



Good Kitten Guide



SETTLING IN

- Kitten proof your home: Kittens will chew plants, string and cables so keep these out the way. Give your kitten a big scratching post and plenty of toys to save your furniture. Block up holes and gaps between appliances, under ovens etc.
- Introduce your kitten to one room at a time. Ensure there is always access to litter trays, food and water bowls and somewhere cosy to hide or sleep.
- If your kitten hides give them space and they will come out in their own time.
- Position the litter tray in a quiet corner and don't move the location to avoid confusion. Put your kitten in the litter tray so they know where it is.
- For indoor cats: have one litter tray per cat plus an extra one i.e. two cats would need three trays, one cat would need two. Wash litter trays daily and keep them away from food/water bowls and sleeping areas. Cats do not like to 'mess' in their living areas.
- Keep your kitten on the same food and litter initially. Any dietary changes should be made gradually over the space of a week so as not to upset their stomach.

INTRODUCTIONS AND SOCIALISATIONS

- Supervise all introductions to other pets. Swap scents first by stroking your kitten and then your other pet and vice versa. Keep your kitten safe in a cat carrier and allow your pet to enter the room. Try offering some food to your kitten and other pet as a distraction. It is normal for an adult cat to hiss and spit at a new arrival on their territory but kittens are usually not too fazed. Once they are accustomed to each other which can take several weeks, you can allow the kitten to sit on the ground beside you. Ensure that your adult cat has an escape route and that dogs are kept on a lead to prevent them from chasing your kitten.
- To help your kitten become accustomed to the cat carrier, leave it out as a bed with a cosy blanket inside.
- Groom and handle your kitten from a young age. Introduce them to visitors, car travel and household noises from as early as possible but do so gradually.
- When your kitten is old enough to go outside, gradually introduce them to the garden. Ensure he is hungry and feed him in the garden to encourage him to return. Indoor cats should have plenty of toys and hiding places to prevent boredom.

FELINE FACTS

Cats are hunters and obligate carnivores

- Cats are agile, athletic, fast and light on their paws so they are effective hunters.
- They are most active at dawn and dusk which is their prime hunting time.
- Cats are born with a hunting instinct and may play with their prey before killing it.
- They can never eat a vegetarian diet as they require the essential amino acid taurine which is only sourced from meat.
- Hunters require worming treatment every four to six weeks.
- Hunters require flea treatment monthly.
- Indoor cats need an outlet for natural hunting and rough play.

Cats catch small and frequent meals

- They frequently go back and forth to their food bowl which imitates natural feeding patterns in the wild. This does not mean that the cat doesn't like their food.
- Overfeeding at meal times or feeding on demand can encourage cats to override their normal satiety levels and lead to obesity.
- They look for water away from their food so space out food and water bowls and also litter trays.
- Dry food can be hidden round the house to encourage indoor cats to forage for food which helps to keep them mentally stimulated.
- Cats on wet food will obtain more moisture from their diet compared to dry food which is useful for cats with kidney problems or urinary tract infection.
- Leg rubbing can be a demand for affection and not always for food.

Cats are territorial

- They are naturally solitary animals and a cat on its own does not always need a companion.
- Cat bite abscesses and wounds are common with territorial cats defending their territory.
- Cat flaps allow other cats to invade another's home which can cause extreme stress in the resident cat, especially if it is timid. If you think your cat would benefit from a cat flap try sourcing one that will only open if it recognises your cat's microchip.
- Taking cats out of their own environment is stressful and can cause fear-based aggression, inappetence and hiding.
- It is normal for any cat to spray urine in the garden to mark their territory. If it is done indoors the cat is usually stressed (or needs neutering!)
- Cats like to have high-up hiding places for security.
- Cats may return to their old territory if the owner moves house within a short distance.

Cats are sensitive to scent

- Cats transfer scent from their scent glands to mark their territory by scratching and by rubbing their face against; furniture, bushes, trees, the owner's legs etc. More extreme forms of marking include spraying urine and leaving faces uncovered.
- Rubbing against another cat allows familiar cats to swap scents so they smell like part of the same social group.
- The smell of food is the first thing that will make a cat eat therefore warm food is more enticing.
- New smells are threatening and this includes air fresheners.
- All cats including females and neutered cats can spray urine when they feel their territory must be more clearly marked.
- Behaviourist assistance may be required for persistent indoor spraying.
- Use scent swapping when introducing new cats by stroking one cat and then the other and by swapping over bedding and food bowls etc.

Cats need to be clean

- Cats stop grooming if they are stressed, unwell or if obese and physically can't reach. Tip: Matting over flanks is a sign of arthritis as they are unable to twist and reach.
- Putting hairball paste and food onto paws should encourage the cat to lick it off.
- Cats will groom toxic substances off their coat too!
- They will avoid a litter tray if it is too close to their food, bed or water bowls. If it is too dirty, the tray is scented by air fresheners or it is associated with something scary like a bullying cat, being grabbed for medication, a loud noise etc
- Indoor cat should have one litter tray per cat plus an extra one.
- Some cats like to urinate in one litter tray and defecate in a different one.

Cats are self-reliant, emotional and highly aware

- Cats only live in groups such as feral colonies, if there is an abundance of food and shelter. Consequently, cats do not live in a social hierarchy.
- Cats are prey as well as predators so they are well adapted to hiding any signs of pain or weakness, which means it can be hard to tell if your cat is ill.
- News smells, sights and sounds are threatening to cats and a slow, quiet approach is best when greeting cats.
- Staring directly at cats is threatening and blinking will help you appear submissive.
- Cats prefer to approach a person at their own pace and cuddling your cat as reassurance can cause your cat to feel more distressed.

Cats only fight when confronted as a last resort as this wastes energy that is essential for hunting.

About the feline friendly practice

Mintlaw Vet Surgery has recently made a number of changes to our practice to make us a more welcoming place for cats and their owners. We have followed the guidelines that have been set up by The International Society of Feline Medicine (ISFM). They devised the Feline Friendly Practice scheme to enable veterinary practices to offer a specialist service for cat owners. The ISFM recognize that visiting the veterinary practice is often a frightening experience for cats and a difficult one for clients. To be accredited to the scheme practices must meet a specific set of criteria before being assessed.

The scheme aims to:

- Reduce stress felt by cats in the veterinary practice
- Educate staff and owners in understanding cats and patients
- Support owners in how to provide the best care for their cats

Mintlaw Vet Surgery has achieved:

GOLD STANDARD

Useful hints and tips

Website: www.icatcare.org

Reading: Cat Manual: The complete step by step by step guide to understanding and caring for your

Cat by Claire Bessant.



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