

# Junior cat care

Looking after your cat



# Think first!

Cats and kittens are cute and cuddly but no matter how much you think you'd love to have one as a pet, it is really important to make sure you and your family are able to look after one properly. Being the owner of a cat is a big responsibility. Although cats are quite independent, this doesn't mean they can look after themselves all the time – they rely on their owners just as much as any other animal.

This booklet will help you to understand what a pet cat needs from you. You'll see that there is quite a lot to learn, but don't worry! Give your cat the right care and attention and you'll have many happy years together.

## Think about...

### ...choosing your cat

You will probably find it easy to choose a cat to love. Whether it's stripy, fluffy, big or small, you are bound to find the right one for you. Remember though, that a long-haired cat needs to have his coat combed every day to stop it becoming matted. This is called **grooming**. It is up to you whether you choose a male or female cat, but whatever sex you choose don't forget that you will need to pay a vet to have him or her neutered at between four and six months of age. See page 6 to find out more about neutering.

### ...where you live

**In a house or in a flat?** While some cats live quite happily in flats and prefer to stay indoors, others like to roam about outside. If your cat can't go outside you will have to spend more time with him so he doesn't get too lonely. To be a happy cat he will also need a litter tray to go to the toilet in, a scratching post to sharpen his claws on, potted grass to snack on and toys to play with.

### ...holidays

**Is there someone who can look after your cat if you go on holiday?** It is not a good idea to take your cat on holiday and run the risk of losing him. Cats are also **territorial** and are happiest in familiar surroundings. It is best to ask someone you can trust to take care of him in his own home. If that's not possible, you will need to pay for him to stay at a **cattery** while you are away.



## ...what your new cat needs

You will need to buy some items for your new cat:

### A bed

A cat needs a dry, warm and comfortable bed. You can make a simple bed from a cardboard box lined with newspaper and a blanket, although some people prefer to buy a ready-made cat bed. These can be bought from any pet shop and can be quite cheap. Remember, cats are independent creatures and quite often find their own favourite sleeping spots... like the sofa, or even your bed!

### Food

Your cat will need a **balanced diet** to stay healthy. You can feed your cat wet or dry food, or a mixture of both. Choose only good quality tinned or dried food for cats and always have fresh water available for your cat to drink. Cats are **carnivores** and cannot survive on a **vegetarian** diet.

### Food dishes

Always use separate bowls for food and water. Cats prefer to eat out of ceramic rather than plastic dishes, as the plastic can affect the smell of the food. Clean the bowls after every feed and give them clean, fresh drinking water every day.

### Litter tray

A litter tray is a plastic tray filled with special granules where your cat can go to the toilet indoors. This should be placed in a quiet spot away from your cat's food and where you are not likely to tread in it! The tray needs to be cleaned out regularly – it's very important to wash your hands properly with lots of soap and warm water after touching a litter tray.



# We're home! Now what do I do?

## The first few days and nights...

When you first bring your cat home, put him in a quiet room where he will feel safe and where he won't be disturbed. Place his food, water, litter tray and bedding in the room with him. Your cat may well spend his first day hiding under the bed! If he does, don't worry; he will come out when he is ready. Let your cat decide when he wants to come to you to be stroked or cuddled. This may well be when you are sitting down quietly or lying in bed.

Although a cat doesn't take long to feel at home, it often helps to put a hot water bottle under his blanket for the first few nights to help him feel safe and warm. He should be kept indoors for at least two weeks so he doesn't get lost or injured and isn't exposed to diseases carried by other cats.

### Feeding

The amount of food you should feed your cat depends on the cat itself, as each cat eats different amounts, just like humans! As a rough guide an adult cat will eat about one tin of cat food a day spread over two or more meals. A kitten will need to eat little and often. A cat needs certain **nutrients** to stay healthy, so his diet must be balanced. If you let them, cats can become fussy eaters, wanting only their favourite treats like fish or chicken. To help avoid a fussy cat, try to vary his food. Never allow your cat to eat dog food! When buying dried food for your cat, make sure it is a complete diet and of good quality. If in doubt, ask your vet for advice.



### Toilet training

Your cat may already be litter-trained when you get him but if he isn't, don't worry! Simply place the **litter tray** where he can easily get to it. Show him where the litter is by placing him in it. Watch him closely after he has eaten or when he wakes up, as this is when he is most likely to need the toilet. If he has an accident don't punish him – he has to learn new things just like we do! While you are toilet training your cat it may be better to keep him in one room until you are sure he knows what to do.

### Milk

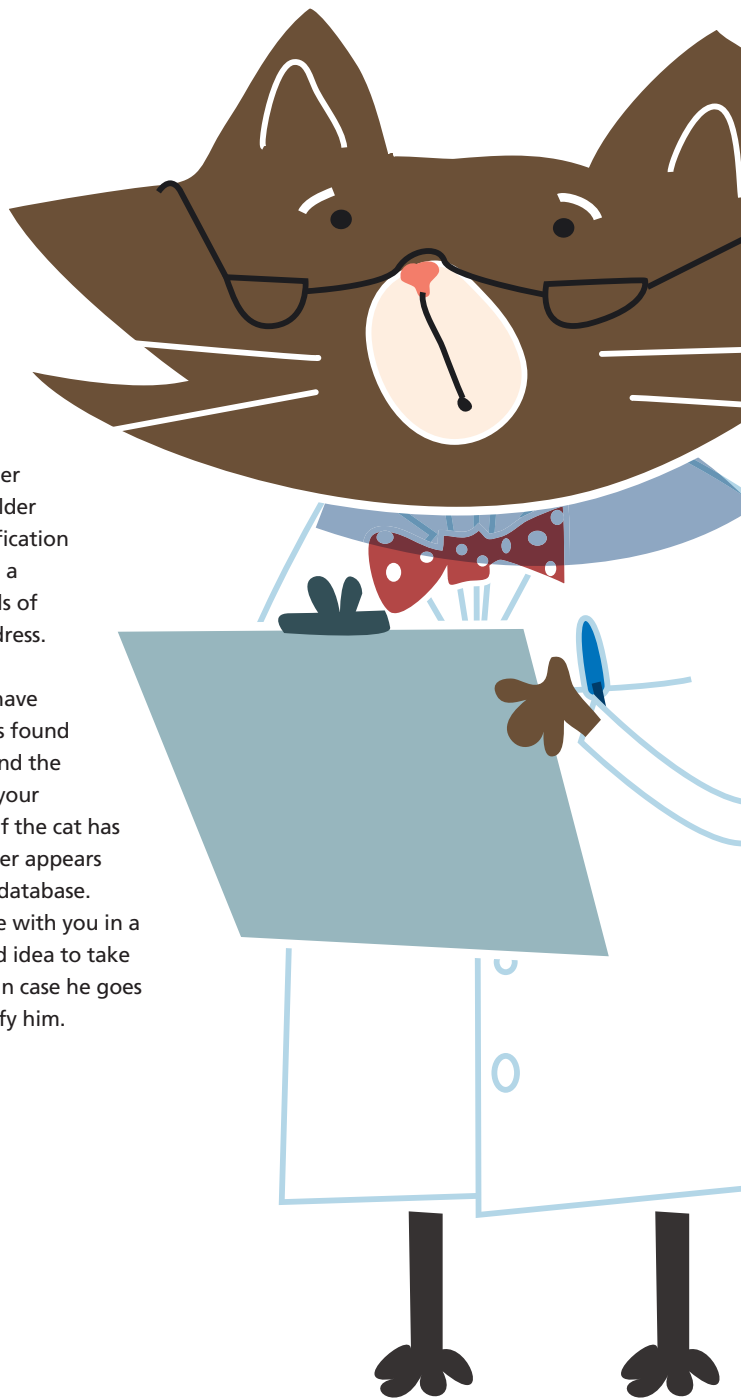
Most people think cats like milk and they are right! The truth is that you shouldn't really feed cow's milk to your cat because it can give him an upset tummy (diarrhoea). Special 'milk' for cats is available at supermarkets, which is better for their tummies, but it is not necessary for cats fed on a balanced diet. Remember that milk for cats is a food not a drink, so they will still need clean water to drink as well.

## As soon as possible...

### Microchipping

Once your new cat has settled in you won't want to lose him! You should think about **microchipping** him, just in case he wanders off and gets lost. This is a safe and permanent way of identifying your cat. A vet places a tiny microchip tag under the cat's skin between his shoulder blades. Each chip has an identification number on it which is stored in a database, along with the details of the cat and your name and address.

Most animal shelters and vets have microchip scanners, so if a cat is found he can be quickly scanned to find the chip. This is a bit like scanning your shopping at the supermarket! If the cat has a chip, the identification number appears linking your pet to the central database. Your missing cat could be home with you in a matter of hours. It's also a good idea to take a photograph of your cat, just in case he goes missing and you need to identify him.



# Neutering

Neutering is an operation carried out on male and female cats to stop them producing litters of kittens. Lovely as kittens are, there are already many thousands of unwanted cats and it's important that you don't add to the problem by allowing your pet to produce unwanted kittens that can't be homed. Cats Protection branches and adoption centres are full of beautiful cats needing homes! Neutered cats are happier, healthier and make better pets. They are also less likely to stray from home.

If you think your parents or carers can't afford to have your cat neutered, they can contact us to find out about the Cats Protection neutering scheme.

## Did you know?

- A female cat can become pregnant from just four months old. She could have up to three litters each year with five or six kittens in each litter. This means that in just five years she could be responsible for 20,000 descendants!
- A neutered cat may be less likely to catch some of the most dangerous cat diseases.
- Many cats killed on the roads are un-neutered **toms** (male cats).
- A neutered cat is more likely to stay close to home and will therefore be a safer and better pet.
- Neutered cats are less likely to wander, protect their territory or get into fights with other cats.
- Cats (male and female) should ideally be neutered from four months of age.



# A healthy cat is a happy cat!

Make an appointment with a local vet within the first few days of getting your cat. The vet will check your cat over to make sure he is healthy and will give him his first course of vaccinations or a booster injection. Speak to your vet if you ever have any worries about your cat's health. Here are some things you need to be aware of.

## Claws

Cats usually keep their claws in good condition by using a scratching post or the bark of trees. If you don't have a scratching post in your home, you may find he takes a fancy to scratching a table leg or the side of the sofa!

## Ears

Ears should be checked regularly. Watch out for dark brown wax – it may be ear mites. If your cat scratches his ears a lot this could be the problem. Many cats get ear mites at some stage in their lives. Ask your vet about treatment.

## Eyes

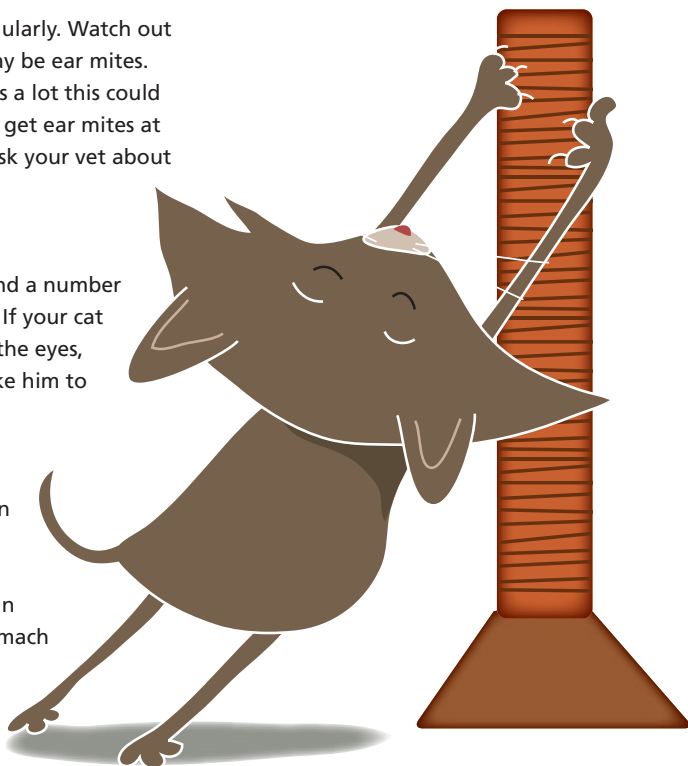
Eye injuries are common and a number of diseases affect the eyes. If your cat has anything oozing from the eyes, or if his eyes seem sore, take him to the vet.

## Fur balls

During the moulting season your cat will shed some of his fur. As your cat licks himself clean, more fur than usual will end up in his stomach and he may be sick and bring up fur balls. This isn't often a problem, but sometimes your cat may become constipated and have trouble going to the toilet. If your cat has problems toileting, ask your vet for advice.

## Grooming

Long-haired cats will need daily grooming to keep their coats in good condition. Use a coarse metal comb and a soft brush. Short-haired cats will probably only need to be groomed once a week.



## Parasites

Parasites are tiny creatures that live inside or on the skin of another animal. They can make your cat unwell, so you will need to buy special treatments from your vet to prevent them.

### Worms

The two types of worm your cat will need treatment for are tapeworm and roundworm. Speak to your vet about the best treatment for your cat and how often to treat him.

### Roundworm

These are thin and coiled like pinky-white pieces of string and can be seen in the cat's faeces (poo) or vomit (sick).

### Tapeworm

Tapeworms are long, thin worms made up of flat segments which can come out one at a time and are found in the hair around the cat's bottom. They look like grains of rice. Adult cats and kittens should be wormed regularly (given medicine to kill the worms).

### Fleas

Fleas can make your cat feel very itchy and uncomfortable and can be a problem in any home, however clean it may be. They live on your cat's skin and lay eggs, which can then fall onto your bedding and furniture before hatching into new fleas. If you don't treat your cat for fleas, your home could become infested! It's important to buy a special flea treatment specifically for cats from your vet and to apply the treatment regularly.

## Teeth

It's easy to forget to look after your cat's teeth. Teeth should be checked regularly for tartar, a hard substance that builds up on the surface of the teeth. If there is too much tartar your vet may need to remove it, otherwise your cat could develop problems with his gums. You can brush your cat's teeth using a special toothpaste and brush – but don't use toothpaste designed for humans! Begin this at an early age to get your cat used to it. Some special types of food can also help keep your cat's teeth healthy.

## Vaccination

Cats can become ill, just like humans. Unless your cat is given the right injections (vaccinations) by a vet, he may become very ill and could even die. So it is very important to get your cat vaccinated. When your cat is about nine weeks old he will need his first injections and he will need 'booster' vaccinations once a year for the rest of his life. Your vet will give you a record card which tells you the vaccinations your cat has been given and when the next vaccinations (boosters) are due.





# What is Cats Protection?

Thousands of cats and kittens are abandoned in the UK every year and Cats Protection is there to help them find the loving new homes that they deserve. Cats Protection is made up of branches and adoption centres. Branches are run by volunteers who care for the cats in their own homes, while adoption centres are specially built buildings with lots of cat pens in one place.

Volunteers are special people who spend their spare time looking after cats for free; they do this because they care about cats and their well-being.

Cats Protection never puts a healthy cat to sleep. We work hard to find every cat a new loving home.

## How can I help?

There are lots of ways that you can help Cats Protection. Here are just a few ideas; let us know if you come up with some of your own!

### Sponsored events

Why not organise an event and get your friends and family to sponsor you in aid of Cats Protection? You could do a sponsored swim, a sponsored silence, a sponsored walk – anything! Contact us for a fundraising pack and sponsor form.

### Home a cat

If you and your family feel ready for the responsibility of owning a cat, we would love for you to choose a Cats Protection cat.

### Fundraising sales

You could organise a sale for your friends, selling cakes, old toys or homemade gifts, or you could donate any toys or clothes you have outgrown to a Cats Protection charity shop.

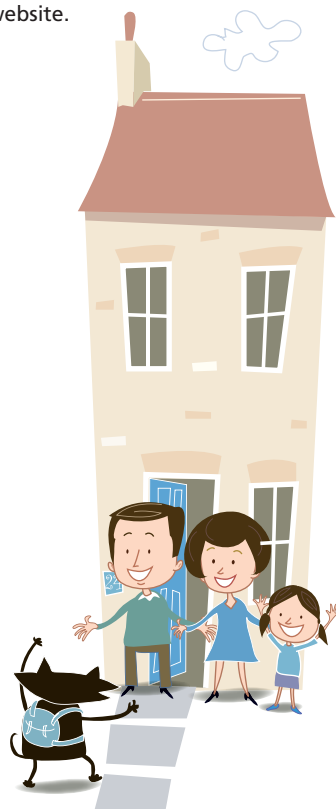
For more information on any of the above visit [www.cats.org.uk](http://www.cats.org.uk), or email [education@cats.org.uk](mailto:education@cats.org.uk)

## Cats for kids!

Cats for Kids ([www.cats.org.uk/catsforkids](http://www.cats.org.uk/catsforkids)) is a place dedicated to all things cat! We've got fascinating feline facts, fun activities, useful cat care advice and information about our charity, Cats Protection.

## Learn with cats

We also have a brilliant range of educational resources that you can use in your school; ask your teacher to have a look at them on our website.



# Are you cat clever?

Look at the cat-related words below in the left-hand column. Then look at the definitions in the right-hand column. At the moment they are jumbled up. Can you draw a line to match each word to its correct definition? You may need to look back in the booklet to help you.

## Words

adoption centre

carnivore

balanced diet

cattery

grooming

litter tray

microchipping

moulting

neutering

nutrients

tartar

territorial

tom

vaccination

vegetarian

volunteer

## Definitions

a meat-eating animal

eating a range of foods from the five main food groups

keeping your (or an animal's) appearance neat and tidy

a plastic tray filled with special granules where your cat can go to the toilet indoors

placing a tiny microchip tag under an animal's skin so it can be identified should it get lost

an operation carried out on male and female animals to stop them producing babies

substances that the body needs to live and grow

a hard substance that forms on the teeth when they are not brushed regularly

when an animal sheds its hair (or skin) to make way for new growth

an adjective to describe an animal that defends the area it lives in

a male cat

an injection of a substance to stop the body catching a certain disease

a place where unwanted and abandoned cats are looked after until new owners are found for them

a person who eats no meat or fish

a person who spends their spare time doing something for free

a place where cats can stay and be looked after while their owners are away on holiday



# Wordsearch

Once you've completed the matching activity opposite, see if you can find each of the words in the wordsearch.

a v m n u t r i e n t s c t u b  
g d v g c u d a d m y a u e h a  
j c o h a y a h a i f v g r t l  
x v l p t w d d s c c e p r z a  
z b u j t x m o u r s g a i c n  
t n n k e i e d g o y e p t y c  
f m t l r m o l k c u t q o m e  
r l e p y c w n v h g a y r q d  
y j e i m z v z c i u r a i b d  
s f r u b p k c r p b i r a v i  
m o t t c z k g d p t a t l a e  
o q h r z w n x p i r n r p c t  
u w f e a i v ( c e n t r e ) b c m  
l e g w m n m p r g x a t z i h  
t r k o a p t z d m b t t f n u  
i t o z d q k w z w r a i r a v  
n r o x f m b m b r j r l y t c  
g n i r e t u e n j t t p l i h  
c y s s u p k w p o s a g o o k  
v k r h d e r o v i n r a c n l

adoption

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cattery

grooming

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microchipping

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vaccination

vegetarian

volunteer



Helpline: 03000 12 12 12

Web: [www.cats.org.uk/catsforkids](http://www.cats.org.uk/catsforkids)

Reg Charity 203644 (England and Wales) and SC037711 (Scotland)

NOV-10 CODE: 570