

# KITTEN GUIDE



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## Vaccination

Vaccinations protect your kitten from serious and potentially fatal infectious diseases. The main diseases vaccinated for include:

- Feline influenza (cat flu)
- Feline infectious enteritis
- Feline leukaemia

Kittens can start their first vaccinations at 9 weeks of age with another dose 3 to 4 weeks later. Until they are fully vaccinated it is important not to let your kitten outdoors to roam where they might come into contact with other cats or areas that may be infected. During this time they should ideally be kept indoors.

Many vaccinations will require a yearly booster, this date will be on your vaccination card and we will send you a reminder near to this time.



## Worms, Fleas, Ticks & Mites



Kittens can become infected with worms at any time so regular worming is essential. Especially if they catch and eat prey. A heavy infestation can cause vomiting, diarrhoea, loss of appetite and weight loss. Some worms can also be passed to humans, especially young children. Therefore, hygiene measures, such as regular removal of faeces from the environment and hand washing, are important in reducing infection risk.

The main types of worm are:

- Roundworms are the most common and look like strands of fine spaghetti in the faeces.
- Tapeworms are made of segments which resemble grains of rice and may be found around their bottom.
- Lungworms can be picked up if your cat eats slugs, snails or from the trails they leave behind. Some cats do not show any symptoms while others may have a cough.

We recommend that kittens are wormed monthly until they are 6 months of age. From this time they should either be wormed monthly or every three months but we can discuss this with you to make the right choice for your cat





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Most kittens pick up fleas at some time. Regular treatment as advised during your visits to us should help to prevent an infestation which can be costly and take a while to get back under control.

- Fleas are dark brown and able to jump! They can cause very intense itching, especially if your pet is allergic to their saliva. They can also transmit tapeworms and severe infestations can cause anaemia.
- Mites burrow under the skin making them difficult to see and can cause intense irritation.
- Ticks have a small head and large round body which can swell significantly once attached. They often do not cause irritation but can transmit a number of diseases such as Lyme disease.

If you see anything you are worried about, please let us know and we can have a look for you.

### Feeding

Your kitten should be fully weaned when they arrive. Always ask the breeder what they have been feeding the kitten to avoid a sudden change in diet which may upset their stomach. After a few days you can introduce a new food by gradually mixing an increasing proportion of it over a week.

The aim of feeding your kitten is to provide complete nutrition for healthy development and growth. Kittens should grow steadily and feeding too much encourages rapid growth which can increase the risk of skeletal abnormalities. Complete kitten foods are formulated to provide for the nutritional needs of your kitten so you should follow the guidelines on the packaging or ask a member of staff for advice if unsure.

Never feed your kitten dog food or a vegetarian diet. Cats require more protein than dogs alongside taurine which is found only in meat. Cats that do not get enough taurine are at risk of developing eye and heart problems.

Most cats prefer to eat little and often throughout the day. While you can leave some food out all the time, it is important to ensure any uneaten food is thrown away before it goes off and to monitor the overall amount of food being eaten. If you have more than one cat you should make sure that they are all getting an appropriate share.

Remember that fresh, clean water must be available at all times! Especially if you are feeding a dry diet. Ideally, the water bowl should be away from the food bowl as some cats prefer to drink in a separate place from where they eat. Whilst others may prefer free flowing water from a tap or drinking fountain.

Avoid giving your kitten milk as a significant number of cats are unable to digest the lactose in the milk and this can cause diarrhoea.





### Litter Training

Your kitten will likely already be litter trained when you bring them home. The only thing you may need to do is stand them in the litter tray and gently stroke the litter with their paw to remind them. Remember to keep the litter tray in the same location and in a quiet place away from water and feeding areas. Initially you should use the same litter they are used to and gradually swap if necessary with each change. It is important to keep the litter tray clean and if accidents do happen, do not punish your kitten, as they won't understand. If you have more than one cat in the house you will need to provide extra litter trays. Generally you should have one more litter tray than the number of cats so they do not have to share.



### Going Outside

Letting your kitten outside for the first time is always an anxious time as you are not sure how they will react and you want to minimise any potential risks. They should have completed their initial vaccinations and be microchipped as a means of permanent identification. It may be better to wait until your kitten has been neutered as entire animals are at greater risk of injury and infection from road accidents and fights. When you first let your kitten outside it is best to choose a quiet time when you are available to supervise and preferably shortly before feeding time to make it easier to get them to come home.

### Grooming and Dental Care

Establishing a grooming routine soon after you bring your kitten home reinforces the bond between you and provides an opportunity to check for any abnormalities. Grooming sessions also give you the chance to examine your kitten's coat, paws, eyes, ears and mouth for anything that might require a trip to the vet in the future.

Those with short hair may only need grooming once or twice a week but those with longer hair will need at least 15 minutes every day.

When cats groom themselves they swallow loose hairs which can form hairballs in their stomach or intestines. These are uncomfortable and are usually coughed up or passed in the litter tray. Regular grooming should help prevent hairballs forming.





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Your kitten will likely prevent their nails from becoming overgrown by scratching and providing a designated scratching post or pad will help them do this. If you feel they need them clipping then please let us know and we will be able to do this for you or show you how to do it safely.



Deciduous kitten teeth appear at around 3–4 weeks of age and their adult teeth at 4 months. Cats are prone to dental problems and so good dental care is essential. Providing dry food will help to keep their teeth clean but you can start a cleaning routine if your kitten cooperates. Ideally this is best achieved using a finger toothbrush and a special cat specific toothpaste.

### **Socialisation and Play**

The first few months of life are the most important for social development. A well socialised kitten will be able to cope with the many situations they could encounter in later life and reduce the chance of them becoming shy or fearful adults.

During the early weeks and months, you should aim to introduce your kitten to a wide variety of sights, sounds, people and experiences. Be aware of situations that might make them wary or scared and introduce them to these gradually and with lots of positive encouragement.

Play is key to kitten learning and also provides them with exercise. It develops their physical and mental abilities, strengthens their muscles and increases their social skills. You should try to make time to play so they can continue to develop skills like stalking and pouncing. Toys should be small and light enough to bat and be carried around but not small enough to be swallowed and checked regularly for any damage.

### **Neutering**

Neutering involves the removal of the reproductive organs, this prevents accidental breeding, fighting, roaming behaviour and may improve certain aspects of health.

It is carried out under a general anaesthetic. In females this is known as ‘spaying’ and in males it is ‘castration’. The timing will be discussed with the vet taking into account their individual size and health status alongside any questions or queries you may have.

### **Pet Insurance**

You may wish to consider taking out pet insurance in event that your kitten may be involved in an accident or becomes ill. In this instance, insurance can provide peace of mind by covering any unexpected veterinary fees. It is important to look at the level of cover required and what the limitations of each policy are alongside whether they cover for any complementary or behavioural treatments.

