



YOUR NEW KITTEN

FACT SHEET 2

DO YOU REALLY WANT A CAT?

There are many positive things to say about cat ownership and if you are considering taking a kitten on, you are probably aware that it will provide an affectionate and loyal long-term companion. Cats are also very entertaining to watch. Some can be over-affectionate, rubbing around your ankles as soon as you walk in the door, while others may be aloof and choose only to take interest when feeding time arrives. Cats very much have their own character, each with a distinctive and unique personality.

Before you take on a kitten there are some important points to consider. These include expenses such as:

- Veterinary fees
- Vaccinating and neutering
- Feeding
- Insurance
- Cattery fees
- Equipment such as a cat basket, litter tray and a bed

There are also many other things that will need to be paid for. You may be surprised at just how much damage a cat can do to the house by climbing curtains or scratching furniture and carpets. And what will you do if you want to spend a weekend away - is someone available to look after the cat?

Consider all the points carefully before making a decision. Remember that cats can live for up to twenty years and that you will be responsible for your cat's care throughout its life.

CHOOSING A KITTEN

The next stage is to decide which kitten to choose. Pedigree kittens can be expensive, but you will have an idea of future looks and temperament. A kitten from a reputable breeder is less likely to have health problems, although some breeds can be prone to certain diseases. Regular domestic kittens can have very strong characters and can look very attractive and there are usually many of these looking for good homes. Remember that there are also very many adult cats looking for homes and that it is often worthwhile contacting your local sanctuaries to see if you could take one of these instead.

Long-haired cats, such as Persians, will need daily grooming, which can be very time consuming. Some long-haired cats resent having their tummy brushed and if this hair becomes matted, it may mean an expensive and possibly traumatic anaesthetic to cut the mats out. The best way of dealing with this is to accustom your cat to being handled as early in life as possible. This early socialisation period is important and will allow your cat to adapt to its environment, as well as learn to cope with the stresses of everyday life.

If you are looking at a litter of kittens, do not be tempted to take the runt of the litter out of sympathy. It may work out an expensive mistake if the cat remains unwell throughout its life! Whenever possible, see either one or both of the kitten's parents, as this will give you some idea of the kitten's potential temperament.

PREPARING FOR YOUR KITTEN

You should try to see your kitten a couple of times before taking it home, to allow it to become accustomed to you. Make sure you have a warm, sheltered hide for the kitten to use as a bed. You will also need to obtain a litter tray and some cat litter. Kittens are very inquisitive and anything sharp or unstable should be taken out of the way and any fires should be shielded. It is best to keep kittens out of the kitchen while you are cooking, as accidents can happen. Check with the breeder about the kitten's diet and be prepared to continue with this regime for a few days. Once the kitten is settled in, any changes in diet can be introduced gradually.

ARRIVING HOME WITH YOUR KITTEN

When you first get your kitten home, introduce it to one room only to start with. Do not force it to do anything, instead let it come out of the basket and explore at its own pace. If you have other animals or young children, it may be best to arrange a large pen for the kitten in one corner of the main room. This way, it can get used to the smells and movements of the home without initially being involved. It can also give the other animals a chance to accept the new cat's smell.

Let the kitten explore the rest of its new home on its own. Some cats are very bold and will go anywhere and try anything straight away, while others will be more timid and will adjust gradually.

Show the kitten its litter tray and bed and try to keep an eye on what it gets up to, until it settles down and falls asleep. Offer a little food and water, but do not be too worried if it is not accepted at first. Remember, kittens are not toys and should not be pulled around.

YOUR CAT AND YOUR VET

When you first take on a kitten, you need to find out if it is vaccinated and if it has had any treatment for worms. You should take it to your vet as soon as possible for a check-up and to find out if the kitten needs any further vaccinations or worm tablets. Vaccinations are normally carried out at approximately 8 and 12 weeks of age. As well as the standard cat flu and enteritis vaccine, you should consider having your cat vaccinated against FeLV, the feline leukaemia virus. Your vet will be able to give you more information about this and will be able to answer any concerns that you may have over health implications associated with vaccination.

FeLV is one of the more serious cat diseases and can be difficult to detect, as carriers may not show any external symptoms. The other two important cat diseases are feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline infectious peritonitis (FIP), neither of which can be vaccinated against at present. None of these diseases can be passed to humans, dogs or any other animal, but they are infectious to other cats. A good breeder should have no problems with these diseases, but if your cat is from a more dubious source, it may be wise to consider having blood tests carried out to check first. Your vet will be able to tell you how common these problems are in your area.

NEUTERING

You will also need to discuss neutering with your vet. Unless you have a specific reason for wishing to breed from your cat and can guarantee homes for all the kittens, you should have your cat neutered. Females that have kittens too young or have many litters can become weak and will not grow properly. It is also not true that you should let them have one litter before they are spayed as it appears to make no difference to the cat's behaviour. As it is quite difficult to keep a cat indoors during the period when she is in season, your cat is quite likely to become pregnant if you are not careful. A cat will come into heat approximately every three weeks until she is mated. Each heat will last for five to ten days, during which time she may call for a mate and crouch down with her back end up in the air, crying. This sort of behaviour is quite normal, but is sometimes mistaken as a sign that the cat is unwell.

Male cats that are not castrated tend to wander and fight and this may spread the three diseases mentioned earlier, as well as cause abscesses. They also have a strong smell, which is not easy to live with. For males and females, however, the strongest argument for neutering is that there are already too many unwanted adult cats in sanctuaries. Many people want kittens, but fewer will take a grown cat.

Neutering is normally carried out between 5 and 7 months of age. A female cat can become pregnant as early as 5 months and produce a litter at seven months. An adult female which has not been neutered can ultimately be responsible for over 20,000 descendants!

Finally, it is worth bearing in mind that you can take out medical insurance for your cat. This will not cover vaccines and neutering, but will cover fees incurred by illness or accident. Your vet will be able to give you further information about this.

INDOOR OR OUTDOOR

Cats are not always the most sensible of animals when it comes to roads and, as your vet will tell you, cats often manage to become involved in accidents. If you are worried about your cat becoming injured, it may be better to keep it indoors. Most cats will adapt to living inside quite well. Sometimes, though, a single cat will be lonely and it may be better to have two for company. Indoor cats will need to keep their claws well trimmed, so, to help prevent damage to your furniture, always make sure that there is a scratching post available.

If you feel confident about your cat going outside, fit a cat flap to allow easy access to the garden. A visit to the pet shop is well worth the time and effort, as there is quite a variety of designs to choose from.

GROOMING

A grooming routine should be started as early as possible in your cat's life to help accustom it to being handled and examined, which will also make visits to the vet easier to deal with. Grooming also helps to form a bond between a cat and its owner.

Long-haired cats, especially, need to be groomed very regularly, ideally once a day, concentrating on the chest and stomach. Without this care, long-haired cats are likely to get furballs and the coat may also become matted. This can be very

uncomfortable for the cat and also encourages parasites. In very severe cases the skin can become very sore and may result in your cat needing to be given an anaesthetic to cut out all the mats. Short-haired cats will also benefit from regular grooming to remove dead hair and stimulate circulation under the skin.

Give your cat a bath from time to time with Denes Essential Oil Shampoo which is ideal for improving coat condition. Rinse and dry the coat thoroughly afterwards.

While grooming, check the eyes, ears, nose, mouth and anal region for anything unusual. Most cats do not generally need to have their nails clipped as they will use a scratching post or other convenient object to keep them in trim.

TRAINING

Unlike a dog, a cat cannot be trained to obey your every word and will sometimes seem to take pleasure in blatantly doing something of which it knows you will disapprove.

Punishment is not a good way of dealing with this, as it can make the cat nervous and even make the problem worse. If your cat is doing something wrong, move it away and say no. Repetition is the best way to teach a cat and, eventually, it will learn.

Most kittens are instinctively litter-trained and are usually shown what to do by the mother. If this is not the case, clear up any accidents without a fuss. If you catch the kitten actually starting to urinate, pick it up and place it in the tray. It is also a good idea to keep a little of the faeces in the tray so the kitten knows the purpose of the tray. Very few cats are naturally dirty and if you do have a cat which will not use a tray or go outside, it is best to discuss this problem with your vet or veterinary nurse (or even an animal psychologist) to see if there is a simple solution.

FEEDING YOUR KITTEN

A good quality food is essential to maintain health. Choosing the correct diet will make a significant contribution to your cat's health and wellbeing. A poor diet can cause deficiencies or excesses of nutrients, which might cause serious problems for your cat. A vegetarian diet should never be used, as a cat has evolved to be carnivorous and cannot obtain all its dietary needs without a regular supply of meat.

In the wild, a cat would eat small mammals, obtaining a natural balanced diet that includes fats, protein, carbohydrates, fibre and vegetable matter. They would also eat plants, including herbs and grasses. Denes kitten and adult cat foods are designed to imitate this natural diet as closely as possible. Highly artificial processed foods may contain chemical taste enhancers, colourings and other additives and may also contain added salt or use soya as a source of protein. Denes foods contain no artificial additives, no added salt and no soya and will provide a balanced diet for your cat without any unnecessary and potentially harmful additives.

Canned foods contain a similar amount of moisture to that of the prey that a cat would catch in the wild. Dry foods have a much lower moisture level and your cat will need to take in extra water to compensate for this.

FEEDING guide USING DENES KITTEN WITH RABBIT & CHICKEN plus added herbs.

A complete balanced canned food for all kittens
between the ages of 2 & 12 months.

Feed kittens at least 4 times daily, serving as much food as they will eat. Kittens will regulate their own food intake and may require up to one 400g can daily.

ADULT CAT FOODS

Once your kitten has reached maturity at around 9 months of age, it can be weaned gradually onto Denes adult cat food. Any of our canned recipes (other than the varieties formulated for older cats) are suitable. **Denes Adult 400g canned foods** are ideal or perhaps the **single serve Select** range for additional varieties. Both **Denes OPTIONS** dry food varieties can also be used.

HERBAL SUPPLEMENTS

An ideal general supplement for your kitten is **Denes All In One+ Powder** (containing seaweed, wheatgrass, spinach, alfalfa leaf and barleygrass) which can be given from two months old. **All In One+ Powder** provides all essential vitamins, minerals and trace elements in their natural form. In this way your cat can absorb and assimilate the nutrients in the way nature intended. From the age of five months, you can also give your kitten a daily dose of **Denes Garlic Oil Capsules** and **Denes Greenleaf Tablets** to strengthen the immune system and to provide protection against infection and parasites. Some kittens are prone to diarrhoea and may benefit from having **Denes Probiotic+ Powder** to help support the bacteria naturally present in their bowel.

ESSENTIAL FATTY ACIDS (EFA's)

These are vital for good health and especially good in helping keep the skin and coat in good condition. **Denes Organic Omega 3 Oil blend** which contains flax, safflower, borage and olive oil can be added to the food on a daily basis to prevent dry scaly skin and dandruff and to help make the coat look extra glossy and shiny.

HOMEOPATHIC REMEDIES & YOUR KITTEN'S HEALTH

Homeopathic remedies are an ideal and safe way to treat minor injuries such as strains, sprains and minor bruises. Remedies for your kitten's first aid kit should include:

Denes **Arnica 30c** for general injuries including bruising
Denes **Rhus tox 30c** for muscle injuries
Denes **Ruta grav 30c** for ligament or tendon injuries
Denes **Ars alb 30c** for minor tummy upsets

Other Denes Fact Sheets to read

- Essential fatty acids
- Homeopathy

If you have any queries concerning your pet's health or feeding problems, you can contact us for free pet care advice by:

- Visiting our website www.denes.com
- Emailing us at info@denes.com
- Calling us on **01273 325364** Mon-Fri, 9am – 12Noon
- Writing to us at:
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