**Lions Gait Cattery:** Kitten Care Sheet

Congratulations on your new kitten!

CARRIER

If you have not already purchased one, you will need a carrier to transport your kitten in the car.

VET

You may wish to take your kitten to your own veterinarian within the first 72 hours for your own satisfaction and to obtain any information you many need about new kitten care. This is a good time to purchase Revolution (external and internal parasite prevention and control), toothpaste, and other specialty items. The vet can show you how to brush teeth and trim the nail tips. Tooth brushing can be done at home daily (or at least three times a week).

HOME

Before you bring home your kitten, you must kitten-proof your house. These are similar to child-proofing. Lock up medicines and chemicals. Look for dangling cords that could drop heavy things, or spill things on your kitten. Close up tiny holes your kitten could get trapped in. Put pet grade screens on your windows. Sweep and thoroughly vacuum. Watch out for where you throw out dental floss, string, ribbon, elastics, burst balloons, rubber bands, and anything else that would fit in a kitten’s mouth. Get rid of any plants poisonous to cats. Check the SPCA website for a comprehensive list. Also watch out for toxic food items that might easily fall on the floor like raisins, chocolate chips, spices (most of them!), and more.

For the first day or two, your kitten might hide. Give them a safe space to do so. If you have other pets, it is good to quarantine/isolate your new kitten from other pets for a minimum of seven (7) days. This does not mean that you should not interact with you kitten!

After the initial acclimatization period, you can slowly introduce your kitten to other pets and, room by room, the rest of your house. It is vital that your new kitten have company for most of the day.

A stressed kitten gets sick. These temporary signs of illness include sneezing, runny nose, watery eyes, diarrhea or constipation. These effects can be minimized by feeding the same food used by the cattery and taking steps to reduce stress. These health symptoms are usually temporary and should go away within a few days if the kitten is not further stressed.

OUTDOORS

We recommend your pet be kept indoors in urban areas and, if possible, given access to an enclosed outdoor area (catio). Invest in a good harness if you wish to take your kitten for walks. Prevent your kitten from coming into contact with outdoor cats or wildlife as there are diseases that are easily transmitted through saliva (nose touching) or blood (scratching). Vaccines are not sufficient protection as there are many strains of virus that are always mutating. Do not assume your kitten will be protected.

FOOD & WATER

Your new kitten will eat a lot and frequently! Use stainless steel, ceramic or glass, shallow plates. Expect to offer food every 3 hours at the beginning. For example, you can offer half a can of food (about 45 g) per meal. Fancy Feast usually is 1 can per 3 lbs, and up to double this for kittens. It is a good idea to weigh your kitten, so you will continue to know how much they should be eating. If the kitten eats too fast, they might throw up. Try to space out several smaller meals if this is happening.

We feed Fancy Feast Pate\* flavours Turkey and Giblets, Tender Liver and Chicken, Beef. Wet food is best. Cats do not drink enough water to compensate for eating dry food. To avoid health problems in the future, it is best to stick to wet food if possible. Some cats become addicted to dry food and do not like switching back to wet food (refuse to eat). Your kitten has not been exposed to dry kibble and so you should not have any issue.

Switching food too quickly can cause intussusception, which is a fatal folding of the intestine. Signs are frequent vomiting and diarrhea. Immediate veterinary care is needed.

Kittens play with the water, so you will want to protect your floor where you place the water dish and prevent the dish from tipping over. You can place it in a heavier, larger dish.

\*At the time of writing this, Turkey, Tender Liver & Chicken, and Beef flavours, did not have the added colour Red 3 which is known animal carcinogen (<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov>). According to the website, Red 40, Yellow 5, Yellow 6 were contaminated with carcinogens including benzidine.

LITTER & BIN

An extra-large, non-enclosed litter bin works best. The bin should be one and half times the length of your kitten. Choose either a heavy litter bin, or a heavy litter so that the bin won’t tip if the cat puts weight on the edge. We use maple wood pellets filled 2-3 inches deep. We find wood or paper pellets the least dusty and the most environmentally friendly. You can transition your cat to a litter of your choice by putting half a bin of pellets and half a bin of your new litter. No need to mix them together.

Scoop poops as soon as you notice them. Kittens should be pooping 1-2 times per day. Scoop pees at least once a day. Kittens should be peeing a minimum of three times a day. Once a week, empty all the litter into a different container and clean out the litter bin with a bit of 1:1 vinegar to water. Plastic litter bins should be recycled every 6 months. You can purchase a large, stainless steel bin (or deep food steamer tray) which will not need replacing.

You can also train your kitten to use a human toilet. It is completely possible! Expect the process to take about 8 to 10 weeks. Many items are available on the market – Litter Quitter, City Kitty, etc. You can also just find tutorials online for how to make your own system with a colander that fits your toilet or a turkey tray with a hole cut in the bottom.

GROOMING

Groom daily with a stainless steel comb and grooming glove. Run your hands all over your kitten to get used to what is normal so you can learn to recognize unusual lumps early. A sanitary trim (not completely hairless) of the kitten’s bottom is recommended monthly for any long-haired kitten. I would also recommend a trim of belly and armpits (also, not completely hairless – can be done with human grade shaver rather than the widely spaced tines of the pet shaver which can cut the skin too easily).

Use a re-useable de-linter to run along any areas your cat sleeps or uses, like the cat tree or cat bed. Vacuum regularly to get rid of loose hairs on the floor that could get ingested. These steps will help decrease the frequency and severity of hair-logs (hairballs). Long haired breeds are not the wild type and do need human help to keep their coat in proper condition. If a hair-log gets too big, it can cause a life-threatening blockage if the cat cannot get it out. Ideal diet with enough oils and moisture lets the hair either pass through the digestive tract, or helps it come back out.

You will want to trim your kitten’s nails weekly up until they are 1 year old. This makes handling your cat much more pleasant and prevents an innocent startle response from becoming a trip to the first aid cupboard.

SCRATCHING POSTS & CAT TREES

Ensure the size is appropriate for your kitten’s abilities. A very tall cat tree for a young kitten can result in a fall from a height that could cause injury. As well, ensure the tree is secured to the wall if it is not weighted enough or unevenly weighted. Remove any dangling items that have long elastics or have bells that can be easily swallowed.

Expect that the cat tree will have parts that will wear out, especially the scratching areas. See if you can find either good quality (larger sized) sisal rope on these areas or be willing to re-wrap these later. Be aware that some cat trees are indoor only. If you put them outside (even undercover) they will become wobbly. Repair or replace wobbly cat trees. Outdoor cat trees can be cleaned better if your cat has an accident on it.

Scratching posts are vital. You will need horizontal and vertical ones. Cardboard scratchers wear out quickly so you may wish to get longer wearing alternatives. One scratching post per cat minimum as these are territory markers as well.

TOYS

Boxes. Sheets of paper. Crumpled up balls of paper. A ball with a bell in it. A stick with a string tied to it. It really doesn’t have to be expensive. There are also lots of interactive toys out there, but nothing replaces human-cat play time. A caution on laser pointers – these can be frustrating to the cat as there is nothing for them to catch. Always end all play sessions with a bit of food or a treat.

BEHAVIOURS

If you find your kitten developing a behaviour you don’t enjoy (biting your fingers, etc), reward your kitten when they are NOT doing those behaviours. When the behaviour occurs, stop giving your cat attention and move away from them. At no point is there ever any reason to yell, hit, or physically punish your cat. This will just make your cat fear you and not want to be around you.

Most unwanted behaviours have a medical origin if they arise ‘out of nowhere’. A vet visit might be your first stop. Watch for urinating outside the litter bin, as this is your cat’s way of communicating a problem to you.

Please contact me by email at lionsgaitcattery@gmail.com if you are experiencing an issue and need help. I will do my best to help you or direct you to where you can find help. I hope you enjoy your new kitten!