

NUTRITION FOR KITTENS

Unlike most pets, cats remain true to their "meat-eater" heritage, and have special food requirements.

Cats cannot process vitamins directly from vegetables, so a cat must eat the meat of animals that can convert vegetable vitamins to a digestible form. That's why, in the wild, a cat must eat all of its prey's carcass to derive essential proteins, minerals, and vitamins. Taurine, for example, is an amino acid that is vital to eyesight. Non-meat eaters can make taurine in their body, but cats cannot. Therefore, they must eat foods that contain taurine.

Commercial diets for cats must be balanced and nutritional, specialized, and concentrated in small portions. Therefore feline foods are slightly more expensive than dog foods. Wet or dry food for a cat should contain 30-40% protein. We highly recommend premium cat food for all kittens. Only put out what the kitten will probably eat in the one day period. We prefer to put fresh food out every day.

Water is extremely important to the cat. Insufficient fluid intake can cause the urine to become too concentrated leading to urinary stone problems. It is interesting to note that cats do not have a thirst reflex. This makes it easy for the cat not to drink sufficient water each day, since they do not sense the need to drink since they are not thirsty. Grown cats should drink a cup of water daily.

The major appetite stimulant for the cat is smell!! Since dry foods do not have as strong a smell as canned foods, some cats are more reluctant to eat dry food.

Make diet changes slowly. Any abrupt change can cause digestive upsets resulting in vomiting and/or diarrhea.

Milk is not necessary in the diet and is often the cause of diarrhea.

Allow the kitten plenty of rest time. Cats sleep about 22 hours each day. Adequate rest is necessary for optimum growth and development. Shaking when sleeping is "mother nature's way" of exercising the muscles.

Guard against the kitten swallowing foreign objects. Quite often, we must perform surgery to remove foreign objects from the stomach and intestinal tract. These objects include string, fishing line, marbles, needles, or just about any other small object you can think of.

By reducing stress and allowing the kitten to feel comfortable on its own terms, you will enjoy many years of affection, love, and loyal companionship.