



# Cat and kitten care



# Congratulations on adopting from SPCA!

Cats bring enormous joy into our lives and we wish you many years of happiness together.

This guide will help answer any questions you have about settling your new cat into your home, and how best to care for them. If you have any other questions or concerns after adoption, please call your local SPCA – we're happy to assist.

- 3 Preparing for your new cat
- 4 Essential info on arriving home
- 6 FAQs
- 7 Settling in – Advice and Tips
- 9 Food and Water
- 10 Health advice
- 13 Behavioural advice and training

Don't forget – we have lots of useful information on our website. Check out [www.spcan.z/catadvice](http://www.spcan.z/catadvice)

## Preparing for your new cat

### Cat shopping list:

- ✓ Cat carrier
- ✓ Water and food bowls or puzzle feeder
- ✓ Food
- ✓ Brush and/or comb
- ✓ Scratching post
- ✓ Safety collar and bell
- ✓ Soft bed
- ✓ Toys
- ✓ Flea and worm treatment
- ✓ Litter tray and litter
- ✓ Scoop for litter tray

### The journey home

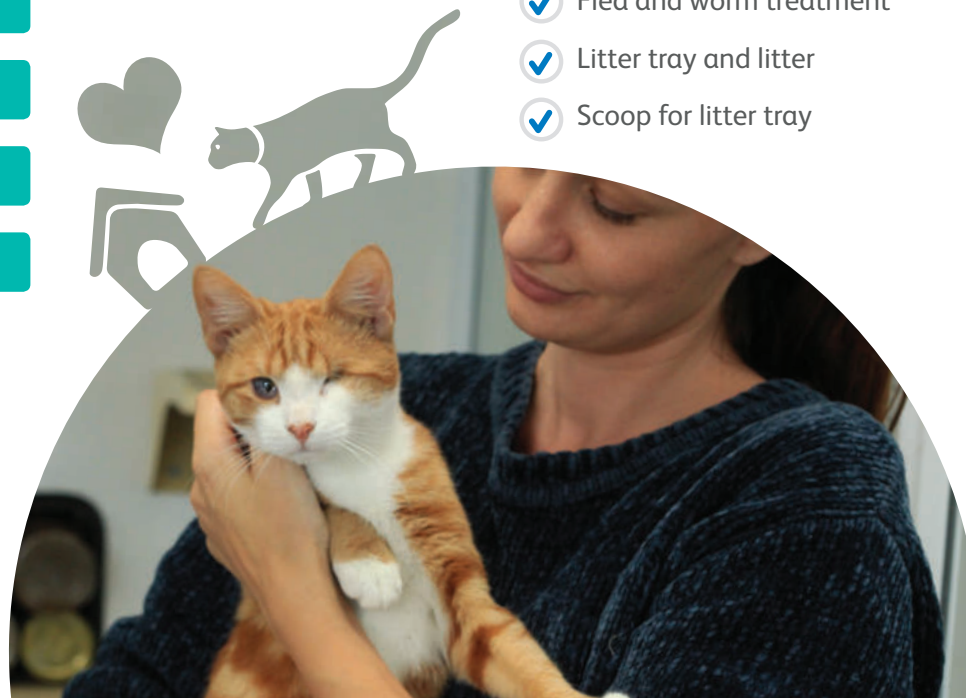
This is an exciting time for both feline and family! However, please don't open the cat carrier in the car on your way home.

Your cat may be scared and unpredictable during the journey, so it's safer to wait until you are inside the house and in your cat's new room.

### Pet Insurance

When your cat is sick or injured, it's a stressful time. To make sure you are prepared, we suggest getting pet insurance to cover the costs of unexpected illnesses and emergencies.

We recommend Southern Cross Pet Insurance – they offer a great range of insurance plans and are a brand you can trust.



# Essential information on arriving home

## Set up one room for your new cat

- > Ensure the room is quiet, secure, a comfortable temperature, and well ventilated.

## Make the room 'cat comfy'

- > Set up the room with water, food, toys, litter tray, a scratching post and somewhere for the cat to hide.
- > Cats like to be high up. Include some shelves or cat tower so your cat feels safe.
- > Provide a bed or comfy blanket to help your cat settle.

## Cat proofing

- > Remove any dangerous or breakable items, such as wires, curtain cords – anything a cat can get tangled in or chew through.
- > If the room has a toilet in it, keep the toilet lid closed.
- > Check your plants are not toxic to cats.

## Make sure that your new cat is not scared

- > Ask anyone in the house to try to keep quiet to avoid scaring your new cat.
- > Don't worry if your cat hides for a few days; this is normal behaviour as they settle into their new home.

## Let your cat explore the house slowly

- > After 2-3 days in one room, slowly introduce your cat to the rest of the house.
- > Do this room by room to avoid overwhelming them.

## Keep your new cat inside

- > Cats which are allowed to roam are at risk from traffic accidents, becoming trapped, poison, injuries, and infectious diseases.
- > Provide your inside cat with enrichment and rotate toys to keep them active and entertained.
- > Consider building a "catio" or cat-proofing your fences as a compromise between allowing your cats freedom and keeping them safe.
- > Cats that are not desexed should not be allowed outside until they have been.
- > Keep your new cat inside at first (adult cats – 1 month, kittens – 2 months).

## Introducing other pets

- > Keep all other pets away from your new cat initially.
- > For detailed tips on introducing your cat to other cats and dogs visit [www.sPCA.nz](http://www.sPCA.nz)



## Your cat's microchip

All SPCA cats are microchipped before you adopt them.

It is essential to keep the microchip details up-to-date if you move house or your contact details change.

Update your microchip details at:

[www.animalregister.co.nz](http://www.animalregister.co.nz)

## Introducing your cat to the family

- > Avoid introducing the whole family at once so as to not overwhelm your new cat.
- > Let the cat decide when they are ready and want to interact.
- > Teach young children how to handle them properly.



# FAQs

## Why should I keep my cat in one room?

This helps them feel safe and secure, and lets them establish their own territory. It's also easier for toilet training and cleaning.

## Should I socialise my kitten?

A socialised kitten grows into a well-adjusted, friendly cat. The most important time for socialising a kitten is between 3-9 weeks of age; however, it's still important to socialise them past this age. Kittens benefit from early exposure to family members, other pets, visitors, grooming, veterinary visits, travel in cars, using the cat carrier, the vacuum cleaner, and other life experiences.

## Why should I keep my cat on my property?

Cats which are allowed to roam are at risk from traffic accidents, becoming trapped, poison, injuries, and infectious diseases.

Keeping your cat on your property does not mean you have to keep your cat inside. Consider building a "catio" or cat-proofing your fences as a compromise between allowing your cats freedom and keeping them safe. Cats can also be trained to accept a harness.

Cats that live indoors need to have enough exercise and mental stimulation. The good news is there are lots of ways that you can enrich your cat's life.

Read more on our website here: [www.sPCA.nz/catenrichment](http://www.sPCA.nz/catenrichment)

## Should I have a vet yet?

Yes, just in case your cat becomes ill or injured suddenly. Check local websites or get recommendations from other cat owners.

# Settling in: advice and tips

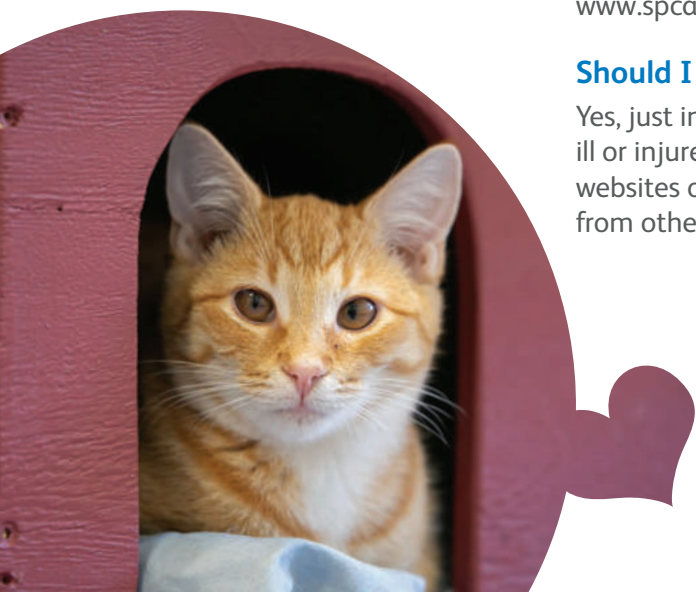
## Cat doors

If your cat is going to spend time outdoors, it's best they can go in and out of the house at their pleasure – a cat door is the best way to do this. Teach your cat to use the door by pulling a string or toy through it or put food through the door.

You might need to initially hold the door open for them to show them it opens by pushing it; or prop the door open.

## Litter tray setup

- > Cats like their litter tray to be at least 1.5m away from their food, water and bed.
- > For multiple cats, you will need at least one tray per cat, plus one extra, in different areas.
- > Most cats prefer a litter tray with a deep, unscented litter similar in consistency to sand that they can scratch around in – you can also use newspaper to line this.
- > Clumping litter is good as this makes it easy to scoop out their toilet waste in one go. However, best to avoid using clumping litter until your kitten is 4 months old as ingesting this could cause stomach problems.
- > Remove all waste at least once a day.
- > Keep it clean: Once a week or every few weeks (depending on the litter system you use) wash the trays in hot, soapy water or 50:50 water and white vinegar. Rinse well and avoid strong smelling detergents and perfumes.





### Litter tray training

- > Cats adopted from SPCA will already be trained to use a litter tray. However, moving to a new house can sometimes cause a few accidents.
- > Place your cat in the tray after eating or drinking, and randomly throughout the day.
- > Give a gentle stroke and praise them if they use the tray.
- > If you see your cat preparing to toilet somewhere other than the litter tray, distract them and quickly move them to the tray.
- > Use an enzymatic cleaner to clean up after accidents. Ammonia based cleaners do not remove the odours, and may encourage your cat to use the same place to toilet again.
- > Your cat may have accidents because either the tray is dirty (cats are very clean animals), the litter tray has moved or changed or a new cat moves in to the neighbourhood.
- > Sometimes inappropriate toileting can be a sign of an illness, such as cystitis or bladder stones, especially if there is blood in the urine or the cat is straining or urinating more frequently. If a sudden change in toileting habits occurs, take your cat to your vet.

## Food and water

### Feed your cat premium food

- > Cats need a good quality diet for all round good health and happiness. Cats adopted from SPCA have been fed PurinaOne – we recommend that you continue with this.
- > Kittens need special food to help them grow, but once they reach a year old they can move onto an adult diet.
- > Cats over seven years old need a special senior cat diet.
- > Cats with health problems often need specific kinds of foods; discuss the best diet for your cat with your vet.

### Foods to avoid

- > Dog food
- > Human food; this usually has salt, spices or additives which can be harmful or fattening.
- > Raw meat and fish; bones can splinter and get stuck in a cat's throat or gut. Provide only cooked meat and fish.
- > Tuna can be an occasional treat, but should not be fed regularly.
- > Milk: many cats are lactose intolerant and will get diarrhoea if they consume dairy products.

### Introducing a new food

- > Introduce any new food gradually over one or two weeks to avoid causing your cat stomach upsets.
- > Mix in the new food with the old, slowly changing the proportions.

### Choosing a food location

- > Provide your cat with a safe, familiar feeding location, and give each cat their own bowl.
- > Always have fresh water available inside and outside, and keep the bowls clean!



# Health advice

## Desexing

At SPCA, we believe desexing is one of the most important ways to prevent unwanted litters being born. All cats and kittens are desexed at our centres before being adopted.

Kittens can be desexed from as young as 8-10 weeks old or 1kg.

## Vaccinations

When you adopt an SPCA cat, they will be up-to-date with current vaccinations. However, be sure to check their health card for the due date of future vaccinations and arrange these with your vet.

### Fact:

A female kitten can get pregnant from **just 4 months old**, and a male kitten may start siring kittens at the same age.

## Fleas

Flea prevention and treatment are essential. Check their healthcare card to see when their next treatment is due.

### How do I tell if my cat has fleas?

- > Your cat may be itching and scratching a lot or grooming excessively.
- > You may see fleas or flea dirt in your cat's coat.

### How do I get rid of fleas?

You can get a quality product that can treat fleas and advice from SPCA or your vet.

## Worms

In large numbers, worms may cause life-threatening problems, particularly in kittens and older cats. In affected animals, common signs include:

- > A pot-bellied appearance
- > Abdominal discomfort
- > Lack of appetite
- > Vomiting and diarrhoea
- > Poor growth

However, in both kittens and adult cats with small numbers of worms, there may be no obvious signs of infection.

Some types of worms can also be spread to humans. You can get safe, effective worm treatment from SPCA or your vet – be sure to keep on top of this.

## Teeth

Cats are prone to a variety of problems with their mouth and teeth that may cause them pain, discomfort or difficulty eating.

### Signs that there may be a problem include:

- > Smelly breath
- > Obvious tartar on the teeth or gum
- > A broken tooth
- > Reduced appetite
- > Difficulty eating

Many cats can have dental disease without showing obvious signs.





### Ears

Just like people, cats are prone to ear infections.

**Signs of ear problems include:**

- > A head tilt
- > Discharge
- > Excessive shaking/scratching of their head.

If left untreated, ear problems can cause permanent damage, so seek vet treatment as soon as possible if you are concerned.

### Grooming

Regular grooming is a good way to bond with your feline and is a great way to keep an eye on their health. Some cats will also need their nails clipped, particularly older or less active cats.

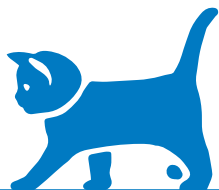
It is good to start grooming from a young age so that they become used to it.

You can pick up suitable combs and brushes and nail clippers for grooming from your local SPCA or pet store.

### Regular vet visits

By taking your cat for yearly check-ups, the vet can keep an eye on their health and spot any issues early.

Cats often hide signs of illness, so it is important to pay close attention to any changes in their behaviour or general health.



**Remember: Never give a cat human medicine (e.g. Panadol), as our medications can be harmful or even fatal to cats. If you are concerned about their health, head straight to the vets.**

## Behavioural advice and training

### Teach your cat good behaviour

When your cat demonstrates good behavior, reward and praise them profusely so they recognise what is good behaviour.

### Teach basic commands

Did you know that cats can be trained using positive reinforcement or reward-based training? You can do this by rewarding them with treats when they perform an action you have asked – the more you do this, the quicker they'll learn the trick. This can help keep your cat mentally stimulated and improve your bond.

Keep training sessions short – no more than 5 minutes and always end on a positive note. You can also teach them to respond to simple instructions, such as “no”. It is also a great idea to train your cat to enter and exit their carrier.

Cats can't be forced to do what you want and don't respond to punishment. Never smack or swat at cats, yell at them, shake them, or rub their nose in their urine or faeces if they toilet inappropriately. This is cruel, and your cat will become scared of you, making the problem worse.

### Confine your cat while training

It's best to confine your cat to one quiet room until they are trained. If you leave them to roam the house before they are comfortable, they may develop unwanted toilet and scratching habits.



## Scratching

Scratching is a natural behaviour for cats.

- > You can teach your cat to use a scratching post by dragging a string up the side of the post for them to follow, or scratch the post with your nails.
- > The scratching post should be taller than them when they are stretched out.
- > To redirect your cat from scratching other surfaces (like your furniture) try double-sided sticky tape to make it less appealing.

## Spraying

- > If spraying occurs, clean, eliminate potential causes and try to re-train your cat.
- > Make sure your cat has a number of litter trays, feeding and watering stations, hiding places, scratching posts, toys and vantage points.



For more tips and advice on inappropriately toileting, visit our website: [www.sPCA.nz](http://www.sPCA.nz)

### Your cat might spray for a number of different reasons:

- > If they feel insecure or threatened (e.g. with the arrival of a new pet, new human or in a multi-cat household).
- > If your cat sprays due to an outside threat, you may need to board up cat flaps to reassure your cat that the house is safe. If they continue to spray, you may need to re-train them. In this case, keep your cat in one room and use a Feliway diffuser to help calm them. Once the spraying stops, slowly reintroduce them to the rest of the house. If spraying continues, speak to your vet.
- > If a cat squats repeatedly as though trying to urinate but passes only a small amount or nothing at all, this can indicate a blockage in the urinary tract. Take your cat to the vet urgently, especially male cats.

## Biting and scratching

- > Kittens often bite due to sheer playfulness.
- > Avoid using your hands for playing, use a toy instead - wand toys are great for playing while keeping your hands out of reach!
- > If your kitten gets too rough, correct this by freezing and uttering a high pitched yelp; this will make your kitten freeze and then once they release your hand, pull away and immediately stop playing. Don't resume play for at least three minutes.
- > Some adult cats can also play rough – the same advice can be applied.
- > Never punish your cat for biting or scratching. Playful cats may interpret the reaction as a game, while fearful or aggressive cats may think they are being attacked and bite harder.

### Warning signs of a fearful or aggressive cat:

Sometimes cats give warning signs before play biting or grabbing you with their paws (sometimes with claws painfully out!).

#### This could be:

- > A twitch of the tail
- > A look in their eye
- > Ears being slightly swiveled backwards
- > Whiskers angling forward
- > A change in the position of their head







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