

Litter tray

Position the litter tray away from the feeding area, and in a quiet, private place. Dispose of solid waste at least once a day, and clean thoroughly once a week or more.

Scratching post

Cats need to sharpen their claws. To save your furniture from being ruined, provide your cat with a scratching post and place its paws on it when it starts scratching.

Health care

Your cat must be vaccinated (at around 9 weeks) against two potentially fatal viruses, Feline Enteritis and Feline Influenza, and will need an annual booster for continued protection. Regular worming – 4 times a year – is also necessary. Coat, teeth, eyes, and ears must be accurately inspected. Any unusual behaviour or persistent physical symptoms (such as diarrhoea) should be investigated by your vet.

Neutering

it is kindest to have your cat neutered. This prevents unwanted pregnancies in females and undesirable sexual behaviour in males, such as straying, spraying urine, and fighting with other males. Remember, thousands of unwanted kittens are put down in Ireland every year, so please don't contribute to this unnecessary waste! The Kilkenny SPCA has a scheme to help unemployed and senior citizens with the cost of neutering.



Holidays

Ideally, you should plan in advance for a trusted person to look after your cat when you are away. Alternatively, there are reputable boarding catteries which will take in a vaccinated cat for the duration of your holiday. It can be expensive, and you'll need to book well in advance. Keep in mind that cats don't like being moved from their familiar environment.

If you are moving abroad with your cat, you can obtain a pet passport, but it's a lengthy and costly process (ask your vet for info.)

Cats and children

Cats can be wonderful companions for children, teaching them compassion and responsibility. However, **never get a cat or any other animal as a toy for your child!** Animals are sentient creatures with their own needs, whose well being depends on you. By understanding and respecting your cat's needs and dignity, you'll pass an important message to your child.



A cat is for life

**CARING FOR
YOUR
CAT**



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Looking after a cat is at the same time a privilege and a responsibility. We owe it to our cats to provide them with the best possible care. Hopefully you'll find some useful advice in this leaflet on how to look after your cat even better.

The minimum standard for the welfare of any animal is summarised by the **5 freedoms***:

- 1. Freedom from hunger and thirst**
- 2. Freedom from discomfort**
- 3. Freedom from pain, injury and disease**
- 4. Freedom to express normal behaviour**
- 5. Freedom from fear and distress**

Accordingly, your cat will need:

- Appropriate food and clean water
- Comfortable shelter and bed
- Companionship
- Vaccination (annual boosters)
- Neutering
- Veterinary care
- Regular worming
- A litter tray (for when the cat is confined indoors)
- A toy for play

Ideally, your kitten/cat should be allowed to live in the house, and have access to the garden through a catflap. It's easy to house-train a kitten (even an adult cat) by providing it with a litter tray and suitable litter.

* from the Farm Animal Welfare Counsel (FAWC), UK, 2005

Costs and time

Before deciding to get a cat, you must consider all the costs involved, including feeding, vaccinations, worming, vet care, neutering, litter, toys, and even boarding in a cattery when you go on holidays. Also, are you prepared to spend some time every day feeding, emptying litter, and interacting with your cat?

Where do I get my cat from?

There is an enormous amount of unwanted kittens being born every year in the country which and up wild, knocked down by cars, or otherwise prematurely destroyed. It's therefore always a wise choice to adopt a cat with the help of the local SPCA or your vet. If you want a pure-bred cat, only buy from reputable breeders who will allow you to see the premises and the kitten's parents. Be aware that inbreeding and selection of extreme characteristics (such as flat noses) can be linked to genetical defects and physical problems. Non-pedigree cats are generally healthier and can make excellent pets!

How to choose a cat

When choosing a cat, consider that:

- A tom tends to be more assertive than a female and also to stray more. Once neutered, however, there are few behavioural differences between a male and a female cat.
- A kitten is more demanding than an adult cat, as it needs litter training, toys, and supervision; it is more adaptable, but an older cat can make an equally affectionate pet.
- A longhair cat needs daily grooming, a neglected coat will become matted, and hairballs can accumulate in the cat's stomach.

When the cat arrives

You should have cat bed, litter tray, and feeding area ready to show to your kitten/cat as soon as it arrives into its new house. A comfortable bed can be made out of a cardboard box lined with an old blanket or towel and placed in a quite spot.

Nutrition

Cats are strict carnivores and require a carefully balanced diet. Feed twice a day (more often if it's a kitten). Keep your cat's bowl and feeding area clean, and make clean, fresh water available to your cat at all times. Avoid overfeeding your cat, as obesity can lead to health problems. Also be careful with milk, it's not a good substitute for water, and some cats are intolerant to lactose.

Play

Play is essential for a kitten's development and well being. A length of string or a little ball will make perfect toys, plus you can find a wide range of toys in pet shops. If you don't provide a kitten with toys, it will become bored and restless and may damage your possessions. If you are going to be away from home a lot, it may be a good idea to get two kittens at the same time, so that they can play together and keep each other company.

