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**KITTEN BEHAVIOR**

***How should I introduce my new kitten to its new environment?***

Go slowly. Introduce you cat first to a confined small area for the first few days, then slowly allow access to other areas of the home.

***How should I introduce my new kitten to my other cat?***

A new kitten may receive a hostile reception from another cat in the home. The tension between cats living together stems from competition of resources. Valuables to cats include: food, water, a litter box, a safe sleeping spot, a scratching post, a perch, and toys. Maximize these items in your home and create hiding spots and refuges for your cats (See out “Enriching Your Cat’s Environment” Handout).

The introduction period will usually last one to two weeks and typically one of these three outcomes ensues thereafter.

1. The existing cat will remain **hostile** to the kitten. Fighting may occur occasionally, especially if both try to eat out of the same bowl at the same time. This is an unlikely occurrence if competition for food and resources are minimized during the first few weeks.

2. The existing cat will **tolerate** the kitten. Hostility will cease, but the existing cat will act as if the kitten is not present. This is more likely if the existing cat is very independent, has been an only cat for several years, or if marked competition occurred during the first few weeks.

3. **Bonding** will occur between the existing cat and the kitten. They will play together, groom each other, and sleep near each other. This is more likely to occur if competition is minimized and if the existing cat has been lonely for companionship.

***What type of playing should I expect from a kitten?***

Stalking and pouncing are important play behaviors in kittens and have an important role in proper muscular development. If given a sufficient outlet for these behaviors with toys, your kitten will be less likely to use family members for these activities. Read more in our ““Enriching Your Cat’s Environment” Handout.

***Can I discipline a kitten?***

Disciplining a young kitten may be necessary if its behavior threatens people or property, but harsh punishment should be avoided. Hand clapping and using shaker cans or horns can be intimidating enough to inhibit undesirable behavior. However, remote punishment is preferred. Remote punishment consists of using something that appears unconnected to the punisher to stop the problem behavior. Examples include using spray bottles, throwing objects in the direction of the kitten to startle (but not hit) it, and making loud noises. Remote punishment is preferred because the kitten associates punishment with the undesirable act and not with you.

***How do I insure that my kitten is well socialized?***

The socialization period for cats is between 2 and 12 weeks of age. During that time, the kitten is very impressionable to social influences. If it has good experiences with men, women, children, dogs, other cats, etc., it is likely to accept them throughout life. If the experiences are absent or unpleasant, it may become apprehensive or adverse to any of them. Therefore, during the period of socialization, we encourage you to expose your cat to as many types of social events and influences as possible.

***My kitten is already becoming destructive. What can be done?***

There are four options that you should consider: frequent nail clipping, nail shields, and surgical declawing.

The nails may be clipped weekly because a cat's nails will regrow and become sharp again in about 4-7 days.

There are some commercially available products that are called nail caps. The most common one is called Soft Paws™. These are generally made of smooth plastic and attach to the end of the nail with a special glue. The nails are still present, but the caps prevent them from causing destruction. After 2-4 weeks the nails will grow enough that the caps will be shed. At that time, you should be prepared to replace them.

Surgical declawing is the removal of the nail at its base, which requires an amputation of the last bone in the digits. This is done under general anesthesia and with appropriate surgical technique and analgesia, cats typically do very well with the procedure. If you elect to declaw your cat, it should always live indoors since the ability to defend itself is compromised.