

Kitten Care



At a glance

Vaccinations

First: 6 – 8 weeks
Second: 10 – 12 weeks
Third: 14 – 16 weeks
Every year thereafter

Worming – Intestinal

Every two weeks until 12 weeks of age, then every month until 6 months of age, then every three months for life!

Heartworm Prevention

Start heartworm prevention before your kitten reaches 12 weeks of age or at the time of her second vaccination. There are products now available that will cover your kitten for Heartworm, Fleas and Intestinal Worms and its all in the one tube making prevention from heartworm easy.

Flea Control

Start your kitten on flea control immediately. Fleas breed fast so a good quality flea control product is essential. A single adult female flea can lay around 50 eggs every day so one flea can turn into hundreds before you know it. We will advise you on which product is best for your kitten. Don't delay your flea control!

Ticks

Ticks live in bushland areas but can be carried through to suburban areas via possums and bandicoots. Preventatives for cats are limited so we will advise you on which one is best for your cat. NEVER use dog products on your cat! Some contain Permethrin which is perfectly safe for use on dogs but can kill a cat. NEVER use dog products on your cat!

Nutrition

Start feeding your kitten on a good quality dry food the moment you get her home. These foods are available at the practice. Although not essential, if you would like to give your kitten milk, make sure it is lactose free. Make sure fresh water is also available at all times.

Desexing

Have your kitten desexed before 6 months of age. It is from this age that your kitten will reach sexual maturity and can get pregnant. Thousands of cats and kittens are put to sleep every year in our refuges due to lack of homes, so please desex your kitten BEFORE 6 months of age so we don't add to this growing problem.



Essentials

Litter Tray

A litter tray is essential even if you are planning to have an outdoor cat. You will have to keep your kitten indoors until she is 3-4 months old for her own safety, so a toilet is a necessity. Without a toilet, she will be forced to make one on her own and you can bet she will probably choose your doona or the clothes which you left on the floor! There is a huge range of litter trays available and can be purchased from the practice.

Kitty Litter

Cat litter is essential as cats naturally dig when they toilet. It is for this reason that some people have trouble with their cat digging up their favourite pot plants. Cats can be fussy when it comes to litter so don't be surprised if you need to try several different brands before you get one she is happy to use.

Toys

Kittens are very active so provide her with plenty of toys to play with. Most cat toys are simple and inexpensive. Make sure the toy is not small enough to swallow but is small enough for your kitten to bat around using her paws. Never give her wool to play with! Pictures of cats with a big woolen ball look cute but if they swallow the wool you might be looking at surgery to remove it. Not so cute after all.

Treats

Yes, it is possible to train a cat. Liver treats are great for cats but be careful not to give them too many as they can get diarrhoea. Remember they are a treat so offer them in moderation.

Collar

Get your kitten used to a collar now. When purchasing a collar, ensure it has a safety catch or an elastic section so it will come off safely should your cat become entangled or caught on a branch etc while climbing. Collars can cause serious damage to cats so a good quality collar is essential. Most cat collars also have a small bell attached to it to protect our precious wildlife by alerting them when a cat pounces. If you insist on an outdoor cat, a bell is essential for any collar for the protection of our wildlife.

Food

A good quality dry food is best and is available through the practice. Good quality dry foods are complete and

balanced for all your kitten's needs. Some pet foods in major chain stores may not be as balanced or meet all of your kitten's requirements, so we will advise you on which food is best to ensure a healthy growing kitten.

History

Try and get as much history as possible about your kitten and make sure you get all health records with information such as worming tablets, vaccinations, flea control, microchip etc. If you do not have access to this information, it is best to assume nothing has been done and start your kitten's health regime from scratch. If you are unsure at any time what you should be doing for your kitten, call the practice and speak to one of our staff. We are more than happy to explain your kitten's health requirements.

Patience

Your kitten is going to make mistakes, please try to be patient with her! Most of the 'naughty' things your kitten is doing are natural feline behaviours. It is up to you to teach your kitten right from wrong in the human world and provide alternatives (scratching poles, toys etc) to prevent these unwanted behaviours.

Bedding

Make sure you provide your kitten with something warm & comfortable to sleep on and because fleas can live and breed in bedding, make sure the bed is washable so the fleas don't take over.

Scratching Pole

A scratching pole is essential for your kitten! The scratching pole should be tall enough to allow your cat to stretch up high and scratch. Low scratching posts can easily be pulled over and don't allow your cat to naturally stretch.

Cat Carrier

A cat carrier is essential for any cat. They make trips to the vet or cattery safe for you and other motorists on the road and they make sure there are no escapees outside the practice. Dogs cause stress for cats and there is a very good chance there will be one at the vet so for your safety it's best you don't come into the practice holding your cat in your arms. They might be loving and affectionate at home but a big barking dog can trigger the fight or flight response in your cat and you could get scratched badly.

Litter Training

Litter Tray Size

To toilet train your kitten you will need a litter tray. Make sure the litter tray is not too deep or the kitten will have trouble getting in and out of the tray. Purchase a shallow tray now and when your kitten grows up you can purchase a deeper tray if required. Steer away from trays with hoods. They are designed to keep the odour down but imagine how strong the odour is inside the tray. Cats are clean animals, so you many find they refuse to use it. Some cats can even refuse to use a litter tray that they have soiled in once already. Keep their trays clean!

Litter Tray Position

Make sure the tray is situated in an easily accessible place for your kitten, usually close to (but not right next to) their bedding.

Do not

- Place the tray in a high traffic area like the bathroom, kitchen or laundry. It is best to give your kitten some privacy and the noises of washing machines and flushing toilets can startle them resulting in them not wanting to go back in that room.
- Place the litter tray where you plan to feed your kitten as cats do not like to eat where they toilet. Would you eat in the toilet?

How Many Litter Trays?

You should have two litter trays for every cat in your household as some cats will refuse to use a litter tray another cat has used. Make sure the litter tray is clean at all times as your kitten may not use the tray if it is dirty.

What do I clean the litter tray with?

Regularly wash your kitten's tray with very hot water or an enzyme based cleaner like Bio-Zet (which is a laundry detergent) and stand it in the sun to dry. Do not use harsh chemicals as sometimes cats will not use the litter tray if it has a strong chemical smell.

What type of litter?

Some cats can be terribly fussy about what type of litter they want to use so you may have to try a few different types.

Won't use the tray? Try the following:

- Change the litter type
- Clean the tray more regularly
- Change the litter tray
- Change the litter tray position
- Don't use harsh chemicals
- Provide more litter trays

Not using a litter tray can also be a sign of a urinary tract infection, so you should make an appointment to make sure their inappropriate urination is not due to a health problem.

If you notice your cat straining in the litter tray, contact the practice immediately. They may have Feline Lower Urinary Tract disease which can be fatal if left untreated.



Scratching

Remember that your cat has been given claws for her own safety and what does a cat do when in danger? Climb a tree! How does she do this? With her claws!

A cat scratches for many reasons. Apart from keeping the claws sharp to get out of harms way fast, she will also scratch to leave her mark on the area using the glands in her paws and her face. All that aside, it doesn't make it acceptable for her to do this on your best furniture.

So how can we avoid this?

Give her an appropriate item to scratch like a good quality scratching post. The post must be tall enough for your cat to get a full stretch (so approximately 1 meter tall) and be sturdy enough not to fall over under your cat's weight. Place the scratching post near their food or bedding and show your kitten how to use the scratching post by rubbing her feet onto the post. Putting a little 'cat nip' around the area and hanging a few toys from your scratching post can also help.

She is scratching my furniture!

Now that you have read why she is scratching and you understand this is natural feline behaviour, take a deep breath and work with her doing the following:

Make your scratching post appealing

- Move the scratching post over to the area that she is scratching (the couch for example) and make it as appealing as possible.
- Play with her around the post using her toys, hang the toys from the post, place cat nip around the post and some tasty treats on top of the post, like liver treats. This scratching post is much better to use than the couch. Now, when your cat loves using her scratching post move it back to the original position and make your couch very unappealing. You can pin some tin foil (aluminium foil), bubblewrap, or double sided tape to the area where your cat is scratching. Cats hate these surfaces on their paws and with that fantastic scratching post you provided, who would want to?

Can I cut her nails?

If your cat is a 100% indoor cat, then yes you can trim her nails. Purchase some nail clippers from the practice and we'll show you how to cut them. It is not advisable to cut the nails of an outdoor cat however as they need their nails to escape from danger or to protect themselves.



Biting

Like puppies, kittens can also bite. It is best not to encourage your kitten to play with your hands or use your hands in play sessions like pouncing on your hand under the doona. The games your kitten grows up with are the games that she will want to play later on in life and while it may be cute now, an adult cat pouncing onto a child or hanging off your clothes is not funny.

Encourage play with your kitten using her toys (balls, toys on string, fake mice etc) only and don't encourage aggressive play like ruffing your kitten up.

If your kitten does get aggressive and bite you, hiss at her and put her in 'time out' (an area where she is isolated) for a couple of minutes. If it is a child, tell your children to yell loudly and fall over, which will let your kitten know that they just hurt their

playmate and teach her to be gentler in future. Cats love playing as it teaches them all the skills needed to hunt like running, pouncing, jumping and hiding. These behaviours are learned at a young age to prepare them for survival and although you may have an indoor cat they still want to learn these skills so it's important to play with them often. Just make sure that you control the play session and the whole family will enjoy the new kitten.

Note: Never give your kitten balls of string to play with. If swallowed, they can cause a lot of complications and sometimes need to be surgically removed. Toys like the one pictured below are perfect and children can play with the kitten using one of these without being scratched. They keep your arm at a distance and allow your cat to get plenty of exercise and have lots of fun.



Indoor or Outdoor Cat?

Whether you have an indoor or outdoor cat, is a decision that every cat owner will have to decide for themselves but keep in mind that on average an indoor cat will live twice as long as an outdoor cat.

Following is a brief summary of what to expect with an indoor or outdoor cat. Hopefully, this will assist you when making this decision.

INDOOR CAT

Contrary to what some people think, cats do not have nine lives, they have only one and it is very precious! If you decide on an indoor cat make sure you provide her with plenty of stimulation like toys, a scratching post and lots of high places for her to sit. She will also enjoy some potted cat grass which you can buy from garden centers. Apart from your cat enjoying every mouthful, it will also aid in digestion. If you do not provide cat grass she may start chewing your indoor plants and flowers, some of which may be poisonous to her (like lilies).

Rotate her toys daily as she will soon get bored with them if you leave them out all of the time. Cat toys are inexpensive and if you use your imagination you can even make some of your own! If your windowsills aren't wide enough for your cat to sit on, you can now purchase a clip on shelf which clips onto your windowsill so your cat can get a bird's eye view of what's happening outside.

If you cannot give your cat the attention she needs or if you plan to leave her home alone for long periods of the day then it may be kind to get two cats (as long as you can financially afford two!). Although you may provide your cat with plenty of stimulation, some cats still want to go outside occasionally. If you want to let your cat outside for brief periods, you can take her for a walk on a cat harness so she can explore. Some cats however have no interest whatsoever in going outside and may prefer to sit at the window sunbaking all day.

An even better option than a harness is a cat enclosure which can be fitted to any home, allowing your cat to get fresh air and sunshine as well as keeping her safe. Enclosures are custom built and designed for your property and can even be built around existing trees and shrubs so don't worry about your beautiful garden. For those who are renting, there is a portable enclosure available so you can take it with you if you move. You should have your indoor cat for 10-20 years, so an

enclosure is a small investment to make. Remember that indoor cats usually cost less as they are at a much lower risk of disease and injury, so an enclosure would be a nice gift to thank her for saving you all that money! Indoor cats are also protected from being hit by cars, attacked by dogs, being beaten up by the local cat bully or contracting Feline Aids or Leukaemia. Just make sure you provide her with plenty of stimulation and she won't mind being kept indoors.

OUTDOOR

Outdoor cats have shorter lives, are at a much greater risk of disease and injury and are generally more expensive to own. If outdoor is your decision however, there are a few steps to take in order to keep her as safe as you can.

- Cat fights break out over territory disputes and usually occur at dusk and at dawn, so make sure your cat is inside during these times.
- Make sure you have your cat vaccinated to protect her from disease.
- Cats have no road sense at all and if they are lucky to survive being hit by a car don't think that they will learn from it. They won't! If you live on a busy road or street do not have an outdoor cat as there is little advice we can give you on how to keep her safe. Outdoor cats injure themselves more so make sure you are prepared for the veterinary bills from her medical treatment. Pet Insurance is essential for all cats but particularly for outdoor cats.



Vaccinations

New kittens need a lot of attention in the health department and things can get terribly confusing but when you know the importance of all these injections it makes it easier to follow.

First, how to read your vaccination card.

The first vaccination is usually given at 6-8 weeks and you will notice it says F3. All this means is 'Feline Three Viruses' and those three viruses are Enteritis, Rhinotracheitis and Calicivirus. Easy!

Your second vaccination will then be given at 10-12 weeks of age and you will need another F3 vaccination.

Your final kitten vaccination is then due at 14-16 weeks of age and you will need another F3. Vaccinations are then given every 12 months after their 14-16 week needle (so your cat will now be approximately 16 months old).

We may also recommend you vaccinate your cat against Chlamydia, Leukaemia and/or Feline Aids. We will advise you further during your consultation.

Q Why only give an F3 for the first needle?

A - It is only necessary to vaccinate against Leukaemia and Chlamydia viruses twice and not three times like the other viruses, however this can change depending on the vaccine so we will advise you.

Q Can the vaccination schedule differ from above?

A - YES! The above schedule is the most common one used, however, this can change depending on a number of things – where you live and the brand of vaccine used are just two factors which can influence a vaccination schedule. It is always best to stick to the schedule your veterinarian recommends. If you don't understand – please ask us to clarify. We are here to help you.

Q - I have been told that I should keep my kitten inside until she has had all her needles.

A - Good! Then you have been steered in the right direction. Your kitten will not be fully immunized until after her third vaccination, so for her safety, it is best to keep her confined to the safety of the house until she is fully immunized. It is simply not worth the risk.

Q Why do I need to give my kitten a 'booster'?

A – A 'booster' shot is a term used for a follow up vaccination. It simply means another F5 (the same vaccination you had last time). The reason you get it again twelve months from the date of your final kitten vaccination is that your kitten's immunity against these horrible diseases will now start to weaken thus putting her at risk. This yearly vaccination visit also gives you a chance to discuss any health issues with your veterinarian and make sure not only is your pet healthy, but you're up to date with all of her needs. Your kitten has only you to rely on for her health, so please continue to protect her by ensuring you vaccinate every year.

Q How do these diseases affect my kitten?

- Enteritis

Recovery rate – Sometimes death may occur without them showing any clinical signs.

- Rhinotracheitis & Calicivirus (Cat Flu)

Recovery rate – High but cats who do recover will carry the disease for long periods of time.

- Leukaemia

Recovery Rate – Around one third of infected cats remain infected and continue to spread the virus to other cats.

- Chlamydia

Recovery Rate – Can be shed to other cats for many months after treatment.

- FIV (Feline Aids)

Recovery Rate – Severely affects the immune system in a similar way to human Aids leaving your cat more susceptible to other disease. Feline Aids is spread from direct contact with other cats. Feline Aids is NOT transmissible to humans.



Heartworm Disease



While most people are aware of heartworm in dogs, many cat owners are unaware that cats too, get heartworm. Heartworm is spread by mosquitoes, so even if you have an indoor cat she should be on heartworm prevention. Mosquitoes can get into a house quite easily!

Heartworm is a parasite which attaches itself to arteries in the heart causing heart and lung disease and death (the disease is passed on by the mosquito as they feed from your cat). Only one bite from an infected mosquito can pass on heartworm to your cat and unlike dogs, it only takes one worm to make your cat very ill. Some cats with heartworm don't even show any signs of illness and can die without warning.

Heartworms take around 8 months to mature to adult size and when matured make their way to the heart. Due to their resistance, cats are usually only infected with a small number of heartworm (remember it takes only 1 to kill your cat). Cats do not tolerate heartworm infection well, so prevention is the best option.

There are many different types of preventatives available so we will advise you on which product is most suitable for your cat.

Remember: Wherever there are mosquitoes there is heartworm disease. It is recommended that your kitten start on a preventative by twelve weeks of age and to continue on the preventative for the rest of her life. If you do not continue this prevention, she will be at risk.

Intestinal Worming



Worms have serious health effects on kittens and in more severe cases cause death, so intestinal worming should never be underestimated. Intestinal worming should not be confused with heartworm as mosquitoes spread heartworm and intestinal worming is usually transmitted via faeces (poo) or via the kitten's mother.

As intestinal worms can have very harmful effects on both your kitten and your family, make sure you use a good quality wormer. This is not an area where you should pick up something cheap and ineffective. Do it once, do it right.

The times you worm your kitten will change depending upon her age. Your kitten should be wormed

- Every two weeks until 12 weeks of age; then
- Every month until 6 months of age, then
- Every three months for life.

Monthly 'spot on' formulas make life easy as they include Heartworm prevention, Flea Control and Intestinal Worming all in the one tube. We will advise you on which product is best for your kitten.

Fleas



Flea control should be started the moment your pet comes home as fleas can breed and get out of hand very quickly. Don't wait for an outbreak to occur, prevention is always better than cure.

Most monthly flea control products can be started from as young as 9 weeks and application is so easy. The most effective flea control are monthly 'spot on' formulas. You simply pour the small amount of liquid from the pipette onto the back of your kitten's neck and she will be protected against fleas for a whole month.

If you have a dog, don't forget to protect them also. If you don't protect the dog or vice versa, one pet will be breeding them while the other is killing them. You will never get rid of the fleas this way. All pets need to be on a good flea control product to keep your environment flea free.

Flea facts

- Fleas are a very common cause of allergic skin disease
- Fleas are a problem all year but mainly in the warmer months
- Fleas are the cause of the flea tapeworm, the most common intestinal worms seen by vets.
- A very small percentage of fleas will be seen on your pet, most fleas live in your environment like the back yard and carpet.
- People can be bitten by fleas too. You will rarely see them but they can leave an itchy sore, much like a mosquito bite. You don't have to see the fleas to know they have been there, just watch your pet scratch.
- If you can't see your pet scratching then maybe you are! Flea eggs can fall off your cat and into your bed and furniture leaving you with a flea problem also. Flea free cat, flea free home. Simple really isn't it?

We have an e-book all about Fleas if you would like to read more about them. Please ask us to email this book to you if you are interested.

Microchipping

A microchip is the most effective form of identification for your pet. A microchip is the size of a grain of rice and holds a number exclusively for your pet. It is implanted under the skin in between your pet's shoulder blades and remains there for life. It's as simple as getting any other injection and only takes a few minutes.

Losing a pet is heartbreaking and even if you have an indoor cat it is as simple as someone leaving the door open for them to get out and get lost. How will your cat get home? Name tags on collars are effective but what happens if your cat wasn't wearing their collar or the collar slips off? Your cat will never leave home without their microchip!

The database which hold your personal details operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year so your pet can be reunited with you at any time of the day or night. Your pet's microchip number will never change but if you move or change your phone number, you will need to update your contact details on the database.

What if your pet was hit by a car? They will be taken to the nearest vet or emergency hospital but who will give permission for particular treatments? If your pet has a microchip we can contact you even if it's 2am, notify you of the accident, and discuss their treatment. Microchips are inexpensive and are a one off cost. What price can you put on your pet returning home to you?

Note: Microchips are compulsory in some states. We will advise on the legislation for this state.



Ticks

Ticks are found near bushland areas and can be carried further inland by native animals including possums and bandicoots. The paralysis tick which is grey in appearance, affects your pet by injecting a deadly toxin which causes paralysis of the limbs (ie losing strength in the hind limbs) and eventually death.

Symptoms to watch for are loss of co-ordination in the hind limbs (drunken appearance), change in voice, gagging, coughing, vomiting, difficulty breathing and depression. Recovery rates depend on how quickly your pet is treated. Prevention is once again better than cure so we will advise you on the best preventative to use.

If you think your pet is showing symptoms of tick paralysis, contact us immediately for advice. Do not wait to 'see how it goes' as your pet will not recover without treatment.

Common Myths about ticks

Q What will happen if I pull off the tick and leave the head in?

A Its fine! Ticks do not have a head, only mouth parts and the toxin is contained in the body. Leaving the mouth parts only acts as a splinter and nothing more.

Q Should I spray it with an insecticide before removal?

A Spraying ticks before attempting to remove them is not essential.

Q Should I wait until I see the vet before removing the tick?

A No, the tick should be removed immediately to stop toxicity. Simply grasp the body of the tick as close to the skin as possible with your fingers, and pull the tick straight out. It is best to keep the tick and bring it into the practice for identification.



Desexing

If you decide to breed your pet, we strongly suggest you do some research first, as breeding can be very expensive and time consuming.

Have you...

- Considered the cost should your cat have any birthing difficulties?
- Considered, or set aside the time?
- Considered that you will be feeding the kittens every two hours if your cat is unable to feed them?
- Considered the cost of worming, vaccinations, flea control and food when they are weaned?
- Put some funds aside in case some of the kittens become ill and need veterinary attention?
- Found good homes for the kittens?
- Got some spare time to toilet train the kittens?

It is recommended that you have your kitten desexed before 6 months of age (for both male and female cats). It is at this age that your kitten will reach sexual maturity.

Reasons to desex your male cat

Cats not desexed will wander much greater distances thus increasing their risk of being hit by car. Cats not desexed also 'spray' (pee) on surfaces to mark their territory. This surface could be your couch or kitchen cupboards and if you have ever smelt the urine of an entire male cat, that would be enough reason on it's own to desex him! Cats not desexed will have a stronger desire to protect their territory meaning they will get into more cat fights. Cat fights cause cat fight abscesses and therefore more veterinary bills! Male cats are 50% responsible for our serious overpopulation problem in this country.

Reasons to desex your female cat

Cats not desexed will 'call' to other male cats in the area to let them know they are ready to mate. This means your cat will howl at all hours of the morning keeping you awake. We have a severe overpopulation problem in this country resulting in thousands of cats being put to sleep every year due to lack of homes. Please don't add to this problem.

Nutrition

THE MOST COMMON NUTRITION QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Q – Should I keep my cat on the same food the breeder/pet shop is feeding?

A – A sudden change in diet can give your kitten diarrhoea, so always try to slowly wean your kitten off the food they are eating now and onto your preferred food. You can do this by gradually adding in the new food and reducing her old food until she is totally eating your preferred food. Your kitten may still get diarrhea due to stress caused by the change in environment but it should only ever be mild. If diarrhea persists longer than 24 hours, or is severe, contact us immediately for advice.

Q – What should I feed my kitten?

A – It is very important to feed your kitten a good quality dry food, as their nutritional requirements are greater than that of an adult cat. Like people, cats need a balanced diet and a premium dry food from the practice will deliver just that.

Q – What is the difference between the food at the vet and food at the supermarket?

A – Quality. Premium foods sold in practice guarantee their ingredients. What this means is if the cat food is 'chicken' then it will always contain a specified amount of chicken no matter how high the price of chicken is at the time of production. Premium foods also do not contain less digestible protein which exists in some supermarket products.

Q – Why do cats have to eat more meat than dogs?

A – To remain healthy, cats require animal protein which contains a particular amino acid called Taurine. Taurine helps prevent heart and eye disease and while there is plenty of it in animal protein it is only present in small amounts of plant protein. While dogs can manufacture Taurine within their body, a cat can only manufacture a little and is not enough to meet their needs so the shortfall of this amino acid must be made up in their diet. This is the reason a dog could be fed a properly balanced vegetarian diet and a cat could not. Cat food should always have Taurine present so check the labels.

Q - Should I give my kitten milk?

A – No, it is not necessary providing your kitten is on a good quality kitten food. Some kittens can be lactose intolerant so the milk we drink can give them diarrhoea.

Q – How often should I feed my kitten

A – Kittens have very small stomachs and should be fed 3-4 times a day (if possible). As their energy requirements are very high it is best to leave out some dry kibble for them during the day if you plan on leaving the house for a long period of time. If you feed moist food or can food, only leave it down for a maximum of 1 hour. If it has not been eaten decrease the amount you offer your kitten next time.

Q – How long should she stay on kitten food?

A – Keep your kitten on kitten food until she is about 6 months of age. From 6 months of age you can feed her an adult food. Some diets suggest you change them to an adult food as soon as they are desexed.

Q – How do I look after her teeth?

A – There are also some premium dry cat foods which have been specially designed to clean her teeth. They are commonly called 'Dental Diets'. These diets are suitable to feed after desexing or after 6 months of age. You can also clean her teeth yourself using a tooth brush and toothpaste kit from the practice. Do not use human toothpaste as it can make her sick!



Pet Insurance

Unfortunately we can't claim our pets on medicare so it is important when purchasing a pet that you consider the cost of veterinary bills should they become ill or be involved in an accident.

A wound from a cat fight or injury from climbing a fence, which requires stitches, can sometimes be in excess of \$300 and if your cat is lucky to survive being hit by a car, their treatment can be over \$1,000. Owning a pet carries a lot of responsibility and one of those is to pay for her medical bills, so be prepared.

Our government heavily subsidises human drugs and surgical procedures which means you don't pay full price when you visit your own doctor. Our furry friends do not have their own government so their drugs and treatments are not subsidized. It is for this reason that veterinary bills can appear to be more expensive.

Pet insurance is a growing industry in Australia but sadly there are still only around 2% of dog and cat owners who have their pets insured. In the UK, around 26% of pet owners have pet insurance. Australia has still got a long way to go before it has an acceptable number of pet owners who are insured!

Pets who are insured generally get much better health care than pets who are not insured, due to the fact that money is not an issue when it comes to their treatment plans. It is very frustrating for veterinarians to have to offer a lower standard of care due to the pet owner not having enough funds.

The worst thing however is the pain that some pet owners have to go through when they must make a decision to euthanise their pet as they can't afford their medical treatment. Sadly, these decisions have to be made and there are no winners. The family are devastated, the veterinary personnel are devastated and an animal will lose its life for something that was treatable. This situation is avoidable with pet insurance.

Good pet insurance cover is usually between \$35 - \$55 per month and some policies cover you for 100% of your veterinary bills. If you would have trouble paying for your pet's emergency treatment then pet insurance is a must. Your cat relies on you to take care of her so please make sure you are ready should she urgently need you.

Please take out pet insurance cover today. It's very important.



Introducing your kitten...

Introducing your kitten to your existing cat
Like most humans, cats hate change. Even the smallest changes like moving the furniture around can be stressful, so be patient with your existing cat when introducing the new kitten.

When bringing your kitten home, set her up in a room on her own for a few days with her litter tray, bed, toys, food and water and don't introduce her to your existing cat straight away. It is highly likely that your existing cat will not like the invasion of the new kitten so confining your kitten will make your existing cat curious and not furious!

Rubbing a towel on the existing cat then rubbing the same towel on the kitten and then again back on the existing cat can blend their smells and make the kitten appear less of an alien. After these few steps you are ready for your introduction.

Open the door to the room your kitten has been in and let them introduce each other (don't force it!). Humans must take a back seat here so sit back and let the cats communicate in their own language. You will undoubtedly hear some hissing and spitting but you must allow this to happen as it is natural communication between cats and you must let them speak their mind. Interference here by you will only confuse things and the settling in period will be prolonged. Introductions don't always go well the first time so if it doesn't go well separate them and start over. Most cats under 6 months of age will bond quickly and permanently but older cats can take a lot longer. Be patient with them and don't expect too much too quickly.

Introducing your kitten to your dog
Introducing the dog is a little bit easier than introducing the existing cat and if done properly, they should be good friends. When introducing the new kitten, make sure your dog is on lead so you are in control of the situation. This will take away the dog's natural instinct to chase if the kitten runs away and hides or climbs up somewhere high to observe.

Once the kitten realizes that the dog is welcome to be in the house or yard she will soon come to terms with

it. Most kittens learn to adore the family dog and be very accepting of their new friend. During the introductory period, the dog may get a few swipes to the nose from the kitten but rarely any serious damage but beware the dog if he forces the cat into a corner! He will soon learn the cat rules very painfully. Ouch!

Introducing your kitten to you baby
This one is the hardest of all as cats do not see babies as little people. When introducing your cat to your baby, it is important to supervise it at all times. Contrary to what some people think, cats do not smother babies. They are merely looking for a warm place to snooze and a cot delivers just that, a warm, soft and high place to snooze the day away. Provide this for your cat and she will more than likely prefer to use this area over the cot as babies move too much and this does not impress cats!

Make sure that at all times your cat has an escape route if the children get too noisy and boisterous. Anywhere that small children can't reach.

