



Centre Street Animal Hospital

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KITTEN RECOMMENDATION BOOKLET FOR NEW OWNERS

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We would like to congratulate you on the acquisition on your new kitten! Owning a cat is an extremely rewarding experience, but it also carries with it quite a bit of responsibility. We hope this document will give you the information needed to make informed decisions regarding your kitten. 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 entire professional team are always willing and happy to help you.

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

A cat is naturally inclined to investigate its new surroundings. At first, you should limit the cat's area of exploration to one room so that these natural tendencies do not create an unmanageable situation (trying to get your new kitten out from underneath a kitchen appliance is not the best introduction experience for either him or you). After confining the kitten to one room for the first few days and getting him used to his new family members, you should slowly allow access to other areas of the home.

What type of playing should I expect from a kitten?

Stimulating play is important during the first week. Stalking and pouncing are important play behaviours in kittens and have an important role in proper muscular development. If given a sufficient outlet for these behaviours with toys, your kitten will be less likely to use family members for these activities. The best toys are light weight and movable. These include wads of paper and small balls. Kittens should always be supervised when playing with string or ribbons to avoid swallowing them. Any other toy that is small enough to be swallowed should also be avoided.

Can I discipline a kitten?

Disciplining a young kitten may be necessary if his/her behaviour threatens people or property, but harsh punishment should be avoided. Hand clapping and using shaker cans or horns can be intimidating enough to inhibit undesirable behaviour. However, remote punishment is preferred. Remote punishment consists of using something that appears unconnected to the punisher to stop the

problem behaviour. Examples include using spray bottles, throwing objects in the direction of the kitten to startle (but not hit) it, and making loud noises. Remote punishment is preferred because the kitten associates punishment with the undesirable act and not with you.

How do I ensure that my kitten is well socialized?

The socialization period for cats is between 2 and 12 weeks of age. During that time, the kitten is very impressionable to social influences. If it has good experiences with men, women, children, dogs, other cats, etc., it is likely to accept them throughout life. If the experiences are absent or unpleasant, it may become apprehensive or adverse to any of them. Therefore, during the period of socialization, we encourage you to expose your cat to as many types of social events and influences as possible

INTRODUCING A KITTEN TO YOUR CAT

Preparing for the Newcomer's Arrival

- Remember that your cat had all of your attention before the kitten arrived. You want to avoid any feelings of jealousy that it may have. Your cat must not feel that the kitten is going to deprive it of your attention.
- If it feels that the new kitten is clearly a friend, they'll bond quickly. Telltale signs include playing with and grooming each other.
- Praise your cat frequently during the days leading up to the new kitten's arrival and all along the introduction process.
- Set aside a small room for your new kitten, this will be his home for the first few days so he does not encroach on your existing cat's territory right away. Everything he needs should be in this room including food/water dishes, a litterbox, toys, scratching post etc. Try to find a safe room with no unnecessary hiding spots or dangerous areas. You should always have one more litterbox than the number of cats in the household, so 2 cats should have 3 litterboxes.
- If you are able, try to acquire something from the kitten before he actually arrives that will carry his scent. Introduce this object to your cat as something positive and reward him if he sniffs at it with interest.

The Kitten's Arrival

- Transport your kitten into the house in a safe enclosed carrier. Do not introduce the kitten to your cat at this time.
- Instead, take the carrier directly to your kitten's new room, open the door and allow him to come out in his own time. This experience will likely be intimidating for him at first, so allow him to settle and acclimate when he feels comfortable.
- If he is too scared to come out at first, you may choose to leave him alone in his room for a while and then check in on him a little bit later.
- Your kitten will start exploring his room and your resident cat will pick up fairly quickly that there is a new tenant in that area. The resident cat will likely start sniffing underneath the door and this will allow him to have a slow introduction to the kitten in a safe manner.
- After a couple of days, you may remove some items (i.e. toys) from the kitten's room and introduce them to your cat (as suggested above).
- Ideally, before any full introductions are made your kitten should have a full checkup to make sure he isn't carrying any diseases or parasites that may be passed on to the adult cat. This is something we will discuss during the kitten's first visit at our hospital
- Once you have gotten the all clear on the kitten's health and the 2 cats have had at least a few days separated you may slowly open the door between them and allow for supervised interaction. This should be limited to a few minutes the first time and then slowly increased.

- Once your kitten has been given free run, ensure you ideally have 3 litterboxes available for the 2 cats (and 2 boxes at absolute minimum) and separate food/water dishes for them as well.

Remember: A cat usually will not hurt a kitten. Action speaks louder than hisses, which may occur frequently. Relax and they will too.

SPAYING AND NEUTERING

Centre Street Animal Hospital is proud to offer *laser* surgery as a progressive treatment for your pets. The extreme precision of laser surgery offers multiple benefits: over traditional surgery: less pain, less bleeding, less swelling, reduced risk of infection and quicker recovery.

Neutering Male Cats

Strangely, people are much more reluctant to neuter their male cats than to spay their females; however, a neutered cat is a more manageable and happier pet. Unlike female cats, the males of the species are always ready to mate. They need only detect the scent of a female in heat to go out in search of her, exposing themselves to many dangers. The mature, unneutered tom cat has an uncontrollable desire to roam and fight, and his litter box will always have a very strong odour. If you keep him inside, he may begin spraying urine to mark his territory. This spray has a highly offensive odour that is almost impossible to wash away. Neutering substantially reduces the cat's desire to roam and usually eliminates spraying. If a male cat is neutered at a young age, he will probably never spray. If the cat has already established the habit of spraying, he may (in isolated cases) continue after neutering, but the strong odour will not be present. Neutered cats are much less likely to go looking for fights. Neutering (castration) is the surgical removal of the testes, a safe and simple operation. Your cat can be neutered at virtually any age, but it is preferable to have it done before puberty, at eight or nine months of age. After surgery, your cat will have a more even disposition and will no longer experience stress related to his thwarted desire to breed and fight with rivals.

Spaying Female Cats

Cats have been the close companions of humans for some 5,000 years. Over that period they have become perfectly adapted to domestic life and unsuited for the wild. As man was the one to domesticate these animals, so is he responsible for their health and well-being. It follows that we must take serious measures to curb the current cat over-population problem (hundreds of unwanted cats die on the streets from disease and starvation). Preventing unwanted litters is just one important reason to spay your female cat. There are also many reasons that are beneficial to you and your cat. When spayed before six months of age, a female cat never goes into heat. She is less likely to roam, and male cats will not wage war over her on your front porch. Furthermore, the spayed cat leads a longer and healthier life than her unsterilized counterpart. Once spayed, a cat will not be subject to many health problems such as ovarian cysts, uterine infections, tumors of the womb and ovaries, abortion, birthing difficulties, caesarean section, ruptured uterus, pyometra or false pregnancy. Nor is she likely to develop mammary (breast) cancer. In addition, you won't have the problem of providing the extra care a pregnant or nursing cat needs. Spay surgery (ovariohysterectomy) is a safe and simple operation. Your cat should be spayed at five to six months of age, although this is not the only time, just the earliest and most beneficial for your cat and you.

If I choose to breed my female cat, when should that be done?

If you plan to breed your cat, she should have at least one or two heat periods first. This allows her to mature physically and she will be a better mother without as much physical drain. We do not recommend breeding after 5 years of age unless she has been bred prior to that. Having her first litter after 5 years of age is more physically draining to her and increases the chances of her having

problems during the pregnancy and/or delivery. Once your cat has had her last litter, she should be spayed to prevent the female problems older cats have.

PARASITES

Do all kittens have worms?

Intestinal parasites are common in kittens. Kittens can become infected with parasites almost as soon as they are born. For example, the most important source of roundworm infection in kittens is the mother's milk. The microscopic examination of a stool sample will usually help us to determine the presence of intestinal parasites. We recommend this exam for all kittens; please bring a stool sample at your earliest convenience if one has not been tested already. Even if we do not get a stool sample, we recommend the use of a deworming product that is safe and effective against several of the common worms of the cat. It is important that deworming be repeated in about 2 weeks, because the deworming medication only kills the adult worms. Within 2 weeks the larval stages will have become adults and will need to be treated. Cats remain susceptible to reinfection with hookworms and roundworms. Periodic stool analysis and/or deworming throughout the cat's life may be recommended for cats that go outdoors.

Tapeworms are one of the most common intestinal parasite of cats. Kittens become infected with them when they swallow fleas because the eggs of the tapeworm live inside the flea. When the cat chews or licks its skin as a flea bites, the flea may be swallowed. The flea is digested within the cat's intestine; the tapeworm hatches and then anchors itself to the intestinal lining. Therefore, exposure to fleas may result in a new infection which can occur in as little as two weeks. Cats may also become infected with tapeworms if they hunt and eat mice. Cats infected with tapeworms will pass small segments of the worms in their stool. The segments are white in color and look like grains of rice. They are about 1/8 inch (3 mm) long and may be seen crawling on the surface of the stool. They may also stick to the hair under the tail. If this occurs, the segments will dry out, shrink to about half their size, and become golden in color. Tapeworm segments do not pass every day or in every stool sample; therefore, inspection of several consecutive bowel movements may be needed to find them. We may examine a stool sample in our office and not find them, then you may find them the next day. If you find them at any time, please notify us so we may provide the appropriate drug for treatment. Other common parasites that can be seen include roundworms, whipworms, hookworms, and coccidia.

I've heard about ticks a lot in the news lately, what does this mean for my kitten? And what about fleas?

Ticks are definitely an emerging concern in our area, each year we unfortunately see more and more patients coming in having picked up a tick. Ticks are a worry because they can carry a number of diseases including Lyme disease, ticks can also migrate from animals to people and can pass those same diseases to humans as well. Fleas are also a worry as they can cause significant itching/discomfort for your kitten if picked up. Fleas do not stay on your kitten all of the time, occasionally they will jump off and seek another host, but as opposed to ticks they will not live and reproduce on humans. It is still important to kill fleas on your new kitten before they can become established in your house, as they are able to live in carpeting or rugs and then can jump back onto any animal host and start the life cycle all over again. Happily, there are medications available that will protect your kitten from fleas, ticks, heartworm, other intestinal and skin parasites as well.

What are ear mites?

Ear mites are tiny insect-like parasites that live in the ear canal of cats (and dogs). The most common sign of ear mite infection is scratching of the ears. Sometimes the ears will appear dirty because of a black material in the ear canal; this material is sometimes shaken out. The instrument we use for

examining the ear canals, an otoscope, has the necessary magnification to allow us to see the mites. Sometimes, we can find the mites by taking a small amount of the black material from the ear canal and examining it with a microscope. Although they may leave the ear canals for short periods of time, they spend the vast majority of their lives within the protection of the ear canal. Transmission generally requires direct ear-to-ear contact. Ear mites are common in litters of kittens if their mother has ear mites. Ear infections may also cause the production of a dark discharge in the ear canals. It is important that we examine your kitten to determine if any black material seen in his/her ears is due to ear mites or ear infection, as these require very different treatments.

NAILS

Can I trim my kitten's sharp toenails?

Kittens have very sharp nails. They can be trimmed with your regular fingernail clippers but preferably with nail trimmers made for dogs and cats. If you trim too much, you will cut into the quick of the nail which will bleed and be painful. If this happens, neither you nor your cat will want to do this again. Therefore, a few points are helpful:

- If your cat has clear or white nails, you can see the pink of the quick through the nail so it is easy to avoid.
- If your cat has black nails, you will not be able to see the quick so only cut 1-2 mm of the nail at a time until the cat begins to get sensitive. The sensitivity will usually occur before you are into the blood vessel. With black nails, it is likely that you will get too close on at least one nail.
- If your cat has some clear and some black nails, use the average clear nail as a guide for cutting the black ones.
- When cutting nails, use sharp trimmers. Dull trimmers tend to crush the nail and cause pain even if you are not in the quick.
- You should always have styptic powder available. This is sold in pet stores under several trade names, but it will be labeled for use in trimming nails.

In general it is easier to locate the quick in cats nails as compared to dogs, where the nail is very thin and sharp it will be safe to trim, as soon as you start seeing the nail get thicker and/or change in colour you can be fairly sure that the quick is close to that area.

My kitten is becoming destructive with her nails. What can be done?

- The nails may be clipped according to the instructions above. However, your cat's nails will regrow and become sharp again in about 7-21 days. Therefore, it will be necessary to clip them at least one to two times per month based on your own individual cat and how quickly their nails become sharp
- There are some commercially available products that are called nail caps. These are generally made of smooth plastic and attach to the end of the nail with a special glue. The caps allow your cat to scratch whatever they prefer but prevents them from causing physical harm. After 3-4 weeks the nails will grow enough that the caps will be shed. At that time, you should be prepared to replace them.

The main suggestion is to look at ways of modifying behavior which may prevent the cat from scratching furniture in the house or being destructive. Try to find what substance your kitten is preferring to scratch around the house; some cats prefer carpet, some cardboard, others rope-like material etc. Once you have determined what your kitten's preferred material is you can purchase (or even build) a proper cat scratching post for them. As they already prefer that type of material they may automatically gravitate towards this device, but you can also help entice them to use the scratching post by rubbing some catnip on it, or using commercially available cat attractants (such as Feliway Scratch). You should also pay

attention to whether your cat prefers to scratch tall objects or longer shorter/flat ones, as you can then arrange to have their scratching post in a similar size and shape to what they already like. Don't be afraid to try a few different options to find which your cat prefers.

Here are a few different types as a visual representation:



VACCINATIONS

When should my kitten be vaccinated?

There are many diseases that are fatal to cats. Fortunately, we have the ability to prevent many of these by the use of very effective vaccines. In order to be effective, these vaccines must be given as a series of injections. Ideally, they are given at about 6-8, 12, and 16 weeks of age, but this schedule may vary somewhat depending on several factors.

The routine vaccination schedule will protect your kitten from five diseases: distemper (panleukopenia), three respiratory organisms, and rabies. The first four are included in a combination vaccine that is given at 6-8, 12, and 16 weeks old. Rabies vaccine is given at 12 or 16 weeks of age. Leukemia vaccine is necessary if your cat will go outside or if you have another cat that goes in and out since this deadly disease is transmitted by contact with other cats, especially when fighting occurs.

Why does my kitten need more than one vaccination?

When the kitten nurses its mother, it receives a temporary form of immunity through its mother's milk. This immunity is in the form of proteins called antibodies. For about 24-48 hours after birth, the kitten's intestine allows absorption of these antibodies directly into the blood stream. This immunity is of benefit during the first few weeks of the kitten's life, but, at some point, this immunity fails and the kitten must be able to make its own long-lasting immunity. Vaccinations are used for this purpose. As long as the mother's antibodies are present, vaccinations do not have a chance to stimulate the kitten's immune system as the mother's antibodies will neutralize the vaccine.

Many factors determine when the kitten will be able to respond to the vaccines. These include the level of immunity in the mother cat, how much of the antibody has been absorbed, and the number of vaccines given the kitten. Since we do not know when an individual kitten will lose the short-term immunity, we give a series of vaccinations. The goal is that at least two of these will fall in the window of time when the kitten has lost the immunity from its mother but has not yet been exposed to disease. A single vaccination, even if effective, is not likely to stimulate the long-term immunity which is so important. Rabies vaccine is an exception to this, since one injection given at the proper time is enough to produce long-term immunity.

NUTRITION

There are lots of choices of cat foods. What should I feed my kitten?

Diet is extremely important in the growing months of a cat's life, 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 or local brand), and a form of food MADE FOR KITTENS. This should be fed until your kitten is about 10-18 months of age, depending on their size/breed. We recommend that you only buy food which has the AAFCO certification. Usually, you can find this information very easily on the label. AAFCO is an organization which 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. Most of the commercial pet foods will have the AAFCO label. Generic brands often do not have it. In Canada, look for foods which are approved by the Canadian Veterinary Medical Association (CVMA). When looking at the AAFCO statement the gold standard is to find a food that indicates it has undergone "animal feeding tests" or "animal feeding trials", this indicates that the food has been officially tested before entering the consumer market. If the food uses the word "formulated" or "formulation" that means it meets the minimum guidelines set out by AAFCO but the food has not actually been tested before being sold. The AAFCO statement will also confirm whether the diet is appropriate for kittens, for adult cats, or for all life stages. If you have an all life stages food it is appropriate for use during your kitten's growth period but may be best to switch to an adult maintenance diet once your kitten is full grown.

Feeding a dry, canned, or semi-moist form of cat food are all acceptable. Each has advantages and disadvantages. Dry food is definitely the most inexpensive. It can be left in the cat's bowl without drying. The good brands of dry food are just as nutritious as the other forms. As a rule, most veterinarians will recommend dry food for your kitten. *Semi-moist and canned* foods are also acceptable. However, both are considerably more expensive than dry food. They often are more

appealing to the cat's taste; however, they are not more nutritious. If you feed a very tasty food, you are running the risk of creating a cat with a finicky appetite. In addition, the semi-moist foods can be high in sugar. It is important to introduce your kitten to a variety of textures when he/she is young, ideally before 12 weeks of age. This is because cats are very particular about the shape/texture/feel of foods, even more so than that taste of them. If your cat has never eaten a canned food, or morsels in gravy etc when he was a kitten, he will be unlikely to eat that type of food when he is full grown.

As your kitten ages he may at some point need to eat a more specialized diet so it is very helpful to make sure that he has had a number of textures of foods in his younger life. You do not need to use these different types of food for long, a good quality dry food is absolutely sufficient for the growth and health of your kitten, just introduce 1-2 different canned foods for a couple of meals while he is young and then you can continue with his regular diet. Cats can naturally be picky from an early age so do not be surprised if your kitten doesn't take to some of the other foods, this can happen. *Table foods are not recommended.* 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.

Commercials for pet food can be very misleading. If you watch carefully you will notice that commercials promote pet food on one basis, TASTE. Nutrition is rarely mentioned. Most of the "gourmet" foods are marketed to appeal to owners who want the best for their pets; however, they do not offer the cat any nutritional advantage over a good quality dry food, and they are far more expensive. If your cat eats a gourmet food very long, it will probably not be happy with other foods. If it needs a special diet due to a health problem later in life, it is very unlikely to accept it. Therefore, we do not encourage feeding gourmet foods.

