

FELINE CARE & TRAINING



Training

A young kitten is adaptable, affectionate, and fits into most families without difficulty. Call it by name when you feed it, and in a day or so it will come to you when called. Young kittens take frequent naps. If your kitten goes to sleep in another spot, pick it up gently and place it in its bed. Most kittens learn quickly, and soon prefer sleeping in their own bed.

Physical punishment such as spanking, hitting, shaking, or kicking is not appropriate discipline for a cat. Most cats can be trained by using loud noises such as clapping of the hands or shaking a can containing marbles. A water squirt bottle may also be used especially to discourage the cat from getting on counters or tables.

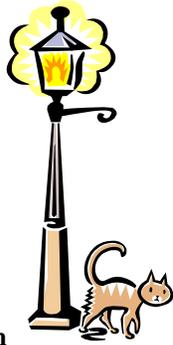


Your kitten probably has been trained to use the litter box by the mother cat. Training to eliminate outdoors is not recommended because of increased exposure of the kitten to parasites and disease. Also, outdoor cats will often eliminate in a child's sandbox or play area, increasing the possibility of exposing children to parasites or disease.

Inappropriate elimination, not using the litter box, is the most common behavior problem with cats. Many times it is the family's lack of understanding of the cat's personality and needs that causes this problem. First, have a complete physical for the cat explaining your problem to the veterinarian. The veterinarian will determine if the problem may be medical such as Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease, inflammatory bowel disease, parasites causing diarrhea, or other conditions.

Second, adult cats may mark their territory by "spraying." This occurs most often with non-neutered male cats; however, neutered male or female cats may mark territory under stressful conditions such as the presence of a new cat or move to a new home. Spaying or neutering your kitten early in life can help prevent this behavior.

Finally, changing the location of the litter box, changing the type of litter, washing the litter box with disinfectants or perfumed cleaners, not having the box cleaned often enough, or use of the box by another cat may all cause inappropriate elimination. Do not ignore this problem because if the cat urinates or defecates outside the litter box over a period of time, it may actually develop a preference for the new location. **Remember, there should be one litter box per cat in your household and each litter box should be cleaned daily otherwise your cat may not use it.**



Micro Chipping Identification

Identifying your pet can be a matter of life and death. It's a grim fact of life: Any pet can escape and become lost. Unfortunately, some are even stolen. Sadly, millions of lost and stolen pets never return home and end up being put to sleep if they aren't identified or adopted.

Micro chipping is an advanced pet-recovery system that could save your dogs and cats from being lost forever. A tiny, easily injected microchip identifies your pets for life, plus a nationwide recovery program speeds your lost pet's return. Already HomeAgain has reunited hundreds of owners and pets! Currently, the number of dogs and cats chipped and enrolled in the national database is more than 50,000 and growing. Enrollment in the database is available to all dogs and cats, regardless of breed.

Permanent identification comes from a tiny microchip that's quickly and safely injected into your pet by a veterinarian. The microchip has a unique identification code that can be read with a hand-held scanner (like the scanners used in grocery stores). A rapidly growing network of more than 12,000 HomeAgain scanners has been placed with animal shelters and veterinarians nationwide. When your pet is found and brought to a shelter or veterinarian's office:

- A scanner reads the Micro chipping ID code.
- The ID code is called in to the national database, available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, through an 800 number.
- You are contacted immediately and every possible step is taken to reunite you with your pet.



Please remember to always transport your cat in a carrier when visiting our office or transporting your cat anytime outside. Even the most docile cat can become frightened in an unfamiliar environment.



Declawing

Whether or not to declaw your kitten can be a very personal decision. Because cats and kittens instinctively want to sharpen their claws, they can be very destructive to furniture and drapes. Providing a scratching post may help as long as you are there to discourage your kitten when he or she begins to claw at the furniture. If this is not possible, you may need to consider declawing.

Because cats do not use their distal digits (the claw part of the toe) for support when they walk, declawing should not affect the way you cat moves. Usually it is only necessary to remove the front claws. The procedure is done under anesthesia. Postoperative pain relievers are given before your kitten wakes up to help prevent discomfort during the recovery and healing process. You will also need to use a special litter provided by our hospital for a few days after the surgery. If you have any questions about the declaw procedure, please do not hesitate to speak with your local Veterinarian.



Diet

Most kittens do best if they have food available at all times. This free-choice method works well with dry food. We recommend dry foods because there is typically less odor associated with these diets and less chance for spoilage. It is important to remember that kittens have different nutritional needs than adult cats. Therefore, we recommend feeding a kitten formula for the first year of your cat's life.

What you chose to feed your cat can affect how badly the litter box smells and how often your cat uses the litter box. Feeding a highly digestible diet not only lessens the trips to the litter box but also cuts down on the bad odors. The quality of the diet can also affect your cat's coat and teeth. Diets high in fats and oils can cause their coats to be oily and retain dirt. High fat diets can also cause tartar build up on their teeth creating bad breath and cavities. On the other hand, feeding a high quality diet not only keeps your cat cleaner but also healthier. There are several good diets out on the market. We recommend **Science Diet** pet foods simply because we trust the company and the quality of their diets. We also feed **Science Diet** here at our hospital. Again, the one benefit owners enjoy the most by feeding a high quality diet is the reduction in odors coming from the litter box. We usually have samples available. Please ask if you would like to try this diet.

- Information provided by Dr. Denise Smith D.V.M.