

A Contented Cat

Whether you decide to get a kitten or rescue one of the many cats needing homes, the responsibilities are the same. Numerous things have to be considered when taking home a fluffy bundle – or when one arrives on your doorstep!

The main things to consider before getting a cat or kitten are as follows:

- a) The cost of feeding and veterinary treatment (including vaccinations and neutering).
- b) Making time for play, grooming and providing a lap or a cuddle and companionship.
- c) Accepting that they will be very proud of themselves when they catch a mouse or bird and will want to bring whatever is left to show you!!
- d) Making sure that if you travel a lot that you have adequate arrangements for their care.

Kittens are old enough to leave their mums at eight weeks and then will become an adult from about 6 months – living for possibly 14 years, so they are a long time commitment. Kittens need to be vaccinated from nine weeks. The routine vaccines protect against feline infectious enteritis, cat flu and feline leukaemia. Two doses need to be given 3 weeks apart and boosted annually, although some vaccines may cover them for a longer period. Kittens need to be fed at least four times a day. This can be good quality dried, kitten food – adult cat food will not have the correct balance of nutrients. Cows milk should be avoided as it is too rich and can give the kittens diarrhoea, so a special kitten milk is recommended. A new kitten will need to be toilet trained. Provide your kitten with a litter tray, in a quiet area of the house which is easily accessible and always keep it in the same place. Take the kitten to its tray after meals and after its sleep and at regular intervals, it will soon learn. Once it has mastered the litter tray and once it is allowed outside it will learn to go outside.

The most responsible thing to do, as a cat owner, is to make sure that the cat is neutered. Many people think that this is cruel because it is not natural. But it is the kindest thing you can do if you look at statistics. One female cat can, in five years, be responsible for 20,000 descendants, many of which will be homeless and will contract the associated diseases as well as suffer from hunger and being unloved. Neutering does not affect the cat in any negative ways but they will be less likely to wander in search of a mate, less likely to spray, be less aggressive and territorial, resulting in a more contented and homely cat. Neutering can also reduce the risk of

contracting Feline Leukaemia (FeLV) and Feline Immunodeficiency (FIV) as these are transmitted during mating.

Adult cats will need a good quality food. A dried food would be better in the heat of the summer down in the Algarve because the moist food attracts the flies! Always make sure there is plenty of clean water available – cats are fussy and so like fresh water, mine used to wait by the sink and drink out of the tap! Once a week or so, you can offer an oily fish, this is beneficial for the coat, joints and elimination of furballs – and your cat will love it!

Your new cat will be a wonderful companion for you and offer you lots of entertainment. Provide them with a comfy bed – or they will lay claim to yours! They will require regular grooming; this will keep their coats in good condition and reduce the risks of fur balls. The best brush we have found for a domestic shorthair is called a Zoom Groom and it used static electricity to collect the fur, the cats love it as well because it massages them. Cats enjoy being groomed and it is a good habit to get into because it calms the cat – and relaxes the owner! There are many toys available to keep your cat entertained. Scratch posts are invaluable because they can save your furniture! There are toy mice that squeak, mice that vibrate across the floor – a great game on tiled floors – balls and toys with catnip in – a natural herb that cats adore.

Regular monitoring is needed of your cat. You need to check their teeth regularly for any disease, ears for mites, they need to be wormed regularly – every six months (more regularly for kittens). Check for ticks and fleas. Ticks can be removed with a tick remover – DO NOT PULL TICKS STRAIGHT OFF, YOU RISK INFECTION - and your cat can be protected from fleas and ticks with Frontline. At some times during the year – now! – there are more problems with fleas, you could use a natural repellent like Dyna-mite or Garlic Juice to repel the fleas or try adding garlic to their food.

Good Luck and Happy purring

Protect your pet with knowledge

Julie Pickering

Copyright © Paws 4 Pets 2006