

## **Caring for a kitten**

Although obtaining a kitten may be a particularly attractive proposition because of its playful and endearing personality, taking on a young cat also involves extra responsibilities.

### **Finding a kitten**

#### *Pedigree kittens*

- Be prepared to find a breeder and pay a substantial sum of money.
- To find a suitable breeder you can contact the *Governing Council of the Cat Fancy (GCCF)*.

#### *Non-pedigree kittens*

- Animal welfare charities may ask you to make a donation towards their running costs.
- Advertisement boards in your veterinary practice or a local news paper
- It is NOT a good idea to obtain a kitten from a pet shop as they often carry diseases and can be very stressed.
- Try to see a kitten with its mother and brothers and sisters.

### **Choosing your kitten**

If you get a kitten that is already carrying a disease, it may never recover full health and the treatment may be expensive.

A healthy, happy kitten will

- have clear bright eyes, clean nostrils and ears, a shiny coat and have a good body condition, but be NOT pot-bellied
- be active and playful and comfortable with people

### **Information to find out**

- Whether the kitten has been vaccinated. If yes make sure you have a vaccination certificate signed by the vet.
- Whether the kitten has been treated for fleas or worm. If yes, with what and when.
- What sort of food the kitten has been eating. Avoid changing the diet suddenly.

### **Necessary equipment**

- carrying box
- food and water bowls
- food (a complete kitten diet)
- comfortable bed
- litter tray with litter
- toys
- a grooming brush or comb

### **Settling in**

- Your kitten will need plenty of love and attention until it settles into its new home.
- Show it the litter tray and its feed/water bowls that should not be too close to the litter tray.
- If there are young children in the house they must not become overexcited or treat the kitten like a toy.
- All doors, windows and cat flaps should be shut and the kitten should not be allowed outside for at least 2-3 weeks, until it has completed all its necessary vaccinations.
- Until it is fully protected your kitten should only mix with cats that are already fully vaccinated and known to be healthy. If you have other pet cats or a dog these should be introduced gradually to the kitten.

### **Further care**

- Cats should be neutered at six months of age, but some females can be fertile at five months old.
- Arrange to have your kitten neutered promptly to avoid health problems and unwanted kittens.

- Kittens must be wormed on a frequent basis every four weeks until six months of age. Older cats may be wormed every 3-4months.
- Once your kitten has had its first course of vaccinations it will need an annual booster vaccination.
- Regular daily grooming for long-haired cats is highly recommended to keep their coat in good condition and is easier if your kitten is used to it from an early age.
- Your vet may be able to supply you with a finger toothbrush that is often easier to use in cats.
- The eyes and nose of long-haired breeds or persian types may also need to be wiped occasionally with damp cotton wool.
- Register your new pet with your vet as soon as possible and visit the practice to get advice on routine health care and neutering before problems develop.