

All About Pets

The national pet care information service



CARING FOR YOUR ADULT CAT



THE BLUE CROSS

Britain's pet charity

Before taking an adult cat into your home, it is important to consider that many cats live to 14 years and more, so caring for one is a long-term commitment.

Adult cats will have developed their own personalities, likes and dislikes and may take some time to settle into their new environment. A lap cat will probably always welcome a lap to sit on but, likewise, an independent and aloof type will never be happy being cuddled and pampered.





The basic requirements of all cats are:

- human companionship – on their own terms
- regular suitable meals and fresh water
- a clean and comfortable bed
- access to the outdoors
- regular grooming – daily for longhaired cats
- regular vaccinations
- regular worming and flea control
- routine and non-routine veterinary care as required

Bringing home your new cat

Moving to a new home can be stressful for a cat, but you can make the move a little easier. For detailed advice, see our leaflets *Socialising and training your cat*, *Introducing your cat to the family* and *Travelling with your cat*.

Feeding

Cats need a balanced, meat-based diet to remain healthy. The best way to provide everything your cat needs is with proprietary pet food available from supermarkets and pet shops.

Cat food comes in two main types; wet food, usually in tins or pouches and dry food. Wet food tends to look and smell more palatable, but once opened it can attract flies and dries up quite quickly. Dry food looks less palatable, but many cats eat it quite readily. It can be left out much longer than wet food and helps to maintain healthy teeth and gums. The choice is yours, and many owners feed a mixture of both – however, care needs to be taken when mixing different products as this may upset the nutritional balance.

Most good quality foods provide life stage ranges for kittens, adult cats and older cats, so choose a product suitable for your cat's age and feed according to the manufacturer's recommendations.

Grooming

Your cat will groom and clean itself very effectively. However, grooming your cat provides an opportunity for you to check it for skin problems, parasites or any injuries and can also be an enjoyable and relaxing experience for both of you.

Longhaired cats need thorough daily grooming to prevent their coats becoming matted. If you do not have time to do this, you should not consider getting a longhaired cat. If you have a longhaired cat that is already matted, you may need to have it professionally 'de-matted' by a groomer, or even a veterinary surgeon as an anaesthetic may be required. Take great care when cutting mats from fur, as they can be very closely attached to the skin and it is easy to injure your cat by cutting skin as well as fur. If in any doubt, seek professional advice.

If you have taken on a cat that is not used to being groomed, try to keep sessions very short to begin with until your cat gets used to the idea.

Microchipping

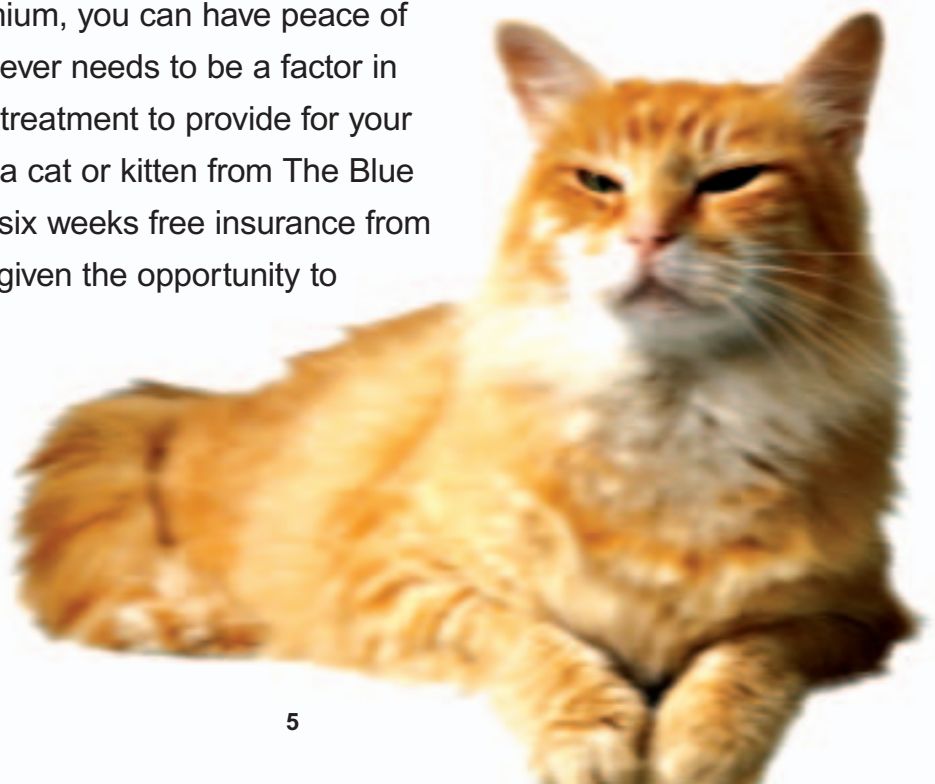
Many domestic animals get lost every year and unless they have some form of identification, they may not ever find their way home. Although it is possible to use a collar and disc to identify your cat, these can easily fall off and get lost. A better option is microchipping, which involves a tiny microchip, about the size of a grain of rice being inserted just under the skin between the shoulder blades. Your veterinary surgeon can do this, or if you have adopted your cat from an animal welfare charity it may already have been done. The chip has a unique number, which can be read by a special scanner and the number is registered on a national database. If your cat is ever picked up and taken to an animal welfare charity or to a vet, its chip can be read and you can be quickly re-united.

Microchip identification is a requirement if you intend to take advantage of the Pet Travel Scheme and travel abroad with your cat.

Insurance

It is not difficult to budget for routine veterinary care such as vaccinations and worming, but what about the unexpected? Young cats and kittens can get into all sorts of scrapes and are likely to suffer injuries at some time in their lives as a result of this. Older cats may develop chronic illnesses that require long term medication. Advances in veterinary care mean that many of these problems can now be treated successfully, but the cost of this can be prohibitive. Fortunately, it is possible to insure against the unexpected.

For a small monthly premium, you can have peace of mind knowing that cost never needs to be a factor in deciding what veterinary treatment to provide for your cat. If you have adopted a cat or kitten from The Blue Cross, you already have six weeks free insurance from Pet Plan and you will be given the opportunity to continue this policy.



Neutering

If you have obtained an adult cat that is not neutered, you need to arrange neutering as soon as possible. Un-spayed female cats will produce two or three litters every year, adding to the numbers of unwanted kittens. They will also attract tom cats to your house, resulting in spraying, fights and late night caterwauling (making you unpopular with your neighbours!).

Un-neutered male cats will tend to wander off for days at a time in search of females to mate with and they will become involved in fights resulting in injuries and even potentially life threatening infections. They are also much more vulnerable to being involved in road accidents due to their wandering in unfamiliar territory.

Kittens can be neutered from around four months old and should be neutered before they start to explore outside. There is no need for a female cat to have a litter before being spayed.

Further information

For further information and advice on caring for your pet or horse visit www.allaboutpets.org.uk, the national pet care information service. Alternatively, you can write to us at the address below to request a list of available leaflets.

All About Pets is provided by The Blue Cross, Britain's pet charity. We rely entirely on your support to enable us to continue our vital work. Any contribution would be most welcome. Thank you.

This leaflet was produced in association with Vetstream Ltd

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