

OUR MISSION

The Lonely Miaow Association is dedicated to the rescue and care of stray and abandoned cats and kittens in the greater Auckland area. We serve the community by rescuing all stray/ unowned cats and kittens, caring for them to the best of our ability and finding new homes for them whenever possible. We need your support to continue and enhance our life-saving work.



LONELY MIAOW
ASSOCIATION INC.

CAT CARE

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT CARING FOR
YOUR CAT OR FOR GENERAL ENQUIRIES

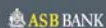
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YOUR BASIC GUIDE TO CARING
FOR CATS AND KITTENS

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WE WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE
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CARING FOR YOUR CAT OR KITTEN

Cats are adorable pets providing warm and affectionate companionship for both young and old. However, owning a cat or kitten means you must also accept long-term responsibility to care for them and provide a suitable quality of life. The following information is a beginner's guide to help you understand your pet's health and behaviour, as well as your responsibilities as an owner.

please
take good care
of me



Feeding

Make sure your cat or kitten always has access to food and fresh water. Cats are grazers by nature and prefer snacking rather than meals at set times.

Kittens should be fed kitten food until they are 9-10 months old as this contains the extra nutrition needed for healthy growth. Eating adult food will not hurt your kitten; it will probably just eat more to get the proper nutrition.

Elderly or very sedentary cats should be given senior food, while those with weight problems should be put on a calorie controlled lite diet.



- Always provide fresh water in a solid straight sided bowl, even if your cat does not appear to be drinking it. Empty, rinse and refill the water bowl daily.
- Cats and kittens do not need milk and it will actually cause diarrhoea or even vomiting in some cats.
- Chocolate is poisonous to cats so be careful not to leave it within reach.
- Chicken bones can splinter in a cat's stomach and cause piercing of the stomach lining. Fish bones must also be avoided.
- Should you wish to change the cat or kitten's diet it should be done gradually over two weeks by mixing the two foods together with increasing proportions of the new food. This process will help to avoid diarrhoea and other complications.

First week

Cats are, by nature, highly territorial, which means that having a place to call their own is extremely important to their emotional well-being. Your new cat or kitten will be in a state of stress from being taken to a strange new place and your goal is to help make it feel comfortable as quickly as possible. When you bring your new cat home, confine it to a single room with food and litter for at least the first few days. It is a great kindness to allow your cat to claim ownership of a small new territory at its own pace and

without competition. Some shy cats or kittens may hide under the bed for as long as a week or even more; others will be ready to come out into the house and go exploring after just a day. The important thing is to let the cat emerge whenever it feels ready. You should spend as much time as possible in the room with the cat, but never try to force it out of hiding. Try to keep children quiet and seated on these visits, so they do not frighten the cat or kitten if it's not used to kids. The cat or kitten will let you know when it's ready to begin exploring more of the house. Be sure to leave fresh food and water out at all times, and check that it is being consumed. Even stressed cats like to eat, so no food for 24 hours or more is possibly a sign of illness and warrants a trip to the vet.

Period of adjustment

Our cats and kittens must be kept inside for a minimum period of one month to allow adjustment to the new environment.

If you have adopted a kitten it should not be allowed outside at all until it has finished its vaccination schedule in order to minimise the risk of picking up diseases.

Until the kitten has been desexed it should not go outside for long periods of time and these outings must be supervised. This is to ensure that the kitten is big enough to defend itself against other cats in the neighbourhood and also doesn't risk becoming pregnant or contributing to a pregnancy and increasing the numbers of unwanted cats.

After this age the cat may be left outside during the day but always find your cat and bring it inside at night – there are a lot more dangers to befall an unwary cat or kitten in the dark.

A cat will explore the neighbouring properties but shouldn't wander too far from home if it is being properly cared for and its outside trips are built up gradually so that it doesn't feel abandoned when you leave it out for the day. If for some reason your cat doesn't return home at its regular time then go for a walk around the neighbourhood calling and speaking to your neighbours. Many cats get locked in sheds or garages so always check these.

NEVER chase a disobedient or excited cat as it may run on to the road, instead try enticing them inside with some yummy food.

Keep safe

NEVER let your cat out at night. Night time is very dangerous for cats – they are much more likely to be run over when the streets are less busy as they get surprised by the cars and blinded by the headlights. Most cat fights occur at night which can result in costly abscesses. There is a greater risk of your cat being attacked at night by a roaming dog.

In most cases we do not recommend that people who live on a main road adopt a cat or kitten. The chance of the cat or kitten being injured or killed by a car is too high. If you have, however, please keep it inside as much as possible, especially when it is dark.

Moving house

If you move house then keep kitty inside for at least three weeks after you move to allow them to learn where their new home is. Cats have an incredible sense of direction and may attempt to walk back to your old house if they are unhappy. Unfortunately they don't know how to avoid the roads on the way.

Reassuring jealous cats

Cats are like children in many ways, so it's not surprising that your older pet may be jealous of a new arrival. He or she may be fearful of losing territory or worried that they are about to be replaced.

Extra love, attention and patience during this transition will help to reassure your pet that it is still the centre of your universe! Be prepared for it to take from a week to a month before the resident cat accepts the new cat. Before bringing home your new cat, make sure that the old cat is healthy and current on its vaccinations. Let your cat continue to have run of the house while the new cat is

confined, so that he or she understands they are not being pushed out of their territory. Allow them to sniff or paw under the door with your new cat, and exchange items such as bedding to familiarise each animal with the other's smell.

When the time comes for the two cats to meet face to face, try to give them short periods of contact, slowly increasing the time as they adapt to one another. Be sure to supervise their visits until you're sure they are okay alone, and be prepared for some hissing and growling, which is quite normal for cats that are getting to know one another. Do not yell at or discipline either cat for hissing or growling, and in the unlikely event of a fight breaking out, break it up with a spray from a water bottle or a thrown towel, not your hands. Prevent the new cat from sleeping in any of your old cat's favourite places (for example your bed) and provide each with separate food and water bowls and litter pans. They'll probably use each other's, but will appreciate having their own. Try to keep your older cat's routine intact, and take every opportunity you can to pet and praise your older cat. Above all, be patient, and one day you will find your cats grooming each other when they think you're not looking!

Missing cat

If your cat is missing you need to act quickly to find it.

- Call on the neighbours up and down the street to ask if they have locked your cat in their garage or shed.
- Walk around the neighbourhood at dawn and dusk calling your cat.
- Prepare a leaflet with a colour photo of your cat, your name, address, contact details, and date when last seen. Deliver 100 or 200 around the neighbourhood.
- Put up the leaflet at your local shops and vet.
- Place an advert with a photo of your cat in the local paper.
- Contact your local SPCA and ask them to list your missing cat.
- Advertise your missing cat on Pets on the Net website.
- Leave food and biscuits outside at night in case it returns while you are asleep.

Introducing cats and dogs

Most of the same advice applies to introducing cats and dogs. Again, let the dog have run of the house, and sniff at the cat under the door and exchange scented items during the first few days. You may wish to put up a baby gate in the doorway of the cat's room or bring the cat into the house in a carrier so the animals can see each other before they actually meet. Make sure the first visits in the house are supervised, with the dog on a leash if you are unsure about how friendly it will be. Encourage your dog with gentle praise if he is friendly. If the cat runs do not allow the dog to

chase it, and don't force a cat that seems uncomfortable to be in the same room with the dog. Keep

the first visits brief, then extend them as the animals become familiar with each other. Be patient, give them time, and they'll soon learn to get along.



Other pets

If you have birds or fish or smaller animals such as mice, guinea pigs or rabbits make sure the cat or kitten is not able to get access to these pets.

Young children

Research has shown that most children under the age of 7 have significant trouble telling the difference between a small animal and a toy. Young kittens and young children can be a bad combination for both the kitten and the child. Even the best-behaved, well-supervised children don't always know what's appropriate. Kittens also don't always know what's appropriate – biting and scratching is natural behaviour for them, especially if provoked. Kittens raised by children can often become skittish and less affectionate.

Please don't leave a young child and a kitten unattended.

Teach your children how to be gentle with the cat or kitten and how to treat them as a member of the family rather than a toy. Kittens need lots of sleep so make sure the children understand that kitty shouldn't be woken when it is sleeping. Teach your children how to properly hold a cat: With one hand under the rump and one hand on the back, held up against their bodies. NEVER let your children encourage a kitten to pounce on their fingers. It may seem cute at first, but a full-grown cat jumping on and biting a hand in play can be very painful or cause bleeding.

Caring for an animal can teach a child compassion and responsibility but this needs to be carefully monitored.

Preventing bad habits

A little training when your cat first comes home will help to prevent any bad habits from becoming established. If you try to "think like a cat" to discover why they perform a certain unwanted behaviour, you can help to establish more acceptable routines. Here are some tips on the three most common bad habits:

Scratching

Scratching is a normal cat behaviour to leave its scent on its territory, get exercise, and groom its nails. Most cats will leave your expensive furniture alone if you redirect their scratching instincts to an acceptable spot. Invest in a cat scratching post big enough for your cat to stretch out on, and if you see him scratching, take him to the post. Rub on a little catnip to enhance its appeal. You can also put strips of aluminium foil down the edges of your sofa during the training period as a deterrent. And have a spray water bottle handy to spray your cat while firmly saying "NO" if he scratches the couch.

Jumping on the kitchen bench and table

Cats love high places, so the kitchen bench strikes them as a great place to watch the world go by. If your cat also finds food up there, they've just had major reinforcement for this bad habit. Best solution: Find another high spot where it's okay for your cat to sit, like the top of a

scratching post or bookshelf. Then persistently move your kitty there while firmly saying “NO” every time it jumps on the counter. Repetition and consistency are the key here, but eventually your cat will get the idea.

Litter box training

Cats and kittens naturally and instinctively seek a place to neatly deposit and bury their waste. Select a large, plastic litter box with sides low enough for a kitten to climb in and out. Avoid litters and litter additives with heavy deodorisers or perfumes which can offend your cat’s sensitive nose and cause it to reject the litter box. To help absorb odours, try adding a handful of baking soda to the bottom of the box.



Cover the bottom of the box with two or three inches of cat litter. Too much litter will just be wasted and may actually frighten a cat or kitten when its feet sink. DON'T use very fine clumping litter for a young kitten – it can inhale the particles and suffocate.

Keep the litter box clean by removing wastes at least once every day, twice is better. At least once a week, dump the litter into a strong rubbish bag and dispose of it. Wash the box with hot soapy water, rinse and dry it well, and add fresh litter.

Place the litter box in a private, easily accessible location. Avoid places in high traffic areas or too near your cat’s food or bed. Cats prefer privacy in the litter box.

Escort your cat or kitten to the litter box four or five times a day for the first few days in your home. Set the cat or kitten into the litter and step away to give some privacy. Praise and cuddle your cat or kitten for using the box or even just for digging. Ideal opportunities for these reminders are when it wakes up from a nap, about five to ten minutes after meals and after heavy play sessions.

If a kitten appears confused or nervous, make light digging motions in the litter with your fingers or try gently rubbing its paws back and forth.

Never scold or force the cat or kitten to remain in the box.

If they associate the litter box with negative frightening experiences – loud noises and voices – they may avoid the litter box entirely.

If your cat or kitten is still not using the litter box: First, have your cat checked by your vet to rule out a urinary tract infection. Next, try changing the type of litter, for many cats are very sensitive to particular litters. Try unscented litters, removing hoods from boxes, moving the box to a more private location, or cleaning the box more often. Provide multiple boxes in multiple cat households. Also, if you have a kitten, be sure it actually remembers where the litter box is! Sometimes in a big house a small kitten can get lost, in which case it will look for the nearest unobtrusive corner to go!

Play time

It is important to spend time interacting with and handling a cat or kitten so that they become confident and friendly. This is especially important for kittens up to 12 weeks of age as this is the crucial time to learn behaviour patterns. If you have adopted a kitten and don't have large amounts of time to spend with it, consider adopting a second kitten of the same age and size so that they can play together. Two kittens will require a lot less attention and will be a lot less lonely, especially if you work full time.

Give your cat or kitten lots of toys to play with when you're not there and vary them, as like children, kittens tire of the same toys. These don't need to be expensive – ping pong balls or milk bottle rings provide hours of entertainment.

DO NOT give your kitten wool or string to play with as if they start to swallow it the barbs on their tongue will not let them stop swallowing and they can easily suffocate.

Holidays

Whenever you go away on holiday, board your cat or kitten with a cattery or veterinarian. Many things can happen when you are away and the next door neighbour may not be as watchful or as careful as you would be. We have had cases where cats have gone looking for their absent owners and not come home.

Please consult your pet shop or veterinary clinic for more information on selecting equipment for your adopted cat or kitten.

You need the following items:

- **Carry cage** – A metal or plastic cage is best as cardboard boxes are not secure enough to contain a wriggling kitten or a strong adult cat
- **Food and water bowls** – A straight sided water bowl is necessary otherwise your floors will get a soaking
- **Litter box and litter**

You can buy or make the following:

- **Bedding** – Old towels or blankets are sufficient but make sure all bedding materials are machine washable
- **Scratching pole** – This will save your expensive furniture and are relatively easily made out of a few pieces of wood nailed together and wrapped in some sisal or old carpet (avoid the looped variety)
- **Toys** – Ping pong balls, kitty teasers, etc
- **Grooming brushes**

Owning a cat can be an expensive venture – make sure you put aside enough for the daily necessities and the unexpected emergencies.

Ongoing costs are:

- **Food** – Usually around \$12 a week for an adult cat fed a high quality dry food
- **Kitty litter** – Available in large bags for around \$10 from supermarkets or pet shops
- **Worming tablets** – Every three months for an adult cat (\$12 a year for a 4kg cat)
- **Flea treatment** – Monthly cost is around \$10
- **Veterinary visits** – Annual check-up and vaccination, desexing (\$50-\$70 for males and \$80-\$120 for females) and treatment for any other medical problems



Important

If you notice your cat or kitten has diarrhoea or is vomiting please take it to a veterinarian as soon as possible. A kitten can die very quickly from dehydration caused by diarrhoea or vomiting. Any change in your cat or kitten's character, especially if they suddenly become very lethargic, is a sign that they are extremely sick. Please don't delay – if necessary visit an After Hours vet clinic.

Desexing – If you have adopted a kitten you **must** have it neutered (male) or spayed (female) when it reaches 3-5 months of age. Not only will it be healthier, better behaved and live longer, but it will help us in our efforts to control the cat population problem that causes hundreds of thousands of strays in Auckland to suffer needlessly every day.

Worming – Your kitten needs worming every two weeks until 12 weeks old, then every month until six months old, then every three months thereafter. We recommend Drontal worm tablets as these protect against every type of worm your cat or kitten is susceptible to. Cancare tablets are best for very young kittens.

Flea treatment – Fleas plague cats and kittens all year round so they will need flea treatment every month. We recommend Advantage or Frontline spot treatments. Regular grooming with a wire flea comb will also help to remove flea eggs.

Ears – Look inside the ears to check they are clean. Extremely dirty ears may be an indication of an infection or ear mites. Excessive scratching of the ears may also indicate problems.

Eyes – Check there is no discharge or blinking of the eyes as this can indicate ill-health.

Teeth – Your cats gums should be pink and the teeth should be clean and sharp. If they are red, swollen or dirty then they will need to be cleaned by a vet to prevent gingivitis.

General checks – Check pads of the paws for cuts and the body and face for any abrasions or abnormalities. If you have any doubts about your cat's health, phone or visit your veterinarian. They should be able to advise you on the seriousness of your find and what to do about it.