

The Governing Council of the Cat Fancy

Giving Cats Care Forever!

Caring for your Kitten



Recommendation - The GCCF strongly recommends that no kitten should be permitted to go to a new home before 13 weeks of age. At least seven days prior to this the kitten should have completed a full course of vaccinations, including a health check, given by a Veterinary Surgeon or by a listed Veterinary Nurse under the direction of a Veterinary Surgeon. The breeder should ensure that kittens are house-trained, inoculated and in good general health.

Take a carrying box with you. No matter how quiet the kitten may seem in its home surroundings the sound of a car and unfamiliar people may frighten it. It is against the law to carry an unrestrained animal when travelling and a kitten loose in a car is a hazard to itself, the car driver, and other traffic on the road. What would you do if the car broke down or if you were involved in an accident and the kitten escaped?

Ask the breeder for detailed instructions on the kitten's daily routine - its feeding, grooming, toileting and playing habits. Many breeders supply a diet sheet, you should ask for this. Make sure you have some of your kitten's favourite foods ready, and introduce any dietary changes gradually.

Settling in

When you get home let the kitten find its own way out of the basket/box and allow it to explore one room at a time. Make sure it knows where its litter tray and water bowl are. (The toilet and feeding areas should not be too close together).

Make sure the room is escape proof - chimneys blocked, doors and windows shut. Kittens can get through surprisingly small places.

Kittens are very often frightened by children and other pets if they are not used to them. Children should understand that they must keep very still and quiet (very small children should not be introduced until the kitten has had a chance to settle). Other animals should be introduced later - gradually and one at a time.

Do not overwhelm your kitten with too much attention, let it come to you naturally, remember you are a stranger to it. Talk to it and encourage it to play with a toy (cotton reels and ping pong balls are favourites). Do not restrain your kitten and force it to sit on your knee. Your lap should be a haven to it, not a prison. Patience with your kitten in the first few hours will be well rewarded.

If you have a scratching post (which is recommended unless you prefer shredded furniture) show your kitten how to use this.

Warmth & Hygiene

Your kitten needs warmth at first - it will miss its mother and litter mates. If there is not some form of heating in the room at all times it should be provided with a heated bed or metal pad (especially

manufactured for the purpose and obtainable from pet shops). Even when adult, a short haired cat should never be left alone in an unheated room at night or in cold weather without some basket or bed with warm bedding in it.

No cat should ever be put out at night to fend for itself

A sanitary tray - litter tray or washing up bowl - must be available at all times and kept in the same place. Solid matter and wet lumps should be removed from the tray frequently and the litter renewed when necessary. The tray should be washed and disinfected frequently. Rinse thoroughly after disinfecting and allow to dry before use. Cats are very fussy and will not use a dirty tray (neither will your visitors appreciate it!). You can buy covered litter trays which provide privacy for your cat and hide the litter from your visitors.

Hazards

All of the following have been the cause of **death** and **serious injury** to kittens and young cats: front and top loading washing machines, tumble driers, electric flexes that can be chewed, hot stoves, water tanks, garden pools, toilets with open lids (you don't want to fish your kitten out from the U-bend), hot baths, irons and the tops of storage heaters.

Be aware that your kitten will investigate open chimneys, open doors and windows. It can escape and disappear through the smallest crack and may get shut in a drawer or cupboard. The airing cupboard is a favourite hiding place and the results can be disastrous after a few hours with no litter tray.

Kittens often creep away under low furniture, kitchen units or electrical appliances.

Use disinfectants which do **not** contain **Phenol** or **Cresol**. These are **poisonous** to cats. Most brands of household disinfectants contain them. (A quick test is to see if it goes white when added to water). Parvocide, GPC-8, Virkon, Peratol and Trigene are safe in correct dilution. Always dilute a cleansing agent according to the instructions and make sure disinfected items are rinsed and aired afterwards. To cleanse a soiled area use a biological washing powder and then rub with surgical spirit as this prevents the cat being attracted back to the same spot.

Cats and kittens can poison themselves by washing their feet or coats after walking through a poisonous substance. Insecticides, weed killers, slug pellets, timber preservatives, woodworm treatments, petrol and anti-freeze are all harmful to cats - often with fatal consequences. Never give a cat any drugs that have not been prescribed for it; many human drugs are poisonous to cats. Seek veterinary advice immediately if you suspect any form of poisoning.

Take care that toys, or parts of them, cannot be swallowed. Plastic bags and rubber bands such as the elastic that goes around joints of meat are a hazard. Plastic does not show up on an X-ray and can be very dangerous if swallowed. Do not allow a kitten to play unsupervised with wool, string or thread, and beware of sewing needles and pins - kittens have been known to swallow thread with these still attached.

Many house plants are poisonous. Do not leave them where they can be chewed - just in case.

Final note

Your breeder has reared the kitten with care up to the age of three months and he/she would appreciate a word on its progress - especially a spare photograph. They might not have time to write back, but would be very grateful.

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