



CARING FOR YOUR NEW KITTEN

*THE TEXT IN THIS KITTEN CARE DOCUMENT HAS KINDLY COME FROM THE VET
MARLBOROUGH KITTEN CARE BOOKLET.*

Congratulations on the purchase of your new kitten. Kittens are a lot of fun, but also a big responsibility and we hope that we will be able to help guide you through the different life stages of your kitten's development. The relationship you develop with your kitten and your veterinarian is very important and the two go hand in hand. We hope that we can provide you information and advice to help your kitten develop into a mature adult. Don't forget—if in doubt please ASK.

Please find enclosed in your introduction pack information on:

- Vaccination
- Worming
- Flea control
- Nutrition
- Creating good eating habits
- Training your kitten
- House training
- Grooming
- Microchip identification
- De-sexing
- Pet medical insurance

We look forward to a long and enjoyable relationship with you and your kitten.

From all the team at Vet Marlborough

1. Vaccinations

Cats are susceptible to a range of viral diseases that can be fatal in severe cases. Viruses are usually spread by close contact between cats. Antibiotics have no effect against viruses so treatment usually consists of attempts to alleviate the symptoms and support the cat until recovery occurs. Fortunately safe, effective vaccines are available to protect cats against cat flu (also known as snuffles), feline enteritis and feline AIDS (FIV). Routinely we vaccinate kittens against these viruses at the age of 8, 11 and 14 weeks, followed by a booster one year later. From then on we vaccinate every year for FIV and every three years for flu and enteritis.

We do not routinely vaccinate against feline leukaemia as this virus is very rare in New Zealand. We can however, offer this vaccination as an optional extra at your request. We do recommend feline leukaemia vaccination of cats at risk, for instance those that live with another cat that already has the disease.

As vaccines take time to work, it is necessary to keep your new kitten inside away from the neighbourhood cats until a week after the initial vaccination course has been completed (ie. after the 14 week injection).

You will receive a vaccination certificate after the first injection and it is important that you bring this with you on each vaccination visit so that we can keep it updated for you. You will need to produce this certificate as proof of vaccination if you ever need to board your cat in a cattery.

2. Worming

All cats need regular worming to ensure control of roundworm, hookworm and tapeworm. These three worm types live in the stomach or intestines and can cause vomiting and diarrhoea, though more commonly they lead to general poor condition and in kittens a poor growth rate. It is important to treat for worms preventatively rather than after you think your cat has become infested with them. Kittens need treatment more often than adult cats.

There are several options available for treating your cat for worms. Worm tablets or worming paste need to be given every 2 weeks until your kitten reaches 12 weeks of age. From then on treat every 3 months for life. For the first 12 weeks you need only treat for roundworm and hookworm but from 12 weeks onwards it is important to treat for tapeworm too. We recommend Drontal Allwormer or Milpro tablets for cats which effectively treat all three worm types.

There are also available pour-on treatments (Revolution and Broadline) that control worms and fleas at the same time and these are an ideal way to treat those cats that are difficult to give tablets to. Revolution controls fleas and roundworm whereas Broadline controls fleas, roundworm and tapeworm. They are very effective and easy to apply. If using Revolution monthly we recommend giving a tapeworm tablet or

application of Broadline 1-2 times a year to control tapeworm (we can do this during their annual health check!).

3. Flea control

Fleas are a common problem, particularly in summer. As well as carrying tapeworms, fleas are very irritating for cats, and can cause an allergic dermatitis. Fleas begin to breed at a faster rate as the weather warms in spring and summer. A female flea can lay up to 50 eggs per day, so the flea population can rapidly expand.

Adult fleas on your pet represent only 5% of the total flea population. Eggs drop off into the animal's environment. Carpets and pet bedding provide an ideal breeding environment for fleas. The eggs hatch into larvae which grow and spin a cocoon. The pupae then hatch into a young adult. The whole cycle can be completed in as little as 4 weeks.

Effective flea control requires the use of products that are non-toxic, convenient to use and effective at breaking the flea breeding cycle. To do this they must either kill adult fleas very quickly before they have a chance to lay eggs, or prevent eggs from hatching. The products that we recommend are Revolution, Bravecto and Broadline pour-ons. If you like to use flea collars then Seresto is the only brand we would recommend. Revolution has the advantage of also controlling roundworm, hookworm and ear mites whereas Broadline controls roundworm and tapeworm as well as fleas. We are happy to discuss which product would suit your situation best and help you design a flea and worm control programme for your pet.

4. Nutrition

We have all heard the expression 'you are what you eat' and this is never more true than in the young growing kitten. Proper development of the teeth, bones, internal organs etc relies upon supply of the correct balance of nutrients and hence depends greatly on the quality of the diet. Although it is possible to provide a balanced diet with home cooked ingredients, it is a lot more convenient to buy a good quality commercial food. Cats require a lot of protein in their diet but that protein must be of the right type or they are at risk of developing certain diseases. Avoid regular feeding of liver or raw fish.

At Vet Marlborough we have chosen to stock what we consider to be the best available, super premium cat foods, from manufacturers that we trust and respect (Hill's Science Diet, Black Hawk Royal Canin). The benefit to you is that you can have confidence that you are providing your friend with a truly optimum diet.

It is important that you choose the correct type of diet for the life stage of your cat. The top manufacturers provide a range of foods for cats with different needs. Kittens

require more protein, energy and minerals than adult cats and it is important to feed them a suitable kitten food during the first year.

Once they are weaned, kittens do not need to be provided with milk. In fact a small proportion of kittens can be intolerant of the lactose in cow's milk and develop diarrhoea. If you wish to give your kitten milk it may be safer to provide a commercially prepared kitten milk which is low in lactose. Having said that, many cats happily drink cow's milk all of their lives with no problems.

Remember fresh water should be available at all times.

5. Creating good eating habits

Once you have chosen a suitable food you need to decide how much to feed and how often. The top manufacturers all provide recommendations on the packaging as to how much of their product to feed and these can be used as a guideline. However cats generally are very good at regulating their own food intake and so it is acceptable to leave food available for them all day unless the cat is overweight. They will eat only what they need. A convenient way to feed a cat is to buy a purpose built automatic feeder and keep it topped up with biscuits. Provide a clean and quiet feeding area away from heavy foot traffic or competing animals.

Ideal body condition is when you can easily feel the ribs with gentle pressure but cannot see the ribs. The fat pad under the belly should be minimal.

6. Training your kitten

Although cats have a free spirit and in many ways rule their own lives, it is possible to train them to display desirable rather than undesirable behaviour patterns. Cats respond to a loud, stern "No" or a squirt from a water pistol when exhibiting undesirable behaviour. However to make progress it is important that the deterrent is used exactly at the same moment as the undesired behaviour and also each time that behaviour occurs. In this way, you can train your cat not to scratch you or the furniture and not to jump on to kitchen surfaces. It is counter productive to chase or hit your cat as this results in a scared, unsociable cat. Scratching posts can be provided to help direct your cat away from scratching the furniture.

7. House training

For the first few weeks you will need to provide your kitten with a litter tray for toileting. This should be placed in a quiet but accessible place away from the kittens eating and sleeping area. The litter tray will need cleaning at least daily as kittens will often ignore a soiled tray.

Place your new kitten in the litter tray first thing in the morning, last thing at night and after eating and give encouragement each time they successfully use the litter tray. If you catch your kitten toileting in the wrong place tell them a firm "No" and gently place them into the litter tray. Clean up any accidents with mild detergents that do not contain ammonia as the smell of ammonia can encourage toileting in that area. Soiled areas may be covered with aluminium foil to deter further accidents in that area.

8. Grooming

Long haired cats require frequent grooming to prevent "matting" of the coat. It is a good idea to get long haired kittens used to being gently brushed right from the start. Grooming equipment should be specifically designed for cats.

At Vet Marlborough we stock a wide range of grooming tools and can advise the best tools suitable for your cat's coat type. Nail clipping is not usually necessary in cats with access to the outdoors but they can be clipped if they regularly get caught on the carpet or furniture.

9. Pet identification

We all hope our own pets will never stray from home and get lost, or even worse, be involved in a road accident. We should never assume this won't happen to our own pets. Many stray pets never see their owners again and the uncertainty of knowing whether a lost pet is still alive can be difficult to cope with. Technology in the form of a **microchip implant** now provides a quick and easy method of identifying your pet. The microchip contains electronic information allowing pet and owner to be quickly reunited in the event of straying.

Most Vets and Animal Welfare Centres now have access to microchip readers. The chip is smaller than a grain of rice and is easily inserted under your pet's skin by an injection. The chip remains in place for life and the pet remains unaware of its presence. At Vet Marlborough we can insert a microchip painlessly under local anaesthesia during a normal consultation. This microchip also reads your kittens temperature so no more thermometer required!

10. Desexing

Desexing removes the sexual urge from both male and female cats. Unless you are serious about showing or breeding, desexing is recommended for all pet cats.

Owners are often tempted to have at least one litter from their female cat. Breeding is an expensive and time consuming process which requires a lot of hard work. It is

not recommended without serious study of the involvement you will be required to give. It can be very difficult to find suitable homes for the kittens.

Without desexing the female cat comes into season regularly and frequently from about 4-6 months of age until she becomes pregnant. It can be a time of stress for both cat and owner. Desexing the cat prevents oestrus so she will not come into heat and will avoid the associated problems of an unwanted pregnancy.

Desexing the male cat is essential to prevent a further increase in the feral cat population. Desexing reduces the likelihood that the male cat will wander and fight. Fighting commonly causes abscesses and can spread disease between male cats, particularly the feline AIDS virus. Desexing also reduces the tendency of male cats to urine spray their territory including the inside of your house.

Both male and female cats are usually desexed at about 4-6 months of age although the operation can be carried out at any time. Your vet will be more than happy to discuss the details with you.

11. Pet medical insurance

Did you know that you can now take out medical insurance for your pets? Were you aware that it can cost well over \$2,000 to have a fractured leg repaired? Far too often we still need to euthanase pets following road accidents as their owners cannot afford the required surgery. If your pet is unlucky enough to develop an ongoing health problem such as heart disease, diabetes, allergies, the veterinary costs over the lifetime of your pet can easily be in the thousands. It makes great sense to get your pets insured which gives you peace of mind.

Some insurance companies offer an absolutely 'no strings attached' FREE four-week trial cover period. Ask your vet to help you choose the best insurance for you and your pet.