

# How can we help?



*Kara Lynsdale covers a few of our Helpline's latest hot topics*

**H**ello and welcome to the very first Cats Protection National Helpline page! The Cats Protection Helpline was started in the nineties to provide information and advice about all aspects of your feline friend and answer questions about the charity's work.

In 2010 we answered over 40,000 calls and emails ranging from requests for adoption information to advice about a very naughty ghost cat that was haunting his owner – whatever the nature of your cat query we'll hear them all!

While we cannot predict the nature of every call we receive, there will always be hot topics that come up time and time again depending on the time of year so if you're interested in what the cat chat is this summer then read on...

## Love is in the air

Breeding season is now well underway and the UK is once again inundated with kittens. On the Helpline we receive hundreds of requests for advice about pregnant cats, kitten care, and the pregnancy process. We also receive reports of feral colonies that have suddenly doubled in size, stray cats giving birth in sheds, gardens or even finding their way into homes and calls from those who are surprised that their unneutered female is suddenly popular with all the toms in the neighbourhood!

Much like pregnancy of the two-legged variety, there are many old wives' tales surrounding pregnant cats, so we've put together a list of the most common misconceptions in an effort to separate the facts from the fiction.

## Fact or fiction?

- Cats should have one litter before being spayed, right? Wrong I'm afraid. There is no evidence to suggest that having one litter of kittens is beneficial
- Brother and sister won't mate together, right? If you remember your history lessons at school you'll know what I'm talking about when I mention the rather randy Romans and how they liked to "keep it in the family". Well, the same can be said of the cat world. It doesn't matter if you're brother and sister, mother and son or niece and nephew twice removed on your mother's side! There's a good reason the Romans made it illegal; the offspring of incestuous parents can have congenital birth defects resulting in numerous health issues that can dramatically affect their quality of life. So if you know of anyone who is thinking about adopting a couple of kittens from the same litter this summer, please let them know that all of our kittens are neutered from four months of age or younger. However, if the kittens are not



from Cats Protection or are stray or feral kittens, please give us a call to see if we can help get them neutered

- A cat can't get pregnant while she still has kittens, right? Once a cat has given birth there is a very short period during which the kittens are being weaned that a cat should not be able to get pregnant. However, as soon as the cat stops lactating, she can get pregnant immediately. This is because lactation suppresses oestrus – that's 'heat' to you and me. Unfortunately, the pregnancy process is incredibly draining for cats, much like it is for us humans. Your cat likes the thought of giving birth nine weeks after having quadruplets about as much as you do! In order to prevent putting such a serious strain on a cat's health, it is incredibly important that the second she stops lactating she is kept indoors before she can be ferried off to the vets pronto!

## A place in the sun

Like millions of Britons each year, if you're enticed by the prospect of strolling barefoot along warm, sandy beaches while sipping on a mojito or two, you probably already have your summer holiday booked. Once the initial excitement of leaving rainy ol' Blighty behind for a while dies down, you are faced with the inevitable question – what do you do with your cat while you're away? Calls to Cats Protection's Helpline regarding rehoming cats always reach a peak in the summer months and one of the reasons is quite simply because the callers do not know what to do with their cats while on holiday or are worried by the expense of boarding a cat.

Catteries are popular choices when seeking temporary accommodation for your cat, however with hundreds of catteries listed online and in your local phonebook, it can be daunting trying to decide which cattery is best equipped for your cat. The Feline Advisory Bureau (FAB) – 0870 742 2278 or [www.fabcats.org](http://www.fabcats.org) – maintains a register of approved boarding catteries in the UK. However, if you do not have a FAB-approved cattery nearby, we would always recommend inspecting a cattery prior to making a decision and during your visit you should ensure that:

- The cattery is licensed by the local authority – you can ask to see the licence
- There is a 'safety corridor' or double doors which prevent any cat that has got out of his pen from escaping
- Cats from different households are not housed together and cannot come into direct contact. There should be gaps or barriers between units to prevent cats sneezing on or touching one another
- Each unit is insulated, easily cleanable and has some form of heating
- The pens, litter trays and food/water bowls are clean and tidy and there isn't an unpleasant smell

Photo: 123rf.com/Ferenc Szelepcsényi



- The cattery insists that all cats are up to date with their vaccinations
- The cattery is happy and comfortable to administer any ongoing medication if your cat requires it

If you're worried that you may not be able to afford the cost of a cattery, an alternative to boarding is pet sitting. This service means someone either calls in regularly to feed and socialise with your cat, or someone will live in your house while you are away. For further information, or to find a pet sitter, contact the National Association of Registered Pet Sitters (NARP) on 0845 230 8544 or [www.dogsit.com](http://www.dogsit.com).

Well, that's all from us folks! We hope you have enjoyed reading our first article. From all of us on the Helpline we wish you and your cat a truly scrumptious summer! ●

To contact Helpline please phone  
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