



KITTEN INFORMATION

DIET

With all the thousand diets on the market it is no wonder this is one of our biggest questions pet owners ask us.

Brands: We recommend companies held to a higher standard of the Global Nutrition Committee called WSAVA (Worldwide Small Animal Veterinary Association). These include Purina Pro Plan, Hill's Science Diet, Royal Canin, Eukanuba, Iams, and Wellness.

Amount & Frequency: Recommendations are based on the calories in each cup, which you can find listed on the back of the food bag. However, the bag often recommends a larger quantity than what is needed since their studies are based on lab animals which often have a precise exercise regimen.

- The best assessment is to monitor the body condition of your kitten and adjust the amount fed based on this. Continue feeding the current amount and see how your kitten responds. If you notice your kitten is leaving food behind after feedings, then you should reduce the amount offered. If you notice your kitten is looking for food after finishing and not "filling out" in the belly as desired, you should increase the food by 20% and reassess.

DENTAL HYGIENE

It is never too early to implement dental hygiene.

Toothbrushing: Of course, the best dental disease prevention is brushing the teeth. Start with introducing the flavored pet approved toothpaste, then work up to introducing the toothbrush with the paste on it. After a few introductions, slowly attempt to brush the front teeth. Once that is implemented, you should be able to work your way back to the molars. Make sure to praise your pet after every brushing.

Multimodal Approach: To achieve the best dental hygiene, a multimodal approach using 2 or more methods is best. In addition to brushing the teeth, you can also use a dental chews, dental treats, water additive, and dental wipes.

Dental Cleanings: Dental disease can lead to further medical conditions (pain, infection, and bacteremia to the organs: heart, lungs, liver, etc.) if not addressed. Once your pet becomes an adult, make sure your veterinarian checks the dental disease with every annual exam so you can determine when the first dental cleaning should be done. Once the dental cleaning is performed, continue the multimodal approach and annual exams to make sure we are staying on top of dental disease.

TOYS

When selecting toys, it is important the toys cannot be torn or chewed apart into pieces or string the kitten may ingest – this can result in the need for surgical removal if it causes an intestinal blockage. It is also important the toys do not damage the teeth – tooth fractures can lead to the need for extraction of the tooth.

Hardness rules:

- Select toys that are at least pliable/bendable with your hands or able to be dented with your fingernail.

Use Caution with these:

- String toys are often eaten. If you play with your kitten using a "fishing pole" toy, hair ties, rubber bands, or other similar toys, put it in a safe place such as a cabinet, when not in use. Do not leave out unattended.
- Catnip toys can be eaten. Make sure they are too large to swallow.
- Fake plants. Cats will often chew on fake plants which can again lead to GI problems, including surgery.

TRAINING

Keeping your pet busy is the best step into training a happy and healthy cat.

Routine: The biggest step in this is to start a routine. Kittens are very smart and if a routine has been implemented, they will anticipate the schedule. Scheduled feedings, quiet time, and play time help both you and your pet.

Litterbox: This is one of the first tasks you'll teach your kitten.

- Kittens catch on quick and have a natural sense to use the litterbox. However, it can be helpful in the beginning to reinforce.
- If your kitten does not come litterbox trained, begin by placing your kitten in the box periodically throughout the day. When they urinate or defecate, leave the waste in the box for the day so they remember to go.
 - After a couple weeks, they should have mastered the litterbox and you can resume daily cleaning.
- Litterbox Rules:
 - *Number of boxes*: the number of cats plus 1. (If you have 1 cat, need 2 boxes.... 2 cats, need 3 boxes, etc)
 - *Cleanliness*: Clean the litterboxes at least once daily. Cats prefer clean potties and if it's too dirty, they may decide to use the bathroom elsewhere.....bath mats, rugs, beds, laundry, etc.
 - *Substrate*: Use caution in changing the type of litter. Cats are particular about substrate and may choose to go elsewhere if they don't like it. Some prefer sandy, others coarse, etc.

Cat Carrier: It is important your kitten learns this is not a scary place, but a pleasant one.

- *Type of carrier*: Choose one that opens from the top and the sides to allow for easy access. Both soft and hard plastic ones are good.
- *Make it a happy place*: Place bedding inside such as a towel or small blanket. Spray Feliway on the bedding. Sprinkle catnip and treats inside.
 - ****Tip**: do this at first introduction and periodically afterward. Then, when you need to take them to the vet, they will willingly go inside to receive their treats and make it easy for you.
- *Leave it out and open*: Let this be your kitten's den. Leave the carrier out in the home with the door open so they may come and go as they please. You will likely find this is your kitten's favorite place to sleep.
- *How to carry it*: The carrier should be carried from the bottom, using both arms. It should not be carried by the handle as it results in jerky movements during transport, making your cat feel unsafe. Also, the handles can break, which may traumatize your cat.

Piranha Kitten: Kittens, like human babies, explore the world with their mouths. Since kittens have teeth, sometimes they are destructive or inflict pain during their play and explorations.

- *Redirection*: Make sure to always keep a toy on hand. When you notice that your kitten is chewing on something they shouldn't, interrupt the behavior by clapping your hands or shouting "no." Then, replace what they are chewing on (whether it is your hand, furniture, etc) with an appropriate toy. This is a positive reinforcement to show a kitten what is acceptable to play with or chew on.
- *Overzealous play*: If your kitten is being more aggressive with play than desired, the best negative reinforcement is to discontinue playing with your kitten and go to another room. This will eventually help your kitten understand that playing too hard or biting you is not allowed and play time will stop.

Desensitization: This is a key role in training to not only help your family, but also the medical staff and groomer that will be helping take care of your kitten.

- You should handle the paws, ears, mouth, and belly daily. You should also practice holding your kitten still by picking them up or holding them in a seat with you. This teaches them it is normal and safe to be touched anywhere and it is okay to sit still when asked. If they do not receive this training, they could become afraid of objects needed for grooming or become difficult to medicate.
- Benefits of desensitization:
 - You – makes it easier for you to medicate or trim nails at home when the need arises.
 - Vet team – they can perform a thorough exam and treat your kitten when they are sick.
 - Groomer – they can perform a better cut with less risk of injury to your pet.
 - Kitten – they are not afraid when someone handles them for any of the above reasons.

SPAY AND NEUTER

The following information is cited from AAHA (American Animal Hospital Association), which creates best recommendations for hospital guidelines.

What does research show about spaying and neutering pets?

There is little data concerning the correct age to spay and neuter pets, but emerging research informs AAHA's guidelines. For example, cancer, orthopedic disease, behavioral problems, endocrine disorders, obesity, and urinary incontinence may be linked to sterilization status and the age at which the procedure is performed. The University of California, Davis, conducted a study on golden retrievers in 2013 that turned the world of veterinary medicine on its head concerning early spaying and neutering. Early sterilization prevented many issues, according to the study, but also appeared to increase the risk of other diseases, such as cranial cruciate ligament rupture, hemangiosarcoma, mast cell tumors, lymphosarcoma, and hip dysplasia. More research is needed, especially with different canine breeds, to help us understand the cause and effect of sterilization and the relationship between spay/neuter status and disease prevalence. More studies on the link between sterilization age and the onset of certain diseases also are needed.

The decision about when to spay or neuter your pet is one you should make with your veterinarian. She is your most up-to-date resource, and her knowledge of your pet's particular breed and potential disease risk can help you make an informed decision about the appropriate age for your pet's sterilization.

As part of the battle against pet overpopulation, it used to be common practice to spay and neuter young pets as soon as it was safe to do so and early sterilization is still performed routinely in shelters. When it comes to privately-owned cats in secure homes, AAHA has endorsed the "[Fix Felines by Five](#)" initiative, which recommends:

- **Spay or Neuter by five months of age**
 - Female kittens can enter their first heat cycle as young as four months, but usually not until they are five or six months old.
 - This recommendation prevents unwanted litters and greatly decreases mammary cancer risks in female cats as well as spraying/marking in male cats, but still allows kittens time to grow. Kittens sterilized at this age quickly bounce back from surgery.

Many pet owners think their female pet needs to experience the joy of motherhood at least once or that their male pet will feel less masculine if he's neutered, but animals simply do not think that way. US pet owners choose not to spay or neuter their pets for a variety of reasons, including:

- They show or breed the animals
- Financial constraints
- Fear of anesthesia
- Lack of understanding of the benefits

These concerns might seem valid, but the reasons to spay or neuter far outweigh the risks of not doing so. Older show or breeding pets who are spayed or neutered can avoid various cancers and infections. Anesthesia in veterinary medicine is now on par with human medicine. If you're still not convinced that spaying or neutering your pet can lead to a happier, healthier, longer life, consider these benefits:

- Benefits of spay:
 - Decreased risk of breast cancer
 - Prevents heat cycles which cause yowling, crying, erratic behavior, and bloody vaginal discharge
 - Prevents unwanted litters or expensive c-sections
 - Prevents life threatening uterine infection that requires emergency surgery which can cost several thousand dollars
- Benefits of neuter:
 - Decreased risk of testicular cancer and perineal hernias
 - Prevents inappropriate behaviors such as roaming to find a mate, marking inside your home, and fighting with other males
 - Prevents need to eliminate urine odors after your home has been well-marked by your territorial male

VACCINES

Kittens go through a vaccine series to build their own immune system as their mother's antibodies received from nursing fade over time. Each set is given 3 to 4 weeks apart, with the last one being given at 16 to 20 weeks of age. Depending on when the series is begun, your kitten may get a total of 3 or 4 FVRCP vaccines.

General Vaccine Info:

Core vaccines are recommended for all kittens as follows:

- FVRCP – highly contagious respiratory diseases caused by rhinotracheitis, calici, and panleukopenia viruses.
- FeLV – deadly virus which causes feline leukemia. Kittens must be tested for FeLV/FIV prior to vaccination.
- Rabies – deadly virus which is 100% fatal and is required by Florida law to be kept current.

Boarding/Grooming: The final set (3 or 4 FVRCP depending on age started) should be completed prior.