



CARING FOR YOUR KITTEN



Table of Contents

Kittens:

1. Basic essentials
2. Introductions & Handling
3. Nutrition (How to feed)
4. Vaccination & Deworming
5. Grooming (nails, teeth, fur)
6. Declawing & Available Alternatives
7. Preventing inappropriate behaviour
8. Toxoplasmosis
9. Permanent Identification
10. Feline Leukemia and FIV
11. Benefits of Sterilization
12. Pet Health Insurance



1. **Basic Essentials**

1. **Litter box**
2. **A litter substrate**
3. **Litter scoop**
4. **A bed for your kitten**
5. **A leash and harness**
6. **A collar**
7. **Identification tag or Microchip**
8. **Food and water bowls**
9. **Pet Odour Eliminator**
10. **Brush for grooming**
11. **Nail Clippers**
12. **Kitten food!**

Make sure that the sides of the litter box are low enough that your kitty can climb in.

A leash and harness are great tools if you are planning on letting your kitten go outside.

Remember to adjust the collar as your kitten grows bigger!

In the event that your kitten escapes or gets lost, an identification tag or microchip will ensure that people know where to return your little friend!

Introductions & Handling

Bringing your kitten home is very exciting but can be a very stressful time for your new companion. They are suddenly plopped into a new environment that's full of new smells, sights and sounds. Here are a few tips to help the first few days go smoothly.

Baby steps are essential for introducing new pets; On the first day, keep the kitten isolated in one room. This will allow your pets to get used to his/her new smell, and the kitten will have a chance to get used to their smells in turn. On the second day let them see each other and on the third day let them interact under supervision.

It is important to think of your existing pets during this time. This is a big adjustment period for them as well and it is important that they do not feel threatened. If you make sure that your new kitten has their own set of toys, bowls and blankets, it will help your existing pet(s) avoid feeling like their "property" is being stolen by the new guy!

"Never leave your pets together unsupervised during the first few introductions."

It is possible that the kitten receives a hostile reception from other household pets, especially other cats. Our adult cats usually see no need for a new kitten and these feelings can be exacerbated if it perceives that special favoritism is being shown the kitten. Your existing pets should never feel that they must compete for food or attention. Therefore, it is important to make sure that each pet has time alone with you during the day and that you do not show favouritism to the new-comer. This will avoid fights and helps build their confidence. The introduction period usually lasts one to two weeks and will have one of the three possible outcomes.

1. The existing cat will remain hostile to the kitten. Fighting may occur occasionally, but this is an unlikely occurrence if competition for food and affection are minimized during the first few weeks.
2. The existing cat will only tolerate the kitten. Hostility will cease but the existing cat will ignore the kitten. This is more likely if the existing cat is very independent, has been the only cat in the house for several years or if marked competition occurred during the first few weeks.
3. Bonding is more likely to occur if competition is minimized and the existing cat has been lonely for companionship. They will play together, groom one another and sleep in close proximity.

Handle your kitten gently and teach your friends and children to do the same. Children should never be left unsupervised with your kitten as they may jolt or squeeze the kitten unintentionally. Rough or sudden movements should be avoided as it may frighten him/her.

Teach your children to gently stroke the kitten following the natural direction of the fur. It is important to recognize the signs that the kitten is wearying and in need of a break; low growls, hissing, tail flicking or attempts to escape or move away are all indications that your new furry friend could use a rest.

Handling your kitten is an important part of their socialization. It is a good idea to habituate them to having their head, tail, ears, belly and paws touched. This will facilitate your job as an owner when it comes time to do routine care such as cutting the nails and cleaning the ears. Imagine how hard it would be to give medication to a cat that is not used to having their head touched! Practicing these things when your kitten is relaxed can be a fun and positive experience. As a bonus, your veterinarian will appreciate a social and affectionate patient! ☐

Nutrition

There are several factors to consider when choosing a food for your new friend. In general, an animal's diet should take into consideration their; age, lifestyle, activity level and specific health conditions if any exist. We recommend feeding a NAME-BRAND food made by a national cat food company (not a generic or a local company), and a form of food formulated specifically for KITTENS. This should be fed until approximately 12 months of age, depending on the cat's weight and activity level. We recommend feeding a food that is certified by AAFCO, the organization that oversees the entire pet food industry. It does not endorse any particular food but it will certify that the food has met the minimum requirements for nutrition; Generic brands are rarely certified by AAFCO. In Canada, look for food that is approved by the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA).

It is important to note that commercials for cat food promote cat food on one basis, taste; this can be very misleading as nutrition is rarely mentioned. Most of the "gourmet" cat foods are marketed to appeal to owners who want the best for their cats; however, they do not offer the cat any nutritional advantage over a good quality dry food and can be far more expensive. If your cat eats gourmet food for any length of time, it will probably never be satisfied with other foods. This may be tricky in the future if they ever need a specialized diet due to a health issue.

Kittens are in a crucial development stage and require a nutrient and calorie rich diet to support their rapid growth rate. Feeding a kitten formula is essential to keeping up with their metabolic needs that may not otherwise be met if they are fed an adult diet.

It is important to see your kitten as an individual when it comes to feeding. Use the feeding chart on the bag of food as a guideline or starting point. As your kitten grows, it is important to

be able to recognize appropriate versus inappropriate weight gain. Because your kitten is unique, you may need to adjust the quantity you feed them based on their body score. Let's have a look at a body score chart to give you an idea.

Obesity in kittens can be extremely detrimental to their health. Extra weight adds stress on the developing bones and joints.



Tips to avoid Over-feeding:

1. Follow the feeding guide or your veterinarians recommendations
2. Have set meal times (Avoid free-feeding)
3. Have one person who is responsible for feeding the cat or else set aside daily amounts in the morning.

**Ask your veterinarian or a
veterinary technician
about Royal Canin
Development Kitten.**



Vaccination & Deworming

Cats, like dogs, require vaccinations beginning at 8-9 weeks of age. Your veterinarian will discuss appropriate timing for vaccination with you at your first visit. This will allow your new friend to build up immunity against diseases that they are otherwise highly susceptible to. Regardless of whether they will live indoors or outdoors, all cats should be protected. Ask your veterinarian about the following vaccines

***FVRCP**: The core vaccine for cats.

***Rabies**: A zoonotic disease (transmissible to humans). Did you know that your animals have to have up-to-date Rabies certificates in order to travel?

FeLV: Feline Leukemia Virus

FIV: Feline Immunodeficiency Virus

All kittens should be vaccinated against panleukopenia, herpes-virus, calici virus and rabies. These diseases are either highly transmissible and/or have serious consequences. Rabies is a zoonotic disease meaning that it is transmissible to humans and is therefore a public health concern. Panleukopenia, herpes and calici viruses can be transmitted by aerosols through open windows or by contact with infected materials. If an unvaccinated cat has to be hospitalized for some reason, there is then a risk of exposure and owners may even bring the virus home on their clothing. Although the risk of an indoor cat contracting the rabies virus is low, bats are a high risk species for rabies transmission and have been known to inhabit attics or even fly into people's homes. For the safety of your family and your kitten, your pets should be vaccinated against Rabies. (Did you know that if ever you want to visit the United State of America with your pets, they must have an up-to-date Rabies certificate from their veterinarian??)

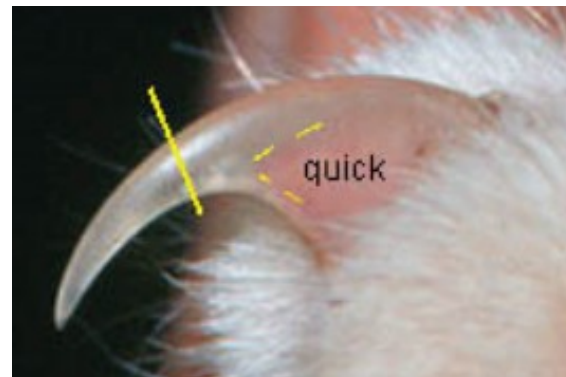
Upon your first visit to the veterinarian, you should bring a stool sample from your kitten. It is very common for them to have intestinal parasites when they are born so your veterinarian will likely recommend several de-worming treatments. The de-wormer may be chosen or adjusted after receiving the results of the fecal analysis. The stool sample is sent out to a laboratory to determine what parasites are present and need to be treated. Treating and preventing parasites on a regular basis is vital to not only your kitten's health, but to your family's health as well. Certain parasites can be transmitted to humans, especially children.



Grooming (Nails, Teeth, Fur)

Nails should be trimmed regularly, especially for indoor cats. It is to the benefit of both you and your cat to start trimming the nails as early as possible. The younger you start, the more readily your cat will accept the routine and the more pleasant an experience it will be! Cats and dogs have something called "the quick" inside their nails. The quick contains the nail's nerve and blood supply so it is important not to cut this part. If your cat has black nails, it can be difficult or impossible to see the pink quick thus difficult to know where to stop. A good rule of thumb is to cut 1mm at a time. If your cat becomes sensitive or irritable, it's time to stop! If your cat has some white nails, you can use them as a reference as to how far to cut on the black nails. If you happen to cut into the quick, the nail will bleed. Do not panic! You should have some styptic powder (such as Kwik Stop) ready to dab onto the end of the nail. (This will stop the bleeding).

There are a variety of nail trimmers that you may choose from. Have your veterinarian or veterinary technician demonstrate how to cut the nails at your next visit as this may help you choose the tool that's right for you and your new companion.



Brushing a cat's teeth sounds weird right?! Maybe... but the benefits of brushing your little friend's teeth are endless. Just like humans, animals should have their teeth cleaned daily. If you can't manage to brush them daily; at least try to brush a few times a week. Brushing gently removes plaque from the teeth, helping to reduce tartar formation. It is also a great way to keep tabs on your cat's dental health. It is recommended to use specially formulated toothpaste for cats and dogs because human toothpaste contains fluoride which is toxic if swallowed. Next time you visit, be sure to ask about our chicken, malt, beef, seafood and vanilla-mint flavoured toothpastes! If you would like to learn the proper technique, be sure to ask one of our technicians to demonstrate it for you! It is really quite simple. Use a small toothbrush, and brush gently away from the gumline towards the crown of the tooth. This motion will help avoid traumatizing the gums and will safely remove leftover food that would otherwise cause tartar build-up.

Regardless of whether you have a fancy long-haired exotic breed or a domestic short-hair, cats require grooming. Brushing a cat's coat will not only help remove tangles, burs and dander, but will also help remove loose fur that may lead to hairballs. There are plenty of different tools that you can use; brushes, combs, gloves...etc. Cats are generally pretty good at keeping themselves clean and therefore don't require regular baths. If you feel so inclined as to wash your cat, make sure you are using a gentle shampoo formulated specifically for animals and ensure that you rinse well. Leftover soap can cause skin irritation. If your kitty gets used to the idea of being brushed, it is a great way for you to spend time together!

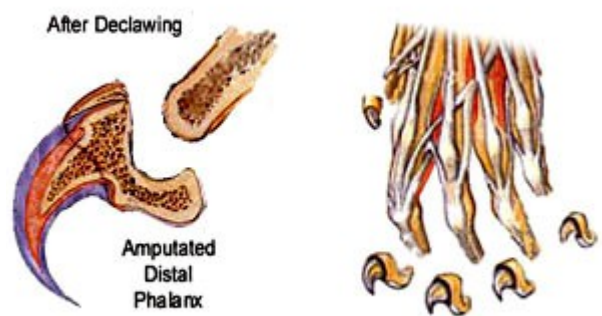
Declawing and Available Alternatives

A cat's nail is so closely adhered to the last bone, or phalanx, that in order to remove the claw, the last phalanx must be amputated. Did you know that declawing is only a common practice in North America? Many countries in Europe have deemed this procedure inhumane and no longer practice it.

Unlike humans who walk on the balls of their feet, cats actually walk on their toes. Therefore, when a cat is declawed, it drastically alters the conformation of their feet and so changes the way they will walk.

Another issue with declawing is that the claws are a cat's first line of defense. If the claws are gone and the cat feels vulnerable, it will often resort to biting to defend itself. Much of the time this is why declawed cats are given up or re-homed. Please remember that a cat that will be going outside should NEVER be declawed.

The average cat does not purposely ruin furniture. Scratching often occurs when a cat feels threatened or feels like he/she must mark their territory. See the next section on preventing inappropriate behaviour.



Luckily for your kitten, there are alternative solutions to declawing. Here are a few ways to keep your new friend happy and away from the furniture...

1. REGULAR NAIL TRIMMING

2. SCRATCHING POSTS

3. SOFT PAWS

4. FELIWAY



Preventing Inappropriate Behaviour

Avoiding inappropriate elimination:

As a rule of thumb, the number of litter boxes in the house should be one more than the number of cats you have. For example; if you have one cat make sure you have 2 litter boxes available. If you have 2 cats, have 3 litter boxes and so on...etc. If the dog is lying in the hall where the litter box is situated, the cat may feel like they can't get there and so will resort to your favourite pair of sneakers. In multi-cat households, it is not uncommon for one cat to resource guard so make sure the others have access to a box elsewhere. Another reason it is advisable to have more than one box is so that if it's been a while since you've scooped, your cat may decide not to use that dirty box. It is also advisable to place the litter box in a safe and quiet place. Avoid noisy or high traffic areas such as hallways, kitchens or the laundry room.

Avoiding Scratching Furniture:

Firstly, it is important to understand that scratching is a normal and necessary behaviour for cats. Scratching sharpens and cleans the claws, exercises and stretches their muscles and allows them to mark their territory using the scent glands in their paws. In order to avoid this natural behaviour on your furniture make sure you're doing the following;

1. Regular nail trimming
2. Provide scratching posts (preferably something rough that mimics tree bark – which cats love).
3. Provide environmental enrichment to stimulate your cat (toys, games, going outside etc.)

Toxoplasmosis

Toxoplasmosis is a disease that results from infection with *Toxoplasma gondii*, a parasite whose natural host is the cat. If contracted, the parasite forms cysts that can affect many areas of the body, but most commonly; the brain and muscles including the heart. If you're healthy, your immune system should protect you against these parasites. They would remain dormant in your body providing you with a lifelong immunity so you cannot become infected again. If however your immune system is weakened, the infection can be reactivated leading to serious complications. It is impossible to contract this parasite from infected people.

Ways to become infected:

1. Coming into contact with infected cat feces
2. Eating or drinking contaminated food or water
3. Exposure to contaminated surfaces such as utensils or cutting boards
4. Eating unwashed fruits or vegetables
5. Receiving an infected organ by transplant or transfused blood

People at high risk:

1. Those with HIV/AIDS
2. People undergoing chemotherapy
3. Those taking steroids or immunosuppressant drugs
4. Pregnant Women

Prevention

1. Wear gloves when you garden or handle soil to avoid contacting contaminated soil
2. Don't eat raw or rare meats
3. Wash all fruits and vegetables well
4. Cover sandboxes when they are not in use to prevent cats using them as a litter box
5. Have someone else clean the litter box (or wear gloves)

Permanent Identification

There are many ways of identifying our pets; tags, personalized collars and ID capsules but did you know that there is a more permanent method? Microchips are a small device the size of a grain of rice that is implanted with a needle beneath the skin over the shoulder blades. They work throughout life, do not fade with time and cannot be removed except surgically. Every microchip has its own unique number. Once registered, the microchip number will be linked to your information; phone number, name and

address. The benefit of having a microchip is that if your animal gets out of its collar or gets lost, we simply scan them, put the microchip ID into a database, and we can then reunite you with your lost pet! When an animal is found without tags or a collar, this is the first thing we will check for. Ask your veterinarian about having your animal micro-chipped today!

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus/Feline Leukemia Virus

Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV), sometimes called feline AIDS virus, is likened to the AIDS virus that affects humans because of the similarities in the two diseases which result. Fortunately, most viruses are species specific. Transmission occurs primarily through bite wounds that occur in cat fights. An FIV infected cat will generally go through a prolonged period of viral dormancy before it actually becomes ill. This incubation period can last as long as six years. When illness does occur, we can see a variety of severe, chronic illnesses. The most common is a severe infection affecting the gums around the teeth (stomatitis). Abscesses from fight wounds which would normally heal within a week or two may remain active for several months. Respiratory infections may also linger for weeks. The cat may lose weight and go through periods of poor appetite and the hair coat may become unkempt. Ultimately, they experience widespread organ failure which results in death. As of this moment there is no effective vaccine to prevent FIV, all we can do is neuter our male cats and keep them indoors.

Feline Leukemia Virus (FeLV) is a retrovirus that is shed in high quantities in saliva, nasal secretions, feces and the milk of infected cats. Transfer occurs during prolonged intimate contact; grooming, sharing a litter box or through the sharing of feeding dishes. It can also be transmitted from an infected mother to her kittens during pregnancy or while they are nursing. Luckily, the virus can survive only hours in the environment without its host to protect it. FeLV is the most common cause of cancer in cats. It can also cause various other disorders that eventually lead to a state of immune deficiency. When this occurs, bacteria and pathogens found in our everyday environment – and normally do not affect healthy animals – can bring on life threatening illnesses. There are many clinical symptoms but unfortunately they are never characteristic. Feline Leukemia may present as poor coat condition, chronic diarrhea, persistent fevers or more seriously as a neurological disorder such as seizures. There are two stages to the disease, primary viremia (in which some cats are able to mount an immune response), and secondary viremia which is characterized by chronic infection of the bone marrow. By the time a cat reaches this secondary stage, the prognosis is very poor. Luckily however, there is an effective vaccine to prevent this virus. If you are going to let your new kitten outside, talk to your veterinarian about vaccination. Other ways of preventing transmission is to test all the cats in your household for this disease. Testing is fairly simple and requires only a few drops of blood. If you discover that your cat is carrying the Feline Leukemia Virus, it is important that they never be let outside and that you take precaution to separate them from your other cats to reduce the chances of transmission.

Sterilization

Québec has one of the worst pet overpopulation problems. It is our job to encourage spaying and neutering as there are already a huge number of kittens, puppies, as well as adult cats and dogs in search

of homes. So rather than contributing to the problem, we can be a part of the solution! We discourage the breeding of animals just to experience “the joys of birth.” If this is something that you have been pondering over, you should consider fostering a pregnant animal for the SPCA or a local rescue. Female cats have seasonal periods of heats, or times when they can breed, usually during winter and spring. During this time, they will attract any males in the surrounding area. Unexpected breedings account for a large percentage of cats surrendered to SPCA.

Spaying your cat offers several advantages but the risks of not sterilizing your animal should also be considered. Unspayed females are at a significantly higher risk for life threatening infections of the uterus known as pyometra and also for mammary cancer. We therefore recommend spaying your cat before she goes through her first heat. The heat periods result in 2-3 weeks of obnoxious behaviour which includes loud vocalization. This can be particularly annoying if your cat is kept indoors. During this time, she will also draw the attention of what seems like every male cat in the neighbourhood! Spaying involves removal of the uterus and the ovaries therefore preventing heats from occurring and unplanned pregnancies.

Intact males have a greater tendency to wander off, particularly if they sense a female in heat. Aggression between males can become an issue as well as excessive urine marking around the house. Male cats go through a significant personality change when they mature. They become very possessive of their territory and mark it with their urine to ward off other cats. The tom cat’s urine develops a very strong odor that will be almost impossible to remove from your house. They also try to constantly enlarge their territory which means one fight after another. Fighting results in severe infections and abscesses and also becomes a neighbourhood nuisance. We strongly urge you to have your cat neutered at about 4-6 months of age. If he should begin to spray his urine before that time, he should be neutered immediately. The longer he sprays or fights, the less likely neutering is to stop it.

Pet Insurance

If all goes well at your first visit here at Timberlea, you will be leaving with a 6 week free trial of pet insurance courtesy of PetSecure! Just as there are insurance plans for people, so there are plans for pets now too! There are many different companies that offer pet health insurance and depending on your budget, there are different plans. Generally speaking, insurance is of great value especially in the first few years of a kitten’s life; when they are most likely to have accidents or ingest things they are not supposed to. In addition, different breeds are genetically susceptible to different ailments or illnesses so pet health insurance can be a great investment! As our cats age, there is increased need for veterinary care with advancing age. Having insurance in place before problems such as kidney insufficiency, cancer, heart disease or arthritis develop can provide peace of mind for both short and long term care!