

# The Kitten book

  
**ROYAL CANIN**

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**ROYAL CANIN**



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# CONGRATULATIONS ...



... You are now the proud owner of a beautiful little kitten and we are delighted for you!

You have made an important decision that will bring you happiness for many years.

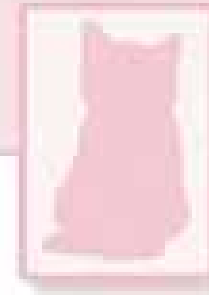
Your cat will share your daily life and home for fifteen to twenty years bringing great delight to children and adults alike.

Cats, proud, noble and unrepentant hunters, have incredible charm that they will not hesitate to use to get what they want.

Many people are attracted by their sleek silhouettes, soft fur and graceful movements, all of which inspire our respect for this exceptional pet.

This Kitten Book, published by Royal Canin, has been specially designed to help you to become a responsible pet owner, answering any questions you may have about your kitten's health, diet and education.

## YOUR KITTEN



**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**DATE OF:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**DATE OF ADOPTION:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**BREED:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**DISTINGUISHING FEATURES:** \_

\_\_\_\_\_

# SETTLING IN

Taken away from its mother brothers and sisters, your kitten will be feeling lonely when you first bring it home. It is essential to prepare for the event to ease the kitten into its new surroundings with its new family.

- Transport**
- Arriving home**
- Introducing the family**
- Equipment**
- Exploring the environment**
- First meals**
- First night**
- Checking the kitten's health**



# Transport

## ARRANGE THE ARRIVAL FOR THE WEEKEND

Weekends are generally quieter and family members usually have more time than the rest of the week. Surrounded by love and care, your kitten will soon realise that you are both master and friend.

## USE A CAT CARRYING CASE

It is dangerous to carry a kitten loose in a car, for both the kitten and other passengers. Ensure safety by using a cat carrying case. You can make it comfortable for the kitten by placing a blanket at the bottom. Remember that the stress of the journey may result in little "accidents", so remember to bring a roll of kitchen towels and a spare mat. Buy a box that is large enough to use when your kitten is a fully grown adult. A dark carrier will be reassuring for your kitten: it will feel protected.



# Arriving home

The first contact with a new environment, new family and any other pets (dogs or cats already in the house) is a very important moment that will affect the success of your kitten's integration into its new home.

Contact should be made gradually and slowly.

Picking up a few new habits and making some small changes will help protect your new kitten from any "traps" that may exist in your home.

All the essential accessories for your kitten's comfort, well-being and feeding should be prepared and ready when the kitten arrives (see page 12).

Think about where in the house you are going to keep all these things.



## AVOID EXCITEMENT

Remember that your kitten has just been brought into a totally unknown environment. Control your own enthusiasm, be gentle and keep your voice low. Avoid passing the kitten from one person to another.

If the kitten is brought up in an excessively noisy or agitated environment (be careful with young children), it may grow up into a fearful and timid cat.

You must find the right balance and play with your kitten to make it a sociable animal.

# Introducing the family

## LEARN TO PROTECT IT

You alone are now responsible for your kitten's safety. You have taken over from its mother and the breeder and your kitten will now turn to you for affection and protection. Protect your kitten: its growth and balance depend on your care.

## WITH CHILDREN

Children often tend to over-cuddle the new arrival, getting excited over it, touching it and pulling its tail. An adult cat is perfectly able to avoid children when it wants to be left alone but a kitten is not. You must explain to your children that the kitten is not a toy, that it needs plenty of sleep and must not be woken up just for a cuddle. It is even recommended to forbid young children to play with the kitten in your absence: this will help to avoid unfortunate scratches.

## THE RIGHT MOVES



Learn how to handle your kitten with care. Sudden or brutal movements might frighten it.

**Carrying:** the best way to catch a kitten is to slide one hand, wide open, under its abdomen, placing the other hand under its back legs for larger breeds.

**Showing authority:** you will not hurt the kitten by picking it up by the scruff of the neck, like its mother did to carry it.



### The wrong moves

- Pulling its tail.
- Picking it up by the head.
- Picking it up by sliding both hands under its front legs.

## WITH OTHER ANIMALS AT HOME

It is important to make any introductions quickly so that the kitten can find its place in the household. There is little point in trying to get a kitten accustomed to rodents or birds, as cohabitation with them is difficult. Introductions to other animals should be made in your presence and gradually. If the situation is handled badly, feelings of frustration and/or jealousy may arise, leading your previous pet to leave home temporarily.

■ **DOGS:** a well socialised dog will accept a new kitten without difficulty. Some older dogs may be less tolerant, but a little scratch from your kitten will dissipate any aggression and the integration will generally be quick and problem-free.



■ **ANOTHER CAT:** things can be more difficult with another cat. An adult cat will not be too happy with the arrival of a new kitten into its territory. It will show its displeasure with threatening attitudes, not wanting its usual routine to be altered. Total acceptance may take from a few days to several months.



During the introductions, refuse any show of aggression. Present the animals during play or mealtime on neutral ground.

Repeat the operation until each cat accepts the presence of the other and all fear starts to subside.

The two cats will establish a hierarchical relationship, which you must respect.



## ➔ THE RIGHT ATTITUDE

- Maintain your previous pet's privileges (dog or cat) for the first few days.
- Reassure it in its own private territory
- Isolate the kitten so that it learns its way around the house gradually and
- does not hide under the furniture.
- Wipe the kitten's cheek or forehead with a cloth and rub its facial secretions along the bottom of the walls in other rooms so that the other animal becomes used to its smell.

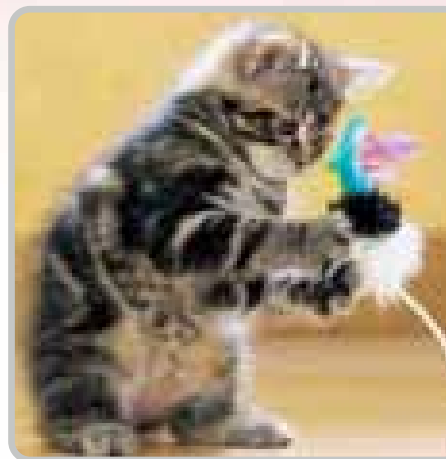
# Equipment



It is important that a kitten should find all its belongings when it first arrives in its new home.

All these accessories are available from most pet shops.

- **BASKET:** a comfortable bed in which the kitten will feel safe (however, the kitten will find its own place to sleep).
- **LITTER TRAY:** a tray with sufficient litter in and a small trowel to remove the soils. Ideally, the litter tray should be covered to keep the soils in the tray and limit bad smells.



■ **TWO DISHES:** a small one for kibbles (an adult cat only eats 60-70g per day) and a larger one for fresh water, which should be available at all times. Leave enough space between the two dishes to prevent the water becoming dirty with food.

■ **SCRATCH POLE:** to avoid damage to your interior.

■ **CAT TREE:** kittens love climbing to give them a higher (dominating) position and twisting around between branches.

This will help limit crazy races and dizzy escapades on your furniture while satisfying the kitten's need for exercise.

■ **COLLAR AND LEAD:** a collar is the best and quickest way of identifying your kitten. For any walks or short trips without a cat carrying case, a lead is essential.

■ **CAT FLAP:** if you allow the kitten to roam free (although not before it has been vaccinated), this is a useful way of avoiding having to open and close the door all day long to let the cat in or out. Some cat flaps have a detection system that controls opening after identification of your pet (usually via an electronic collar). The kitten's first outings into the garden must be carefully supervised. Gradually, the kitten will mark its territory, depositing urine and body odours around the garden and scratching the bottom of tree trunks.

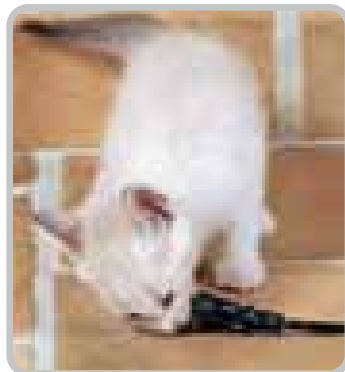
■ **TOYS:** Each item should have its own place in your home (see diagram page 28) and you will have to show your new friend around. Start with the litter tray, so that it can relieve itself immediately, then the bed, which will become its haven of peace and safety and finally, its toys and accessories.



# Exploring the environment

## HOUSEHOLD DANGERS

Prevention is better than cure!  
Your new arrival has come to a strange place: let it find its way around at its own pace. It will need to go out and explore, getting used to the place and its smell to feel safe and at home. Although we may not realise it, there are a number of dangers in a household, and certain gestures or oversights may threaten your kitten's safety. You will be able to protect your kitten from possible domestic accidents by adopting new habits and making certain alterations.



## Domestic Safety Measures

- Hide electric wires
- Cover electric sockets
- Put away pesticides, weed-killers and rat poisons
- Put away all medicine
- Put away all small objects: elastic bands, drawing pins, needles, etc.

Kittens often tend to settle down in cupboards, drawers, laundry baskets, under furniture and very often inside washing machines or tumble driers.

Learn to recognise your new friend's potential hiding places and you will be able to limit the risk of accidents.

Also learn to watch where you walk and check to make sure there is no pretty little ball of fluff in the doorway before shutting the door.



## Habits to adopt

- Do not leave plastic bags or foam objects around.
- Close the lids of the dustbin and toilet. (Be careful with bin bag strings: cats love to swallow these!)
- Place suitable covers on electric hot plates.
- Limit access to the balcony.
- Be careful with the iron, responsible for many burns.

## INDOOR PLANTS

Instinctively, kittens will not eat toxic plants but it is prudent to avoid having toxic plants in your home. For a full list, consult your vet.

### List of the most common potentially toxic plants:

- Cyclamen
- Holly
- Mistletoe
- Wisteria
- Dieffenbachia
- Philodendron
- Azalea
- Rhododendron
- Jerusalem cherry tree
- Oleander
- Poinsettia
- Ivy
- Aucuba
- Sweet peas
- Weeping fig...



# First meals





It is absolutely essential to avoid any sudden change in diet otherwise your kitten may suffer from digestive disorders. For the first week, it is best to give the kitten the same food as at the breeder's. Transition to another type of food is possible once the stress of arrival into a new environment has been overcome.

When you pick up your kitten, find out about its diet (number of meals/day, rationed or on demand) and what it ate.

To change diet, the new food should be phased in over a week to replace the previous food.

Gradual transition reduces the risks of loose stools and diarrhoea, which are harmful to the kitten's development.

## Food transition table

-  Day 1 & 2:  
75% "previous" food  
+ 25% new food
-  Day 3 & 4:  
50% "previous" food  
+ 50% new food
-  Day 5 & 6:  
25% "previous" food  
+ 75% new food
-  Day 7:  
100% new food



**Never give table scraps during your meals** or the kitten will get used to begging and stealing from the table. The food you choose for your kitten should contain all the nutrients it needs for its growth period (up to about one year). It is essential to adapt the type of food and daily ration to the kitten's age. Cats tend to eat small amounts of food at each meal, making kibbles an ideal solution as they can be left out without going bad. Make sure that your kitten always has fresh water available and place its food and drink in a quiet area.

# The first night

First separation, first experience alone: the first night is often very difficult for a kitten.

## Where should it sleep?

Its real place is not in your bedroom, but a cat will never refuse to sleep with you. Just bear in mind that it will be difficult to stop an adult cat from doing what it did as a kitten. Moreover, as it grows up, it will start going out and picking up parasites. Perfect hygiene must be ensured to avoid affecting other members of the household. A cat's real place is in its basket, in its own place. The first night, do not give in to the temptation of going to get the kitten, even if it meows. Remain firm, in general the kitten will get used to its new sleeping place in just three or four days.



# Checking the kitten's health

Kittens are generally adopted at around three months old, once they are relatively autonomous, have had their first vaccinations and have been identified by a tattoo or micro chip. There are certain legal obligations to be fulfilled when buying a kitten: the seller has to provide all the documents required for the transaction and the buyer must pay the agreed price. If you purchase a kitten (particularly a pure breed), the breeder will give you a identification card and a health record card with the vaccinations and examinations carried out by the vet. If you buy your kitten from a pet shop, take time to talk to the manager to find out the origin and background of the kittens on sale. In any case, you must take it to the vet.

## • First trip to the vet

The first visit to the vet (usually before the kitten is first acquired) is not just a simple consultation, but a detailed examination of the kitten's main organic functions.



This visit to the vet's should be considered as a validation of your purchase. The examination, as detailed as possible, confirms your new pet's state of health and eliminates all risk of undetected disorders (illness, malformation, etc.).

If your kitten was given to you, it is also necessary to ensure that all the necessary vaccinations and examinations are carried out.

Your vet will compile a health record about your kitten and advise you on its diet, hygiene and any behavioural traits typical of its breed.

### ● Identification

Kittens can be identified in two ways : tattooing or microchip implants. The owner's details are recorded in a central file and if your lost or runaway cat is found, you can be warned. Check regulations concerning identification with your veterinarian who will give you information on how to proceed.



## BEHAVIOUR

### Personality tests

These tests are very simple to conduct and will give you a better idea of your new friend's temperament.

#### ● Socialisation test

Watch your kitten from a distance:

- if it runs to play with your shoe laces or rub up against you, it has been properly socialised.
- if it is timid and tries to run away whenever you approach it, it has not been properly socialised. It is essential to socialise your kitten, giving it more toys and living space and playing with it.

#### ● Aluminium foil ball test

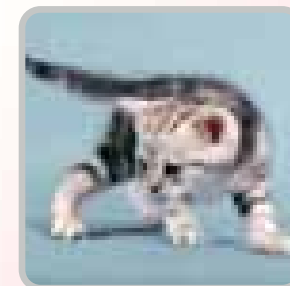
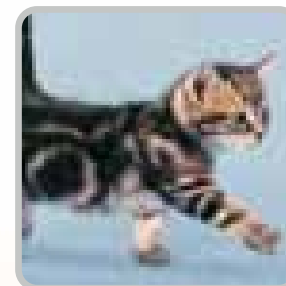
Roll a ball of aluminium foil in front of your kitten. A slow reaction is an expression of its fear or indifference to external movements.

#### ● Dominance test

A kitten that lets you stroke its tummy while it lies on its back has assimilated parental authority: it will be docile and easy to live with. If on the other hand, the kitten fights or tries to scratch, its temperament makes it prone to unexpected reactions, similar to the petting and biting syndrome.

#### ● Noise test

Clap your hands loudly out of the kitten's sight. If it is curious about the noise, but remains calm, it has been brought up in a rich, stimulating environment. If it runs away, you will have to introduce it gradually to noises and contact with the outside world, slowly revealing a multitude of new sensations.



# EDUCATION

Most of the kitten's education will be completed during the period between birth and the age of six months. In fact, most behavioural patterns are acquired by the age of three months, thanks to the dominant role of the mother, brothers and sisters. Thus, when you adopt a kitten, your contribution to its educational foundations is rather limited. It does however involve your responsibility: you must complete the kitten's education within its new environment and correct any unsuitable behaviour.

**Favourable environment**  
**Unfavourable environment**  
**Learning**



# Favourable environment

A favourable environment is one in which your cat is easily socialised, getting used to the people and elements around it.

## PRESENCE OF THE MOTHER

If the kitten has been raised with its mother, it is recommended to leave it with her until 3 months. Its education will be more complete and the kitten will be more at ease in its new home.

### ➔ What not to do

You must not adopt a kitten under 2 months. A kitten that was taken away from its mother too soon will be more fragile and difficult to educate.



## EFFECTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

A kitten that has been handled by several people from an early age will be more open and curious. Similarly, if you accustom it to the various noises of daily life, it will settle into its new home without difficulty.

# Unfavourable environment

If the kitten is being raised in a place with few sources of stimulation (e.g. in an isolated area), it is recommended to adopt at the age of seven weeks and immediately seek contact with other cats.

## ABSENCE OF THE MOTHER

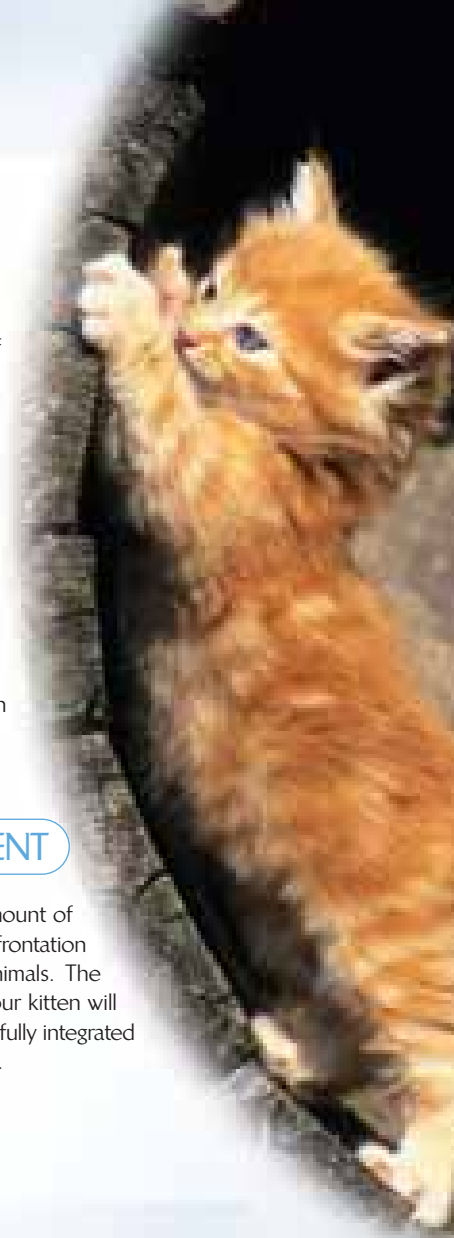
The kitten must be educated quickly to prevent the appearance of nervousness or depressive tendencies. It must be taught the different social rules to be respected and the behaviour required for its future life in a human home.

## INFLUENCES OF THE ENVIRONMENT

The kitten must be socialised by offering a maximum amount of external stimulation: being held by different people, confrontation with noises of varying intensity, contact with other animals. The more stimulating its environment, the more balanced your kitten will be as an adult cat. It may take longer for the kitten to be fully integrated into its new home, but the end results will be the same.

# Learning

Kittens learn in two different ways: initially by imitating their mother, then later by experimentation. In this case, the kitten acts and then experiences the consequences of its actions. If it likes the consequence, it will tend to repeat its actions.



## LEARNING TO BITE AND SCRATCH

A kitten must understand the limits that must not be exceeded as soon as possible before its weapons (claws and teeth) are fully developed. In play fights, the kitten will be bitten and scratched, which will teach it to measure the intensity of its own actions.



## LEARNING TO PLAY

Play is a major factor of the kitten's socialisation.

Games encourage exploration of the surroundings and develop the kitten's physical abilities.

Play is also a remedy for solitude. However, a toy alone is useless: it only becomes interesting when it moves, rolls or slides into a place that is difficult to access.

## LEARNING TO HUNT

In the wild, cats learn to hunt at a very early age, often at just one month, when the kitten first adopts the hunting postures. However, it is only at around six weeks, when the mother brings back prey, that it begins to understand what is edible. By the age of two months, kittens have controlled their fear and acquired their hunting behaviours. A six-month old kitten is theoretically able to survive alone.

## HOUSE-TRAINING

Mother cats teach their kittens where to relieve themselves. Kittens are generally house-trained at around five-six weeks and use their litter tray, often spending long periods of time covering their excrement. If the kitten is not trained, place it on its litter. Dig a hole with its paw, then get it to practice covering its eliminations.

Repeat this operation once or twice and your kitten should be house-trained.

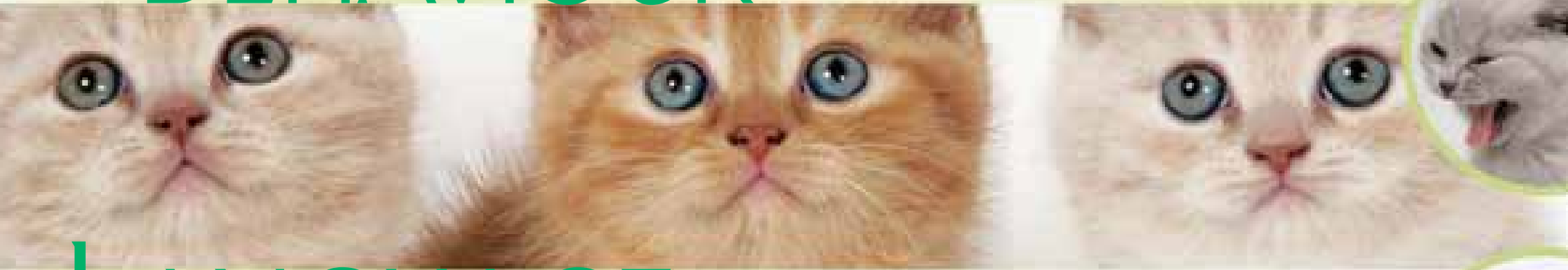


### Different types of games that kittens like to play

Game theme	Benefits and assimilated behaviour
Fighting	Attack and defence behaviour
Wrestling	Self control of biting Respect of hierarchy
Side stepping	Territorial protection and hunting
Chase	Territorial protection and hunting
Rearing up	Territorial protection and hunting
Boxing	Optimisation of visual and touch sensitivity Self-control of scratching
Bird	Hunting
Mouse	Hunting
Fish	Fishing



# BEHAVIOUR



# LANGUAGE

**Kitten behaviour**  
**Kitten language**



# Kitten behaviour

In order to live in perfect harmony with a kitten, you have to understand the organisation of its territory, its routine and its main concerns. Once it has defined, organised and marked its territory, your kitten will spend most of its time sleeping. When it is not asleep, its main occupations will be playing, hunting, eating and being cuddled.



## ORGANISING ITS TERRITORY

**A cat's territory is exclusive and its quality is more important than its size.**

In the country, cats take over an area with an approximate radius of 50m around the house, i.e. around 8000m<sup>2</sup>. Their field of action however, may stretch up to 1km. The territory of a female-cat may be up to one hectare and that of a male up to ten hectares. In town, ten cats may share a third of a hectare, provided their territories do not overlap. Depending on where you live (a house in the country or a flat in town), your kitten's territory will overlap with your house and its immediate environment, your home or just a single room. In any case, it will prefer a perfectly organised, furnished of 35m<sup>2</sup> studio, structured to provide a multitude of play opportunities, overhead activities and hiding places to an open area of 200m<sup>2</sup> that is empty of furniture or hideouts.



## ➔ Roosting cat

**Kittens love to be high up.**

**If your home does not have safe areas that are located high, try to create some by altering your environment slightly or buying a cat tree.**

Your kitten will organise its life in your home around four different areas.

You must respect this organisation and not interfere with it or your kitten may suffer certain behavioural disorders.

### ● Eating area

This area must be kept separate from the toilet area (litter tray) and your own dining area. Do not place the cat's food dishes in your dining room or you kitten may confuse your plate with its own dish and come begging at the table.

### ● Rest area

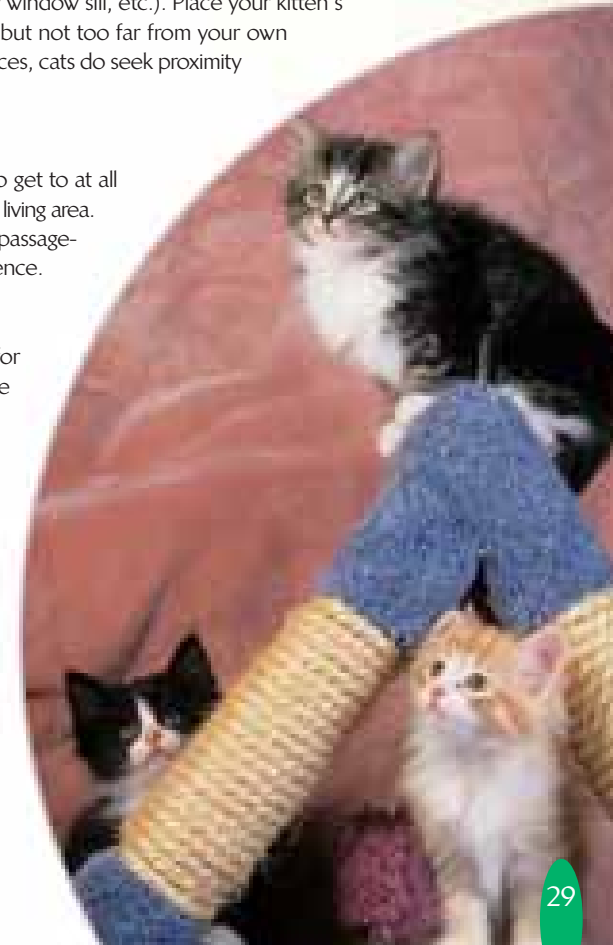
Cat resting places change during the day, depending on the sun and heat sources they seek out (radiator, fireplace, sunny window sill, etc.). Place your kitten's sleeping basket in one of these places but not too far from your own living area because, in spite of appearances, cats do seek proximity with their masters.

### ● Toilet area

This area must be easy for your kitten to get to at all times, away from its food dishes and your living area. A recess or room corner, away from a passage-way will reduce some of the inconvenience.

### ● Play area

This is the largest area and is used for living and relaxing. It should be a place where the kitten can run around and reach high places (tables, wardrobes, shelves, armchair backs, etc.). Cats love being on a level with their master's face. They can then rub up against you as if you were another cat.



## THE SLEEPING/PLAYING/HUNTING TRILOGY



### ● Let sleeping kittens lie

Sleeping is an essential activity for a kitten. It is important to leave it sleep, because hormones, that are essential to its growth, are secreted during sleep. Your kitten will alternate between light and deep sleep or paradoxical sleeps, when it dreams. Kittens dream for about 20-25% of their total sleeping time.

From the age of two months, the sleeping routine will gradually change to that of an adult cat, i.e. an average of 13-16 hours per day, divided into several periods.

During light sleep phases, your kitten is just napping and remains attentive to the slightest noise. This light sleep is often followed by a deep sleep cycle during which the kitten will completely relax.



### Important

It is recommended not to wake a kitten from deep sleep to avoid affecting its growth.



### ● Playing

Exercise is essential for your kitten's well-being. Play will channel its energy, which will then not be used for destructive action but for toning its muscles.

Its favourite exercises will be those that enable it to climb, perch, jump, sharpen its claws and play with hanging or rolling moving objects (balls of paper, synthetic fur mouse, hard ball with bell, etc.). Play and hunting are two closely related activities in cats, in that most of the games they play are similar to predatory activities: the toy is often assimilated to prey. Thus, be careful not to play with your kitten with your hand

### ● Hunting

A cat's predatory instinct may result in a certain amount of natural damage, that may not be appreciated by your neighbours (the kitten's play area may incorporate nearby houses too) and aggressive behaviour in relation to your moving hands or feet.

Be gentle but firm in reprimanding these games to teach the kitten that this behaviour is unacceptable.



### Caution

Your kitten may become infested with worms from its prey, particularly mice. Check its weight and general condition regularly. If in doubt, consult your vet.



# Kitten language

The cat's image as a solitary feline is no reflection of its easy communication with its fellow cats or humans. Kittens are excellent communicators.

They use different modes of communication depending on whether they want to make themselves understood by other animals or by people.

Although most communication modes are totally acceptable, one must be limited: the marking of its territory.

## COMMUNICATION WITH PEOPLE

Your kitten understands better what you think than what you say.

Although your kitten only understands a few words of your language, it is very sensitive to your body language and attitudes. It can understand your feelings (suffering or joy) and even anticipate your reactions.

Your kitten will communicate with you constantly via a complete, explicit and highly developed body language.

### ● With its head

The shape of its eyes and position of its ears are very precise indicators of what the cat wants to express.

**EARS STRAIGHT**, open in front and round eyes: neutral.

**POINTED EARS**, turned sideways, frowning eyes: anger.

**FLATTENED EARS**, round, dilated pupils: aggression.

**EARS OPEN IN FRONT**, straight, eyes partly open, slit pupils: happiness.



### ➔ The importance of whiskers

Never cut a cat's whiskers as they are used to feel around the cat's environment and communicate with other cats.



### ● With its body

**It rubs its head or tail against your legs:** this indicates happiness. Your kitten feels good near you and wants to share its smell with you.

**It kneads your knees for a long period:** intense pleasure. The kitten expresses the joy it felt while suckling. The movement of its paws around its mother's teats was used to stimulate the milk flow. By reproducing this movement, associated with pleasure, it identifies you with its mother.

**It rolls on the ground whenever it sees you:** submission. Cats will only adopt this position with the people they trust completely: it is an act of submissions associated with a previous moment of relaxation.

**It wags its tail:** this movement expresses excitement. If you stroke your kitten and it starts to wag its tail, stop, because your kitten does not like it and is showing its displeasure.



### ➔ Caution

Unlike a dog, a cat that wags its tail is not necessarily happy.

### ● With noises

**Purring:** submission and contentment. Kittens start to purr during their first feeds, expressing both great satisfaction and total dependence on their mother. If it purrs with you, your kitten is expressing its submission and contentment.

**Growling and whistling:** intimidation. Cats use these sounds in situations of aggression: they are signals of intimidation in its defensive strategy.

**Miaowing:** or mewling. There are a great variety of sounds, each with their own meaning. A cat may mew to express a request, complaint, confusion, refusal, etc. You will soon learn to recognise their meanings by observing your kitten.

### ● With gestures

**Rubbing:** integration in its territory. Kittens use this gesture to deposit hormonal secretions, pheromones, from the glands beneath the ear on your ankles. Your kitten is sharing its odour with you, expressing its well-being and making you part of its territory.

## LANGUAGE WITH OTHER ANIMALS

Kittens have a variety of subtle means of communication enabling them to detect the presence and level of aggressiveness of other animals. It can then easily decide to accept or refuse contact with the other animal.

### ● Marking its territory

It is perfectly natural for a kitten to mark its territory: it is a means of communication. A territory is marked by leaving odours, hormonal secretions or scratch marks.

■ **SPRAYING:** spraying urine and/or leaving uncovered faeces is by far the most common method of marking a territory. Male cats in particular are prone to such behaviour, often after experiencing stress or emotion (transport, intrusion by another cat, etc.). This means of marking the territory is intended to inspire fear of intruders, causing them to flee. The cat lets out a powerful, horizontal spray of urine, generally onto a vertical surface (tree, bottom of a wall, sofa, and anything that protrudes beyond it).

■ **HORMONAL SECRETIONS:** specific hormones, called pheromones, play an important role in the kitten's sexual and territorial behaviour. The scent is rubbed onto an object or another animal (dog or cat), enabling the territory to be shared. It is a sign of acceptance and will only occur if the kitten feels perfectly safe.



### Sterilisation

Early sterilisation of male kittens helps limit urine spraying in the house.



■ **SCRATCHING:** no one appreciates these marks left by your kitten on your furniture, wallpaper, sofa or trees. This type of marking is often associated with spraying to mark a cat's territory.

You can use behavioural therapy to deal with the problem: prevent access to the place of scratching, alter the type of support, punish from a distance (using a water pistol, for example), etc.

### ● Meeting other animals

If a meeting is inevitable but not wanted, the kitten will set about implementing a dissuasive strategy, mainly based on bluff: crying, screaming, showing its teeth, hitting out with its paws, etc.

It is important to monitor any teeth marks or scratches on non-neutered male kittens after a confrontation since certain injuries may become infected.

Sterilisation can improve sociability significantly and may be the answer to many "neighbourhood" problems.

Surgery is possible from the age of two months, but usually carried out before puberty at around six months. Ask your vet for advice.



# GROWTH & DIET



The growth period is a tricky moment that affects the well-being and health of the future adult cat. Many factors affect growth and diet plays a prime role. The cat's diet must take into account the specific digestive characteristics (sense of taste and smell) of the feline species. Only specifically developed food can guarantee provision of all the nutrients required for your cat's health, whatever its age, breed or level of activity.

## Kitten growth

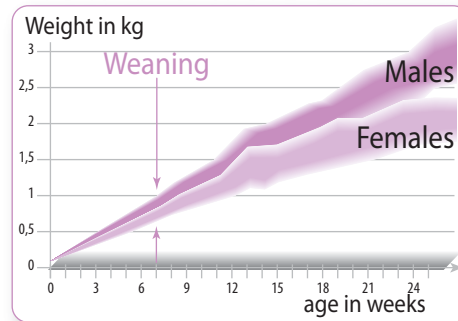
### Factors influencing kitten growth



# Kitten growth

A kitten's growth can be measured by observing its daily weight gain (+ 10 to 30g per day, depending on the breed). Growth is at its most intense between four and five months, reaching around **100g per week**.

It is important to weigh the kitten always at the same time. Kittens should be weighed daily before weaning, but from the age of two months, weighing is recommended on a weekly or fortnightly basis.



Growth curve of Siamese and oriental kittens (Dubos 1997)

## ENVIRONMENTAL INFLUENCES

- **HYGIENE:** mediocre hygiene at birth will make the mother more fragile and her kittens will suffer.
- **STRESS:** as for all young beings, kittens grow during their sleep. Even though kittens sleep less after two months, the quality of their sleep continues to be very important.

### Important

Your kitten's weight should not stagnate or fall. It is best to weigh the kitten regularly: it should gain 15g per day on average. If not, you must give it formula milk. Caution: kittens may continue to suckle even when the mother has stopped producing milk. Suckling is therefore not a sign that the kitten is eating.

# Factors influencing kitten growth

## THE SPECIFIC CHARACTERISTICS OF KITTENS

- **BREED:** the bigger the breed of kitten, the longer the growth period.
- **GENDER:** males tend to have a greater growth potential than females and their growth period lasts a few weeks longer. They become heavier than females between six and twelve weeks.
- **GENES:** kittens receive genetic material at birth, half from the father and half from the mother. The size, corpulence and other morphological specificities of the parents and lineage can also affect growth.
- **HORMONES :** after the birth, growth depends on the correct synthesis of certain hormones. Early sterilisation has no effect on a kitten's growth rate or ultimate adult size.



## FOOD QUALITY

Although at birth the kitten's digestive tract is suited to milk, its digestive abilities will change until it is no longer able to digest lactose (the sugar in milk) in adulthood. Balanced quantities of protein, lipids, carbohydrates, minerals and trace elements are necessary to ensure harmonious growth. These nutrients should be provided in a form that is suited to the cat's physiological and digestive characteristics.

The smell of the food determines its level of palatability: dry food **must take this requirement into account.**

From ten days old, the kitten recognises the four basic flavours: acidic, bitter, salty and sweet. However, they are not attracted by sweet flavours. .

### ➔ Diet transition

Sudden changes in diet can cause digestive disorders (loose stools, diarrhoea).

A transition period should be allowed over a week, gradually replacing the previous food by the new food (see page 16).



### ➔ Do not feed with meat only

Although cats are strictly carnivorous, in the wild, they do not only eat the muscles or liver. They also ingest the bones and guts of their prey, which are often herbivorous or omnivorous. They thus consume vegetable matter occasionally, providing them with a roughly balanced diet.

### ➔ Table scraps: fat and sauces are harmful for their health

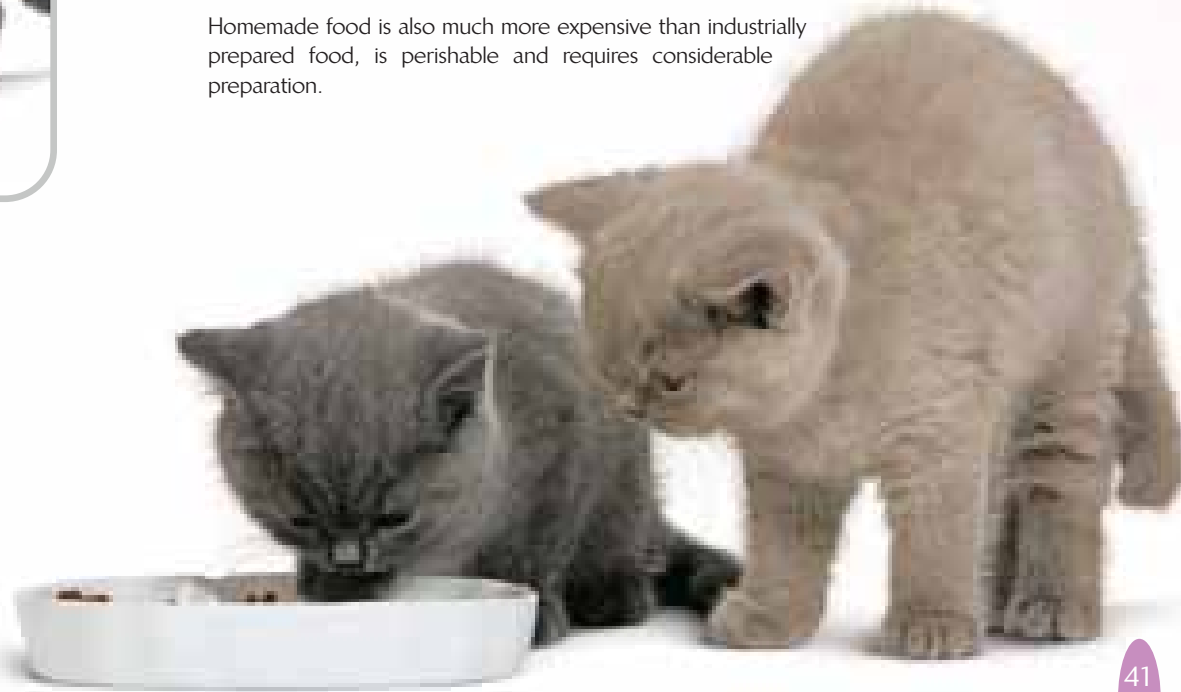
This type of food should be avoided in order to preserve your kitten's health. Aside from the nutritional unbalance they cause (resulting in dull fur, risk of excessive weight, irregular growth), your kitten will assimilate your food with its own food and come begging whenever you sit down to eat or prepare your meals.

## DIFFERENT TYPES OF FOOD

### ● Homemade food

This is the meal that you prepare yourself from ingredients like meat you have cooked, rice and vegetables. Although you can control the quality of its composition easily enough, you cannot be sure of its nutritional balance, or that you are providing enough of each of the nutrients that your kitten needs for its growth, particularly in terms of minerals and vitamins.

Homemade food is also much more expensive than industrially prepared food, is perishable and requires considerable preparation.



### ● Manufactured food

The main advantage of this type of food is that you are sure of providing your kitten with all the nutritional elements it needs to grow and develop properly. It is prepared with care and the same hygiene rules are applied as for human food. The cost per serving is much lower than home-made food and no preparation time is required.



### ■ It comes in two forms:

- wet food (tins or trays) containing 80% water and packed in 300-400g servings

- dry food (kibbles) containing generally 8-10% water. Kibbles therefore last longer, which means they are ideal for feline eating habits: cats tend to snack, eating 10-16 times a day

It is best to respect the recommended daily intake to avoid over-feeding or under-feeding your kitten, which may affect its development.



### ➔ Urinary stones in urine

Cats that eat kibbles are not more prone to urinary stones or cystitis than other cats, provided they have a constant supply of fresh water available.

### ➔ Fresh water

Regardless of the type of food you give your kitten, make sure it has constant access to a bowl of fresh, clean water.



## THE KITTEN'S DIET

Kittens grow quickly, so their food must be very high in energy.

Their needs are high until the age of about twelve weeks. At this age, they consume around 3 times more energy than an adult cat, i.e. 200-250 kcal/kg.

The kitten's nutritional requirements change as it gets older.

### ● Kittens under four months

Although kittens are not generally completely weaned before seven weeks, from four-five weeks, kittens can start to eat solid food. To simplify the transition, food should be proposed initially as a broth made with hot water or formula milk.

### ● Kittens over four months

Once the permanent teeth are in place, kittens need kibbles that are large enough to encourage it to chew. Their nutritional requirements remain specific until the age of one year, by which time they will have stopped growing.

The amount of growth food to be given increases until they reach adulthood.



## THE ADULT CAT'S DIET

The diet of adult cats must take into account the following parameters, which depend on the cat: age, lifestyle, breed, specificities. Each cat has its own dietary requirements!

### ● Breed cats

For example, Persian cats have a unique facial structure: they cannot pick up their food in the same way as other cats because of the unique position of their upper and lower jaws. Specific kibbles have been developed to make eating easier.

### ● Access to the outdoors

Adult cats that have more opportunities for outside exercise should have a more energy-rich diet. Specially formulated dry food can fulfil these specific requirements, enabling your cat to stay healthy and protecting its immune system.

### ● An indoor life

Some cats cannot or do not want to leave their master's homes. Such cats do not need as much energy as they take little or no exercise. Their diet must be designed to allow for regular intestinal transit and stimulate the natural elimination of the hairballs that form when a cat spends a lot of time cleaning itself.



■ **NUTRITION FOR FUR AND SKIN:** the quality of a cat's fur is the first sign of health. Any emotional, sanitary or dietary stress can affect the appearance of the fur. Its shine is related to the composition of the sebum, a natural wax secreted by the sebaceous glands. The production and quality of sebum are affected by diet: cats need unsaturated fatty acids to keep their skin and fur healthy. The correct amounts of essential nutrients encourage cellular exchange. Vegetable oils and fish oils are good sources of unsaturated fatty acids.

■ **A TENDENCY TO BECOME OVERWEIGHT:** excessive weight is harmful for a cat's health (1 in 4 cats is overweight). Sterilisation and lack of exercise can lead to weight gain in adult cats. To help your pet get back into shape and give it tonus and vitality, some foods contain less fat, while providing a high proportion of protein and energy so that the cat loses weight without losing muscle.

## MATURITY

Cats live for about fifteen years on average, although some may live for more than twenty years. Dietary changes are necessary to compensate for its diminishing digestive capacities, sense of smell, taste and greater difficulty in chewing.

# GROOMING



Cleaning, along with sleeping, is one of the kitten's main occupations. Kittens start to wash themselves at just fifteen days old, using their rough tongues and paws.

The kitten licks its front paws and uses them as wash mitts, even reaching the ears

The back paws enable the cat to scratch its back more easily and more thoroughly and also help with cleaning the ears.

**Caring for the coat**

**Clipping the claws**

**Bathing**

**Cleaning the eyes**

**Cleaning the nose**

**Cleaning the ears**

**Oral hygiene**

**Digestive hygiene**



# Caring for the coat

Brushing your kitten will soon become a special moment for both master and pet. A beautiful coat is greatly appreciated in a kitten being both a sign of good health as well as of the level of care it receives. Brushing is also a good opportunity to examine the kitten carefully for any external parasites.

## ■ BRUSHING IS ESSENTIAL

Brushing is necessary to remove the dead hairs that remain in the fur to prevent the kitten from swallowing them. Hard licking may result in too much hair being ingested and hair balls forming in its stomach. Hair balls can cause vomiting and occasionally result in blockage of the digestive transit in the most serious cases.

## ➔ Beauty contests

There is a special category for kittens from the age of three months. If you are interested in beauty contests, it is best to take your kitten from an early age so that it will get used to them and grow into a good “show” cat.



## ➔ Be careful with combs

Combs go deeper into the fur than brushes but there is a greater risk of irritating the skin. Choose your comb carefully.



You must get your kitten accustomed to brushing as soon as possible. This ritual will soon become a shared moment of pleasure and complicity. It is recommended to end your grooming session with a cuddle or play time.

### ● Short-haired cats

Weekly brushing is sufficient. Before brushing, you can massage the fur against the direction of hair growth with a grooming glove to remove dead hairs and tone the skin. Use a soft brush, if possible with natural silk bristles, to avoid damaging the fur.

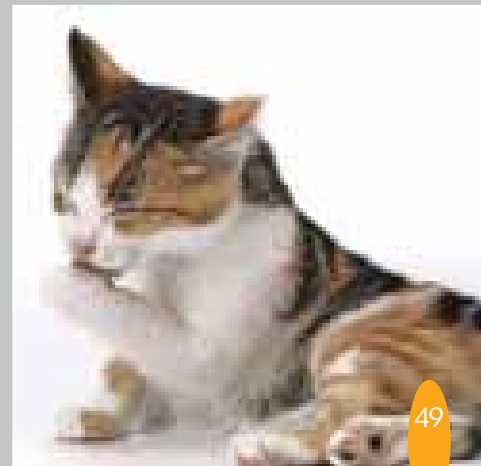
### ● Mid-length haired and Persian cats

A few minutes' brushing every day will avoid the formation of knots and locks and remove dirt. A large toothed metal comb is best for this.

Always comb your kitten with and then against the direction of growth to gently remove dead hairs and any tiny knots. If a knot resists, be gentle and patient rather than pulling hard and tearing out a clump of fur.

## ➔ Hair balls

The regurgitation of hair balls is a physiological phenomenon that should not be confused with vomiting caused by illness or poisoning. Certain adult cats may require food that has been specially developed to improve digestive transit and eliminate ingested hairs.



The areas behind the ears and ruff cannot be reached by the kitten's tongue. These areas are therefore most prone to knots and require particular care. To finish your grooming session, brush along the length of the tail (with then against the direction of hair growth to give more volume).

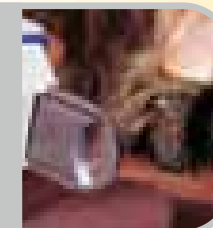
### ➔ Moulting periods

In spring and summer, more regular brushing is required and extra care with a rubber massage mitt then comb to free any dead hair more easily. You can also use a chamois cloth.



### ➔ Claw clipping

It is best to cut a small amount several times than to make a big cut and reach the fleshy part of the claw.



#### ■ HOW TO CLIP CLAWS?

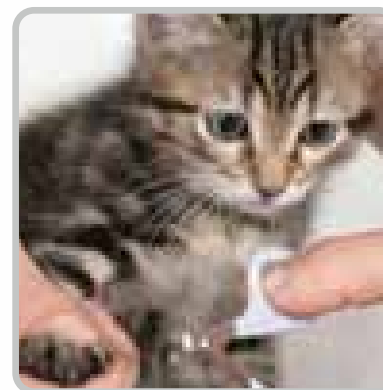
Claw clipping is completely painless but never fun for your kitten. It is therefore very important to start early to limit its apprehension.

Choose a comfortable place to sit and place the kitten on your lap, holding its body between your thighs. Between clips, we recommend **soothing your kitten by caressing its belly.**

"Guillotine" clippers are the best tool for trimming claws. Cut the white tip of the claw, staying well away from the end of the pink triangle, the fleshy part at the base of the claw. Beyond this limit, you may cause intense pain and bleeding to your kitten.

A kitten's claws are a good indicator of its health. Claws that are too hard or too soft are signs of possible malnutrition or bacterial attack.

If your kitten bites its nails, it may be in an anxious phase that can result in depression. In this case, consult your vet.



## Clipping the claws

Kittens use mostly their claws to mark their territory. To avoid the extensive damage that may be caused without eliminating its natural behaviour, it is best to clip its claws.

Before doing it yourself, ask your vet to explain which part of the nail you can cut without causing pain and bleeding.



# Bathing



## ■ CAUTION: NOT ALL BREEDS LIKE WATER!

Very few cats are attracted to water but bathing remains an important part of the care ritual for mid-length and long haired cats. You must familiarise your kitten with bathing from an early age.

## ■ BE GENTLE BUT FIRM

The first time, you have to get your cat acquainted with water without scaring it. Wet the kitten with a wash mitt or sponge

to start with. If it reacts with hostility, stop and try again a few days later until the kitten accepts the water.

## ■ RINSE WELL

Having filled the bottom of the bath or a basin in the shower with water at 36-37°C, place your kitten in the water, reassuring it constantly with caresses and gentle words.

Use a bowl to pour water over its back, taking care not to pour water into its eyes or ears.

Do not wet its head. It is important to use a specific cat shampoo, whose acidity is suited to the cat's skin and fur (available from the chemist or pet shop).

Then wash the fur, insisting on any dirty areas, before rinsing well with a bowl or shower head.

Wrap your kitten in a warm clean towel to dry its fur all over.

You can use a hair-dryer to dry the fur completely (not too hot, not too close, gently).

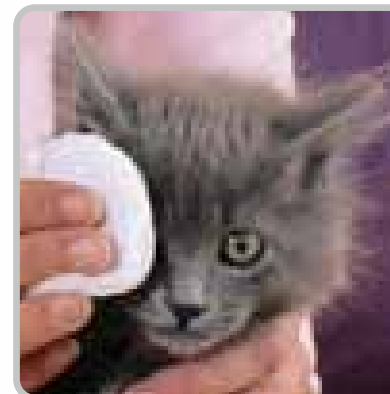


## Important

- Never use human shampoo: it may be toxic for the kitten.
- Never use dye.
- Do not ask someone who is not competent to wash your kitten.



# Cleaning the eyes



Some cats (those with flat faces, for example) secrete tears that may leave marks under the eye. You can clean the fur with a compress soaked in eye lotion. Do not use cotton wool because it leaves threads; prefer pharmaceutical compresses soaked in veterinarian serum, wiping from the inside of the eyelid towards the outside. In the event of unusual secretions or redness, consult your vet.

# Cleaning the nose

A healthy kitten's nose should always be damp and clean.

Some cats may have nasal secretions in the corners of their nostrils. You can easily remove such secretions with a compress or tissue and some warm water.



## Important

Consult your vet in the event of nasal discharge or lesions around the nose.

# Cleaning the ears

The ears must be examined regularly. If they are dirty, all you have to do is drizzle a little ear solution inside and massage the outer ear. In the event of particularly severe, unpleasant smelling discharge, consult your vet for diagnosis. He/she will recommend the appropriate treatment.

## Important

Never use cotton buds or water- or alcohol-based solutions to clean the ears.



# Oral hygiene

Milk teeth appear from the second to sixth week, adult teeth from 4 months.

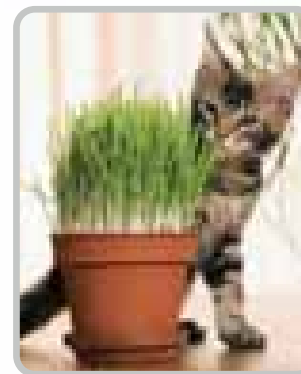
Tartar tends to accumulate on the teeth, causing inflamed gums and bad breath.

In extreme cases, poor oral hygiene may result in lost teeth.

Your vet will advise you and may de-scale the teeth using an ultra-sound machine.

## Anti-tartar effects

Some kibbles have a particular texture and contain substances that trap the calcium in the saliva, slowing the formation of tartar.



# Digestive hygiene

There is an ancestral behaviour in some cats to eat grass: they are sensitive to certain flavours and smells in grass.

**Grass acts as a purge for kittens:** it may cause regurgitation, which is necessary for its digestive health. It does not eliminate the need for deworming.



# GOING TO THE VET



It is essential to protect your kitten against certain illnesses by vaccinating it and keeping its health records up to date.

Your kitten's health records must be presented whenever you put your cat in a cattery while you are away or if you travel abroad with your cat.

## **Choosing your vet**

**First visit or purchase visit**

**Vaccinating your kitten**

**Booster shots for adult cats**

**Sterilisation**

**Internal parasites**

**External parasites**



# Choosing your vet

Here is some advice to help you choose your vet if you do not want to keep seeing the vet used by the breeder from whom you purchased your kitten.

Your choice should be based on both the simplicity of check-up consultations as well as possible emergency visits.



## The main selection criteria are:

- Your confidence in the vet,
- Proximity to your home,
- Cleanliness and upkeep of the facilities,
- The vet's interest in cats,
- Reminders sent to patients for vaccinations,
- File updating,
- Presence of a consultation assistant,
- Presence of surgical facilities,
- Availability of an emergency service,
- Nutritional advice.

## The first visit or purchase visit

### • You bought your kitten

This consultation validates the purchase of your kitten and protects you in the event of unsoundness (see Checking the kitten's health, page 17). If a problem arises, it guarantees the reimbursement of your kitten and any veterinary costs incurred.

### • Your kitten is given to you

Your vet will examine your kitten thoroughly, perform any necessary vaccinations and prescribe deworming treatment.

## Vaccinating your kitten

Your kitten must be vaccinated to protect against certain serious illnesses: coryza, feline Panleukopenia or typhus, feline leukaemia virus and rabies. Kittens should be vaccinated after the age of six weeks because until then, their maternal antibodies neutralise the vaccination antigens.

The ideal age for initial vaccination is between six and eight weeks. The traditional shots protect against typhus and coryza.

Ask your vet about vaccinating against feline leukaemia virus and rabies: the need for these vaccinations depends largely on the cat's lifestyle. An anti-rabies shot is required for travel within the European Union. A vaccination record signed by the vet provides proof of the kitten's protection against these illnesses.

### • Between six and nine weeks

The first vaccination for:

- Coryza (due to several agents, including the herpes virus and calicivirus), causing respiratory illnesses,
- Typhus, a viral illness whose symptoms include diarrhoea and vomiting,
- Feline leukaemia virus (FeLV), characterised by a degradation of the cat's immune system, making the kitten very vulnerable.



### • Between twelve and sixteen weeks

Booster injections for coryza, typhus and FeLV. The first vaccination against rabies is also administered at this point if necessary, depending on where you live or your travel destination.

## Booster shots for adult cats

When your kitten is a year old, your vet should administer a second booster shot for coryza, typhus, FeLV and rabies, if necessary. These booster shots should be repeated once a year.

## Sterilisation

This operation, generally done at around six months old, can be carried out from the age of 3 months. It enables avoiding unwanted pregnancy and helps develop behaviour suitable for indoor life. Furthermore, even for outdoor cats, life expectancy is significantly improved by sterilisation because of the reduced frequency of fighting and illnesses transmitted between cats. Ask your vet for more information.

# Internal parasites

Kittens are far more receptive to internal parasites, like worms or protozoa (microscopic single-cell parasites), than adult cats. Your vet will advise you about any deworming or other treatments necessary.

## ● Worms

There are two types of worms that occur very frequently in kittens:

- **FLAT WORMS OR TAPEWORMS** (e.g.: *Dipylidium caninum*) stick to the wall of the intestine, causing bloating, diarrhoea and sometimes affecting the fur.

White rings, rather like grains of rice, found in the faeces or on the cat's fur (around the anus) indicate the presence of flat worms. Kittens also tend to scratch their hindquarters.

- **ROUNDWORMS OR ASCARIS** (*Toxocara cati*) live in the kitten's small intestine, causing bloating and possibly slow growth. This may occasionally lead to intestinal obstruction.

Roundworm can be detected by a pot-bellied appearance, digestive problems or dull fur in a kitten.



## ➔ Deworming

It is important to deworm your kitten regularly (usually once a month) until the age of six months.

## ● Protozoa

Two types of protozoa mainly affect kittens. They are both responsible for digestive disorders: serious diarrhoea causing dehydration and weight-loss in kittens.

- **GIARDIA:** these microscopic protozoa are found in the mucus of the small intestine.
- **COCCIDIA:** these are ingested by eating cysts found on the ground or in prey (particularly mice). One of these coccidia can be passed on to humans: *Toxoplasma gondii*.

Only your vet is able to identify these parasites and prescribe the correct treatment.



# External parasites

The most common external parasites in kittens are fleas, ticks, ear mites and ring worm.

## ● Fleas

Fleas cause kittens to scratch, wash and lick themselves a great deal, which may result in the ingestion of hair balls. In certain cases, dermatitis is caused by an allergic reaction to flea bites.

Flea control (to be intensified in spring and summer) should include treatment of the kitten as well as its environment.

- **TREATING THE KITTEN:** the kitten is treated by applying a long-acting topical insecticide product or treated orally.

- **TREATING THE ENVIRONMENT:** it is essential to spray insecticide over all the kitten's contact surfaces, including recesses and bedding.

## ➔ Caution

Never pull on a tick to remove it: you are likely to leave the head inside the skin, causing a very painful reaction for the kitten. There are special tweezers (in points of sales).

## ● Ticks

Ticks are almost exclusively contracted outside. They prefer to attach themselves around the neck and ears. While they are relatively harmless, ticks can cause inflammatory reactions around the point of attachment.

- **TREATING THE KITTEN:** the kitten should be treated with a global acaricide, recommended by your vet, which will eliminate ticks painlessly.

## ● Ear mites

Minuscule mites living in the ear canal can cause painful ear infections. Symptoms include large amounts of a dark brown, unpleasant smelling secretion in the ear canal and violent scratching of the ear by the kitten.

- **TREATING THE KITTEN:** the kitten should be treated in two stages. First, clean the ears with a damp compress, then apply an acaricide prescribed by your vet inside the ear canal.

## ● Ringworm

This microscopic fungus attacks the base of the hair. It does not cause any irritation (scratching). The skin blackens and the hair falls out, mainly around the head. Ringworm is very resistant, widespread and highly contagious, affecting most domestic pets.

- **TREATING THE KITTEN:** the vet will prescribe a fungicide to be administered orally and/or by bathing over a period of at least six weeks.
- **TREATING THE ENVIRONMENT:** contaminated areas can be sprayed or washed with fungicide. Ask your vet for information.

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