



Where stars are born

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Caring for your new kitten

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Caring for your new kitten

What do I need before I get my kitten?

Essential equipment

- Litter tray.
For a kitten: make sure it is low enough for the kitten to get into.
- Litter scoop: select one with holes large enough to suit your choice of cat litter.
- Cat litter: your kitten is used to Cat's Best Oko Plus, a wood-based clumping litter. A free sample is given to Cape Town collections. If your cat travel, we fill the travel litter box with this litter.
- Water container: a glass- or aluminium bowl.
- Travel box – used for the collection of the kitten as well as for future vet visits. A must if you want to show your cat.



Optional equipment

- Bedding: you may prefer to buy a cat igloo or similar enclosed sleeping cat furniture.



- Scratching post: they come in various sizes and shapes. Cats need to scratch – a good scratching post should assist to keep your furniture intact.

Food

- Upon collection in Cape Town, you usually receive sample kitten food packs from :
 - Hills, Royal Canin, Iams and Nestle Purina SuperCoat.
- From time to time the suppliers of the kitten packs run out of stock. You can ask your vet for them too.
- We recommend that you get at least a 2 kg packet of kitten pellets before you collect your kitten. Any of the above brands will be safe to use, because the kitten is used to them.
- Switching brands should always be gradual, else the kitten's tummy may get upset.
- If you switch to different food, always introduce it at a rate of 20 (new) : 80 (known) for the first day or two.
 - If the kitten's tummy is not upset, increase at a rate of 40 : 60, then 60 : 40, then 80 : 20 and then 100%.

Relocation tips

Room preparation

- Prepare a room with no other pets and for which you can close the door.
 - Set up a litter tray.
 - Set up water and kitten pellets – not too near litter tray.
 - Set up cat furniture: place to sleep, scratching post, etc.
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The “PLACE OF SAFETY” rule

- The golden rule in re-homing any cat (kitten or adult) is the “**PLACE OF SAFETY**” rule. It works like this:
 - The cat felt safe in its known environment. Home was its “PLACE OF SAFETY”.
 - During travel the container becomes the temporary PLACE OF SAFETY.
 - In the new home the travel container is initially the cat's only known PLACE OF SAFETY.
 - Allow the cat to get out of its PLACE OF SAFETY at its own pace.
 - Assure that the cat can retreat back to its previous PLACE OF SAFETY whenever it feels threatened.
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Orientation: litter and food

- Once the kitten is out of the travel box or igloo and seems relaxed, it needs orientation on where the litter box and food are.
 - Place the kitten inside the litter box.
 - Also show it where the water and food are set-up.
 - It will probably not use the litter box or eat immediately, but will remember the location for future use.
 - Repeat above after a while until you observe that the kitten know where the litter box and food are.
 - Signs of needing the litter box are anxious meowing, scratching the floor (usually in a corner) followed by an upright sitting posture.
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Beyond the room

- Once settled and at ease in the relocation room, leave it to the kitten's pace to explore.
 - It will soon start to grow a circle of confidence as its PLACE OF SAFETY is growing wider and wider.
 - As the cat explores, the PLACE OF SAFETY will expand – first the room, then the house, etc.
 - If the kitten is the only pet, you can open the door of the relocation room when the kitten indicates that it wants to go out of the room.
 - Leave the door open in case the kitten wants to retreat to its PLACE OF SAFETY.
 - In a multi-pet house:
 - It is advisable to keep the new kitten separate for about two weeks¹.
 - The first couple of meetings with other pets should be supervised.
 - Make sure the kitten can dash back to its PLACE OF SAFETY if needed.
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Food

Dry food (pellets of kibbles)

- Cherie-Finesse kittens are raised on mother's milk and a variety of dry kitten food (Hills, Royal Canin, Nestlé Purina SuperCoat).
- Kitten pellets can be moistened with water, but it must not stand for longer than a day.
 - Moist pellets get stale fast and invites bacteria and fungal growth.
 - It is advisable to moisten in small quantities of about a teaspoon and rather repeat if needed.
- In Cherie-Finesse, dry food is the main diet.
- Cat food manufacturers claim that the chewing action helps to clean teeth from plaque, as opposed to moist food which sticks to the teeth and gums and encourages formation of plaque and tartar.
 - "The squeegee effect of the kibble scrubs the animal's teeth like a toothbrush" says Dr Fyvie of Hills.
- Allow treats from the human table only in MODERATION.
- Guide: A kitten should stay on kitten food until age 9-10 months.

Cow's milk

- Cow's milk in moderation will do no harm.
- Cherie-Finesse kittens are used to having cow's milk in moderate quantities.
- However, if the kitten develops a loose tummy, do not give milk.

Eggs

- Occasionally, raw, whisked egg is on the menu.
- Hard boiled egg, mashed with a fork, is also a treat.
- Again: moderation is the key.

Water

- Kittens (and cats) must always have access to clean, fresh water.
 - Change fresh water at least once or even twice a day.
 - When cats eat or drink, saliva gets into the bowls.
 - It is therefore recommended that water (and food) are never "topped up".
 - Wash water bowls daily, preferably with a dish washing soap that contains disinfectant.
 - Glass or stainless steel containers are best for water, because plastic tends to collect grime over time.
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¹A 2 week "quarantine period is recommended, because, should the kitten have any latent contagious disease caused by fungi or viruses, most symptoms should show up within two weeks .

Litter

Litter type

- All commercial cat litters have good points and bad points.
- Cherie-Finesse uses Cats Best Oko Plus cat litter. The main reasons are:
 - There is no odor, unlike most other brands where odor is prevalent after a day or two.
 - The clumps are well-defined, do not break up when scooped and are easy to remove.
 - Dustbin hygiene – instead of collecting feces in bags to put in the dustbin, it is easy to flush them down the toilet. Also: the clumps do not leave odors in the dustbin.
 - It has a good rating for bacterial / virus control.
 - Disadvantages:
 - The “normal” litter tends to scatter around the litter box.
 - In the process of “covering up”, fine dust in the wooden litter may get trapped inside the nail sheath and cause inflammation.
 - Some cats prefer not to cover up after using the litter tray. We believe it is the “feel” of the litter.
 - Oko plus developed a heavier product for longhaired cats, but it seems that the heavier litter increases the reluctance to cover up.
- Clumping clay litter works well with adult cats, but should be avoided with kittens.
- Normal clay litter works well, but reluctance to cover up may occur. Normal clay also tend to trap odors.
- Crystals are preferred by many cat owners, but some report back that they

Litter tray

- Litter trays vary from expensive, custom-made models with hoods and lids, obtainable from pet boutiques, to an ordinary kitchen bowl obtainable from your local grocery store!
- Keep the litter tray tidy – Chinchillas hate dirty litter and will rather do their thing next to it than inside a dirty tray.
- An ordinary kitchen cooking spoon with large holes (used for pasta or taking things out of oil) works well as a scoop to remove solids out of the litter.
- Scoop wet patches and solids out of the litter at least twice a day.
- Disinfect the litter box and scoop regularly with household bleach (JIK). Let the container stand for a few minutes for the bleach to work properly.

TIPS:

- *Do not flush litter down the toilet – it clogs the drain.*
- *Clean the scoop after each use.*
- *Disinfect the scoop and brush regularly with household bleach.*

Scratch post

Scratch post

- A scratch post is a must!
- When deciding where to put your cat's scratch post, think of places where it spends the majority of his/her time.
- Sleeping areas are often a good place to put a scratch post as most cats stretch and scratch after waking up.

Health

Next visit to vet

- Abide by the dates in the vet certificate for your kitten's next visit to the vet.
 - A cat should have regular visits to the vet at least once a year.
 - As a rule, kittens should get their rabies injection from age 12 weeks onwards.
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De-worming

- Fleas are the main cause for lint worm in cats.
 - De-worm regularly at about **4-6 weeks interval**.
 - You need not take the cat to the vet each time: ask your vet for a small supply of de-worming tablets.
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Dental care

- A raw chicken wing or chicken giblets once a week is good for cleaning the gums.
 - If your cat seems to eat less than usual, inspect the gums for signs of gingivitis.
 - Bad breath is an indication that something is wrong – usually gingivitis, which can be seen as a red edge around the teeth.
 - Wampum Antibacterial mouth spray is a good remedy for bad breath.
 - Wampum recommends that one should use Antibacterial mouth spray each year for 10 consecutive days to clean tartar.
 - In addition to bad breath, other signs which indicate that your pet has oral disease include red and swollen gums, a yellow-brown crust of tartar around the gum line, pain in the mouth, a loss of appetite, lethargy and even depression.
 - If any of these signs are present owners should take their pets to the vet for a dental examination.
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Hair balls



- All long hair cats groom themselves and swallow hair in the process. To get rid of the hair, they cough up the hair ball once in a while. It is natural and you do not need to worry about it.
 - Feed a dry food that minimizes hairballs from forming.
 - A further aid to minimize hairballs is an ointment called **Animalax**. Get a tube of **Animalax** or other suitable preparation from the vet or your local pharmacy. Administer on a regular basis: about once a month, to prevent hair balls from making your pet uncomfortable.
 - Cats like to eat green grass, which in turn helps them to vomit the hair balls trapped in the tummy. Make sure you keep safe pot plants, as they may try to eat plants in stead of grass.
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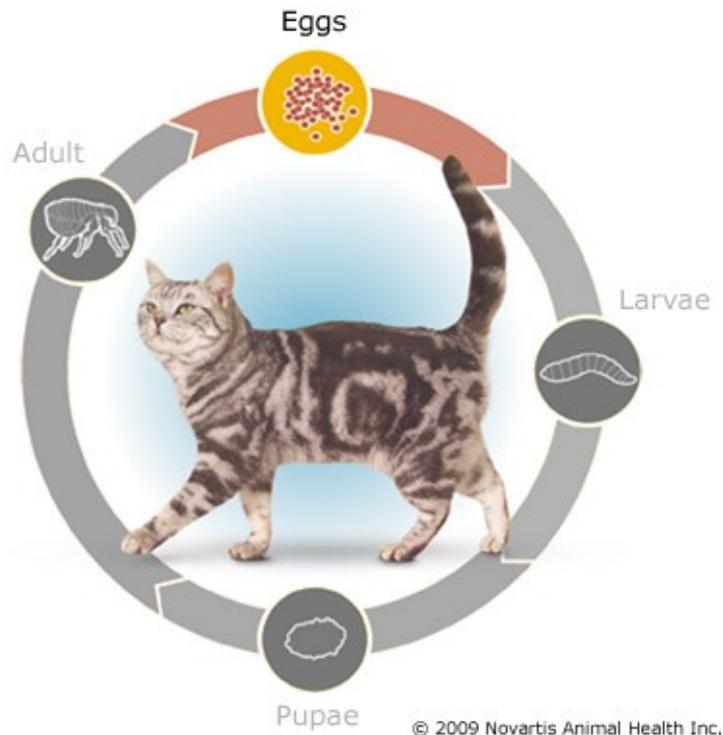
Loose tummy

- Corn starch ('Maizena') is a natural agent to settle a slightly loose tummy. It can be administered by mixing a teaspoon of Maizena with a teaspoon of water for a kitten. Use more for an adult. Administer orally with a syringe that has no needle.
 - However, if the tummy is very loose or the stool looks unhealthy or smell foul, consult your vet.
 - Watch out for dehydration (dry nose or tongue that develops a dark red outer edge).
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Fleas

Cat fleas

- The cat flea, *Ctenocephalides felis*, is one of the most abundant and widespread fleas in the world.
- Cape Town's weather is ideal for fleas.
- Flea eggs are blown all over the city and will land at your house, no matter what you do.
- To combat fleas on your pets, understanding of the life cycle of fleas is important: egg, larva, pupa, adult.



Egg stage

- The female cat flea lays her eggs on the host, but the eggs, once dry, are designed to filter out of the hair coat of the host into the resting and sheltering area of the host.
- Combat:
 - Medication like Program or Revolution prevent eggs from hatching – ask your vet.

Larva stage

- Eggs hatch into larvae, which hide from light.
- Flea larvae feed on a variety of organic substances, but most importantly subsist on dried blood that is filtered out of the hair coat of the host after it is deposited there as adult flea faecal material (called "flea dirt").
- Combat:
 - Spray environment, bedding and cat (Coopers, Fle-Go, etc.)
 - To eradicate fleas that are in carpets and the household, spray 30 minutes before vacuum. They are sensitive to vibration and can fasten themselves to the carpet poles.
 - Flea larvae thrive on dust and the vacuum cleaner is paradise for them: spray the vacuum cleaner bag as well.

Pupae stage

- Flea larvae metamorphose through 3 stages before spinning a cocoon and entering the pupae stage.
- Combat:
 - The pupae of the flea is very hardy and can only be killed through the use of flea-specific vapours (e.g. Doom Fogger).

Adult stage

- Fleas do not normally emerge as a young adult flea until the presence of a potential host is perceived by warmth, vibration or carbon dioxide production.
- Newly emerged fleas are stimulated to jump to a new host within seconds of emerging from the cocoon.
- The new flea begins feeding on host blood within minutes
- Combat.
 - Contact poison, like a body spray or drops (e.g. Advantage, Frontline, etc.) can be used. Be aware that some cats have sensitive skins and the flea substance may burn the skin.
 - For a quick, temporary “fix” to get rid of adult fleas, use **'Capstar'**, which is a pill. It works within minutes, killing all adult fleas on the cat, but lasts only 12 hours.

Grooming tools and products

Grooming equipment

A variety of grooming tools are required for optimal grooming. The essential ones are:

- Nail clipper
- Soft tooth brush
- Face cloth
- Combs
- Brushes
- Towels or suitable large chamois
- Hair dryer.

Optional

- Drying cage.

Combs

- Two types of combs are essential: a body comb and a face comb..
- The “Grey-hound” type of comb is a metal comb with strong teeth.



- Specifications for the Greyhound body comb:
 - Size: 190mm long; 30mm long teeth, 5 per cm & 3 per cm
 - Price as on December 2011: R160
- Specifications for the Greyhound face comb:
 - Size: 130mm long; 16mm long teeth, 5 per cm & 8 per cm
 - Price as on December 2011: R137

Shampoo

- **Never** use human shampoo on a cat.
 - Allergies: cats are allergic to some ingredients in human shampoo
 - I once witnessed allergy caused by a human shampoo – it was as if a bee stung the cat. The cat's face, eyes and respiratory passages swelled and the cat nearly died from suffocation!
 - The neutral pH of human shampoo is wrong for cats.
 - Cats need a slightly alkaline shampoo.
 - Cherie-Finesse uses only Wampum shampoo on our cats, plus Johnson's baby shampoo to clean near the eyes.
 - The following shampoos are recommended:
 - For kittens: Wampum Conditioning Shampoo Concentrate.
 - It is an extremely mild and gentle, high-foaming, nourishing shampoo containing a skin refatting agent. 100% coconut oil based. Hypoallergenic, antistatic and biodegradable. Ideal for long coated breeds and very sensitive skins.
 - Instructions: Rinse the coat thoroughly with lukewarm water. Dilute the shampoo by mixing one part shampoo with four parts warm water. Apply to wet coat and lather well. Rinse thoroughly.
 - Wampum products recommended for regular use on adults are:
 - Cat degreaser, followed by
 - Conditioning Shampoo Concentrate, followed by either
 - Conditioning Rinse Concentrate or Magic Rinse.
 - To avoid knotting, use Silk Spray Concentrate when blow drying and in-between baths.
 - For show preparation, use as above but use Pump-it-Up Shampoo and Volumising Rinse.
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Some general grooming tips

When to bath

This a most frequently asked question!

Answer:

- When the cat is obviously dirty from some external source.
 - Show cats: ideally: once a week, or every 2nd week. Make sure you understand your cat's unique requirements and prepare so that the cat has peak coat condition on show day.
 - Non-show cats: at least once every month, but always if the cat appears greasy and the coat is “smelly” - think of your own hair!
 - According to Dr Heidi Rolfes, founder of the Wampum shampoo range, the more hair is washed, the faster it grows!
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When to groom

- Daily, daily, daily!!!!
 - Avoid knots and mats!!!
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Knots

- Apply an oil-based product (e.g. Wampum Silk Spray) and leave for a few minutes.
 - Then use finger tips to part knots.
 - If a knot persists, rather cut it out than to hurt the cat.
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Eyes

- Keep eyes clean – daily.
- If tearing, press gently against the tear gland. (I use a damp, thin face cloth).
- If eyes tend to tear like “hay fever”ask vet for suitable eye drops (I use ExOcin).
- If eyes are red or look like it may have infection – consult vet.
- Corn starch powder applied regularly prevents staining. Be careful not to get it inside the eye.

Ears

- Keep inside of ears clean - weekly. (I use a damp, thin face cloth).
- If ears are very dirty, use a soft toothbrush that is wet with baby shampoo foam and gently brush from the inside to the outside, without letting water of foam get into the ear canal. Wipe dry with a soft, damp face cloth.
- If ear mites are suspected, consult your vet.

Nails

- Keep your cat's nail tips short by regular (weekly) clipping.
 - Especially the front feet!
 - Press gently on the toe pad to protrude the nail.
 - Clip only the sharp point of the nail.
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Things only a vet can do

Microchip

- Micro-chipping gives you peace of mind.
- All vets and SPCA's across the country (and world-wide!) have scanners that will identify your pet and link it to the owner's contact detail immediately!

Spaying / Neutering

ESN (Early Spaying or Neutering) is a standard and advisable practise to be performed at age between 12 – 16 weeks, in both males and females.

- Do not wait too long especially for males, because if done too late, the male may want to mark his territory by spraying, even after neutering.
- The ideal weight to sterilize a kitten is 1,5 kilogram.

Removing tartar

With **each** visit to the vet, ask for a proper dental inspection: at least one a year!

- It may be needed to remove tartar under general anaesthetic.
 - This will allow your cat to grow old with a full set of teeth.
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