



## **Guide to your new kitten**

Congratulations on your new kitten! We hope you are enjoying the recent addition to your family. This guide is a brief overview of kitten basics. To be at their best, cats have some basic needs; providing them will help ensure your cat's long-term health and welfare. If these needs are not met, your cat may feel stressed, which can affect both health and behavior. The following are some ideas to get off to the purrfect start.

### **Private Space**

- ❖ Cats seem to prefer having their own space, to feel like they are “in control”
  - ❖ Provide a private room complete with
    - ❖ Food and water
      - ❖ Bowls should be placed away from the litter box
    - ❖ A bed
      - ❖ The carrier with a soft pad inside is a great choice
      - ❖ Bed should be placed away from the litter box
    - ❖ A litter box
    - ❖ A scratching/climbing post
    - ❖ A window to look out of
    - ❖ Toys
  - ❖ Give your cat a few days to get used to these surroundings and to get the sense that this space is a safe haven
    - ❖ Spend some time alone with your kitten in the room so you can get to know each other
    - ❖ Provide praise for using the toys, litter box and scratching/climbing post



### **Elimination/Litter Box**

- ❖ Understanding the natural elimination habits of cats will help prevent problems from developing
  - ❖ Most cats are meticulously clean
    - ❖ They cover their waste and
    - ❖ Try to eliminate in areas that have not been used before
- ❖ Elimination is a basic need for biological reasons and for marking territory
  - ❖ To meet their territorial needs, provide at least one litter box per cat plus one extra
    - ❖ 2 cats = 3 litter boxes
      - ❖ Multiple boxes provide appropriate places to eliminate and mark territory without offending the household
    - ❖ A litter box should be located on every level of the home
- ❖ It is crucial that we provide positive litter box experiences so the cat will continue to use the boxes provided
  - ❖ Cats will avoid anything that has been associated with a negative experience
    - ❖ Difficulties getting to or into the box
    - ❖ Getting startled while using the box
    - ❖ Negative experience while leaving the box
    - ❖ Urinary tract conditions
- ❖ **Choosing a box**
  - ❖ Litter boxes need to be big enough for cats to enter and move around in
    - ❖ Larger pans provide a bigger area for the cat to eliminate in without stepping in the old eliminations
      - ❖ Kittens, older cats and cats with health problems may need easy entry and exit from the box
  - ❖ Uncovered boxes have easier accessibility
    - ❖ May not provide the privacy some cats desire
  - ❖ A covered box may be more attractive
    - ❖ Make sure the lid is secure so it can't move and startle your cat while using the box
    - ❖ May need to be scooped and cleaned more often to keep it appealing to the cat
      - ❖ Do not store the scooper or anything on the cover that could fall and startle the cat
  - ❖ Provide both types and keep using the one the cat chooses
    - ❖ If your cat uses both then keep both

## Choosing litter

- ❖ Research has shown that most cats prefer
  - ❖ Fine- grained litters
  - ❖ Scoopable litters usually have finer grains than clay litters
- ❖ Many cats prefer unscented litters
  - ❖ Do not place room deodorizers or air fresheners near the box
- ❖ Once you find a litter that your cat likes, stick with it.
  - ❖ Abrupt changes can result in the cat not using the litter box
- ❖ Your cat's health may require a dust free litter
  - ❖ If you need to change litter type, offer the new box or litter beside the old one and carefully observe the cat's response to the change
  - ❖ When it is time to return to the original substrate, put the litter pans with the substrate back in their original locations and observe observe the cat's response to the change
    - ❖ Upper respiratory infections
    - ❖ Asthma
    - ❖ Other breathing problems
    - ❖ Post surgical procedures
- ❖ How much litter to use?
  - ❖ Some cats prefer lots of litter, others want very little
  - ❖ Fill the box half way, vary the amount from shallow at one end to deep at the other end.
    - ❖ Observe where the cat eliminates
    - ❖ Proceed to fill the box to that level
- ❖ Location
  - ❖ Place in areas that provide
    - ❖ easy access for the cat, while providing some
    - ❖ privacy and a clear escape route
  - ❖ They must be located away from unexpected noises or being startled while in the litter box
    - ❖ Appliances
    - ❖ Air ducts
    - ❖ Another animal or human sneaking up on your cat
  - ❖ Box placed in an area that has a door
    - ❖ wedge the door open to prevent the cat from getting trapped in the area.
  - ❖ Placing a rug or placemat under the box helps to
    - ❖ Avoid scattered litter
    - ❖ Make it easier to keep the area clean
- ❖ Cleaning
  - ❖ Litter pans need to be scooped daily
  - ❖ Clean the litter pans once a week with water and a non-scented soap
    - ❖ Some circumstances require cleaning the boxes more often
  - ❖ Do not use ammonia or strong smelling cleaners for this job.
    - ❖ A cat's urine contains ammonia compounds and strong cleaner's may be toxic to the cat
  - ❖ Odor shouldn't be a problem if the litter box is kept clean.
    - ❖ If you find the odor offensive, your cat may also find it offensive and not want to eliminate there
    - ❖ A thin layer of baking soda placed on the bottom of the box will help absorb odors between scoopings



## Scratching

- ❖ Scratching is a natural and uncontrollable behavior of cats
  - ❖ Cats scratch to
    - ❖ Stretch the muscles and tendons of the
      - ❖ Toes
      - ❖ Shoulder
      - ❖ Neck
    - ❖ Mark their territory
    - ❖ Shed the outside nail husk to maintain good claw health
    - ❖ Decrease stress and unwanted behaviors
    - ❖ Declawed cats retain the instinct to scratch
  - ❖ The nails have multiple uses
    - ❖ Hunting
    - ❖ Defense
    - ❖ Balance
    - ❖ Grooming
  - ❖ Adolescent cats have a tendency to play rough
    - ❖ Sometimes violently by scratching
      - ❖ Their owners
      - ❖ Objects
      - ❖ Other pets
    - ❖ This behavior can destroy the bond between owner and pet



### ❖ Scratching Posts

- ❖ Provides cats with a safe outlet for scratching
  - ❖ Scratching posts should be stabilized to ensure that they don't move or tip over and scare/hurt your cat
- ❖ Cats often scratch objects near sleeping areas and room entrances
  - ❖ Scratching posts should be located in these and other "public" parts of the house that the whole family uses
    - ❖ Sleeping areas
    - ❖ Room entrances
    - ❖ Food/water bowls/litter box locations
  - ❖ In multi-cat households should have several scratching posts, both vertical and horizontal, throughout the house
    - ❖ Provides the cats with an acceptable place to leave their mark without ruining furniture and carpets
- ❖ Choose a similar material your cat most likes to scratch
  - ❖ Cats prefer scratching posts made out of rough material they can shred
    - ❖ Sisal (a coarse natural fiber) satisfies urge to scratch and is tough enough to stand up to repeated use
- ❖ Vertical (upright)
  - ❖ Cats that scratch chair legs or the corners of your couch may prefer a vertical scratching post.
  - ❖ Make sure that vertical scratching posts are tall enough so your cat can stretch up while she scratches.
- ❖ Horizontal (flat)
  - ❖ Cats that scratch rugs and carpets may prefer a horizontal scratching post or mat
  - ❖ Available in a variety of sizes and materials including sisal, carpet and cardboard

### ❖ Discouraging inappropriate scratching

- ❖ Considering your cat's demonstrated preferences, substitute similar objects to scratch
- ❖ Place the scratching post near the object you want the cat to stop scratching
  - ❖ Cover the inappropriate objects with something your cat will find unappealing
    - ❖ Double sided sticky tape
    - ❖ Aluminum foil
    - ❖ Sheets of sandpaper
    - ❖ A piece of plastic carpet runner with the pointy side up.
- ❖ Attaching cotton balls soaked with a citrus scent or perfume to inappropriate objects
  - ❖ Don't use anything that could harm the cat if she ingests it
  - ❖ Strong odors may cause nearby acceptable objects to be associated with the unpleasant smell
- ❖ Once your cat is consistently using the scratching post; it can be gradually moved to a location more suitable to you
  - ❖ It's best to keep the scratching post as close to your cat's preferred scratching locations as possible

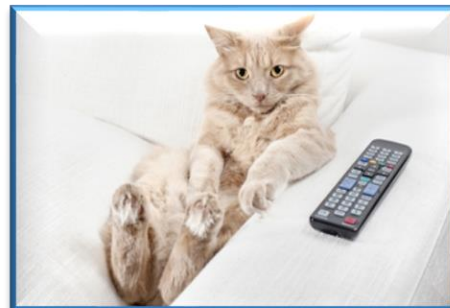
## Perches

- ❖ A perch is a *must* have for your cat
  - ❖ A perch provides a safe and private climbing area to watch the action from above
- ❖ A perch is anything that allows your cat to lie, sit, sleep or look outside from above
  - ❖ You can place a couch, sofa, chair, or sturdy table in front of a window, so your cat can look outside
- ❖ Perches come in a wide variety of shapes and sizes
- ❖ More than one perch is great so your cat can look outside at different angles
- ❖ A bird feeder in the yard, planting pretty flowers to attract bees, butterflies, and other insects will provide hours of interest
- ❖ If you prefer an area different than where your cat chooses, you will need to coax her to or place them to the area you *would* like for them to use



## Video Stimulation

- ❖ Cats like visual stimulation due to their hunting heritage
  - ❖ If our cat doesn't have a window to look out of, use a videotape of a nature show that has live action with
    - ❖ Birds
    - ❖ Fish
    - ❖ Rodents
    - ❖ Insects
  - ❖ These videos are great when you can't be around to play with them



## Toys

- ❖ Cats need a fun way to release energy and burn calories too!
- ❖ Cats like toys that *do* something, remind them of moving meals, enticing them to interact.
  - ❖ Squeak
  - ❖ Chirp
  - ❖ Jitter
  - ❖ Swing
  - ❖ Vibrate
- ❖ Identifying your cat's toy (prey) preference
  - ❖ Cats prefer to hunt specific creatures
    - ❖ Some cats prefer to chase mice
    - ❖ Others may prefer to catch birds or bugs
  - ❖ Identifying your cat's "prey preference" allows you to buy or make toys that your cat will be more likely to play with rather than ignore
  - ❖ You can identify your cat's prey preference by paying close attention to the way he/she reacts to toys
    - ❖ Find toys or objects that resemble birds
      - ❖ Feathers
      - ❖ Stuffed toys covered in feathers
      - ❖ Objects suspended in air
      - ❖ Toys making chirping noises
    - ❖ Entice your cat to play by making each object move and fly through the air.
      - ❖ Does your cat follow the object?
      - ❖ Does he follow all of the objects or ignore most of them?
        - ❖ If your cat seems to enjoy feathers and/or objects in the air, choose toys resembling birds
      - ❖ Put these objects out of sight
    - ❖ Find toys or objects resembling mice
      - ❖ Fur
      - ❖ Stuffed animals
      - ❖ Furry mice
      - ❖ Balls
    - ❖ Entice your cat to play by making each object move or roll past your cat
      - ❖ How does your cat react when you make each of these objects move?
      - ❖ Does kitty want to chase it?
        - ❖ If your cat prefers furry toys and/or toys moving on the ground, choose objects resembling mice
    - ❖ Try both "bird" and "mouse" toys at the same time by alternating them about every 20 seconds
      - ❖ Which does kitty prefer?
      - ❖ Does he prefer some of each kind?
        - ❖ Maybe he prefers both birds and mice!
      - ❖ Put these toys away
    - ❖ Find toys or objects resembling bugs
      - ❖ Laser toy
      - ❖ A string with a knot on the end
      - ❖ Dry food or treats tossed across the floor
    - ❖ Entice your cat to play by making each object shine or move
      - ❖ How does your cat react?
        - ❖ If your cat likes tiny objects with lots of movement, choose toys resembling bugs.
    - ❖ Try to alternate with "bird toys" and "mouse toys" to see which prey is best

