



NEW KITTEN GUIDE



Bringing a new kitten home is an exciting time. We have put together some information to help you with some of the key issues you will need to consider now you have taken on your new addition!

Diet & Feeding

What you feed your new kitten is so important. Kittens have different nutritional needs to people or even adult cats. To ensure they get the best start, we recommend you feed your kitten a good quality, kitten-specific, premium dry food as the basis of their diet. In addition to this you can add **small** amounts of good quality canned food, raw or cooked meats, or home-cooked food (being careful to avoid toxic foods like onions, garlic, grapes/sultanas, chocolate or spicy/spoiled foods).

- Kittens 6-12 weeks of age should be fed 3-4 times per day.
- Kittens 3 to 6 months of age should be fed 2-3 times per day.
- Kittens 6 months and older should be fed twice daily or have food available throughout the day.

Here at CPH we recommend Royal Canin and Hills Science Diets, but there are many premium foods available which will provide excellent nutrition for your kitten.



Some breeders may recommend all kitten food should be home-cooked and to avoid commercial diets. It is incredibly hard to get the nutrient and mineral balance your cat needs correct in home-cooked foods and we would strongly advise against this unless the diet is professionally formulated for you.

Treats like chicken wings or necks are a great way to keep kittens entertained and improve dental hygiene but should be size appropriate and fed under supervision. NEVER feed cooked bones to your pet. They may splinter or break into shards leading to severe intestinal damage and potentially life-threatening complications.

All changes to your pets' diet should be made gradually to avoid tummy upsets. Ideally, introduce new foods in small amounts mixed with their current diet, and increase the amount gradually.

Parasite Prevention

There are many parasites which can affect cats and cause illness, discomfort or even shorten your pet's lifespan. The main parasites which should be treated and prevented in our area are intestinal worms (including tapeworm, roundworm and hookworm) and fleas.

Intestinal worms can cause stunted growth, weight loss and diarrhoea in animals and can even potentially cause issues in people (who can pick up the larval stages of the worms from their pets). Intestinal worming should be carried out at 4, 8, 10 and 12 weeks of age, monthly from 12 weeks to 6 months of age, then 3 monthly in adult animals, or with a combination product such as Revolution or Advocate every month.

Fleas can cause major issues in pets as a result of discomfort and pain due to their bites, but in more serious cases they can also transmit other parasites (like tapeworm) and some animals can be allergic to their bite, meaning they can develop widespread allergic skin rashes and itch even after a single flea bite. Fleas can be very difficult to control and require the use of good modern flea control products treating not only the affected pet, but all in-contact animals as well as the environment to reduce the risk of re-infection (the fleas on your pet represent only 5% of the total flea population, the remaining 95% exist as eggs and larvae within your pets environment!). If you have a multi-pet household, i.e. more than one cat, or cats and dogs, ALL pets should be treated for the highest chance of eradication.



Heartworm is a worm which is transferred from one infected animal to another by mosquito bites. It is more common in areas which are hot and humid and have higher numbers of mosquitoes, but is seen in low levels in our area. Heartworm can affect cats, although it is not quite as prominent as it is in dogs. A good prevention method is to keep your cat indoors and protected from mosquitoes.

There are numerous products available to treat and prevent these key parasites. Your vet will discuss these with you and determine which product is best suited for you and your pet. Our nurses are also well trained to talk to you about these options either over the counter or over the phone. As a general rule, supermarket branded parasite control is not recommended as they are generally less effective than veterinary products (due to drug licensing and regulatory laws).

Vaccination

As with humans, vaccinations are important to reduce the risk of your animal picking up potentially fatal diseases from other animals and the environment. In Australia we routinely vaccinate against Feline

Panleucopenia virus, Feline Rhinotracheitis and Calicivirus which make up the 'F3' vaccine. There are other vaccinations available against Feline Leukaemia, Chlamydia and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV), although these do not make up part of our routine vaccination program at Croydon Pet Hospital. Our vets can discuss your kitten's needs at their first vaccination visit with us and come up with an individual vaccination protocol to suit. We recommend kittens be vaccinated at 6-8 weeks, 12-14 weeks, 16-18 weeks and then yearly at their annual health check.

Socialisation & training

Early socialisation with other cats, humans and dogs is very important. Kittens should be handled early on in life to help with normal development. Practice handling your kitten's ear, mouth, paws and nails daily as part of their daily cuddles and grooming. Use positive reinforcement with praise and food to encourage your kitten to practice good behaviour. Much like puppies, kittens are very smart and have the ability to learn a number of commands and even tricks. Keep training sessions short and fun to encourage your kitten and to hold their attention span. Treats can help!

Cats are very clean creatures and usually take quite well to toilet training, as long as they have access to a clean litter tray. The tray should be placed in a "private" area, and kept away from your cat's feeding area. Your kitten should always be praised when it uses its tray. The litter should be cleaned daily, and a tray provided for each cat if you have more than one.



Microchipping & Registration

A microchip is a small device about the size of a grain of rice which carries a unique 12 digit code which is then linked (via a computer database) to owner contact details. Microchipping is compulsory for all pets in Victoria and kittens should arrive into their new homes already microchipped. At your kitten's first health check, the vet will scan for their microchip, if they do not have one already, we can implant one during the consultation. Alternatively, we can microchip your pet during its desexing procedure, although bear in mind your kitten will have no permanent form of identification until the microchip is placed.

It is important to keep your details up to date on the registry to make sure if your pet gets lost, they can always be returned to you. Only authorised people have access to the online microchip registries and we are not authorised to give out your details to a member of the public without your consent. Please let us know if you wish to check your details are all up to date on the microchip registry, and we can check all the current details for you.

All dogs and cats must be microchipped and registered with your relevant council. Certain councils have strict curfews for cats and they may need to be confined to your property overnight or throughout the

entire day and night, depending on your council's requirements. Please check with your local council for further details.

Pet Insurance

Pet insurance is becoming increasingly popular amongst pet owners, and for good reason. With increasing costs of living and more specialised medical and surgical treatments becoming available for pets, having pet insurance means you have the luxury of making treatment decisions with your heart, not your wallet.

There are many pet insurance companies and policies available, and while we cannot recommend one for you, we would recommend doing your research and reading policy fine print to make sure you are getting the most suitable policy for your situation. Online policy comparison tools are available and can be helpful to get you started on the search for your best policy.

Desexing

Desexing your cat (speying for females, castration for males) is something we strongly recommend here at CPH. Desexing animals decreases the risk of many potential issues like:

- Unwanted pregnancies
- Pyometra (infection in the uterus, often following a heat cycle)
- Ovarian cancer
- Uterine cancer
- Mammary (breast) cancer
- Testicular cancer
- Prostatic hyperplasia (enlarged prostate)
- Perineal herniation
- Behavioural issues (including urine spraying, hormone-driven aggression and roaming)

The age at which you have your pet desexed is generally best based on a few factors. The recommended age of desexing for most cats is 4 - 6 months, this is also around the time you can expect your female cat to have her first season. We often recommend desexing before the first season to reduce the risk of unwanted pregnancy, adverse behaviours including excessive vocalisation and the impact that a season can have on the risk of developing mammary tumours (every season increases the risk).

It is generally best to consult with one of our vets to work out an appropriate desexing age for your pet based on your home environment and the breed of your cat. We will also be able to give you an individualised estimate of the cost of desexing as well as information on the procedure and ways to make the surgery safer for your pet.



Creating a kitten friendly household

There are some essential items you will need to purchase for your new kitten if you haven't done so already:

- Litter tray(s) -we recommend 2 trays in different locations for one kitten, three for two cats etc.
- Food and water bowl
- Bedding or blankets in a quiet, cosy place away from other pets and/or children
- Collar, and harness if you wish to train your cat to walk on lead
- Secure cat carrier for trips to the vet
- Toys and other enrichment items such as a scratching post
- Feliway Spray or diffuser, this is a calming pheromone spray that can be used to settle your new kitten and relieve stress and anxiety



When introducing your new kitten to other pets in the household, make it a positive experience. Always supervise your pets until they have gotten to know each other, and allow them to take breaks away so they are not overwhelmed by the other animals. The same goes with introducing young children. Before long, your new kitten will be settled in and part of the family.

Should you have any other questions about looking after your new pet, please do not hesitate to contact us at Croydon Pet Hospital on (03) 9727 4004.

