

# HomeVets

→ WELCOME

TO YOUR KITTEN PACKET!

Welcoming a new kitten into your home is an exciting time with many questions. We're here to address any concerns you may have along the way.



Congratulations on the newest addition to your family! Welcome to the HomeVets veterinary kitten packet, designed to guide you through the essential care and well-being of your new furry family member. In this comprehensive resource, you'll find valuable information on vaccines, preventative medications, dietary recommendations, pet insurance options, behavior tips, as well as guidance on spaying and neutering.

Whether you're navigating the exciting journey of kittenhood for the first time or looking to refresh your knowledge, our packet aims to equip you with the information and tools needed to ensure a healthy life for your pet.



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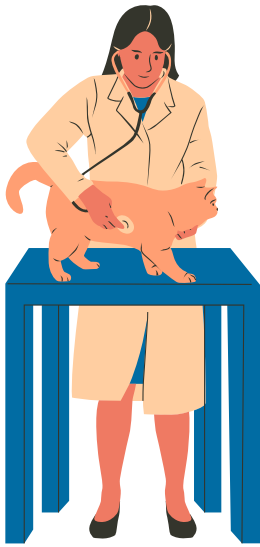
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Kitten packet

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# VACCINE SCHEDULE

may be adjusted based on veterinarian recommendations

	8 weeks	12 weeks	16 weeks	Revaccination
Rabies *			Initial (1 of 1)	A single dose within 1 year following the initial vaccination. Administer subsequent boosters every 1-3 years.
Feline Chlamydia, Calicivirus, Panleukopenia, Rhinotracheitis *	Initial (1 of 3)	Booster (2 of 3)	Booster (3 of 3)	A single dose within 1 year following the initial vaccination. Administer subsequent boosters every 3 years.
Feline leukemia virus		Initial (1 of 2)	Booster (2 of 2)	Administer subsequent boosters annually.

## \* ESSENTIAL VACCINES

### RABIES VIRUS

Rabies is a serious, contagious, fatal disease of animals and humans. Because of the deadly nature of this disease, vaccination of cats is required by law. The law varies by state. In Maryland, kittens must be adequately vaccinated against rabies by the time they are 4 months of age. One year later, animals must be given a second shot, and every one to three years thereafter.

### FVRCP

(FELINE VIRAL RHINOTRACHEITIS, CALICIVIRUS, AND PANLEUKOPENIA)

This is a combination vaccine effectively protects against 3 highly contagious and life-threatening feline diseases. Rhinotracheitis and calicivirus cause upper respiratory symptoms like fever, sneezing, and eye inflammation, while panleukopenia primarily manifests as gastrointestinal distress and can be fatal, particularly in kittens.

### FELINE LEUKEMIA VIRUS

Feline leukemia virus (FeLV) is a highly contagious virus that affects only cats, causing immune suppression and various types of cancers, with transmission occurring through bodily fluids or from mother to kitten. FeLV-infected cats shed the virus in various bodily fluids, primarily through close contact behaviors like grooming and fighting. Since there is no cure for FeLV and it is ultimately fatal, vaccination is crucial to prevent infection, particularly in cats that go outside.

After vaccinations, kittens may be a little sore and sleepy for the next 24 hours. If you see any of the following signs, please notify us so that we can adjust the plan for next vaccinations: lumps/swelling/pain at the vaccine site, limping, or crying out. **If we are closed, pursue care at an ER for the following: vomiting, weakness/falling over/extreme lethargy, facial swelling, hives, or breathing abnormalities such as open mouth breathing.**

# PREVENTION

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Depending on your cat's lifestyle, we recommend year-round, broad-spectrum parasite control against heartworms, fleas, ticks, and gastrointestinal parasites. Some examples are listed below. Please discuss this with one of our veterinarians as there are many different options on the market.



### REVOLUTION PLUS TOPICAL

- Fleas & Ticks
- Heartworms
- Ear Mites
- Roundworms
- Hookworms



### NEXGARD COMBO TOPICAL

- Fleas & Ticks
- Heartworms
- Hookworms
- Tapeworms
- Roundworms



### CREDELIO MONTHLY CHEWABLE

- Flea and tick only



### SERESTO COLLAR

- Flea and tick only



Heartworm disease is a serious and potentially fatal disease in pets. It is caused by foot-long worms that live in the heart, lungs and associated blood vessels of affected pets, causing severe lung disease, heart failure and damage to other organs in the body. Heartworm is spread to cats through infected mosquito bites.

Heartworm disease in cats differs significantly from that in dogs. Cats are atypical hosts, with most worms not surviving to adulthood, leading to often undiagnosed cases. Immature worms can cause damage, resulting in heartworm-associated respiratory disease (HARD). **Since treatment medication for dogs isn't suitable for cats, prevention is crucial to safeguard them from heartworm disease.**

# SPAY / NEUTER

Spaying and neutering can decrease possible health risks and prevent unplanned litters. It can also decrease unwanted behaviors such as roaming and urine-marking/spraying. We recommend spaying and neutering around **6 months of age**. Some females can come into heat as young as 4 months, if this happens to your kitten let us know and we will plan surgery accordingly.



## DENTAL CARE

To ensure proper dental care for your kitten, it is recommended to start toothbrush training as soon as you bring your little one home. To introduce your kitten to toothbrushing, start by letting them taste the toothpaste as a treat. You may use a finger cot or a piece of gauze covered in toothpaste made for cats to ease your kitten into the experience. Gradually incorporate brushing a few teeth at a time, followed by a favorite treat to reinforce positive associations. Aim to brush the outside surfaces of all teeth at least three times a week to promote optimal dental hygiene. This routine helps prevent dental issues and ensures your kitten's teeth and gums remain healthy.

Many owners struggle (understandably!) with regularly brushing their cat's teeth, and there are a variety of products - including dental diets, water additives, and oral gel spray - that can supplement toothbrushing for maintaining oral health.



For more information, visit the VOHC website:  
[vohc.org/accepted-products/](http://vohc.org/accepted-products/)

## DIET

Kittens should always have access to measured amounts of dry kibble, supplemented with wet food served 2 to 3 times throughout the day. Cats have a natural need for a solitary setting while eating and require multiple small meals throughout the day.

The common practice of feeding cats a few large meals at a single feeding station can potentially lead to inactivity, distress, and overeating, ultimately contributing to obesity.

Boredom, especially in indoor cats, can also lead to excessive eating. Due to pet food's high palatability and small size can further promote overeating and weight gain.

Try the below tips to help with these common issues:

- Use puzzle feeders and hide kibble in treat toys around the home to increase activity and provide mental stimulation.
- Split the cat's daily food allowance into multiple small meals throughout the day.
- Provide visually separated feeding stations or invest in new technology, such as microchip feeders, to consider pet social dynamics and reduce stress during mealtimes.
- Use treats for training purposes and mental stimulation (keep in mind they should not exceed 10% of the total diet to avoid excessive calorie intake).

# COMMON TOXINS



Steer your kitten clear from these items:



**MANY COMMON HOUSEPLANTS, INCLUDING LILIES (SEE NEXT PAGE)**



**CHOCOLATE, GRAPES, NUTS**



**HUMAN FOODS IN THE ALLIUM SPECIES (E.G., ONIONS, GARLIC, CHIVES, LEEKS)**



**HUMAN OR VETERINARY NON-STEROIDAL ANTI-INFLAMMATORY MEDICATIONS (NSAIDS SUCH AS TYLENOL, ASPRIN, IBUPROFEN)**

If your pet ate something you think may be poisonous, call one of our veterinarians at HomeVets or Pet Poison Helpline immediately. The sooner a pet poisoning is addressed, the easier, less costly, and safer it is to treat.

**Pet Poison Hotline**



**(855) 764 - 7661**

**ASPCA Animal Poison  
Control Center**



**(888) 426 - 4435**



# POISONOUS PLANTS FOR CATS

## *A Field Guide*



SAGO PALM



DAFFODILS



AUTUMN CROCUS



HYACINTH



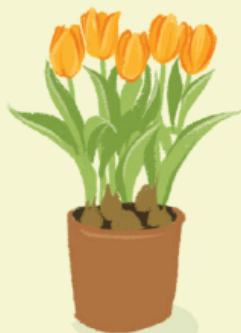
AZALEAS



DIEFFENBACHIA



CYCLAMEN



TULIPS



OLEANDER



LILIES



RHODODENDRONS



KALANCHOE

This includes  
both true lilies  
and daylilies.



# PET INSURANCE



We recommend getting pet insurance for your new puppy while they are young and free of pre-existing conditions! While you can plan for routine yearly expenses for your pet, such as annual exams and vaccines, pet insurance is important for covering unanticipated costs. From potential chronic conditions to unexpected accidents like tearing an ACL, unforeseen trips to the vet can cause stress and financial strain.

Pet insurance offers peace of mind by covering a portion of veterinary expenses for your pet's illnesses and injuries, minimizing the financial burden in times of need.



Pet Insurance Ranking	Best Overall	Best For Young Pets	Best No-Cap Payouts	Best Coverage	Best Value	Best Newcomer	Best Vet Direct Pay	Best For Pre-Existing Conditions
Company	PetsBest	Fetch	Healthypaws	Embrace	Figo	Lemonade	Trupanion	AKC Pet Insurance
Average Policy Price	Variable	Variable	Variable	Higher	Lower	Average	Higher	Variable
Policy Coverage	Extensive	Extensive	Limited	Extensive	Extensive	Limited	Limited	Extensive
Customer Service & Reputation	Good	Good	Excellent, Stable	Excellent, Stable	Excellent, Stable	Uncertain, New	Excellent, Stable	Excellent, Stable
Average Claim Processing	18-30 Days	5-6 Days	2 Days	5 Days	3 Days	2 Days	2 Days	2 Days
Vet Direct Pay Option	✓		✓	✓			✓	

See Canine Journal's review of available pet insurance companies at [caninejournal.com/best-pet-insurance/](https://caninejournal.com/best-pet-insurance/).  
Updated monthly.

# BEHAVIOR



## LITTER BOX HABITS

### How many litter boxes should I have?

Provide one litter box for each cat, plus one additional extra box. For example, you would need 3 boxes if there are 2 cats in your home.

### Where should I put the litter box?

- Consider quiet and private areas away from high traffic in your home.
- Place litter boxes in multiple locations throughout your home, ensuring they are easily accessible.
- In multi-cat households, having separate litter box locations prevents one cat from blocking access for another.
- For multi-level homes, provide at least one litter box per level. Consider placing an additional box on the level where older cats spend most of their time, reducing the need for them to navigate stairs.

### How big should the litter box be?

Ideally, a litter box should be about 1 ½ times the length of your cat from nose to tail base. This size ensures your cat can comfortably enter, turn around, scratch, and eliminate. If standard litter boxes aren't adequate, consider alternatives like concrete mixing trays or storage containers. For older cats needing easier access, you can modify the box by cutting down one side but smooth any edges to prevent injury.

### What if my cat suddenly stops using the litter box?

When your cat stops using the litter box, remember that cats do not understand right or wrong but act based on meeting their needs. If your cat avoids the litter box, it's likely because it doesn't meet their preferences or another area in your home better suits their elimination needs.

Address the problem promptly as behavior can become habitual. Consult your veterinarian at HomeVets first to rule out medical issues. Investigate potential causes like litter type, box location, or interactions with other pets.

### What Type of Litter Should I Use?

- For young kittens, select a natural, pellet-based litter that minimizes inhalation or ingestion risks. For adult cats, soft, unscented clumping litters are preferable as they are easier to clean. Avoid litters with perfumed crystals, cedar, or pine scents that can trigger asthma in both cats and humans.
- Consider the litter depth as well—many cats prefer no more than two inches of litter. Adding extra litter won't reduce the amount of cleaning necessary for a litter box.

### How Should I Maintain the Litter Box?

- Scoop waste daily and add litter as needed.
- Clean the box thoroughly every 1-4 weeks with hot water and gentle dish detergent.
- The frequency of litter replacement depends on the number of cats and boxes, as well as the type of litter used. Non-clumping litter should be completely changed weekly. Clay litter typically needs changing twice a week. Adjust as needed if you notice odor or excessive clumping.

### What brands are good?

Every cat is different and will have individual preferences, but here are a few different kinds you can try

- Clumping - Dr. Elsy's or World's Best
- Crystals - Fresh Step Crystals
- Paper - Fresh News
- Corn - World's Best Flushable Litter

### Check out more information on the Cornell Feline Health Center website:



\*\*If you are pregnant, please consult your physician for potential concerns regarding Toxoplasmosis.



## NAIL TRIMMING

Regularly trimming your cat's nails helps prevent injury and damage to household items. Trimming the nails of outdoor cats is not recommended as their claws serve important tools for climbing and defending themselves.

Use proper feline nail trimmers for precision and to avoid splintering. Introduce nail trimming gradually, starting when they are kittens if possible, and offer breaks and treats to ease any resistance. Seek advice from your veterinarian at HomeVets for guidance and practice in a calm environment for successful nail care routines.

## CARRIER TRAINING

Regular veterinary care is crucial for ensuring your cat's long-term health and comfort. Cats may be anxious about vet visits and associate carriers with these experiences, so it's important to acclimate them to their carrier gradually.

- Make the carrier a familiar and positive part of their environment by leaving it out with soft bedding and treats, catnip, or toys inside.
- Use a synthetic feline pheromone spray or wipe in the carrier, which may minimize anxiety associated with the carrier.
- Once acclimated to the carrier, take your cat for short trips in the car with their favorite treat to help them get used to traveling in a car.



## LOW-STRESS VET VISITS

### On the way to the clinic

Encourage your cat to enter the carrier voluntarily using treats or toys. If necessary, gently place your cat in the carrier using a top-opening or by removing the carrier's top half. Covering the carrier with a towel or blanket during travel can help reduce stress.

### Returning home in a multi-cat household

After vet visits, manage reintroduction to other cats at home by allowing them to adjust to the returning cat's scent gradually. Leave your cat in the carrier for a few minutes. If there is hissing between cats, keep the returning cat in a separate room with their necessities (food, water, litter box). Consider swapping bedding with each cat's scent to familiarize each of them.

After a few hours, you can attempt to reintroduce the cats again. Monitor their reaction and separate again if they seem stressed. You can use special feline pheromone plug-ins and sprays where your cats spend most of their time to help with the transition.

## SCRATCHING

Scratching is a natural behavior for cats with several purposes: maintaining claw health, stretching, and marking territory. Instead of trying to stop scratching entirely, redirect your cat to appropriate surfaces like scratching posts or cat trees. Here are some tips to try at home:

- Regularly trim your cat's nails.
- Use cat pheromone sprays/diffusers to help reduce stress-related scratching.
- Provide enriching objects and spaces for scratching and play to meet your cat's needs.
- Try using temporary nail caps designed for cats.

# HOMEVETS KITTEN PACKET

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## NOTES



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