

WELCOME TO THE FAMILY

An owner's guide to helping your gorgeous new kitten thrive.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

WELCOME HOME	4
IMPORTANT MILESTONES	5
PREPARING FOR YOUR NEW ARRIVAL	6
VACCINATIONS - GIVING YOUR KITTEN THE BEST START	7
PROTECTING AGAINST FLEAS, WORMS AND OTHER PARASITES	8
SETTLING IN AT HOME	13
NUTRITION - FOR A HEALTHY START IN LIFE	15
TRAINING TIPS	17
GENERAL HEALTH AND WELL BEING	22
QUICK REMINDERS	24



Welcome Home

Congratulations on the new furry addition to your family!

It's amazing when your new kitten arrives at home. Fun, cuddles, a cuteness overload, and a bit of a learning curve for everyone.

Your first few weeks together will establish the pattern for your cat's future behaviour and lay the foundation for an incredible friendship.

This booklet covers many of the essentials you'll need to be a responsible pet parent. It's a great starting point, and there's loads more information available through our partners' websites, Cat Care for Life, and International Cat Care. We're super proud to have partnered with these global organisations to make sure your new family member has a long, healthy and happy life.

IMPORTANT MILESTONES



First things first

Your kitten is now relying on you to provide for its health and wellbeing, so, it's a good time to choose a vet to help you out - if you're reading this booklet, you've chosen a great vet! Vets know pets better than anyone and the staff at your clinic will love your kitten as much as you do.

Birth to two months

You're most likely to adopt a cat from eight weeks, so chances are they are already past this milestone. A lot of development happens in this first eight weeks, so if you need details, ask your veterinarian.

Two months

Vaccinations are really important (see page 7). The first round of vaccinations will start at 6-8 weeks.

Two to four months

Your cat's personality will start to emerge. Connections and bonds strengthen with the family. This is a critical time to learn trust and establish a core territory - where they feel safest. More vaccinations and training starts.

Four to eight months

This is the best time to get your cat spayed or neutered, and microchipped. Six months is about the time you may start to give unsupervised access to adventures outside. The training continues (it never really stops!)

Check out Cat Care for Life www.catcare4life.org to understand the different needs your new kitten will require at different stages throughout their life.



PREPARING FOR YOUR NEW ARRIVAL



It doesn't need to be overwhelming; here is a handy checklist of the basics you will want to have available to help you and your kitten get settled in.

- **Cat carry case** – Ideally one that opens from the top and sides. This is less stressful for your kitten, and if it has room to grow into it, even better.
- **A cosy bed** – Something your kitten will feel safe and secure in. But cats will be cats, and you may find your kitten prefers the box it comes in rather than the bed itself!
- **Litter box** – Again cats will be cats, and fortunately they are super clean creatures and will use a litter tray (and eventually the garden once they are old enough). A litter tray, and good quality litter is essential for kittens or if your cat has limited access outdoors. Highly recommended even if your cat is free to roam.
- **Food, & dishes for food & water** – Nutrition plays a vital role in your kitten's development. We talk about these in more detail later in the book, but it's a good idea to have a dedicated bowl for food and another for water.
- **Flea and worm treatment** – Monthly worming is essential for kittens, and should continue for the cat's life, especially if living with children, the elderly or other high-risk group. Likewise, prevention is far better than cure when it comes to fleas, and gentle monthly dosing provides great results. More on pages 8-12
- **A cat flap** – Cats are independent and adventurous, and love letting themselves out to explore the world. A cat flap will mean you don't have to get up every time. There are lots of options including flaps that respond only to your pet's microchip keeping other cats locked out.
- **Scratching post** – Cats love climbing and stretching their claws out. These items could save your furniture and curtains - so the taller the better.
- **Toys** – Cats love to play, so toys give them an outlet for energy and their instincts. It's a great way to bond with them too.

You can find more useful advice on preparing for your new kitten at the International Cat Care website <https://icatcare.org> or subscribe to their YouTube channel iCatCare, for helpful tips, advice and training videos.



VACCINATIONS - GIVING YOUR KITTEN THE BEST START



Why should I vaccinate my cat?

Vaccinating your new kitten helps to protect them against all manner of diseases. It is essential that vaccinations are kept up to date, boosters are given when due and records are kept.

Is one vaccination enough?

Different vaccines protect against different diseases and each local environment is different - your veterinarian can advise what vaccinations are required for your cat's lifestyle and location.

Likewise, the frequency of vaccinations will vary depending on the individual cat and which vaccinations they need. The initial vaccine course is normally administered in two or more doses, with 3 to 4 weeks in between each injection.

Booster vaccinations

To maintain protection, regular booster vaccinations are required. At your cat's annual health check, your veterinarian will let you know which vaccines need a booster. Annual health checks are important to ensure everything is okay, in addition to administering necessary booster shots.

Your kitten should not be allowed outside until at least a week after it has finished its first course of vaccinations, and you should avoid exposure to other animals until your kitten has been fully vaccinated.

Tip: If you plan on using a cattery at any time, they will most likely require an up to date vaccination certificate or confirmation from the veterinarian that your cat has been vaccinated.



PROTECTING AGAINST FLEAS, WORMS AND OTHER PARASITES



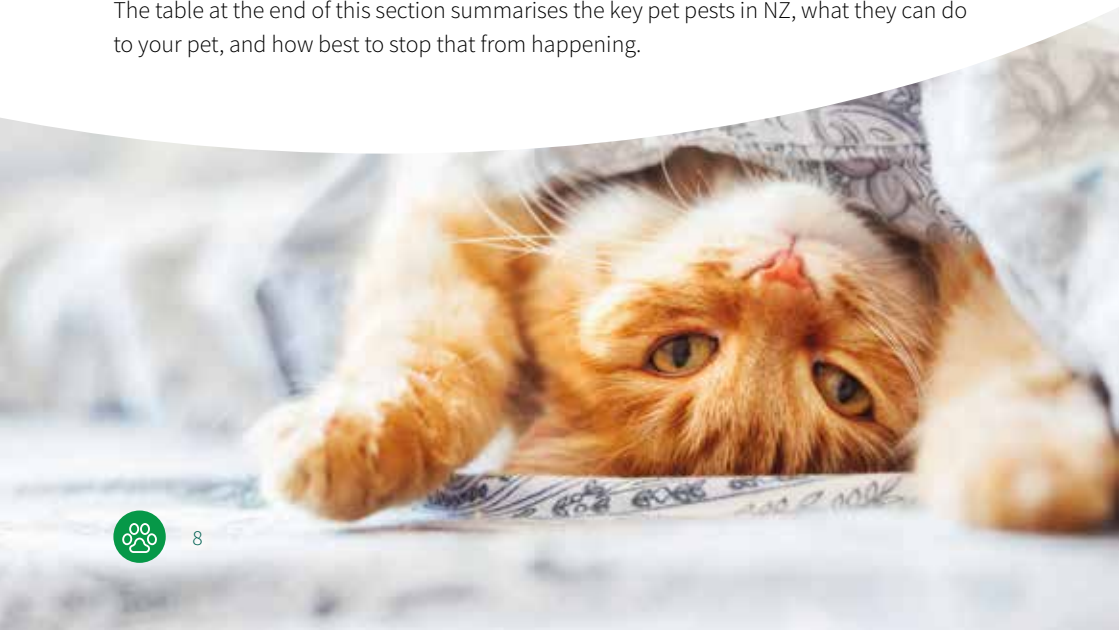
These little creatures love to call your kitten home, both inside and out.

From birth, your kitten is an irresistibly warm and nutritious place for these unwanted pests. And Kiwi cats love hunting, grooming and roaming - their adventurous behaviour exposes them to fleas, worms and other parasites.

Your fur baby loves nothing more than to proudly bring home a wee 'gift' that they have caught, like a mouse or a bird, or go on adventures around the neighbourhood, in gardens and local parks - anywhere other animals have been. These places are where parasite problems start. With New Zealand weather generally warmer and wetter than other countries, and good home insulation, the flea population is active even during the cooler months.

There are many products available to help keep pests at bay, but not all are equal. **We think the best solution is to treat for internal & external parasites in one gentle monthly spot-on with NEXGARD SPECTRA for Cats;** no collars, no pills and no stress for you or your cat.

The table at the end of this section summarises the key pet pests in NZ, what they can do to your pet, and how best to stop that from happening.



Are these pests REALLY a problem?

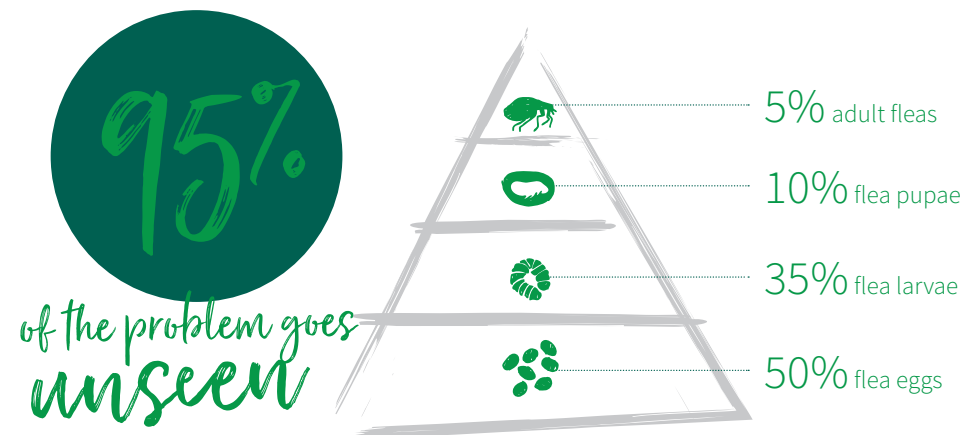
The short answer is yes. These parasites can cause a lot of discomfort for your pet, but more seriously, they cause diseases, and in extreme untreated cases, can be fatal. Prevention is much better than cure - once you see fleas on your pet it may be too late to prevent an infestation, and once established it may take up to three months to eliminate. This is because it takes time for immature fleas to develop into adults, as illustrated on page 10.

Gentle monthly dosing with NEXGARD SPECTRA for Cats: the perfect solution.



1. FLEAS

The adult fleas you see on your pet are only the tip of the iceberg. 95% of the flea population exists as eggs, larvae and pupae in the environment, which continue to develop into adult fleas thus re-infesting your pet when they finally reach adulthood.



Consistent, regular monthly dosing all year round with NEXGARD SPECTRA for Cats helps you be pro-active in managing the risk before it becomes a full-blown flea infestation for your pet and your home. This table follows what happens when you apply flea treatment to your pet.

Day 1 – The flea treatment kills adult fleas, and they stop laying eggs.



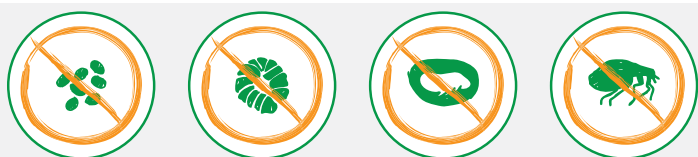
Day +10 – The flea treatment you applied 10 days ago is still killing newly hatched adult fleas.



Day +21 – Once again, the flea treatment applied 21 days ago is still killing adult fleas, but you will need to administer another treatment soon.



Day 60+ – You now need to keep administering flea treatment every month to kill newly acquired adult fleas that jump on to your pet from the environment.



Other useful tips for managing flea control in your environment

Beyond flea treatments for your pet, the following are excellent in helping control the problem:

- Treat all animals in your household regularly, throughout the year with safe gentle monthly dosing.
- Regular vacuuming will remove eggs and stimulate fleas to emerge from their cocoons.
- Regularly wash pet blankets and bedding in hot water (>60°C for 10 minutes).
- Avoid untreated animals entering your home environment.

2. WORMS

While you may not see as much flea activity in winter as in summer, worms don't care about the weather at all.

If your cat is free to roam outdoors, has raw meat in its diet (like wild prey), or is in a household with kids or the elderly, then guidelines recommend a monthly worming regimen.

Similarly, since cats spend up to 50% of their time grooming, they very easily ingest fleas. Fleas are a common source of tapeworms, so monthly flea control is important too.

With easy to administer all-in-one monthly products that treat for fleas AND worms – it's never been easier to keep your pet happy and healthy inside and out, and your whole family safe.

You should know:

- The worming active ingredients in most parasite treatments 'pass' through a pet's system quickly, killing all adult worms present at the time. So, the day after treatment, cats and kittens can start picking up worms again from the environment or from hunting prey.
- Some worms are zoonotic – which means they can pass from your cat to you. Whilst uncommon, the health risk can be significant, especially for children. Roundworms lay 10,000 eggs a day and these can last for up to 10 years in the environment. This is why we believe monthly worming of your kitten and cat are so important, not only for their health, but yours and your family's too.

3. TICKS AND MITES

Fleas and worms are the biggies, but there are other parasites that need to be protected against as well. The table on page 12 summarises each, and what you can do to provide the best care and protection for your kitten.



Common Name	How would my kitten catch this parasite?	What might I notice if my kitten has this parasite?	How can I protect my kitten?	Can this be passed to humans?
Fleas	Fleas are everywhere. Adult fleas are only 5% of the population, and the rest exist as larvae, pupae and eggs in the environment. Your kitten can catch fleas from countless places.	Scratching is the obvious sign, or you may see the actual fleas themselves.	A gentle monthly flea treatment with NEXGARD SPECTRA for Cats can be administered all year round to prevent a flea infestation from forming in your house. It can take at least three months to resolve a flea infestation if allowed to establish, so stopping them before they start is the best option.	Fleas often bite owners of infested kittens, or cats, mostly resulting in 'itchy bites'
Roundworms	This worm can be picked up from the environment, eating wild prey, or from their mums while nursing.	Often you won't notice anything. You may notice diarrhoea, that your kitten isn't growing as well as you expect, or that their abdomen is swollen. You may see worms in their poo or vomit.	Monthly de-worming is essential for kittens, and should continue for the pet's lifetime. NEXGARD SPECTRA for Cats is available in kitten and adult weight ranges.	! Yes. Although not common, exposure has been associated with serious and long lasting consequences
Tapeworms	Fleas are a very common source of this worm. Other sources include eating wild prey (mice, rats, birds, slugs etc.)	Most commonly, you see segments of tapeworm in your cat's poo or around the anal area of your cat.	Monthly de-worming to kill tapeworms is essential if your kitten has outside access, eats raw meat or wild prey. Good, consistent monthly flea treatment with NEXGARD SPECTRA for Cats can prevent infection by the flea tapeworm, by controlling fleas.	! Yes, the flea tapeworm can pass to humans, although rare.
Hookworms	Kittens may pick this up from their mum while nursing. Other sources include eating hookworm larvae from the environment, or direct skin contact with larvae.	Clinical signs vary from none to severe anaemia, gastric disturbance and even death.	Monthly de-worming is essential for kittens and should continue for the pet's lifetime. NEXGARD SPECTRA for Cats is available in kitten and adult weight ranges. General cleanliness is important in all areas occupied by the pet.	! Yes, by skin contact with infective larvae
Lungworms	This worm is picked up by a cat that eats an infected slug, snail, bird, mouse or rat, etc.	Clinical signs range from mild coughing to severe breathing problems.	Monthly treatment with NEXGARD SPECTRA for Cats eliminates lungworm risk in cats.	No
Ticks	Cats can be infected when they enter tick habitats - often areas shared with livestock (sheep, cattle, goats, horses, etc.). The tick will climb up long grasses and wait for a cat to walk past, and then crawl on.	You may see the tick attached to the skin of your cat or kitten. A fully fed adult tick can be as big as 9mm.	We are lucky that the tick we have in NZ does not transmit disease to cats (other countries have ticks that do), but ticks can be irritating for pets. Monthly treatment with NEXGARD SPECTRA for Cats will help protect against ticks. Avoiding access to tick habitats is also recommended.	Ticks can occasionally crawl onto humans and bite, causing irritation.
Ear mites	Mites spread by direct contact with other infected animals. Ear mites are more common in young animals.	Head shaking and ear scratching are common signs of ear mites.	A single treatment with NEXGARD SPECTRA for Cats is highly effective against ear mite infestation. Monthly treatment eliminates the risk.	Yes, although this is extremely unlikely.

SETTLING IN AT HOME



You've done really well! You've got yourself sorted with all that you need to welcome a new kitten into your home. The vaccinations are sorted, and you've protected your kitten and your family against nasty parasites with gentle monthly dosing, so now let's get settled.

Experiencing a brand-new home

This can be daunting for a tiny kitten. Every kitten has a unique personality; some are shy while others are confident. Whatever their character, you'll want the transition to go as smoothly as possible. As a new parent you'll want to understand how the environment impacts your kitten and make sure it will feel safe & secure at home. This will of course strengthen the bond you have with your fur baby.

For the first week or so

Choose a room where your kitten can adjust gradually to its new surroundings. This can also help with litter box training.

Checklist:

- ✓ Potential hazards – check the room and remove anything that could become broken or dangerous, remember your kitten loves small spaces
- ✓ Avoid rooms with full length curtains – as kittens love to climb
- ✓ Have a litter box in a discreet corner, with easy access
- ✓ Food & water dishes should be far away from their litter box
- ✓ Position the bed as far away from the litter box and food & water bowls as possible
- ✓ Have toys available for play – even a cardboard box can go a long way
- ✓ Scratching post – have something that you are ok with your new kitten scratching its claws on or climbing

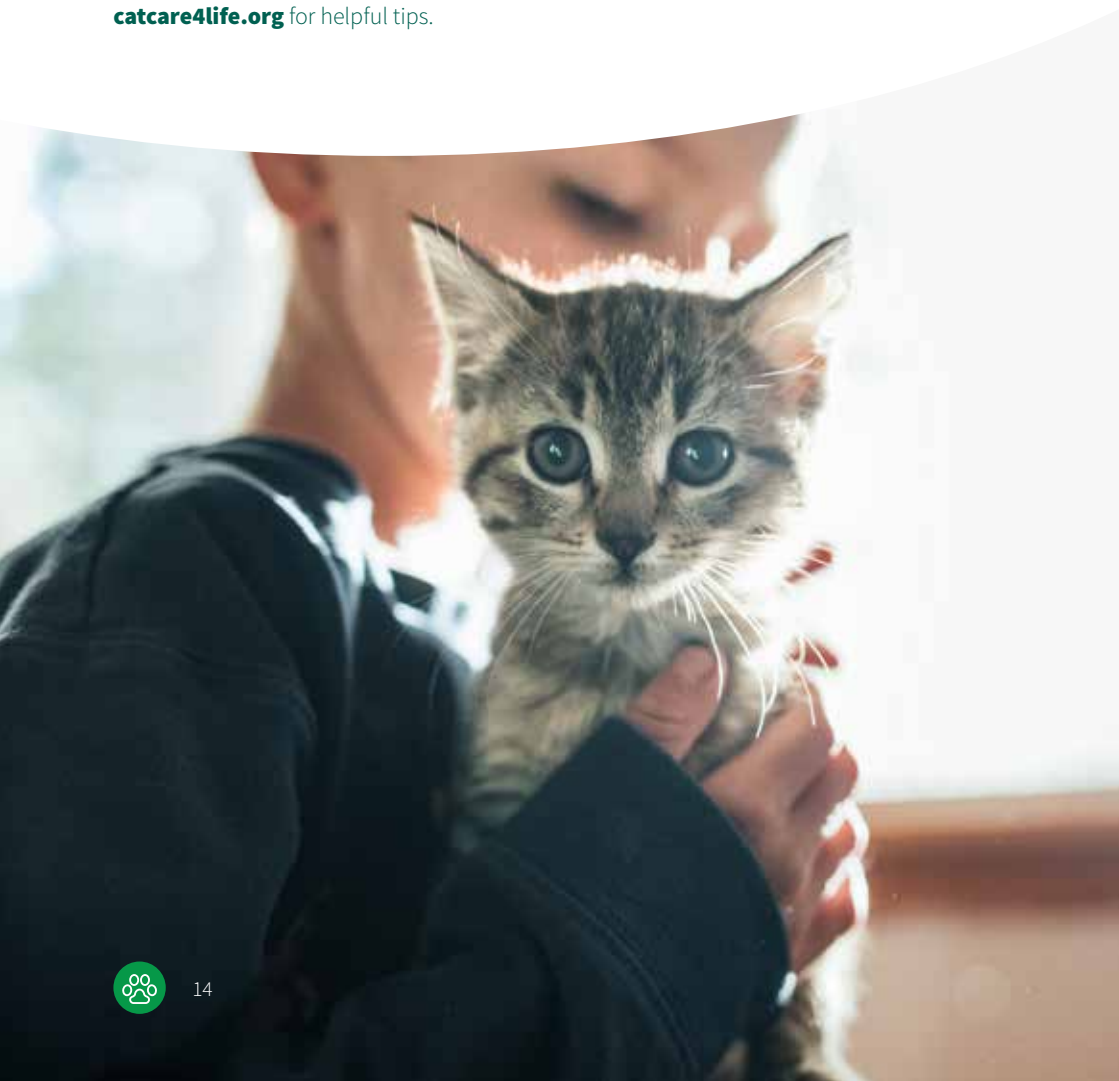


Kittens need their sleep when they are young, even more so than adult cats, but in between catnaps they exhibit energetic bursts of activity. Kittens love to climb so be prepared to go to the rescue; going up is always easier than coming down.

The importance of territory

Cats are very territorial and need to feel secure within their home and comfortable within their wider territory. They often rub their cheeks on surfaces (especially your leg)– this is to rub pheromones around the places they consider ‘theirs’ and can give them a sense of security .

There are lots of things you can do to make your new family member feel welcome, such as slowly introducing your kitten to kids, other cats or even dogs - so check out catcare4life.org for helpful tips.



NUTRITION – FOR A HEALTHY START IN LIFE



Food plays a vital role in a kitten’s health. The first year of your kitten’s life is the most important for growth and development. The right food will help them grow strong bones and muscles, and aid in eye and brain development. Come training time, this will be crucial.

Feline nutritional science has made great advances in recent years. Commercial foods supply perfectly balanced, complete diets depending on your cat’s age and lifestyle. From kittens through to seniors, and even specialty diets for cats with particular diseases, long, healthy and happy lives are easily catered for. And just like parasite protection – it can be confusing. Your veterinarian and clinic staff can advise you on the nutritional needs of your kitten.

The essential info:

Their diet needs to be made-up of:

- Proteins*
- Carbohydrates,
- Lipids (fats)*
- Vitamins and minerals.

All these must be included in the correct quantities and proportions. Reputable cat food manufacturers base their products on scientifically proven standards for the composition of their diets. Cats and kittens have specific nutritional needs, such as taurine, which is critical for your kitten’s health and survival.

* Kittens have higher protein and fat demands than adult cats. This is because of the extra energy it takes to grow a strong body.



Meal-time tips

Kittens aged 8-12 weeks need four meals a day, dropping to three a day for 3-6 month olds, and finally two meals a day for cats over six months.

Cats are sensory eaters, using their sense of smell to help them eat. They are also picky and particular, meaning some cats will like a bowl, so their whiskers touch the sides, while others prefer a plate or flat dish, so those whiskers don't touch a thing.

Remember to always provide fresh drinking water at all times for your kitten and keep their food and water dishes away from litter boxes and where they sleep.

Do not give your kitten cow's milk as it can give them an upset tummy. If you wish to feed milk use one that is specially formulated for cats. Stomach upsets that persist for more than 24 hours require veterinary attention.

Hunting for fun

Most cats hunt. It's a simple fact and feeding them more won't stop it. In the wild cats hunt alone, so if they waited until they were hungry before they tried to get food they would run the risk of starving. Instead, cats are always ready to grab a living snack. If you are concerned about this behaviour, you should try other means of prevention, such as restricting the cat's environment, or provide more play toys for distraction.

TRAINING TIPS



From birth to six months is the perfect time for training, as kittens start learning from a very young age. This is the best time to develop your kitten's behaviour and socialisation.

Coming when calling

Now's the time to start training your kitten to come to you when called. Treats usually work best to get your kitten to respond to you. This is helpful for when your kitten is ready to explore outdoors.

Using a litter tray

Most Kiwi cats have access to the outdoors and will do their business somewhere private outside. Until then, your new kitten will require an indoor litter tray positioned well away from their food and water.

Things to think about

Provide your kitten with access to suitable toileting facilities:

- Constant access to the tray day or night
- Location of the tray is important - even minor adjustments could lead to house soiling problems
 - Away from playing children and the dog
 - Your kitten needs to feel safe when using the litter tray, so position it somewhere private
- Hygiene – maintain a clean litter tray, cats don't like being anywhere that's dirty. They'll choose somewhere else if their tray is not clean

It is also essential to have at least one litter tray per cat plus an extra one in a different location to ensure they feel safe and comfortable.



Placement tips for food, water & litter trays

Lots of new cat owners make this mistake: line up the food, the water and the litter tray so that they're all close together and convenient for the cat to find and use. Given a choice, a cat will drink well away from where it eats and will definitely eat and drink far away from where it goes to the toilet. Experiment with the types of bowls you offer your kitten. In general, cats prefer glass, metal and ceramic dishes to plastic ones.

The carrier

You want to encourage your kitten to recognise its carrier as a safe and secure place to be. Placing familiar towels or blankets inside the carrier can make the carrier more inviting.

- Have the carrier available in the house where your kitten is likely to visit and investigate, this will allow it time to accept the carrier as part of the furniture. With a bit of luck, you may even find your kitten uses it as somewhere to relax!

The best way to get your kitten used to travelling in its carrier is to break it down in small steps, with a reward at the end of each step when the carrier is not moving. This will help your kitten to learn that movement is a positive experience.

- Move, stop, reward – step-by-step and build this process up all the way to the car

Check out more on the above topics with helpful quick, easy to follow training videos at International Cat Care: <https://icatcare.org>

- Putting your cat in a cat carrier – video
- Getting your cat used to travel – video
- Encouraging your cat to be happy in a cat carrier – video
- Making your home 'Cat Friendly'
- Litter trays – how to choose the right litter tray, litter and tray position for your cat





"Kittens are angels
with whiskers."

- Alexis Flora Hope



GENERAL HEALTH AND WELL BEING



Although cats are incredibly independent, some cat owners want to give their new family members a little extra attention.

Grooming

From the very first weeks you can help your cat's fur to shine. Use a brush with soft metal bristles and a rubber base, or a soft brush. Groom your kitten every day if it is long haired and two or three times a week otherwise. It will love you for it and purr with pleasure to say thanks.

Dental care

Just like us our cats need dental care too. Many cats suffer from dental problems even at an early age. This is difficult to avoid, as most cats will not relish having their teeth brushed. Some diets have been specially developed to reduce the incidence of dental disease. Now's the time to get your kitten used to being handled and having their mouth checked. It is also best to have your veterinarian check your cat's teeth on an annual basis.

Claws and paws

There are special nail-cutters for claws that get too long. Your veterinarian will be able to let you know which clippers are suitable and just how much to cut. Remember, any surface that is too hot for you to touch is too hot for kitty's feet. Something to be aware of on really hot days.

Ears

Gently check ears regularly. If you notice anything unusual, have them checked by your veterinarian.

Chronic pain and disease

Occasionally cats will suffer from a chronic condition, meaning something that is long-lasting, often for life. Examples are osteoarthritis, allergies, kidney disease and hypertension. Fortunately modern animal pharmacology has developed highly effective medications that can help relieve the pain and symptoms associated with these conditions. Your veterinarian will diagnose any concerns during regular check-ups, or if you take your cat in having noticed something different.

Pet insurance

Unfortunately, **animal health is not subsidised by the government like human health care is**. So whilst there are treatments available, they do cost, and you may wish to consider pet insurance. For a modest monthly premium, you can receive very generous benefits from insurers to cover the costs associated with providing the best pet health care available.

Additional information on general health and wellbeing is available at International Cat Care: <https://icatcare.org>.

- Dental disease in cats
- How to brush your cat's teeth
- Having their ears checked
- Having their mouth checked
- Getting their paws checked and claws clipped
- Having their coat checked
- Having their eyes checked



QUICK REMINDERS



Vaccinations

Vaccinations generally start around 6-8 weeks of age. An initial kitten course needs to be completed (usually by around 16 weeks of age) and then booster vaccinations are required for ongoing protection.

Parasites

Gentle monthly dosing with NEXGARD SPECTRA for Cats can help control fleas, ticks, ear mites and worms including tapeworm and lungworm. If your kitten is less than 8 weeks of age you can use FRONTLINE Spray to manage fleas, as this can be used on kittens as young as three days of age. Stay on top of flea and worm treatment as it is easier to prevent than it is to eliminate an infestation.

Feeding

Adapting the feeding programme as your kitten grows helps to prevent obesity, joint problems and other disease such as diabetes later in life. Speak to your veterinarian for advice on the best types of food during the different life stages of your cat.

Microchipping

Microchipping is generally done at an early age so your kitten may already be microchipped when you acquire it. Remember to update changes such as new owner details and change of address as soon as possible. Ask your veterinarian for further details regarding microchipping at your kitten's first check-up.

Transportation

Even a normally placid cat can become quite frantic whilst being transported. Always use a secure well-ventilated cat carrier, ideally one that has an opening at the top and at one end. It is much easier to lift a scared cat out of this type of carrier.

Desexing

Your kitten will go through puberty between five and eight months. Desexing both 'toms' and 'queens' at an early age will prevent unwanted pregnancies.

Special attention

Most cats love special attention and will purr when they are content. If your four legged friend feels safe and content around you, you'll form an incredible bond.

We hope you found this guide useful for settling in your new kitten.



HOW OLD IS YOUR CAT?



Life stage	Age of cat	Human equivalent age
Kitten Birth - 6 months	0-1 month	0-1 year
	2 months	2 years
	3 months	4 years
	4 months	6 years
	5 months	8 years
	6 months	10 years
Junior 7 months - 2 years	7 months	12 years
	12 months	15 years
	18 months	21 years
	2 years	24 years
Adult 3-6 years	3 years	28 years
	4 years	32 years
	5 years	36 years
	6 years	40 years
Mature 7-10 years	7 years	44 years
	8 years	48 years
	9 years	52 years
	10 years	56 years
Senior 11-14 years	11 years	60 years
	12 years	64 years
	13 years	68 years
	14 years	72 years
Super Senior 15 years+	15 years	76 years
	16 years	80 years
	17 years	84 years
	18 years	88 years
	19 years	92 years
	20 years	96 years
	21 years	100 years
	22 years	104 years
	23 years	108 years
	24 years	112 years
	25 years	116 years

MONTHLY DOSING
Gentle on pets
 TOUGH ON PARASITES





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