

or area you have designated for the kitten upon its arrival. Use a fine grained litter that is soft on your cat's feet. Put the kitten in the box several time a day and let it get the feel of the litter under its feet. Most kitties will begin using the litter box right away. Praise it when it goes. If you catch the kitty start to "go", pick it up and place it in the box. Do not punish you kitty for having an accident. Keep the litter box clean since cats are particular to cleanliness and some will not use a litter box that is soiled. Once you start letting your kitty have more freedom in your home, you may want to place another litter box out, especially if you have two levels. Place one upstairs and one downstairs. Once you decide where the litter boxes will be, do not move them suddenly. Your cat may continue to go to the same area due to habit. It is also important not to make sudden changes in litter. If you want to change types, keep the box with the old litter, and place a box with the new litter next to it until it starts using it consistently. You can also try mixing the two types for awhile.

One of the most common feline behavioral problems is eliminating outside the box. This undesirable behavior can occur for several reasons including a change in litter or location or dirty litter box. Remember, male cats will also start spraying urine if they are not neutered. A medical problem is very commonly the cause of elimination problems. Urinary tract infections, cystitis, and diabetes are frequently the reason, but they may also eliminate inappropriately if they have a wound or other medical problem. If the litter box is not the problem and your kitty begins housesoiling, see the veterinarian as soon as possible to check for any underlying medical conditions.

Cats are very good at hiding pain and illness, but there are signs you can watch for that may mean your kitty might be sick. These include elimination problems, eating litter, bad breath, changes in activity, not grooming themselves, increased vocalization, sudden hiding, and any changes in everyday behavior. If your cat exhibits any of these signs, you should have it seen by the veterinarian.

Most cats, especially while young, have an instinctual desire to explore and play. Sometimes this play can get out of hand, with scratching and climbing and knocking items off tables. The best thing to do when a kitten is young is to provide a safe play area for them to explore and play. Provide kitty toys and even a few cardboard boxes for the cat to climb on and hide in. Teaching your cat to stay off counters and away from houseplants (some of which are poisonous to cats) can be difficult, but teaching them while young is best. Do not use physical punishment when your kitten does something wrong. Cats are sensitive to smells and textures. You can use a deterrent, such as, the smell and taste of vinegar or cayenne pepper, to keep the kitten from chewing on something. If you put something that is undesirable on kitty forbidden counters or furniture, they are likely to learn to stay off, even when the deterrent is removed. Example: put pieces of cardboard with two-sided tape on it and place it on a table. The kitten will not like the feel of the sticky tape and will learn that it doesn't want to jump onto that table. You can also place two-sided tape on places the kitten tries to scratch. Cats naturally want to scratch to sharpen their claws, so it is a good idea to provide a scratching post that your kitten is allowed to scratch on.

Some kittens get carried away with their play and can actually get aggressive. Remember, kittens that are socialized with their littermates and mother are less aggressive than those that do not get this interaction. If your kitten plays attack with you as the target, you should not encourage it. Find toys you can toss and the kitten chase after, this directs the attack away from you. A feather toy on a "fishing pole" is also a great toy to attack. If your kitten continues to be

aggressive towards you or even another cat in the house, you can spray it with a watergun as punishment. Swatting the kitten should be avoided since it can make it fear you or even encourage rougher, more aggressive play.

Teaching appropriate behavior while your kitten is young will lead to a happier relationship between you and your feline friend. The behavior it learns now will stay with it for the rest of its life.

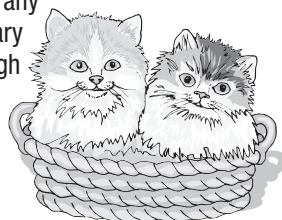
Piece of Mind

You have all the supplies your new kitten will need, it is on track with veterinary care and proper nutrition, and training is going well. So, what else could there be to help ensure a lifelong, happy and healthy relationship with your new kitten? Piece of mind that your kitten has permanent identification, and being prepared financially for unpredictable accidents and illnesses.

Your veterinarian can simply inject your kitten with a microchip that will stay with your pet for life. 90% of lost pets never return home, but the HomeAgain microchip gives your kitten the best chance of being returned home, should it get lost or stolen. It is nearly painless to inject, and is relatively inexpensive. If your cat becomes missing, the HomeAgain will send out an alert to help bring it home. They have a 24/7 hotline and offer services such as an emergency medical hotline and travel assistance. HomeAgain has reunited over 600,000 lost pets with their families. Talk to your veterinarian about having your kitty microchipped or visit www.homeagain.com for more information.

Unfortunately, accidents and illness do happen to our pets in their lifetime. Prevention is the best protection, but when the unexpected does happen, veterinary testing and treatment can add up. A veterinary pet insurance plan is a smart way to cover these costs. It is also a good way to help pay for the veterinary recommendations such as vaccinations, spay and neuter, and dental care. There are different affordable plans available. Visit www.petinsurance.com for more information.

We hope this helps you and your kitten to start off on the right paw in a lifetime of happiness. If you have any questions please contact us at Flanary Veterinary Clinic, 270-898-9738 or through the website, www.flanaryvet.com. We will be happy to help you.



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PET NEWS

Starting Off On The Right Paw A life plan for your kitten

A new cat is full of fun. Knowledge of your feline's care is important for years of companionship, health and happiness.



Choosing your Kitty

The choice to adopt a new cat or kitten is one that should not be taken lightly. Hopefully, the cat you choose will be part of your life for many years to come. There are several questions you should ask yourself when choosing a cat. Selecting a purebred cat or a mixed-breed cat is a decision that will need to be made. Many people acquire a mixed-breed kitten from someone they know, or from a humane society or rescue group. They are usually free or you may pay a small fee. Another advantage is that they usually don't have a high predisposition to certain genetic problems and diseases that purebreds have. Mixed-breed cats also make wonderful pets and are usually easy to find. If you choose a purebred kitten, you will typically know what your cat will look like, and somewhat what it will act like, as an adult. If you want a cat that is large with long hair, a Maine Coon might be one to choose. If you want a cat that is very vocal, then a Siamese could be the one for you. Researching which breed you want, and also finding reputable breeders can be quite a bit of work, but be sure to get all the information you can before deciding on a breed.

You will also need to consider whether you want a kitten or an adult cat. Both have advantages and disadvantages. Kittens are fun, full of energy, and cute. It is hard, though, to determine what their personality will be like when they reach adulthood, but they can be trained a little easier. Kittens usually need to be monitored more closely as they tend to be more mischievous than an adult. Adult cats have already been through the age of drape climbing and knocking over everything. Their personalities are already evident, however this could also mean they aren't accustomed to certain things, such as a vacuum cleaner, dogs, or children. Deciding between a kitten or a cat is important, so be sure to take the time to consider what will work best for you and your family.

If you are choosing to adopt an adult cat, be sure to get to know the cat before bringing it home. Ask the shelter or owner about its personality, whether it is friendly with other pets and its likes and dislikes. Also be sure to ask about medical history; you should acquire a vaccination record and know if the cat has been spayed or neutered. Try to find out why it needs a new home as well. Was it a stray or does it have a behavioral issue that made the owner decide to give it up? Find out all you can and even visit the cat several times, if possible, so you can get to know each other.

If you are adopting a kitten, one of the most important things to consider is the age at which the kitten is adopted. Most people want to

bring home the kitty at a tiny 5 or 6 weeks old. However, the best time to adopt from a litter is at least 9 weeks old and up to 12 weeks when possible. The socialization time a kitten has with its littermates and mother is crucial to the cat's overall behavior as an adult. Kittens that are both socialized with their littermates and are handled often by humans tend to be less aggressive and friendlier adult cats. Watch how the kitten plays. It should be playful but not too aggressive. A "nice" cat should not hiss when approached by humans, or run and hide.

Regardless if choosing a kitten or adult, purebred or mixed-breed, choosing a healthy, happy cat is most important of all. A healthy cat should not have any drainage around the eyes or nose and shouldn't have excessive sneezing. Check under the kitty's tail to be sure it is clean. If there is dried feces or it appears wet or the hair is matted, it could be a sign of illness. The haircoat should be clean without bald spots or signs of fleas or ticks. Excessive dirt (which looks like coffee grounds) in the ears or scratch sores on the ears are most likely signs of ear mites. The cat should be at a proper weight and eating well. Be aware that if adopting an adult cat that is excessively thin or overweight, it could have serious health problems that could require lengthy and expensive treatment.

Take time to choose your new kitty and be sure to have it checked by the veterinarian as soon as possible. Remember, cats easily live well into their teen years, especially with proper care, so you are making a commitment to care for your kitten for many years.

Prepare for Kitten Homecoming

Bringing home a new kitten is always exciting but can be very scary and exhausting for the kitten. Being prepared beforehand will make the transition easier and less stressful for your new companion. Try to have supplies ready that you will need. These include food and water dishes, litter pan with litter and a scratching post. You will also need to have kitten food. When you get the kitten, see if you can get a small bag of the food it is used to eating, then, gradually mix in the new food over the course of a week.

A pet carrier or crate is the best way to transport your new kitty home. This keeps them safe and helps them feel secure. It will also prevent them from crawling under your feet while driving. Once home, designate a room that is safe for your cat, just until it gets used to its new home. Have the crate or box with towels or a blanket in it for it to sleep in and feel safe. Put the litter box and food and water dishes close by. Be sure to "kitty proof" the room as well. Kittens are very curious creatures and like to play with just about anything, especially if it is

lightweight or moves. Electrical cords, plants, curtains, strings from rugs, and small items, such as bread ties, all pose risks to a curious kitten. They are also dangerous so remember to remove or secure them.

If your kitten is going to be an outdoor cat, try to create a clean, safe place in the garage or porch. It is best to keep the kitten confined to this area for a few days, until it learns that this is its new home. Do not open the crate outdoors as soon as you get home. A scared and confused kitten or cat is likely to run off, not knowing where it is, and become lost. Outdoor cats need to have shelter to escape the cold and heat. Take caution to clean up antifreeze and other chemicals. Also be prepared to keep the cat out of the yard for a while if you are going to be spraying or treating plants.

Introducing your kitten to its new family should be a gradual process. Children should be taught how to properly pet and hold the kitten. They need to stay calm so they don't scare the kitten. Remember, kitty claws are sharp and it would be best to have them trimmed before children try to play with it. Introductions to other pets should also be gradual as to not scare the kitten. **IMPORTANT:** If you have other cats, take your new kitten to the veterinarian before introducing them to each other or sharing a litterbox or food and water dishes. (This is to prevent possible spread of FIV or Feline Leukemia; more information under Testing in Kitten's Veterinary Visit article.)

When pets first meet each other, allow them to see and smell each other through the pet carrier or gate. When they seem to be comfortable with each other's presence, you can allow them to interact. Always supervise these first encounters. If you have to leave, separate them while you are gone, until they are getting along nicely. Sometimes pets love each other from the start, other times it may take several weeks just for them to tolerate each other. It may take time but your new kitten will settle in its new home and become part of the family.

Kitten's Veterinary Visit

Take your new kitten or cat to the veterinarian as soon as possible, preferably before taking it home (especially if you have other cats). If your kitty has already seen a veterinarian or has had vaccinations, take this information with you. Your kitten's veterinary visits are crucial for its lifelong health. The vet will take care of your cat's health needs as well as educate you on how to help it live a long and healthy life.

Kittens will have several veterinary visits while young for examinations, vaccinations, deworming, and blood tests. The veterinarian will examine your kitty from nose to tail and assess its overall condition. Examinations allow the vet to diagnose, treat and prevent health problems. Be sure to ask the veterinarian any questions you may have.

Testing

Before you introduce your new kitten or cat to other cats in your household, and before you start vaccinations, your kitty needs to be tested for two diseases: FIV (feline immunodeficiency virus) and Feline Leukemia. These two very common diseases are similar and are a major cause of death of cats. These viruses are transmitted from cat to cat and from mother cat to kittens. There is no treatment once contracted. Testing is very easy; it only requires a few drops of blood and results are ready in about 10 minutes. If your cat's test result is negative, it can be protected through vaccinations. If it is positive, the veterinarian can discuss your options, including working with you to manage the infection and prevent the spread of



the disease. Testing helps your cat to live the best life possible and helps stop the spread of these deadly diseases.

Vaccinations

Your kitten will receive vaccinations every few weeks, beginning as early as 8 weeks and ending at around 16 weeks. Vaccinations prepare your pet's immune system to prevent diseases that can cause serious illness and death. Even cats that are strictly indoors will need some vaccinations since some diseases can be transmitted through the air or can be brought in by us or other pets. At each visit, your kitty will be vaccinated to prevent the following diseases:

- FIV (feline immunodeficiency virus) and Feline Leukemia; two deadly diseases that attack the cat's immune system.
- Rabies; a deadly disease caused by a virus that attacks the nervous system that can be transmitted to people and other animals usually through a bite wound.
- Kennel cough; an airborne disease that causes sneezing, runny eyes and loss of appetite. Over 85% of cats are exposed to this virus and even indoor cats are susceptible.
- Rhinotracheitis; a severe upper-respiratory virus that can be especially devastating to kittens.
- Calicivirus; a highly contagious upper-respiratory virus that can lead to pneumonia and cause mouth ulcers.
- Chlamydia; a virus that causes infection of the nose and eyes and is possibly transmitted to humans resulting in eye infections.
- Panleukopenia (also called feline distemper); causes fever, weight loss, diarrhea and vomiting, and most often ends in death.

Internal and External Parasites

Nearly all kittens are born with worms. The most common worms in cats are roundworms, hookworms, and tapeworms. These along with other intestinal parasites, such as Giardia and Coccidia can cause serious health problems if not treated. The risks to your pet include blood loss, malnutrition, diarrhea, vomiting, dehydration and sometimes even death. Some intestinal parasites can also be spread to humans and cause damaging effects such as permanent or partial vision loss. At Flanary Veterinary Clinic, your kitten will typically be dewormed at 8 weeks of age (or when you adopt the kitten). At 11 weeks, a microscopic exam of the kitten's stool will be done to look for worm eggs, indicating worms are present. This is done since kittens very easily re-infect themselves with worms, even after de-worming. This fecal exam can also detect other intestinal parasites such as Giardia and Coccidia, both of which are organisms that live in the intestines and often cause diarrhea and poor weight gain. At this veterinary visit, your kitten will also be started on heartworm prevention. Heartworm prevention, such as Heartgard or Revolution, is given once a month for life and serves two purposes. The main purpose is to protect against heartworms, which are worms that are transmitted to dogs and cats by mosquitoes. They can grow up to a foot long and live in and around the pet's heart. If left untreated, the animal will develop serious complications and eventually die. Sudden death is unfortunately a very common first sign of feline heartworms, and studies have shown that indoor cats are even more susceptible to heartworms. Heartworm prevention will also help prevent some intestinal worms, essentially de-worming your pet every month.

Revolution is a product that will serve multiple purposes for your cat. Not only will it protect against heartworms and intestinal worms, it will also protect against fleas and ear mites. Keeping your kitten free of fleas, ticks and ear mites is important to its health. Ear mites are microscopic mites that are very common in kitten's ears and cause extensive scratching, sores and infection. Not only will fleas and ticks bug you and your pet and cause allergic reactions, they also spread diseases and cause anemia, and in extreme cases even death.

Prevention is the key in controlling these creatures before they get out of hand. If ticks are a problem or concern, then a once a month application of Frontline is best. Frontline protects against both fleas and ticks. (If using Frontline instead of Revolution, you will also need to use Heartgard for heartworm protection). Discuss with the veterinarian the best options for your kitty. Only use the products that are recommended by the veterinarian. Many of the products that are available at stores can be very dangerous to your kitten's health, not to mention they usually don't work very well.

Throughout your kitty's life, you should notice any changes in appearance or behavior and bring it to your veterinarian's attention. Changes in eating, urinating or defecating, and general behavior can all indicate illnesses. You should also notice if there is any eye discharge, unusual mouth or ear odors or skin or coat changes. The sooner problems can be detected, the sooner treatment can be provided with the best possible outcome.

Nutrition for Life

The food your kitten eats now and throughout life has a great impact on its health, mood, and life expectancy. The right balance of quality nutrients promotes good health and since kittens grow very fast, proper nutrition is important for their development. They should be fed a kitten food until 1 year of age. Then your cat should be switched to an adult food, or adult light food, then a senior food at 7 years old. The veterinarian is the best source for the right food for your cat, as there are many different types available.

Hill's Science Diet is the number one brand recommended by veterinarians. Pet's that are exclusively fed Science Diet lead longer and healthier lives because it has the right balance of the right nutrients. Visit www.hillspet.com for more information on nutrition and Science Diet foods. Remember to always provide clean, fresh water and clean dishes to help prevent bacteria.

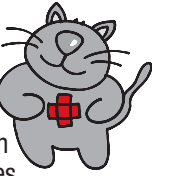
The right food is important for your kitten's health, but also remember to be wise about table scraps and treats. Too many treats can cause your kitten not to eat its food, taking away from its nutritional needs. They can also add more calories than your kitty needs, which can cause improper weight gain. You should also avoid feeding scraps and human food which cause weight gain, and can also cause sickness and even death.

Feeding too much of the right food can also be damaging to your kitty's health. Many cats will eat far more food than they need if it is available to them. Most cats should be switched to a light food at one year old since cats (especially indoor cats) are very prone to weight gain. Obesity in cats is very concerning for several reasons. First, grooming becomes difficult for them. Overweight cats tend to have difficulty reaching to clean themselves, resulting in urinary tract infections and skin problems, especially on their backs and hindquarters. Arthritis and joint problems have an early onset and are accelerated in overweight cats, as well as heart disease and high blood pressure. Diabetes is an extremely common disease that is associated with obesity in cats. Signs include weakness, increased thirst and urination, unexplained weight loss, and depression. Diabetes is expensive and can be difficult to treat and maintain and often leads to death.

Your veterinarian can help keep your kitty's weight on the right track. If it becomes overweight, the veterinarian can offer special foods and information to help your kitty get back to a healthy weight. Obesity is usually easier to prevent than reverse. It is not just something that affects your cat's appearance, but how your cat lives.

Spay or Neuter Your Kitten

Most kittens should be spayed or neutered at about 5 months of age. Spaying and neutering involves the removal of the reproductive organs. Not only does this help control pet overpopulation, but research has proven that these pets live longer and have a reduced risk of a variety of health problems, including certain types of cancer. Both operations are low-risk procedures, usually without complications.



Spaying and neutering at a young age can also help limit some behavioral problems. Female cats that are not spayed usually become very vocal when they reach sexual maturity. When kept indoors, it will usually cry consistently and try to get out. If let out, most likely it will be bred. Stray male cats will usually move into your yard when a female is in heat. Male cats that are not neutered will begin to mark their territory, essentially spraying their urine in your house or, if outdoors, on your house and plants. This urine has a very strong smell that is very difficult if not impossible to remove. Unaltered male cats will usually roam and, very commonly, not return home. They usually fight with other males, increasing their chances of contracting diseases.

The number of kittens born every year is staggering. Just two uncontrolled breeding cats, with continued breeding, can lead to over 12,000 cats in only 5 years. This multiplying leads to over 80,000 cats in 10 years. Unfortunately most of these are euthanized in shelters or die on the streets because there are not enough homes for them. Spaying and neutering is not only best for your kitty's lifelong health, but it also prevents euthanasia of unwanted kittens.

Prior to surgery, your kitty should have several tests done to ensure its safety and quick recovery. If not previously tested, an FIV and Feline leukemia test should be done. Blood tests are also done to check the function of internal organs. These are important before surgery to be sure the liver and kidneys can excrete the anesthesia, resulting in a proper recovery. An EKG should also be performed to check the function of the cat's heart before and during the surgery. The results from the bloodwork and the EKG are not only important before a surgery, but it also sets a baseline for your kitty's future health. If your cat becomes ill in the future, these test results can be used as a reference for diagnosis and treatment.

Declawing

At the time of your cat's spay or neuter you may decide to have it declawed at the same time. This procedure is commonly done to prevent furniture clawing or scratching people. The primary concern in deciding whether or not to declaw is if it will be able to defend itself. A cat's claws are its primary way of defense and escape. If a kitty is strictly indoors and never ventures out, then declawing would be fine. However, outdoor cats, or cats that go out occasionally or even those that consistently try to escape, should not be declawed. Removing its claws leaves it vulnerable to be attacked by other animals. Declawing is commonly done at the same time as spaying or neutering so the animal will only have to go under anesthesia once. Also, declawing at around 5 to 6 months is more advantageous because they heal much faster and have less pain than a full grown cat. If you choose to have your cat declawed, be sure it is going to be indoors for life.

Kitty Housetraining and Behavior

Litter box training should begin as soon as you get home with your kitty. Most kittens do not have any problem using a litter box, and in most cases it is far easier to housetrain a cat than a dog. Place the litter box in a quiet, private (but not hidden) area. Keep one in the room