
- **Worming** is mainly for the worms that affect the intestines. These worms are **roundworm, hookworm and tapeworm** - infection can cause diarrhoea, poor growth and even death if severe. As a kitten, worming with paste or tablets is recommended every 2 weeks until 12 weeks of age, then every 3-6 months. If your cat is having one of the spot-on flea formulas which treats intestinal worms (roundworm and hookworm) as well (eg Revolution or Advocate), then they generally only require a tablet for tapeworms. This can be given once a year or more often if advised. It is important to make sure you know your cat's correct weight, and give the appropriate dose of intestinal wormer.
- **Heartworm** can occasionally cause disease in cats. Dogs are the main species affected and the disease is spread by mosquitos. It is very difficult to detect and treat in cats and although there is a low incidence, the first sign may be sudden death. Fortunately, prevention is possible with either a monthly spot-on which covers Heartworm, or a chewable monthly Heartworm tablet.
- We recommend using some sort of **flea treatment** especially for kittens who are going to be allowed outdoors sometimes. There are many products that can be used to kill fleas, however, the most effective and safest flea treatments tend to be the monthly spot on formulas. Some of these (Revolution and Advocate) have the added advantage of treating the kitten for intestinal worms (except tapeworm), heartworm, and ear mites.

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- Your kitten's **diet** should be complete and balanced - this means all the nutrients (including vitamins and minerals) are provided in the correct amounts and proportions. If not, nutritional problems can develop over a period of time. Of the complete and balanced diets, the premium diets (such as Science Diet, Iams or Royal Canin) provide a better source of protein, they have less preservatives **and** are better absorbed so there is less smell in the litter tray. Supermarket varieties are next best but always check the label for the words "Complete and Balanced", as some more expensive brands are not such a healthy alternative for your cat. Kitten versions of all these diets are important since they provide higher energy and protein levels for a growing body. It is a good idea for your kitten to get used to a combination of dry and tinned food from an early age.

One thing not provided by these foods is exercise for the teeth. Giving raw chicken wings or necks, or strips of raw, red meat (NB see hand out on 'pet meats'!) twice weekly (under supervision) helps to keep the teeth and gums healthy. It is best to introduce these to the diet when a kitten is young so they look forward to them.

When you first bring your kitten home, it will take them a little time to settle in. It is a good idea to have a place ready for them with a bed, food bowls and a litter tray. Kittens are very quick learners and generally know instinctively how to use their kitty litter, though occasionally they may need encouragement! They should be kept inside completely until at least a week after they have had their last kitten vaccination. If you would like your kitten to have time outdoors, then let them out a little at a time, initially under supervision. It is a good idea to let your kitten or cat out before mealtime, so they have a good incentive to come them inside again! Kittens should always be supervised outdoors until they are adults. All cats should be kept in at night - both for the sake of the local wildlife and for their own safety. Cats are much more likely to roam at night and therefore are much more prone to fighting and having accidents at this time.

Provide your kitten with things to do - even a peg, a sock or a scrunched up piece of paper can be a toy! Scratching is natural behaviour for cats, but they need to be able to express this in an acceptable way (to protect your furniture!) - scratching posts or something similar provides their claws with good exercise.

Taking good care of your new kitten will set the foundations for a happy lifelong relationship!