



28966 Information Lane
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Feeding Your Cat/ Kitten

Shopping for pet food can be overwhelming. Should you buy an organic, natural, or grain free diet, or a diet with no by-products? Many popular brands spend more money on advertising and packaging than on quality ingredients. Other brands use gimmicks to make the food sound more appealing; such as grain-free, all natural, or fresh. What is most important for your pet's diet is to feed a product that supplies the three essentials: vitamins, minerals and energy supplying nutrients. At VMC we believe pets should eat a good quality food that your pet likes and that suits your budget. A few recommended brands include Royal Canin, Science Diet, Purina ProPlan, and Nutro.

Cats are obligate carnivores, which mean they have a strict meat- based diet requirement. Some of their diet can include vegetables, which are useful as a source of digestible fiber. Fat in the diet is what makes foods palatable for cats. Most practitioners now support canned food as being the ideal diet for cats. Canned food provides more meat-based protein, less calories than dry food, and has more moisture than dry food. What canned diets don't provide is the option to feed intermittently during the day. They also lack the convenience of dry food. The exact amount of canned and dry food depends upon your cat's life stage (kitten, senior), lifestyle (indoor vs. outdoor) and health related needs (weight management). Kittens should be offered canned food daily, with free choice dry food. As kittens mature the quantity of food offered should be reduced.

Be careful of a kibble that contain a lot of dyes or fat, which are often used to either make the product more palatable or appear more interesting to us as pet owners. Be sure the diet names the meat source (for example; chicken, beef, lamb, salmon.) Avoid diets which list meat meal or meat by-products, as the source of this meat is unknown. Chicken meal is essentially the entire chicken ground up into a meal. Chicken by-product meal uses the animal parts not consumed by people. By-products are a less expensive but still a nutritious protein source. Whole grains, fish meal, corn gluten meal, and brewer's rice are other examples of inexpensive protein sources.

Treats for cats should be limited, as many of them contain sugars and calories. Fresh meats and fish should be limited, as they do not contain essential nutrients cats need daily. Avoid all processed human foods, fatty foods, sweets, and dairy products, as their consumption can lead to serious health issues. For cats who love to eat or tend to gain weight, keep them entertained with interactive toys and feeders.

Any pet food purchased should be AAFCO labeled. The Association of American Feed Control Officials (AAFCO) is defined as a voluntary membership association of local, state and federal agencies charged by law to regulate the sale and distribution of animal feed and animal drug remedies. Essentially, they are the only group in the industry that has established a standard at which you as the consumer will know that your pet food is delivering the nutrients that it is formulated to provide. For more information visit the website www.aaftco.org

Note: AAFCO does not differentiate between the quality of protein sources.

**For more tips and information visit these
Nutrition Websites and Resources:**

www.purina.com

www.hillspet.com

www.royalcanin.com

American Animal Hospital Association

www.aaha.org

American College of Veterinary Nutrition

<http://acvn.org>

Nutritional Requirements of Cats and Dogs: easy to read pet nutrition booklets

<http://dels.nas.edu/global/banr/petdoor>

Animal Nutrition Resources - The American Academy of Veterinary Nutrition

www.aavn.org/nutrition-resources/

An indoor pet environmental enrichment guide

<http://indoorpet.osu.edu/cats>



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Litterbox Training Cats and Elimination Disorders

Most kittens will naturally use a litterbox to eliminate, provided the box is clean, accessible, and in a quiet place. As they age, some cats develop elimination problems, where they may urinate or defecate outside the box. Some of this behavior is territorial; cats are solitary and will occasionally urinate to mark their territory. Even cats living alone in a house or apartment may urine mark in response to instinct. Other cats develop litterbox aversions, and develop a preference for eliminating on other surfaces (cloth, linoleum, etc.) Urinary tract disorders, painful defecation or fear of interruption can also cause cats to not use the box. Whatever the cause, once a cat begins to avoid the litterbox, it is hard to change the behavior. Luckily there are a few precautions you can take to minimize the chance your kitten will develop these problems.

Rules to Keep Cats Loving the Litterbox

- In multi-cat households, there should be one box/cat, plus one extra. This is an important rule! Many cats do not like to urinate in the same box they defecate in. Others don't like to eliminate where another cat has gone.
- Avoid scented litter and certain covered or mechanical litterboxes. Cats prefer an open, easily accessible box.
- Avoid putting the litterbox near the food or play station. For bigger homes, be sure the litterbox isn't in the most distant place in the house, such as the basement or attic.
- Do not use too much litter. Cats don't like the feeling of too much sand or litter- it is difficult for them to maneuver in. Use just enough litter to cover the bottom, with a bit extra.
- For cats that get agitated with wildlife or other cats outside, keep lower windows covered, so cats cannot see what is going on outside
- Keep kittens and cats entertained with interactive toys, and climbing and scratching posts.

Get your cat examined by your veterinarian at the first sign of an elimination problem. If there is a medical issue, the sooner the problem can be resolved, the less likely your cat will continue to avoid the box.