



THE KITTEN GUIDE

Please note

*This book has been written solely for the information of readers
and is not for use as a veterinary medical manual
in place of veterinary consultations and treatments.
It is recommended that kittens receive regular veterinary health checks.*

THE
KITTEN
GUIDE

Throughout their lives, cats are great companions for the families that care for them. Our philosophy, based on four simple fundamentals for responsible owners, will help build the solid grounds of a long-lasting and unique relationship with your cat.

RESPECT

Cats' domestication has rendered mankind responsible for their wellbeing. Respecting your cat means catering for their basic needs, all the while, offering them opportunity to express behaviours that are linked to their evolutionary ancestry.

CARE

Spending time playing with your cat, providing them with the necessary care and attention they need, taking them to the veterinarian: caring for your cat means monitoring their health and wellbeing throughout their life.

KIT TEN

KNOWLEDGE

Showing curiosity for the feline species, learning about cat behaviour and understanding feline communication, are key for a fulfilling relationship with your kitten.

ENVIRONMENT

A familiar and predictable home in which a cat is able to exercise some control over their physical environment and social interactions helps to reduce stress and enables them to cope with any challenges. Enriching your cat's environment enhances their physical and mental wellbeing.

1/ARRIVAL

IN THEIR NEW HOME P.8

Providing all necessary equipment P. 12

Organising their new home P. 14

Accompanying their first steps P. 16



2/HEALTH

P.20

Choosing tailored health-nutrition P. 24

Ensuring a full health follow-up

with your vet P. 42



3/WELLBEING

P.50

Knowing and understanding your kitten P. 54

Enriching your kitten's life to enhance their wellbeing P. 66

Maintaining your kitten's hygiene P. 72





ARRIVAL IN THEIR NEW HOME

- Providing all necessary equipment
- Organising their new home
- Accompanying their first steps

**THE FIRST
FEW EXPERIENCES
IN A NEW HOME
WILL IMPACT A KITTEN
THROUGHOUT THEIR LIFE**

**KITTENS ARE FRAGILE.
THEY NEED REASSURANCE
AND TO FEEL PROTECTED**

**KITTENS REQUIRE
A SAFE HOME IN WHICH
THEY CAN EXPLORE
WITH CONFIDENCE**

Welcome to the family !

The arrival of a new kitten is an important event: for your kitten, but also for you and your family.

How can you make your kitten's arrival to their new home as successful as possible?

**The big moment is here,
you have just collected
your new kitten!**

Whether he or she comes from a breeder, a shelter, a pet store or a friend, first impressions are vital, and will influence your mutual relationship in the long term. Plan to collect your kitten at a moment when you can spend time looking after them: at the weekend or on your day off for example.

**This is a magical moment for
you, but it can be a stressful time
of change for your kitten.**

Your kitten has left the security of his or her mother and littermates, and is experiencing a multitude of new sights, sounds and smells. Try to control your own emotion and excitement during this time.



PROVIDING ALL NECESSARY EQUIPMENT

The essential tools for your new kitten include feeding and drinking bowls, a litter tray, a bed, a cat tree, a scratching post, toys and, of course, your kitten's first diet! You can find these essentials at pet stores, through your vet, or online.

How to set up their feeding and drinking areas?

A minimum of two bowls is needed: a small one for food and a bigger one to provide a clean and constant supply of water. It is worth paying a little more for stainless steel bowls as they are more durable and easier to clean. The bowls should be placed away from each other to prevent food from getting into the water, and well away from the litter tray. The water bowl can be replaced by a water fountain to promote your kitten's drinking behaviour. If your house has more than one storey, a set of bowls should ideally be installed on each floor. Providing individual eating areas in a multi-cat household ensures the privacy needed by each cat and helps to prevent any stress coming from feeding competition.

How to prepare their sleeping area?

Kittens need a lot of sleep when they are young. Prepare some comfortable bedding in different cosy corners around the house using pillows, covers, baskets, including a few beds up high where they feel safe (although they will choose their favourite spots themselves!). Replicating these areas in multiple locations in the house will provide separate access in multi-cat households and/or several choices for individual cats.

How to satisfy my kitten's natural instincts?

Play is the way a lot of young animals learn and kittens are no exception. There are plenty of toys you can buy to encourage this behaviour. Only use toys specifically designed for kittens as these will be more durable and safe. As cats love to scratch, it's a good idea to give your kitten a purpose-built scratching post and an indoor cat tree or a scratching mat if you want to keep your curtains and furniture safe. You can encourage them to use the scratching post by spraying it with a cat friendly Catnip product. Alongside this equipment, your kitten will need a suitable place to run around in, with high objects like tables, cupboards, shelves and sofa backs that they can jump up on.

How to choose the right litter?

Make sure your litter tray is the right size for your kitten, so they can use it without making a mess. It must be cleaned regularly and often. It's essential to have a scoop on hand to remove mess at the start and end of every day, and replace the litter and lining every 1-2 days. If you want to reduce odour and litter being kicked out of the tray, consider a covered litter box. Provide your kitten with both a covered and non-covered option at first so they can choose. If you have multiple cats, you will need separate trays in separate, quiet areas for each cat. The common rule is to have one more tray than the number of cats (i.e. if you have one cat, you need 2 trays, if you have 2 cats, you need 3 trays, etc.).



ORGANISING THEIR NEW HOME

Your kitten may feel lonely when they first arrive in your family. To minimise stress, it is vital to prepare as much as possible for your new pet's arrival in their new home. Here are some simple tips to keep them safe and secure.

RESPECT YOUR KITTEN'S AREAS

Cats are naturally clean animals and prefer to have their litter tray away from food and water dishes. The litter tray must be easily accessible and away from the family rooms.

Make sure they have plenty of bedding around the house, where they can hide or rest.

Don't try to set them up in a specific room to sleep as they will choose this themselves and sometimes, it will be in very special places!

Your kitten requires a lot of sleep. Try not to wake or disturb them during these precious moments of rest.

There are many dangers for a kitten in your home. **Take time to make your kitten's living environment as safe as possible.**

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

At first, it is safer to restrict access to areas like balconies or the garden, and to be careful when the windows are opened. Later on, your kitten will be able to explore as they like.

Check if any of your plants are poisonous. Certain plants, such as lilies, are highly toxic to cats. You can ask your veterinarian for a blacklist.

INSIDE THE HOUSE

Make sure all the rooms your kitten will have access to are secured. Kittens will chew on anything when teething, so keep electric wires wrapped or out of sight and protect sockets with a safety plug. Put away all small objects that could be swallowed such as elastic bands and drawing pins, and don't leave plastic bags or foam objects lying around. Keep all medicines, pesticides, weed killers and rat poison locked away. Because kittens can fit everywhere, use covered rubbish bins, keep toilet lids down, and check your washing machine/dryer before starting them.



ACCOMPANYING THEIR FIRST STEPS

When your kitten first arrives, it's important to get the details right to help them settle into your home. You should be patient and let them explore their new environment and adjust gradually.

How to help your kitten discover their new home?

Your new kitten may weep a little on the first few nights. Remember that they have left their mother and littermates, so it is normal that they may be a bit scared at first.

Choose a quiet room for your kitten to stay in for the first few days. This will help them gradually become used to their new surroundings and the smells of the new home. Set up the litter tray in this room to make litter training easier.

Supervise your kitten when you grant them access to other areas of your home. Kittens are curious and it is amazing what hazards they can quickly uncover!



How best to prepare your kitten's first encounter with children?

Kittens are great as they can provide a role in teaching children about responsibility and looking after animals. This being said, to begin with, it's probably best not to let them play with your kitten when you're not around. Although they don't mean to, children can sometimes be clumsy or rough with animals. Explain to them that your new kitten is not a toy, that he or she needs lots of sleep and that they shouldn't wake them up just to pet them.

You can show them how to approach and pick up your kitten safely, and encourage them to use toys to play with your kitten. This keeps the play enjoyable for everyone and is a great bonding experience.

Handle kittens with care - sudden movement or rough handling can be frightening. The best way to pick up your kitten is to slide an open hand under their tummy as your other hand supports their rear end.

What if you already have pets?

The golden rule: the current residents are masters in the home, so do not upset their habits. Do not show preference for the new arrival to the detriment of other pets who could feel abandoned.

Let your kitten meet the rest of the family in stages, keep a watchful eye, and be patient.



You should always supervise interactions between your existing dog and your new kitten. For the first encounter, choose a room where there are places to hide so that your kitten feels safe.

Keep your dog calm and on a leash. There is no point in rushing things, so don't force contact between them but wait until they both get used to each other.

If your dog already knows and likes cats, this process will be much easier.



If you already have a cat in the house, make sure that you introduce your new kitten carefully and gradually. Luckily, adult cats tend to be more accepting of kittens than of other adult cats. Ensure each of them has a safe area or space to escape to when they are feeling unsure: it is therefore important to provide multiple potential hideouts and resting spots, at various heights, throughout the house. Make sure to provide each of them with their own sleeping area, food and water bowls, toys, and litter trays as they will not want to share. Do not try feeding them near to each other to help with introduction. Feeding is not a social behaviour in cats and feeding them together can be very stressful.

CATS LIVE IN A WORLD OF ODOURS! USE A RAG TO COLLECT FACIAL SECRETIONS FROM YOUR KITTEN'S CHEEKS AND FOREHEAD AND RUB IT AGAINST THE BOTTOM OF THE WALLS IN OTHER ROOMS TO GET THE EXISTING CAT USED TO THEIR SMELL.



HEALTH

- Choosing tailored health-nutrition
- Ensuring a full health follow-up with your vet

**DIET PLAYS
A KEY ROLE
IN YOUR
KITTEN'S HEALTH**

**A GROWING KITTEN
REQUIRES A SPECIFIC,
TAILORED DIET**

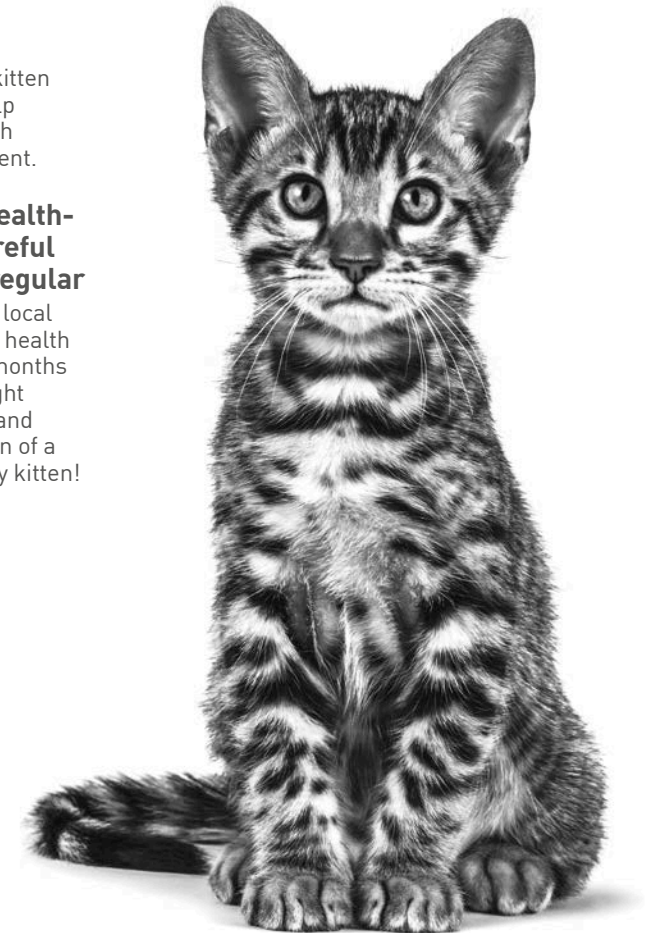
**IT IS VITAL TO SEE
THE VET REGULARLY
AFTER YOUR
KITTEN'S ARRIVAL**

The kitten-owner's main responsibility is to monitor their kitten's health, but also to continually monitor them ongoing into adulthood.

How to give them the perfect start in life?

Getting to know your kitten well is essential to help them grow and flourish in their new environment.

Ensure tailored health-nutrition, with careful observation and regular monitoring by your local vet in order to prevent health problems in the first months of your kitten's life, right through to adulthood and beyond. The foundation of a healthy cat is a healthy kitten!



CHOOSING TAILORED HEALTH-NUTRITION

The role of a kitten diet is to provide vital nutrients for healthy growth. Rigorously selected and measured, nutrients contribute to optimal digestion and health.

Why can't we feed a cat in the same way as a human?

Despite the close bond between cats and humans, cats have very different needs when it comes to nutrition.

While humans benefit from a different combination of foods at every mealtime, this frequent and continuous variation is not suited to a cat's digestion who would originally feed mainly on birds and rodents. Let's compare their digestive physiology with ours:

- > Their jaws are designed for cutting, not for chewing.
- > Their food is digested by the powerful acid in their stomachs. There is no pre-digestion by the saliva in their mouths.
- > Their digestive tract accounts for around 3% of their total bodyweight, with food taking 12-24 hours to move through the intestines. Compare this with a human, whose digestive tract represents 11% of bodyweight and has a transit time of up to 5 days, and it is easy to see why humans can more easily tolerate and digest a wide variety of different foods at the same time without risking an upset.



From a nutritional point of view:

> Cats need an important supply of protein: greater than dogs and twice that of humans.

Unlike most other mammals, cats are unable to synthesize taurine, an essential amino acid (building blocks of proteins). In case of deficiency in the diet, reproductive problems, blindness or heart disease could develop.

> Fat is an important energy source for cats.

Unlike dogs and humans, cats are unable to manufacture arachidonic acid, a fatty acid (building blocks of lipids) essential for many biological processes.

> Cats have very particular vitamin requirements.

- Unlike dogs and humans, they are unable to synthesize vitamin A.
- Unlike humans who can make Vitamin D in the skin in response to sunlight, cats can only source it from their diet.

In terms of feeding behaviour:

> As humans, we like to take meals at set times of the day, taking a long time to enjoy our food. The cat is a little bit different and, given the choice, tends to eat multiple small meals, up to 16 throughout the day.

MEAT ALONE IS NOT A BALANCED DIET. IN THE WILD, CATS EAT EVERY PART OF THEIR PREY, INCLUDING THE INTESTINES AND THEIR CONTENTS WHICH ARE OFTEN PLANTS, BUT ALSO THEIR TENDONS AND DANDER (HAIR, CLAWS)

Getting to know your cat, and respecting their real needs

1

Cats eat **multiple small meals**
(10 to 16 a day)

2

Food reaches
the stomach with
no pre-digestion

3

Digestion is fast
and non-absorbed food
is passed out in the
faeces in large amounts

Cats have **30** teeth,
all of which
are sharp.

With very few taste
buds, cats are not
specialists of taste
and **cannot taste
sweet flavours.**

No digestive enzymes
in the saliva
(no predigestion).

Cats eat **many small
meals** spread throughout
the day.

The cat's stomach
contains **six times
more hydrochloric
acid than humans.**

**The cat's small
intestine** is about
1 meter long.

Despite the
shortness of
the large intestine
(20-40 cm), **transit
is very slow**
(20 hours at least).
This is where
non-digested food
is fermented.

To eat or not to eat?

Cats are notoriously fussy eaters. It is thus essential to offer them a proper nutritional diet which is not only suited to their age and specific needs, but that is also highly palatable. Nourish their senses - enrich their health!

In the wild, cats are solitary hunters and no other cat tries the food before they do, so they have to be very careful in their food selection. Based on their past feeding experiences, each cat develops their own preferences for certain foods, while categorically refusing others. Understanding the way cats determine their preferences for food will guide you to choose the most palatable food for them. Besides that, food palatability plays a vital role in critical moments like periods of sickness.

All of the cat's senses are sought in the decision-making process:

> Hearing & Sight:

- Cats are sensitive to a range of sounds 3 times wider than that of humans, and to sounds of very low intensity.
- Broad field of vision, high retina refresh rate, 3-D vision, and night vision allow cats to clearly distinguish moving objects, by day or by night.

> A keen sense of smell:

- Smell plays a far greater role in your cat's dietary likes and dislikes than taste. If smell is attractive, they will eat.
- A change in olfactory function can cause a modification in the choice of food and the loss or decrease of the sense of smell will lead to the refusal to eat.

> Touch:

- Size and shape of the food influence the easiness of gripping and this is a key factor particularly for brachycephalic breeds (i.e. Persian).
- Certain whiskers on cats' face help them distinguish different textures.

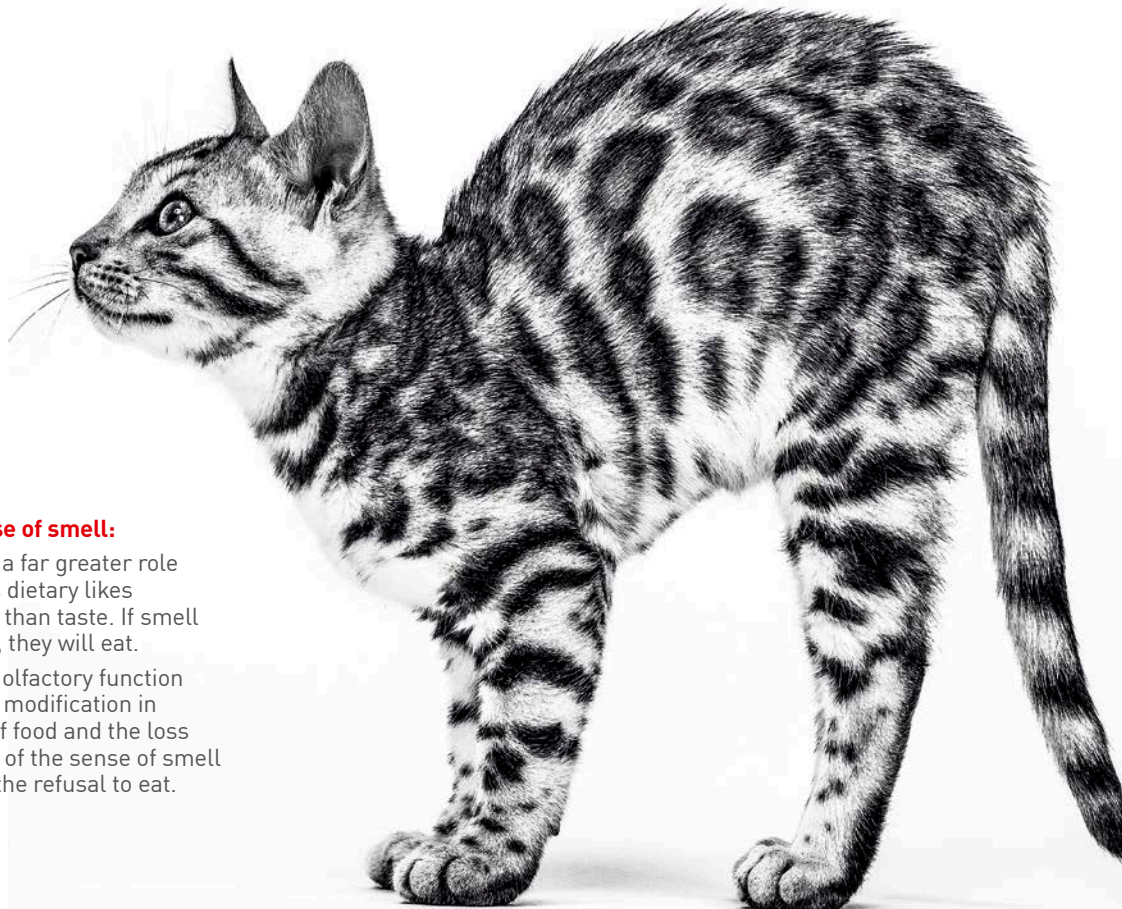
> Taste:

- Even though it is cats' least developed sense, it still plays an important role in food selection, allowing them to taste bitterness, acidity, saltiness, and umami (savouriness). The kitten is able to distinguish these basic tastes after just ten days.
- Probably due to the evolutionary development of the species, which, as carnivores, have lost the ability to perceive sweet tastes, they are not attracted by the taste of sugar: if they lick the bottom of your cereal bowl, it is because of the protein content of the milk rather than any sweetness from the cereal.
- They are very sensitive to certain bitter molecules, characteristic of most toxic substances that they need to avoid.

> Post-ingestion feeling:

Sensations that cats feel after eating will also strongly influence their preferences. The more positive that sensation, the more the cat will be attracted to the same food in the future.

WHILE THE PERCEPTION OF TASTE IS VERY STRONG IN HUMANS, THIS IS NOT THE CASE IN CATS AS THEY HAVE APPROXIMATELY 95% LESS TASTE BUDS THAN WE DO. THEY ACTUALLY DECIDE WHETHER THEY LIKE A FOOD BASED ON ITS SMELL AND TEXTURE.





FUSSY WITH WATER TOO!

Some owners never see their cat drinking so they believe that they simply don't like water. Actually, as cats have evolved from desert dwelling animals which derived most of their water from eating their prey, it is true that they do not have a strong natural urge to drink frequently. If they are not keen on the water source available they would rather give it a miss. But this does not mean that they don't enjoy drinking water. And a good water intake is essential to help support urinary tract health.



Did you know?

When different foods are available, cats are able to choose those which will allow them to reach a good nutritional balance!

Also, observation of cats has shown that there are three different modes of gripping food, mainly related to the cat's face anatomy, and therefore to the breed:

- > Labial mode (most frequent): first contact is with the lips and the picking up is done with the incisor teeth
- > Supralingual: the cat uses the upper side of their tongue as if lapping
- > Sublingual (specific to brachycephalic breeds): the cat applies the underside of their tongue to the kibble then turns it over towards the back.

Why is it wrong to feed kittens on an adult diet?

..... Is a human baby fed like an adult? Obviously not: babies have fragile digestive systems, small jaws and no teeth, and are thus unable to bite into an apple, for example. Comparing the specificities of the two species makes it easier to understand why kittens also require a different diet to adult cats.

Growth in kittens lasts for at least 12 months, depending on the breed and gender. The larger the breed, the longer it will take to reach their adult weight. Since males are usually larger than females, their growth period is several weeks longer. The growth period is the most important stage in a cat's life. Not only do they learn their future behaviours, but their body is moulded into its eventual shape and size. By the time a kitten reaches their adult weight, they will have multiplied their birth weight by 40-50 times.

During the first months of life, the impact of nutrition is crucial.

Kittens' growth is split into 2 stages and the nutritional requirements vary during the first year.

> From birth to 4 months

At this stage, kittens go through a very intense and particularly delicate period of growth during which they are prone to digestive upsets. During this critical period, the diet should not only be rich in energy to meet essential growth needs, but should also be very digestible in order to cater for the still immature digestive system of the kitten.

> From 4 months to 12 months

- The bone structure gradually becomes stronger.
- The muscle mass increases.
- The digestive and immune systems mature progressively.
- The kitten's milk teeth fall out, replaced by permanent teeth (between 4 and 7 months).
Once the adult teeth have come through, a kitten needs kibbles of sufficient size to encourage them to crunch.

Weaning is the transition from liquid (maternal milk) to solid food and naturally corresponds to the time when kittens cut their milk teeth, at 3 to 6 weeks. At this stage kittens are not yet able to crunch, so a pulpy meal (rehydrated kibbles or an adapted wet food) helps facilitate the transition between liquids and solids. While weaning is generally not complete until the age of 7 weeks, the kitten can be started on solids from around 4 to 5 weeks of age. Indeed, **from around 4 weeks old, through copying their mother, kittens gradually sample solid food.**

To make the transition easier, it is possible to rehydrate kibbles for kittens during this weaning stage, with warm water or milk-replacer to form a porridge consistency. The amount of liquid should then be gradually reduced until your kitten is able to eat dry food.



If your kitten is not fed a balanced growth diet, he or she could suffer from major nutritional deficiencies or excesses, resulting in developmental problems and potentially even long-term health issues. By feeding them properly during this time and continuing to do so throughout their adult life, you can help set them up for a long and healthy life.

A KITTEN IS A GROWING CAT: THE COMPOSITION, THE TEXTURE AND THE SIZE OF THE FOOD MUST BE ADAPTED TO THEIR AGE.

To support your kitten's digestion, growth and encourage vitality, their diet must be precisely formulated with balanced quantities of nutrients, in a food form adapted to their physiological and digestive traits.



DURING THE FIRST MONTHS OF LIFE: ENERGY... BUT NOT TOO MUCH!

Many factors influence growth and good nutrition plays a major role. Food not only supplies your kitten with energy, but the nutrients it contains are used to **build and maintain bones, muscles and organs**. A kitten grows very quickly, so they have to be served a very **high energy diet**. They continue to need high quantities of energy until around 12 weeks of age, consuming three times as much energy per kilo of body weight as an adult cat (200-250 kcal/kg).

The most intensive growth stage is between four and five months, when the kitten puts on around 100 g per week. Then the growth rate slows down but the energy needs are still considerable. Nevertheless, just increasing the portion size is not a good idea because it could result in overloading the still immature and fragile digestive system as well as promoting overweight, and overweight kittens don't grow well. Feeding your cat more than recommended could lead to obesity, which increases the risk of diabetes and other health issues. An established routine with a food suited to their nutritional needs, helps ensure a balanced diet and guards against overweight and obesity.



THE "IMMUNITY GAP" IS A VITAL PHASE AT THE START OF LIFE

Before whelping (birth), a kitten is safe and warm in their mother's womb.

At birth, the kitten's immune system is still very immature and they rely on their mother's antibodies that they receive via the **colostrum** (the first lot of maternal milk). The quantity of maternal antibodies drops during the first 12 weeks of the kitten's life.

At the same time, your kitten begins to explore and discover their living environment while progressively developing their own defence system against different 'antigens', including germs encountered, or vaccinations as examples.

The period during which maternal protection has become insufficient and the kitten's own defence mechanism is still underdeveloped, is a sensitive period for risk of infection, and is known as the "immunity gap".

During this time, specific nutrients like **antioxidants and prebiotics** in the diet, can support the development of the immune system, reinforcing your kitten's natural defences.

A powerful immune system is the foundation for a magnificent, healthy adult-to-be. Keeping the immune system in balance contributes to a range of essential health benefits - it not only increases your kitten's ability to fight infection and disease but also increases their general wellbeing.



DIGESTION: A SENSITIVE SUBJECT DURING THE FIRST MONTHS

As newborns, kittens' digestive tracts are perfectly suited to digesting milk but they will gradually lose their capacity to digest lactose as they grow. Contrary to what many people think, **cow's milk is not suitable for kittens nor adult cats**. At the time of weaning, a kitten's digestive capacity is not yet fully developed because enzymatic secretion is limited. Maturing will take place progressively during growth.

If a kitten cannot digest properly, then he or she will not benefit from dietary nutrients, and may get tired quickly and not grow normally. Quality nutrition provides selected nutrients which are both essential for harmonious growth and highly digestible, meaning that they are better absorbed by the kitten and are therefore much more efficient.

What should I feed my kitten when they first arrive home?

A sudden change in diet can cause digestive upsets, and early experience of a type of food plays a big role in the creation of later food preferences. Therefore it is extremely important not to suddenly change the food you give to your kitten, as this will not only risk digestive stress and diarrhoea, but it can also lead to a future aversion of the new food. Get information on your kitten's diet and feeding regime before their arrival (including the number of meals per day, whether they were given set amounts or were able to eat when they liked) and maintain this diet and routine while they are settling in to their new home. Your kitten will adapt to the new environment more easily if their food is familiar.

Once they have recovered from the upset of moving to their new home, you can change the diet if you wish. In order to avoid digestive stress, gradually mix the food over a week, increasing the amount of the new food added each day so that 100% of the new food will be provided by day seven.

It is important to remember that **food transitioning should be done with any and all diet changes your kitten or cat goes through at any stage in their life.**

DAY
1 & 2



● 75% of current diet
● +25% of new food

DAY
3 & 4



● 50% of current diet
● +50% of new food

DAY
5 & 6



● 25% of current diet
● +75% of new food

DAY
7 and after



● 100% of current diet

What food should I choose?

If your kitten is fed home-made meals, it is then difficult to assess whether or not they are getting all of the nutrients necessary to support their growth. **Ensure top quality food products from specialist stores or your local vet, as they are complete and ready-to-eat.** Make sure the diet is adapted to the evolution of the nutritional needs of your kitten during the 2 different stages of growth: first age from 0 to 4 months and second age from 4 months to one year. A tailored health-nutrition diet will contain a blend of antioxidants, vitamins and specific amino-acids that can promote your kitten's natural defences. It comes in different textures, wet and dry, which can both be fed daily, if they are served in separate bowls.

Remember that texture, shape of the kibbles, and how easy it is to grip will influence your kitten's preference.

We recommend during the growth phase, to offer your kitten different textures, as this helps them to accept different varieties of food during their adulthood, and also **enriches their feeding experience.** Health nutrition diets are prepared with great care, observing the same health and safety rules as imposed on human food preparation, thus meeting the highest standards of quality and food safety.



What are the visible effects of a healthy diet on a kitten?

- > Vitality
- > Healthy appetite
- > Well formed stools, no digestive disorders
- > Harmonious body development
- > Glossy coat

What are the invisible effects?

Invisible to the naked eye, the role of nutrition is essential in reinforcing the body's natural defences! Severe vitamin and trace-element deficiencies can interfere with the normal development of a kitten's protective immune response, and could cause them to become ill more frequently.

Where, when and how to feed my kitten?

Cats prefer eating in a calm place, out of sight and away from predators, and with an easy escape route. As such, choose a quiet place, away from the litter tray, and let your kitten eat in peace.

> It is essential that you feed your kitten the right kind and amount of food for their age, so make sure you are adhering to the feeding guideline quantities from the pack.

> Don't leave wet food out for more than an hour as it will dry up and become less palatable.

Cats' ancestor, *Felis sylvestris lybica*, the African wild cat, was a solitary predator who had adapted their feeding habits to the unpredictable availability of their prey and their variable nutritional value. This evolution still influences our cats' eating habits today: if the daily ration is left available to cats they will return to the bowl around 10 to 16 times throughout the day and night, eating just a small amount each time.

> If your kitten can manage to organise their food by themselves, by eating small quantities at a time, all through the day, you can give the whole daily amount in one go, and give them constant access to their bowl.

> However, if your kitten has a tendency to eat the whole lot in one go, it is better to divide the daily ration into several small amounts. To suit cats' ethological needs, a food dispensing toy can be helpful. After weaning, you may start introducing the feeding toy, which will satisfy their natural instincts and create active eating habits. Every day, show them how it works, until they are able to use it by themselves (12 days on average). This will make mealtimes fun and exciting.





How much does a kitten drink?

- ❖ Cats don't drink very much. From an evolutionary point of view, this relates back to cats' wild ancestors who lived in desert areas, and were able to concentrate their urine and avoid water loss. The type of food impacts the amount of water drunk. Kibble does not contain much water (less than 10%), whereas wet food is often enough to cover kittens' liquid needs, since some wet foods contain more than 80% of water. Whatever food you serve to your kitten, you should encourage them to drink as it is beneficial for their health.
- > Always ensure that your kitten has access to clean fresh water (but not less than 10°C), preferably placing a few bowls around the house in different locations. Cats are opportunistic drinkers and don't tend to make a special trip to find their water. With a bit of experimentation you may find that your kitten has a favourite place in the house where they like to stop for a drink.
- > Place water bowls away from feeding and toileting areas. For cats, eating and drinking are entirely separate activities. From an evolutionary perspective, this avoids the risk of drinking water contaminated by bugs from the carcasses they are feeding on.
- > Use ceramic, metal or glass water bowls. Many cats dislike the taste of water in plastic bowls. A wider, shallow bowl that is full to the brim is often preferred, allowing the cat to keep one eye on their surroundings at all times while drinking.
- > If you have more than one cat, make sure there are enough water bowls to avoid any arguments. Cats don't like queuing!
- > Change your cat's water frequently to keep it fresh. Many cats prefer moving water. This instinct helps ensure that drinking water is clean and uncontaminated. Commercial water fountains are really beneficial for these cats.

ENSURING A FULL HEALTH FOLLOW-UP WITH YOUR VET

Ongoing medical monitoring of a kitten is a combination of expert advice (the vet) with regular observation (the owner). Your vet is your kitten's pediatrician!

How to monitor growth?

To ensure that your kitten is growing well, we recommend that you weigh them regularly in order to check they have gained weight since the last time they were weighed. You can use a baby scale or a kitchen scale. Weigh your kitten at the same time of day, once a fortnight from the age of two months (once a week before two months). Your kitten should put on between 10 and 30g per day depending on the breed. If their weight stagnates or falls, it is essential that you supplement the diet with formula kitten milk or an appropriate kitten diet after weaning. Ask your local vet for advice.

How often should my kitten visit the vet?

It is crucial to schedule a first visit to the vet's shortly after bringing your kitten home. After the first visit, even if your kitten looks healthy, it will be important to consult your local vet regularly for health checks, basic care, weight monitoring, vaccination coverage and an adapted worming programme. Keep numbers for your local vet and emergency clinics on hand.

How to choose a vet?

Save time by choosing a vet before your kitten arrives at their new home. If you have not yet chosen a vet, why not ask family or friends with pets for their recommendation! The most important thing is to choose a vet with whom you and your cat can build up a long lasting relationship, enabling you to work together for your cat's benefit. Developing a trusting bond with a specialist is vital to your kitten's health monitoring.

Things which you will need to consider:

- > How close the vet clinic is to your house, and whether there is a car park if you need to drive there.
- > The facilities available at the clinic, how clean and well maintained they are, and the standard of care provided.
- > The staff at the clinic and if any of them have a special interest in cats and feline medicine.
 - > The emergency service provision they make.
 - > Whether "cat only" clinics are offered, or a separate cat waiting area; so your cat does not have to sit in a busy waiting room with lots of dog.
 - > Any extra services offered, such as nurse clinics, educational materials and grooming for example.



One very important part of caring for your cat is **preventative health care**, and this starts right from the beginning as a kitten.

IDENTIFICATION

In some countries, identification is compulsory for any kitten sold or adopted out, either by tattoo or microchip, and generally performed by the vet. Identification is essential; in cases of loss or theft, the ID number will provide owner identification and contact details.

THE VET IS THE ONLY PERSON ABLE TO HELP YOU TO CHOOSE A VACCINATION PROGRAMME ADAPTED TO YOUR KITTEN, TAKING INTO ACCOUNT ENVIRONMENTAL RISK EXPOSURE SPECIFIC TO YOUR LOCATION



VACCINATIONS

Vaccines reinforce the cat's natural defences and prevent contagious, sometimes fatal, diseases. Kittens usually begin a vaccination course at the age of eight weeks, when the kitten is no longer protected by maternal antibodies and is particularly vulnerable to disease. Your vet will carry out a complete medical examination to determine if your kitten's health status allows vaccination. The first injections will be followed by regular boosters. The immunity against different diseases lasts for different lengths of time, and so your cat will not necessarily get the same booster each year.

TREATMENT AGAINST EXTERNAL PARASITES

Your kitten is an easy target for external parasites: fleas and ticks are tiny creatures which attach to your kitten and feed on blood by biting through the skin, potentially causing serious infectious diseases; ear mites are caused by tiny mites in the ear canal which cause itchy and irritating ear discomfort; ringworm (microscopic fungus) attacks the cat's coat at its root. If you find an adult flea on your cat, you will need to treat your entire house with an appropriate, cat-friendly, anti-flea product for the house, to remove all the other flea life-stages from your home. For ticks, the best thing to do is regularly check your kitten (particularly if they are long-haired!) and remove any that you find. Ticks can be extracted with special pincers, but be sure to ask your vet for further advice here.

EVEN INDOOR CATS REQUIRE PARASITES PREVENTION, SINCE THERE ARE MULTIPLE WAYS THAT PARASITES CAN ENTER YOUR HOME

WORMING AGAINST INTERNAL PARASITES

Internal parasites are worms and protozoa (microscopic unicellular parasites) which live inside the body. They can cause bloating, digestive problems, or a dull coat. Some parasites can be transmitted to humans, especially to children, where they can cause problems, and so it is vital to have a strict worming protocol in place. The treatment must be carried out regularly from 2 to 6-8 months, then once a year. Kittens are more susceptible to parasites than adult cats because their immune systems are not yet fully developed, therefore all kittens are assumed to carry them. Your vet will recommend a regular worming programme from your very first appointment.

PREPARING

FOR YOUR KITTEN'S FIRST VISIT
TO THE VET

**Vets do not rely solely
on clinical examination.
The success of your kitten's
health care will also depend
on information provided
on their diet and lifestyle.**

1

IF YOUR BREEDER OR RESCUE CENTRE GAVE YOU A HEALTH RECORD FOR YOUR KITTEN, BE SURE TO TAKE THIS WITH YOU TO SHOW IT TO YOUR VET.

2

BEFORE THE APPOINTMENT, REMEMBER TO TAKE NOTES ON YOUR KITTEN'S DIET (BRANDS, QUANTITIES, ETC.). ALSO, KEEP TRACK OF ANY CHANGES YOU MAY HAVE NOTICED LATELY (APPETITE, TRANSIT, BEHAVIOUR, ETC.).

3

IF YOUR CAT IS NOT USED TO TRAVELLING YOU CAN HELP LIMIT STRESS ON THE DAY BY LEAVING THEIR CAT CARRIER OPEN IN THE HOUSE SO THEY CAN SLEEP AND PLAY IN IT. THEY WILL LEAVE THEIR SCENT THERE AND IT WILL BE EASIER TO ENCOURAGE THEM INTO IT WHEN YOU NEED TO.

4

IN THE RECEPTION AREA AND THE WAITING ROOM OF THE CLINIC, HAVE THE FRONT END OF THE CARRIER TOWARDS YOU (RATHER THAN TOWARDS OTHER CATS AND DOGS!) AND KEEP THE CARRIER COVERED WITH A TOWEL .

How can I prevent my kitten from getting fat?

The lack of physical activity linked to an indoor lifestyle, together with excessive food consumption, leads to overweight or obesity for an increasing number of cats. To help maintain your kitten's ideal weight, review the feeding guidelines recommended on your kitten's food packaging and carefully measure these servings accordingly. Don't give in to the temptation to give your kitten more than suggested on the pack, limit treats and don't give them table leftovers. Also, do not just give a smaller amount of growth food to prevent weight gain, as limiting the quantity may result in a nutritional imbalance of nutrients. Consider using feeding puzzles to entice your kitten to work for food. Provide plenty of opportunities for them to climb in the house and don't forget to regularly play with them. Monitoring food intake and weight gain is very important and feeding them a diet based on ideal energy levels and rations, while also carefully following the vet's recommendations, will help to reduce the risk of your kitten becoming overweight or obese.

Did you know?

Feeding trials carried out with 32 adult cats showed that the size of the food bowl has an influence on food intake. Cats who are fed in a bowl twice as big will eat a significant amount more than cats who are fed the same quantity in a small bowl. So, a smaller bowl will help to limit excessive weight gain.



Neutering is one of the most responsible decisions any pet owner can make. Not only does it limit the increasing number of stray cats (one of the reasons many cat shelters are so full nowadays), but it also has lifelong health and behavioural benefits for your cat.

> The surgical neutering operation is carried out under a general anaesthetic, and can reduce the risk of certain types of cancers as well as reducing the risk of specific, often life-threatening infections of the uterus in female cats. It reduces marking in males, suppresses heat in females, and if your cat ventures outside, neutering increases life expectancy by decreasing fighting and the transmission of infectious diseases, as well as limiting risks when they look for a mate (car accidents, poisoning, etc.).

> Kittens grow quickly and the average age of neutering coincides with the onset of sexual maturity, which is around 6/7 months for the female and between 6 to 12 months for the male. This can differ according to the breed and to the season when your kitten was born. Speak with your veterinarian about the optimal time to have your kitten neutered.

> Neutering causes changes in hormone secretions. As early as 48 hours after neutering, cats increase their daily food intake (+26% in the male, +18% in the female). At the same time, energy expenditure reduces by around 30%. If the diet is not strictly controlled and adapted after the operation, weight gain may rapidly follow. This risk is increased further still, if the kitten lives in a small space, without physical activity.

This presents a double nutritional challenge: nutrition should be adapted to provide essential nutrients, while also assisting to avoid weight issues. The new adapted food can be introduced before the operation, so that the cat does not have to experience the double stress of going to vet, as well as having a change to their diet.

Just follow your vet's advice and make sure your kitten stays active while you watch their diet.



WELLBEING

- — Knowing and understanding your kitten
- — Enriching your kitten's life to enhance their wellbeing
- — Maintaining your kitten's hygiene

**KITTENS
ARE CURIOUS
AND LOVE
TO PLAY**

**EARLY SOCIALISATION
INFLUENCES
ADULT BEHAVIOUR**

**AN ENRICHED
ENVIRONMENT
ENHANCES YOUR
KITTEN'S WELLBEING**

Understanding feline communication and the social behaviour that drives it, will offer you a good foundation for a fulfilling relationship with your kitten.

Although cats are independent, they still need a lot of attention and affection, and should not be left alone for long periods of time as this deprives them of the attention and stimulation that they need. You must set aside time to spend with your kitten every day, including at weekends.



KNOWING AND UNDERSTANDING YOUR KITTEN

Exposing your kitten to different external stimuli will encourage them to be more curious and open to life. The first 14 weeks of life are particularly important for socialisation. This is an age range where certain events are likely to have long term effects on adult behaviour and influence subsequent friendliness.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

A favourable environment includes surroundings where kittens socialise easily and familiarise themselves with various people and objects. They should be handled by different people of different ages, introduced to other animals and experience noises of different intensities. The more stimulating the environment is, the more well-balanced your kitten will be.



EARLY SOCIALIZATION WITH THE MOTHER AND SIBLINGS

The first four weeks of life for your kitten are spent in social contact with the queen (their mother) and littermates. Mother cats play a vital role in their kittens' upbringing, teaching them hygiene and social habits by example and through play, as well as feeding them, keeping them in check, comforting and protecting them. Positive social interactions in these first few weeks of life, have been shown to affect how sociable the kitten is when they get older. Kittens need to understand what is permissible, and what is not, at the earliest opportunity, before their weapons (teeth and claws) are fully developed. During mock fights with their siblings, the bites and scratches they receive help them determine how aggressive they can be when using their teeth and claws.

For kittens who have been raised by their mother, it is highly recommended to wait until they are at least 2 months old before separating them to avoid the stress of early weaning, and to allow them time to gain appropriate social experience with their mother and siblings.

TAKING OVER AS YOUR KITTEN'S NEW MOTHER

Your role is vital in completing your kitten's education in the context of their new environment, getting them to adopt the right behaviour so that you can all live together harmoniously. When your new kitten arrives home, it is important to set them up for success by preventing access to areas where they can cause trouble and ensure all interactions at home with people, other animals and inanimate objects are supervised, positive and stress free. Taking over as their new mother, it is now up to you to make sure that your kitten understands that scratching and biting are prohibited during play sessions. By providing them with plenty of physical contact (such as grooming and stroking) from their new family and others, you will help ensure that your kitten grows into a friendly adult cat. They will be more relaxed and comfortable with being touched all over, including having their ears, mouth and feet examined. This will make visits to the veterinarian far more pleasant for them and for you. Also, it will help ensure those interacting with them are kept safe, especially children.

Can I train my kitten?

Although cats are usually considered as “untrainable” animals, they are, in fact, perfectly capable of learning particular behaviours. All it takes is patience and positive reinforcement methods. Effective training can help to avoid hygiene issues as well as tension between owner and pet. It is also a great way to provide your kitten with the mental stimulation they need.

Kittens learn in two different ways: by imitating their mother’s actions and by experimenting by themselves. In this latter case, they have to accept the consequences of their actions. If they like these consequences they will tend to repeat those actions. If you decide to use cat treats during training, just make sure that these treats do not constitute more than 10% of the total daily calorie intake in order to avoid excessive weight gain, or upset the unique nutritional balance of your cat’s diet.

As they are very sensitive to visual cues (body language, postures) rather than verbal cues, they can understand what you are feeling by observing your attitude and gestures and even anticipate what you are going to do. While training your kitten, use clear and consistent signals when communicating, in order to promote good understanding.

TOILET TRAINING

Many kittens learn how to use the litter tray by watching their mother. To maximize the success of litter training, try to find which litter your kitten has previously used and if you want to change the litter type, do it gradually. Ensure the litter tray is placed in an easily accessible spot, in a quiet area of the home away from the bedrooms and from their food and water dishes. If your kitten is not litter trained when they come home, stand them in the litter tray and use one of their forepaws to scratch at the litter - the best time to do this is immediately after eating or sleeping. If you don’t have success and your kitten doesn’t use the tray, try a different litter or litter tray (e.g. covered litter tray or one with lower sides). A relaxed body language during toileting, like tail held loosely, ears forward and slightly to the side, is a good indicator of the preference. Litter trays require frequent and regular cleaning, once a day for waste disposal, and once a week for washing the litter tray and replacement of the litter.

SCRATCHING AVOIDANCE

Clawing on household objects is a normal behaviour in kittens, but is never (if ever!) appreciated by their owners. Education should start from an early age. A simple “no” accompanied by a snap of the fingers or hands is often enough to correct it. For indoor kittens, providing several opportunities to use scratching posts around the home can help prevent damage to furniture or curtains.



What is your kitten's character?

.....! Each kitten is unique. Understanding your kitten's character, including their likes and dislikes, will foster a mutually rewarding relationship.

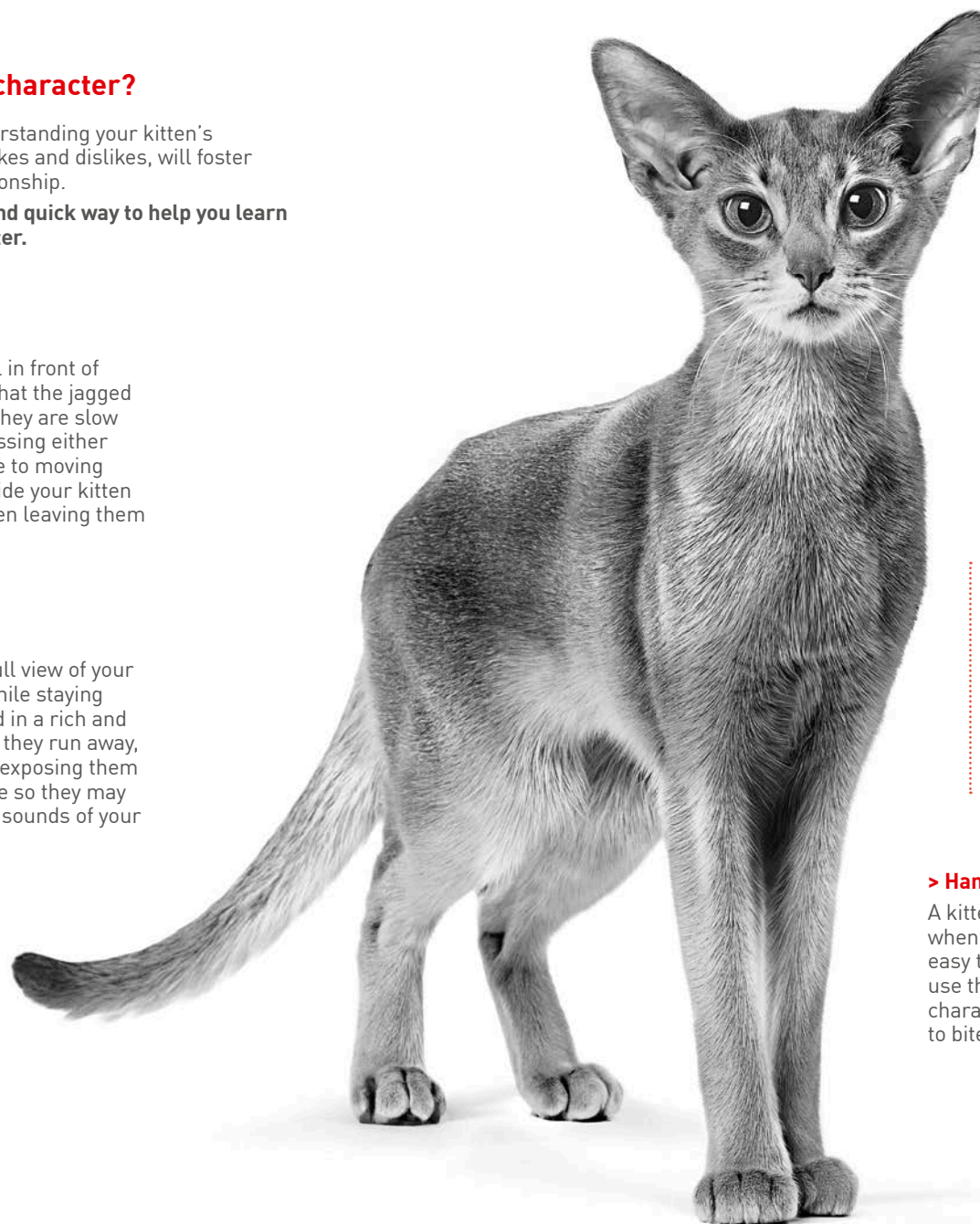
These tests are a simple and quick way to help you learn about your kitten's character.

> Aluminium foil ball test

Roll a ball of aluminium foil in front of your kitten, but be careful that the jagged edges don't harm them! If they are slow to react, they may be expressing either nervousness or indifference to moving objects. Remember to provide your kitten with more suitable toys when leaving them unattended.

> Noise test

Clap your hands loudly in full view of your kitten. If they act curious while staying calm, they have been raised in a rich and stimulating environment. If they run away, you should make a point of exposing them to the noises of everyday life so they may become accustomed to the sounds of your household.



> Socialisation test

Observe your kitten from a distance: if they run up to play with your laces or rub up against you they have been properly socialised. If they are timid and look to get away when you move towards them, they may not have been properly socialised, or have a naturally timid personality. It's vital for them to go through the socialisation phase again. Besides providing them toys and taking more time out to play with them, it is important to ensure all interactions at home with people, other animals and inanimate objects are positive and stress free.

GET TO KNOW YOUR KITTEN BETTER BY PLAYING WITH THEM.

YOUR KITTEN IS HIGHLY SENSITIVE TO YOUR BODY LANGUAGE AND BEHAVIOUR.

IF YOUR KITTEN SCRATCHES OR BITES, SCOLD THEM FIRMLY BUT GENTLY.

> Handling test

A kitten that is happy for you to stroke their belly when they're lying on their back will be docile and easy to get along with. But if they struggle or try to use their claws, that's a sign that, because of their character, they may act unpredictably, such as trying to bite in response to being stroked.

How does your kitten communicate?

.....
..... Your kitten is continuously communicating with you through four types of communication: Tactile, Olfactory, Visual (body and face) and Vocal.



TACTILE COMMUNICATION

Choosing to be in close proximity with other pets and humans is a feline sign of mutual affection. Allorubbing is when two cats rub against each other. Allogrooming or mutual grooming is a reciprocal behaviour and is often seen in post conflict situations as a reconciling behaviour. It is also sometimes seen as a precursor to play. Kneading is when your kitten kneads your knees and lap for long periods. They are expressing intense pleasure and reliving some of the enjoyment they felt when feeding from their mother.



OLFACTORY MARKINGS

Scent-marking is natural behaviour and a means of communication. It may be a warning to other animals not to encroach, a sign of anxiety or, on the contrary, a sign of acceptance of their bounds. Kittens deposit scents through rubbing, scratching and spraying.

> Rubbing

Scent glands are located on the face, the tail and the paw pads of the kitten. These glands secrete pheromones which are chemicals participating in a permanent familiarisation of the environment in which the kitten evolves.

Laying down scent marks by rubbing their face and body against objects, people and other animals is a comforting behaviour which reflects your kitten's sense of security. In this way, light touching and brushing around you shows that they are including you in their home range. But be careful not to misinterpret this behaviour as a call to be fed: such misinterpretation is considered to be an important factor in the causes of feline obesity.

> Scratching

When your kitten scratches on objects, not only do they keep their claws in good condition by removing the blunted outer claw sheaths, but they leave an olfactory mark through the scent glands in their paw pads, in addition to leaving a visual mark. When it occurs at points of entry or exit, this can indicate feelings of insecurity and adequate changes in the kitten environment are required in order to help them rebuild a stronger sense of security.

> Urine spraying

Urine spraying against vertical surfaces usually starts at 6 months of age when kittens become sexually mature. This behaviour may result from stress or a change of habit and is intended to inspire fear and to drive away any intruder; it usually stops after the neutering operation. Faecal deposition (or middening) can also be used as an olfactory marker and is often found left in strategic locations.



VISUAL COMMUNICATION

This form of communication is primarily geared towards increasing distance between individuals and involves a combination of postural and facial signals. Body posture gives a first impression of the cat's emotional state and demonstrates levels of fear and aggression, but it is the facial expression which allows for fine tuning and gives the first information about a change in the cat's emotional state.

> Body posture

Arched back

This is one of the most recognised bluffing postures of the cat and is used to give an impression of increased stature and confidence in a potentially hostile encounter.

It is a defensive body posture which indicates an anticipation of confrontation. It is often associated with a raised and fluffed up tail, which adds to the overall impression of body size.

Crouched body posture

As a threat gets closer and the option to bluff diminishes, a defensive feline will adopt a crouched body posture. This posture is associated with bodyweight being shifted onto the paws, ready for a quick retreat.

Social roll

When kittens are totally relaxed they will invite social contact from other felines and humans through the use of a lateral roll. This is distinct from a defensive roll when the cat rolls completely onto their back to enable them to use all four legs in defence.

Tail waving

When kittens move their tail, they are expressing irritation. If you are stroking your kitten and they start to wave their tail, stop immediately as it means that they are not enjoying what you're doing.

> Facial expressions

The shape of the eyes and the position of the ears are accurate indicators of what they want to express.

- Neutral cat: ears upright and open, eyes round.
- Angry cat: ears straight twisted to the sides, eyes puckered.
- Aggressive cat: ears down, pupils round and dilated.
- Happy cat: ears open and forward upright, eyes half closed, pupils in slits.



Importance of whiskers

Never cut your kitten's whiskers. They use them for the tactile exploration of their surroundings, for instance to assess the width of a path, but also to communicate with other animals.



VOCAL SIGNALLING

Vocal sounds are the manifestation of emotional states.

Purring

When your kitten purrs, they are generally showing contentment. However, they may also purr when they are anxious or uncomfortable, including when they are sick, as purring has a calming effect when they are stressed.

Growling and hissing

This is an intimidation tactic and can be used in an attack.

Meowing

There is a huge variety of meows, each with their own meaning. You will learn to recognise them by observing your kitten. Meowing shouldn't always be equated with hunger. It might also mean that your kitten wants your attention or is feeling playful.

How to assess the wellbeing of my kitten?

- Behavioural signs that indicate whether a cat is relaxed and willing to interact include slow blinking, purring, facial rubbing, approaching and staying in close proximity, and a relaxed roll onto their side.
- Negative indicators of wellbeing in cats include the expression of anxiety and fear, and stress related changes in behaviour: aggressiveness, destructive behaviour, excessive grooming and vocalisation, self-mutilation, loss of appetite, reduced grooming, exploration and play, hiding or reduced social interaction. In this case, do not hesitate to seek advice from your local vet or from a pet behaviourist.

ENRICHING

YOUR KITTEN'S LIFE TO ENHANCE THEIR WELLBEING

Even though your kitten will switch between active and rest phases quickly, they will spend most of their time sleeping: on average 13 to 16 hours a day. Peak activity periods occur at dawn and dusk, where their main concerns will be playing, grooming, eating and receiving attention.



SLEEPING & RESTING

It is while sleeping that essential hormones for your kitten's growth are secreted therefore you should never disturb them while asleep. In addition, respecting their sleeping periods will strengthen their immune system.

Around your house, ensure your new kitten has plenty of comfortable bedding to sleep in, in quiet, warm, dry and draught free places, not too far away from the centre of family life, but also out of the way of the high traffic areas of your home.

Do not hesitate to offer an open cat carrier for your kitten to rest: familiarisation with it as part of their normal furniture may help make trips to the veterinarian less stressful.



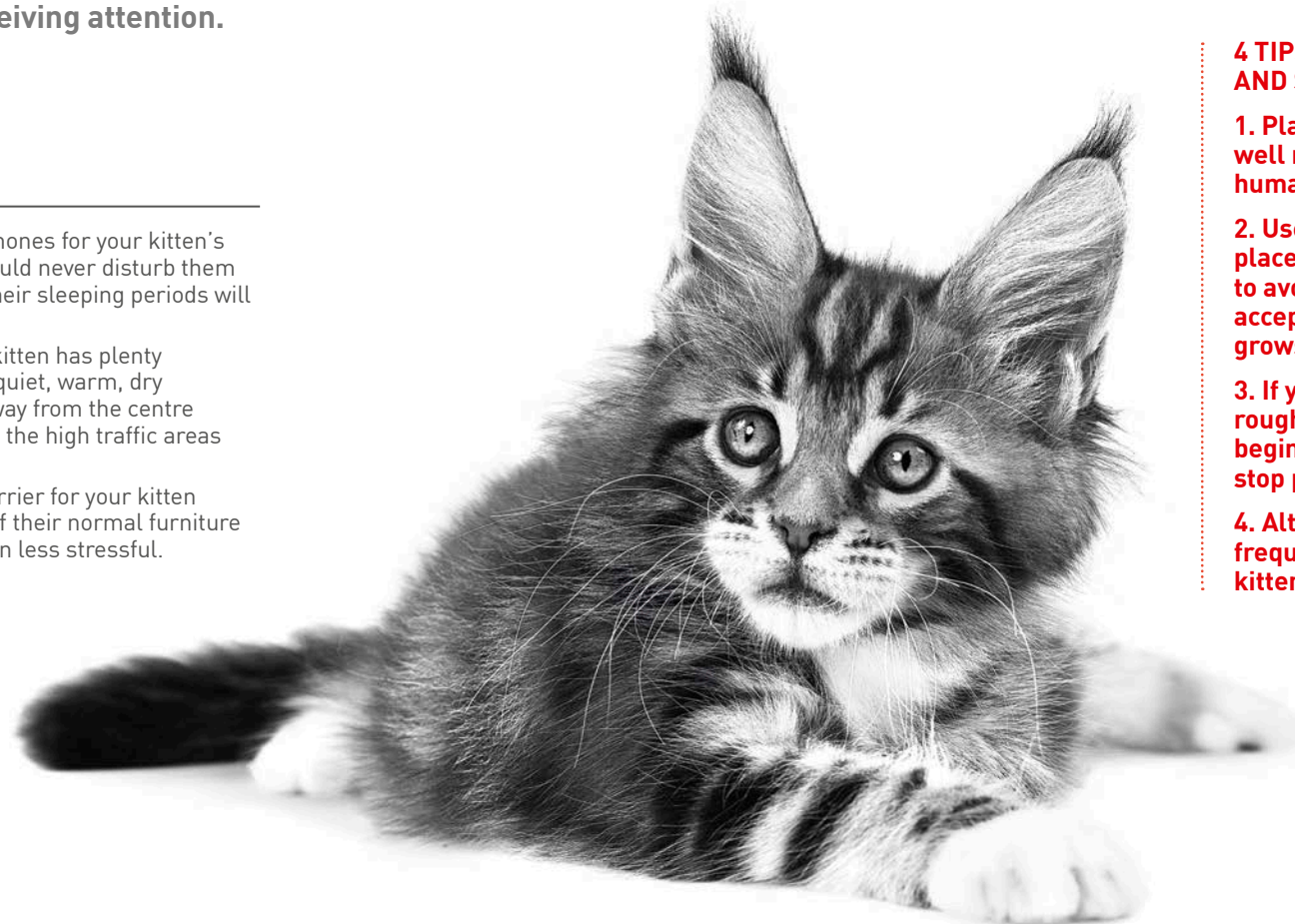
PLAYING

Relationships are built on spending time together and sharing experiences, so setting aside time to play with your kitten will strengthen your mutual bond. Providing opportunities for play is an enjoyable way to promote optimal well-being and to reinforce positive behaviour. Playing develops both physical and cognitive capacities of your kitten. It allows them to channel their energy and is a good antidote to loneliness.

In cats, play closely resembles predatory behaviour and is stimulated by prey characteristics, such as small size, quick movement, and complex surface texture. The best toys are the ones that will get your kitten to mimic the different stages of predatory behaviour (stalk, rear, wrestle, neck flex and arch, and pounce), which is particularly engaging for them.

4 TIPS FOR FUN AND SAFE PLAY:

- 1. Play when your kitten is well rested and is seeking human interaction.**
- 2. Use dedicated toys in place of hands and feet to avoid this becoming acceptable as your kitten grows older.**
- 3. If your kitten becomes rough during play and begins to bite or scratch, stop play immediately.**
- 4. Alternate between toys frequently to keep your kitten stimulated.**



EXERCISING

Physical activity is fundamental to toning your kitten's muscles, maintaining strong bones and a healthy body weight, and is also a good way of achieving the mental stimulation that your kitten requires for good health and wellbeing. Favourite exercises are those which allow them to run, climb, perch, jump, pounce, sharpen claws and play with mobile objects hanging or rolling (ball of paper, toys, hard ball with bell, etc.). Make sure your kitten has a suitable place to run around in. Any object higher than one meter, offers great potential as part of your kitten's playground: cat trees, cupboards, shelves, tables and sofa backs that they can jump up on. For indoor kittens, exercise can be encouraged through play, either with their owner or independently through toys. Cat toys and activity posts are great ways to help entertain and exercise an indoor kitten and this will also help prevent boredom.

Note that indoor kittens tend to be more sedentary, therefore they need a diet which reflects their lower activity levels.

PERCHED CAT, HAPPY CAT!

Kittens enjoy being above ground level where they feel safer and can more easily observe their environment. Also, being at the same height as your face allows them to rub against you, as with an equal. Ideally each room should have some sort of elevated platform for sitting and observing each area, as well as for sleeping and resting.



GROOMING

Along with sleeping, grooming is one of the biggest activities of your kitten: they can spend up to 30% of their waking time grooming. Kittens usually start grooming themselves at around 15 days of age. They use their rough tongue to clean themselves, but they also use their front and rear paws. The front paws are moistened with the tongue and serve as a washcloth going as far as the ears. The rear paws are very flexible, allowing them to groom all of their back and the ears. This behaviour triggers the production of endorphins, which create positive feelings in the body such as appeasement. If your kitten grooms excessively, it may be a sign of anxiety or a skin issue, which must be monitored closely by your local vet.

FEEDING

Cats are predators so their natural instinct is to hunt for food. Stimulating feeding methods and meal variability are ways to enrich your kitten's feeding experiences. Firstly, hiding food in multiple locations and feeding puzzles are practical ways of encouraging your kitten to explore their environment and work for their meal. Secondly, food variety meets their natural instinctive behaviour, since their wild ancestors evolved to enjoy food sources with different textures, aromas and tastes. As such, your kitten will appreciate much more than just the "flavour" of their diet, but even more so, the aroma and texture variations. Mixing wet (soft textures with intense aroma) with dry food (crunchy kibbles), in compliance with the feeding guidelines, allows your kitten to source all the nutrients they need while enjoying diverse food experiences which can improve their sense of wellbeing. It also combines the health benefits of dry kibbles of which texture can help reduce dental plaque, and of wet food which naturally increases their daily intake of water, helping dilute their urine, and producing a greater feeling of fullness, thus promoting a healthy urinary tract and assisting in maintaining an ideal weight.



MULTI-CAT HOUSEHOLD

So long as their environmental needs are met, most cats can live happily together in the same household. Behavioural problems can occur when one cat's home range prevents the other cat from performing a normal activity. For example, the kitchen might be part of one cat's home range but also the only route to the outdoors. So, when the second cat wants to go outdoors, they might be prevented if the first cat is protecting their home range. To prevent stress, make sure that each cat has the ability to perform all their normal activities (eating, drinking, using the litter tray and sleeping) without confrontation, by providing a variety of locations for individual resources (feeding and drinking bowls, litter trays and resting areas). This will increase the animal's ability to access and reduce potential conflict resulting from competition.

AN ENRICHED ENVIRONMENT IS KEY TO MAINTAINING YOUR KITTEN'S BALANCE AS IT OFFERS PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR PHYSICAL ACTIVITY, MENTAL STIMULATION AND THE EXPRESSION OF NATURAL BEHAVIOURS (EXPLORATION AND PLAY). VETERINARIANS CAN ADVISE ON APPROPRIATE FORMS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ENRICHMENT: VERTICAL SURFACES FOR CLIMBING (CAT TREES AND CLIMBING POLES), PLACES TO HIDE, SCRATCHING SURFACES, ETC.

MAINTAINING YOUR KITTEN'S HYGIENE

How to care for my kitten's oral health?

When your kitten comes home, they still have their milk teeth which are quite fragile, so the texture of the food should be adapted, for instance rehydratable kibbles. Proactive oral care should start off when your kitten is young. It can help prevent periodontal diseases resulting from dental plaque. This bacterial film can develop on the adult teeth causing bad breath and leading to tartar formation. With time, tartar can cause inflammation of the gums and eventually tooth loosening. Once there is tartar the only solution is to take your cat to the vet for dental scaling. So getting your kitten used to tooth-brushing from a very early age, using a special cat toothbrush and specially formulated toothpaste, will contribute to good oral health in the future.

Because cats may not show obvious signs of pain and discomfort associated with oral disease, your awareness and veterinary check-ups (every 6 months starting at one year) are key to management.

How to clean my kitten's eyes, ears and nose?

Eyes

Clean your kitten's eyes with a little piece of gauze and a specially formulated cleanser, which you can buy at your local vet clinic.

Ears

Rule no.1 is to touch the ears as little as possible. If they are dirty, apply a small amount of specially formulated lotion and gently massage the outside of the ear. Never use a cotton bud or a water- or alcohol-based solution. If there is an obvious and unpleasant looking discharge, consult your veterinarian for a precise diagnosis.

Nose

Some cats may have dried nasal secretions in the corners of the nostrils. You can easily remove these with a warm cotton ball or tissue dipped in eye lotion or a sterile saline solution.

At 2 months of age, kittens typically have 26 milk (baby) teeth. When the permanent teeth start coming through, from 4 months, you might find the odd milk teeth lying around, but most of the time kittens swallow them, which is completely normal! At around 6 months, kittens will have a full set of adult teeth, 30 in all.



How to care for my kitten's coat?

You can keep your kitten's coat shiny and healthy with regular brushing, which also helps to detect the presence of external parasites like fleas and ticks. In addition to fur maintenance, brushing allows the removal of dead hair, thus minimising the amount of hair swallowed while grooming. The longer the coat is, the more likely your kitten is to swallow hair that may cause hairballs to form in their stomach.

This hair is normally eliminated from the body in the stools, however sometimes this fur builds up in the stomach, and is vomited up as a hairball. Short-haired kittens usually only need a groom once a week, whereas medium to long-haired kittens will benefit from a daily brush. Indoor kittens will groom more than kittens with access to outdoors and because the constant temperatures indoors mean moulting is a year-round event, regular brushing is particularly essential for them.

Before you brush, you can massage against the hair direction to remove dead hair and stimulate the skin. The types of brush and comb to use will depend on the coat - your veterinarian or pet groomer will be able to advise on the best brush for your kitten.

Don't forget to groom behind their ears and the back of their neck, and finish up the brushing session with a cuddle or a game!

Starting at their youngest age, they will get used to being handled and grooming will quickly become an opportunity to enjoy each other's company and strengthen the bond between you.

Should I bathe my kitten?

Very few cats are keen on water, but for those with long and medium length coats, bathing is a must, so it is best to get your kitten accustomed to water from a very early age. Start by dampening them very gently with a washcloth or a sponge. If they react aggressively, don't insist. Just keep trying again over the next few days, until they get used to it. Once they have become accustomed to water, you can use a bowl of lukewarm water (36-37°C) to wet their back but be careful not to pour water over their head or get it into their eyes and ears. Only use specially formulated cat shampoos, available from your veterinarian or in pet shops, which have the right level of acidity for your kitten's skin and coat. After cleaning the dirty parts, rinse them off well with a bowl of water or under the shower. To dry their fur, wrap them up in a warm, dry towel.

How to clip my kitten's nails safely?

It is important to get your kitten used to having their nails clipped at a young age. If claws get too long they can get stuck, snagged or even pulled out, which could result in an injury. Clipping doesn't hurt if it is done properly and can be done at home, at your local vet clinic or through a professional grooming service. Be sure if you plan to cut your cat's nails that you do one claw at a time and use a dedicated nail clipper. Start by choosing a comfortable spot, and place the kitten on your knees. Press lightly on the footpad to extend the claw. Clip the white tip of the claw without going close to the edge of the pink triangle.

If you're unsure or uncomfortable, do not hesitate to ask your local vet for a demo.



WHEN A KITTEN BECOMES A CAT

1ST GROWTH STAGE CONSTRUCTION

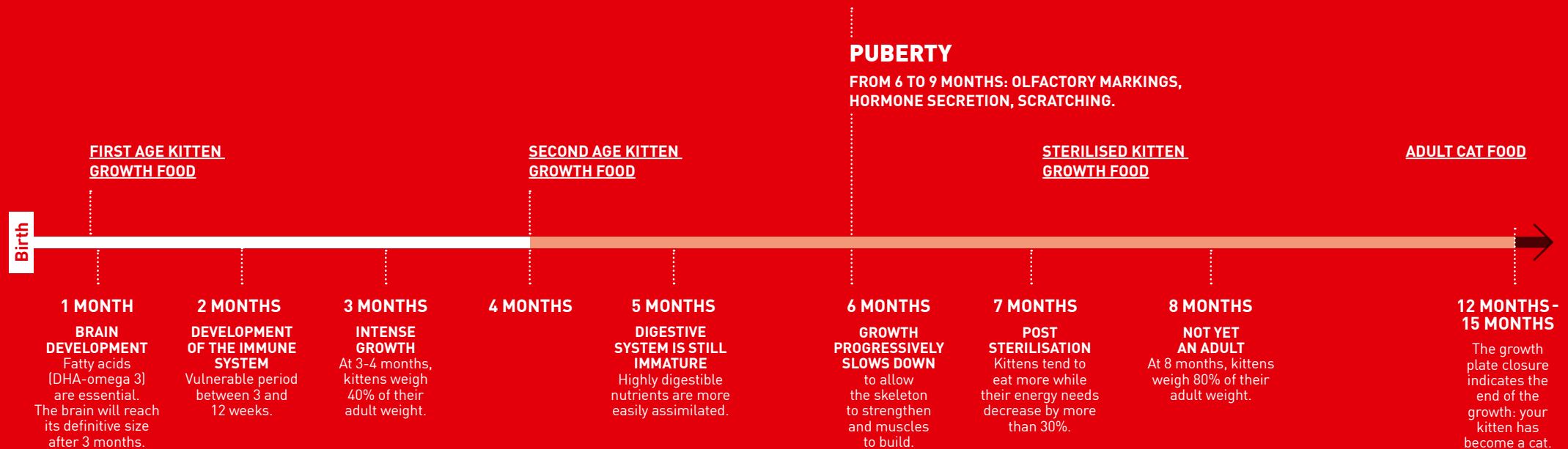
2ND GROWTH STAGE CONSOLIDATION & HARMONISATION

STERILISATION

Sterilisation is a benign procedure intended to prevent reproduction but also to extend your cat's life expectancy.

Carried out at around 6 months, it limits uterine infections, mammary tumours and running away.

ADULT AGE



FIND OUT MORE ABOUT YOUR KITTEN

[royalcanin.com](https://www.royalcanin.com)

Our website is packed with advice and tips for optimal feeding of your feline companion throughout their life.




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Every day, our pets enhance our lives. This is why we are committed to giving them the very best in every area, by going well beyond the quality of our nutritional solutions and services. A better world means a healthy planet, where the living conditions of both pets and owners are respected. In this way, we support breeders who commit to select and reproduce animals in a sustainable way, while providing for their health and wellbeing.



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