



Positive
cattitude



**A POSITIVE CATTITUDE
for your kitten's
first year!**

Congratulations on the new addition to your household!

We know that you're excited about the years you'll have together – and we're excited for you! This first year of a kitten's life is very important. It's when kittens form the foundations of their social behavior and habits, and it's also a time when their health can set the stage for years to come. Now and forever VCA wants to be your partner in caring for your cat, to help provide you with the care you need and the advice you want!

We've created this booklet to give you information on how to care for your new kitten, and to help you record and keep track of important information. We hope you find it helpful – and that it helps you develop the Positive Cattitude that we're so proud of!

Remember, you can always find lots of information at **VCAcattitude.com**, too!

– Your VCA Team



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Welcome home

Things you'll need

Before or just after you bring your new friend home, you'll need to prepare a few things! Here's a checklist of items you'll need to create a welcoming environment.



BOWLS FOR WATER AND FOOD

KITTEN FOOD Speak with your veterinarian as soon as possible about your kitten's nutrition and the food you should buy. See page 10 for more information.

LITTER BOX AND SCOOP If you have more than one cat at home, you'll likely need to add at least one new litter box for your new kitten. You may want to try to cover or line the litter box, but keep in mind that some cats don't like this.

CAT LITTER Fill the litter box with about 1½ inches of litter and scoop it clean twice a day. Once a week replace the litter completely, and give the litter box a wash with a mild detergent before adding new litter. Some cats dislike particular types of litter, so if your new kitten won't use the litter box, you may need to try other kinds until you find one your kitten likes.

BRUSH OR COMB Most cats need to be brushed or combed to keep their fur clean and untangled. The method and frequency depends on a few factors — especially how long their hair is! Ask your veterinarian about the best way to groom your new kitten.

TOOTHBRUSH AND TOOTHPASTE Believe it or not, our kittens need their teeth brushed too! Buy a toothbrush and toothpaste made for kittens — never use human toothpaste on your pets — and make sure to follow the directions your veterinarian gives you for brushing your kitten's teeth.

NAIL CLIPPERS to keep those claws trim! Ask your veterinarian for advice about nail clipping. The most important thing is to keep clear of the pinkish section of the nail, called the *quick*. This contains nerves and blood vessels and will be painful and will bleed if cut.

KITTEN COLLAR Get one that has two or three extra holes so your kitten will have room to grow.

IDENTIFICATION TAG WITH YOUR NAME AND PHONE NUMBER Should your kitten get lost, having your contact information attached to the collar will help reunite you! For even better protection, ask your veterinarian about microchipping your kitten. We strongly recommend microchipping!

CAT CARRIER Traveling with your cat can be tricky, but there are ways to minimize the stress you may both experience! See page 15 for more information.

CAT BED Cats need up to 18 hours of sleep per day, so don't be surprised if you catch your new kitten napping anywhere you've left something soft out! Plus, giving your cat a bed can help create a safe space to go to if needed.

CATNIP Most cats love catnip, but their reactions can vary. Some will become very lazy, while others will get wired up and run around until the effect wears off. You can give catnip to your kitten directly, or you can rub it on a scratching post or toy to keep it interesting!

SCRATCHING POST One of the best ways to keep your kitten's claws off your furniture is to provide a better option! Buy a scratching post to help distract your new kitten from your new sofa!

CAT TREE One of the nicest ways to enrich your kitten's environment — especially in multi-cat households — is a cat tree. Cats love playing on them and climbing to elevated areas, plus cat trees often have integrated scratching posts.

PARASITE PROTECTION Keep your kitten protected from all kinds of nasty infections with the right parasite protection. Make sure you get advice from your veterinarian, as using the wrong kind of protection can be dangerous.

TOYS! Keeping your kitten entertained isn't just adorable, it's also important! By giving your cat stimulating toys you're encouraging active behavior and exercise. Try to play with your cat at least ten minutes twice a day to make sure this new member of your family gets enough activity.

TREATS! Everyone loves a treat, and your kitten is no exception! Use treats to train your kitten and to encourage positive behavior. (But make sure you don't overdo it!)

Welcoming your new kitten home!

There may be nothing cuter than seeing a new kitten explore a new home, but while you gaze at how adorable your fluffy feline is, it's also important to make sure your home is safe and kitten-friendly — and minimize fear and confusion for your kitten.

Make sure that there's nothing dangerous for your kitten to play with, such as loose wires, rubber bands or other small items. Also keep anything toxic or dangerous well out of reach, such as laundry detergents, insecticides and even plants!

When you bring your kitten home, allow time for exploration and getting acquainted with the new surroundings. If possible, try to be at home for the first few days so that your kitten can get to know you too! And don't try to rush anything, including introductions to new spaces in your home as well as to the rest of your family and friends (see page 12 for more on socialization).

Similarly, if you have other cats at home, wait about a week before you introduce them to your new kitten. When it's time (and you're around to make sure everything goes well), leave them in the same area to meet each other. Don't force them together though, as this might cause high anxiety!

Adjusting to your new home can be a difficult time for a kitten, so you want to make everything as calm and comfortable as possible.





What to do

- Make sure your home is kitten-friendly and that you have all the supplies you need.
- Kittens especially need lots of contact and interaction with their new owners, so take extra time with them.
- Create routines for your kitten to get used to, such as using the same food and litter (once you know what's best). And always call your kitten by name when it's feeding time!
- Introduce new people and places one at a time, always giving your kitten a chance to adjust.
- Keep your new kitten in a quiet place at first to minimize stress.
- Put your kitten's litter box in a quiet spot they like where they'll feel safe using it, i.e., away from dogs. In multi-cat households, each cat should have their own box in a different location, to avoid competition or aggression.
- In the case of inappropriate urination or spraying, ask your veterinarian about Feliway®, a non-drug product that often successfully stops behaviors related to cats' anxiety or stress.
- Keep track of vaccinations, monthly parasite protection, nutrition and other health requirements. (See page 26–27 for more.)
- Make sure you know what to do in case of emergency, including having contact information for emergency care services.
- If you're worried (or even just curious!) about anything whatsoever, give your VCA animal hospital a call. We're here to help and provide information to keep your cat healthy.

Keep them well away from these common toxic substances

Kittens can get just about anywhere, so make sure all hazardous items and materials are locked away or well out of reach!

HAZARDOUS ITEMS

- Prescription and over-the-counter medications — for humans or pets
- Estrogen creams — any direct contact
- Recreational drugs
- Tobacco products
- Potpourri
- Household cleaners (detergents, disinfectants, bleach)
- Insecticides (rodent bait, snail bait, mothballs)
- Automotive fluids (antifreeze, oil, gasoline)
- Compost, cocoa mulch and garbage
- Plants/flowers*

HARMFUL FOODS

- Chocolate, gum and candy
- Avocados and wild mushrooms
- Onions and garlic
- Raw yeast dough
- Grapes and raisins
- Salt
- Macadamia nuts and walnuts
- Alcohol, coffee and tea leaves
- Milk and raw eggs
- Human food (spoiled, fatty, raw, undercooked)
- Xylitol — a sweetener used in many sugar-free gums and mints



What *not* to do

- Don't bring a new kitten home to a chaotic or noisy environment, like a birthday party or holiday celebration. This can be very scary and disorienting for a new kitten. (If you're giving one as a gift, consider bringing the kitten home a few days before or after the celebration.)
- Never hit a kitten, and don't punish them for something that happened a while ago. Cats don't generally react well to punishment, and if you try to punish them for something that happened while you were out, they won't understand.
- Don't try to make your kitten share with other pets. If you already have pets at home, make sure all have their own food, litter, toys, etc. And make sure you give each one equal attention!
- Don't let your kitten play with string or ribbon unsupervised. These can choke your kitten or be dangerous if they're swallowed.

Nutrition and exercise

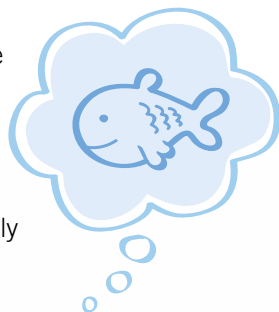
Kittens grow up fast!

They develop 75% of their adult body weight in the first six months, so it's vital that you pay attention to how you feed your kitten. It's also important to regularly play with your kitten to help establish an active lifestyle.

Your kitten should be weaned off his mother's milk around seven weeks old, and you should make sure that you're providing a well-balanced and nutritious diet to help maintain a healthy growth rate. (Ask your veterinarian for suggestions about the best food options for your kitten.)

At six months of age you need to start making sure you aren't overfeeding your kitten. Don't offer food more than twice a day at this point, and keep an eye on serving sizes. Once your kitten is one year old you can switch to adult food, though you may need to make the change gradually so your kitten can get used to it.

You can give your kitten human food occasionally. (It can be hard not to if you have a kitten who begs at the table!) But never give any cat onions, chocolate or dairy products (see page 9 for other harmful foods). These can cause discomfort, and can even be poisonous to kittens!



Make sure you and your kitten build healthy eating and exercise habits together from day one!



Nutrition is especially important because in recent years we've seen negative trends in pet obesity and poor fitness, which can lead to serious health concerns. To keep your kitten's nutrition on track, we'll monitor weight and growth from your first visit and recommend particular foods if it seems necessary. We'll talk about nutrition and exercise again on your cat's 1st annual visit at about 15 months old. We'll make sure feeding and exercise habits are in place to keep your cat at a healthy, happy weight.

Check out **VCABigPetProject.com** to learn more about healthy pet weight.

And talking about your kitten's growth, do you know how old your cat is in human years?

In just one year a kitten will grow the approximate equivalent of fifteen human years! Use the chart below to get an idea of how your cat will age – but keep in mind this is just an approximation!

CAT'S AGE = HUMAN YEARS

1 year = 15 years	6 years = 40 years	11 years = 60 years	16 years = 80 years
2 years = 24 years	7 years = 44 years	12 years = 64 years	17 years = 84 years
3 years = 28 years	8 years = 48 years	13 years = 68 years	18 years = 88 years
4 years = 32 years	9 years = 52 years	14 years = 72 years	19 years = 92 years
5 years = 36 years	10 years = 56 years	15 years = 76 years	20 years = 96 years

Socialization

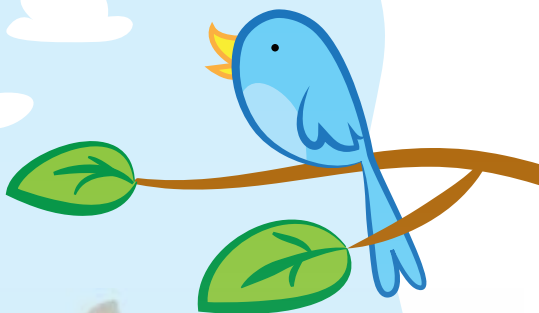
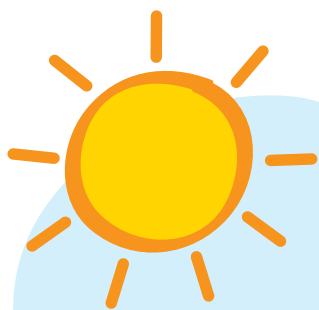
The first three to four months of your kitten's life can have a major impact on how friendly and comfortable she is around your family, friends and other people who come into your home.

Making sure your kitten is friendly and well adjusted to people is called socialization, and when it's done properly it can minimize problem behaviors well into adulthood.

The key to proper socialization is making sure your kitten gets used to new things at the right pace. Be sure your touch is familiar, and touch your kitten's paws, ears, mouth, back, legs and tail frequently. More petting time makes for easier claw trimming and tooth brushing later on.

Introduce new people and places slowly, always giving your kitten adequate time to adjust. And when you do introduce new people, have them touch your kitten's paws, ears and mouth, too! This will help keep your kitten less stressed when your veterinarian does the same thing during a checkup! Introductions to other pets should also go at a slow pace, and wait to schedule those play dates until your kitten has been vaccinated to make sure there are no health risks.

Every time your kitten is friendly with new people and pets, offer a treat and some attention to associate the good behavior with a positive experience.



Traveling with your new kitten

One of the most common reasons cats don't see their veterinarians as often as they should is the resistance they give when it's checkup time!

In fact, almost 60% of cat owners report their cats dislike being placed into a cat carrier and transported by car, and almost 40% of them said just thinking about it was stressful! Form good habits by making sure your kitten is used to traveling early on.



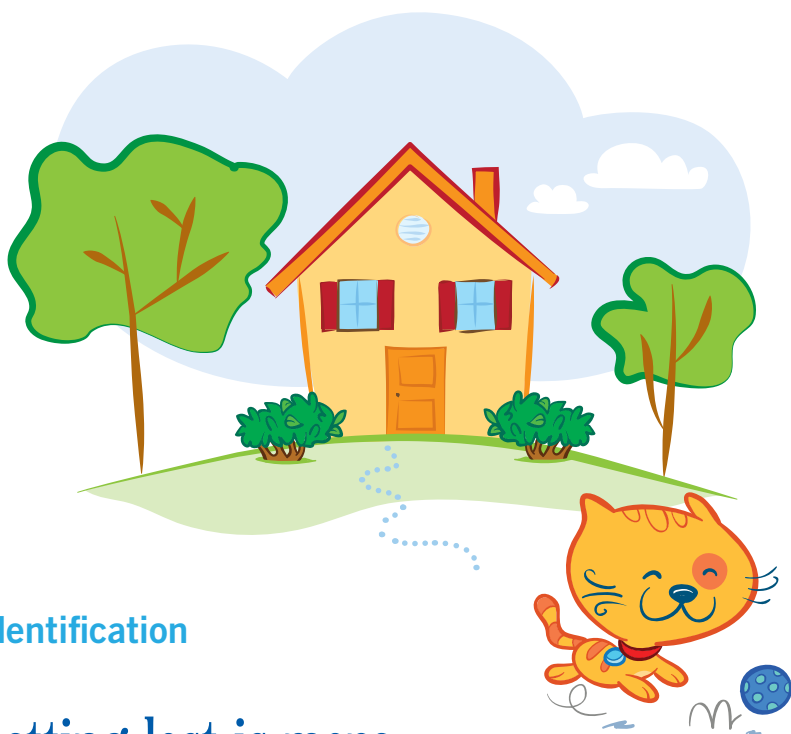
Many kittens are afraid of traveling, but there are easy steps you can take to help reduce the stress. Kittens and cats get very attached to their homes and are often afraid of foreign territory, so they rarely enjoy being taken on trips. Here are a few tips to minimize your stress when you take a trip!

- Before you plan on taking your kitten on a trip anywhere, leave your cat carrier open in your house for your kitten to explore, and line it with blankets and toys so that it's filled with familiar smells.
- If you're planning a long trip, try taking some shorter practice trips first (either to pleasant destinations or just around the block a few times!) so that the experience isn't as strange.
- When it's time to go, wipe your carrier with Feliway® wipes, which contain a pheromone that calms cats.
- Wrap your kitten's body in a towel and slowly place the bundle in your carrier. Avoid forcing your kitten into the carrier as this will only make it more frightening and may reinforce a long-term negative response.
- While on the road, seatbelt the carrier in and avoid loud, disturbing music. You may also want to cover the carrier to reduce frightening sights!
- Visit [VCAattitude.com](https://www.vcaattitude.com) to watch a video on how to train your cat to be comfortable in a carrier.
- And don't forget to ask your hospital about our **free** VCA Cat Transportation Kits*, including a carrier and plenty of samples and information to make your trip easier!



*While supplies last.





Identification

Getting lost is more common than you might think!

One in three pets will get lost in their lifetime, and even worse, 90% of them never make it home. We want to minimize the chances that you and your new kitten get separated, so in addition to a secure collar that includes a tag with your name and contact information, it's important to have your kitten microchipped and enrolled in a reliable recovery program. The very tiny microchip is implanted just underneath your cat's skin, and can be scanned and read by veterinarians and shelters all over the country to make sure that you and your pet can be reunited, even without a collar (which can often become lost). Ask us about this quick way to keep your pet safe!

A healthy start!

Perhaps the most important thing you can do for your new kitten is to make sure that you provide the healthcare needed to live a long, healthy and happy life.

New kittens' immune systems aren't fully developed, so they are vulnerable to a number of health concerns. Just like babies, their ability to fight off infections depends on the antibodies they receive from their mothers' milk, and this can vary from one cat to the next. Additionally, many kittens have parasites that need to be treated before they cause damage.

On page 26 you'll find a medical record that you and your veterinarian can fill out during your first year of care to keep recommendations and treatment information all in one place.



Your veterinary team

We want to be your kitten's best friend... after you, of course!

During your kitten's first year you should come see us at least three times to get the best preventive care. At each visit we'll make sure your kitten's vaccinations and parasite treatment are up-to-date, and we'll give you information on what to do next to take care of your kitten. Together, we'll establish an important health baseline for monitoring your cat's health for years to come.

Your whole VCA team will take the time to get to know your new pet. Our goal is for you and your new kitten to always feel welcomed and at ease every time you visit.



Vaccinations

Newborn animals have not yet had a chance to develop their own immunity, so they need protection against infections present in their environment.

Kittens receive some immunity from their mother in the form of maternal antibodies, but they are only temporary, declining steadily and usually gone by the time your kitten is twelve weeks old.

Vaccination is key to protecting kittens, as many infectious diseases are fatal to cats. Follow-up booster vaccines are given to kittens because it's impossible to know exactly when they lost the protection they got from their mother. We always recommend non-adjuvanted vaccines whenever possible.



If the antibodies decline too soon, a kitten can be left very susceptible to disease. We will advise you on your kitten's vaccinations, based on his relative risks and lifestyle. We recommend spreading these vaccines across 3–4 visits in your kitten's first year to make sure your kitten's system isn't overloaded and to maximize the immune response. After that, your kitten will require annual booster shots, starting at the 1st annual visit scheduled 12 months after the last kitten vaccination.

Vaccines recommended for all kittens include:

- **Feline panleukopenia virus (FPV – distemper)**
- **Feline herpesvirus-1 (FHV-1 – rhinotracheitis)**
- **Feline calicivirus (FCV)**
- **Feline rabies virus**
- **Feline leukemia virus**

(FeLV): We recommend 2 doses of this vaccine for all kittens.



Parasite prevention and treatment

Some parasites can cause discomfort, while others can be much more dangerous.

Thankfully, preventing and treating parasite infestations and infections is easy and effective (as long as you follow your veterinarian's recommendations!). Here are the most common parasites we will help protect your kitten from, starting the moment you first come to see us.

Fleas

Fleas aren't just irritating for your cat! They can transmit diseases and even other parasites, such as tapeworms. Fleas are also sometimes the cause of serious allergic reactions in pets. Left untreated, fleas will reproduce exponentially and eventually infest your whole household, which means you'll probably find yourself scratching too! Flea control is available in various forms and easy to use. Ask your VCA veterinarian what's recommended for your kitten, and be sure to follow these recommendations carefully, as some products meant for adult cats or dogs should never be used on a kitten.



Heartworm

Heartworms are very dangerous worms that live in the heart, blood vessels and lungs. Although heartworm disease is more common in dogs, a cat can become infected if bitten by a mosquito, and in some cats, heartworm disease leads to severe damage and even sudden death with no warning signs. Preventing heartworm infestations is easy, and your veterinarian will suggest the protection best suited for you and your new friend. Don't leave your cat unprotected!

Ear mites

Ear mites are tiny parasites that live in the ear canal. They are transmitted by direct contact from an infected animal (for example, from mother to kitten!). They often cause severe itching in the ear canal, so a telltale sign of infection is persistent scratching in and around the ears. Each time your kitten comes to see us, we'll take a look to make sure your kitten isn't infected.

Intestinal parasites

Intestinal parasites, such as roundworms, *Giardia* and tapeworms are very common in kittens. Roundworms and *Giardia* can be ingested from the environment, and tapeworms can be contracted just by swallowing a flea! Your VCA veterinarian will test and deworm your new kitten with safe and easy medication so you don't need to worry. Periodic fecal tests are important to ensure that your cat remains free of intestinal parasites.

Evaluate your kitten's risk for intestinal parasites:

Yes No

- ☐ ☐ Has your kitten ever had fleas?
- ☐ ☐ Do you have more than one cat or other pets in your household?
- ☐ ☐ Does your kitten spend any time outdoors?
- ☐ ☐ Does your kitten catch rodents, cockroaches or other prey?

If you answered yes to one or more of the above, your kitten could be at risk. A recent study revealed that intestinal parasites (roundworms or hookworms) are found in approximately **1 out of every 4 cats** admitted to shelters in the U.S.*

Spaying and neutering

Having your kitten spayed (female) or neutered (male) helps control pet overpopulation, and can have health benefits for your pet.

Spaying a kitten can significantly reduce her risk of developing certain cancers and infections later in life, and neutering a kitten can prevent him from marking territory (like your furniture!) with urine, as well as behaving aggressively with other males, which can lead to bite wounds and infections. You can spay or neuter your kitten as early as 2–3 months, and it is best to spay before the first heat cycle and neuter before your kitten starts marking territory. Spaying or neutering your kitten is the right thing to do — for more than one reason!



In the event of an emergency



Here are some signs that emergency care may be needed:

- Sudden collapse or difficulty standing
- Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath, or coughing with accompanying/apparent distress
- Swelling around the face and mouth
- Seizure
- Paralysis
- Persistent limping
- Eye injury

- **Stay calm** and, if applicable, make sure that no further danger to you or your pet is present.

- **Keep your kitten warm, comfortable** and as **calm** as possible. If there has been an injury or if there's any chance of a **broken limb, keep movement to a minimum.**

- **Call your veterinarian or an emergency animal hospital.**

Phone number:

- If you think that there is an **injury to the spine or neck**, you may be asked to strap your cat to a solid, flat surface with athletic tape for immobilization.
- Make sure to **never block your kitten's air passage.**
- Bring your kitten in to see us, or an emergency animal hospital, **as quickly – and safely** – as possible.

Your kitten's medical record

WEIGHT	RECOMMENDED DIET	AMOUNT
First visit:		
Second visit:		
Third visit:		

VACCINES	Date 1 ST SHOT	BOOSTER #1	BOOSTER #2	BOOSTER #3

PARASITE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT	Administration Instructions	Frequency	Start – End Dates (mm/dd/yy)
☐ Intestinal parasites			Start ___/___/___ End ___/___/___
☐ Heartworm			Start ___/___/___ End ___/___/___
☐ Fleas			Start ___/___/___ End ___/___/___
☐ Ear mites			Start ___/___/___ End ___/___/___

OTHER PRESCRIPTIONS (SPECIFY)	Administration Instructions	Frequency	Start – End Dates (mm/dd/yy)
			Start ___/___/___ End ___/___/___
			Start ___/___/___ End ___/___/___
			Start ___/___/___ End ___/___/___
			Start ___/___/___ End ___/___/___

SPAYING OR NEUTERING

☐ Date:

MICROCHIPPING AND ENROLLMENT

☐ Date:

Your kitten's important information



Useful Information

Your VCA Animal Hospital:

Telephone Number:

Your Pet's Doctor:

Your Pet's Microchip Number:

Emergency

VCA Emergency Hospital:

Telephone Number:

Poison Control

Telephone Number:

Cat Sitter:

Telephone Number:

Your kitten's milestones!

Name:

Date of Birth:

Used the litter box

Recognized me

Came to me when called

Had picture taken

Got on Facebook

Lost a first baby tooth

Got up on the couch without help

Got on the bed without help

Slept all night with me

Met another pet

Went on a trip

.....

.....

.....

VCA recommended products

Here are some of our favorite products for your new best friend!



VCA, CAPC and most major veterinary associations including the AVMA agree that all pets should be protected against parasites year-round. Make it easy with **Vethical® Paradyne®!**



VCA recommends **Zoetis™ FELOCELL®** vaccines for your cat. FELOCELL 3 is for vaccination of healthy cats as an aid in preventing feline viral rhinotracheitis (FVR) caused by feline herpesvirus-1, respiratory disease caused by feline calicivirus (FCV), feline panleukopenia (FPL) caused by feline parvovirus (FPV). FELOCELL 4 adds protection against feline chlamydiosis caused by Chlamydia psittaci. FeloCell is a non-adjuvanted MLV vaccine.



PUREVAX®, the **Merial** line of feline vaccines, is developed with state-of-the-art technology just for cats and kittens. PUREVAX vaccines deliver everything needed to induce immunity without any of the unnecessary proteins or adjuvants. Adjuvants are additives that increase the immune response and may present potential risks to feline patients, such as injection site reactions and chronic inflammation. VCA proudly recommends PUREVAX Rabies and Feline Leukemia vaccines for your cat.



Stop unwanted cat behavior such as vertical scratching and urine spraying with **Feliway®** made by **CEVA Animal Health**. Feliway is a synthetic copy of the feline facial pheromone, used by cats to mark their territory as safe and secure. By mimicking the cat's natural facial pheromones, Feliway creates a state of familiarity and security in the cat's local environment, thereby eliminating the need for scratching and spraying. Feliway helps comfort and reassure cats while they cope with the challenging situation of adjusting to a new home.



Quality Nutrition to Improve Quality of Life™

Starting your kitten off with proper nutrition is a vital step in ensuring she'll grow into an active, healthy cat. Feeding her a properly formulated kitten food, such as **Hill's® Science Diet®** or **Hill's® Ideal Balance** pet food for kittens, helps fuel her growth and energy from day one.



From the time they're kittens until they're mature, cats' nutritional needs are constantly changing, and we believe their food should, too. Your cat's health matters, and that's why **Royal Canin®** offers a full line of nutrition designed for every life stage.



Even healthy-looking cats can be infected with intestinal parasites. Ask your veterinarian how **Profender® Topical Solution** may fit into your cat's treatment protocol.



You can use **CareCredit** over and over* either for follow-up visits with your veterinarian or to pursue the pet dentistry you've wanted. Whether it's an everyday checkup or an emergency surgery, we offer you special financing options, so you can worry about the important stuff. You know, like playing fetch and learning new tricks. Apply for CareCredit today — your pets are counting on you.

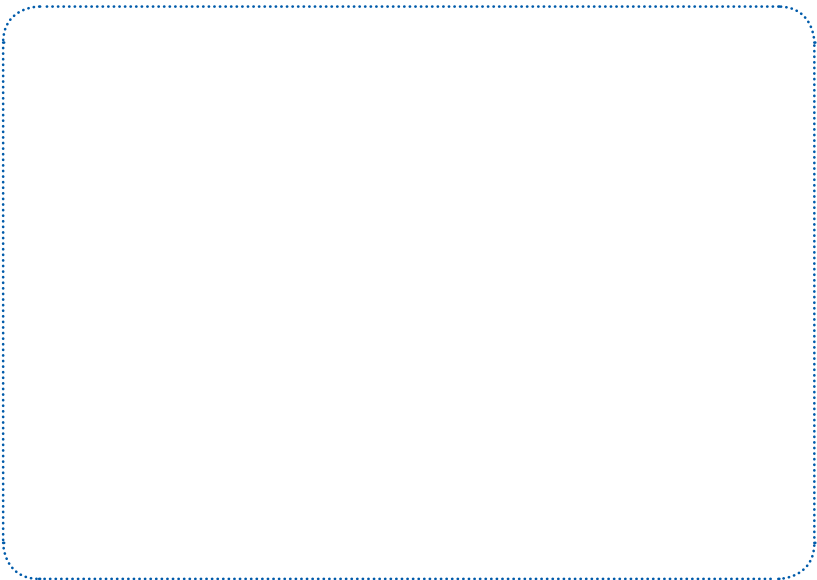
*Subject to credit approval.

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We know being a new pet owner can be stressful. If you have any questions or concerns, don't hesitate to contact us, we are here to help! Most importantly, your kitten is going to grow up fast, so take lots of pictures and have lots of fun with your new fluffy friend!



Learn more at **VCAHOSPITALS.COM**
or call **1-800-VCA-PETS (822-7387)**

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Animal Hospitals