

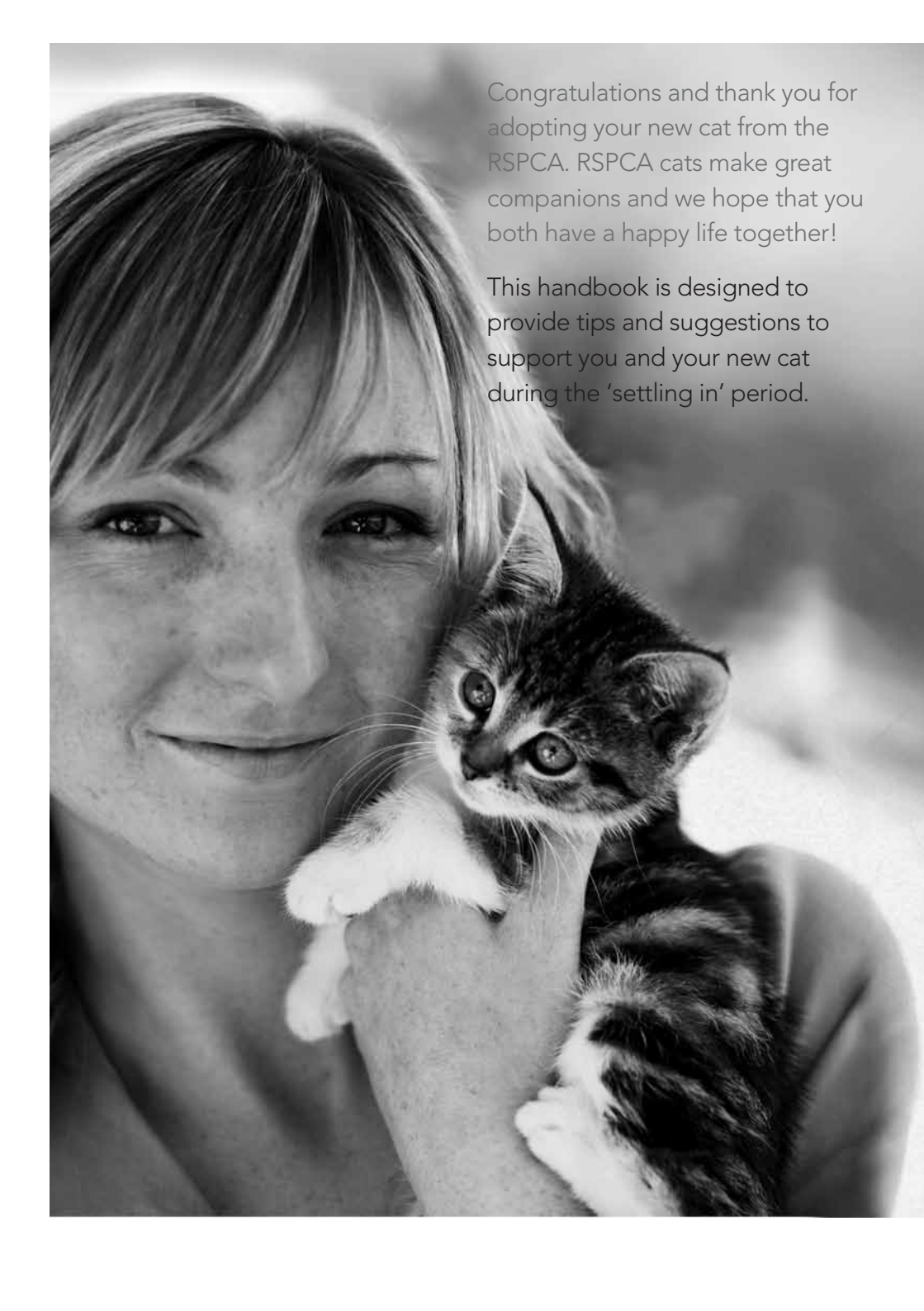
**RSPCA** 

# Cat care

handbook



[rspcavic.org](http://rspcavic.org)



Congratulations and thank you for adopting your new cat from the RSPCA. RSPCA cats make great companions and we hope that you both have a happy life together!

This handbook is designed to provide tips and suggestions to support you and your new cat during the 'settling in' period.

# About the RSPCA

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Victoria) was established in Melbourne in 1871. Since then, the RSPCA has become Australia's leading animal welfare organisation.

Across the state, the RSPCA's community services include the work undertaken by our Inspectorate, Animal Care, Veterinary Clinic and Education and Learning teams. The RSPCA operates nine animal welfare shelters and two community pet care centres across Victoria, providing refuge, care and a second chance to thousands of animals each year.

Our Inspectorate receives more than 10,700 animal cruelty complaints each year, rescuing vulnerable animals from abuse and neglect and prosecuting cruelty offenders through the courts. Each year, our Education and Learning team contributes to prevention strategies by educating and influencing more than 6,300 young people on the value and importance of animal welfare.

The RSPCA works to increase community awareness and education on animal welfare and advocates tirelessly for improved legislation. Legislative improvements to better protect animals have been achieved at both state and federal levels thanks to the continued lobbying of the RSPCA and support of the community.

As a not-for-profit organisation, the RSPCA relies on community support to care for 'all creatures great and small'. More than 90% of the RSPCA's funding is due to the generous support of the Victorian community.

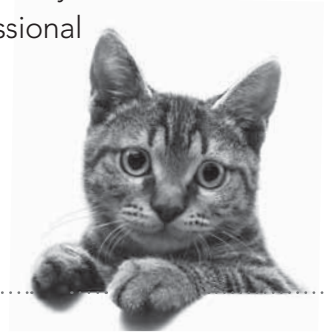
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When you adopted your cat, you should have received certificates for vaccinations, microchipping and desexing. Where required, information may have also been provided relating to surgical aftercare.

These are important documents and should be stored in a safe location as part of your cat's health record. This information is required for the future care of your cat by your veterinarian and to obtain concessional registration available from your local council.



## Your cat's details

Cat's name .....

Gender .....

Colour .....

Breed description .....

Age .....

Microchip number .....

## Contact details

### Your local RSPCA

Name .....

Telephone .....

Address .....

### Your Veterinarian

Name .....

Telephone .....

Address .....

### 24-hour emergency clinic

Name .....

Telephone .....

Address .....

### Your local council

Name .....

Telephone .....

Address .....

# What do I need?

Refer to the list below to ensure you have all the equipment and supplies needed to settle in your newly-adopted cat.

Our expert team is here to help and can provide advice on selecting products;

- ❁ **Collar and ID tag**
- ❁ **Water bowl**
- ❁ **Food bowl**
- ❁ **Kitten, adult or senior cat food**
- ❁ **Litter tray and scooper**
- ❁ **Cat litter**
- ❁ **Warm bedding**
- ❁ **Basket**
- ❁ **Scratching post**
- ❁ **Toys**
- ❁ **Grooming brush or comb**
- ❁ **Worm control products**
- ❁ **Flea control products**

A shopping list is provided at the end of this booklet.

All proceeds from RSPCA animal product purchases help to support all creatures great and small.

## Post adoption check list

### ❁ **Desexing**

If your cat has had surgery, ensure you are aware when the sutures (stitches) are due for removal. Please also make sure you keep the desexing certificate in order to obtain concessional council registration.

### ❁ **Vaccination**

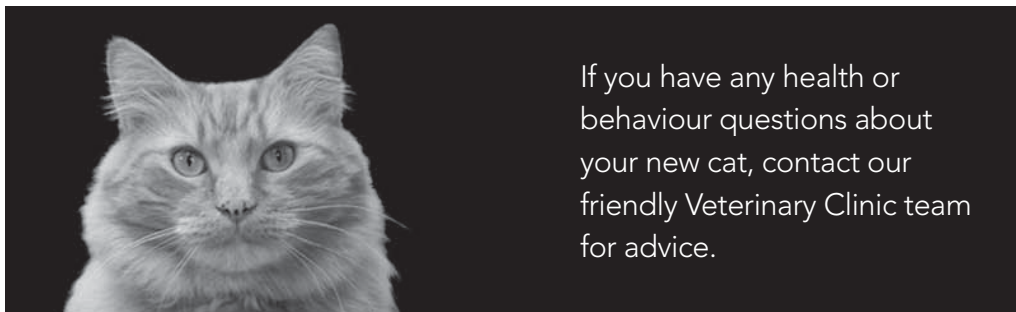
Your cat has had a vaccination and may require a booster vaccination. Please ensure you are aware when this booster is due. Be sure to keep your cat's vaccination certificate and present it to your veterinarian at the time of the next vaccination.

### ❁ **Microchipping**

Your cat has been microchipped. It is crucial that your details are kept up to date, as this will give you the best chance of being reunited with your cat if it goes missing. (see more information on page 7).

### ❁ **Continuous health care**

If you received medication for your cat at the time of adoption, it is important to follow the instructions provided until the course of medication is complete.



If you have any health or behaviour questions about your new cat, contact our friendly Veterinary Clinic team for advice.

# Responsible pet ownership

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**As a responsible pet owner adopting from the RSPCA, you have met the following criteria:**

- 🐾 You are over 18 years of age.
  - 🐾 You have not been convicted of an offence relating to cruelty to animals, and are not a known subject of an RSPCA investigation.
  - 🐾 The cat is not being purchased as a gift for another person without his or her knowledge.
  - 🐾 The cat will be registered with your local council within a reasonable time after the adoption.
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**When you sign the purchase agreement provided by the RSPCA, you agree that you understand the purchase is in accordance with the condition of sale under the Domestic Animals Act 1994 and that the following conditions apply:**

- 🐾 Should you find that the animal is unacceptable (excluding accidents) because of health or other reasons that are supported by a veterinarian, within seven days of purchase, you will receive a full refund or replacement cat upon the return of the original purchase.
- 🐾 Should you return the animal within three days for any reason, you will receive a refund of 75% of the total purchase price or will be offered a replacement animal with the same guarantee.
- 🐾 All replacement cats are subject to the same conditions of sale.
- 🐾 All other treatment, including vaccinations, regular worming and flea treatment after purchase, will be at your cost.
- 🐾 You undertake to provide all food, water, shelter and veterinary treatment for the life of the animal.
- 🐾 You undertake that the animal will not be used for experimental or research purposes of any description, and that you are not a dealer or agent of a dealer.
- 🐾 That details of your purchase will be supplied by RSPCA Victoria to the relevant municipality in which you reside at the time of purchase.

# Health concerns

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Your new cat has been examined by a veterinarian and no significant health issues have been identified. However, we strongly recommend that you have your new cat examined by your own veterinarian just in case.

Should you have any concerns relating to the health of your cat as a result of the veterinary examination, or for any other reason, we ask that you contact the Adoption Centre from which you adopted the cat for advice and guidance. The RSPCA will provide free veterinary care for your cat for two weeks after adoption for conditions arising as a result of its shelter stay.

Should your cat commence treatment with a veterinarian, other than one engaged by the RSPCA, this will be at your expense unless pre-approved by an RSPCA representative.

Many cats that are placed in adoption arrive at RSPCA shelters as stray animals. Consequently, we have little or no specific information regarding individual cats, other than what we have observed during their stay at the RSPCA or during a behavioural assessment.

If you are experiencing difficulties with your new cat, please contact the relevant RSPCA Adoption Centre to discuss.

# Homecoming

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An animal shelter can be an unsettling environment for cats. Be patient with your new cat during the 'settling in' period while it adjusts to its new home. Your cat has just experienced a period of change, uncertainty and possibly surgery, which may require time to overcome.

The 'settling in' period may take longer for some cats than it will for others. It could take a day or two, or it could take a month.

When you first take your new cat home, isolate it to one small room for at least the first 24 hours (possibly up to one week). Make sure it has access to a clean litter tray, food, water and a warm bed. Cats do not enjoy change, so this arrangement gives your cat time to adjust to its new

environment and feel secure.

It is fine to leave your cat alone during this time, giving it a chance to explore the room at its own pace.

You will need to cat-proof your home. Lock up toxic and dangerous materials, such as cleaning solutions, antifreeze and medications. Close small holes or gaps in heating vents and floorboards. Remove small objects like paper clips, coins, rubber bands, staples, thread, ear-rings, needles and thumbtacks, as like these can choke animals if swallowed.

Keep the toilet lid shut, as cats can drown or die from ingesting toilet bowl cleaners. Young animals have the instinct to chew, so cover electric cords with rugs or plastic cord guards available from hardware

stores. Remove poisonous plants such as azalea, daffodil, rhododendron, oleander, mistletoe, hydrangea, morning glory, Easter lily and wandering dew plants.

If your cat is happy and confident after the initial 24-hour period, it should cope well with being allowed to explore the rest of the home. Make sure your cat knows where the food bowls and litter trays are to prevent any accidents. Give your cat a room or space to retreat to if it does become a little anxious.

Don't proceed to this step if your cat is nervous, not eating or hiding in the room. This will only overwhelm it more and slow the process further. Socialise with your cat in the separate room and leave it until its ready to come out and explore.

Do not force your cat to interact before it is ready. It is natural for your cat to feel overwhelmed and unsure in its new environment.

We recommend you keep your kitten indoors until it is at least eight to 10 months old before allowing it to go outside alone. This keeps it safe from cars, other animals, disease, poisoning or becoming lost. It also helps your kitten bond with its new family, making it less likely to stray around the neighbourhood.

We recommend that adult cats be kept indoors for approximately eight to 12 weeks. This will give your cat time to adjust to the new sounds and smells around it and grow accustomed to its new family and territory. If you let your cat outside before it has fully adjusted, it may run away. You can allow your cat supervised visits outside during this initial period. Watch it closely at first and only allow it out for short periods of time.

It may be worthwhile using a lead for these initial outings. Gradually increase the amount of time your cat is outside as it becomes more confident and familiar with its surroundings.

Many local councils have laws requiring your cat to be confined within the boundaries of your property. The RSPCA supports this position, as it provides a safe environment for your cat, preventing territorial fighting, the risk of injury from road trauma and the protection of native wildlife.

As more councils introduce compulsory confinement and night curfews, many people are turning to the use of cat enclosures to keep their pets safe. These enclosures are not cages, but safe and enjoyable areas where your cat can play all day and night without danger to itself or wildlife. There are many companies that build both custom and flat-pack enclosures, which are easy to set up and maintain.

Just like us, cats find moving house a stressful experience and will need time to feel at home. Please have patience. It is important not to force your new cat to interact if it is not ready, and just allow it to do as it feels comfortable.

If you need support, please contact your local RSPCA Adoption Centre.



# Identifying your cat

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It is very important to fit your cat with a correctly-fitted collar and identification tag immediately after it arrives home. This will ensure that if it does escape or wanders from your home, there is a way to identify it and return it to you.

Your cat has been microchipped prior to adoption and you have completed ownership and contact details for this microchip. These details are provided to a nationally-accessible computer database. It takes up to six to eight weeks before these details are logged onto the national database.

You will receive via the post notification of your cat's inclusion on the national database. Make sure you retain this notification in a safe place so that you can contact the register if you need to update any of the details.

If your cat becomes lost and is taken to a veterinary clinic, council pound or animal shelter, it will be scanned for a microchip. This will provide a basis for searching the database to obtain your ownership details.

It is essential that you notify the registry of changes of ownership or contact details to ensure the microchip details remain up to date.

All cats over three months of age must be registered with your local council. You will be provided with a registration tag and number by your local council.

Your cat must wear this tag at all times when not contained within your property. Local councils offer concessional registration for cats that are desexed and microchipped.

# Desexing and surgical aftercare

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You are now the owner of a desexed cat that will give you many years of happiness, without contributing to the over-population of cats in our community. Desexed cats are less likely to:

- 🐾 Roam and risk getting lost or injured
- 🐾 Fight with other cats
- 🐾 Spray (urinate) around the house and yard marking territory
- 🐾 Show aggression to people
- 🐾 Experience behavioural problems

If you adopted a male cat, there will be no sutures (stitches) to remove.

If you adopted a female cat, you will have been told at discharge when to bring her back for the removal of her sutures.

The sutures need to remain in place for at least 10 days after the operation. Please keep the wound clean and dry.

If you notice your cat licking or chewing at the sutures or wound, please phone your RSPCA Veterinary Clinic or nearest Adoption Centre for advice.

# Feeding

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All cats at RSPCA Adoption Centres are fed Hill's Science Diet. Some cats experience stress from all of the changes that occur during the adoption process and consequently may stop eating. You may need to offer a range of foods to encourage their eating. The RSPCA feeds and recommends Hill's Science Diet.

All RSPCA kittens and cats are fed Hill's Science Diet. Correct feeding of a kitten is critical, as it is at this stage that bones and joints are growing and forming. All kittens should be fed a kitten or growth formula cat food. Both dry and canned kitten foods are suitable for kittens.

Dry foods are very convenient, provide an excellent diet, they do not smell and they may help to keep your cat's teeth clean because they are hard and require crunching to facilitate ingestion.

Make sure your cat always has access to clean, fresh water. This is especially important if your cat is fed only dry food. Keep to the same food brand, but if you do choose to switch, always

introduce new food gradually to avoid stomach upsets and diarrhoea. Avoid gravy-based foods for kittens. Kittens should be fed three to four times a day, for up to four months of age; after this age cats should be fed once or twice a day.

Obesity in cats is very common and correct feeding regimes should prevent the development of this condition.

Please refer to the dietary information on the selected food packet for the amount to be fed. These are recommended amounts and may vary a little between individual cats depending on their levels of activity.



# Litter training

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Cats are fastidiously clean animals and when outdoors they tend to urinate and defecate in relatively open and previously unused areas. They carefully cover their waste and move on.

Inside the house, place the litter tray in a quiet location away from the food bowls. An inside laundry or bathroom is ideal. Once set up, carefully place your cat into the litter tray to ensure it is aware of its location and leave the tray in the same place in your house to avoid confusion.

If you have more than one cat, the general rule is one tray per cat plus one spare.

Cats may have a preference for an open or covered litter tray because they like their privacy. Your cat may prefer a larger-sized tray. It is helpful to know that your cats may prefer a certain type of litter and may refuse to use the one you are offering it.

The most common behavioural problem reported by cat owners is urination and defecation outside of the litter tray. You can help to prevent this by providing the correct number of trays, placing them in appropriate locations, offering litter that your cat prefers and cleaning any trays at least once daily.



# Indoor / outdoor cats

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The RSPCA recommends that you keep your cat indoors as much as possible. As well as keeping the cat safe, this also protects native wildlife and maintains your cat's dependence on you as its owner. Your cat is also less likely to be adopted by neighbours in the street because it is getting all the attention it needs in its own home.

If you have decided to keep your cat as an indoor-only pet, please be aware that if you do allow it outside periodically, it may develop a preference for the outdoors.

This behaviour can be difficult to modify, especially if you give in easily when your cat meows at the door. Be prepared to say 'no' and offer the cat a distraction.

Indoor cats need to be provided with stimulation, including the following:

- ❁ Allowing access to windows with fly screens so the cat can enjoy a breeze.
- ❁ Cats enjoy chewing on grass, so you can provide grass in a pot, which can be purchased from most nurseries.
- ❁ Cats enjoy observing from above, such as on top of a wardrobe.
- ❁ You can hide treats and catnip toys around the house.
- ❁ Provide scratching posts with perches and/or beds built into them.

You can be as creative as you like, but the most enjoyable thing for an indoor-only cat is the time spent with its family.

Despite some inherent dangers, cats do enjoy spending time outdoors. An outdoor enclosure is the best option, however this solution has a financial cost.

There are a number of companies that make excellent outdoor runs and cat-proof netting that can be secured to balconies, across fences and even around trees. Alternatively, you could make one yourself. Speak to your RSPCA Adoption Centre for more details.

Outdoor runs are a great way for your cat to enjoy the outdoors without the dangers to the cat or wildlife. Many people teach their cat to walk on a lead. This is not as difficult as it might sound, especially if you start young.

Even an outdoor cat will need to get used to a routine. If you let it go outside during the day while you are out, call it to come inside as soon as you arrive home.

This way your cat will learn to greet you and come home at the same time each day. The lure of food will bring most cats back, especially if they have not eaten since the morning.

If your cat has the luxury of a cat door, you may be able to close it off so you can regulate where your cat is spending its time.

# A new cat in the family

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## Introducing your new cat to your resident cat

Some cats are more sociable than others, so please have realistic expectations. Cats in the wild tend to spend most of their time as solitary animals rather than in a group. Cats are territorial animals and need time to get used to each other before there is a face-to-face introduction. Slow introductions can prevent fear and aggression problems from developing.

Confine your new cat for up to a week in a medium-sized room with litter tray, food, water and a warm bed. Initially only allow your resident cat to smell underneath the door. There may be some hissing or your cat may retreat. This is normal behaviour and it may take some time before this ceases. You can feed both cats on either side of the closed door to this room, which will help them associate something enjoyable with each other's smell.

If the animals seem relaxed with this process, you may then want to use a doorstop to prop the door ajar, just enough to allow the animals to see each other, but not enough to get upset.

Switch sleeping blankets or beds between your new cat and resident cat so they become accustomed to each other's scent. Rub a towel on one animal and put it underneath the food dish of the other animal. This associates the new cat's scent with the pleasant experience of eating.

Once your new cat is using the litter tray and eating well while confined, let it have free time in the house while confining your resident cat to the new cat's room. This switch allows the animals to experience each other's scents without a face-to-face meeting. It also gives the new cat time to become familiar with the new surroundings. Introduce your cats to each other gradually so that neither cat becomes afraid or aggressive.

You can expect mild forms of these behaviours, but if either animal becomes fearful or aggressive, separate them and start over with the introduction process as outlined above.



## Introducing your new cat to your dog

The positive interaction of a cat and a dog is not necessarily a normal occurrence.

Dogs usually want to chase and play with cats, in particular ones that usually become afraid and in turn run away.

The following techniques may assist in introducing your new cat to your dog. You will need to work on basic obedience so your dog knows what is expected of it. A delicious treat will help motivate your dog to perform what is necessary in the presence of such a strong distraction as a cat. Confine your cat to a medium-sized room when your dog is inside the house. This way, both animals may smell each other's scent underneath the door. Feed the animals on either side of the closed door so they can associate something enjoyable with each other's scent.

Use doorstops to prop open the door just enough to allow the animals to see each other but not get to each other. Switch the bedding between your new cat and your dog so they become accustomed to each other's scent.

Use controlled meetings inside the house. You can achieve this by keeping your dog on its leash and using the commands 'sit' and 'stay' while giving a treat. Let your cat walk around the room and explore without your dog chasing it. This will help to build your cat's confidence.

Lots of short meetings are best so your cat does not become too anxious. You can repeat this process until both the dog and cat are tolerating each other's presence without fear or aggression.

The worst thing you can do is allow your dog to chase your cat, as this will cause the cat to feel scared and uncomfortable in its new environment. If this occurs, it is often difficult to re-educate the cat.

## Kittens and children

The first few weeks and months of kitten ownership can have a great influence on your cat's personality for life. It is therefore essential that you explain carefully to your children how the new arrival should be treated. Kittens are not toys and need much care and attention. What can be an innocent game for a young child can cause distress or injury to an animal.

Teach your children correct handling and how to recognise when the kitten is unhappy. Never leave your toddler unsupervised with a kitten, as toddlers can be known for hair pulling, jumping, throwing, hitting and screaming around animals. Kittens do have sharp claws and will use them if they feel threatened or even during play. Encourage your children and kitten to play gently using toys so the kitten's claws do not cause damage to little hands. Bad habits are hard to break! If a kitten gets used to clawing at your hands in play, it may well continue for life.

Toys on strings are better for children to initiate play with a kitten. This will help avoid bites and scratches by keeping your playful kitten focused on the toy instead of the child's hands. All family members should be mindful that rough play with a kitten often results in unwanted, aggressive behaviour in an adult cat.

# Possible health issues

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## Cat flu

Cat flu is a contagious respiratory disease in cats and kittens caused by several infectious agents. This usually involves any combination of two separate viral agents and one bacteria. These infections are not transmissible to dogs or people. Flu is spread directly by infected cats, from food bowls and passively on human hands. Up to 80% of cats may be carriers and the virus is most frequently spread when under stress due to change, such as entering an animal shelter.

Over 14,800 cats are admitted to RSPCA shelters throughout Victoria annually. This large number and the associated stress that it causes the cats, means that it is not possible for us to eliminate cat flu entirely. There is a possibility that your cat may have developed some flu-type symptoms while at our shelter or may develop symptoms shortly after going home.

Cat flu generally lasts around two weeks in most cats and they often recover more quickly once out of the animal shelter. If your new pet is on medication for cat flu, this should have been explained to you at adoption. If he or she develops the following symptoms then please phone your local Adoption Centre or the RSPCA Clinic on 03 9224 2211:

- ❧ Not eating for more than 24 hours after being offered a selection of foods such as canned, dry, home cooked chicken breast or canned tuna.
- ❧ Drooling or open mouth breathing.
- ❧ Red or watery eyes or sneezing.
- ❧ Green or yellow discharge from the eyes or nose.

Cats with the flu may not be able to smell their food properly and may be more fussy-than-usual eaters, so warming their food or offering a selection of extra tasty food, such as cooked chicken or fish may benefit. Cat flu is not unlike the common cold in humans and this may help you understand the condition better.

## Feline Enteritis

Feline Enteritis is a highly contagious and usually fatal viral disease of cats. All cats adopted from the RSPCA have received vaccinations against this disease. Depending on your cat's age and previous history, a second vaccination may be required soon after adoption. You will be advised if this is necessary at the time of adoption.

## Feline AIDS

Feline AIDS is a viral disease of cats similar to HIV in humans. It only occurs in cats and cannot be transmitted to humans or other animals. It is mainly contracted via the saliva of cats and transmitted by cat bites during fighting. Please seek advice from your vet if you are intending to allow your cat outdoors.

Due to the high number of cats admitted to RSPCA shelters, we are only able to test cats deemed high risk of being a Feline AIDS carrier prior to adoption. There is a small risk that other cats or kittens adopted from the RSPCA may have Feline AIDS. There are blood tests and vaccinations available for the diagnosis and prevention of this condition. Please contact your vet if you would like to know more.

## Vaccinations

All RSPCA adopted cats have received their first vaccination and a vaccination certificate has been provided with your cat. We vaccinate our cats to protect against Feline Enteritis and cat flu.

Your cat may require a second or third injection before your cat is fully vaccinated. It is important that you check your vaccination certificate to find out when your cat's next injection is due. An annual booster injection should always be included as part of your cat's annual health check.

## White or ginger cats and skin cancer

If you have adopted a white cat with pink skin then it would have been recommended to you that your cat always remain indoors because of its risk of skin cancer. The same applies if you adopted a cat that has pink skin on the tip of its ears or a pink nose. Cats often enjoy lying in the sun and will sit on window ledges within a home. It may be necessary to restrict access to rooms that receive full sun during the summer months. Ginger cats or those with pale colouring on the nose and ear tips are also at risk. It is best to keep these cats inside between 9am and 4pm when UV is high, which can include overcast and cooler days. If this is not possible then you can try using cat sunblock on the affected areas. Unfortunately cats will often rapidly groom or lick this off. Some sun block products are actually toxic to cats so it is advisable to check with your vet before you start using a cream.

You should seek veterinary advice if you notice a change in appearance on the nose or ear tips. They may appear red, develop crusty scabs or show some degree of hair loss. Cats that develop skin cancer on their ears may need the tops of their ears surgically removed.

## Worming

Cats can frequently become infested with intestinal worms. There are a range of intestinal worms including roundworms, hookworms and tapeworms. Some of these intestinal worms can affect humans and your cat should be wormed regularly throughout its life.

All RSPCA adopted cats have been wormed during their stay.

There is a large range of products available for worming your cat and advice on the most suitable products is available from the RSPCA or from your own veterinarian.

## Fleas

Fleas can occur on the cleanest and healthiest of cats. They are the most common external parasite and can be easily treated. Flea bites can cause a very marked allergic reaction in much the same way as mosquitoes can affect humans. Fleas suck blood when they bite and heavy flea infestation can result in significant blood loss. The irritation from flea bites can result in cats scratching or biting at themselves severely. This results in skin damage and secondary infection, however fleas frequently cause less marked irritation where the cat exhibits excessive grooming. Owners frequently mistake this as a cat that is particularly clean and fastidious. As fleas only spend a limited period of their life cycle on the cat, owners frequently under-estimate the significance of fleas.

There is a large range of products available for the treatment and prevention of flea infestation and this should be discussed with our veterinary team or your own veterinarian.



## Dental care

Owners should pay particular attention to the state of their cat's teeth. Tartar often builds up on the teeth, which results in gingivitis and subsequent periodontal disease. These conditions may have a very marked impact on the long-term health of your cat and are easily addressed by providing appropriate food.

Providing your cat with raw chicken wings, as part of its diet will often assist in the prevention of tartar. If this is not possible there are some prescription diets available to avoid this problem. Ask your veterinarian for advice.

## Obesity

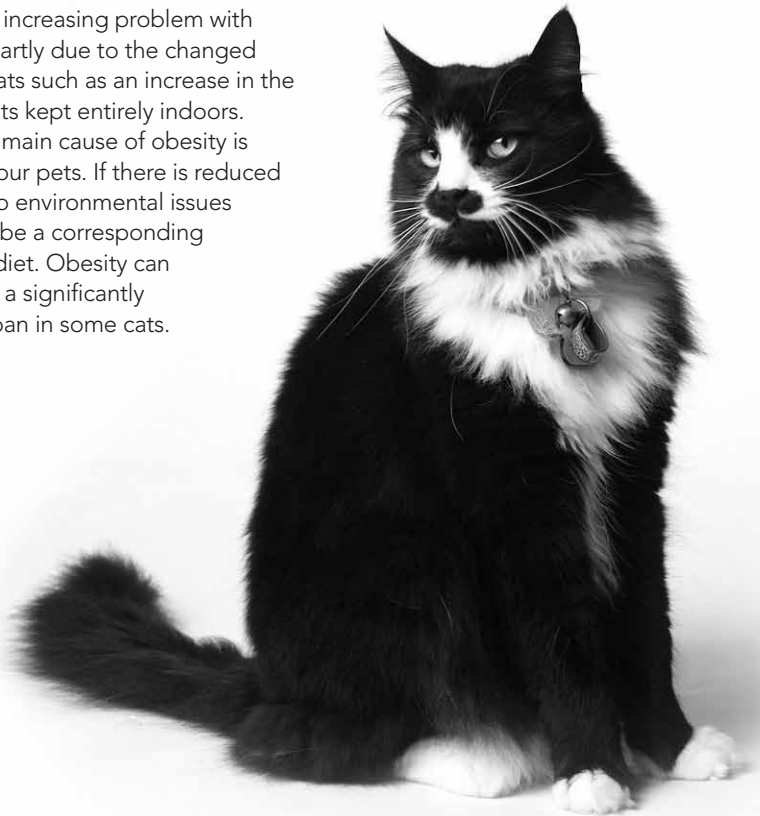
Obesity is an increasing problem with cats. This is partly due to the changed lifestyles of cats such as an increase in the number of cats kept entirely indoors. However the main cause of obesity is overfeeding our pets. If there is reduced activity due to environmental issues there should be a corresponding reduction in diet. Obesity can contribute to a significantly shorter life span in some cats.

## Cat bite abscesses

Abscesses are a very common condition in cats. They usually occur as a result of a cat fight and subsequent bite.

Bites from cats normally result in deep puncture wounds rather than open lacerations and consequently often develop as abscesses which usually require veterinary attention.

Abscesses normally require a course of antibiotics in early stage puncture wounds or surgery in well developed abscesses. However if an abscess develops, surgical lancing under general anaesthetic is usually required.



# Cat behavioural issues

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## Inappropriate soiling

Inappropriate soiling can be abnormal urinating, defecating or both. It is the most common behavioural problem of cats. If it does occur, it's essential to make a veterinary appointment to have your cat's health assessed. There are several health issues that may be the cause, for example urinary tract infections, diabetes, renal disease, constipation, diarrhoea and senility.

Cats often spray to mark their territory. If there appears to be no medical reason for the problem then there are many possible environmental factors:

### Litterbox avoidance

- ❃ Soiled or smelly litter
- ❃ Wrong type of litter
- ❃ Wrong type of litter tray
- ❃ Location avoidance
- ❃ Excessive local traffic
- ❃ Insecure in the located area

### Location preference

- ❃ Cats can change the preference of a location

### Surface preference

- ❃ Showing a preference for a specific surface type rather than the litter

### Anxiety

- ❃ Environmental changes - new furniture, household changes
- ❃ Excessive numbers of cats
- ❃ Absence of an owner
- ❃ Changed family dynamics

## Need for privacy

- ❃ Nervousness
- ❃ Fearfulness
- ❃ Fright

When inappropriate toileting becomes a problem it is essential to address it immediately. The sooner the issue is detected the greater the likelihood of resolving the problem.

There is a need to establish the environmental factor that may be contributing to the problem and where possible put in place measures to resolve the issue. The success of addressing these problems will depend on many factors, such as:

- ❃ Cause of the problem
- ❃ Duration of the problem
- ❃ Frequency of the problem
- ❃ Number of locations where it occurs
- ❃ Number of cats in the home
- ❃ Temperament of the cat
- ❃ Health issue that may be causing the problem
- ❃ Owner's commitment to addressing and solving the problem

## Feline aggression

Aggression is the second most significant behavioural issue of cats. There is a range of aggressive behaviours. In addressing this problem there is a need to establish the type of aggression that the cat is exhibiting.

### Play aggression

Play aggression is a normal part of a cat's social development. It only becomes a problem when there are no modifying influences applied to this behaviour.

Owners frequently contribute to this problem by teasing the cat when playing. Owners should be mindful when playing with their new cat not to tease and torment the cat. Using hands and fingers can result in them becoming the focus of aggression at a later date. Directing the cat's playful attention to an object or toy may reduce the potential of your cat directing its play aggression to humans.

### Fear aggression

Fear aggression occurs when cats are insufficiently socialised or subjected to unregulated discipline. There is often a genetic inclination to fear aggression. It may be triggered by noises, human approach or being stared at. Cats exhibiting fear aggression usually exhibit hissing, teeth bared, ears back and lowered body posture. This requires time and reassurance to reduce the fear and consequent aggression.

### Predatory aggression

Predatory aggression occurs in cats of either gender. They usually stalk a moving target and attack. You rarely see true predatory aggression. More so you are likely to observe play predatory aggression. If a cat has true predatory

aggression it is very difficult to resolve, as it is an instinctive behaviour. Stalking birds is a good example of this instinctive behaviour and it probably has a genetic component. Placing a bell on your cat's collar may assist in protecting birds from this predation.

### Patting-induced aggression

This occurs when patting or stroking a cat and it suddenly becomes aggressive. The cat often seeks out the attention and exhibits the aggression when the threshold of attention has been reached. The approach here should be to handle and pat the cat, but to stop the interaction before the threshold is reached. You can progressively increase the time of the patting.

### Territorial aggression

Territorial aggression is frequently seen when a new animal enters another cat's territory. This may be within a home or in an outside area. Male and female cats exhibit territorial aggression. The territory claimed by males tends to be larger than for females.

### Pain-induced and irritable aggression

Pain-induced and irritable aggression may be the result of an underlying health issue, such as arthritis, dental disease or a cat bite abscess. It may also be a reaction to pulling of the hair or standing on the tail.

### Cat to cat aggression

Inter-cat aggression is more normally territorial in nature and suggestions for dealing with this behaviour have been mentioned earlier.

# Zoonotic disease

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## Toxoplasmosis

Toxoplasmosis is a condition that affects pregnant women and can result in miscarriages and foetal abnormalities. It is however rare and pregnant women should continue to enjoy their cat's company during the pregnancy and when their baby is born.

Cats are most frequently blamed as the cause of infections in humans as the causative agent, *Toxoplasma gondii*, is a protozoan organism which can occur in the intestine of cats.

Infected cats will shed oocysts (eggs) of the organism in the faeces. These eggs can become infective if ingested by humans after one to five days incubation.

Infections in cats most commonly arise from eating infected raw meat, ingesting birds, rats, mice and soil. Once infected, cats develop an immunity and become resistant to further infections.

The level of risk of Toxoplasmosis associated with cats is considerably lower than often thought. This is due to:

- 🐾 The actual levels of infection in cats, being restricted to cats that have access to raw meat, mice and birds.
- 🐾 The transient nature of infections in cats which develop immunity.
- 🐾 The incubation time for the oocysts to become infective.

The higher risk arises from the soil where infected cats might defecate and where the oocysts are provided with the incubation period to become infective.

## Preventative measures

- 🐾 Wear gloves when working in the garden.
- 🐾 Wash uncooked vegetables thoroughly prior to use.
- 🐾 Change the cat litter tray daily and dispose of the contents in a bin.
- 🐾 Be more cautious in handling the litter tray if raw food is part of your cats diet.



# Shopping list for your new kitten/cat

NAME: .....

**FOOD: HILL'S SCIENCE DIET FOOD** – your new kitten/cat has been eating Hill's Science Diet food while in our care. To avoid an upset stomach it is best to keep your kitten/cat on the same diet. If you do choose to change your kitten/cat's diet, we recommend you do this gradually.

*Kittens will need to stay on the kitten range until 12 months of age.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Hill's Kitten Diet                    | <input type="radio"/> Hill's Feline Optimal Care   |
| <input type="radio"/> Hill's Feline Indoor                  | <input type="radio"/> Hill's Feline Oral Care      |
| <input type="radio"/> Hill's Feline Sensitive Skin          | <input type="radio"/> Hill's Feline Stomach        |
| <input type="radio"/> Hill's Feline Hairball                | <input type="radio"/> Hill's Feline Hairball Light |
| <input type="radio"/> Hill's Feline Light                   | <input type="radio"/> Hill's Feline Mature         |
| <input type="radio"/> Hill's Ideal Balance Kitten           | <input type="radio"/> Hill's Ideal Balance Light   |
| <input type="radio"/> Hill's Ideal Balance Adult Grain Free | <input type="radio"/> Hill's Ideal Balance can     |
| <input type="radio"/> Hill's Kitten can                     | <input type="radio"/> Hill's Feline can            |

**FLEA AND WORMING CONTROL** – our staff will give you all the information you need to treat your new pet correctly.

**COLLAR** – if you decide to take your new feline friend for a walk we have leads and harnesses available.

**ID TAG** – this can be organised within 10 minutes in store (excludes Peninsula).

**WATER BOWL** – the bowl should be large enough to hold a day's worth of water. Ceramic bowls are best as they keep the water cool and are harder to tip over.

**FOOD BOWL**

**LITTER TRAY AND SCOOP**

<p><b>BEDDING</b> – an igloo style bed will keep your new cat nice and snug while it sleeps.</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Igloo                      <input type="radio"/> Cushioned bed</p>	<input type="radio"/>
<p><b>CARRIER</b></p>	<input type="radio"/>
<p><b>TOYS</b> – cats love toys with catnip in them.</p>	<input type="radio"/>
<p><b>SCRATCHING POST</b> – scratching posts are great for keeping cats off your furniture.</p>	<input type="radio"/>
<p><b>GROOMING</b> – we have a large range of grooming products to cater for your cat's needs. The type of brush you will need will depend on your new cat's coat.</p> <p> <input type="radio"/> Slicker brush      <input type="radio"/> Nail clippers      <input type="radio"/> Zoom groom  <input type="radio"/> Grooming mitt    <input type="radio"/> Fine tooth comb    <input type="radio"/> Bristle brush  <input type="radio"/> Shedding comb    <input type="radio"/> Furminator </p>	<input type="radio"/>

**SPECIAL NEEDS / FURTHER COMMENTS:**

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# RSPCA Victoria Adoption Centres

## **Ballarat**

155A Gillies Street South  
Ballarat 3350  
P 03 5334 2075

## **Bendigo**

20 Pipers Lane  
Bendigo 3550  
P 03 5441 2209

## **Burwood East**

Head office  
3 Burwood Highway  
Burwood East 3151  
P 03 9224 2222

Also includes veterinary clinic,  
grooming and training.

## **Castlemaine**

24 Langslow Street  
Castlemaine 3450  
P 03 5472 5277

## **Epping**

335 O'Herns Road  
Epping 3076  
P 03 9408 7356

## **Peninsula**

1030 Robyns Road  
Pearcedale 3912  
P 03 5978 9000

Also includes veterinary clinic.

## **Portland**

185 Darts Road  
Portland 3305  
P 03 5523 4690

## **Wangaratta**

1 Connell Street  
Wangaratta 3677  
P 03 5722 2874

## **Warrnambool**

23 Braithwaite Street  
Warrnambool 3280  
P 03 5561 2591

## **RSPCA Pets Place Ballarat**

27 Albert Street  
Sebastopol 3356  
P 03 5335 5909

Also includes vet consults,  
grooming services and pet  
retail.

## **RSPCA Pets Place Epping**

560 - 650 High Street  
Epping Homemaker  
Centre  
Epping 3076  
P 03 9401 0222

Also includes vet consults  
and pet retail.

## **More information**

Visit [rspcavic.org](http://rspcavic.org) for more information on caring for your cat and what to do if it is lost. There is also a large range of pet products and publications available at all Adoption Centres and Veterinary Clinics.

For specific behavioural problems, please email the RSPCA at [animalbehaviour@rspcavic.org.au](mailto:animalbehaviour@rspcavic.org.au) or phone 03 9224 2222.

**[rspcavic.org](http://rspcavic.org)**

The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Victoria)  
ACN 131 965 761 ABN 56 749 449 191

