

## **General notes on caring for your kitten**

**GENERAL:** Whether or not you intend to show it and/or breed from it, this kitten is sold to you on the understanding that it is primarily a pet, which will live as part of your family, and not spend all or most of the time caged or kept outside the house (stud cats are an exception once mature). We also expect you to feed it appropriately, keep its vaccinations up to date, and seek veterinary advice for all but the most trivial illnesses and accidents.

### **WHAT YOU NEED BEFORE YOU GET YOUR KITTEN OR ON THE WAY HOME WITH IT:**

- A carry cage that shuts securely – kittens are strong and can easily get out of cartons or similar. Get one big enough to last the cat its lifetime.
- A litter tray – at least as deep as a washing up bowl; your kitten will have no trouble jumping in and out and it will mean less litter is spread about. Covered litter trays are great, but prop the door open at first.
- Litter – we'll give you a small bag of what the kitten has been used to but you'll need to buy some for use later.
- Food – see below; again we'll give you a sample of the dry food the kitten has been eating.
- Bowls for water and dry food and a small plate or saucer for meat/wet food. Separate bowls are best, otherwise you end up with biscuits in the water or water in the biscuits all the time. For water, a fairly large ceramic or metal bowl will keep the water cooler and more attractive to the kitten than a smaller or plastic bowl would.
- A bed – this can be as simple as a carton with a towel in it.
- A scratching post – can be home made, but it needs to be big – many sold in shops are too small. Cats stretch upwards as far as they can to sharpen their claws and won't use anything that doesn't allow them to do this; remember your kitten will grow fast. The more attractive the better for the cat and the better for your furniture – shelves, hammocks etc. all help make the pole attractive. Don't hide it in a corner behind the furniture; put it where the cat will be attracted to it first when it walks into the room, before it gets to the furniture.
- Toys – don't need to be expensive; balls of screwed up paper are great, but kittens love toys where a ball runs around in a tunnel and also love toys on the end of a pole and line that you can move around for them.

## **SETTLING YOUR KITTEN IN WHEN YOU TAKE IT HOME FOR THE FIRST TIME:**

Your kitten will be disoriented and perhaps frightened when you first get home with it. It may want to spend quite a bit of time in hiding for the first couple of days, particularly if you have other pets already. It also won't know where its food, water and litter box are. If it has the run of the house it may end up disoriented and toilet somewhere it shouldn't simply because it does not yet know where to find the litter box or because it is too frightened to go back to where the litter box and its food are. For these reasons you need to start with it confined to one small room such as a bedroom, bathroom or laundry where it can easily find what it needs and where other pets can initially be kept out until it has gained a bit of confidence. Once it has used the litter box and eaten and is showing interest in exploring further it can be allowed to expand the area of the house it uses – this may be a few hours or a few days. Let it explore itself so it learns the way back to its base – don't carry it to another part of the house at first.

Once it seems well settled and happy to come to you when you call it, it can start going out into the garden under supervision if you live in an area where this is safe. However, it shouldn't be left outside unsupervised at least until it has been neutered or spayed at 5-6 months old.

If it does disappear in the first day or two, it will have hidden somewhere – it's very unlikely it will have got out through a slightly open window or similar, although reasonable care with windows and doors is required. Don't frighten it by moving furniture to search for it – wait for it to come out of its own accord – it may stay hidden for many hours and won't come to any harm – it will just be sleeping quietly in a safe place it has found. Also it may not toilet or eat for the first day or more – this is just a reaction to the change and nothing to worry about as long as it doesn't go on more than a day or two.

Do give it lots of cuddles and encourage it to play to help it gain confidence and bond with you.

It's important that you start it off with food and litter that it has been used to (see below) and that we will give you a bit of – later on you can make changes if you want to.

## **INTRODUCING YOUR NEW KITTEN TO RESIDENT OLDER CATS**

Occasionally, if they're both males with very confident personalities, your older cat and new kitten may hit it off immediately and be friends from the moment of introduction, but that's uncommon and if it happens you're very lucky. More commonly one or both will be frightened and upset initially. The resident cat being upset, stressed and frightened for a few days is very common and nothing to worry about – it will quickly pass. In a couple of weeks at the most, the two of them will be devoted friends and far happier than they would have been alone - you just need to help them work through the introduction.

Fear of the kitten by the older cat seems strange but is very normal - kittens in natural situations usually have very protective mothers nearby. The cat will look upset and frightened and will hiss and growl at the kitten to tell it to keep its distance and slap at it if it comes too close. That's fine – don't try to intervene. If they are together in the same space or in adjacent rooms where they can see each other through a glass door for example, the older cat will gradually get used to the situation and gain confidence to the point where it's interested in being friends with the kitten. The change when it does eventually happen usually moves very quickly to complete acceptance and bonding. If you don't have them where they can see each other and interact, they can't get to know each other and no progress will be made - you will remain stuck in this situation.

You do need to monitor for the first few hours they're together, and you do need to intervene and separate them if the older cat is either seriously aggressive and actively attacking the kitten (yowling and trying to bite it – slaps are OK), or so frightened it's really panicking. In those situations try putting the kitten in a cage such as a large dog crate until things calm down a bit. For a very upset cat, you might try a short-term course of clomicalm from your vet to help it cope - however, that takes a week or two to take effect, and by that stage everything will have probably sorted itself out anyway.

## **INTRODUCING YOUR NEW KITTEN TO DOGS**

Take it gradually, and always have the dog under full control on a leash the first few times they meet. If the kitten is frightened or the dog too excited, arrange for them to spend time getting to know each other with the kitten safe in a large dog crate or similar cage.

**FOOD:** The kittens have had kitten formula dry food available at all times. They have had several brands but mostly Royal Canin Babycat. Water should also be available at all times. Each evening they have had a meal of fresh raw beef, or chicken necks. Ox heart, ox liver, ox kidney, chicken necks, fish (can be raw or cooked with rice), or grated cheese are also suitable food. Liver is an excellent source of vitamins and minerals, but should only be fed about once a week (or small amounts more often) otherwise problems of vitamin A poisoning and arthritis can ensue. Give the meat in good-sized chunks to get the kitten chewing hard and keeping its teeth clean. They have had tinned or pouch sometimes in the mornings as well. Make sure that they regularly get food they have to put some effort into chewing, such as chicken necks and chunks of gravy beef, otherwise the teeth will deteriorate, and this can be a contributory factor in kidney disease.

**VACCINATIONS:** These kittens have had two sets of vaccinations against snuffles and infectious enteritis (triple vaccine - see vaccination certificate), but will **need a booster next year and annually after that if going into catteries at any time – every two or three years if not.** My vet considers two vaccinations at this stage sufficient, but some vets prefer to give a third vaccination at 16 weeks.

If you're in an area where the disease is prevalent and are going to let the cat outside, your vet may also recommend vaccination against FIV (feline AIDS); this is a problem mainly where there are resident populations of feral or stray cats.

Vaccination against infectious leukemia is also available. However, this disease is not as prevalent now as it was a few years ago, and the vaccination does carry some risk, so at present in most areas the risk of the vaccination is greater than the risk of disease and vaccination is not recommended. However, ask your vet whether there have been any cases in your area, and get your kitten vaccinated if there have. More information on all these vaccinations is available from your vet.

**WORMS:** The kittens have been wormed with Advocate (covers both worms and fleas) as a precautionary measure - I have seen no sign of worms. Continue to worm at the intervals appropriate to the kitten's age, as advised by your vet. Your vet's surgery will sell you (over the counter) a very effective wormer that deals with both roundworms and tapeworms.

**FLEAS:** Fleas are seldom a problem here but the kittens have been treated with Advocate (covers both worms and fleas). If they are to be indoor only cats they shouldn't need flea treatment; if they go outdoors and meet other cats, treat with every 4-6 weeks in the warmer months.

**HOUSETRAINING:** The kittens are trained to use a litter box. I mostly use a granulated recycled paper litter (Breeder's Select) and a cocoa husk litter. I find these excellent – light, extremely absorbent and good at odour control, and don't get tracked around much. They can also be composted, or used as a mulch if solids are removed. Breeder's Select is usually obtainable from Countdown supermarkets and vet clinics and some pet stores. However, sometimes it is in short supply and they have used other litters with no problems. They will probably automatically begin to use the garden as they get older; if not, gradually move the dirtbox outside, and spread some litter on the garden. They will continue to need a dirtbox at night or at any other time they are confined.

**NEUTERING:** Unless we have made specific arrangements to the contrary, you have been sold this kitten at a substantially reduced price on the understanding that it will be neutered/spayed before it reaches the age of 6 months, and you will have also been asked to sign a standard NZ Cat Fancy agreement to do this. Please let us know when this has been done.

**HOUSING AT NIGHT:** Many cats of the South-east Asian breeds seem to have very poor road sense and are very adventurous, so it is important to keep them in at night, particularly while they are young.

**PLEASE** keep in touch and let us know how you are getting on with the kitten, and enjoy it!