



# Paws Reflect

KITTENS who are born to friendly mothers will generally grow up to be friendly cats themselves but it is not always possible to meet the mother cat.

Kittens are naturally curious, playful and trusting and unless frightened or tormented will grow up to be loving companions but it is best to avoid kittens who are shy or frightened.

Children should be taught to handle the kitten gently and to allow it to rest when tired.

Kittens require a series of vaccinations for protection against cat diseases. The first vaccinations are usually given at about 7 weeks old. If your kitten has not been vaccinated prior to adoption or purchase you should arrange with your local veterinarian to start the vaccinations series as soon as possible. The kitten should be kept inside until the vaccinations are completed. Kittens need a different diet than adult cats and, having small stomachs and big appetites, need up to four or five meals per day.

They should be fed nutritionally complete commercial kitten food which is available in both canned and dry forms. They should have access to fresh, clean water at all times. Food and water bowls should be shallow and clean. Cow's milk causes diarrhea in many kittens. Low lactose pets' milk is available.

Kittens should be wormed with a kitten worming product, available from your veterinarian, pharmacy or pet shop, every two weeks from the age of three weeks.

Cats have a natural instinct to cover their waste so providing a litter tray in a quiet, easily accessible part of the house and showing the kitten its location is about all that is usually required to litter train your kitten.

Most kittens will have been taught by their mother to scratch and cover their waste but placing the kitten in clean litter and scratching the litter will usually get the kitten copying you. For the first day take the kitten to the tray immediately it wakes up or after a feed. It will soon catch on.

Cats do not like to eat in their bathroom so avoid placing food and water bowls close to the litter tray as this can be one of the common causes of cats not using a tray.

Make sure the litter box is kept clean but do not clean it with disinfectants as cats dislike the strong smell of most cleaning products - hot soapy water is sufficient. Sometimes a disinfectant is called for. Make sure it is safe for cats and kittens.

If the kitten has an 'accident' it will be likely to return to the previously soiled areas so you will need to remove the odor. Never use cleansers containing ammonia as this will attract the kitten to the spot. Enzyme products are available from pet stores and supermarkets which not only clean but also will help remove the odor.

Scratching carpets and upright surfaces is a natural behavior for cats as they do this to remove the outer sheath of their claws. To prevent damage to furniture provide a sisal or carpet covered scratching pole. Praise and reward the cat when it uses the scratching post.

