

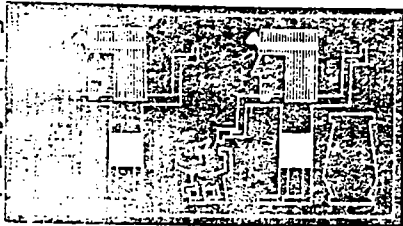


**The
Care of
Cats**

Care of Cats

By Felicia Ames
1973 The American Humane Association

Cats have been known since ancient Egypt. Their fortunes in life have varied from the deity-like reverence of the ancients to the suspicion and abhorrence of witch-hunting days. They range from royal Siamese and Persians to nocturnal gentlemen of the road. Although similar in many ways, each has a unique personality.



If you have chosen a cat for your pet, you have chosen well. These handsome, intelligent and affectionate animals have a special grace and dignity of their own. Cats are easy to care for, but knowledge of their habits and needs will make the job even easier.

FEEDING

Kittens should remain with their mother until they are at least four to six weeks old. If you acquire a motherless kitten younger than four weeks, consult a veterinarian about feeding routine and formula. Baby or pet formulas can be substituted for the mother's milk; canned goat's milk or evaporated milk warmed to body temperature may also be satisfactory. Newborn kittens must be fed at two-hour intervals, day and night, with a medicine dropper or a pet nursing bottle. A kitten should take about a tablespoonful at a feeding, more if he wishes.

At around four weeks of age you should begin weaning the kitten. This is done by mixing a little quality canned cat food with evaporated milk.

Cats have specific nutritive requirements. For a balanced diet they need water, proteins, fatty acids and vitamins. The essentials are contained in a variety of scientifically prepared, high quality cat foods.

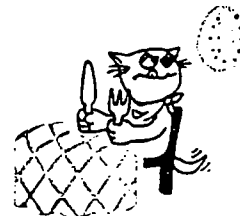
As soon as your kitten begins to eat solid food, keep a supply of fresh water available *at all times*. Gradually cut down on the number of meals as you increase the size of the servings. At around two months, your kitten will probably be eating his canned food "straight," without its being mixed with milk.

After your cat is six months old (yes, it's now a "cat"), he will be satisfied with one or two meals a day. Some thrive on only one meal daily, but two feedings are not harmful and may improve cat-human relations. Other cats are nibblers and appreciate having dry food available for snacks at all times.

Here are some diet DOs and DON'Ts to help you keep your pet vigorous and healthy. Never feed your pet cooked chicken or turkey bones. They easily splinter and may become lodged in his throat or intestines. Never serve food straight from the refrigerator. Avoid raw freshwater fish. It contains an enzyme that destroys some of the vitamins. Cold foods may cause vomiting. Some cats like milk, some don't. It is not essential for the mature cat and, in fact, is upsetting to some.

Don't leave food exposed to become dry and unappetizing. If you leave food out for the snacker, the dry foods are ideal because they do not spoil. To your cat's regular diet, you may add occasional treats of cooked vegetables (string beans or asparagus are common favorites), cottage cheese, eggs, or chopped raw meat such as beef or lamb kidney, heart, liver or melts. Avoid uncooked pork or fish. Some cats like occasional servings of horse-meat.

Apply the Golden Rule. A cat gets tired of monotony, just as you would. Feed him a varied diet. A cat likes his meals on time, just as you do. Set up a feeding schedule and stick to it.



And remember: always keep fresh, cool drinking water available.

HOUSING

A young kitten needs a well-padded shallow box or basket in a warm, draft-free location. The adult cat will adapt happily to any house or apartment, to a barn, a store, or a warehouse. But *don't* expect your cat to live outdoors or to spend his nights in a dank, musty cellar. Cats are house pets. The cat put out to roam at night will be a nuisance to neighbors, a menace to sleeping birds and small wild animals, and a less satisfying friend and companion. The night prowler is also more exposed to injury and infectious disease. Keep your cat confined at night.



COMMON AILMENTS

Rule one in caring for your pet's health is choosing a veterinarian. Keep his address and telephone number available at all times. Don't wait until your pet is critically ill before you seek his help. Cats do not malingering. If your pet shows symptoms of illness, get him to the veterinarian quickly. Never give your cat aspirin.

Feline enteritis, also called panleukopenia or cat fever, is the worst killer of cats. It is highly infectious (but not to humans) and can kill a cat in a day. Fortunately, it can be prevented. When your kitten is seven to eight weeks old, take him to be immunized.

Viral-rhinotracheitis or flu, exhibits much the same symptoms as the common cold in humans. Usually mild in adult cats, it can be serious in kittens. Keep your cat quiet, indoors and out of drafts for a few days. If there is no marked improvement, consult your veterinarian.

Pneumonitis is a severe disease of the upper respiratory tract. Symptoms are much like those for viro-rhinotracheitis—fever, sneezing, runny eyes and nose—but they last longer. Only your veterinarian can

distinguish and prescribe medication. Antibiotics are usually effective, *if* you seek help soon enough.

Diarrhea may be a minor upset or a symptom of something more serious. If it persists longer than 36 hours, consult your veterinarian. Do not give milk or raw liver; either might aggravate the condition.

Constipation can be caused by hairballs (accumulations of hair that the cat licks from its own coat) or improper diet. Old cats are more prone than young ones. A teaspoonful of salad oil or butter and a meal of raw liver are very likely to do the trick. If the cat squats and strains very often, with no result, the trouble is likely to be urinary calculi (bladder or kidney stones) instead of constipation. In that case do not give a laxative. Get to the veterinarian immediately. It's serious.

Vomiting, unless it is accompanied by other signs of illness, is not necessarily serious. Cats vomit easily—to expel a hairball or some undigested grass, for example. If vomiting persists, or if the cat shows other symptoms such as loss of appetite, sluggishness, coughing, sneezing, or gagging, take him to your veterinarian promptly.



PARASITES

Fleas and Lice can be controlled by commercial powders or sprays, but be sure to select a preparation made especially for cats. Some insecticides are fatal if swallowed, and cats constantly lick their coats. Never use, on or near a cat, anything containing creosote, naphthalene, tar, U.S.P. phenol, carbolic acid, creolin, DDT, or chlordane. Even a minute quantity of DDT, carbolic acid, or any tar derivative can kill a cat. To be safe, ask your veterinarian.

Flea collars have proven effective, but some animals are extremely sensitive to the insecticides in the

collars. If you use a collar, inspect under it frequently for signs of irritation. Also, watch for symptoms of illness or bizarre behavior. Any collar is dangerous to a cat unless it will break apart or stretch to permit the cat to escape if it gets snagged where the animal is climbing.

Ticks can be a serious problem, one that is best left to your pet's veterinarian.

Ear Mites call for a veterinarian's attention. Ears are delicate. Ear mites can be painful.

There are other ailments that plague the feline but, in general, a well-fed, well-sheltered cat will be a healthy cat. Concentrate on giving your pet good care and let your veterinarian take charge when trouble strikes. Helpful advice is also available from animal protective organizations.

Internal parasites could be another ailment to watch for, especially if the cat is in contact with other animals, or if you "adopt" a stray. Your veterinarian can advise you and check a fecal sample, if necessary.

HANDLING AND TRAINING

It is a common mistake to handle kittens too much and too roughly. Children, especially, should be taught that a kitten is to be a companion and a playmate, not a toy. Pets in a home can help to mold desirable character traits in children—kindness, thoughtfulness, generosity. But if a child is allowed to abuse an animal, however innocently, the situation encourages callousness, selfishness and irresponsibility.

Let your kitten sleep when it wishes and play when it wishes. All infants need lots of rest.

Don't pick up a cat by the scruff of its neck. This is painful and can cause injury. Lift him by putting one hand under the front of the body and the other hand under hindquarters.

One of the nicest attributes of cats is their cleanliness. You will rarely, if ever, need to bathe your cat, because the feline washes himself constantly. In an emergency, bathe him in warm water and mild soap (no detergents).



Frequent grooming, however, is the best way to keep hair out of your cat's stomach and off the furniture. Long-haired cats should be combed daily with a steel comb made especially for cats. A brush will do the job for short-haired breeds.

A shallow plastic or enamel pan without chips (a dishpan will do) is the best toilet facility for a kitten or cat, even if you have a yard. Cover the bottom of the pan with a layer of commercial litter.

You'll have no trouble teaching toilet etiquette. Simply provide the litter pan and make sure your cat knows where it is. (In a large house you might need two—one upstairs and one down.) A very young kitten may have to be lifted into the pan a few times, but he'll soon get the idea.

Cats are fastidious by nature. Don't forget to do your part by keeping his litter pan fresh and clean. It should be washed at least once a day.

MAKING A FRIEND

There are few greater compliments than the friendship of a cat. You can't buy friendship from a cat. You can't force friendship. You get affection and respect from a cat only when you earn it—and a cat's standards for human conduct are high.



First of all, you have to understand cats. For example, you must accept the fact that punishment

has almost no effect—except that he may become indignant and leave home. A loud “No! No!” is far more effective than a swat with a newspaper.

Don't expect to get “obedience” from a cat, as you do from a dog. The word “obedience” isn't in his vocabulary. If you ask a cat to do something that *he* wishes to do, he will consent graciously—and that's about the best you can expect. If this characteristic irritates you, better try a tank of fish instead of a cat.

In spite of his independent nature, the cat is an affectionate animal. He needs far more than room and board; he also needs your love. Give it to him and he will return your affection in full measure.

SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

1. All tin cans need flattening; dispose of all jars.
2. Paint, varnish, and rat poisons must be out of the cat's reach.
3. Even though cats are surefooted, they may misjudge a jump. Screened windows help.
4. A new stretch type collar is the best collar to purchase. Ribbons, string, or other collars can be caught on objects.
5. Be careful of open drawers, trunks, closets, washers and dryers, ovens, or other warm snug places. Cats love these cozy corners.
6. Likewise, watch the cat around a filled bathtub, and close the toilet.
7. Electric dangling cords on the iron, toaster, or lamp become a great curiosity. Make sure kitty doesn't chew the cord or pull down the appliance.
8. If swallowed, threads, ribbon, or yarn can clog intestines, resulting in painful constipation.
9. If a cat fight occurs, a bucketful of water thrown on the combatants will cool tempers and send cats scrambling.
10. Don't worry if your pet climbs a tree and seems to be stuck. As far as we know, no cat has yet starved



in a tree. If everyone leaves kitty alone, she will come down.

BREEDING

The best advice about breeding cats is—don't. Cats in the United States number in the tens of millions. With at least a third of them homeless, humane organizations in this country are flooded constantly with kittens and cats that no one wants. Hundreds of thousands of kittens and cats must be mercifully killed every year to keep them from slow starvation and cruel death from disease and exposure.



Your animal welfare organization recommends that all cats kept as pets be neutered—females spayed, males castrated. Castrated males generally lose their otherwise strong tendency to roam, fight, spray the furniture and stay out all night. Spayed females do not inconvenience you with heat periods. A cat may usually be neutered any time around seven months of age, but your veterinarian can advise the best time. Each cat matures at a slightly different age.

A NOTE ON THE AGING CAT

Although felines live an average of twelve years, with proper care and feeding your pet may be with you to celebrate his 15th birthday or more.

As he advances in years he will need your special care and understanding. He may not be as much fun as he used to be, and if you understand him you won't expect him to bounce around like a spry kitten.

As your cat begins his years as a senior citizen, you will want to keep a special eye on him. Here are some things to watch for:

1. Have his teeth checked regularly. Erosion of tooth enamel can cause gum infections. Should he loose his teeth, he'll have to have a soft-food diet.
2. If your pet is drinking an unusual amount of water this could be an early indication of a kidney problem.

Should the symptoms persist, see your veterinarian immediately.

3. As your pet advances in years and becomes less active he will not need as much food. Watch his diet so that he doesn't put on a lot of weight.

4. A loss of hearing frequently plagues the aging cat. You'll want to take this into consideration if you notice that he doesn't respond to your verbal commands.

5. Drafts pose a special problem for the older cat. Since he will sleep more, see that his bed is comfortable and out of drafts. Nor should he spend too much time outside at night since lower temperatures may cause sniffles or worse.

The American Humane Association is a non-profit federation established in 1877 to help prevent cruelty to children and animals. We thank you for your interest and support. There are well over 1,000 agencies in the United States and Canada which are concerned with the prevention of cruelty to animals. Learn the name and address of your nearest humane society. When you need advice and help with your animal problems, you will know where to turn for expert and friendly help. If you do not feel you can find the information you need, ask



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