

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NEW KITTEN OWNERS



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CONGRATULATIONS!



Owning a cat can be an enriching experience, but it is also a big responsibility. We hope this booklet will give you the information needed to make good decisions regarding your kitten.

MAKING YOUR NEW KITTEN FEEL AT HOME



When welcoming a new kitten into your home, it's important to start off right by making sure you have everything you need for your kitten to settle in well.

'Kitten-proof' your home by clearing potentially dangerous items away from reach, such as string, plastic bags, electrical cords, plants, and fragile or breakable items.

Show your kitten the special places where she can eat and sleep, and where her litter box will be kept. Provide a climbing/scratching post as well as a comfy place to hide.

If there are young children in your home, make sure they know how to be respectful and gentle with the kitten.

DIET AND NUTRITION

Diet is critical during the growing months of a kitten's life. There are many commercial foods specially formulated to meet your kitten's unique nutritional requirements. Your kitten should be fed a good quality kitten food until 9 - 12 months of age.

Adult formulations are not recommended as they do not provide the nutrition a kitten needs.

Cat foods are available in dry and canned formulations, although both have advantages and disadvantages. Dry food is less expensive and can be left out all day. Some dry foods, like Hill's Science Diet t/d prevent tartar build up. Canned food contains a high percentage of water, which supports urinary tract health.



However, canned food will dry out or spoil if left out for prolonged periods, so should only be used for meal feeding. It's best to feed a combination of dry and canned food so your kitten becomes used to both types of food. Follow the recommended feeding guide on the package or ask one of our staff.

Choose a food with the AAFCO (American Association of Feed Control Officials) certification. AAFCO oversees the pet food industry and sets minimum requirements for nutrition. Royal Canin and Hill's Science Diet are excellent veterinarian recommended diets that meet these requirements.

We will be happy to assist you in choosing the best diet for your kitten by discussing options with you. Call the clinic and ask to speak with Alli, our nutrition advocate.

SOCIALIZATION AND TRAINING



The optimal socialization period for cats occurs between 2 – 12 weeks of age. During that time, a kitten is very impressionable to social influences. If kittens are introduced to as many different social situations as possible during this critical period (men, women, children, dogs, other cats, etc.), they will likely accept them throughout their life. Keep the experiences positive and in a controlled, calm environment to avoid having your kitten developing any negative associations.

Many dog training methods also work well with cats, such as treat rewards and praise. The trick is to start early! Cats can learn to come when called, especially around meal times. Inappropriate behaviour can be corrected by making a loud, startling noise or saying 'no' in a firm voice. Be consistent with your response to bad behaviour and ensure that everyone in the family learns to use the same word every time. If your kitten starts scratching furniture, you can try saying 'no', spraying your kitten with water using a spray bottle, attaching double-sided tape to the area, or closing off the room when you are not home. Ensure that your kitten has access to a scratching post or an alternative, so you can redirect scratching behaviour.

Litter training is usually very straightforward; kittens and cats instinctively learn to use it as soon as they know where it is. Place your kitten in the litter box when you bring them home and scratch their paws in the litter. If your kitten does not use the litter box consistently, they may need to be examined by a vet to rule out medical problems.

Introducing your kitten to other pets requires patience. Supervision and caution should be used at all times, even when your other pets are well behaved. Make sure that your current pets are not allowed to become stressed by the kitten's attention. If you see your pet become uncomfortable or irritable, remove your kitten to another area with some toys, allowing your older pet some peace and quiet.

On the first day, introduce your pets slowly by keeping them separated in different rooms so they can get used to each other's smell. On the second day, allow them to see each other and by the third, allow them to interact. Your existing pet must not feel that they need to compete for food or attention. The new kitten should have its own food bowl, and it should not be permitted to eat from the other pet's bowl. The transition will be smoother if the existing pet is given more attention than usual. The introduction period usually lasts 1 -2 weeks. At the end of the introduction period, your existing pet will remain hostile to the kitten, tolerate the kitten, or they will become lifetime friends. Please ask us if you have any questions.

Never leave your pets together unsupervised until you are 100% sure that they get along and play gently together. This is especially true with dogs and kittens, as a dog can accidentally hurt a kitten with rough play.

A good source of general information on keeping your new kitten happy is available here: <https://indoorpet.osu.edu/cats>

GROOMING AND NAIL CARE

Grooming needs are usually breed and lifestyle dependent. Medium and long-haired cats require regular brushing to avoid matted fur, but all cats can benefit from regular brushing. We recommended introducing your kitten to brushing by using a soft brush and don't let your kitten bite the brush. This will make it easier for you as your kitten gets older.



Kittens' nails can be trimmed with your regular fingernail clippers or with nail trimmers made for cats. Nail trims are most comfortable with two people; one person holding while the other clips the nails. Nails have a pink 'quick' which supplies blood to the nail and can be seen through the nail. If you take too much off the nail, you will cut into the quick which is painful and will cause the nail to bleed. If this happens, your kitten may become adverse to nail trims in the future.

Many cats, especially indoor cats, will require regular nail trimmings throughout their life. Handling your kitten's feet frequently will help your kitten become used to having them handled and trimmed. Use positive reinforcement during and after nail trims, and stop if they become agitated. Keep initial sessions short.

VACCINATIONS



Vaccinations are usually given at 8, 12, and 16 weeks of age, but this schedule may vary depending on your kitten's individual needs.

The core vaccination schedule will protect your kitten from several common diseases: rhinotracheitis (cat flu), calicivirus and panleukopenia. These are combined into one vaccine (FVRCP) that is given at 8, 12 and 16 weeks of age.

Feline leukemia virus (FeLV) is a deadly disease that is transmitted by direct contact with other cats, especially through fighting. This vaccine is strongly recommended if your kitten will go outside or if you have another cat that goes outside. The rabies vaccine is also recommended for outdoor cats and is given as a single dose at 16 weeks of age.

When a kitten nurses, it receives a temporary form of immunity (maternal antibodies), which lasts for the first few weeks of the kitten's life. This immunity interferes with vaccinations by neutralizing the vaccine.

Since we do not know when an individual kitten will lose the short-term immunity gained from its mother, we give a series of vaccinations. We give the first vaccine between 6 and 8 weeks when most kittens' maternal antibody protection wanes. Booster vaccines 3-4 weeks later ensure adequate antibody production to protect against disease.

WORMS

Intestinal parasites are common in kittens. Symptoms include poor overall health, chronic soft or bloody stools, change of appetite, a pot-bellied appearance, poor coat, and weight loss. Common parasites include roundworm, hookworm, whipworm, and tapeworm.

Many kittens are born with roundworms or can become infected soon after birth through their mother's milk. Approximately 5 - 13% of humans have antibodies to roundworms, which suggests that millions of people have had exposure to them.



Tapeworms are a common intestinal parasite of cats transmitted through fleas. Cats infected with tapeworms will pass small segments of the worms in their stool. The segments are white in color and look like grains of rice. They are about 3 mm long and may be seen crawling on the surface of the stool or stuck to the hair under the tail.

With the exception of tapeworm, very few internal parasites are visible in the stool. A fecal test can reveal the eggs of internal parasites, but these tests can be falsely negative. For this reason, our veterinarians elect to treat all kittens for worms.

We recommend the use of a deworming product, such as Milbemax, given orally. It is effective against several of the common worms of cats. Deworming treatment should be given twice, at 2-4 weeks apart. It is essential that the treatment is repeated as the medication only kills adult roundworms. Within 2-4 weeks, the larval stages, which migrate through tissues in the body, become adults and need to be treated. Periodic deworming throughout your cat's life is recommended for outdoor cats.

FLEAS AND TICKS



Fleas are the most common of all cat parasites. They feed on your cat's blood, causing irritation and itchiness, which in cats is manifested in excessive licking (over-grooming). They can also transmit tapeworm and can bite other hosts (including humans). Adult fleas make up only about 2% of the flea population as an adult flea lays up to 50 eggs per day. Therefore, just killing adult fleas does not get rid of the eggs and larvae in the environment.

Ticks are also a significant problem here on the West Coast. They also feed on your cat's blood and can transmit diseases such as Lyme, Anaplasma and Babesia.

The best treatment for fleas and ticks is preventing the problem before it starts. We recommend topical products like Revolution (which also kills roundworms), which are applied monthly, or Bravecto which lasts for 12 weeks. We will provide you with an age and weight-specific flea and tick control product that is safe for your pet.

In the Victoria area, it is recommended to treat your pet year-round. The mild winters here never eliminate the flea and tick population.

SPAYING AND NEUTERING

Part of responsible pet ownership is ensuring that your cat does not contribute to pet overpopulation. The best way to do this is to have your female cat spayed and your male cat neutered. The operation is done in a single day (dropped off in the morning and picked up later that day) and with adequate pain control and rest, a full recovery is made within a few short days.



Female cats will have a heat cycle every 3 weeks starting at 5-6 months of age, unless they are spayed. Mating behaviour in female cats is annoying, and neighbourhood male cats will become attracted and fight and mark their territory around your property. In many cases, the urge to mate is so strong that your indoor cat will attempt to escape and despite your best efforts, your cat may become pregnant. Therefore, the best time to spay your cat is before her first heat at 5-6 months of age. As well, spaying a cat before her first heat significantly decreases the risk of mammary cancer and uterine infections later in life.

Male cats undergo a significant personality change when they mature. They become territorial and mark with their urine, which develops a powerful odour almost impossible to remove from your house. Unneutered male cats will fight continuously with other male cats in the neighbourhood which results in infections and abscesses and increases the risk of spreading diseases such as Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) and Feline leukemia virus (FeLV). Neutering will protect your cat from testicular, prostate, and rectal cancer.

TATTOOS AND MICROCHIPS



Each year hundreds of thousands of lost pets are taken to animal shelters across the country. Many of these animals wear no form of traceable identification and are never reunited with their owners.

Tattoos and microchips are excellent permanent and traceable forms of identification for your pet. It is highly recommended that one or both of these be done at the same time as spaying or neutering.

A microchip is a tiny electronic implant inserted under the loose skin on a pet's neck using a special needle. It can be implanted without the need for anesthesia. Each microchip has an associated identification number which is stored in a computer database with your name, address, and phone number. Animal shelters and veterinary hospitals throughout North America are equipped with scanning devices that read the microchip. If your pet is found, they will be able to notify you quickly using your stored information.

Tattoos are etched into one of your pet's ears, usually at the time of spaying or neutering while your pet is under general anesthesia. The tattoo number is associated with the vet hospital that gave the tattoo, allowing your pet to be traced to the clinic where your details are kept. Tattoos are a visible and permanent method of identification.

HOUSEHOLD DANGERS

Many household items can be dangerous to your kitten, including foods and plants... but even string can be dangerous if your kitten swallows it! Keep all loose objects up out of reach, garbage cans covered, and doors to empty rooms closed. Not all pet toys are safe for kittens and some toys like ones that include string should only be played with under supervision. Household plants can be deadly - visit the ASPCA website at: <http://www.asPCA.org/pet-care/poison-control/>



PET INSURANCE



Huge advances have been made in veterinary medicine. Our pets are living longer, healthier lives, and provide us with even more years of companionship. However, the more veterinarians can do to keep your pet healthy, the more it can cost. Pet health insurance can help by sharing the cost of veterinary care, especially for unexpected situations. It gives you the peace of mind that you will be able to provide the medical attention your pet needs.

Most policies cover veterinary fees for diagnosis and treatment of any accident, injury, or illness. There are many different plans available, so it is important to research the right plan for you and your pet. Most pet insurance companies offer 1 month of free insurance for kittens – ask your veterinarian or the Client Care Team to sign the form to take advantage of this free offer.

If insurance is not an option for you, consider putting aside some money each month for those unexpected visits to the vet.

LOOKING FORWARD

As your kitten grows into an adult cat, they will need regular veterinary care to stay healthy, including yearly exams and vaccinations. Once your cat has reached 7 years, you may want to consider yearly blood panels to look at liver and kidney function and to catch disorders early. Also, your cat may need dental cleanings, which will likely avoid painful and expensive extractions as they get older.



We are proud to be a partner in your cat's health and will help to guide you through this process. Please let us know if you have any questions.

KEEP IN TOUCH

On the web - www.mckvets.com

On the phone - 250-727-2125

By email - contact.us@mckvets.com

Book Online - <https://mckvets.com/make-an-appointment/>



KITTEN VACCINE INFO

FVRCP - Feline Viral Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus & Panleukopenia
Importance - Essential

Transmission - Aerosolized through window screens and on clothing. Cat to cat contact, and any area where infected cats have been.

Clinical Disease - Upper respiratory disease, oral & dental disease, lameness and often fatal intestinal disease.

FelV - Feline Leukemia

Importance - Advised for outdoor cats/indoor cats in contact with outdoor cats

Transmission - Mothers to kittens, bite wounds, or long term contact with other cats.

Clinical Disease - Immune system dysfunction, as well as susceptibility to cancers

Rabies

Importance - Advised for outdoor cats, and indoor cats with open chimneys in the house

Transmission - Bats (~0.5% of all bats in BC are positive, 54 positive bats on southern island in 2016)

Clinical Disease - Always fatal neurological disease. Transmissible to humans

	FVRCP	FelV	Rabies
8 Weeks			
12 Weeks			
16 Weeks			
1 Year			
As Adults	Every 3 Years	Every Year	Every 3 Years

KITTEN-PROOF HOME CHECKLIST

INDOOR DANGERS

- Make sure all **electrical cords and wires** are out of reach, or apply a pet-repellent spray. Kittens love to chew when they are teething.
- Keep an eye out for **hot objects and surfaces**. Kittens love to explore new heights.
- Securely store all **household cleaning products and medications**, as well as **lotions and creams**. Any of these could have ingredients that are potentially toxic to your curious kitten.
- Check all **houseplants** on the ASPCA Poison control website. Some common greenery can have deadly effects. <https://www.aspca.org/pet-care/animal-poison-control/toxic-and-non-toxic-plants>
- Keep all **soft plastic bags and packaging** out of reach, as these can cause suffocation.
- If you love to cozy up to a nice fire, be sure to use a **fireplace screen** to protect your kitten from burning embers.
- Be sure to check **collars and harnesses** regularly as they grow to ensure a proper fit, and to avoid serious injury.
- Keep **holly, mistletoe**, and especially **Christmas tree tinsel** out of reach during the holidays.
- **Chocolate and Xylitol** are extremely toxic to cats. Be sure not to leave any sweets out for snoopy kittens to ingest.

OUTDOOR DANGERS

- Check the garage for **antifreeze**. Keep it well out of reach, or dispose of it and switch to a pet friendly propylene glycol-based brand.
- Make sure to keep pets away from your lawn if you treat it with **chemicals**. Always read and follow the directions and keep the unused chemicals securely fastened and out of reach. Remember that cats love to climb!
- Keep covers on **hot tubs and pools** when not in use. They could fall in and be unable to get back out.
- Check **outdoor plants** against the list on the ASPCA Poison control website as well.
- Make sure all **paint, gasoline, motor oil** and the like are securely closed and placed well out of reach.