

## Food

Firstly, a word of warning, changing diet and (and water source if sold out of Sydney) may lead to a few days mild diarrhoea while your kitten settles into the new diet and/or water. If this happens put the kitten on something bland such as "Whiskas Chicken for Kittens" with the addition of a half-spoonful of bland, plain, live-culture yogurt for a couple of days and then introduce it to your preferred diet gradually.

Your kitten eats a mixed meal, either twice a day or, if your circumstances permit, you may give smaller meals three times a day. However, at about six months of age you should reduce the kitten to two substantial meals - twice a day. Combine a selection from a good commercial raw pet food or a fatty minced beef (hamburger mince from a good supermarket), any good quality tinned fish and a few dry biscuits. On occasion you may add in a, raw egg yoke, some grated cheese or plain yogurt to give both variety and a complete diet. Garnish with a bit of roast lamb, cooked chicken (without bones), raw steak, heart or liver to chew. DO NOT give cooked meat containing small bones such as chicken and be aware that too much grated cheese may cause constipation. When the kitten has grown sufficiently the fatty minced beef can be replaced or supplemented with fatty gravy beef. Keep the chunks big enough to give the kitten/cat plenty of exercise in chewing.

If you give lean meat or give a completely fish meal add a teaspoon of Canola Oil to supply the fat needed in the kitten's (or cat's) diet as this assists the gut to use the rest of the food more efficiently.

Amongst "complete" dry foods currently available Supercoat , Whiskas Advantage, Royal Canin, Purina, Nutrience, IAMS and Hills Science Diet amongst others are also acceptable "complete" dry foods. Dry foods should not be the sole diet of any cat, particularly males/desexed males, where it can contribute to potentially fatal blockages of the urinary tract. When using dry food make sure the kitten/cat has plenty of fresh water, daily. Now days there are a number of

dried foods which are designed to keep urinary tract infections at bay, none have proved to be particularly effective so please keep giving your pet a varied diet and plenty of water. Never use adult dry food for kittens as the harder biscuits can break the softer "kitten teeth".

To maintain oral hygiene give the kitten part of a RAW pork or beef spare rib or RAW chicken wing every few days. Never feed a cat on dog food as a SOLE diet as it contains no taurine and lack of taurine can cause severe heart problems in cats. There are also specific biscuits (i.e. Hills Science Diet TR) which can be used to clean teeth but do not use until the kitten is at least 9 months old.

Additional calcium to promote good boning must be provided in the first 6-9 months. Human vitamins are not suitable and may unbalance the kitten's vitamin and mineral intake. Check with your vet before you give any supplements.

Milk is something which is a personal preference of the kitten or litter. Never use milk for humans – use the special milks for cats as these have reduced lactose content. Some kittens love milk, some react to it with mild diarrhoea. Cats actually prefer water and unless you have a specific need to include milk in your kitten's diet, don't give it. I would suggest that you give your kitten a little bit and then increase it if it appears to tolerate it. Cheese and/or cream is a better substitute for milk if you wish to include dairy products but sparingly as cream is very rich, especially for a small tummy and excessive cheese can cause the kitten to bind.

Don't leave food around after the kitten has eaten. If you ever need to diet your cat do so by reducing the amount of meat and biscuits that it eats per day and cut out ALL snacks.

Move your kitten onto your preferred diet slowly - diarrhoea can be life-threatening to a small kitten. Fresh water must always be available. The diet above can be wasteful to purchase, prepare and keep fresh if

you only have one kitten. Purchase enough quantity for a weeks diet, split it into your daily requirement and freeze the prepared meals. With any fresh meat it is always better to freeze it first (as freezing kills some bugs) before giving it to a kitten.

Remember as your kitten grows to adulthood supply him/her with food which will encourage chewing and teeth cleaning.

## **Teething**

This generally starts between 4-5 months. You might notice that they become more "bitey" around this time.

Watch for tummy upsets or diarrhoea and provide a suitable "teething ring" such as an empty cardboard carton for them to chew on. If a tummy upset occurs move the kitten to a blander diet for a few days.

## **Vaccinations**

Feline Enteritis is the most common life-threatening disease affecting cats. It is a very contagious viral disease and the death rate is very high, especially in cats under 12 months of age. The signs include fever, depression, severe stomach pain, vomiting, diarrhoea and dehydration. Your kitten has had an F3 (Feline Enteritis, Rhinotracheitis, Calicivirus) vaccination at 8 weeks and 12 weeks. You will have two veterinary vaccination certificates to this effect. The third vaccination at 16-18 weeks is recommended to complete the initial coverage and will ensure that your kitten is covered as much as is possible these days. Thereafter it will need one annual booster shot and then a booster shot every two to three years after that. The current flu vaccine does not cover all known strains so again you should keep the kitten inside and away from strange adult cats until it has developed some immunity. If you have introduced the kitten to a single or multi-cat household and it reacts within a few to 14 days with lethargy, loss of appetite and mouth ulcers (or red gums) please take it to a vet immediately as it may have come in contact with a carrier cat. Unfortunately we have now been

told that the Calicivirus is mutating and that the vaccine can be ineffective against some strains of the virus. We are waiting for advice as to a better vaccination regime. Until that time please take your kitten to the vet if it displays any mouth ulcers or any symptoms in the eyes, nose or mouth.

If your cat is to be kept inside all the time (and thus not coming into contact with other cats) you may decide not to vaccinate against Feline Leukaemia (Leucogen) virus. If you decide to vaccinate with Leucogen then after the 16 week vaccination it should receive a separate Leucogen vaccination and then another one three to four weeks after that. We are currently recommending against the F4 and F5 vaccinations, especially as we have had a case where a healthy Australian Mist Kitten ended up spending three days on a drip after receiving an F5 injection.

I suggest that you visit your vet soon after you take the kitten home. This will make you feel comfortable that you have a healthy kitten and will give you a chance to get to know your vet and him/her a chance to have a healthy baseline on the kitten. A crisis is not a good time to meet a new vet.

## **Fleas and Worms**

Tapeworms are transmitted by fleas so the best method is to control fleas. One of the topical spot preparations will give good control but you may be in an area which has annual flea plagues during the hot months, if so, also use one of the room sprays available on the market and always remember to spray under the house.

Use "All-Wormer" preparations containing pyrantel pamoate/embonate and niclosamide monohydrate to control tapeworms and roundworms (eg Felex or Excelpet paste or tablets). In the past Drontal Allwormer was known to cause fits and other distressing neurological symptoms in Burmese, Abyssinian, Siamese, Australian Mist and Domestic. The new formulation has been tested and is safe for Australian Mists.

## **De-sexing, Identification and Registering with Your Local Council**

Your kitten is already desexed at 11-12 weeks. Sometimes your female kitten may not be desexed. Our vets may think a runt of the litter too small to desex. If so, you may want to make arrangements with your breeder to have her come back to be desexed or desex her yourself and supply a veterinary certificate so that the breeder will release her Certificate of Registration and Pedigree and transfer her to you with the Companion Animals Registration Board (in NSW). This may seem a little awkward for those genuine pet buyers but unfortunately there are unscrupulous breeders who will try to buy a pet kitten and then use her to backyard breed. It is not just the price difference but Mist breeders are all very particular about who can breed from their lines. All kittens originating from NSW will be permanently identified by microchip. For other States consult your breeder.

Included in your paperwork should be a Certificate of Sterilisation from the breeder's vet. This is an important document because without that you will have to pay \$100 instead of \$35 to lifetime register your new kitten with your local council. You are required (by law) to register all new kittens with your Council before they are six months of age.

## **Litter**

Your kitten is fully trained. Introduce it to the tray on reaching home. Don't expect it to travel a kitten mile to a tray, especially at night. Change litter (paper pellets, lucerne pellets, sand, sawdust, clay or dry garden soil) regularly. When you change your kitten over to your favourite brand expect to have a few mistakes until it gets used to the new litter. Never use "clumping clay" as the chemicals used to produce the clumping can cause intestinal tract problems, if inhaled or eaten, and in some cases have been known to lead to deaths in very small kittens. Change the litter tray at least weekly and wash, disinfect and thoroughly rinse tray before refilling -

a household bleach is best. Care should be exercised with all chemicals near kittens (and cats) due to the sensitivity of their skins. Do not use disinfectants such as PineOClean, as cats are allergic to all tar and pine oil derived products.

## **Introducing Kitten to Existing Cat**

When you are introducing a kitten into a home that has an existing feline owner you will usually have some problems with territoriality. Australian Mists are mostly very laid back about other cats but there are exceptions. The other cat will respond by seeing the kitten as an invader and seek to run it off. If you have a roomy cage or a separate room, put the kitten into it and leave it for a few hours to investigate and settle down. Then you swap them and put your cat into the cage or room and let the kitten run free to explore the rest of the house. If you are able, keep swapping them every few hours for the first 24 hours, this gives each the others smell without them confronting each other. It also allows the kitten to start to take on the "house smell". Then let the kitten out under your supervision. Your cat will still be hostile but as long as you don't let them actually fight they should settle down to a stand-off for a few days and then, they should start to tolerate each other, which leads to them playing and thus becoming friends.

Cats have two techniques: avoidance and confrontation (fighting). They will generally avoid confrontation but a small house or unit doesn't give them the space to avoid each other all the time. When they do confront, step in before it gets to fighting and move one of the cats away from the other. They usually do not return to confront. You will need patience for a few days, but it will get better. You must make even more fuss than usual of the resident cat - after all, you tell it, I bought this kitten as a friend for you, even though I love it too!

## **Keeping Your Kitten/Cat Indoors**

Studies have shown that cats that are allowed out do not live on average more than 4 years. Keeping your cat inside can save a lot of heartache and also save the money you may have to spend on expensive surgery and treatment if a car or a dog injures your cat. Cats can also do a lot of harm to native birds and animals. There is quite a bit of anti-cat sentiment in Australia so it is important to be a responsible cat owner.

We strongly encourage new adoptive parents to keep their kitten inside. Even when the cat is grown we don't recommend letting her out on her own. If a cat is not allowed to roam free she soon becomes used to the idea that inside the house is her territory and she will be perfectly happy.

If you are out a lot and are worried your cat may become bored inside then you could consider getting 2 kittens and/or installing a cat enclosure so she can go outside in safety. Starex Tonkinese Cattery has a webpage which shows the advantages of cat enclosures and also links to companies who will install them for you. We also recommend these enclosures.

## **What you need before you take your kitten home**

Some things are essential, some are just good to have:

### **Essential**

A Litter Tray. This can be open or have a cover depending on choice. If it is covered please remove the door at the front as I have lost count of the number of times I have heard of small kittens trapped inside their litter tray, also do not get a high walled tray while your kitten is little. If the kitten has a large area to roam with multiple rooms two trays at opposite ends save accidents

A Carry Case. Kittens grow very quickly so do not buy one for a kitten. Buy a "medium" or "small dog" designated carry case. This should be a life time of your cat investment as you will need to take them to the vet, to boarding catteries etc.

Food and Water Bowls. These should have a wide base so that they don't get tipped over and the food bowl should be shallow to allow the kitten to reach the food. Royal Canin has a bowl which is designed to alleviate cats throwing up by eating in the wrong position.

Food. Check with your breeder about which food the kitten is currently on and match that as close as you can. You might also like to get one (or two) tins of Whiskas Kitten. This is purely to have a bland diet on hand in case you get a reaction to changing food and water.

### **Non-essential**

Scratching Post. If you want to save you curtains and upholstery a good scratching post is excellent insurance. Encourage the kitten to use it by playing with them on it. Don't get a small one - kittens love to get up high and it makes sure they get plenty of exercise.

Toys. Toys can make a difference to whether your kitten remains active through its life or not. Do not get any toys with bells on them as these can come off and get swallowed. The best toys are made not bought. A cardboard box with holes cut in it to allow the kitten to jump through and a piece of paper or material which makes a noise all scrunched up are the best toys and you can replace them very easily. Other toys which are good for exercise are the cat tunnels.

### **Rescuing Australian Mist**

Most Australian Mist Breeders will assist in re-housing our cats. Please remember to call any Australian Mist first, if you find yourself in this situation. If you should ever become aware of any other Australian Mist cats in distress please call any Australian Mist breeder.