

Responsible Cat Ownership



The joys of pet ownership bring with it many responsibilities... but the pleasure that a cat can give us are well worth the effort.
Arriving home with your new cat or kitten

- The first few days in a new environment can be very intimidating for both kittens and adults, kittens will miss the company of their siblings and mother, whilst an adult cat will always be wary of new surroundings.
- It is best to keep the cat confined to a single room for the first few days. Provide a litter tray, which should be located in a discrete place. Soiled litter and faeces should be removed regularly. Place the bed and feeding bowls well away from the litter tray.
- For the first few days allow the kitten's confidence to grow before handling it too much.
- Cats should be kept indoors for at least 3 weeks so that they can familiarise themselves with their new surroundings before allowing them to venture out for the first time.

Vaccination

● Cats can be vaccinated against numerous diseases but should always be vaccinated against 'flu and enteritis'. The latter disease is not as common as it once was but is still seen occasionally and is invariably fatal.

Flu can be very debilitating in a young kitten or older cat and currently it is recommended that all cats receive regular boosters.

● Any cat or kitten that is to be allowed outdoors should be vaccinated against Feline Leukaemia Virus and if your cat is to go into a boarding establishment it may be worthwhile considering vaccination against Chlamydia which causes runny eyes and nose.

Neutering

● Contrary to the opinions of many there is no psychological reason why a cat should have a litter of kittens. There are still many thousands of stray and unwanted cats in the UK.

● Think carefully before deciding to let your cat breed; also consider the many health benefits in having a cat neutered. They are less likely to roam ... crossing busy roads and running the risk of being injured

by vehicles. The incidence of Feline Leukaemia Virus and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus is much higher in unneutered cats. Fighting between unneutered cats of all sexes is more common, resulting injuries often leading to abscess formation.

The operation necessary to neuter both males and females is straightforward and well worth the expense.

Parasite Control

● Owners should be aware that their cats can be affected by both external and internal parasites. Parasites can be controlled with the appropriate treatment, there are many excellent treatments available. Seek veterinary guidance on this matter

Dental Hygiene

● It is now commonly recognised that most cats will suffer from dental problems even at an early age. This is difficult to avoid, as most cats will not relish having their teeth brushed. Some diets have been developed which claim to reduce tartar build up.

It is best to have your cats teeth checked on an annual basis. A vet

will usually do this routinely at time of annual vaccination.

Indoor/Outdoor Cats

● Cats are very individualistic animals many will be very happy to live indoors all the time provided that the environment is suitable i.e. clean litter tray, regular supply of fresh food and water, scratching posts and areas that allow the cat to climb and explore without causing damage to them-

Responsible owners should also consider the feelings of their neighbours. Try to discourage your cat from thinking of your neighbour's garden as a convenient litter tray. Provide litter trays or create an attractive area in your own garden with either loose soil or sand and encourage your cats to use it by initially sprinkling some cat litter over the area.

selves. Others would find it very stressful if they were not allowed to explore the "Great Outdoors".

● It has been recorded that most road traffic injuries to cats occur during the hours of darkness and it is best to keep cats indoors at night.



Identification

● The safest and most reliable way to identify a cat is to have a microchip inserted. This is a simple procedure that your vet can carry out. The chip will remain in the cat for life. Remember if you move house to update your cat's details on the database.

● Collars with identity discs can be used... but beware collars can cause serious injuries. Their collars can catch up on trees but more commonly they can get a paw caught in the collar when grooming. The collar then slips back under the foreleg of the cat and can in a short time cause serious injury. Always make sure that any collar fitted has a safety release mechanism.

Insurance

● With increasing knowledge and vastly improved facilities

Veterinary Surgeons can now treat many injuries and illnesses that in the past may well have proved fatal to a cat. Treatment however can be very expensive and there can be nothing more heart rending than knowing that due to financial constraints you cannot do everything possible to save your pet.

Health Insurance taken out at an early age for your cat could avoid such an occurrence.

What to do if your Cat goes astray?

● If your cat is missing the first thing to do is to check your own garden and outbuildings, and those of your neighbours. If there is no sign here you need to contact the veterinary surgeries, rescue centres and police in your local area, it is often beneficial to put notices in local shops including a photo. If your cat has a microchip it will be scanned if taken to any of the above centres. If your cat has no identification, the local rescue centres are only obliged to hold onto your cat for

7 days before they can re-home it. It is therefore vital you act quickly if your cat is missing.

Transportation of Cats

● Even a normally placid cat can become quite frantic whilst being transported. Always use a secure well-ventilated container lined with newspaper, ideally one that has an opening at the top rather than at one end as it much easier to lift a scared cat out of this type of carrier.

Holiday Provision

● Most cats do not travel well and are very territorial so it is not a good idea to take them on holiday with you. If you intend to be away overnight provision must be made for the care of your cat. Either arrange for a neighbour or relative to call at the house at least twice daily. Alternative your cat should be boarded at a licensed facility. Visit the cattery first to ensure that the facilities are of the standard you would expect.

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When Should Your Kitten Have a Veterinary Check?

Your kitten's first booster is due a year after the initial course, at approximately 15 months of age. However, a veterinary check at 7 to 10 months is advisable. Small adjustments to the daily routine at this time, may help to prevent problems becoming established later in life.

Things to Consider:

Behaviour and Training

Mistakes in your kitten's education can lead to long term behavioural problems.

Feeding

Adapting the feeding program as your kitten grows helps to prevent obesity later in life.

Dentition

As your kitten ages the deciduous teeth (milk teeth) will fall out. The permanent teeth require special care to prevent tartar building up.

Puberty

Generally, between 5 and 8 months your kitten will go through puberty. Neutering both 'toms' and 'queens' at an early age helps prevent straying and so protect them from infectious diseases.

External Parasites

More trips outside means more risk of infestation with fleas and ticks. Ensure your kitten is treated with an effective product for both, such as Frontline®.

Worming

Don't forget worming preparations do not have lasting activity - you must regularly worm your cat.