

What you Need for your New Cat

Bringing a new cat or kitten home soon? How exciting! There's nothing cuter than a playful or cuddly furball. You can get the relationship off to a great start – and ease the nerves of both human and furball – by making sure that you have everything your cat will need.

KITTY LITTER, BOX and SCOOPER

One of the perks of having a cat is that they're inclined by nature to 'go' in the same area each time. No poop-scooping missions in your backyard will be necessary. But that means you'll need to have a litter box for your cat. There's a wide range of options available. A litter box can be as simple as a plain plastic tray, or as complex as an automated poop-handler. Whatever works best for your budget and preferences will be fine. But when it comes to the litter that goes in the box – well, your cat might have a say in what you use. If you notice your cat exhibiting some reluctance in using the litter box, it may be because of the litter. Try another brand. It might take experimenting with a few brands before kitty is content, but then all will be well.

BEDDING

Cats like to have a place to call their own for sleeping. When you're shopping for a bed for your cat, you'll find yourself faced with a huge array of choices. Whatever you buy should be soft and warm. It might be as simple as a pillow, but lots of cats show a preference for nest-type beds (usually shaped somewhat like a donut). Of course, there's a pretty decent chance that the cat will ultimately choose to sleep elsewhere – like in your bed with you. But still, it's a good idea to have a kitty bed available for it.

SCRATCHING POSTS

Cats love to scratch. They need to scratch. And they WILL scratch; it's instinctive! The only question is: what will your cat scratch? The smart move is to give your cat something that it will love to scratch, and that's made for scratching. That's a scratching post. As with most of the kitty equipment you'll be buying, you'll be able to choose from a multitude of brands and varieties. But here are a few tips for buying a just right scratching post for your pet:

- It should be sturdy and stable. A cat can hit a post hard in a vigorous play attack, so you want to be sure that the post will remain in place and upright.
- It should be tall. In general, something in the range of 25" to 30" will probably be about right. It should be at least as tall as your full-grown cat's reach when it's standing on its hind legs.
- It should probably be vertical. Most cats like vertical scratching posts. But a few seem to prefer horizontal scratching posts. So if you find that your cat doesn't seem inclined to play with its vertical post, you might need to trudge back to the store for a horizontal post.

FOOD AND WATER BOWLS

You'll need food and water bowls for your cat. Stainless steel bowls are the favorites among vets because they are easy to clean and sterilize. Glass and ceramic are also popular. Plastic bowls aren't recommended because they may retain smells that the cat will find repellent. Plastic bowls are also more likely to be host to a kind of bacteria that can cause a type of feline acne.

TOYS, TOYS, TOYS

Cats are playful creatures, and playtime is an important component in their development. Cat toys are great play-time tools, and just about any purpose-built toy that your cat enjoys will be fine. Just be sure that the cat can't get any small pieces off the toy. Anything too small may be considered a potential choking threat. And don't offer your hand to your kitten to swat at as a play toy. It might be cute now, but it won't be when the cat is larger and has become conditioned to attacking your hands for fun!

GROOMING

You'll want to keep your cat looking cute with the proper grooming equipment. If you have a longhaired cat, you

will probably need a wire brush (you can buy a wire/bristle combo brush if you wish). A de-shedder tool might also belong on your want list. De-shedders remove loose hairs before they can cause matting on the surface of the cat's coat, and will make grooming duties considerably easier.

COLLAR

While you're not likely to be taking your cat out for a walk with a lead and collar, it's still a good idea to have a collar for your cat. The collar should offer either 'break away' or 'snap away' features. Those safety features could prevent your cat from becoming helplessly stuck should its collar become snagged on something. And of course you should have an identification tag on the collar.

CARRIER

Be sure to also buy a cat carrier. It's the only safe way to transport your cat, even if you don't plan any trips longer than to the nearest vet. A loose cat in a car is NOT a good thing! Again, you'll be faced with a bewildering array of choices. Just make sure that the carrier you choose is well ventilated and sturdy. It is a requirement at the vet clinics to have your cat in a carrier for all appointments.

CAT FOOD

Feed your cat a nutritionally balanced diet and provide fresh water 24/7. Give your cat the highest quality food you can afford. Good nutrition is the key to good health. Cats generally prefer canned food and will be healthier with a raw or canned grain free food diet. Educate yourself on your cat's nutritional needs. For starters, your kitten will need a high protein kitten kibble available at all times and canned cat food fed twice a day. Look to the Pet Valu staff for the best options for kibble and canned cat food. One general rule to remember is that any canned wet food is more beneficial than any dry kibble. Dry kibble is not a healthy diet and feeding strictly kibble is against Furever Friends policy of adoption. The healthiest cat is on a high protein grain free diet. This may seem like an expensive route but it will lead to less vet costs in the end. A cat cannot digest grain and that is primarily what most kibble cat foods are made from. This bad diet has been proven to lead to urinary tract issues and acute kidney failure in most cats as they age and has been found in cats as early as 1 year old. It is recommended that you feed a wet grain free diet supplemented by a grain free kibble. If you feel you cannot afford this diet, just remember that any cheap wet is better than dry...**always**.

ALL THE COMFORTS OF HOME

With a little bit of planning and careful shopping, you'll have everything you need to make your house a happy home for your new furry friend. You'll be laying the foundation for many years of happiness.