

introduction

Congratulations on being a proud owner of a new kitten. Having a kitten is an exciting event filled with promise of a long, happy future together. Kittens are wonderful bundles of energy and fun, ready for anything and fascinated by the world. It will be up to you to guide them through the crucial first stages of life, settling them in and teaching them how to behave as a much-loved and important member of the family.

This booklet does not replace the in-depth knowledge that your kitten's breeder, rehoming centre or veterinary surgeon may offer. If in any doubt, please consult them for further information.



checklist

First of all, here is a handy checklist so that you can make sure you have everything you need for the arrival of your kitten:

- Secure travel basket or cage
- Bedding – soft, absorbent and fleecy bedding is ideal
- Sleeping box or basket
- Kitten or puppy crate (useful, but not essential)
- Litter tray and cat litter
- Air-tight food storage container
- Food and water bowls
- Toys – your kitten will need plenty of stimulating toys to play with
- Scratching post
- Brushes and combs
- Kitten food

registering with a vet

Make sure you register with a local vet as soon as you bring your kitten home. You'll need a vet for vaccinations, routine parasite control, neutering and for any other treatment as required. We also recommend micro-chipping which is a permanent means of identification and has helped to reunite many lost pets with their worried owners. Pet insurance is also recommended to cover the cost of unexpected veterinary bills.

It may be beneficial to locate a veterinary surgery that is cat-friendly or has cat-only clinics. It is much less frightening if your kitten does not have to experience a curious or excited dog putting its nose near the carrier. Separate waiting areas or time slots for dogs and cats can also be very useful.



the first time

bringing your kitten home

The day that you go to collect your new kitten is bound to be exciting but it's important to remember safety.

A cat basket is essential and when you are choosing, make sure that it opens at the top as well as the front. Having the added access through the top makes getting your kitten out a much easier and calmer experience. Furthermore, trying to extract your kitten from front-opening basket later on at the vet practice can cause a great deal of stress before any examination can even start!

Whilst travelling, place your kitten in the basket and position it securely with a seat belt or in the foot well so that it cannot slide around. Also make sure that the box is placed on something waterproof and is lined with absorbent material (newspaper plus soft bedding such as a towel) in case your kitten has an accident. You can increase comfort further by placing a blanket over the top and sides of the box. This will create a darker environment which may help them to feel more calm and secure. There is no need to put food or water in on a short trip, but if you have a long journey, you can purchase special spill-proof travel bowls. Your kitten may meow on the journey but don't be tempted to take them out. Instead, talk reassuringly and try to drive smoothly! If it is a sunny day do not leave the kitten in the car unattended as temperatures in the vehicle can rise rapidly.

Your kitten's sense of hearing is far more acute than that of a human, so if you have the stereo on during the trip, keep the sound turned down low. A calm and uneventful ride home will help to ensure that your kitten settles in well.

At home make sure all the windows and doors are shut and introduce the kitten to your home one room at a time. This is the first time they will have been away from the only territory they knew, so it can be a bit overwhelming. Let your kitten settle peacefully and carry out introductions to other people and pets gradually.

new arrival

Don't be surprised if your kitten doesn't have much of an appetite to start with. This may have been the first time that they have travelled by car so they might be feeling a little queasy. They will also be very interested in investigating their new home and this may well take precedence over food.



settling in

an invaluable den

A useful item to have at home for a new kitten is a crate – these are often used for dogs in the back of cars or for toilet training puppies. Crates are made of strong metal and come in various sizes, providing a safe warm den for your kitten. Food bowls, bedding and a litter tray can be put inside so it is self-sufficient when you are not able to monitor. To help your kitten to enjoy being in the crate try to feed and play with your kitten inside. Allow your kitten to walk inside the crate on their own terms and leave the door open until it has become a familiar environment.

Once your kitten is used to the crate you can carefully shut them inside when you are going out. Kittens are very curious and can get into all sorts of places and danger! This will help to keep your kitten safe and out of mischief. The crate is also useful for introducing your kitten to other animals as they can get used to each other safely and without a chase taking place.

the first night

Create a sleeping area for your kitten by placing a bed or crate in a warm, draught-free and quiet place. Ideally you will have a blanket with the smell of your kitten's litter mates on it to place in the bed/crate area. The first night away from mum and the litter mates is going to be very lonely. The smell of the litter mates on the blanket will help your kitten to feel comforted. A hot water bottle (wrapped in a towel and not too hot) to snuggle up to and a radio left on low may help to settle them down. Keep the room nice and dark and switch off the television. If you know what your kitten has been eating then stick to that initially as there are many other stressful changes going on already. If you do wish to change your kitten's food in the future it is always advisable to introduce it slowly over the period of a week. Always ensure your kitten has access to fresh, clean drinking water.

settling in

You are likely to be very excited about your new arrival and will be eager to get to know each other. However, it is important to respect that leaving mum and the litter mates will be difficult at first. Some kittens are naturally outgoing and will soon make friends, but others may need a little more time to adapt to all the new people, noises, smells and other pets in the household.

Try to create a routine for feeding, play and relaxation, and remember that although your kitten will be energetic they will also need lots of sleep (just like a baby).

Patience and understanding will help your kitten to feel safe, secure and settled.



safety first

a safe cat friendly home

Once your kitten becomes more confident, they will love exploring their new home. Keep all cleaning chemicals, Disinfectants, medicines and human food out of reach. You will also need to keep dangerous items like needles and threads out of the way. Veterinary surgeons report a surprising number of kittens and cats having accidentally ingested sewing materials whilst playing with them.

Some house-plants and cut flowers are poisonous to cats. Kittens and cats are great explorers and climbers, so it is best to remove any plants that are toxic. These include lilies, ferns, cyclamen and umbrella plants. Christmas is a hazardous time of year as holly, ivy, mistletoe and even tinsel are all poisonous to cats too. More information on dangerous and toxic substances can be found on International Cat Care's website at <http://www.icatcare.org/advice-centre/cat-care/cats-and-poisons>

Kittens like warm hiding places which can include the washing machine, dishwasher and tumble dryer. You will need to take extra care and always check that your new feline friend hasn't decided to take a nap in a danger zone! Also take precautions so that your kitten can not escape when you and others are coming in and out of the house. Keeping windows and doors closed will also help to keep your kitten safe.

If your home is looking a little bare once you've removed harmful plants, why not grow some cat-friendly plants instead? Cat nip and special kitty grass are ideal.



training

litter training

Until your kitten is allowed outside, you will need to provide indoor areas for toileting. Ideally, you should purchase one litter tray per cat or kitten in the household plus one extra. Place the litter box in a quiet place where it can be used in peace. Most cats prefer their litter tray to be located away from their food and water bowls. Make sure your kitten can access the tray and get into it, i.e. the sides aren't too deep if your kitten is very small.

Make sure the tray is cleaned out regularly and wash your hands thoroughly afterwards. It is advisable to avoid soiled cat litter if you are pregnant.

Litter training in kittens is usually very straightforward – the mother cat has generally done the work for you. To help your kitten to recognise where to go to the toilet try using the same brand of litter that they have been using up until you got them. If your kitten has an accident, try to remember that they are still learning and don't scold. Instead, clean up any mess with some tissue and place this in the tray to help your kitten know where to go next time. In the beginning place your kitten on the tray when they wake or after a meal as these are times when your kitten is most likely to want to go to the toilet.

rules for humans

Bad manners such as jumping up on surfaces and walking over tables can be cute when your kitten is small but become a nuisance later on. Furthermore, cats and kittens can represent a health risk to humans if they are allowed to walk on surfaces where food is prepared. After all, your cat may have previously been using their litter box! Try to avoid these behaviours by not allowing your kitten to do them from the start. It's also important not to threaten or punish your kitten. Instead, just remove it from the area quietly and consistently.

You are likely to form a strong bond with your kitten whilst spending lots of time with them. It is important to remember to allow some time to themselves whilst you are around which will help to avoid over-dependence. A cat who is not used to being left alone may become stressed when you go out; this is especially true for the more interactive breeds, such as the Siamese.

drinking Water

With all this training and play time, your kitten will need plenty of fresh, clean water.

If you have other cats at home, they will also be getting used to their new mate, so you may notice that they obstruct your kitten from drinking. Therefore, it's a good idea to have a few bowls of water in different rooms around the house.



play time!

as kittens are very playful pets you will do well to invest in a variety of toys.

Playing with your kitten is important for many reasons; including helping to build a strong bond and releasing excess energy (so that your kitten can feel tired and relaxed when left alone). Furthermore, using toys to play with can stop kittens biting and scratching humans by accident.

Soft toys are fun for kittens to play with and can often help relieve pain whilst teething. Balls and stringy toys are also great fun for your kitten to chase. Try to avoid playing roughly or any games where hands or feet are the target for the kitten to attack. As your kitten grows, their teeth will get bigger and stronger, these types of game can become painful or even dangerous for people and your kitten will be learning the wrong way to interact. Fishing rod type toys where the 'prey' is at the end of a string can be lots of fun and keep claws away from hands.

Supervise your kitten with toys to ensure that they do not swallow any pieces, or get injured. It is beneficial to allocate time to interact with your kitten and to be creative with your games.

take care that:

- No small pieces can get detached or be chewed off the toy and swallowed.
- There are no sharp pieces or loose strings, which can be swallowed.



kitten care

grooming

It is important to start grooming your kitten from an early age so it is readily accepted when the cat is older. Although cats are very good at keeping themselves clean, grooming can help to avoid matting and decrease the amount of hair shed around the house. It also helps to strengthen your bond and enables you to spot any wounds early on. Long haired cats are particularly susceptible to matting in their fur so it is very important that they get used to being groomed every day.

To get your kitten used to being brushed, start off very gently and slowly. You can stick to short sessions to start with and also use treats or toys as a distraction. Begin by brushing the less sensitive areas, such as the top of the head and back first, and then move on to other areas as your kitten starts to relax.

paws and claws

Cats keep their nails strong and at an appropriate length by scratching and walking around outside. Providing a scratching post for your kitten in a place where they like to scratch or sleep will help them to keep claws healthy. For indoor cats and those that are less active it may be beneficial to trim claws with clippers. You can ask your vet to do this for you or even to show you how to do it correctly. Cutting the nails too short will be painful for your cat as the centre of the claw contains the "quick" (the blood supply).



teeth and gums

Dental care is important from a young age, but in reality not many cats are tolerant of having their teeth brushed! If you introduce this at any early age it may be possible to brush the teeth. Special cat tooth-brushes and tooth-paste (never use human paste) are available at many pet stores. The enzymatic tooth-pastes can help to prevent the soft bacterial film of plaque from developing into the hard yellow-brown tartar.

You will need to check your kitten's teeth and gums regularly, so you notice any smelly breath or red, sore gums, which could mark the onset of gingivitis. The Arden Grange kitten and cat foods may be helpful in promoting good oral hygiene. The entire range contains cellulose fibres (which give the food a very crunchy texture) as well as natural antioxidants. Antioxidants have proven benefits to oral health in human dentistry.

out and about

going outside

Try not to let your kitten outside until about a week after it has had all of its vaccinations. If you already have a cat which is using a cat flap make sure your kitten does not copy it and go out before it is fully protected (cats learn quickly by observation).

If you are using a flap then tape it open initially so your kitten can climb through and then gradually shut it so that they have to push it to get through. It is recommended that you wait until your kitten is fully vaccinated, old enough and sufficiently confident before you allow free access in and out.

collars and tags

Cats that go outside need some sort of identification in case they get lost or injured. Microchipping is recommended for cats and some owners use a visible form of identification, such as a tag on the collar, as well. Engraved tags are better than the barrel types which tend to unscrew by themselves and the information within them is often lost.

Because cats get into small places and climb trees there is always the chance of a collar getting caught or the cat pulling their head or leg through it. Thus it is best to use a good quality safety collar which snaps open should it get caught. It's also a good idea to get your kitten used to a collar and tag early on, so that if they were to escape, quick visual identification is possible.

vaccination

Whether you buy a pedigree kitten or get one from a rescue centre, it is likely to come to you with at least one vaccination. Kittens need a full course to protect them against some potentially dangerous diseases which they can catch whilst mixing with other cats. If your kitten is going to go outside a slightly different combination may be needed than if he or she is going to stay indoors. Talk to your veterinary surgeon about what your kitten needs.

A booster vaccination after a year is also vital for protection. Thereafter, talk to your vet about how often your cat needs a booster depending on its lifestyle and health. It is also important to use regular parasite control to ensure that your kitten stays happy and healthy. Protecting against fleas, ticks and worms is essential, and your vet will be able to advise safe and effective products to use.



we are what we eat...

Choosing the right food for your kitten is critical. A good diet will ensure maximum benefit from the nutrients in the food and will result in small, firm stools. A concentrated food such as Arden Grange Kitten is ideal for the immature digestion as the smaller feed volumes mean less work for small stomachs as well as less waste.

Nutrition is not only a vital contributing factor to your cat's outward appearance, but can also affect general demeanour and temperament. Over-feeding will be detrimental to your kitten's health. Problems frequently arise when over-supplementing an already complete diet with mineral and/or calorie-rich foods.

It is important to watch your cat's weight closely; cats that are less active or who have been neutered can put on weight easily. As a general rule, you should be able to feel your cat's ribs when you touch them, but not see them. Just like us, cats need the correct ratio of food and exercise for optimal health and fitness.

toxic foods

Certain foods are dangerous for your kitten; these include chocolate, onions, grapes, raw potatoes, tomatoes or raisins. Raw fish fed in excess can also cause problems as it contains thiaminases; the enzymes that breakdown thiamine (vitamin B1). If fed excessively the cat could become deficient in Vitamin E because it is used up when the oils begin to go rancid.

Also beware of liver as this can cause hypervitaminosis A if fed in excess. Sticking to a complete and balanced commercial diet such as Arden Grange avoids these risks.

Never give human or dog medicines as these too can be toxic to cats.

feeding

Arden Grange Kitten Food is the perfect choice for your kitten. However, we do suggest that you initially feed your kitten on what he or she has been used to. The breeder or homing centre will advise of the usual meals, times of feeding and quantities.

Leaving mum and the litter mates can be a stressful time, and even a change to a higher quality diet can cause an upset tummy if undertaken too quickly.



meal times

Portion controlled meals are recommended, rather than free-feeding because cats and kittens do not like stale food. Three or four small meals per day are ideal for the growing kitten as it helps to prevent gorging and support growth.

Dry food can be moistened with a little warm water for about 20-30 minutes prior to serving as this will enhance the meaty aroma.

Note: Food that has been soaked needs to be thrown away if it has not been eaten as it may be subject to bacterial growth which can cause an upset tummy.

You could even try warming the food for a short period (in a non-metallic dish) in the microwave to bring it to body temperature. Be wary of adding little extras as your kitten will soon learn to expect them and may well start refusing to eat regular cat food.

If you do have problems with inappetence, you can include a nutritious and palatable addition such as a very small amount of cooked fresh white fish or finely chopped/minced chicken, but it is important to make sure this is mixed in very well with the commercial food to prevent your kitten from simply eating the additions and leaving the cat food. Soaking the dry food makes blending a lot easier. To avoid upsetting the nutrient balance of the Arden Grange Kitten food, the additions should not account for more than one third of your kitten's daily calorie intake. Beware of offering too much variety as this can make the problem worse.

changing to adult food

Many owners are unsure as to when to change their kitten from a growth diet to an adult recipe. As a guideline, it is recommended that when a cat reaches its optimal skeletal height (i.e. it is as tall as it will be as an adult), then an adult food will be suitable. For most cats this will be at 6 - 12 months of age.

Many factors can affect your cat's dietary requirements including age, size, weight, activity level, whether they are an indoor or outdoor cat and their own individual digestion and rate of metabolism.

If in doubt it is sensible to contact the breeder of your kitten or the Arden Grange advice line.
Tel: 0044 (0)1273 833 390.

We advise that any diet change should be made gradually. This enables the digestive system to adapt to the new nutrient balance, ingredients and volume of food.



growing up...

The growth period is nutritionally the most important stage of your cat's life. Kittens have greater structural and functional demands upon their bodies, a faster metabolic rate, and a subsequently higher need for calories than an adult cat of the same weight. This is why diets formulated for the early growth period have a higher energy density. Arden Grange Kitten Food has been specially formulated to meet the increased nutritional demands of the developing cat.

Cats have a high requirement for meat and fish. A diet such as Arden Grange Kitten Food which contains good levels of high quality proteins will ensure that the structural and metabolic demands of the feline body are efficiently met. Crucial nutrients that need to be present in your kitten's diet include taurine (an amino acid which is essential for healthy vision, heart function, growth and development as well as reproduction) and arginine (important in the breakdown of ammonia in the urea cycle). Cats are unable to make these essential amino acids themselves and are therefore reliant on a diet which contains them, as well as arachidonic acid and pre-formed vitamin A.

Feeding a complete and balanced diet such as Arden Grange Kitten food ensures that all of the necessary nutrients are present at the correct level. Always ensure your kitten has fresh water available and avoid giving milk. After weaning kittens lose their ability to digest lactose (milk sugar) and as they mature, milk can cause loose stools. Dairy proteins are also one of the more common dietary allergens that can adversely affect cats and dogs.

the right balance

Arden Grange Kitten Food provides a balanced calcium:phosphorous ratio and the correct level of Vitamin D to aid bone development and growth. The correct calcium:phosphorous ratio is essential for healthy structure and strength of teeth and bones, whilst calcium is also necessary for the normal clotting of blood and for nerve and muscle function. Skeletal health is further promoted by the addition of glucosamine, chondroitin and MSM.

