



# NEW KITTEN PARENT GUIDE

BY:



# CONGRATULATIONS!

Bringing home a new kitten is an exciting time and there can be an overwhelming amount of information to take in.

We designed this **kitten box** and guide to make it easy to give your kitten the best possible start in life, so you can spend more time getting to know one another!





## BRINGING HOME YOUR NEW KITTEN

Kittens gradually wean off their mother's milk and begin to be able to eat solid food from about 8 weeks of age, so this is considered the minimum acceptable age for them to be removed from their mother.

When you first bring your new kitten home, ask if you can take some unwashed bedding from their previous home with them so that they can smell their littermates and old familiar environment during this time of adjustment. You could also try the Feliway synthetic pheromone spray on bedding and toys or plug in a Feliway diffuser in the room where your kitten will spend most of their time.

Confine your kitten to a small, safe area of the house to begin with so that they don't get lost or hurt themselves and can easily access their food, water and bed. As your kitten's confidence levels grow you can begin to allow them to explore more of the house. Introduce your kitten carefully to any existing pets in the house to help get their relationship off on a positive footing.

### Should my kitten go outdoors?

The decision as to whether your kitten will be introduced to the great outdoors is an important one. Indoor cats are much less likely to be exposed to health hazards and dangers such as cat fights, snakes, paralysis ticks and cars. They also are much less likely to become lost, upset neighbours and prey on native wildlife. In some areas of Australia there are restrictions on whether your cat can go outside so please check with your local council.

Most vets will agree that keeping cats indoors is best for their health, however it is important for their physical and mental wellbeing to ensure indoor cats are provided with sufficient environmental enrichment such as toys, scratchers, vertical spaces and hiding places.

## FEEDING



Kittens need special food to support their increased need for energy, calcium and other nutrients during growth. Feeding your kitten a high quality kitten food in their first year of life will help them grow and develop into a happy, healthy young adult.

When choosing a food, Look for premium diets based on scientific research and development from brands including Hill's Science Diet, Royal Canin and Advance. These science based kitten foods are rigorously tested to ensure safety, quality, nutritional soundness,

palatability and digestibility. The end result is food that tastes great, is gentle on your kitten's tummy and delivers everything they need to grow and thrive.

### **Wet food, dry food or both?**

Both wet and dry food offer individual benefits for cats. We generally recommend feeding a mixture of both.

Dry food is cost effective, convenient and may help to keep the teeth and gums healthy. Adding some wet food to the menu offers your cat a variety of textures and tastes to enjoy, plus it also aids hydration by boosting your cat's water intake, which in turn supports urinary tract and kidney health.

Mixed feeding from an early age will help to discourage your kitten from developing strict dietary preferences and allow you to feed a range of diets. This may be important if they need a specific diet for a health condition during their life.

### **Does my kitten need raw meat in their diet too?**

Your kitten will get all the nutrition they need from a premium quality kitten food. Feeding raw meat to pets has been demonstrated to be a health risk to both pets and their families. While pets may not become unwell, they can pass on harmful bacteria including Campylobacter, Salmonella, and E.Coli to members of their household.

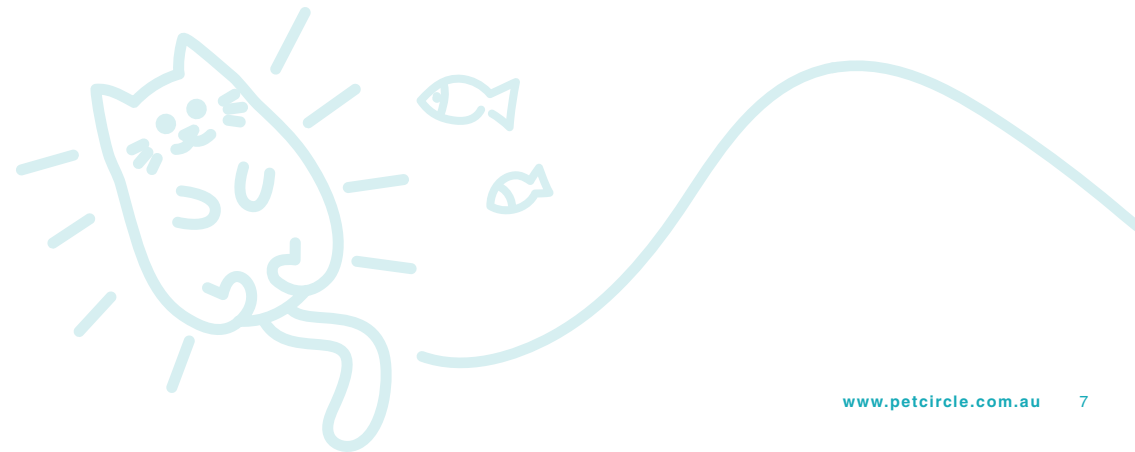
### **How much and how often to feed your kitten?**

Kittens need to eat more frequently than adult cats, after all they only have tiny little stomachs! Up until the age of about 16 weeks it's recommended to split your kitten's daily feeding amount into 3 separate meals.

The ideal feeding amount for your kitten will vary depending on the particular food, your kitten's age and their weight. To work out how much to feed your kitten, consult the feeding guidelines on the food packaging and use this as a starting point, adjusting the amount up or down depending on your kitten's needs. If you need help or aren't sure how much to feed, check with your veterinarian or ask a Pet Circle Veterinarian.

### **How long should I feed kitten food?**

Most kittens need to be fed kitten food until they are 9-12 months of age. Typically 12 months applies, but some cats (particularly those who were desexed early) may start to become a little overweight by 10 months, and these kitties may benefit from a swap to adult food a little earlier. Large breed cats such as the Maine Coon and Norwegian Forest Cat generally require a kitten diet for up to 13 - 15 months.



# HEALTH



## FLEA, TICK & WORMING TREATMENTS

Your cat needs to be protected from fleas, intestinal worms, tapeworm and heartworm. For outdoor cats living in or visiting the east coast of Australia, protection against paralysis ticks is also extremely important.



## INTESTINAL WORMS & TAPEWORM



It's recommended to worm your kitten:

- Every 2 weeks until 12 weeks of age
- Monthly till 6 months of age
- Every 3 months after that, or monthly to combine with heartworm

## HEARTWORM



Often overlooked as a parasite of importance in cats, advances in diagnostic tests and research suggest that there may be more heartworm positive cats than once realised. This is partly due to heartworm disease being almost identical to feline asthma (and therefore often misdiagnosed), and partly due to how difficult it is to test in cats.

Lifelong coverage against heartworm is recommended for all indoor and outdoor cats, this can be easily achieved with a combination product such as Revolution Plus.

## FLEAS & TICKS



If your cat is 100% indoor, or you live outside of a tick area, you generally don't need protection against paralysis ticks. Paralysis ticks are present on most of the east coast of Australia, and are most active in warm tropical and subtropical areas, particularly during spring and summer. In some areas of Queensland and New South Wales it is not uncommon for cases of tick paralysis to be seen year round.

If your cat does spend time outdoors and you are in a high risk tick area, prevention is essential with a product that covers paralysis ticks. If tick prevention is not required in your area, we generally recommend selecting a monthly combination product to ensure your cat is still kept up to date with protection against fleas, intestinal worms and heartworm.

Flea prevention is recommended year round to prevent flea eggs, larvae and pupae building up in the environment. This helps to avoid the sudden 'explosion' in flea numbers that can be seen with the onset of spring.



## VACCINATIONS & HEALTH CHECKS

Typical vaccinations for kittens involve 3 injections spaced approximately 4 weeks apart. These usually occur at 8 weeks of age, 12 weeks of age, and 16 weeks of age but can vary depending on your location and the type of vaccine your vet uses. Once the kitten series has been completed your cat will need yearly vaccinations for life.

### TIPS

At your kitten's first health check, ask the vet to scan for their microchip to ensure it is working and the number matches your paperwork!

## DESEXING

**Cats can start breeding as young as four months of age.**

Desexing your kitten before he or she reaches sexual maturity (from 4 to 6 months of age) will prevent unwanted pregnancies as well as reduce roaming behaviour and territorial marking. Allowing your cat to roam outdoors prior to desexing will increase their likelihood of falling pregnant.

Most vets will recommend desexing your kitten at about 5 to 6 months of age, although in some cases kittens can be desexed as early as 16 weeks depending on their size.



## DENTAL CARE

When it comes to dental care, anyone who has owned a cat will tell you that brushing their cat's teeth is much easier said than done! With their little mouths and sharp claws, it can save a whole lot of time and frustration if you start when they're young.

Tooth brushing is the best way to help prevent dental disease and reduce the number of trips to the vet for dental procedures. Try to get your kitten used to having their mouth examined and handled from an early age.

Once all their adult teeth are through (usually by about 6 months), you can then upgrade to a toothbrush and pet friendly toothpaste to get into the habit of a good dental routine.



## BATHING & GROOMING

Grooming your new kitten is a great way to spend time and bond with them. It also helps to control shedding, particularly during the warmer months and reduces the development of hairballs. Long haired cats such as the Ragdoll are particularly prone to the development of matts which can quickly become painful and difficult to remove.

The requirement for grooming will be dependent on what breed of cat you have, with long haired breeds requiring brushing more frequently. For these breeds, we recommend grooming daily with a rubber brush,

wide tooth metal comb, deshedding tool. For short haired breeds, we recommend using a rubber brush, bristle brush, or deshedding tool on a weekly basis.

### Do I need to bathe my kitten?

Cats and kittens regularly groom themselves, so unless your kitten becomes excessively dirty or soiled with urine or faeces, there's no reason to give them a bath. If you do need to bathe your kitten, use a gentle kitten specific shampoo, use lukewarm water and dry them thoroughly afterwards to prevent chilling.

## TRAINING & BEHAVIOUR



### POSITIVE PET PARENTING

Positive or reward based behavioural training is widely accepted to be the most effective and enjoyable way to encourage animals to behave in the ways that we want. This concept really hinges on capturing and rewarding desirable behaviours (with food and praise) while ignoring undesirable ones.



Attempting to stop unwanted behaviours through punishment, such as yelling, threatening body language or physical force is not appropriate or effective. Rather it causes cats to become fearful and increases stress levels, which in turn can increase the likelihood of problem behaviours such as inappropriate toileting, urine spraying and aggression.

In the case of negative behaviours with cats and kittens, the best approach is to 'shape' their behaviour by redirecting them away from the undesirable behaviour (eg. scratching the couch) towards a learned desirable behaviour (eg. using their scratching post).

While it can take time and patience, positive pet parenting will help your cat to learn how to behave and interact with people and other animals appropriately without damaging your relationship or causing distress, anxiety or pain.

A handy mantra for positive pet parenting is to train the pet you want - acknowledge and reward behaviours you desire in your pet, ignore and reshape the behaviours that you don't desire.

## CREATING A CAT FRIENDLY ENVIRONMENT

Taking a few steps to ensure your home is safe and stimulating for your cat can make a big difference to their wellbeing and help prevent problem behaviours.

- **Vertical space** - cats naturally like to rest and observe their environment from a high place of safety, you can provide this with cat furniture such as trees, shelves, window beds and climbing frames.
- **Beds** - if you would prefer your cat to sleep in their own bed, be sure to make it appealing by placing it somewhere secluded and elevated off the ground. Most cats will appreciate a spot which catches the morning sun or close to a heater in winter. Wash bedding infrequently as cats will find comfort in and be attracted to beds with a familiar scent.
- **Litter trays** - make sure you position your cat's litter tray somewhere discreet, away from food, water, large windows and busy areas of the house. As a rule of thumb, provide one tray per cat in your household plus one extra. Remove solid waste daily and change the litter entirely once a week to keep the tray clean and appealing.
- **Scratching posts** - scratching is a normal behaviour for cats, it helps to maintain healthy claws and is a way of marking territory. Provide your cat with a scratching post or pad to prevent them from using your furniture instead!
- **Play** - most cats prefer play which replicates natural hunting behaviours, so bear this in mind when choosing toys. Offer your cat a variety of toys, rotated regularly to prevent them

from becoming bored. Combine automated toys which move randomly with daily interactive play sessions using teaser, chase and catnip filled toys

## TIPS

Refresh your cat's interest in toys with a little catnip spray.

- **Vegetation** - cats will naturally eat grass to help clear hair which is inevitably consumed during grooming. For indoor only cats, you can grow a small amount of cat grass to provide for this. Note it is normal for your cat to vomit after eating grass!





## HOUSEHOLD HAZARDS FOR CATS AND KITTENS

It's important to be aware that there are some common household items which can pose dangers to your inquisitive cat or kitten.

- **Houseplants and flowers**, particularly Lilies but also Ferns, Devil's Ivy, Elephant's Ear, Oleander, Azalea, Chrysanthemum and a variety of other plants.
- **Open washing machines and dryers** may be an appealing option for a cat looking for a quiet, secluded place to sleep. Always keep the doors shut on these appliances and check them before use.
- **Cables and wires** may need to be covered or made inaccessible to prevent your cat or kitten chewing on them and receiving an electric shock.
- **Needles and thread** can easily be swallowed or wrapped around the tongue causing injury.
- **Hot surfaces** such as stovetops, fireplaces and irons can burn unsuspecting noses and paws.
- **Cleaning chemicals** such as disinfectants and bleaches can cause illness if spilt on the coat or stepped in and then groomed off by your cat.



## TOILET TRAINING

Cats are naturally fastidious creatures and as such your kitten will likely take quickly to using their litter tray. To maximise success, make sure the tray is positioned correctly as described above and clean it regularly.

Place your kitten in the tray after eating, when they wake from a sleep and after play. To begin with, restrict your kitten's access to a small area of the house so that they are never far from the tray. As they begin to regularly use the tray, you can start to increase the area they have access to.

If your kitten has an accident, don't punish them. Clean up any mess and be sure to use a urine removal spray to neutralise any odours.

### Which cat litter should I use?

When young kittens are first weaned and are still learning to use the litter tray, it's not unusual for them to attempt to eat the cat litter. For this reason it is not recommended to use clumping clay (sodium bentonite) litters or crystal litters, which can cause illness if ingested or inhaled.

Look for biodegradable alternatives such as those based on plant material or recycled paper which are much less likely to do harm if taste tested.

With a little patience, preparation and love, your kitten will grow into a happy, healthy, much cherished family member.

From all of us at Pet Circle, we wish you and your new kitten many happy years together.

*Teagan*

**Dr Teagan Lever BVSc**  
Pet Circle Veterinarian



**Need more help?**

Scan this code with your phone or visit [petcircle.com.au/vet-pet-plan](https://petcircle.com.au/vet-pet-plan) for a personalised pet health, lifestyle and nutrition plan from our Pet Circle Vet Squad.

# YOUR KITTEN'S HEALTH RECORD

NAME		YOUR KITTEN'S PHOTO
SEX		
BIRTHDATE		
BREED		
COLOUR		
MICROCHIP #		
REGISTRY		

DATE DESEXED		VETERINARIAN	
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VACCINATION RECORD				
VACCINE	DATE	WEIGHT	NEXT DUE	VET

FLEA & WORMING TREATMENTS		
PRODUCT	WHAT DOES IT COVER	FREQUENCY

IMPORTANT DETAILS	
REGULAR VET CLINIC NAME	
PHONE	
EMERGENCY VET	
PHONE	
PET INSURANCE PROVIDER	
POLICY NUMBER	





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