

**BlackHawk®**

Every ingredient matters

# My new kitten

A comprehensive guide





★ OUR PROMISE ★

Everything we do, every ingredient, every product is about nourishing the real, honest, unique relationships we have with our pets, so that we can share the very best quality of life together. We'll never stop searching for and creating better ways to show how we care, because **Every Ingredient Matters.®**





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# First days

## Bringing your kitten home

The first day can be exciting and daunting for your new kitten. They will need a safe and confined area to help settle in, such as an enclosure, crate or small room, with a soft bed, toys, food, water and a litter tray.

Make it a positive experience, with play and cuddle time. When your kitten gets more confident you can start exploring larger spaces in your home.

- Introduce other pets slowly and safely, letting them have their own space to get used to the new smells.
- Over the next few weeks, allow them to spend short periods of time together under close supervision. Ensure your kitten gets treats and knows it can get away if it wants to by providing escape routes.

**“They will need a safe and confined area to help settle in.”**

## Introducing your kitten to the family

When introducing your children to the new kitten, you'll want to supervise their initial interactions:

- Rough playing such as pulling on ears or tails would really upset their new friend.
- The best way to pick up your new kitten is to place one hand under their chest, just behind their front legs. Place the other hand under hindquarters, and gently lift with both hands.
- Try not to startle your new kitten with shouting or loud noises, even if they display unwanted behaviour.





## The best of both worlds

As a new pet owner, you'll want to decide early on whether your new friend will live indoors with you or have the freedom to roam between the house and the yard. This is a difficult decision that depends on multiple factors, including whether or not you live close to a busy street or in a more secluded area. Check your local legislation for any restrictions that may be in place regarding roaming pet cats.

Here are a few ways to get your indoor kitten to experience the excitement of the outdoors:

- A cat window verandah, which is a box that attaches to the outside of your home and acts as a bay window, to enjoy the smells and sights of the outdoors, while safely enclosed.
- Cat perches or platforms placed next to the window, so that your kitty can watch the outside world. For safety, be sure to open windows only with cat safe security grills.
- The concept of 'catios', or patios designed for cats, is becoming increasingly popular. They are structures attached to the house and act as an extension of the house, meeting many of the needs for more mental and physical stimulation while addressing wildlife and feline safety concerns.

# Feeding

## Feline nutrition

Your kitten's wellbeing starts with a nutritious and balanced diet, affecting more than just their physical health. Kittens are incredibly active and experience rapid growth. They require up to 2.5 times more energy daily than adult cats. In addition to increased energy needs, their developing bodies necessitate higher levels of various nutrients compared to adult cats. Some of these essential nutrients include:

**Protein:** Cats are obligate carnivores, and adult cats require approximately one-third more protein in their diets compared to dogs. Kittens have an even higher protein requirement, with approximately 40% of their protein intake allocated for growth and the rest for maintenance.

**Fat:** Fat provides the concentrated energy that kittens need for their high activity levels. Fatty acids are also crucial for the development of a kitten's nervous system, brain, eyes, and other vital organs. Kittens have high requirements for alpha-linolenic acid and arachidonic acid.

**Minerals:** Kittens need higher amounts of calcium, phosphorus, sodium, and copper compared to adult cats. Iodine and magnesium are also critical for normal metabolism and healthy tissue development.

Ensuring that your kitten is receiving the necessary nutrients in their diet is essential for their overall growth and wellbeing.

## Which kitten food is right for your kitten?

Kittens should be fed a complete and balanced premium kitten diet that is designed to meet their nutritional needs.

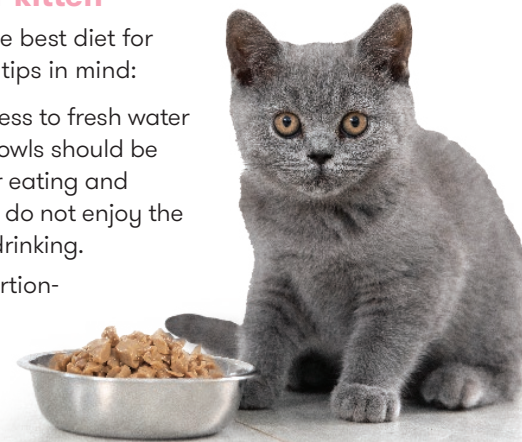
Cats are obligate carnivores and need a high quality source of protein and essential amino acids. Taurine is one essential amino acid that must be provided in feline diets to avoid serious disease.

Balanced minerals and fatty acids levels are also important for proper and healthy development of the growing kitten.

## How to feed your kitten

Once you've chosen the best diet for your kitten, keep these tips in mind:

- Give your kitten access to fresh water at all times. Water bowls should be separated from their eating and toileting areas. Cats do not enjoy the scent of food while drinking.
- Choose ad-lib or portion-controlled feeding.



Many choose ad-lib feeding, leaving food out at all times. Because kittens generally eat only what they need, grazing up to 20 times a day, this may work for many of our feline friends.



However, some kittens may overeat if fed ad-lib particularly if they live indoors and as they approach adulthood. In this instance measuring the food is a good alternative.

Refer to the back of your kitten food pack for suggested feeding guidelines. It's important to note that every kitten is different, so adjust quantities based on the specific needs of your kitten.

## Changing from kitten to adult cat food

When your cat is about 12 months of age, it's time to switch to a maintenance formula adult cat food. At this age, cats no longer need the extra calories and nutrients for growth supplied by kitten food. However, it is still important to feed them a high quality diet to maintain health and vitality.

It is a good idea to make all changes in their diet gradually to minimise the risk of upset tummies. Monitor their weight and body condition during the transition, and adjust feeding portions if necessary.

-  Kitten Food
-  Adult Food



## Black Hawk Kitten Food

Specifically formulated for growing kittens, packed with vitamins, minerals and essential nutrients, Black Hawk's tasty range of kitten food encourages healthy bone, teeth, muscle and brain development.

It also includes algae- $\beta$ -glucan, which may help support a healthy immune system, and a combination of prebiotics and probiotics to help your kitten's digestion.

With the goodness of real chicken and fish, our great-tasting, high protein wet kitten food fulfils kittens' carnivorous nature and adds welcome variety.

With fish oil to support brain and eye development and rich gravy to add all-important hydration, supporting your kitten's urinary health and digestion.





# Training

## Basic training tips

Kittens do a lot of learning in their first year of life, which makes this the best time to start teaching them your house rules. Training helps you and your kitten understand each other better.

Kittens learn best through repeated positive encouragement and reward. Punishing kittens will cause them stress and can make them afraid to try new things – and we need them to trust you and try new things in order to learn.

Set some house cat rules with the family and try to be consistent. The key with training is to reward immediately to help your kitten associate an action with the signal you are giving.

Decide on a word or signal for each action you want to train. For example, as a signal to ask for them to hop off your lap or furniture, you may choose to say ‘down’ and/or point at the ground. You would give this signal when you can see your kitten is about to step down off your lap or furniture and then reward them immediately for doing the right thing.

### TIP: Kitten training

Avoid punishing your kitten if they are showing a behaviour you do not want to encourage, such as biting or scratching. Instead, simply ignore them and give them attention again when they are showing the right behaviours.



## Toilet training

Kittens usually start learning to use the litter box at 3 or 4 weeks of age. Once you have settled your kitten into their new environment, you will need to determine the best place for their litter tray.

- Choose an area away from your kitten's food and water where they can have privacy, away from high-traffic areas, and where you are happy for the litter tray to remain permanently. Avoid frequently moving the tray so as not to confuse and stress your kitten.
- Begin by gently placing your kitten into the litterbox, a couple of minutes after they have finished eating, and a couple of minutes after waking from sleep. Allow your kitten time to sniff around the litter box and encourage them to dig around the litter.
- Give your kitten lots of praise to reinforce their good behavior.
- Clean the litter box regularly. Remove solid and liquid waste daily at minimum. Clean the litter box weekly to keep odours under control. Use warm, soapy water — not scented disinfectants that your kitten may dislike. Use litter tray liners for easy cleaning if necessary.

## Make short work of accidents:

- Soak up urine with paper towels and remove faeces with a poo bag.
- Treat soiled areas using a pet suitable stain and odour spray that contains odour neutralising enzymes, instead of ammonia based solutions which only will encourage remarking.
- On carpeting, blot the stain – don't scrub – and work from the outside toward the centre.



## TIP: Choosing the right litter

For kittens, we recommend the Trouble & Trix Natural Pellets litter that are safe for the kitten if ingested.

Always keep an eye on very young kittens during the toilet training process and try to deter them from eating their litter.



# Troubleshooting

## Litter box issues

If your kitten can't seem to find their litter box in time, start with this trouble shooting checklist:

- Is the box too small? It should be big enough for your cat to step inside and turn around, ideally at least 1.5 times the length of their body.
- Has your cat had a bad litter box experience (e.g. loud noise) in the past? They may have developed a negative association and might show this by stepping into the box and then leaving very quickly.
- Is the litter box dirty? With a much better sense of smell than humans, if you smell it, it's even more intense for your cat.
- Do they dislike the litter? Try an alternative litter.
- Multi-cat households should have one litter box per cat, plus one extra box.
- Stress or anxiety can make your cat go in all the wrong places. This can be from other pets, new additions to the family, moving or renovations. Seek your vet's advice.

If you address all of these issues, and your cat is still urinating outside the litter box, they may have a medical problem. An increase in frequency of urination, large volumes of urine, straining or discomfort when urinating, and diarrhoea or constipation are all signs of illness. If you notice any of these, schedule an appointment with your veterinarian as soon as possible.

## Spraying and marking

When cats feel insecure, they may spray to mark their territory. This is normal. Avoid rubbing your cat's nose in it, or putting them in the litter box afterwards, because cats take this punishment to heart and can contribute to litter box trauma.



## Taking your cat out of the house

You may want to take your kitten out of the house for many reasons, including trips to the vet or groomers, or perhaps even for some on-lead adventures in the yard.

As a safety precaution, your kitten should be safely restrained whenever they are away from the home. It is important to get your kitten used to a collar/lead/harness from an early age. Consider the following tips:

- Start with a soft collar with a safety release clip.
- Put the collar on them for short periods of time when they are eating or happily distracted to make wearing the collar a positive experience.
- Once your kitten is used to its collar, make sure to leave it on at all times.
- Before you take your kitten on outdoor adventures, practice walking them inside the home with a well fitted harness and lead.

When travelling with your kitten in the car or where there are other animals, a carry cage is the best way to keep your kitten safe and calm.



### TIP: Basic training

Get your kitten used to the carrier at home by leaving it in their area with some treats and food inside, even when there are no plans to travel.

# Health

## Vaccinations

Ensure the best start to life for your fur baby with regular visits to the vet. Your veterinarian will be able to advise on everything from how well your kitten is growing, to how to prevent against common diseases.

Kittens should have their first visit to the vet at around 6-8 weeks of age. At each visit, the vet will collect some general information on your kitten and will give them a thorough health check. All kittens should be vaccinated to prevent common and preventable diseases.

The first vaccination is usually given by the vet at their first visit. Booster vaccinations are given every 3-4 weeks until 12-16 weeks of age, however vaccination protocols may vary. Kittens should be kept away from unvaccinated cats and public areas until their final kitten vaccination is completed. Adult cats need to be given a booster vaccination every 1-3 years as recommended by your vet.

## CORE VACCINES

Recommended for all kittens

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Feline parvovirus (FPV)

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Feline calicivirus (FCV)

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Feline herpesvirus (FHV-1)

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## ADDITIONAL VACCINES

As recommended by your vet

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Feline leukaemia virus (FeLV)

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Chlamydia felis

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Feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV)

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### TIP: Vaccinations

Your local vet will be able to give you the best advice on the right vaccination protocol for your kitten.



## Worm, flea and tick treatment

It is important to protect your cat from parasites. Parasite treatments should be started soon after taking your kitten home. There are several convenient treatments on the market that can be used for kittens. Check with your vet for recommendations on the best treatment options available.

Fleas breed very quickly and can build up in the environment that the kitten spends its time in. Just a few fleas can quickly become an infestation, so don't leave them unchecked.

Intestinal worms can make your kitten unwell and some feline intestinal worms can also cause disease in humans. Kittens should be wormed with an intestinal wormer more frequently as they are more prone to having worms than older cats. Seek advice from your vet as to what is the most appropriate worming schedule for your circumstances.



### TIP: Worming tips

It can be a challenge to give some cats their worming tablet. Try using a syrup or ask the staff at your vet hospital to demonstrate the best ways to give tablets.

## Microchipping

Microchipping not only identifies your kitten for life, but it can also save their life. Some kittens will have a microchip when you adopt them and others will need to have this done at the veterinary clinic. Make sure you register your kitten with the National and/or State Registry and always keep them clearly identified with a collar and tag with their name and contact details.

## Desexing

To prevent unwanted breeding and prevent some common health issues, cats that are not going to be used for breeding should be desexed by a vet before 4 months of age or as advised by your vet.

Desexing involves staying in hospital for a general anaesthetic and surgery. Your kitten will need to rest when they get home and may have stitches which need to be kept clean and dry. The vet or nurse may ask to see your kitten again after 7-14 days to check that they are healing and remove their stitches.

## Dental care

Four out of five cats over the age of three years have some degree of dental disease, which becomes more severe with age if left untreated.

This can be a real problem for you and your pet because it can lead to more serious problems such as illnesses related to the heart, liver and kidney.

Take preventive action with your kitten with annual dental checks at your vet. Dental checks provide an opportunity for you to discover whether your pet has an existing problem which has gone unnoticed.

Brushing their teeth daily is also a great way to keep their teeth and gums in good health. Cats can be trained to enjoy having their teeth brushed, especially if started at a young age. Make sure you use a toothpaste that is appropriate for cats.

### TIP: Dental care

One of the ways to reduce plaque and tartar build-up is to encourage your kitten to chew on specially designed dental treats.

# Wellbeing

## Play and stimulation

Exercise and play are not just important for physical health but are equally important for learning and development.

Cats are natural predators and love to stalk, chase and pounce. Playing allows them to use these natural behaviours in a healthy way. Never use your hands or feet to play with them. If they do direct these behaviours at you, redirect them onto a soft toy that they can bite and kick against.

Provide them with lots of different types of toys for them to bat, toss and pounce on. Feeder toys containing food or treats are a great way to space out meals and keep your kitten busy. Make sure to rotate the toys regularly to keep it interesting.



Cats love to climb, hide and hunt. By providing them with a 'cat territory' to do this in, you can help keep your kitten mentally stimulated and in good physical shape.

Set up a 'kitten territory' with tunnels, boxes and hiding holes for them to explore. They love to climb and be up high, so think vertically and plan out some safe platforms for them to jump onto. Make sure they have a cat scratching post to work those nails onto.

### TIP: Play and stimulation

Kittens just love jumping into, rolling about and hiding in cardboard boxes.





## Grooming

By regularly running your hands over your little kitten, you can start to get them used to being handled before you introduce the brush. Choose a brush that is gentle on your kitten's skin and start with short grooming sessions. Lift them up onto a table with a non-slip surface and brush them gently from head to tail and toes.

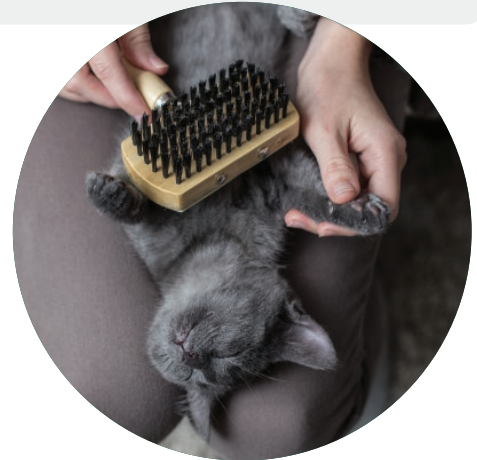
Different coat types benefit from different brushes:

- Slicker brushes are great for fluffy or short coats
- Use shedding rakes for heavy shedders and tangled coats

Getting your kitten used to having their feet touched while they are young will make the important task of trimming nails much nicer for you both. Only the very tip of the nail needs to be trimmed. If you are unsure of how much of the nail to trim, ask your vet to teach you at your next visit.

### TIP: Getting them used to being handled

While you are grooming your kitten, give it a quick check over. This is good practice for them and helps you notice any early signs of health problems. Have a look at their eyes and ears; check their teeth and gums; and look over their bodies for any sore spots or skin and coat changes.



# Troubleshooting

## Frequently asked questions

### What types of treats should I give my cat?

Although there are a range of treats on the market, it's always best to choose those that are designed for kittens. Select a treat that uses natural ingredients and meat as the main ingredient. Treats should make up no more than 10% of your kitten's diet, with the other 90% coming from a quality, correctly balanced cat food.

### How do I discourage my kitten from scratching the furniture?

Kittens need to scratch to keep their nails in good health, so make sure they have a specially designed cat scratching post nearby.

You can try spraying Aristopet Catnip Spray on the scratching post to make it more appealing, and put toys around it to make it fun.

Use a scratch deterrent such as Aristopet No Scratch Spray on the furniture that you want to move them away from (but always spray a test patch somewhere discreet when using sprays to make sure it doesn't damage the furniture surface).

### Should I feed my kitten table scraps?

We do not recommend feeding your kitten human food unless specifically instructed by your veterinarian. Cats have different nutritional needs to people and the wrong foods can upset their stomachs and lead to nutritional imbalances. Some human foods such as chocolate, onions, grapes and sultanas are toxic for cats.


### Further information

**Black Hawk Pet Care:** [blackhawkpetcare.com.au](http://blackhawkpetcare.com.au)





If you have any further questions or for more information  
on our complete cat food range, please contact us on:  
**Telephone:** 1300 651 111 **Email:** [info@blackhawkpetcare.com](mailto:info@blackhawkpetcare.com) or visit  
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# BlackHawk®

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