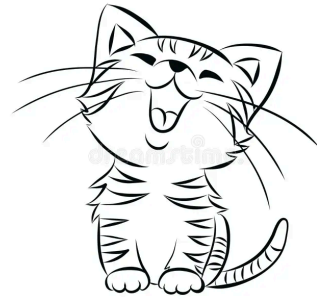




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## **NEW KITTEN HANDOUT**

We would like to congratulate you on the acquisition of your new kitten! Owning a cat can be an extremely rewarding experience, but it is also a large responsibility. We hope this handout will give you the information needed to raise your kitten into a happy, healthy adult cat.

First let us say that we are grateful that you have chosen us to help you with your kitten's health care. If you have questions concerning any subject related to your kitten's health, please feel free to call our hospital. Our veterinarians and staff will be happy to help you.

### **How should I introduce my kitten to its new environment?**

A cat is naturally inclined to investigate its new surroundings. It is suggested that the kitten's area of exploration be initially limited so that you can supervise its activities. After confining the cat to one room for the first few days, you should slowly allow access to other areas of the home.

### **How should I introduce my new kitten to my other cat?**

Most kittens receive a hostile reception from other household pets, especially from another cat. The other cat usually sees no need for a kitten in the household and these feelings are reinforced if it perceives that special favoritism is being shown to the kitten. The existing cat must not feel that it is necessary to compete for food or attention. The new kitten should have its own food bowl and ideally should be fed in a different room from the adult cat. The kitten should not be permitted to eat from the other cat's bowl. Although it is natural to spend time holding and cuddling the kitten, the existing cat will quickly sense that it is being neglected. The new kitten needs lots of love and attention, but the existing cat should not be slighted. In fact, the transition will be smoother if the existing cat is given more attention than normal.

The introduction period will usually last one to two weeks and will have one of three possible outcomes:

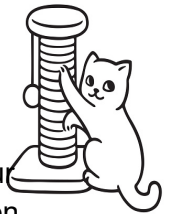
-The existing cat will remain hostile to the kitten. Fighting may occasionally occur, especially if both try to eat out of the same bowl at the same time. This is an unlikely occurrence if competition for food and affection are minimized during the first few weeks.

-The existing cat will only tolerate the kitten. Hostility will cease, but the existing cat will act as if the kitten is not present. This is more likely if the existing cat is very independent, has been an only cat for several years, or if marked competition occurred during the first few weeks. This relationship is likely to be permanent.

-Bonding will occur between the existing cat and the kitten. They will play together, groom each other, and sleep near each other. This is more likely to occur if competition is minimized and if the existing cat has been lonely for companionship.

### **What type of play behavior should I expect from a kitten?**

Encouraging appropriate play activities is very important from the first day in your home. Stalking and pouncing are important play behaviors in kittens and have an important role in proper muscular development. Good toys for cats are lightweight and moveable, and will simulate hunting behavior which is normal for cats. Ideal toys include fishing pole types, balls and even toys in which you can hide food or treats. String, ribbon and balls small enough to be swallowed should be avoided, as ingestion of these items can cause intestinal obstruction. Your kitten should never be encouraged or allowed to pounce on people, stalk feet or chew/suckle on your fingers. These behaviors, although cute in tiny kittens, will encourage aggressive play.



### **Can I train a kitten?**

Contrary to popular opinion, kittens and cats can be trained to encourage appropriate behavior toward people or property. Harsh corrections and punishment, including shaker cans and squirt guns should be avoided. These corrections often cause over-excitement, stress and can even cause your kitten to be afraid of you.

Instead of these methods, food treats can be used as rewards for good behavior. Ask one of our doctors or staff for recommendations on how to train your kitten in a positive manner.

### **What vaccines does my kitten need?**

There are many diseases that are fatal to cats. Fortunately, we have the ability to prevent many of these by the use of vaccines. Vaccines are divided into core vaccines, which every cat should have, and lifestyle vaccines, which may be recommended based on your kitten or cat's lifestyle. Core vaccinations for all cats include Feline Distemper, which protects cats from respiratory and intestinal viruses, and Rabies.



**Feline Distemper vaccine-** Recommended at 8, 12 and 16 weeks. Because of the way this vaccine works, it is important to repeat it several times. This vaccine is repeated after one year, and then every 3 years for life.

**Rabies** - We recommend and the law requires Rabies vaccine for all cats, even those that are kept exclusively indoors. Rabies vaccine is typically given at 16 weeks of age, and yearly thereafter.

**Feline Leukemia Virus** - Feline leukemia (FeLV) is a serious viral disease of cats that can cause immune suppression and is linked to some kinds of cancer. Kittens can be born with feline leukemia, or can catch it from direct contact with other cats. We recommend that all kittens and new cats be tested for feline leukemia before introducing them to your household. We recommend vaccinating all cats that go outdoors for this serious infection. Feline leukemia vaccine can be started after 12 weeks of age. It requires a series of 2 vaccines the first year, and is repeated yearly after that.

### **There are lots of choices of cat food. What should I feed my kitten?**

Diet is extremely important for growth, and there are two important criteria that should be met in selecting food for your kitten. We recommend a NAME-BRAND FOOD made by a national cat food company (not a generic brand), and a form of food RECOMMENDED FOR KITTENS. Generic brands of food often contain many unhealthy fillers and low quality protein and carbohydrate sources. Growth, or kitten food should be fed until your kitten is about 12 months of age. We recommend that you only buy food that has been certified by an independent organization as complete and balanced. In the United States, you should look for food that has been certified by AAFCO, an independent 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.



Kittens should be fed 3 - 4 times daily until 8-12 months and twice daily after that.. Allow access to food for 15 - 30 minutes, then pick up what they do not eat. Meal feeding has many benefits, including weight control, increasing training opportunities (using food treats) and the ability to customize each cat's diet to their individual nutritional needs. Vitamins and other supplements are usually not necessary if your kitten is on quality food.

Cat foods are available in dry, canned, and semi-moist formulations. We know now that kittens and adult cats alike benefit from having at least half of their diet in the form of canned food. Canned food contains higher levels of protein and moisture, both of which are important for cats. (If we think about wild cats, they eat intermittent, high protein meals - it turns out that this is healthiest for our domestic cats as well). When choosing canned food, remember that "pate" type foods are higher in protein than those with gravy.

Many dry foods are now formulated to be higher in protein and may be acceptable, especially for those kittens and cats who especially enjoy crunching their food. Most semi-moist foods are especially high in carbohydrates, and therefore not the healthiest choice for daily consumption.

Table foods are generally not recommended. Because they are generally very tasty, cats will often begin to hold out for these and not eat their well-balanced cat food. If you choose to give your kitten table food, be sure that at least 95% of its diet is good quality commercial kitten food. We enjoy a variety of things to eat in our diet, however, most cats actually prefer not to change from one food to another unless they are trained to do so by the way you feed them. Do not feel guilty if your cat is happy to just eat one food day after day, week after week.

Please ask one of our veterinarians or technicians if you have questions about what to feed your kitten, or about feline nutrition in general. We are happy to discuss your options and recommend the very best food for your kitten.

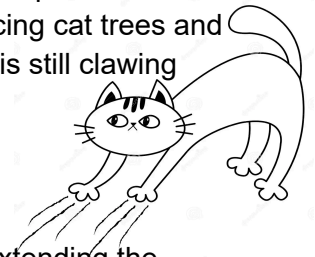
### **What can be done about fleas on my kitten?**

Fleas do not spend their entire life cycle on your kitten. Occasionally, they will jump off and seek another host. Therefore, it is important to kill fleas on your new kitten before they can become established in your house. Many of the flea control products that are safe on adult cats are unsafe to use on kittens less than four months of age. In addition, many flea and tick products recommended for dogs are toxic to cats.

There are many new topical and even oral flea control products that are administered once per month, and which are safe for use on kittens as young as six weeks. The most effective products are available only by veterinary prescription. We will be happy to discuss the various products that are available and help you choose the most appropriate program for your kitten.

### **My kitten is already becoming destructive. What can be done?**

Many kittens can successfully be trained not to claw furniture by a combination of positive reinforcement (often using food treats) and introduction of appropriate and enticing cat trees and houses that encourage their normal inclination to climb and claw. If your kitten is still clawing furniture, you can consider the following options.



*Nail Trimming* - Cat's nails may be clipped by holding them in your lap, gently extending the claw and trimming with a feline nail trimmer. Use food treats and praise to acclimate your cat to this procedure, and never force your cat to submit if they are frightened. Going slow and allowing them to get used to nail trimming will have lifelong rewards. Remember that your cat's nails will regrow and become sharp again within a few days or a week. It may be necessary to clip them two or more times per month.

### **Should I microchip my kitten?**

A microchip is a small metal chip that is inserted under the skin. Each microchip has a number, which can be read by a scanner. Microchips are by far the best way to get your cat returned to you if they ever become lost. Microchips are safe and inexpensive and relatively painless to insert. We recommend microchips for all cats that go outdoors and for indoor cats that have a risk of getting outside.