



**Officer Vet**

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[www.officervet.com.au](http://www.officervet.com.au)

# YOUR NEW KITTEN!

## The first night

The first days in a strange environment will be quite overwhelming for your kitten. Give yourself a couple of days to devote to settling the new kitten in, and during this time, be sure that there are no doors or windows open. Start with allowing access to a small area of the house and gradually increase. Get into the routine that you want the kitten to be part of right from the start. Find a good spot for its bed, food bowls and litter tray. To help your kitten get used to being without its mother and littermates place a hot water bottle and maybe a ticking clock beneath its bed (substitutes for mother's heartbeat). Pop a soft toy or blanket into the bed for the kitten to snuggle up to.

When introducing your kitten to other pets in the household take your time. The key is to introduce them gradually. Let other pets sniff the area where the kitten has been, and let them see each other through a window/sliding door first. Other cats will probably be grumpy for a while, but will eventually accept a young kitten.

## Using the litter tray

Cats are naturally very clean animals and even most young kittens will automatically use the litter tray provided. However, you can help them to get the idea by placing them into the tray and then hold onto their front paw to make a digging action in the litter. If there are multiple cats in the household then it is important to have one litter tray per cat – they do not like to share! Sometimes they can even be fussy about the type of cat litter. This is something that you can experiment with. Make sure that the litter trays are cleaned daily. By following these guidelines you reduce the chance of the cat soiling in other areas in the house e.g. pot plants. Be aware – urine spraying is different to normal urination. This is something that de-sexing will help to prevent (see handout).

## Scratching

Cats need to scratch. This is how they keep their nails trim and is also a way of marking their territory. Unfortunately new kittens do not know that the household furniture is out of bounds, so it is important to provide them with their own scratching post.

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### **Inside or outside**

Cats have traditionally been allowed to roam outside at their leisure, but things are now changing. Local councils now have regulations regarding when and where cats can go. For example, some councils fine the owner if the cat is found off their property. Obviously it is very hard to tell a cat where it can and can't go, so many people are now keeping their cats indoors permanently. This has several advantages. Cats are much safer indoors away from roads. They are also kept safe from infectious diseases such as feline AIDS and cannot fight with other neighbourhood and feral cats, so preventing other common feline ailments such as abscesses. Kittens that are kept inside from the start generally have no problem accepting life as an indoor pet. However, it is important that they are provided with plenty of toys and mental stimulation. An ideal scenario is to set up an enclosure outside for your cat and connect it to the house via a cat flap. These can be purchased or home made, and cats love the opportunity to laze outside in the sun. You can also provide grass and herbs such as catnip for your indoor cat to graze on. If you do let your cat go outside it is very important that they are brought in overnight. This is the time of day that most cat fights occur, and also when they hunt the native wildlife.

### **Grooming**

Long haired cats will need regular brushing, so it important to get a young kitten used to being brushed and make it a positive experience. Purchase an appropriate brush from the clinic or the pet shop and start gently. Most cats will need brushing regularly in the summer when their hair moults. Brushing out the loose hair will help to prevent your cat from developing fur balls. Cats keep themselves very clean and rarely need bathing. If you must bath your kitten, make sure that it is with a shampoo that has been specially formulated for kittens.

### **At the vet clinic**

Whenever your cat has to travel it should be housed in a carry box. Even if the kitten is very relaxed in the car and the vets, it is for their own safety that they are enclosed. Although the clinic is obviously available for vaccinations and for dealing with any health problems, it is important to be aware that you can also use the clinic as a resource for any questions regarding the kitten's behaviour, parasite control etc. Our vets and nurses will be happy to help.

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