THE NARRE WARREN VET

Kitten Handbook



the narre warren vet™

KITTEN HANDBOOK

Congratulations!



Congratulations on the arrival of your new family member!

We know that there are many challenges that come with the addition of a new pet - that's why we've put together a new kitten handbook outlining the basics of kitten care.

If you have any questions about your new kitten, please don't hesitate to get in touch with us.

Phone (03) 9704 6463
Email: nurses@narrevet.com.au

Or visit us in person at 459 Princes Hwy, Narre Warren, VIC

KITTEN HANDBOOK

Coming home

Making the transition from the breeder to a new home can be extremely stressful for a young kitten. They have lost the comfort of their Mum, Dad, and litter mates and have seen a change in their handler and home environment. It is important that we provide comfort, guidance, and support during this process.

Feliway

Veterinarians commonly recommend a spray or plug in diffuser called Feliway, which helps kittens to feel comfortable and relaxed in stressful situations.
Feliway contains a synthetic pheromone that only cats can smell. This pheromone mimics the feline facial pheromone that cats leave in their environment when they feel safe and secure. We commonly see cats 'headbutting' items of furniture or people they love - this is the action performed when they leave this pheromone of their own accord
Feliway has been proven to help reduce the signs of stress, such as urine spraying, scratching, or hiding. It is also strongly recommended to be used in the carrier to reduce the stress associated with car rides/ cat carrier use.
Feliway also has a product that can be used when introducing a new kitten to a household that already has cat residents.



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Carriers

With so many carrier options on the market, education is required to ensure your kitten has a safe and secure means of travel. Contrary to popular belief, cats generally do not enjoy leaving their home environment and do not want to see the world from inside a carrier. We recommend carriers with semi-solid walls (ventilation holes only) and a removable top. Suitable alternatives include the canvas carriers with zip-up walls and doors - see the images below.





We DO NOT recommend cats travel in bubble carriers or on a harness and lead. The bubble carriers do not provide any sense of security; cats are much happier when they feel that they are hidden from view. Harnesses and leads also provide no sense of security, and far too much mobility - we run the risk of your cat slipping the harness and escaping.







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Settling in

Kittens may feel lonely and will miss their mother and siblings during the night. To allow your new family member to feel more comfortable, we recommend setting up a safe haven for them. This should be a confined area of the house, such as a bathroom or laundry, where they can feel safe and remain comfortable whilst they settle in. We recommend having a Feliway plug-in diffuser in this space to aid in reducing stress and anxiety.

It can be normal for cats/ kittens to take anywhere between 4 to 6 weeks to settle into a new environment.

Within this safe space, your kitten will need a litter tray, water bowl, food bowl, warm bedding, and a scratching post. It is important that your kitten is familiar with the location of their litter tray and how to use it before they go exploring the rest of the house.

It is a good idea to have your kitten return to this safe space when you cannot supervise them until they have grown up a little bit more.



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Litter Boxes

There is a general rule when setting up litter trays for cats and kittens. This rule is called the N+1 rule; the 'N' represents the number of cats/ kittens in the household. For a house with only 1 cat/ kitten, there should be 2 litter trays - in separate locations in the house. For a house with 2 cats/ kittens, there should be 3 litter trays. This rule is in place because some cats do not like using already soiled litter trays. Providing 2 different locations for toileting can help prevent urinary issues such as toileting outside of the trays (on your couch, for example!) or spraying.



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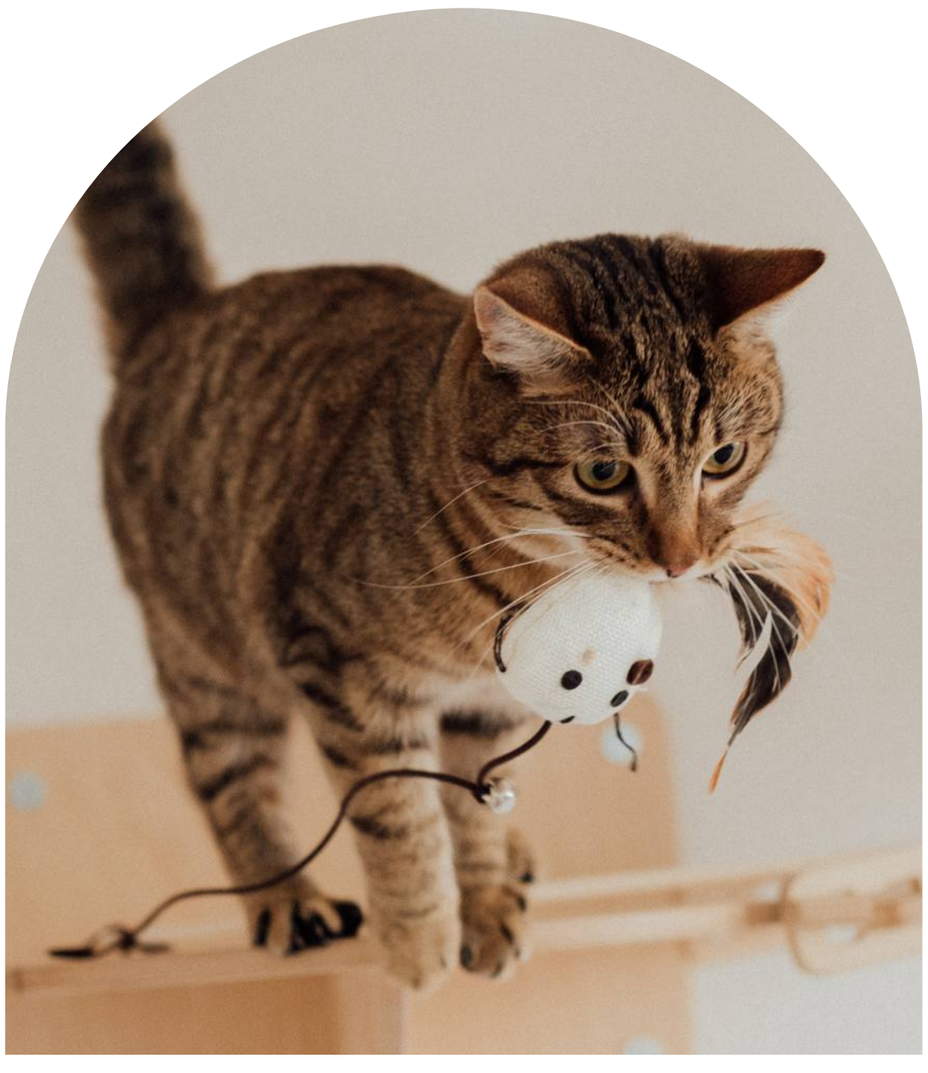
Enrichment

Environmental enrichment for kittens is all about creating a stimulating, safe, and engaging space that supports their development and natural instincts. Since kittens are in a critical period of growth and learning, enrichment helps them develop physical coordination, confidence, and appropriate social behaviours. It also reduces stress and boredom and encourages positive human interaction.

Physical enrichment: encourages exercise, exploration, and motor skills development. Adding items such as climbing structures (cat trees and shelving), scratching posts, tunnels, and hideouts with a variety of different textures and surfaces.

Sensory enrichment: enriches sight, sound, smell, touch, and taste. Window perches to encourage bird watching, cat-safe plants (like catnip or cat grass), a variety of toys, including crinkly, fuzzy, and ball-shaped toys, in their environment, encourage kittens to explore their natural instincts.

Social enrichment: encourages bonding and teaches appropriate behaviour. We encourage regular gentle handling by people within the household, short positive play session with appropriate toys, and slow exposure to routines within the household, such as vacuum use and cooking in the kitchen.



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Enrichment

Cognitive enrichment: promotes thinking, problem-solving, and learning. Items such as puzzle feeders or food toys. Playing with wand toys or laser pointers (always finish with your kitten having the satisfaction of ‘catching’ the toy or laser).

Feeding enrichment: mimics natural hunting behaviours. Scattering/ hiding food throughout the house and using foraging toys encourages kittens to be inquisitive and explore their home environment.



Safety tips: Always supervise new toys at first. Ensure all objects are non-toxic and not too large to swallow. Avoid string toys or ribbon unless you’re present. Make sure climbing areas are stable and not near breakables.

Bonus tips: Start early! Kittens are most impressionable between 2-9 weeks of age. Keep the environment clean and calm, especially around shy or nervous kittens. Make sure you have quiet rest zones separate from the active spaces.

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Registration

Microchip registration

One of the first things required when you pick up a new kitten is to make sure that they are microchipped.

In Victoria, all kittens that are sold must be microchipped prior to adoption. The minimum age for a microchip to be implanted is 6 weeks of age. The microchip helps us to reunite lost pets with their families.

If the breeder has not already transferred your details onto the kitten's microchip number, they will provide you with a 'transfer of ownership form'. You will need to complete this form and send it to the registration company. A change of ownership may take a few weeks to be processed.

If your contact details change, it is important that your pet's microchip details are updated.



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Registration

Council registration

Each council has its own set of regulations for pet registration. In the City of Casey, All cats over the age of 3 months must be registered and must be microchipped. In addition to being microchipped, the City of Casey requires all cats to remain contained within their property boundaries. This is in line with the Domestic Animals Act 1994. This means that your cat MUST remain indoors. If you would like to have your cat have access to an outdoor environment, we recommend installing an outdoor enclosure. This is a fantastic means of environmental enrichment whilst keeping your cat safe from other cats, dogs, and cars! It also keeps our wildlife safe from your cat.



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Pet Insurance

Council registration

Pet insurance is a type of health insurance for pets that helps cover the cost of veterinary care. It can ease the financial burden of unexpected illnesses or injuries, and sometimes routine care. Coverage depends on the plan, but most policies fall into one of these categories:

Accident only: covers injuries (e.g, broken bones, poisonings, car accidents, etc.). It is the cheapest option but only has a limited scope.

Accident and illness (Comprehensive): covers accidents and diseases such as cancers, infections, arthritis, etc. This is the most popular type of coverage.



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Pet Insurance

Wellness / Preventative: (add-on or separate cover to the options above) covers routine care such as vaccinations, parasite prevention, and dental procedures; occasionally will cover costs associated with desexing. This type of cover is often the least cost-effective unless it's bundled with one of the options mentioned above. Most pet insurance plans are re-imbursement based meaning that you still need to pay for your vet bill up front, you'll then make a claim to your provider with your receipt and consultation notes, and then your insurer will reimburse you a percentage of your bill minus any excess deductible.

We have the GapOnly® program available within our clinics. GapOnly® is a service that simplifies pet insurance claims by allowing pet owners to pay only the difference (the "gap") between their vet bill and their insurance coverage at the time of service. Instead of paying the full amount upfront and waiting for reimbursement, pet owners can claim on the spot at participating clinics and only pay what their insurance doesn't cover.



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Nutrition

Nutrition plays a key role in a kitten's growth and development. Cats are obligate carnivores, meaning that they need a source of animal protein (meat) to survive.

There are a lot of different diets for our kittens out there, including raw food diets, dry kibble diets, canned food diets, and home-made diets.

We recommend a high-quality, balanced, premium commercial kitten food. Sticking to a food labelled 'kitten' until they are 12 months of age (1 year old) is important to prevent nutritional deficiencies during growth. Once your kitten turns 12 months old, they can transition (over a 7-10 day period) to an adult food, and when they turn 7 years of age, they can transition again onto a senior food.



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Nutrition

Cats like to be fed 3-4 times a day, which replicates how they hunt in the wild; however, we frequently feed them twice daily due to busy schedules.

We recommend feeding from metal or ceramic bowls and cleaning them regularly. Over time, plastic bowls house bacteria that don't wash away even when cleaned, which can lead to skin and mouth irritation.

Cats prefer their food and water to be separate from each other, and they also prefer their wet and dry food kept separate too. And most importantly, they do not like putting their faces into deep dish bowls due to the sensitivity of their whiskers.



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Toxic food

There are a number of human foods and plants that are toxic to cats. If you know or suspect your cat has ingested any of the following foods or plants, please phone the clinic or afterhours emergency center as soon as possible.

Onions, Garlic, leeks, and chives: damage red blood cells (can cause anemia).
Chocolate and cocoa: contain theobromine and caffeine, which are toxic to the heart and nervous system.
Caffeine (Coffee, Tea, Energy drinks, etc): can cause rapid breathing, heart palpitations, and seizures.
Alcohol: even small amounts can be fatal.
Grapes and raisins: can cause kidney failure.
Xylitol: found in sugar-free gum, candy, and some peanut butters, causes insulin release, which leads to low blood sugar and liver failure.
Raw dough (Yeast): expands in the stomach and produces alcohol.
Fat Trimmings and Bones: can cause pancreatitis, choking, and internal damage.
Raw Eggs: risks salmonella and biotin deficiency.
Milk and Dairy: most cats are lactose intolerant, causing gastrointestinal upset.
Tuna (in excess): can lead to malnutrition or mercury poisoning.

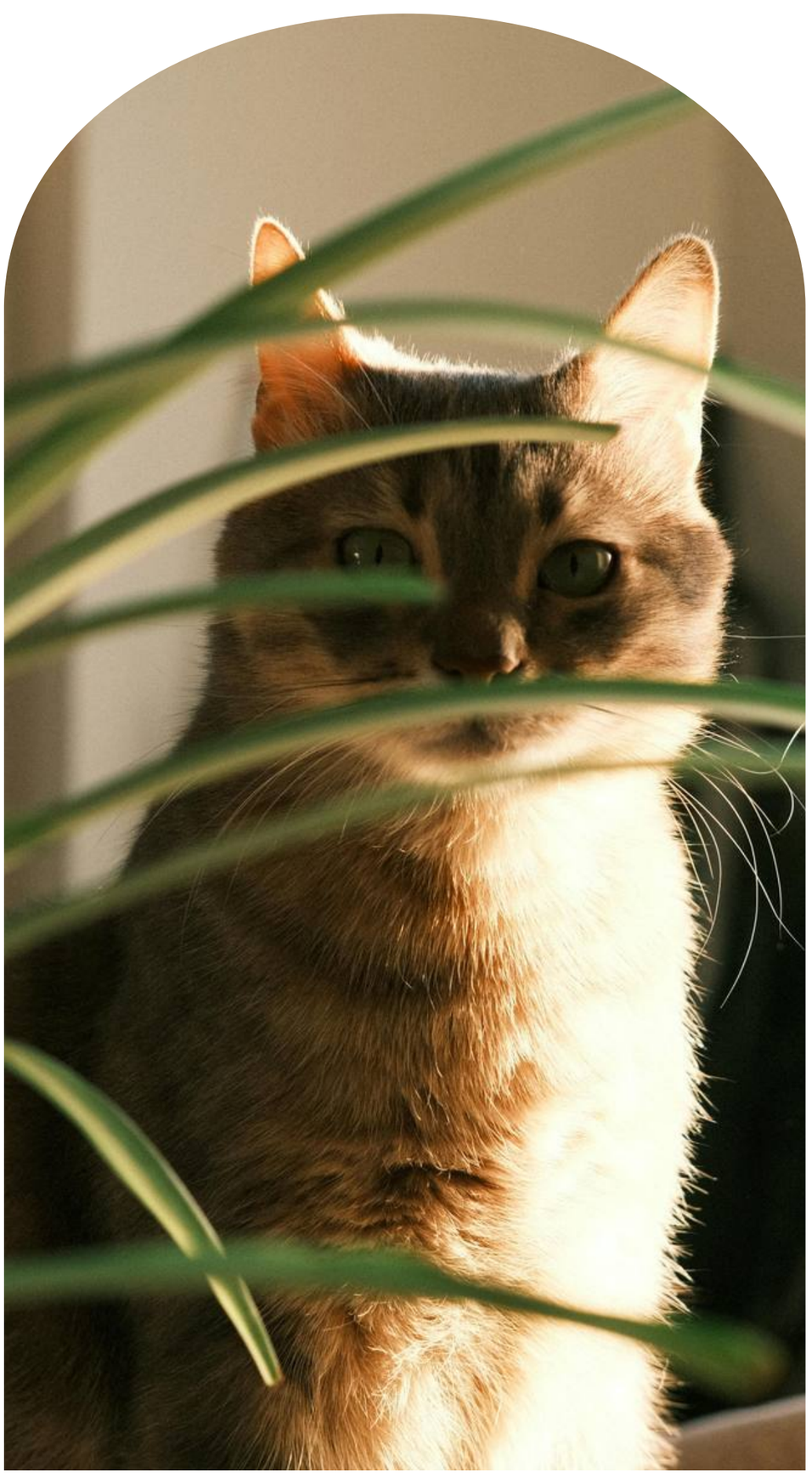
Dog Food is not a balanced diet for cats and can cause a taurine deficiency over time.

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Toxic Plants

Lilies: Even small amounts (including pollen or water from the vase) can cause kidney failure.
Sago Palm: This entire plant is toxic, especially the seeds, causing liver failure.
Oleander: is toxic to the heart.
Autumn Crocus: can cause severe vomiting and multi-organ damage.
Yew: is toxic to the heart and potentially fatal.
Diffenbachia: causes oral irritation, drooling, and difficulty swallowing.
Aloe Vera: causes vomiting and diarrhoea.
Philodendron and Monstera: cause oral irritation and vomiting.
Pothos (Devil's Ivy): causes mild oral and digestive tract irritation.
Peace Lily: causes oral irritation and vomiting.
English Ivy: causes abdominal pain, vomiting, and diarrhoea.

Signs of poisoning in cats:
Drooling, vomiting, diarrhoea, lethargy or weakness, seizures or tremors, difficulty breathing, and unusual behaviour.



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Parasite prevention

Worms

Kittens can be infected with roundworm, tapeworm, hookworm, lungworm and whipworm. Kittens can be born with roundworms as the mother can pass the worms to the kittens while in utero. They can also acquire roundworms through the milk they receive from their mother. Kittens need to be wormed with an all wormer at 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 12 weeks of age, then every month ongoing for the rest of their life.

Fleas

Fleas can be transmitted to our kittens from other pets and the environment. They can be easily prevented by monthly topical products or tablets. DO NOT use products labelled for dogs on your cats. Dog products often contain pyrethrin which is highly toxic to cats.

Heart worm

Heartworm disease is spread by mosquitoes and can be fatal if left undetected or untreated in our pets. Prevention usually starts at 12 weeks of age using a monthly topical product.

A topical product such as Nexgard Spectra helps prevent against all of the parasites mentioned above in one easy monthly application.

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Parasite prevention

Ticks

Ticks are tiny parasites that feed on blood and can spread serious diseases. They attach to your Kitten's skin, often after walks in grassy or wooded areas. Tick bites don't always cause symptoms right away, but infections can lead to fever, joint pain, or tiredness. Regular tick prevention from your vet helps protect your kitten from these risks.

Nexgard Spectra for Cats

We usually recommend that kittens be wormed with an all-wormer at 8 and 10 weeks. At the 12-week vaccination, Kittens will be given a free sample of Nexgard Spectra, a spot-on solution which helps prevent fleas, heartworm, roundworm, hookworms, tapeworm, whipworms, and ticks. This is to be given monthly.



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Grooming

Introducing brushing and grooming to a kitten early helps them to learn to enjoy (or at least tolerate) it, setting them up for a lifetime of healthy hygiene. Below you will find a step-by-step guide:

Start early and keep it short: Begin as soon as your kitten has settled in, keep grooming and handling sessions short and sweet - just 1-2 minutes at first.

Create a calm and safe environment: Choose a quiet, cozy space with no loud noises or distractions. Groom during cuddle time or after a meal when your kitten is naturally calmer.

Let them explore the tools: Allow your kitten to sniff and inspect the brush or comb. Use soft, kitten appropriate grooming tools such as a soft bristled brush, rubber comb or grooming mitt.



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Grooming

Go slow and make it positive: Start with strokes along the back or behind the ears - areas most kittens enjoy. Avoid the belly, tail, and legs until they're more comfortable. Use gentle praise, soothing voice, and high-value treats (like creamy treats or roast chicken). End on a positive note before your kitten gets fussy. long-haired breeds).



Introduce gentle restraint gradually: Teaching your kitten to accept handling and light restraint prepares them for nail trims, ear checks, and teeth brushing.

Watch their signals: If your kitten squirms, growls, or tries to escape - take a pause. Respect their boundaries and try again later.

Build routine slowly: Slowly increase duration and frequency. Aim for a few short sessions per week, building to daily brushing if needed (especially for long-haired breeds).

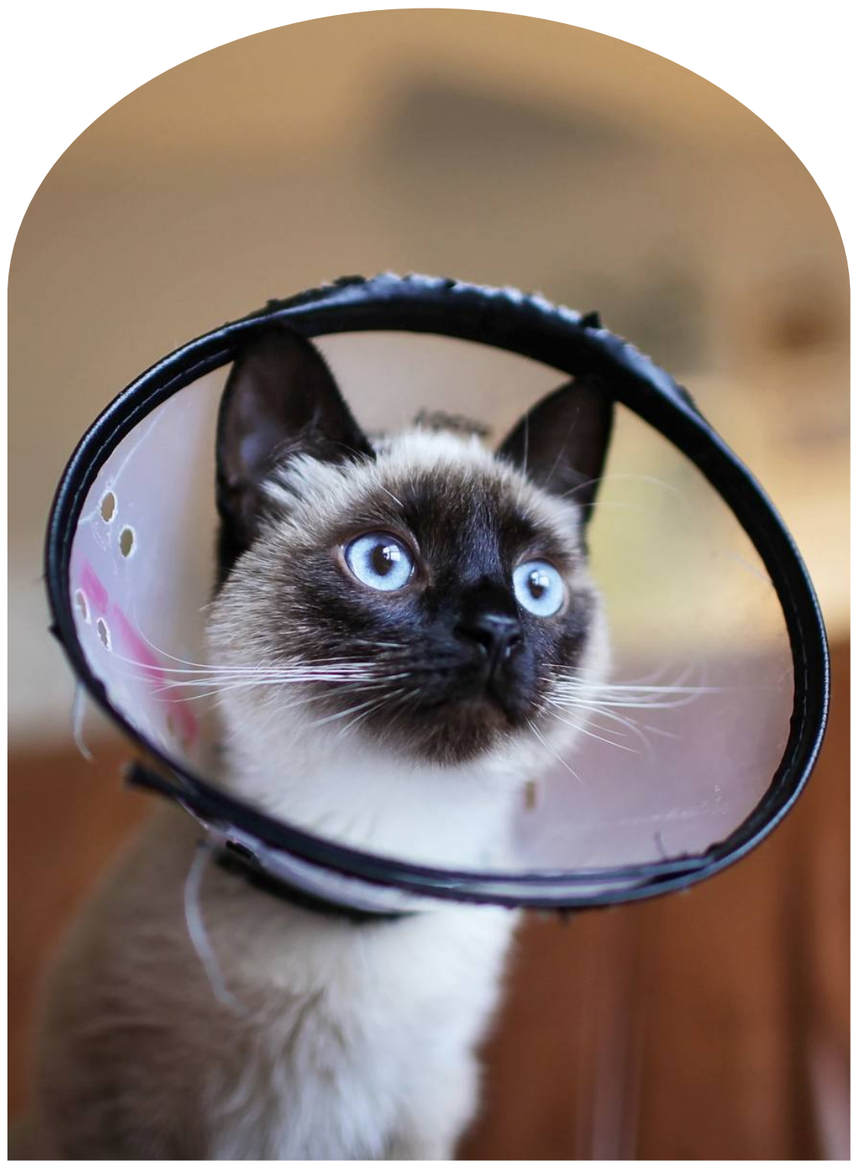
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Neutering

Neutering both male and female kittens helps to reduce roaming and subsequent fighting with neighbourhood cats. It may also reduce urinary marking behaviour. In females, it reduces behaviours such as calling, yowling, and crying at night. Neutering also helps with population control to reduce unplanned litters and is required by law whilst residing in the City of Casey.

Did you know that some cats are capable of breeding and producing kittens from the age of 4 months! Becoming pregnant at such a young age can put a huge toll on the young, growing mother, resulting in growth and nutritional complications.

There are many debates concerning the recommended age of neutering versus certain side effects on health. Neutering at a young age can be less stressful, results in smaller surgical wounds and have less tissue damage (due to small blood vessels) as well as decreased surgical time and an easier recovery period.
We recommend neutering at 16 weeks of age (4 months old). If you have any questions or concerns regarding neutering, please feel free to discuss them with our staff.



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Final Word

Kittenhood can be a difficult time, and we know there is a lot of information to take in.

We are here to help you through this journey so we can help our pets enjoy longer, healthier lives!.



Please note: We are not sponsored by any of the products listed to promote or sell their products. All the products listed are recommended by our team as they are tried and tested.