



Kitten Information Sheet

Congratulations on your new kitten. To help you take the best care of your kitten, we've put together this outline of services we recommend for the health and long life of your new friend.

1. Feed a name brand, complete and balanced kitten chow, and leave a bowl down since cats prefer to eat free choice. Studies have shown that cats should eat a balance of wet and dry food. Eating a diet of dry food only, increases the risk of renal disease as a cat ages. Eating a diet of wet food only, can cause excessive tartar and periodontal disease. We recommend feeding a ¼ can of wet food in the am only, mixed with dry food to get the added moisture. Leave less if your kitten does not finish it within a half hour. Dry food only in the pm because the wet food can cake along the gums at night. The dry food at night helps to scrape the teeth clean, just like a dog chewing on a bone. At 6 months of age, gradually change to adult food and monitor your cat's weight. To help prevent urinary problems, especially in male cats, feed a low mineral/ash diet to adults.
2. Kittens that stay inside are generally healthier due to their limited exposure to other animals and their diseases, as well as trauma. Most cats are perfectly happy indoors as long as they have a window or a porch, food and a clean litter box. Since cats instinctively use litter boxes and don't require walks, they are easy to house train.
3. Vaccine Schedule:
We have chosen the safest available vaccines available for your kitten. We have taken great steps to prevent vaccine reaction while maintaining and developing good immunity. Please keep in mind that localized reactions are still possible.
 - a. The DRC or FVRCP (Distemper-Rhinotracheitis-Calici-Chlamydia) is first given at 8 weeks of age, then boosted every 3-4 weeks until 14-16 weeks when the kitten's immune system is more fully developed. A yearly booster is then given. In a low-risk lifestyle (strictly indoor cats), the Distemper combo can be given every 3 years.
 - b. Rabies is first given at 3-4 months and boosted yearly. Rabies immunizations are required on all cats (even indoor cats) according to Maine state law.
 - c. If your kitten is exposed to other cats (in multi-cat households, going outside, cat shows, boarding, etc.), a blood test for feline leukemia (FeLV) should be done, and the kitten vaccinated if the test result is negative. The first vaccine can be given after 9 weeks of age, a booster 3-4 weeks after the first vaccine, then yearly thereafter.
4. Neutering: Unless you plan to breed professionally, you should have your kitten spayed (female) or castrated (male) at 5-6 months of age. There are several important medical advantages to early neutering, in addition to helping solve the critical over-population problem. *Millions* of dogs and cats are euthanized each year in this country simply because there are no homes for them. Owning a breeding queen or tom is a time and money consuming occupation. The queen goes in and out of heat every 3 weeks during the long breeding season (you will know she is in heat from the yowling) and the tom

marks his territory by spraying very strong smelling urine. Please be a responsible pet owner and have yours neutered

5. It is normal for kittens to sharpen and shed their claws. Provide a scratching post or a corrugated cardboard box as acceptable objects, and discourage drapes and furniture. Trim your kitten's nails every 6-8 weeks. If your kitten is being destructive, declawing may be necessary. It is usually done under the same anesthetic as the neutering. Declawing requires the removal of the claw and the first toe bone to which it is attached. Alternatives to declawing include: regular nail-trims and a nail covering called **Soft Paws**. You can use food rewards (lure-training) to teach your cat to use a scratching post and to stay off the furniture.
6. Many kittens can be born with intestinal worms (roundworm) and can acquire other worms (coccidia) from the environment or from fleas/hunting (tapeworm). We routinely worm kittens on their first 2 vaccination visits. A fecal sample should be checked after the last worming and yearly thereafter if it is an outdoor cat.
7. Fleas can infest even indoor cats. Baths, powders and sprays are effective on the pet, but the environment must also be treated. A topical, once a month liquid called **Revolution** is on the market which kills adult fleas in 24 hours and repels but does not kill ticks. Another topical treatment is **Frontline** which kills both fleas and ticks. Flea collars are hazardous to kittens under 4 months of age and should not be used.
8. Socialization of kittens must be done very early (before 3 months of age). Kittens raised with a wild queen can rarely be tamed. Your kitten should receive regular baths or combing, especially if a long haired breed, and nail trims. Exposure to other people, including children, loud noises, car rides (in a secure box), etc. make for a calmer pet. Behaviorist/Veterinarian Ian Dunbar recommends training your kitten (by food rewards and praise) to come when called; go to the scratching post or their bed. You can even teach such dog exclusive tricks as fetching, rolling over and sit up and beg.
9. Grooming: Most cats need regular brushing or combing to remove mats and dead fur. Teach your kitten to accept these normal routines by praising them and giving small food treats. Stroking a cat slowly from head to tail releases the natural hormone serotonin which is relaxing to them. Also spend a few minutes looking into your kitten's mouth and ears, and teach them to submit to regular picking up and handling.
10. Play: Cats are intelligent and agile creatures. During play, a kitten makes full use of its surroundings to provide physical and mental challenges. They are attracted to moving objects, stimulating their prey drive which is used in hunting behaviors. Running, jumping, batting and climbing are all practice for the hunt. They also like to investigate everything, so you need to kitten proof your house and have plenty of safe toys as well as a scratching post available to them.

Playing with your kitten gives you opportunities to teach acceptable behaviors. Avoid rough play which might encourage biting, scratching or other aggression directed towards people. The target should be a toy such as catnip, fleece chew, feather on a stick, or a

lightweight ball. A paper bag is also a favorite. Toys should be large enough not to swallow and should not have removable pieces like yarn or buttons. String-like objects can cause very serious intestinal blockages if swallowed, so do not allow your kitten to play unsupervised with yarn, string, etc.

Cats are nocturnal in the wild, and can often indulge in wild hunting displays, especially at night while you are trying to sleep. Try some chase games just before bed to tire the kitten out.

11. Introducing a kitten to an already established cat can be difficult. Cats are very territorial and resent newcomers. Introduce your new kitten gradually to resident pets. Place the kitten in a carrier so other pets can see and smell, but not touch. Don't leave your kitten alone with other pets until everyone is getting along. Rubbing the kitten with something that smells of you can help. Be sure to give your resident pets their fair share of your attention. Separate feeding dishes and litter boxes may be necessary at first. Once a friendship is established two cats can be good company for each other and great fun for you. If you have no other pets, consider getting 2 kittens at the same time so they will have companionship.
12. Kittens and young children should never be left unsupervised. Children tend to encourage aggression by wiggling fingers and toes at the kitten. It is highly likely that those little fingers and toes may be scratched or bitten as a result. Teach children to gently stroke pets and never pull ears or tails.