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Congratulations on making the decision to add a kitten to your household! Although an exciting time for you, this can be a stressful time for your new addition. You will likely have many questions about what to expect and what needs to be done with your new kitten. This kit will help address common questions and concerns many new pet owners have, and help you navigate the important milestones in your kitten's life.

It is important to have an initial check-up by your veterinarian once obtaining your kitten. Remember to always keep emergency veterinary clinic numbers close at hand, as well as keep records of vaccines, deworming, and any other medical treatment.



Kitten Proof Your Home

- Ensure all windows and screens are securely closed
- Keep your kitten away from balconies or high places
- Store any cleaning supplies or toxic substances out of reach, as well as any human medications or supplements
- Baby locks help with keeping cupboards closed
- Keep garbage cans safely tucked away
- Keep all electrical cords out of reach
- Make sure that any household plants are safe from your kitten

Cat Behaviour

Cats need unrestricted access to areas of the house where they can avoid stressful situations or threats such as small children, other pets, or loud noises. Since cats love to climb, providing perching options throughout the house offers safety and encourages exercise. These places can also be ideal to incorporate scratching surfaces. Cats tend to scratch on vertical objects in areas where they spend much of their time.

Remember a bored kitten is often a mischievous kitten; a kitten who is not stimulated enough will find his or her own means of stimulation. This may include ruining furniture, digging up carpet, or exploring kitchen cupboards. There are various reasons why kittens may scratch; marking territory, clean paws, or a need to stretch. Cat pads contain a special scent gland that releases a scent when they scratch.

Things you can do to encourage your kitten to scratch only in appropriate places include:

- Rubbing cat nip on scratching posts
- Clapping hands loudly when kitten is scratching inappropriate objects
- Praising your kitten for using the scratching post appropriately
- Providing several outlets for scratching
- Placing citrus items in areas you want to deter your kitten from

- Some cats don't like aluminium foil – use this to cover areas of furniture until he or she learns not to
- Keep your kittens nails neatly trimmed

Environmental Enrichment for Cats

Cats are the most popular pet in Canada, however they are not small dogs and require use to understand their different behaviours. When kept indoors, cats must be able to maintain their natural behaviours (scratching, chewing, elimination); if deprived of these they can develop health or behavioural problems.



Litterboxes should be kept in a safe, quiet area separate from food and water. There should be one litterbox per cat, plus one more located out of sight to prevent aggression or competition. Many cats prefer large open litter boxes that allow them to dig.

Vaccines

Your veterinarian will help you to develop a vaccine protocol for your kitten depending on his/hers lifestyle and risks. All kittens should be vaccinated for **rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, and panleukopenia, and Chlamydia psittaci** during their initial visit. These are known as “core vaccines” because they can cause severe disease or are quite common. **Rabies** will be administered at 16 weeks of age and is required by law.

Rhinotracheitis – A common respiratory infection of cats which can be fatal in kittens. Sneezing, decreased appetite, and fever, followed by a thick discharge from the eyes and nose are often observed.

Calicivirus – An upper respiratory infection of cats with similar signs to Rhinotracheitis. In addition, ulcers may be seen on the tongue and mouth

Panleukopenia – A potentially fatal disease characterized by the sudden onset of severe vomiting and diarrhea. Is especially dangerous to kittens

Chlamydia – Common respiratory infection that produces sneezing, fever, and a thick discharge from the eyes. Can lead to secondary bacterial infections

Rabies – Rabies is a fatal disease spread through saliva and bite wounds of infected animals. It is a fatal infection of the nervous system and can also affect humans. Rabies vaccination is required by law.

“Non-core” vaccines are those that are not required for all kittens, but may be added into the protocol depending on the pet’s lifestyle.

Feline Leukemia Virus – This virus decreases the ability of the immune system to respond to infection and may lead to the development of different types of cancer. It is passed from cat to cat by direct contact, so outside cats and cats in multi-cat households are especially at risk.

Remember, it is important to discuss with your veterinarian what is best for your pet and your family!



Deworming

Kittens often have internal parasites when they are born. All kittens should be dewormed every two weeks for three treatments in a row if unknown status. A fecal exam should be performed to check for the eggs of any parasites that need to be treated. Some common parasites include: Roundworms – Spread through ingestion of eggs in feces, during development in an infected mother, through nursing from an infected mother, or from ingesting prey animals. Can cause vomiting and diarrhea in young kittens and can lead to failure to thrive.

Hookworms - Hookworms suck blood from the small intestine, and can lead to . Can be transmitted through the soil or through a kittens's mother. Kittens are often pale and very weak. Hookworms can also be transferred to humans.

Whipworms – Can lead to chronic bloody diarrhea in kittens. It is shed intermittently which can make it difficult to detect on routine fecals.

Tapeworms – tapeworms are spread through ingestion of fleas, or, for cats that hunt, small rodents. Tapeworm segments look like small packets of rice in your kittens' feces and often require separate, specific treatment.

Giardia – Spread through ingestion of infective stage in stool. Can cause watery, foul smelling feces and is shed intermittently, making it difficult to diagnose.



Flea Prevention

Remember, FLEA PREVENTION IS MUCH EASIER THAN TREATMENT. It is advised that all new kittens get dosed with a flea preventative. During the summer months when fleas can survive, we recommend that your kitten be on a preventative flea/heartworm/deworming program. This season often lasts from May until November but can vary depending on the weather! Prevention can be administered topically on the back of the neck, or through an oral medication depending on owner preference.

Spay/Neuter

We strongly recommend that you spay or neuter your kitten **at or before 6 months** of age. The procedures are different between males and females, although both serve to remove the source of hormones from your kitten's body. There are several benefits to sterilization, including:

- Making your kitten easier to train
- Reducing the likelihood of marking behaviour (urinating)
- Reducing roaming behaviour as there is no need to find a mate
- Reducing the risk of health problems including:
 - Pyometra (infection of the uterus which can be life threatening)
 - Mammary cancer in females
 - Prostate cancer in males
 - Testicular cancer in males

Microchipping

A microchip is an excellent way of **providing permanent identification** for your new kitten. It is a small implant (similar to the size of a grain of rice) that is placed through an injection under your kitten's skin. It contains a unique tracking number so that in the event that your kitten gets lost, the shelter, veterinary clinic, or animal control officer that finds him or her will be able to scan the number and return your kitten safely! This service is offered at the time of spay or neuter, but can also be done earlier if desired.

**Can your lost pet
find it's way back home?**

**A microchip will help
make a difference!**



Microchips provide a record of identification for life.

Training

Training is one of the most important, and most difficult, parts of obtaining a new kitten, and can often be a source of frustration from pet owners.

Houstraining

Until your kitten is 3-4 months old (and sometimes later), your kitten will have limited bowel and bladder control.

- Most accidents happen by allowing your kitten too much freedom, too soon
- Confine your kitten unless you can provide direct supervision
- Have a schedule for feeding and walks
- Take your kitten out first thing in the morning, after naps and meals, and before you go to bed
- Reward your kitten for eliminating outside, always go outside with your kitten so you can reward good behaviour
- Never punish a kitten who has had an accident (prevent your kitten from ever having the need to eliminate inside)

Travelling with your Pet

The best time to start travelling with your kitten is when they are young. Take a few short rides before going on a long ride, as kittens often get nauseous their first few car rides. Make sure your kitten has positive reinforcement during the ride with treats or toys to reinforce a pleasant experience.



Introductions and Handling your Kitten

Introducing the new environment and new family members to your kitten is a very important stage. Keep your kitten isolated so that you can control introductions to people and pets in the family. Total acceptance by other animals may take several months. Rough or sudden movements can frighten a kitten, if introducing young children, an adult should always be present for these introductions. Current pets may be unwilling to share belongings with a newcomer, so ensure that your new kitten has his or her own dishes, blankets, toy, slitter box, etc. Also allow each pet to have time away from the other, as well as one on one time with you.



Kitten Grooming

It is best to get your kitten used to common grooming procedures while they are young, before they develop habits that are difficult to correct!

Grooming – Depending on the hair type of the kitten, the grooming needs will vary. Long haired coats will require more frequent brushing. This will also reduce the incidence of hairballs.

Nail Trimming – All cats need proper nail care unless they scratch excessively on their own. Please clip them regularly, when left too long they can become painful and become prone to tearing and breaking. Handling your kitten's feet regularly will make nail trimming much easier!! Be sure to avoid hitting the quick (blood vessels and nerve tissue) inside the nail; this can be avoided by trimming nails back a little bit at a time.

Caring for Teeth – Many cats will allow their teeth to be brushed, especially if they get used to you handling their mouths early on. Daily brushing is the most effective way to prevent disease.

Exercise

Exercise is essential to your kitten's health and well being. Favourite things to do include climbing, perching, jumping, sharpening claws, and playing with toys, all natural behaviours. Play is a large part of your kitten's development, it encourages them to explore their surroundings and develop physical capabilities. Hunting and Playing are very closely related. Exercise can also keep your kitten away from destructive activities.

After spaying or neutering your kitten, it is important to monitor exercise and food intake as often cats will experience a reduction in metabolic rate following surgery.



Diet

Your veterinarian will likely provide diet recommendations depending on the specific needs of your kitten. The right formula will help provide optimal nutrient delivery, small well-formed stools, excellent digestion, ideal skin quality, and an optimized immune system. Superior nutrition can increase a cat's life expectancy, and lead to a healthier, happier life. Cats are very prone to becoming overweight, and obesity in kittens can be very detrimental to their health. Having set meals for your kitten throughout the day will help with monitoring of intake. Avoid feeding human food, as this can encourage begging and may encourage your cat to become a picky eater. Feeding your kitten in a quiet place will help reduce the incidence of stomach upset and will help to establish consistency.

Kitten food should be fed exclusively up until 9-12 months of age. This will optimize bone and soft tissue development. Adult cats are fed more foods that are urine acidifying and restricted in minerals, which could interfere with development in kittens. Remember to ask your veterinary team when transitioning your kitten to an adult formula.



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What about treats?

Many treats can be very high in calories and lead to significant weight gain if used frequently. Please do not feed your kitten any bones as fragments can result in severe damage and possible surgery. Many cats cannot digest milk and will develop diarrhea...please provide **fresh water only!**

Raw meat can contain a number of pathogenic bacteria and parasites that can be detrimental to your kitten's health. A raw diet is not a balanced formula for a growing kitten. As well, bacteria found on raw eat can present a human health hazard to family members, especially young children!



1st Vet Visit – 6-8 weeks

- Vaccines – FVRCP
- Deworming and fecal exam

2nd Vet Visit – 12 weeks

- Vaccines – FVRCP +/- FeLV

3rd Vet Visit – 16 weeks

- Vaccines – FVRCP + rabies +/- FeLV

6 months of age – Spay or Neuter (microchip)

May until November – Flea and Heartworm Prevention
+/- tick prevention



Your kitten will get vaccinated again at 1 yr and 4 months of age. After that yearly examinations are recommended to ensure your adult cat is in good health and to recommend an appropriate vaccination protocol. We are happy to discuss concerns or any questions about your pets at any time. Our goal is to make your pet happy!





