



## BACKGROUND

**SIZE:** 8-11 pounds on average—but larger breeds & breed mixes can weigh 15+

**LIFESPAN:** 13-17 years

**COST PER YEAR:** About \$670

**GOOD WITH KIDS?:** Young children may unwittingly mishandle or hurt kittens, who are particularly vulnerable to injury. Children ages 10 & up are ready for duties like feeding, grooming and litter cleaning.

**WHERE TO GET A CAT:** Your best option? Adoption! There are great cats (purebreds, too!) at shelters and small-animal rescue groups all across the country.

Go to: [www.asPCA.org/adoption/shelters/](http://www.asPCA.org/adoption/shelters/) to find a shelter near you.

Note: Make sure you have all your supplies (see checklist) *before* you bring your cat home.

## FOOD

- Feed kittens 6 to 12 weeks old 4 times a day.
- Feed kittens 3 to 6 months old 3 times a day.
- Feed adult cats one main or 2-3 smaller meals a day.
- Feed your cat a commercial brand of dry food that meets nutritional requirements and provides a well-balanced diet. Kittens should be fed a commercial brand of kitten food. Fresh water should be available at all times, and be sure to wash food/water dishes daily.
- Throw away any uneaten canned food before it spoils.
- Do not give cats cow's milk, as it can cause diarrhea. Treats are yummy for cats, but should not total more than 5% of their daily intake. Most packaged treats contain lots of sugar and fat.
- If your kitten is refusing food or isn't eating enough, try soaking her kitten food in kitten milk replacer or warm water. Gradually mix with her regular food. Monitor your cat's food intake carefully, as obesity is a major health problem in cats today.

## BEDDING/HOUSING

- Your cat should have her own clean, dry place in your home to sleep and rest. Line the bed with a blanket or towel. Be sure to wash the bedding often.
- Please keep your cat indoors. Cats who are allowed outdoors can contract diseases, get ticks or parasites, become lost or get hit by a car, and get into fights with other free-roaming cats and dogs.

## LITTER BOX

- Place your cat's litter box in a quiet, accessible location, such as a bathroom or utility room. Avoid moving the box unless absolutely necessary. Then do so slowly, a few inches a day.
- In a multi-level home, one box per floor is recommended. In a multi-cat home, each cat should have her own box.
- Cats won't use a messy, smelly litter box, so remove solid waste at least once a day. Dump everything, wash with mild detergent and refill at least once a week. Don't use ammonia, deodorants or scents, especially lemon, when cleaning the litter box.

## GROOMING

- Most cats rarely need a bath, but you should brush or comb your pet regularly. This keeps the coat clean, reduces shedding and cuts down on hairballs and matting.
- During your grooming sessions, check for wounds, hair loss and inflammation. Also, look out for ticks and flea dirt, black specks of dried blood left behind by fleas.

## HANDLING

- To pick up your cat, place one hand behind her front legs and another under the hindquarters. Lift gently. Never pick up a cat by the scruff of the neck or the front legs.

## ID

- If your cat occasionally escapes from the house or is routinely allowed outdoors (again, we caution against it!), she must wear a safety collar and an ID tag. A safety collar with an elastic panel or specially designed clasp will allow your cat to break loose if the collar gets caught on something.
- We recommend permanent ID, such as a microchip, to help secure your cat's return should she become lost or accidentally get out of the house.

## PLAY

- Cats delight in stalking imaginary prey. The best toys are those that can be made to jump and dance around and look alive. Your cat can safely act out her role as a predator by pouncing on toys instead of people's ankles. Please don't use your hands or fingers as play objects with kittens, which could lead to biting and scratching behaviors. Avoid strings and toys with pieces that can break off and lodge in her intestines.

## SCRATCHING

- Your pet needs to scratch! When she scratches, the old outer nail sheath is pulled off and the sharp, smooth claws underneath are exposed. Cutting your cat's nails every 2 to 3 weeks will keep them blunt and less likely to harm you or your furniture.
- Provide your cat with a sturdy scratching post, at least 3 feet high, which will allow her to stretch completely when scratching. It should be stable enough that it won't wobble during use, and covered with rough material such as sisal, burlap or tree bark. Many cats also like scratching pads. A sprinkle of catnip on the post or pad once or twice a month will keep your cat interested.

FOR EXPERT ADVICE ON COMMON BEHAVIOR ISSUES (FROM EXCESSIVE YOWLING TO ELIMINATING OUTSIDE THE LITTER BOX), VISIT THE ASPCA VIRTUAL PET BEHAVIORIST AT [ASPCABEHAVIOR.ORG](http://ASPCABEHAVIOR.ORG)

## HEALTH

- Your cat should see a veterinarian for a full physical examination and fecal check at least once a year. It can be determined at that time if additional vaccinations or diagnostic tests are necessary. If she is sick or injured, seek help immediately.

## SPAYING AND NEUTERING

- Female cats should be spayed (the removal of the ovaries and uterus) and male cats neutered (removal of the testicles). Cats can be spayed and neutered as early as 6-8 weeks of age.

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- Neutering can prevent urine spraying, decrease the urge to escape to look for a mate, and reduce fighting between males. Spaying greatly helps prevent breast cancer, which is often fatal, and serious infection of the uterus.
- Cats can breed up to 3 times per year, so it is vital that your female cat be spayed to prevent unwanted litters.

## VACCINATIONS

- Cats should be vaccinated with a vaccine that protects against panleukopenia, calicivirus and rhinotracheitis. When a kitten is around 6 to 8 weeks of age, a veterinarian can begin to administer a series of vaccines at 3- or 4-week intervals until the kitten reaches 16 weeks of age. If you have an unvaccinated cat older than 4 months, he will need a series of two vaccinations 3-4 weeks apart. Your veterinarian can tell you how often your cat will need to be revaccinated.
- Other vaccines are given depending on a cat's lifestyle and risk factors. These include vaccines for feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV) and feline leukemia virus (FeLV), two of the most common causes of disease and death in domestic cats. Your veterinarian can determine what vaccines are best for your cat.
- Because cats can be infected with either FIV or FeLV for months, even years, and show no symptoms, all cats should be tested for these viruses. Keeping your cat indoors and away from cats whose FeLV and FIV status is not known are the best ways to prevent your cat from becoming infected.
- Rabies vaccination is required by law in most areas of the country. In most cases the vaccination is given at 3 months of age, repeated a year later and every 3 years after that. Ask your veterinarian if you are unsure of the laws in your area.

## EAR MITES

- This is a common problem that can be transmitted from cat to cat. If your cat is constantly scratching at his ears or shaking his head, or if you see dark-colored wax or debris in his ears, he may be infested with ear mites. Make an appointment with your veterinarian right away.

## FELINE LOWER URINARY TRACT DISEASE (FLUTD)

- Both males and females can develop urinary tract disease, which is not uncommon in adult cats. Signs of FLUTD include frequent trips to the litter box, blood in the urine and crying out or straining when urinating. Please see your veterinarian immediately if you think your cat has FLUTD.
- If your male cat looks "constipated," he may have a urethral obstruction and can't urinate. Blockage, which is rare in females, can be fatal if not treated quickly.

## FLEAS AND TICKS

- Flea infestation should be taken seriously. These tiny parasites feed off your pet, transmit tapeworms and irritate the skin. Check your cat regularly for fleas and ticks. If your cat is infested, you will also need to treat all pets in the household and get rid of the fleas in your home.
- Make certain that any product you use is safe for use on cats. Cats die every year from improper treatment with flea and tick control products. Your veterinarian can recommend the best flea control program for your pet and home.

## MEDICINES AND POISONS

- Never give your cat medication that has not been prescribed by a veterinarian. Did you know that acetaminophen and aspirin can be FATAL to a cat?! Keep rat poison or other rodenticides away from your cat.

- For information about potentially toxic substances that can harm your cat, visit [www.aspc.org/pet-care/poison-control/](http://www.aspc.org/pet-care/poison-control/)

IF YOU THINK THAT YOUR PET MAY HAVE INGESTED A POTENTIALLY POISONOUS SUBSTANCE, CALL THE ASPCA ANIMAL POISON CONTROL CENTER AT (888) 426-4435

A \$65 consultation fee may be applied to your credit card

## INTERNAL PARASITES (WORMS)

- Cats can be infected with several types of internal parasites and worms. The key to treatment is correct diagnosis, which is obtained by a microscopic examination of your cat's feces by a veterinarian. Your veterinarian can then prescribe the appropriate medication.
- To prevent your cat from getting worms, keep your pet indoors to prevent her from hunting and eating infected prey, avoid exposure to infected cats, rodents, fleas and feces, avoid feeding raw meat and practice good hygiene when cleaning the litter box.

## CAT SUPPLY CHECKLIST

- ✓ Commercial brand cat food
- ✓ Food dish
- ✓ Water bowl
- ✓ Interactive toys
- ✓ Brush, cat claw clipper
- ✓ Comb
- ✓ Safety cat collar with ID tag
- ✓ Scratching post or scratching pad
- ✓ Litter box
- ✓ Litter
- ✓ Cat carrier
- ✓ Cat bed or box with blanket or towel

## THE NO-NO LIST

Do not feed your cat:

- ✓ Alcoholic beverages
- ✓ Chocolate
- ✓ Coffee
- ✓ Grapes, raisins & avocados
- ✓ Moldy or spoiled food
- ✓ Onions, garlic & chives
- ✓ Poultry bones
- ✓ Salt & salty foods, macadamia nuts
- ✓ Tomato leaves, stems & unripe fruit
- ✓ Yeast dough
- ✓ Human medications unless prescribed by your veterinarian.



The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals®

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