



# Your New Cat

Tips for ensuring a healthy and happy life for your new family member

cat protection society

OF NSW



Thank you for choosing the Cat Protection Society for your new cat. Your new family member is already desexed, vaccinated, microchipped, flea and worm treated, and has been registered in your name on the NSW Companion Animals Register.

We love to hear how Cat Protection graduates are enjoying their forever homes, so please don't be shy to send us some photos and an email from time to time. Let us know if you're happy for us to share your feline friend's story with our friends on social media and in our members' journal *Cat Affairs*.

Most importantly, please remember we are always here to help you and your new cat, so don't hesitate to call us if you need information or advice.

## WHAT YOU WILL NEED FOR YOUR CAT

Once you have decided a cat is the pet for you, you will need a few basics ready for them in your home:

- Litter tray and kitty litter
- Food (we feed and recommend Hill's Science Diet)
- Food bowl
- Water bowls
- Toys
- Scratch post
- Cat bed or igloo
- Secure pet carrier.

Also, be sure to:

- Check all fly screens and windows to ensure they are secure and your new cat cannot get out
- Block off small spaces to prevent your new cat getting trapped. Cats like to hide in small dark spaces when they're scared
- Provide lots of patience and love.

## THE FIRST NIGHT AT HOME

A new home can be very scary for your new cat. It is important that their first night in your home is as stress-free as possible.

- Set up one room in your home with a litter tray, a small amount of food, water and a cat bed. When you adopt from Cat Protection, you will receive a piece of bedding your cat has been sleeping on while staying with us. It's important to keep using this as it has your cat's scent on it and the familiarity will help to make your cat feel more secure. Place the carrier on the floor and don't open it until you've closed the door to the room. Your cat might not come out of their carrier straight away, that's okay, let them take their own time. Spend time in the room with them and observe how they are acting. If they seem very scared, leave them alone for a few hours. When cats are frightened it is normal for them to hide. This may be under the bed or in a box or their carrier. Don't be upset, this can be very normal behaviour for some cats. Let them take time to adjust. Pop in every few hours to check on them and talk to them in a calm and friendly voice. Sit on the floor to be at their level. If you have young children, let them know the cat isn't used to your house yet and will need some time to settle in.
- Try to avoid loud or sudden noises in the house as these may scare the cat.
- Don't worry if they don't eat on the first night as they may not be feeling well after the car trip. Offer them the same type of food they were eating at the adoption centre as a sudden change of diet can give them an upset tummy, or even diarrhoea. Offer only small amounts of food for the first 12-24 hours.



## SETTLING IN

Over the next few days introduce yourself to your new cat by spending some time in their room. Play with them, stroke them, and place them gently on your lap. All these things will help them learn to trust you and feel safe. Don't rush it, let them come to you.

Once your cat is relaxed and wanting to explore the house, introduce them to other rooms slowly. It is important you keep them inside the house for at least one month even if you plan to have an indoor/outdoor cat. If they are a kitten, they should stay indoors-only until they're at least six months of age and have completed their vaccination course. You can harness-train your cat or kitten indoors.

If you introduce them to the world outside, make the process slow to avoid stress. Supervise them at all times and start with short intervals outside. If you have been training them, you can take your kitten or cat for short walks on a harness (only do this if they are comfortable and make sure that you keep to safe areas). Each time you go outside, you can increase the length of time you are out. If you decide you will be letting them out alone, you will need to establish a routine where food is an incentive to come back inside.

We recommend that owners keep their cat indoors-only or confined to their property, and always inside from early evening until late morning. This reduces the risk of your cat being injured, getting into fights, contracting diseases and harming wildlife.





## INTRODUCING YOUR NEW CAT TO THE FAMILY

Growing up with pets can be a great experience for children. It is very important that parents supervise their children whenever they are interacting with pets to make sure the children know how to handle the pet. This ensures both the child's and the pet's safety.

When introducing your new cat to children you should have the child sit on a chair or on the floor so the cat has a firm place to sit. You should hold the cat and gently sit them on the child's lap. Let the child gently stroke them while you are holding the cat to reassure them they are safe. After doing this a few times, show the child how to hold the cat properly. This is by placing one hand under the rump of the cat and the other arm under the cat's front shoulders. This way the cat will feel secure. Ask the child to always remember that cats have very good hearing so any loud noises or voices can frighten the cat.

To avoid being bitten or scratched your child also needs to understand the signs your cat might show when frightened. These include:

- Hissing or spitting
- Ears pinned back against the head
- Cowering
- Fur raised
- Growling.

Provide a safe place for your new cat to retreat to if they become overwhelmed. This will help your cat and your children to develop a trusting relationship.



## INTRODUCING YOUR NEW CAT TO OTHER PETS

You will need to introduce your new cat to any existing pets. While they are confined to their room, start to introduce the smell of your new pet to any other pets you have. Don't wash your hands between touching them to allow them to smell each other on you. If you have a gap under the door of the room let them smell each other through it. Place your new cat in their carrier and introduce your other pets to them without letting them out. This way they feel secure and your other pet/s will not be upset. After doing this a few times you should be able to sense when they are relaxed around each other. Once they seem comfortable with each other's presence, you can open the carrier and let them explore each other. Always supervise these visits for a few months after introduction.

Don't expect your pets to get on well together right away; some pets need time to adjust. Never neglect the pets you already had when getting a new pet as this may cause problems. Do expect some hissing or growling. This is very normal behaviour.



## LITTER TRAINING

Your new cat is litter-trained but it's important to prevent accidents and help them adjust to their new environment by making sure they have appropriate toileting facilities.

- Provide your new cat with a litter tray that is the right size. If it's too small, your cat may miss the litter; if it is too big, the cat may not be able to get into it.
- Try to use the same litter the cat is used to. If you need to change the type of litter, introduce the new litter into the old type so your cat will get used to it. You may need to try a few different litters until you find one your cat likes.
- Remove all solid waste as soon as possible and at least daily.
- Empty and clean all litter from the tray as recommended on the packaging. If your cat is fussy you may need to do this more often as a cat's sense of smell is better than ours.
- Don't use strong detergents when cleaning the tray as this may deter your cat from using the tray.
- Always place your kitten in the tray after eating to promote use.
- Provide one tray per cat plus one spare (for example, one cat = two trays; two cats = three trays, etc).
- Place the litter tray in a quiet spot as cats like their privacy when going to the toilet. Don't move the tray around or your cat may not be able to find it.
- Protect any house plants with pebbles or bark to prevent your cat soiling the dirt.
- Always praise your cat when they use the tray. This will make it a pleasant experience for the cat and promote tray use.



# DISEASE PREVENTION

## Worms

Your new cat has been wormed. It is important that you continue worming your cat throughout their life. Intestinal worms like hookworm, roundworm and tapeworm can all be killed by using a worming tablet or spot-on treatment. Kittens need to be wormed fortnightly from 2-12 weeks old and adults monthly to three monthly depending on the product. Humans can catch worms from pets and they can catch them from us. See your pharmacist if you are concerned about your human family.

## Fleas

Your new cat has also been flea treated. You will need to continue this monthly to prevent flea eggs hatching. We recommend spot-on flea and worm products like Advocate for easy application. Fleas cannot live on humans but can bite and cause allergic reactions on pets and humans. To prevent this remember to flea treat your cat regularly. At Cat Protection, we use and recommend Bayer flea and worm treatments. Never use flea treatment products intended for dogs on your cat: these can be very dangerous, even deadly, to cats.

## Vaccinations

Your new cat has been F3-vaccinated. Your cat's profile will tell you when the vaccination was given and the vaccination certificate will tell you when the next one is due. Kittens require boosters before their vaccination course is complete. Some cats might need annual or additional vaccinations. Please discuss the appropriate vaccination schedule for your cat with your vet, taking into account issues such as whether your cat will boarded regularly or have outdoor access.

## Skin cancer

Many people do not realise cats can get skin cancer. Cats with white noses, ears or light coloured pigmentation on the ears and nose are especially at risk. To prevent your cat getting cancer you should keep them inside for the hottest part of the day. If this is not possible apply a pet sunscreen to the ears and nose when they are outdoors (never use human sunscreen as these are toxic to cats). Any sunburn on the cat should be seen by a vet as soon as possible. Kittens as young as 12 months have developed skin cancer lesions.

## Ringworm

Ringworm is a fungus NOT a worm. It appears on the skin as a circular mark that is inflamed and itchy for your cat. It is carried on hair follicles. Humans can catch ringworm and can give it to cats. It is treatable so any suspect marks on your cat should be seen by your vet.





## FEEDING YOUR CAT

At Cat Protection, your cat will have been fed Hill's Science Diet. We recommend this food as it provides your cat with all the nutrients they will need. The Hill's range of cat foods are balanced to meet your cat's needs at every life stage, from kitten to senior. Transitioning to the right food when your cat enters a new life stage will help to meet your cat's changing nutritional requirements.

Adult cats need to be fed twice a day. Kittens will need three to four small meals a day as they have small stomachs. Your kitten will need kitten food until they are 12 months old. Follow the feeding guide on the packaging as overfeeding your cat can result in diarrhoea, vomiting or excessive weight gain.

Always provide your cat with a supply of fresh water; two bowls are better than one. If your cat doesn't drink enough water, they will become dehydrated. Cats prefer their water bowls to be located away from their food bowl, and of course, neither food nor water should be near their litter tray. Never give your cat or kitten milk as cats are lactose intolerant and milk can make them very sick. Pet-only milk is available if you feel you must give your kitten milk.



## GROOMING YOUR CAT

Although cats groom themselves it is important that you brush your cat regularly. Grooming your cat will help form a bond between you and prevent cat hairs throughout the house.

Short-haired cats should be brushed at least once a week and long-haired cats daily. Concentrate on areas that your cat may have difficulty reaching like behind the legs and the back of the neck. There are many brushes and combs available; choose one that's right for your cat (long-, medium- or short-haired). Groom your cat for just 5-10 minutes at a time until it becomes part of their routine; they may then enjoy longer brushing sessions.

## KEEPING YOUR CAT HAPPY INDOORS

Cats can live happily indoors. By keeping your cat indoors you are benefitting your cat, yourself and the environment. At Cat Protection we encourage all cat owners to keep their cats indoors.

When you decide you would like your cat to be an indoor cat you need to remember to provide enough stimulation for your cat so they don't get bored. Although cats sleep a lot, you will need to provide at least 30 minutes a day of play time for your cat, even older cats.

The following points will ensure your cat's environment is enriched to keep them happy and healthy.

### Toys

There is a huge variety of cat toys available to keep your cat happy for hours. You don't have to spend a lot of money; scrunched-up paper bags and food puzzles made with cardboard tubes are lots of fun for cats!



### Hiding spots

Cats need a quiet place they can retreat to if they get stressed. Provide your cat with an igloo bed or a box they can hide in for when they want time alone.

### Greenery

Provide your cat with some cat grass or catmint in a pot; your cat can chew on the foliage to help their digestion.

### An outside run

Build a 'catio' so your cat can sit outside without the hazards of being on the street. Look on the internet for DIY patterns or companies that provide pre-fab and customised cat enclosures. There are free instructions on the Cat Protection website on how to build cat runs and cat-proof fencing.

### Walk your cat

Cat harnesses are available for all size cats. These fit around your cat's body and attach to a lead, so your cat can walk safely outside. Remember to only do this in safe areas and only if your cat is comfortable with doing this; refer to the factsheet on our website for more guidance.

## Scratching posts

Cats need to scratch things in order to shed the dead nail sheath from their claws. Provide your cat with a scratch post, or a few, to protect your furniture. There are many different types to choose from, including ones with activity centres and resting levels. To promote use of the posts, spray them with catnip spray or Feliscratch.



## Windows

Install a window seat or place a piece of furniture under a window so your cat can look out. Cats love to sun themselves in the window and look at life outside. Remember if your cat is light coloured they can still get sunburnt through the glass; consider UV-blocking window film.

## Clean the litter tray

Cats are very clean animals so ensure you remove any solid waste from your cat's litter tray as soon as possible and at least daily. Provide your cat with a couple of trays to avoid any nasty surprises when you get home.

## Get two cats!

Keep your cat entertained by getting them a friend. This will ensure your cat isn't lonely and has a playmate. Remember it is easier to adopt two cats or kittens together than manage introductions later on; also, some cats prefer to live alone.

If you don't intend keeping your cat indoors during the day, you should ALWAYS curfew your cat at night - for your cat's safety and the environment.

## GOING ON HOLIDAYS

Everyone likes to go on holidays but it can be difficult when you have a pet. This doesn't have to be the case. You can:

- Board your cat in a cattery or with your local vet. Your cat needs to be up-to-date with all vaccinations to stay at a cattery. At Cat Protection, we can give you a list of boarding catteries that might be able to accommodate your cat
- Have pet minders stay or come to your house to feed your cat. This option is good for cats who are shy or easily stressed as they don't need to leave home.

## IDENTIFICATION

Your new cat is already microchipped. This means a chip about the size of a grain of rice has been placed under their skin just between the shoulders. This chip contains a number that can be scanned by your vet. This number is on a database linked to your contact details. This database can only be accessed by an authorised person for the purpose of reuniting a cat with their owner.

As Cat Protection Society is an authorised registration agent, we will register your new cat to you at the time of adoption. Your cat's microchip and registration papers are very important and should be kept in a safe place. You need these to create a profile for your cat on the NSW Pet Registry, which you can then use to update any details such as a change of address or phone number. It is very important to remember to keep your contact details up-to-date as if your cat ever becomes lost, that is the information relied on to return your cat to you. If you need assistance please call us or your local council. If your cat goes outside, you should also consider a collar and tag for your cat.





## SAFETY AND FIRST AID

**Keep your vet's phone number, as well as an after-hours emergency vet number, in a visible place and programmed into your phone.**

In an emergency, a swift response is essential and you don't want to waste precious time looking up phone numbers. Even keeping your home as pet-friendly as possible does not ensure your cat will not become sick or injured.

Make sure all chemicals are locked away; remember cats can jump up onto high areas so placing poisons on shelves doesn't prevent your cat getting to them. Cats also love to chew things so make sure any toys you give your cat are large enough for your cat not to choke on them. If in doubt, take the toy away.

It is beneficial for you to know what is 'normal' for your pet. Look at how much they eat, drink and go to the toilet as this all helps you know whether your cat is sick. You should also look at your cat's gums. The normal colour should be pink. If they are pale pink, almost white or red, you should see your vet.

**Dehydration** If your cat doesn't drink enough water they will become dehydrated. Dehydration is especially common in the hot summer months. Always check your cat's water bowls and always fill them with clean water. You can check whether your cat is dehydrated by gently pulling up the skin at the back of the neck; it should fall back within one or two seconds. If this is delayed, take your cat to the vet.

**Bleeding** If your cat is bleeding for more than 5 minutes or bleeding heavily, you will need to take immediate action. Place a gauze pad on the wound and apply direct pressure. Maintain the pressure for a couple of minutes until the bleeding stops. Firmly wrap the wound with a bandage and seek veterinary advice immediately.

**Shock** Cats can go into shock after any severe trauma. They will appear weak and shaky with their breathing and pulse rate very rapid. Shock is very serious and can be life-threatening. If you suspect your cat is in shock, cover them loosely with a towel or blanket, place them in a carry cage and get them to the vet immediately.

**Poisoning** Poisoning can be a common ailment in cats. This can be the result of toxic plants, chemicals or your cat ingesting human medications.

Common products that are highly dangerous to cats include chemicals for cars and cleaning products; medicines; mothballs; pesticides; snail pellets; fungicides and rat and mouse killers. Cats can also be poisoned from eating poisoned rodents. Remember to put all medications, chemicals and poisons in a closed cupboard to stop your cat getting to them. Never leave cleaning products in buckets - your cat may drink from them.

Many plants are toxic to cats and it's best to avoid these. A vase of lilies may look pretty on the table, but if your cat ingests even a small amount of the pollen or chews the plant, it could lead to severe kidney damage or even death. If you have a cat, keep lilies out of the house and out of the garden.

Other common plants that are dangerous include: azalea/rhododendron; castor bean; cyclamen; dieffenbachia; ivy; kalanchoe; oleander; cannabis; sago palm; tulip/narcissus; and wisteria.

If you suspect your cat may have been poisoned never induce vomiting unless

advised by your vet. Signs of poisoning include:

- Salivating
- Vomiting
- Diarrhoea
- Foaming at the mouth.

If you think your cat has been poisoned, phone your vet immediately. If you know what your cat ingested, take it along with you to the vet as a positive identification of the toxin will help your vet to treat your cat.

**Choking** Cats can choke on bones, toys and other small household items. If your cat is choking they will generally paw at their face and cough to try to remove the object. It may be difficult for you to help as the cat will be stressed and might try to bite you. If you can see the object you can try to remove it. If you can't easily remove the hazard, or you think your cat may have swallowed it, place your cat in their carrier and take them to your vet without delay.

**Ticks** In summer ticks can be a very serious problem for your cat. Ticks will burrow into a cat's skin under the fur and suck the blood from the cat. Ticks can transmit a number of diseases from animals to humans and can be very dangerous to your cat. Ticks can be found anywhere on the body. Check the ears, inside legs and tail. Running your hand over your cat's body regularly will help you get to know how your cat feels; this will help you notice any lumps or bumps that might be a tick. If you suspect your cat has a tick seek veterinary advice immediately. Talk to your vet about preventatives if you live in a tick-prone area.

**Broken bones** Never treat broken bones yourself as you could cause further injury to your cat. Place your cat on a towel or blanket and place them in their carrier to restrict movement. Take your cat to the vet immediately.

**Sneezing** Sneezing is common in cats as it is a way for them to clear their nasal passages. Persistent or excessive sneezing could be an indication that your cat is ill. If the sneezing is accompanied by a nasal discharge, blood or pus you should seek veterinary advice. Make sure your cat adheres to their vaccination schedule.

**Vomiting** Vomiting can be caused by a number of things. It is often the way a cat will expel a foreign object, like string, or can be caused by something the cat has eaten that has upset their stomach. Furballs can also make your cat vomit. If your cat has vomited remove any food for 12 hours as eating may upset the cat more. If the vomiting is persistent call your vet immediately.

**Diarrhoea** As with vomiting, diarrhoea may be your cat's body expelling a foreign object from the body, or your cat may have ingested something that has upset the stomach. If stools are just a bit runny and your cat has no other signs of ill-health, give them a small amount of boiled chicken instead of their regular food for the next 12-24 hours and monitor them closely. Make sure they have plenty of water. If the diarrhoea persists after 48 hours, see your vet. If stools are liquid, if you see any signs of blood or pus, or if your cat has other signs of illness (eg lethargy, vomiting) do not feed them but take them to your vet as soon as possible.

**Abscesses** An abscess is a swelling of the skin that is filled with bacteria and pus. They are very painful. If left untreated they can cause secondary infections and make your cat very sick. Never try to burst an abscess yourself as this can cause severe damage to surrounding tissue and skin. All abscesses should be seen by

your vet immediately. They are usually drained by your vet and your cat given antibiotics to treat the infection.

As most abscesses are caused by cat fights, prevention is the best medicine. Ensure your cat is desexed and keep them inside. Outdoor cats are exposed to many risks such as injury and diseases, including FIV.

**Bites** Cats can be the victim of dog and cat bites. If your cat is bitten it is important that you seek veterinary attention as the wound may contain harmful bacteria that will cause infection.

**Giving your cat a pill** Giving your cat a pill can be a stressful experience (for both of you!). To give your cat a pill correctly, you should hold their mouth open, place the pill at the very back of the mouth, hold the mouth closed until the cat swallows. If your cat doesn't like taking pills, pill-guns are available that hold the pill in the end and let you insert the pill into the mouth with your fingers at a safe distance. If your cat is particularly restless you might want to wrap their body in a towel with their head poking out at the end. This will help you to avoid being scratched. You can also crush the pill in a small amount of food (about a tablespoon). Make sure it is a food your cat loves, like warm chicken, as this will tempt them to eat it. Watch the cat to ensure all the food is eaten. See our YouTube video for more guidance.

**Emergencies** In any emergency situation you should always contact your vet as top priority. Initial first aid by you can often prevent further injury to the cat and will help to minimise any pain or discomfort the cat is feeling. Have a basic first aid kit handy just in case. This should contain such things as scissors, bandages, a towel, an eye dropper, gauze, tweezers and animal antiseptic cream. Thick gloves can also come in handy to prevent being bitten or scratched. Have your vet's number as well as an after-hours emergency vet number somewhere visible and also programmed in your phone.

In the case of an emergency you should:

- Get someone to ring the vet clinic to let them know what has happened and that you are on your way. Ask whether you should be doing anything in the meantime for your cat
- Remain as calm as possible
- NEVER give medication for people to your cat
- Control any blood loss
- Check the cat's airways to maintain breathing
- Do not attempt first aid if you cannot safely handle the cat
- Place the cat in their carrier
- Go to the vet as soon as possible.

If you suspect a toxic substance is on your cat you can rinse the area thoroughly. The more information you have, the better your vet will be able to treat your cat. If you know that your cat has swallowed a poison, carefully take the container with you (product labels will allow the vet to identify the toxic substance).

There are books on animal first aid that you might find useful but remember that the most important thing to do in any emergency is to contact your vet immediately.

**For more information on cat care and health, please refer to our website  
[www.catprotection.org.au](http://www.catprotection.org.au)**

You will find factsheets on cat health and behaviour, as well as links to cat care tutorials on YouTube.

Don't forget you're always welcome to phone us on 9557 4818.

Please like us on social media and stay in touch!

Cat Protection provides shelter and adoption of homeless cats and kittens; discount desexing and vaccination; feline health and welfare policy and research; as well as information and education on cat care. As a charity, we rely on donations, bequests and sponsorship.

If you would like to support our mission helping cats, you can become a member, donate, volunteer, leave a bequest, buy your cat food and accessories at Cat Protection, donate to or buy from our Op Shop.



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OF NSW



103 Enmore Road Newtown NSW 2042

t 9557 4818 or 9519 7201

[info@catprotection.org.au](mailto:info@catprotection.org.au)

[www.catprotection.org.au](http://www.catprotection.org.au)

ABN 81 610 951 615