

Expert Pet Nutrition™

ADVANCE

A guide to ensuring your kitten
gets off to the right start

NAME:

PET'S NAME:



Congratulations on your new furry family member!

Pets make the world a better place

The ADVANCE™ team wants to make the world a better place for pets, which is why we've put together the ADVANCE™ Your Healthy Kitten Guide.

The ADVANCE™ team understands that becoming a pet parent is a big responsibility. This guide has been developed in Australia by experts from a range of fields – including Veterinary, Breeder, Pet Nutrition and Pet Behaviour.

Many kittens find their move to a new home somewhat scary and overwhelming. However, there's lots that you can do to help them feel at home and enable a smooth transition into life with your family.

Getting your new kitten off to the right start will set the foundation for a long and happy life together.

In this guide, you'll find information on preparing for your new kitten and welcoming them home, through to introducing them to other pets and people. We've included nutrition, training and grooming tips as well as a health record to help you keep track of vaccinations and treatments.



Pets improve lives

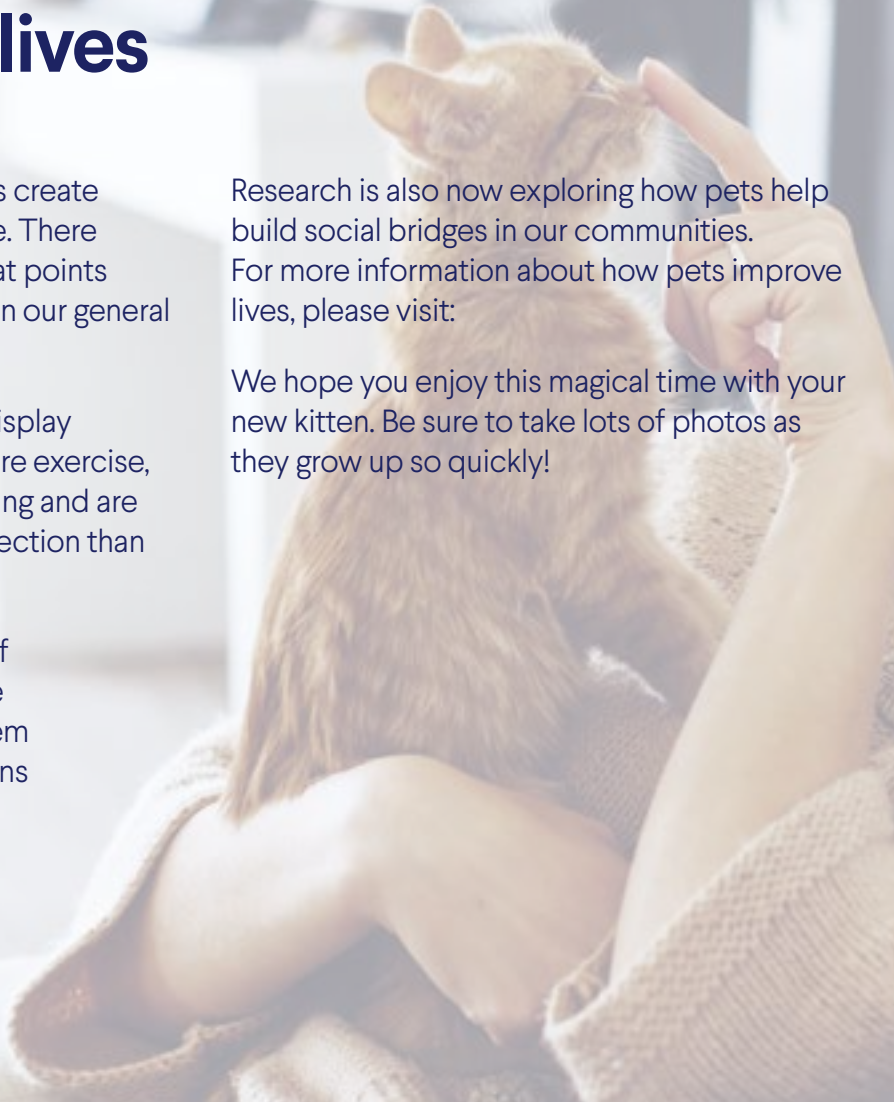
Research has established that pets create a valuable connection with people. There is also a wide range of research that points to the positive impact pets have on our general health.

Pet owners have been shown to display greater self esteem, undertake more exercise, fare better on measures of wellbeing and are better able to cope with social rejection than non-pet owners.

Research suggests the presence of pets in the home from an early age may acclimatise the immune system so that it is less sensitive to allergens in later life.

Research is also now exploring how pets help build social bridges in our communities. For more information about how pets improve lives, please visit:

We hope you enjoy this magical time with your new kitten. Be sure to take lots of photos as they grow up so quickly!



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PREPARING



Preparing to welcome your new kitten

Bringing your new kitten home is an exciting time for the entire family. However, it can also be an overwhelming time for the kitten who is about to leave a familiar environment, their mother and littermates. With some planning, you can help make their transition as smooth and less stressful as possible.

Watch this video for more great tips on keeping your kitten safe at home





Making your home safe

Now is the time to take a look at your home from a different perspective – that of your kitten's!

Although tiny, kittens are superb athletes with an incredible ability to leap, crawl and use their claws. Consider it a kitten's full time job to get up to mischief! This means you'll need to prepare your home so that your kitten is kept safe.

Initially, it is best to limit your kitten to one room or space. Choose where this will be and then set about making sure it is a safe and secure area. You can then start to prepare the rest of your home.





Inside the home

Kittens are by nature highly curious, so make your way around your house in a systematic way – moving room by room, looking for potential hazards.

- Carefully check if there is there anywhere a kitten could get stuck, trapped or fall from.
- Assess cupboards and shelves for safety – use draw closures, especially in rooms such as the bathroom, kitchen and laundry.
- Store household chemicals and poisons in a locked cabinet so they are not accessible to a kitten.
- Small items such as sewing supplies and dental floss can be swallowed, so secure them out of a kitten's reach.
- Some houseplants are toxic to cats such as philodendron, mistletoe and poinsettia.
- Keep kitchen countertops clean and free from food items to reduce temptation.
- Toilet lids should be kept down so your kitten can't fall in or drink from the bowl.





Outside the home

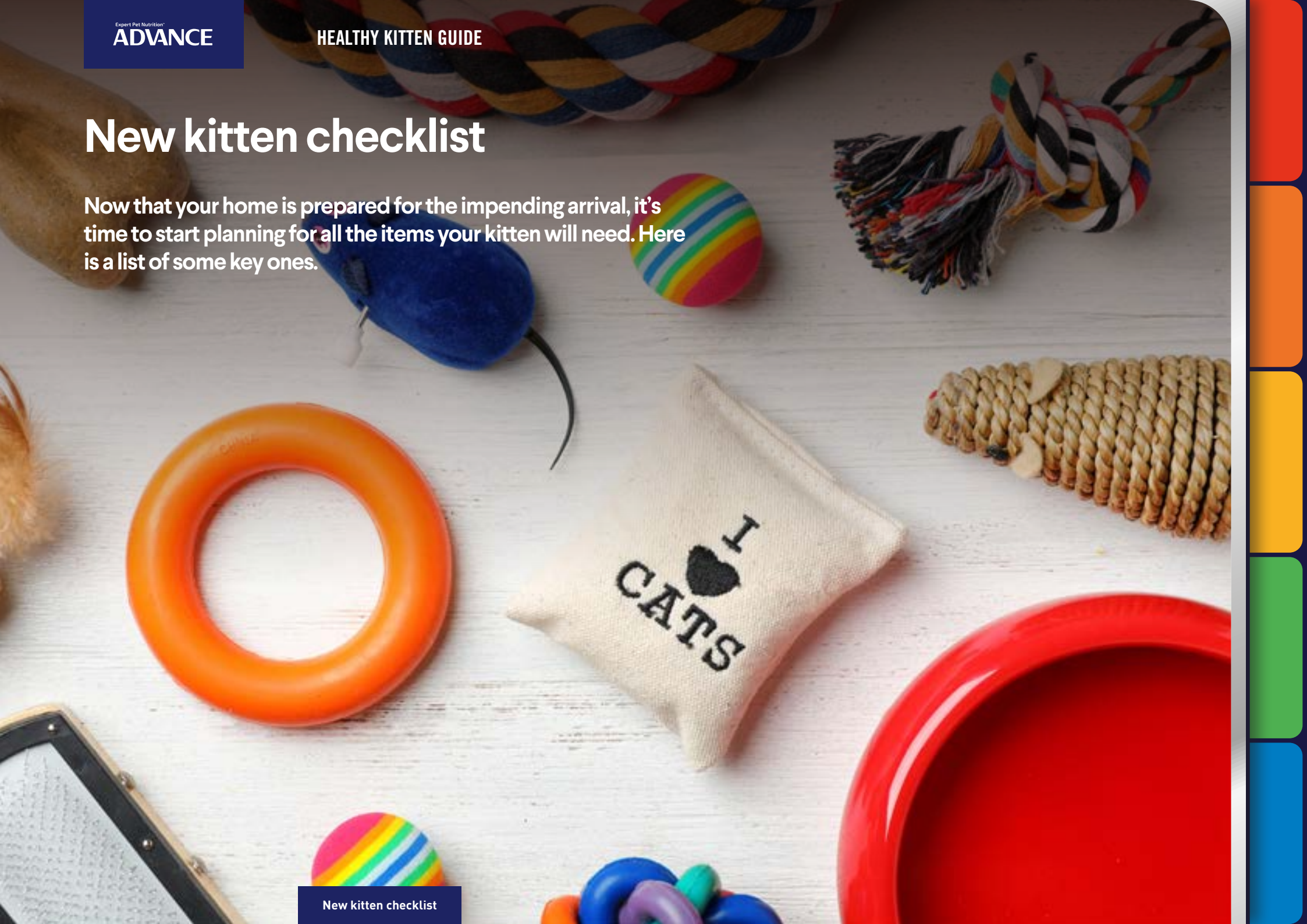
Unless your kitten is going to be an indoor cat, you'll need to consider the safety of the outside environment. You can also consider installing a cat safe enclosure to provide your indoor cat with a secure outdoor space.

- Take a walk around your property looking for potential hazards.
- Look for any chemicals such as cleaning agents or paints that may be within a kitten's reach. If found, secure them in a safe spot.
- Ensure garden-related items such as fertilisers, potting mix, weed/snail/slug killers and other chemicals, as well as garden tools are also kept well out of reach.
- Some common garden plants can be toxic to pets such as azalea, begonia, cyclamen, tomato and lilies. Perform a thorough garden inspection.



New kitten checklist

Now that your home is prepared for the impending arrival, it's time to start planning for all the items your kitten will need. Here is a list of some key ones.





Name

It is ideal if you choose your kitten's name before they arrive. You can then use it whenever you interact with your kitten such as when they are being fed, treated, patted, played with, or groomed, so they associate their name with good things.





Cat carrier

You'll need a cat carrier not only for your kitten's first journey home, but also for later trips, such as to the vet or cattery. There's a wide range of different types available, so take your time to choose the one that you are happiest with.





Food & water bowl

Your kitten will need separate food and water bowls that are durable and non-slip.

Consider stainless steel or hard wearing plastic bowls that can be easily washed. Decide upon a suitable, quiet location where your kitten will be fed. Cats are naturally graze feeders, so they tend to visit their food bowl frequently over the day.





Kitten food

A supply of kitten food that your kitten is already eating will help make the transition to a new home easier.

If you decide to change brands of food, this should always be done over a 5 to 7 day period to reduce digestive stress. For more information about kitten feeding, see the section on Nutrition.





Litter box

You will need a litter box and a supply of litter. It's a good idea to have one more litter box than the number of cats in the household, so if this is your first cat, start with two.

For an initial period, it may be helpful to use the same litter material that the kitten was using in their previous home. You can make any changes gradually once the newcomer has settled in.

Litter boxes should be cleaned daily.





Slumber time

For healthy brain development, young kittens aged between 8 to 12 weeks need to sleep for around 18 to 20 hours a day.

Consider where your kitten will sleep and what sort of bedding they will sleep on. An ideal kitten bed will be warm and cosy with high sides to keep out draughts but with a low front for easy access.

Most cats prefer a secluded place free from noise and distractions to spend their time dozing. This will help them feel safe and secure so they can rest peacefully. A padded washable cat bed or a basket lined with blankets or towels are great options.

Place your kitten's bed away from their food, water and litter tray areas.





Kitten toys

In between catnaps, kittens exhibit energetic bursts of activity. Kittens love to play and enjoy interacting with toys that stimulate their playful nature.

Kittens also like to sharpen and exercise their claws, and they need to learn what in the home is okay to use for this purpose. A scratching post is ideal and you will need to train your kitten to use one.

Be sure to regularly inspect toys for any signs of wear and to ensure they are still safe for play. Replace toys that are damaged. Any toys with string attached should only be used under supervision.





Collar

A collar should be introduced as soon as possible and choosing the right size is important. The collar should fit so that two fingers easily fit underneath it. The collar is likely to need replacing as the kitten grows.





Grooming items

Depending on your kitten's coat type and length, choose a suitable brush or comb.

Grooming your kitten is a great way for them to get used to being handled. Start slowly and be sure to pair grooming with treats and praise, to ensure this is a positive experience for your kitten.





Choosing a veterinarian

Throughout life, a cat will need regular veterinary care and attention.

Now is a good time to choose your veterinarian and book in a health check for your new kitten. At this visit, you can discuss an appropriate healthcare routine for your kitten.



Bringing your new kitten home

Finally the day has arrived and your new kitten is coming to join your family! You've prepared the home environment – both inside and out, and you've stocked up on all the essential kitten items you will need. Let's take a look at collecting your kitten and bringing them home.





Paperwork

Your kitten is likely to have had an initial veterinary check and first vaccination. All kittens are required to have been microchipped before sale.

Discuss with your breeder or adoption centre about all the paperwork you will need such as microchip and vaccination/worming records, so that is ready when you collect your kitten. If your kitten is a purebred, your breeder should supply papers (copy of pedigree). You should take the vaccination record with you when your kitten visits the veterinarian for the first time.

Microchips work in a similar way to a barcode, and allow the cat to be traced back to the owner through a central registry. You will need to make sure that your details are registered with the relevant microchip database. A collar with an identifying name, phone number and registration details will also help trace a lost kitten back home.

If a kitten is lost, the owner should contact their local

pound, council, RSPCA and veterinary clinics, as lost or injured pets are often brought to these centres.

Watch this video for more great tips on kitten identification



Car safety

Prepare your car with towels, a suitable sized cat carrier for the kitten to travel in and remember to pack water. Your kitten needs to be restrained for their safety as well as to avoid distracting the driver.

It is advisable to keep your kitten in the back of the car, or in the rear of a station wagon. Ensure the car trip is as relaxed as possible and offer reassurance as needed. Avoid feeding the kitten for a couple of hours prior to travel to reduce the likelihood of your kitten feeling nauseous.

Offer water at any rest stops you make during the drive. It's a great idea to line the carrier with an absorbent "puppy potty pad" in case your kitten needs to toilet during travel. Carry extra pads as well as a couple of zip-lock bags, some paper towels and a few disposable gloves for any necessary cleanup.

Watch this video for more great tips on car safety





Meeting the family

In order for your kitten to adapt to a new environment and settle into a regular feeding and sleeping routine, the household should be kept relatively quiet and visitors kept to a minimum for the first two weeks.

Once you've arrived home, take your kitten in their carrier to the room where they will sleep. If you have other pets at home, don't rush to introduce them - this needs to be done carefully and after the kitten has settled in.

Provide your kitten with their own space for the first few weeks. This will help them settle into their new home more confidently and assist with toilet training.

Place the carrier down, open the door and allow your kitten to come out when they're ready, don't coax or force them. Even after they've left the carrier, place it in the corner of the room so that it can provide a familiar refuge.

For the first 48 hours, any handling should ideally occur after the kitten has initiated it. After this, it is preferable to gently handle the kitten for short periods, rather than continuously.

Discuss with children the need to be quiet and calm when interacting with the kitten. Make sure that interactions between children and pets are always supervised.

Watch this video for more great tips on how to introduce your kitten to kids and family





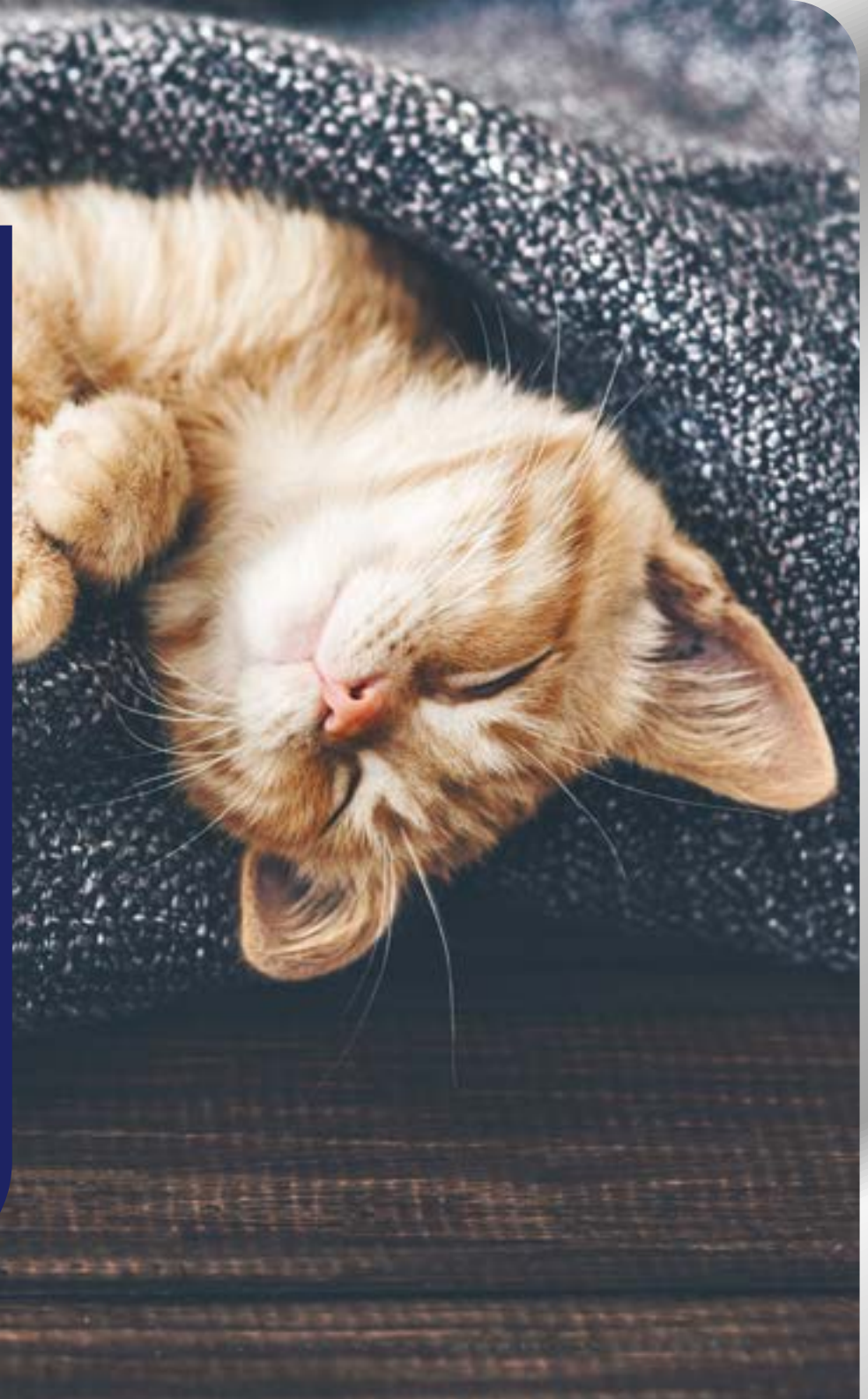
The first night

It is likely that for your kitten, the first night at your home is their first night away from their mother and littermates.

It's easy for a young kitten to feel overwhelmed, so ensure a calm environment and allow your kitten plenty of time to adjust.

A kitten pen or metal dog crate can be invaluable when you have a new kitten. It should be large enough for a bed, food, water, toys and a litter box. Place this in the room you've chosen for your kitten and it will provide a safe place for your kitten at night or when you're not able to supervise them. This also allows you to move the kitten safely into a new part of the home as the kitten starts to settle in.

Cats are naturally active at dusk and dawn, but if they have a warm and cosy bed in a quiet and safe location (such as the pen) they will be fine until you wake in the morning.





Exploring the home

Initially, a new kitten might hide quite a bit until they become more accustomed to their new home. Don't worry – it won't be long before they are out and about exploring their new surroundings.

As your kitten becomes more settled, you can start allowing them access to other safe areas of your home. Provide your kitten with a litter box on one side of the room and a fresh bowl of food and water on the other. You might like to also supply a few other hiding places such as a cardboard box (a perennial kitten favourite) to help them feel safe and secure.

Ensure your kitten is well supervised, which also provides the opportunity to reinforce desirable behaviour such as using their scratching post and litter box. Also make sure your kitten always has free access to a safe, quiet resting space for when they need some time out.

Introducing your kitten

If your home already has furry residents, consider whether you think the addition of a new kitten is safe and appropriate. If you do, then only consider introducing your kitten to another pet once they are comfortable with their new home.

Signs that your kitten is feeling settled include:

- Eating, drinking, grooming and toileting normally
- Interested in playing with their toys
- Rubbing themselves on your legs, furniture and other items in their room
- Approaching you when you enter their room

It's important to understand that there are potential difficulties when introducing a new kitten. Read on for our tips.



Introducing your kitten to an older cat

When introducing a kitten to an older cat, proceed slowly and take the time needed – don't rush things. This can make a big difference to each cat's perceptions of one another and help reduce stress.

Introducing cats should be thought of as a process where we start with scent, not an actual physical meeting. Cats recognise others in their social group through smell, so our objective is to create a communal scent whereby both cats first become comfortable in the presence of the smell of the other cat. Start by taking some of each cat's bedding such as a blanket and place it in the other cat's bed. Ensure each cat still has plenty of bedding available. After a couple of days, it can be returned to the original cat's room so that further mixing of the scent occurs.

If all cats continue to show relaxed behaviour, you can allow each cat to explore the other's area of the home separately.

If all cats appear comfortable, progress to a visual introduction through a physical barrier such as a mesh gate or a door held very slightly open (but so neither cat can move through). Pair this introduction with positive reinforcement such as by offering treats or toys to both cats separately. Encourage each cat to happily go about their business, and while they may glance at each other now and again, we want to avoid a staring contest! Allow cats to sniff each other through the barrier if they seem interested. If any hissing, growling or tense body posture is shown then redirect the cat's behaviour with a toy. Don't punish cats as that will only frighten them. If either cat appears distressed, they should be separated completely.

Once all cats are comfortable with visual contact you can gradually move to a physical introduction under strict supervision. This is ideally initiated when all cats are occupied in their own activity such as play. Our aim is for the cats to appear comfortable in each other's presence. We don't need them to be physically interacting. Only move on to unsupervised access for short periods provided neither cat displays negative behaviour. Start with a few minutes and build up gradually. It's critical that all cats can retreat to a safe place at any time. During this process, the use of synthetic feline pheromones may be helpful, ask your veterinarian for advice.



Introducing your kitten to a dog

While dogs and cats can get along and co-habit, some individual dogs may not be compatible with cats. You must consider this carefully before adding a new kitten to your family. You should also have good control over your dog's basic training.

Introducing a kitten and dog should be thought of as a process where we start with scent, not an actual physical meeting. When your kitten has become comfortable enough to start exploring the house, let them first become familiar with the dog's scent. With your kitten safely back in their room, allow the dog the opportunity to explore the kitten's scent without the kitten being present. Repeat this for a week and if both pets appear comfortable you can proceed to the next step.

Take your dog for a long walk so they are calm and relaxed. For the introduction, choose a room where your kitten feels comfortable and has an easy escape route if needed, such as a resting spot high up where they can be well out of the dog's reach.

Ideally your dog is crate trained, as this helps make an introduction safer. With your dog in a crate distract them with a favourite toy and then bring your kitten into the room. Don't force an interaction between the pair, just allow both the dog and kitten to have their own separate, positive experiences with play and treats. Hopefully everyone remains relaxed, but if not, separate the pets and try again another day.

If both pets appear relaxed, you can move to the next step. (This is also where you'll start if you can't begin with your dog in a crate). Have your dog beside you safely on a secure leash and with the kitten in the same room, praise and treat both pets for showing calm behaviour. Keep these introductions brief and repeat regularly. If either pet becomes excitable, separate them and try again another day. Never force the pets to interact and always be ready to separate them if either show any aggressive behaviour – but don't punish them as that will be counter-productive.

Allow your pets to spend at least the next few weeks interacting in this way and only consider moving to a supervised off-leash encounter when you feel completely comfortable. Continue to supervise all encounters until you're sure each pet has learnt to tolerate each other. It's imperative that now and in the future, your kitten always has a safe refuge they can get to, well out of a dog's reach.



Key kitten milestones

Kittens go through various stages of development on their way to adulthood. Like all proud parents, you'll want to check off these milestones.

Key kitten milestones

BIRTH TO 2 WEEKS:

- A kitten is unable to walk, hear or see after birth.
- Majority of a kitten's time is spent eating and sleeping.
- Rely on mother and littermates for body heat.
- Nutrition is via their mother's milk until they are around 3-4 weeks old.



2 TO 3 WEEKS:

- A time of significant change for a kitten.
- Kitten's eyes begin to respond to light and movement.
- Ear canals open.
- Kittens start to walk and stand.
- Purring typically begins during week three.
- Milk teeth begin to erupt.



4 TO 8 WEEKS:

- Balance begins to improve during the fourth week.
- Kittens become curious and will readily approach new situations with interest.
- Visits to the vet begin for a health check, vaccination, worming and microchipping.
- From 8 weeks, a kitten can move to their new home.
- This period is particularly influential in the development of a stable temperament in the adult cat, so adequate socialisation is imperative.



9 TO 12 WEEKS:

- Remember to schedule further vaccinations.
- Continue positive socialisation practices.
- Kittens should be trained to use cat scratching posts.



Key kitten milestones

4 TO 6 MONTHS:

- By 4 months, your kitten's house training should be well established and they should be using their litter box.
- Check with your vet what further vaccinations are required.
- From 4 months, adult teeth start to erupt and baby teeth are lost so direct your kitten's chewing towards acceptable objects. Avoid giving your kitten hard objects that could damage their teeth.
- Continue to regularly handle your kitten and start gently grooming them to help them become accustomed to it.
- At 5-6 months, talk to your vet about desexing.



7 TO 11 MONTHS:

- Consider whether your kitten will be indoor, outdoor or a bit of both.
- Keep up the toys and play to provide mental and physical stimulation.



12 MONTHS AND BEYOND:

- From 12 months, gradually transition to an adult cat diet.
- Young cats are usually still very energetic so play with your cat to build on your bond and help them exercise their muscles and joints.
- Continue a regular worm, flea and tick control program - talk to your vet.



Photo gallery

TRAINING



Socialisation

Positive socialisation practices are a critical process in a young cat's life, and how much you do or fail to do will directly affect the future character of your cat!

Early learning

The key window for socialisation in kittens is from 2 to 7 weeks of age but can extend to up to 14 weeks of age. This period is when your kitten is most sensitive to socialisation. This means that the experiences your kitten encounters, negative or positive, will shape your cat's future character. Therefore, it is vital that during this time, a kitten meets a wide variety of people, situations and other animals in a calm and positive way. Socialisation should also continue throughout your cat's life.

Cats who have been well socialised are more likely to be confident in unfamiliar situations. They are better equipped to handle changes in their environment, helping them be more resilient. It is vital that new experiences are coupled with positive rewards as this builds trust in your kitten.

Given that most kittens are not brought home until 8 weeks of age, it is essential that you choose a breeder or adoption centre that will provide your kitten with a variety of experiences during those early weeks.

Remember that until your kitten is fully protected by vaccination, they should only mix with cats whose vaccinations are fully up to date and not be let outdoors.

Living with the family

If your kitten is well socialised during those early weeks and has lots of contact with people during this time, there's a good chance they won't be shy as they grow up. If you want your kitten to be a trusting and cohesive member of your family, it's important to keep handling them. Talk to them and stroke them in a calm and positive way and progress only at the pace your kitten can handle.

Everyday objects

Day to day living is packed with things that might seem strange and a bit scary to your kitten at first. Car trips and the noise of household appliances such as the vacuum are just a couple of examples. Get your kitten used to them as early as you can, and pair this exposure with rewards to ensure a positive association. The more you expose your kitten to everyday life in a positive way, the more confident they'll be.

Trying different foods

Exposing kittens to variety in terms of taste, aroma and texture can help them to be better accepting of dietary change throughout life. Always make any food changes gradual to help avoid digestive upset.

Litter box training

Kittens prefer to go to the toilet in privacy, so it's important to place the litter box in a quiet, safe place with easy access.

Cats are naturally clean animals and toilet training for kittens is usually a relatively simple procedure. Cats tend to be rather secretive about their toilet habits and should be allowed to relieve themselves in private. The litter box should not be placed near the cat's feeding bowls since cats do not like to soil their feeding area. They should also be placed in a quiet location, away from sudden noises and people/pet traffic. Alternatively, cats should have ready access to the outside, preferably by means of a cat flap. A kitten should never be punished if there is an accident. Instead, it is better to avoid mishaps by giving the kitten ample opportunity to go to the toilet in a litter box or outdoors.

Many kittens make the transition to their forever homes having already learned how to use the litter box by their mothers, but even orphaned kittens usually have a strong instinct to scratch around in the litter box to toilet. If your kitten needs a little help learning what to do, then place them in their litter box first thing in the morning, last thing at night and after every meal. Scratch the litter with your finger and you'll be surprised how quickly they will learn that the litter box is their toilet.

When your kitten successfully uses their litter box make sure you give them lots of praise – a small treat might help too. This way, they'll soon learn to associate the litter tray with good things. All you need to do is show your kitten a little patience, and lots of encouragement, and they'll quickly adjust to using it.



Watch this video for more great tips on litter box train your kitten.

Litter box etiquette

To ensure litter box success, it's important to choose an appropriate litter box and have a regular hygiene schedule.

The litter box should have three sides that are high enough to contain the litter and contents, plus a lower side to make getting in and out easy. As a general rule, the litterbox should be at least one and a half times the length of the cat from their nose to the tip of their tail. A kitten in a standard litter box should fit easily, but be sure to keep checking this as your kitten grows into an adult cat.

You should also have one more litter box than the number of cats in the household. If this is your first cat, then you should have two litter boxes. If your home has multiple cats, ensure that each cat has enough resources and that no cat is being blocked from accessing the litter box.

Many cats have a preference for certain litter types, so try different ones to see which your kitten prefers. Litter should be filled to a depth of around 4cm. Scoop litter boxes daily and replace litter as needed. Each week, discard the entire litter and wash the litter box with water. You can use soap if needed but don't use ammonia based cleaners.

Has your kitten suddenly started to have little accidents? If so, check out our Help section for possible reasons why. To clean up, rinse the area with clean water, then use a 10% solution of biological washing powder to get rid of the smell. It's best not to use anything else, as many cleaning products actually smell a bit like a cat's urine. So if you clean with these, you may actually be leaving a feline signal that encourages more unwanted behaviour, not less!



Training

Part of a cat's charm is their independence and free spirit. However, cats can still be trained to display desirable rather than undesirable behaviour to ensure they fit in with the household.

To help a kitten learn to respond to his or her name, it should be used at every interaction.

Before the kitten comes home, you should decide which behaviours will be acceptable and unacceptable. For example, will the kitten be allowed to sleep on beds or jump on benches? Deciding this before the kitten arrives, ensures everyone in the household will consistently encourage the acceptable behaviours when they occur by praising and rewarding the kitten.

Chasing or hitting a cat achieves nothing except a frustrated pet parent and a scared, unsociable cat.

Cats are intelligent creatures and learn exactly the same way as dogs. You can teach your cat tricks like sit, lay down or 'high five' by using kibble or their favourite treats and luring them into positions and rewarding them when they display the desirable behaviour.



Positive reward-based training

This gentle method of training is the most humane and effective way to train a kitten. It is enjoyable for the pet and positively enhances the bond they share with their pet parent. Punishing your kitten with harsh reprimands if they misbehave is not necessary and is likely to make the issue worse, as this can lead to more anxious and fearful behaviour.

Reward

A reward is anything that motivates your cat. For early kitten training, food treats are generally the most motivating and convenient reward. However, as the desired behaviour is learned, the use of food treats as rewards should be phased out and replaced with praise and patting, life rewards and even toys. Remember that food treats should not make up more than 10% of your kitten's daily food intake. You can also use a portion of your kitten's main meal dry kibble for training.

Gentle Handling

At this stage of a kitten's physical development, their skin is quite flexible and baggy. It is a perfect time to start conditioning your kitten to gentle handling. Teaching your kitten to be calm and confident while being handled will lead to a more manageable adult cat. Practice gently handling your kitten and begin to look at their eyes, in their ears, open their mouth and gently feel each of their paws. All this should be done very calmly, giving plenty of praise and treats as you handle them. This should get the kitten used to the way a veterinarian might examine them.

Watch this video for more information
on handling your kitten



Encouraging playtime and exercise

Think of playtime as an essential daily activity for your kitten. It will help keep their mind and body active while enabling you to share valuable bonding time together.

Playtime is also very important for adult cats – especially those that live indoors where it might be their main source of exercise. Kittens love anything that you can make move, twitch or disappear out of sight! Your kitten will enjoy playing with a range of cat toys such as bouncy balls, feathers and anything on a string, but inexpensive everyday items such as paper bags and cardboard boxes are also perennial cat favourites.

You won't have to play with your kitten for long before they start displaying their playful instincts as they stalk and pounce on their toys. Cats are physiologically suited to short, rapid bursts of activity, rather than sustained exercise. Therefore, it is usually better to use a number of short play sessions rather than a single prolonged period.

Cats also quickly become bored with familiar toys, so it's important to provide as much variety as possible. Regularly rotate toys to reduce boredom.



Playtime ideas

Here are our tips for purr-fect playtime!

- Offer a range of toys – consider fishing rod type toys as well as small toys that can be thrown for cats to chase, such as ping pong balls. Any toys with string attached should only be used under supervision.
- Play ‘hide and seek’ – cut a hole in a cardboard box, and see how your kitten enjoys playing and hiding in it.
- Take it a step further with a game of ‘hide and pounce’ – poke toys through the holes of a box.
- A cardboard tube will give you and your kitten endless entertainment, especially if something pops out of the end!
- Some cats love food puzzles where they have to interact with a ball or other device so that it releases pieces of dry food.
- Structures such as climbing and scratching posts can also be beneficial in stimulating exercise.
- During playtime, don’t forget to let your kitten win every few rounds. If you don’t, they’ll quickly get frustrated.



Watch this video for more information
on kitty playtime

Nipping and scratching

Kittens begin to develop play behaviour at an early age.

Young kittens love to stalk, chase and pounce. They also wrestle, bite and scratch their littermates and mother – all in the name of fun. This behaviour is helping the kitten learn the hunting behaviours that used to be essential for survival. Luckily your kitten can now depend on you for their next meal, but their instincts run deep! In fact, your kitten's instinct to hunt is so strong that they'll do it even when they're not hungry.

Kittens learn to inhibit any overly aggressive behaviour while they are still with their littermates and mother. If play is too rough, a sibling or mum will let the offending kitten know by way of a growl or a well placed swipe, and play might stop. Through this process, kittens learn to control aggressive behaviour.

Scratching is a normal feline behaviour used to groom nails, for marking territory and to help cats stretch and condition their muscles. Nail care and proper training is needed to prevent scratching in inappropriate locations and is best started when a kitten.

Different cats prefer different scratching surfaces, and ideally supply both vertical and horizontal surfaces covered with your cat's preferred material. Common materials to try are sisal rope, cardboard, carpet, rough fabrics and wood. Make the scratching surfaces desirable by placing catnip or treats on them and train your cat by encouraging them with a toy held part way up, and reward the cat with a treat for using their scratching pole.



NUTRITION



What do kittens need?

A kitten's diet has to supply all of the energy and nutrients they require for healthy growth and development.

Kittens require the right balance of energy, proteins, fats, vitamins and minerals with certain nutrients particularly important during growth. If intake of a nutrient is below the minimum requirement, then health may deteriorate due to deficiency. If intake is above the maximum requirement, then health may be compromised due to excess.

A nutritionally complete and balanced diet specifically formulated for kittens provides peace of mind and should be fed until adulthood. This may be provided by feeding either a wet or dry format or a mixture of the two.

Water is also an essential nutrient and all kittens should be given access to fresh drinking water in a suitable container appropriate for their size.



Feeding your kitten

Your kitten's food requirements vary depending on a number of factors including breed, sex, age, activity level, lifestyle (indoor/outdoor) and environmental temperature.

How often to feed my kitten?

In general, younger kittens should be fed smaller meals more frequently. This is to help allow them to take in enough food for growth. Their stomach capacity is small, therefore they require frequent meals.

Adult cats naturally are graze feeders, and many regulate their food intake well. It is acceptable to measure out their daily food allowance and offer this over multiple meals per day. Monitor your cat's body condition on an on-going basis, to avoid obesity.

Keep mealtimes regular and always ensure that your pet has free access to a supply of fresh, clean drinking water.

Should I feed my kitten a home made diet?

It can be tempting to feed a pet a diet made up of human foods and table scraps. However it is a challenge to create a home made diet that is complete and balanced, especially in the long term. Home made diets tend to be low in calcium and iron, as well as some vitamins such as thiamine. If your kitten's diet is lacking in essential nutrients or does not contain them in the correct proportions, this could result in serious nutritional deficiencies. This can lead to poor growth and have a lasting effect on your kitten's long term health. Some human food ingredients can be toxic to pets. Examples include chocolate, grapes, raisins and onions.



Why feed ADVANCE™?

Using the best of global science, local knowledge and consumer insights, ADVANCE™ uses only quality ingredients to produce one of Australia's highest quality controlled super premium pet foods.

ADVANCE™ is a super premium pet food which boasts a myriad of benefits:

- High digestibility for less litterbox waste.
- Cutting edge nutritional innovation.
- Product consistency.
- Complete range to cover lifestage, lifestyle and specific needs diets.
- Higher energy density meaning less food is fed.
- No artificial colours or flavours.



ADVANCE™ is scientifically formulated to help improve cat health

All ADVANCE™ Kitten Dry formulas contain:



Natural Colostrum

Helps defend against digestive upsets



Omega 3 DHA and Choline

To support healthy vision and brain development, to encourage a kitten's learning.



Antioxidant Vitamins C and E

Clinically proven to increase antioxidant level. Helps provide a natural defence for your cat.



Omega 3 and 6 Plus Zinc

To maintain a healthy skin and coat with reduced coat scale.



Fermentable Prebiotic Fibre

To support digestion and a healthy gut microbiome.

Every ingredient in ADVANCE™ serves a purpose to deliver the superior nutrition your kitten needs.



Made in our own facilities

ADVANCE™ products are made by Mars Petcare with over 50 years of manufacturing experience in Australia.

All ADVANCE™ products are made in our own facilities which means that we control the entire production process from start to finish.

Highest manufacturing standards

Our facilities are audited and fully compliant with FSSC 22000 – Food Safety System Certification 22000 and AS-5812, Australian Standard – Manufacturing and Marketing of Pet Food.

ADVANCE™ products are one of the most tested super premium pet foods in Australia, one of the reasons why it is the food of choice for top breeders.

Your guarantee of quality

ADVANCE™ recipes all deliver guaranteed palatability and contain no artificial colours and flavours. As additional proof of our confidence in the performance of our products, all of the ADVANCE™ range is backed by a 100% money-back guarantee.

Sustainability

Ingredients in ADVANCE™ dry food are sourced from local producers whenever possible. ADVANCE™ was the first pet food company to join the REDcycle™ soft plastics recycling program. ADVANCE™ is 100% committed to renewable electricity.



ADVANCE™ Kitten Food Range

ADVANCE™ Kitten dry food

Suitable for all cat breeds from weaning to maturity and is designed with a kibble size that is ideal for growing mouths and tummies.

This product is also formulated to support breeding cats throughout pregnancy and lactation.



ADVANCE™ Kitten
- Chicken with Rice

ADVANCE™ Kitten wet food range - tray and pouch:



ADVANCE™ Kitten
- Tender Chicken Delight
85 g



ADVANCE™ Kitten
- Chicken & Salmon
Medley 85 g



ADVANCE™ Kitten
- with Chicken in
Jelly 85 g



ADVANCE™ Kitten
- with Lamb in
Gravy 85 g

The benefits of mixed feeding

Dry and wet foods are equally nutritious.

The feeding of both dry and wet food formats is known as 'mixed feeding'. This method of feeding provides a pet with taste and texture variety and enables them to get the benefits that each feeding format offers.

Australian pets need to rehydrate more regularly. The addition of wet food helps a pet gain additional moisture from their diet.

When feeding both ADVANCE™ dry and wet food, simply halve the recommended quantities of each product and let your pet enjoy the advantages of both formats.

Avoiding digestive upset

Digestive upset is common in kittens. Rapid dietary change and the stress associated with moving to a new home, in addition to other causes such as infectious agents, can lead to loose faeces, diarrhoea or vomiting.

The feeding of milk to kittens can also lead to digestive upset, and should be avoided. Lactose-free pet milk is an option, but a complete and balanced kitten diet will supply all the essential nutrition your kitten needs.

Transitioning to a new diet

When changing a kitten from one food type to another, it is recommended that the diet is gradually changed over a period of 7 days.

This should be achieved by adding a small proportion of the new diet to the kitten's regular diet on the first day.

The proportion of the new diet should be gradually increased each day, so that it makes up half of the kitten's food on day 4 and the whole meal by day 7.



Oral health

Your kitten will start losing their temporary teeth (also known as milk teeth) between 3½ to 4 months of age. These are replaced by a set of adult teeth.

The milk teeth usually fall out easily, but during this time the kitten may have sore gums and eat a bit less than usual. By the time your kitten is 6-7 months old, they should have all of their permanent teeth.

Most kittens will have the urge to chew when they are teething. It is important that you do what you can to direct your kitten's chewing towards acceptable objects and don't allow any chewing of people's shoes, clothes or furniture. Avoid hard objects as they can damage the teeth.

Dental disease is common in cats, so start dental care while your kitten is young. Plaque can form on the teeth which contains bacteria and leads to gingivitis. Plaque can then mineralize to form tartar which leads to bad breath and gum recession. Prevention is better than cure, and the most effective way to prevent tartar deposits is to brush your cat's teeth daily.

Initially, get your kitten accustomed to having their mouth and teeth touched. Lift their lip and touch their teeth and gums very gently. Start off slowly, be patient and use lots of positive reinforcement (treats, verbal praise). Eventually progress to using a finger-brush and then toothbrush that has been designed for cats. Gradually build up the amount of time your kitten tolerates tooth brushing. Always use pet toothpaste, as human toothpaste is toxic for pets.

Specially designed dental dry food such as ADVANCE™ Triple Action Dental Care can be offered when your kitten becomes an adult. Dental treats such as Feline GREENIES™ can be used daily, and fed from 1 year of age.



Transitioning to an adult formula

When your kitten reaches adulthood, their nutritional needs change. It is important to transition your cat to an appropriate adult formula to ensure their nutritional needs are met.

When should I transition my cat to an adult formula?

Cats are considered adult at around 12 months of age, and can be transitioned to an adult cat formula.

How should I change my cat to a new food?

It is a good idea to always make a gradual change to a new diet – over a period of 7 days. This reduces stress on the digestive system and the risk of diarrhoea.

Which Adult food to choose?

All ADVANCE™ products in both dry and wet formats offer excellent digestibility, proven through pet friendly feeding studies. The recipes all deliver guaranteed palatability and contain no artificial colours or flavours.

ADVANCE™ cat food is comprised of lifestage and specific needs ranges. In the life-stage range, ADVANCE™ contains 3 flavour options for adult cats – Chicken, Ocean Fish and Chicken & Salmon.

ADVANCE™ has a range of specific needs products for cats. For example, your cat may require a diet to assist with weight control, hairballs or dental issues.

Made from the highest quality ingredients, you are assured there is a product to match your cat's specific requirements.

ADVANCE™ Adult Cat Food Range

Lifestage

For adult cats with no specific health concerns, choose a diet from the ADVANCE™ lifestage range:

ADULT



CHICKEN

OR



CHICKEN &
SALMON

OR



OCEAN
FISH

HEALTHY AGEING



CHICKEN

MULTI CAT



CHICKEN &
SALMON

ADVANCE™ Multi Cat All Ages is designed for multiple cat households as this formulation provides complete and balanced nutrition for all life stages.

ADVANCE™ Adult Cat Food Range

Specific Needs

For adult cats with specific health concerns, choose a diet from the ADVANCE™ specific needs range:



HAIRBALL



CHICKEN

ADVANCE™ Hairball contains four natural active ingredients Beet Pulp, Cellulose, Psyllium Husk and Slippery Elm Bark. These fibre sources reduce the frequency of hairballs and may help reduce hairball symptoms.



DENTAL CARE



CHICKEN

ADVANCE™ Triple Action Dental Care promotes oral health with a larger kibble which assists mechanical abrasion, to help reduce plaque and tartar accumulation. This product also contains a tartar reduction formula that binds salivary calcium to help reduce tartar formation. Natural plant extracts help to freshen the breath by inhibiting the growth of bacteria.

ADVANCE™ Adult Cat Food Range

Specific Needs

For adult cats with specific health concerns, choose a diet from the ADVANCE™ specific needs range:



HEALTHY WEIGHT



CHICKEN

ADVANCE™ Healthy Weight has been formulated so that your cat maintains a complete and balanced vitamin/mineral intake whilst consuming fewer calories. This product also contains L-Carnitine to help burn fat to support a healthy metabolism.

To assist in weight loss, feed a combination of both wet and dry food to allow a larger meal to be fed, for the same number of calories.



INDOOR



CHICKEN

ADVANCE™ Indoor has been formulated to meet the unique needs of indoor cats such as hairball reduction and healthy weight management. In addition, high digestibility and controlled levels of minerals promote optimal water turnover and a healthy urinary tract.



SENSITIVE SKIN & DIGESTION



TURKEY

ADVANCE™ Sensitive Skin & Digestion has been formulated to support cats with skin or digestive sensitivities. Specific nutrients promote a healthy skin barrier while Natural Colostrum helps support a healthy gut microbiome.

HEALTH /GROOMING



Vaccinations

Kittens usually begin a course of vaccinations between 6-8 weeks of age. Vaccines are designed to provide a pet with immunity against infection. They work by stimulating the body's immune system so that when exposed to the same infection, the immune system can more rapidly recognise and react to it. It is recommended that all cats should be given a set of core vaccines, which are Feline Panleukopenia and Cat Flu (Feline Herpesvirus, and Feline Calicivirus).

Depending upon your geographical location or lifestyle, a series of non-core vaccinations may also be required and this should be discussed with your veterinarian. Vaccination not only provides protection to the individual animal but also helps to protect the entire population and minimise the chances of a major outbreak of any infectious disease.

It generally takes 7-10 days after the last vaccination for the kitten to be protected. Discuss with your veterinarian when booster vaccinations are required.



Don't forget!

Don't forget to check when your kitten will be due for their next vaccination, and book an appointment with your vet.

Watch this video to understand what to expect when you take your kitten to the vet for the first time

Parasite control

Cats are susceptible to a number of different parasites including worms, ticks, fleas and heartworm which may be encountered during their normal day to day life. These not only pose a risk to the infected animal but certain parasites can infect humans as well. The type of parasites that a cat may be exposed to will depend upon where they live and their lifestyle and this will affect the type and frequency of treatment required. A wide variety of products are available for the treatment and prevention of parasites, including flea collars, spot-ons or sprays and worming tablets.

Prevention and treatment plans should be discussed with your veterinarian to ensure that your kitten receives the correct protection.

Watch this video for more information
on flea prevention



Desexing

Desexing (also known as neutering) is the surgical sterilisation of a pet through the removal of all or part of its reproductive organs. The primary reason for neutering is to prevent unplanned pregnancies. There are, however, other benefits associated with neutering such as reduced risk of certain cancers and potentially modifying unwanted behaviours associated with sex hormones.

Any kitten, male or female, should be desexed at around six months of age unless there is intention for them to breed. There is little to choose between male and female cats once they have been neutered – both sexes will make affectionate, home-loving pets.

Pet insurance

Consider taking out pet insurance, which can be highly beneficial when facing expensive veterinary fees in unforeseen circumstances such as accidents or illness. Research different policy options thoroughly.

Watch this video for more information
on desexing your kitten



Grooming

As part of general handling, you'll need to get your kitten accustomed to being groomed and washed. This is also a great time to inspect the condition of their skin and coat.

Brushing & Bathing

Once your kitten has settled in, you can start to slowly build up the amount of time you spend grooming them. With time and patience, many kittens enjoy being groomed and come to see it as part of their daily routine. Start off slowly, keep grooming sessions short and pair them with praise and treats to create a positive association for the kitten. A cat this is used to being handled will also make for easier and less stressful veterinary examinations.

Cats spend around a third of their time grooming themselves. The cat's tongue is covered in backward-facing spines which act like a hairbrush to remove loose hair and dirt. Some degree of moulting will occur all year round and the loose hair may be swallowed by the cat which contributes to the development of hairballs. By grooming your cat and removing loose hair, you can help reduce hairball formation.

Grooming has many benefits as it helps improve muscle tone and keep the coat shiny. When cats groom each other it helps maintain strong social bonds. When you groom your cat, this should be a positive way of building and reinforcing the bond you share. The type of grooming equipment you will need depends on your kitten's coat type and length. Regular grooming helps prevent the coat from becoming matted. If a cat develops matts this will usually need to be addressed by a groomer or vet clinic. If your cat is healthy there is no reason to bath them as most cats don't tolerate this.



Watch this video for more tips on grooming your kitten

Nail trimming

Your kitten's sharp little claws are amazing. They help them balance on smooth and slippery surfaces, and give them a good, strong grip when they're climbing and holding onto things. It's important that your kitten's claws stay in good condition.

Because your kitten's claws are protected by special sheaths, they rarely get damaged. However, it's a good idea to check them regularly to make sure they haven't grown too long. Outdoor kittens usually keep their claws trim by scratching on trees or fences, but if your kitten lives indoors you may want to check their claws more frequently.

When it comes to caring for your cat's claws, their scratching post will act as a nail file. However, your cat is likely to need a nail clip when they get older. To help get your cat used to that idea, start handling their paws early on so that they'll be more accepting of a trim when the time comes.

If you notice that your kitten's claws have grown long, you can trim them yourself or visit the vet. To trim them at home, find a comfortable place where your cat can be gently restrained. Work in good light and use a pet claw trimmer to trim each claw back a little at a time until you get close to the quick, the pink part where the blood supply is. You can see where this is on white claws, but you'll need to use your judgement on dark coloured claws. Be sure to pair this exercise with food treats to ensure a positive association with claw trimming.



Health record

Use this health record to keep track of your kitten's vet visits and ongoing health plan. Be sure to fill it out after each vet visit to keep it up to date.

Date:	Weight:	Vaccination Given:	Next Vaccination Due:	Parasite Treatment	Diet Recommendation:	Health Notes:

Health record

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HELP



Indoor or outdoor cat?

Will your kitten be an indoor cat, outdoor cat or perhaps a mixture of the two? Let's take a look at some of the pros and cons for indoor and outdoor living.

Outdoor living

Pros

- Plenty of ways to exercise such as climbing, scratching and hunting.
- Lots of mental stimulation such as exploring and watching the world go by.
- Opportunity to establish their own territory and patrol it.

Indoor living

Pros

- You are more able to control the environment, which technically should mean it's safer. However, the home harbours its own hazards for curious kittens which you need to be on top of.

If you'd like your kitten to experience a mix of inside and outside living, consider installing a cat enclosure at home. That way your cat gets some exposure to the outside world, while staying safe. You can also train your kitten to walk on a harness. By considering each type of living arrangement, you can make the choice that will best suit you and your cat.

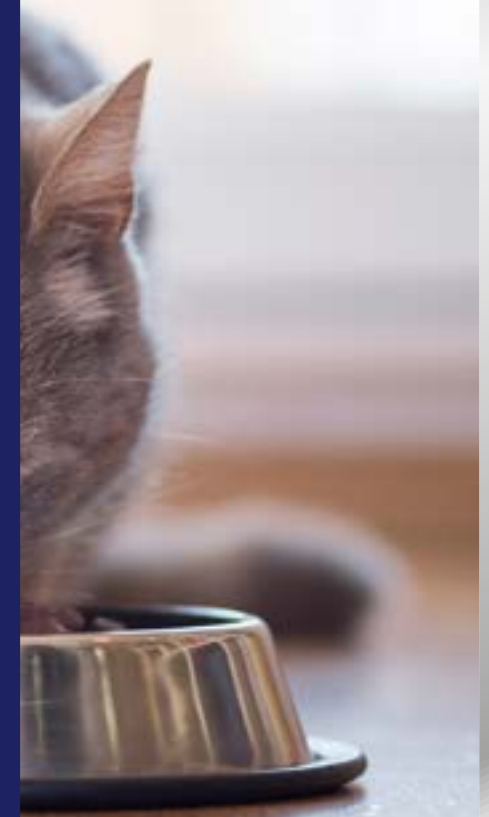
Cons

- Hazards and dangers in the outside world such as other cats, dogs, cars etc
- May get into fights with other cats and be at risk of injury, as well as disease such as Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV).
- May be frightened by weather events such as thunderstorms and become lost.

Cons

- Harder to get exercise, so indoor cats are at risk of obesity and are less mentally stimulated so you'll need to provide the entertainment!

Watch this video for more tips on indoor or outdoor living



Scratching

As we've seen, scratching is a normal feline behaviour used to groom nails, for marking territory and to help cats stretch and condition their muscles. We can't stop a cat from scratching, but we can redirect this behaviour to objects that are more appropriate.

It is best to train your kitten to scratch appropriate surfaces while young. Find out what materials your cat prefers such as sisal rope, cardboard, carpet, rough fabrics and wood. Supply both vertical and horizontal surfaces covered with your cat's preferred material. Make the scratching surfaces desirable by placing catnip or treats on them and train your cat by encouraging them with a toy held part way up, and reward the cat for using it.

If the cat prefers another material, such as the couch, attempt to get an appropriate item covered in a similar material.

Never punish your kitten or cat using noise, water, etc if you see them scratching the item as this will only teach them that scratching the item while you are around is scary. Your cat will likely continue to scratch it when you are gone.

A better method is to cover the inappropriate item in double sided sticky tape or another material eg plastic which makes the item aversive at all times. Meanwhile, reinforce the cat with praise and treats when they scratch the appropriate item.

Nail care can also help prevent inappropriate scratching so practice nail trims with positive reinforcement such as the offering of treats.



Not using the litter box

If a cat suddenly stops using the litter box, we need to find out why as a cat won't do this out of spite.

Possible reasons include:

- Is the cat unwell? Be sure to get a veterinary check to rule out any medical issues that may be preventing litter box use such as joint pain.
- Has the type of cleaning solution that is being used to sanitise the litter box changed? Water or soap is best and avoid ammonia-based cleaners.
- Has the litter brand or type such as paper, crystals or clay changed? Many cats have their own preferences when it comes to litter. Use trial and error to see which your cat prefers. Ensure litter is filled to a depth of around 4cm.
- Is the cat stressed for any reason? Talk to your vet about your cat's lifestyle and living arrangements to see if stress could be contributing.
- Is the litter being replaced regularly enough? Cats won't want to use a dirty litter box. Scoop litter daily and do a complete litter change once per week.
- Is the tray in a position where the cat now feels unsafe when using it? The litter box should be located in a quiet area away from sudden noises and people/pet traffic. The litter box should also be away from food and water stations.
- Do you have enough litter boxes in the home? Remember the 'number of cats plus one' rule for litter boxes.

If needed, your veterinarian can provide further advice.



Urine marking

In the wild, cats are mostly solitary, they rarely meet with other cats. However, they still need ways to communicate effectively with each other. Urine marking is one clever way they can exchange information.

In some cases, urine marking (also known as spraying) can be a sign that your cat is feeling insecure or stressed, perhaps believing their territory is under threat. Urine marking is also more likely in multiple cat households. There could be conflict between cats in the house or between the resident cat and those they see outside.

If you're having to deal with unwanted wee, don't worry – there are lots of things you can do to help prevent it:

- Have your cat desexed to reduce their desire to urine mark. Desexed cats of either gender can still spray, but entire male cats tend to do it the most.
- Avoid using ammonia and chlorine cleaners as these smell similar to cat urine and may actually encourage marking behaviour.
- Try not to clean up the wee while your cat is around as disrupting the scent might make them more stressed.
- Clean the affected area with a 10% solution of biological washing powder, and spray it with an alcohol such as surgical spirit.
- Soon after you've cleaned the area, encourage your cat to play there as this will help them feel more secure.

If the problem continues, talk to your veterinarian for further advice. In some cases the use of synthetic feline pheromones can be helpful.



Curtailing countertop cruising

Cats like elevated locations and they love food, so you can see why the countertop is difficult to resist! This is especially true if the kitten or cat gets fed when on the counter. Decide early on if you are prepared to accept sharing your counter space with your kitten or not. If so, then you should never punish your cat as this leads to confusion. If not, preventing the behaviour is much easier than treating it once established. Do not feed the cat from the counter – make it as boring a place as possible and do not leave food out.

To assist in preventing a cat from jumping on the counter top, you should manage the environment appropriately to reduce the likelihood of this behaviour occurring.

For example:

- Place large objects on the bench that prevent access
- Shut the kitchen door when nobody is home

This is in conjunction with the reinforcement of alternative, desirable behaviours such as walking on the floor or sitting in a cat bed when in the kitchen. You can offer treats to the kitten or provide affection when they are exhibiting these desired behaviours so that they will be more likely to occur in the future. Also ensure that the kitten or cat has other outlets for climbing and reinforce this behaviour with treats and praise.



Fighting in resident cats

Sometimes problems can arise in multiple cat households where cats just don't seem to get along. First, it's important to rule out any possible medical issues via a vet check.

Following that, ensure there is provision of adequate resources for all cats:

- Provide more than one feeding and watering station to help prevent altercations as some cats will “stake out” a certain spot as their own, so providing options for other cats will help.
- Have one litter box for each cat in the household plus one additional. So if you have 2 cats, you should have 3 litter boxes.
- Provide plenty of scratching surfaces – at least one for each cat, but more is better. Remember to offer both horizontal as well as vertical surfaces, and in a range of textures.
- Ensure each cat has their own refuge spot when they need to take time out eg an open cat carrier or cardboard box so that they can come and go.
- Provide lots of toys and rotate them for the novelty value, ensure cats get exercise.
- Use vertical space for cats to perch such as shelving or cat trees (this will help increase a cat's territory space) and aim for one perch per cat as a minimum.

If the problem continues, talk to your veterinarian for further advice. In some cases the use of synthetic feline pheromones can be helpful.



Not using cat door

Some kittens can be a little suspicious of the cat door at first, and might need your help to gain confidence when using it. The noise the door makes as it shuts can be scary, as can the feel of the door as it touches the cat's back on the way through.

Tips to help:

- Fit the cat door at the right height for your kitten to step through – this is usually about 6cm above the bottom of the door
- To begin with, prop open the cat door slightly and tempt your kitten through it with treats and food
- Let your kitten have a good sniff and explore around the area
- Try gently lifting your kitten up towards the cat door to help show them what you expect them to do

With a little practice, and lots of positive reinforcement, hopefully your kitten will soon be using their cat door.



Expert Pet Nutrition™

ADVANCE

Cat Adoption

The ADVANCE™ Cat Adoption Centre program has been operating in participating Australian veterinary practices since 1999. During that time, the program has placed over 50,000 kittens and cats into loving homes! Cats make wonderful pets and provide therapeutic benefits to their owners. This program helps people experience the many joys of cat ownership.



If you have any questions on the products in this guide please make your enquiry to Mars Petcare.

In Australia: Telephone 1800 640 111
or contact us at: www.advancepet.com.au

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