



Congratulations on your new kitten!

Whether you are experienced with cats or a first-time cat owner, this packet will supply you with the most current information and advice on how to raise your new friend. If you have any questions during or after your visit, please feel free to ask. We're here to help!

Kitten Proofing the House

Set up a safe and secure area where you can leave your kitten when you are not available for supervision. This location should have a food bowl, water bowl, litter box, play toys, a scratching post and a resting area; be sure it is big enough to accommodate all these things. Make sure to inspect the area for nooks and crannies where a kitten might hide or get stuck. All kittens and cats will need time to investigate their new surroundings. For a new kitten this is a more manageable task if you limit the available space initially. Be sure that any area where your kitten is allowed to roam has been effectively cat-proofed, which includes anywhere the kitten can jump or climb. Potentially dangerous items such as electric cords and items that might be chewed or swallowed (such as thread, rubber bands, paper clips, children's toys) should be booby trapped or kept out of reach. After your new kitten has had some quiet time in a restricted location, slowly allow access to other areas of the home under your supervision. Kittens are natural explorers and will use their claws to climb up onto anything possible. In the first few weeks, slow access to the home will allow exploration as well as the ability to monitor the kitten's behavior.

Litter Box Training

While this may not seem like a very important subject at first, the litter box can quickly become the major focus of your attention should your cat decide to stop using it. Elimination disorders are one of the biggest reasons for cats to be given up to shelters, and one of the most common problems for which people seek veterinary advice. Cats prefer to use the litter box in a quiet, private place where they feel safe. There are many types of litter boxes available, including covered boxes, self-cleaning boxes, and boxes designed to fit into corners. Make sure the litter boxes you provide are the right size(s) for your cat(s). Most cats prefer not to have their litter box right next to their food dish, so avoid this situation if

possible. In general, cats seem to like a litter that has the consistency of beach sand or garden soil. They seem to prefer fine-textured litter (such as the clumping type) to more coarse litter, and unscented litter to scented. Two inches of litter in the box is usually sufficient. It generally works better to use less litter and change it more frequently. Cats are extremely clean creatures, and they may avoid a litter box that is not cleaned often enough. Scoop the litter boxes at least once daily. Wash the litter box and change the litter completely once a week. Do not clean the box with a strong smelling disinfectant, but rinse the box well after washing it. Any accidents should be cleaned up with an enzymatic cleaner specifically made for pet stains, including cat urine. Regular cleaners may mask the odor so that we can't smell it, but to a cat's superior sense of smell, the odor will still be discernible, and can prompt a cat to continue to use that area as the bathroom. A word of note: pregnant women should not clean the litter box due to the risk of exposure to toxoplasmosis.

Body Handling

Depending on the personality and early experiences as a kitten, your cat may enjoy, accept, or dislike certain types of handling, from petting to bathing. In order for the cat to learn to accept and enjoy a variety of types of physical contact from humans, it is critical that the human hand only be associated with positive experiences and that all physical punishment is avoided. Begin with those types of handling that the cat enjoys or is willing to accept, and provide small treats at each of the first few sessions. Once the cat learns to associate food with these sessions, slightly longer or more intense sessions can be practiced. This type of handling can be used to help the cat become accustomed to, and perhaps enjoy, patting, grooming, teeth brushing, nail trimming, and even bathing. Overtime you can introduce a brush or comb so that you can help keep your cat's coat clean and free of mats. Regular grooming will also help decrease hairball formation. Never force this type of handling upon your cat, as any negative experience will only make the problem worse and the cat more resistant to further handling.

Preventing Behavioral Issues

The key to preventing behavior problems is to identify and provide appropriate outlets for all of the needs of the kitten. This is especially important for the indoor kitten since all of its play, predation, exploration, scratching, elimination and social needs will need to be channeled into acceptable indoor options. Most of the physical activity of an outdoor cat would be focused on the hunt or on predatory and social play. Interactive play should therefore be designed as substitutes for the outdoor cat. To provide multiple predatory play sessions, use wands and movable toys or small light toys of plastic, fabric, feathers or fleece, that can be batted, chased and retrieved. Feeding can be made more interactive by feeding multiple small meals, some of which can be given in foraging toys, stuffed into feeding toys, or hidden inside bags and boxes. A cat's interest in exploration might be addressed by

providing new toys that can be batted and chased, and new areas to explore such as paper bags and cardboard boxes. Interest might be stimulated and maintained by hiding food treats or catnip in the toys, exploration and climbing areas. In addition to social play session with owners, highly social and playful cats may also benefit from having a second social and playful cat in the home. A comfortable blanket or rug for napping, counters, shelves or play centers for perching, posts for scratching, and a proper litter area for elimination round out most of the cat's needs.

Scratching

Kittens have very sharp toenails that wreak havoc on cat owners and their furniture. Scratching is a normal behavior for cats. Providing them with appropriate scratching posts will encourage them to scratch where you want them to, hopefully preventing damage to your rugs and furniture. From the beginning, teach your kitten the appropriate place to scratch using catnip, toys, etc. An important part of scratching is the cat's desire to mark territory, so a scratching post should be in an area that's used by the family, not hidden in a corner. After a time, you can move the post away to the periphery of the room, but you'll need to do this gradually. There are lots of different scratching posts on the market – different surfaces, materials, designs, etc. We recommend providing your cat with both vertical and horizontal options. If your kitten starts to scratch an inappropriate object, immediately place him/her in front of the scratching post and pet him. Rubbing the scratching post with fresh catnip should help. Cats are creatures of habit, so start good habits early.

Diet & Nutrition

Cats are obligate carnivores and require meat protein in their diet. One of the defining characteristics of an obligate carnivore is a requirement for a high amount of protein in their diet. Studies show that cats have a better chance at optimal health if they are fed a high-protein low-carbohydrate diet. This protein should be of high quality, so choose a name-brand food specifically formulated for kittens that is made by a reputable cat food company. Growing felines have different nutritional requirements than adult cats, so kitten food should be fed until your kitten reaches twelve months of age. We'd be more than happy to discuss your kitten's dietary needs and come up with a feeding plan with you.

Flea Preventatives

Flea control is important year round in Georgia. Aside from creating itchy bites, fleas also can transmit diseases and intestinal parasites to both pets and humans. There are quite a few flea preventatives (both oral and topical) available. We'd be happy to discuss your options with you and find the right product for you and your kitten.

Dental Care

Appropriate dental care is one of the most important things that you can do to improve the quality and longevity of your pet's life. For long term dental health a combination of home care (brushing and dental chews) and periodic professional cleanings is recommended. Teeth brushing should be done at least twice per week, but ideally every day. There are many dental chews available to help fight plaque and tartar.

Identification

Even strictly-indoor cats have been known to escape the confines of their safe homes and become lost. Cats often don't tolerate collars well, so ID tags are usually not the best option for pet identification. The best way to identify your cat is to have him microchipped. Microchips are a permanent form of identification (about the size of a grain of rice) that are placed just under the skin between the shoulder blades. While placing a microchip doesn't require anesthesia, many clients opt to perform this procedure concurrently with a spay or neuter.

EMERGENCIES

For after-hours emergencies, contact either:

Animal Emergency Center of Sandy Springs

Monday – Friday: 6 PM – 8 AM

Weekends & Holidays: Open 24 hours

(Sandy Springs Pl & Roswell Rd)

404-252-7881

Blue Pearl Veterinary Partners

Open 24 hours

(Abernathy Rd)

404-459-0903