

## 1<sup>st</sup> Time Cat Owner Checklist



### To Buy:

- Food, both canned and dry food** - Pet Food Warehouse or other pet stores have higher quality food that is healthy for your cat, as compared to grocery store brands (try to make sure that meat or seafood is one of the first listed ingredients)
- Bowls for food and water** - ceramic or stainless steel is recommended
- Bedding and blankets**
- Litter box and litter** - most cats prefer large uncovered boxes and clumping, unscented, soft textured litter)
- Nail trimmers and brush** - the right kind of brush will depend on the length of the cat's hair
- Scratching post/blocks** - providing a variety of appropriate scratching surfaces can help prevent damage to your furniture
- Toys** - a wide variety of toys with different textures, sizes, and types (like mice, wand toys, crinkly/jingle balls, cat nip, and laser points)
- Collar and name tag** - even if your cat is an indoor cat!
- Flea preventative** - talk to your vet about what brand is best for your cat
- Sturdy cat carrier** - one with plenty of room so your cat can be comfortable and enough space as they grow and get bigger; cardboard carriers shouldn't be used long term

### To Do:

- When you get home, close off one room to let your cat explore by themselves (without other pets); let them take as much time as needed to adjust and come out of their carrier at their own pace. They may even want to spend a few days in that room until they are comfortable!
- Within the first week, use your VVMA voucher to go to the vet and get a general wellness exam, finish any pending vaccinations/treatments and to set up any future appointments. After that, your vet will advise you when you should take your cat to see them.
- Feed your cat twice a day (once in the morning and once at night), changing the food each time and making sure there is fresh water out at all times.
- Place litter boxes in places that are quiet and easily accessible, like a bathroom or bedroom – make sure they have access at all times. Clean the litter box(es) at least once a day; cleaning it whenever it's dirty is even better.
- Play with your cat! Lots of play time can alleviate stress, boredom, and destructive behaviors.
- Get into the habit of grooming and nail trimming too!

## **7 Cat Myths Debunked**

### **1. Cats only purr when they are happy**

Cats do purr when they're happy, but they also purr when they are nervous or frightened, as a way to self-soothe.

### **2. Cat whiskers have no purpose**

Whiskers serve several functions and are highly sensitive (the tip of each whisker picks up vibrations in the environment that help a cat sense where he/she is and what other creatures are around her). Cats also use their whiskers to measure distances, like if they can fit through a doorway. Like other hairs on a cat's body, whiskers shed. That's normal. But you should never trim them - a cat with cut whiskers will become disoriented and scared.

### **3. Declawing won't hurt my cat, it just removes their nails**

People often mistakenly believe that declawing their cat is a harmless "quick fix" for unwanted scratching. They don't realize that declawing can make a cat less likely to use the litter box or more likely to bite (other long lasting effects can be painful walking, back pain, and early arthritis). Declawing involves the amputation of the last bone of each toe (if performed on a human being, it would be like cutting off each finger at the last knuckle); this procedure and recovery is very painful for cats. Pet parents can easily get into a nail trimming habit which will allow everyone in the household to live together happily.

### **4. Cat fur causes allergies**

The reason that people are allergic to cats is due to the allergen that is in cat saliva. Cats groom themselves with their tongues thereby spreading their saliva all over their bodies. When you pet a cat their saliva allergens get on your hands.

### **5. If you can feel your cats ribs, they're too skinny**

An ideal body condition for a cat is when the ribs can be easily felt through their skin. A slight waist is seen when the cat is viewed from above with a little bit of body fat. If you are unable to feel your cat's ribs, then your cat is likely overweight.

### **6. My cat is going to the bathroom outside the litter box because he/she is mad at me**

Not at all – cats don't experience emotions in the same way people do. There could be any number of reasons why a cat isn't using the box. Some of the most common reasons are underlying medical issues (i.e. a urinary tract infection), a change in their environment (a new cat/dog/baby/home/household member), a disruption in their schedule (i.e. your job has new hours), a dirty litter box, or a change in the litter box (location, un/covered, new litter). Always start by visiting the vet to rule out any medical issue and then try to find out what has changed and work to resolve the issue.

### **7. Can you give cats milk?**

Cats, once grown, are lactose intolerant. When they are kittens they can drink their mother's milk but after they are grown, milk will likely make them sick.