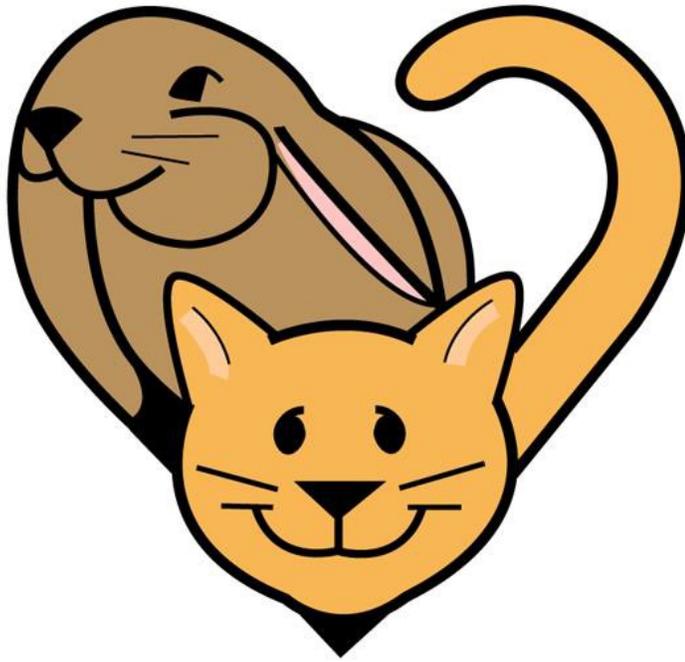


# Kitten Care



## Furry Friends Refuge

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515-222-0009

[www.furryfriendsrefuge.org](http://www.furryfriendsrefuge.org)

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# Kitten Care

## What do I need?

Quality kitten food

Food/water dish

Large litter box

Cat litter

Toys appropriate for the cat's age

Scratching post or kitty condo with sisal posts

Bed or cube or safe area for kitty to sleep in (and to stay in when you are not there)

## Food

Feed an unlimited supply of high quality dry or canned **KITTEN** food, or ideally both, until your kitten is 1 year of age. Your kitten should always have food available. Canned food can spoil if left out too long, so be sure to remove the uneaten food before adding more. Take your kitten to the veterinarian if they refuse food for a 24 hour period. Do NOT feed a kitten cow's milk. **WE FEED THE KITTENS AT THE SHELTER PURINA KITTEN CHOW COMPLETE.**

## Water

Your kitten should have access to clean water at all times.

## Toys

Provide lots of toys for your kitten, both toys they can enjoy alone, and those that are interactive with you. Kitty fishing poles are great toys used for you to interact with them. Balls, stuffed animals, play mice, scratching posts, and cat condos/trees are great toys for them to play with alone.

## Litter/Litter box

Purchase a litter box large enough for a full size cat. Weaned kittens are big enough to climb in the typical size litter boxes and it will save you from purchasing another litter box as your kitten grows. The covered type of litter boxes are not recommended and are very high for kittens to climb into, so go with a standard litter box that you can use for your cat forever. An automatic litter box is not recommended as the only litter box for a kitten as he or she may not use it because the noise and movement scares some kittens.

Place the litter box in the room where your kitten will be staying. To begin with, this should be a bedroom or other small room that will be their safe place, away from other pets, and where you can spend time with them. If your kitten will be sleeping with you, the bedroom would be a good choice. Never expect a kitten to travel to another room to use their litter box right away--it will take them a little while to adjust to the new environment. Additionally, at a young age, most kittens will typically not travel multiple rooms to use a litter box. Just like a toddler playing with his toys, kittens are easily distracted and may use the closest corner as a litter area. Never blame the kitten; it is up to you to return them to the litter box area as you would help a toddler with potty training.

You can move the litter box when your kitten is older and is comfortable navigating the entire house. This can be a different time frame for different kittens. At that time, you can move the litter box a small amount at a time until you get it to the room that you want, or you can purchase another litter box to put in the new spot and then slowly move this one to be beside it.

## Where will your kitty sleep? Where will your kitty be when you are not home?

These are questions you will need to strongly consider, preferably before your kitten comes home with you. The kitten should **NEVER** be brought into a home and given the entire house to roam right away. They should be kept in a separate small area like a bedroom where they sleep and where they can have their litter box and food close to them.

You can take them out into the other areas of the house for short periods of time after the first day and extend the periods of time based on their reaction. Again, remember a young kitten will typically not travel multiple rooms to use a litter box at a young age.

# Introductions with Other Cats/Dogs

**Slow, slow, slow.** Give the kitten time to adapt to the new home before introducing to the existing cat/dog. Give them at least a day or two before your first introduction to other animals. It is a stressful time for them and they will react better when they feel more confident. During this time, the new kitten and the existing animals are getting used to the other's smell without having interaction.

**It is important to keep your kitten separate from other cats for at least a week.** There is always a chance that the kitten may break with a cold from the stress of their spay/neuter surgery and/or from being in adoption and you do not want to subject your cat to a contagious upper respiratory virus. Symptoms of such illnesses can take from 7-14 days to surface. Remember, these animals will have their lives together-there is no need to rush the introduction.

**Kitten to Existing Cat** – Start by allowing the existing cat to check out the “safe area” where your new kitten has been kept (without the kitten present). You may offer the cat some food in the area or play with them to distract them as someone is holding the kitten or the kitten can be in a carrier if very frightened. Try to avoid forcing the meeting, just let it happen and typically it goes better. Always supervise the interaction! Keep them separated when you are not at home until you are absolutely sure that interaction will be safe.

**Kitten to Existing Dog** -- The dog should be on a leash and on the other side of a gate or screen door from the kitten at first meeting. If this introduction is successful, the dog may then be on a leash with the kitten in a crate for protection. Look for signs of stress and discontinue if that occurs. At no time should the dog be allowed to show aggression toward the kitten. If that occurs, remove the dog from the area and try again another time. Once all is well with nose to nose meeting through the crate and on leash, you can introduce off leash and without the carrier. Always supervise the interaction! Keep the dog and cat separated when you are not at home until you are absolutely sure that your kitten is safe around the dog.

## Important “Do’s”

**Take your kitten to the vet** within 3-10 days for a check-up. If you do not work with an existing vet, we have agreements with the following vets for a free first vet exam:

- Banfield – Petsmart locations Always
- Broderick Animal Clinic – 10 North 4<sup>th</sup> Street, Waukee, (515) 987-1447
- Family Pet Veterinary Center West – 1215 Prospect Avenue, West Des Moines, (515) 224-9747
- Family Pet Veterinary Center Norwalk – 1326 Sunset Drive, Norwalk, (515) 981-0317
- Heartland Animal Hospital – 4115 University Ave #200, Des Moines, (515) 255-4464
- Jordan Creek Animal Hospital – 3401 EP True Parkway, West Des Moines, (515) 224-9500

- Northwest Veterinary Hospital – 7507 Dennis Dr, Des Moines, (515) 276-4549
- Oaks Veterinary Clinic – 2030 27th St, Des Moines, (515) 279-3654
- Pet Medical Center of Urbandale – 4450 128<sup>th</sup> St, Urbandale, (515) 331-9035
- Starch Pet Hospital – 2222 University Ave, Des Moines, (515) 283-1576
- The Animal Hospital of Adel – 1126 Greene Street, Adel, (515) 993-3410
- Tri County Veterinary Clinic – 650 Highway T14, Pella, (641) 628-4040
- University West Pet Clinic – 8145 University Blvd, Clive, (515) 223-8185
- Urban Pet Hospital – 3601 104th Street, Urbandale, (515) 727-0607
- Value Vet – 4654 Northwest 86th Street, Urbandale, (515) 278-1011
- Westfield Vet Hospital- 8789 NW 54th Ave, Johnston, IA 50131 (515) 986-5738

Always **watch your kitten for signs of illness**. Watch for sneezing, runny nose or watery eyes which are signs of an upper respiratory virus that commonly surfaces in kittens in stressful situations. A kitten with a lack of appetite, lethargy, or diarrhea should be taken to the veterinarian for an exam. It is easy for a kitten to get dehydrated if they are not eating or drinking properly or if they have diarrhea.

**Remove any houseplants** within reach of the kitten. Many are poisonous, including philodendrons and lilies. Either hang your plants or remove them from where the kitten will be. There are many websites with full lists of plant names. If you are unsure of what type your plant is, you can take a leaf in to a local garden center for identification.

**Spend a lot of time with your kitten**, especially if he or she does not have an animal companion. They need a lot of reassurance in this time of big changes, and lots of play to stay a happy kitten!

**Brush the kitten** at least a couple times a week even though they do not shed yet. It will start a routine and will get the kitten used to brushing which will be helpful as they mature.

**Check the kitten’s nails to see if they need trimmed**—they grow very fast. You will want to trim off just the hooked tips of the nails to avoid injury to the kitten or you may take them to the vet or to Furry Friends Refuge for nail trimming.

## Important “Don’ts”

**NEVER let your kitten go outside** without a halter collar, leash, and supervision.

**Do NOT play rough with your kitten** or promote biting in play. Play biting can be cute as a kitten, but it quickly gets out of hand and is never a good learned behavior. You do not want to teach your cat to bite your hands. If your kitten does bite during play, make a loud “ouch” noise or hissing noise loud enough to startle the kitten and then replace your hand with an appropriate toy. If your kitten keeps up with the rough play, it is time for him or her to go to their safe area for a time out.