DR STU MOBILE VET

It just takes time.

Your new kitten: a practical care checklist

Personalised Mobile Vet | Dr Stuart Cunningham BVSc | Reviewed November 2026

Start with the dates and products in your kitten's breeder or rescue record. Have the record ready for our home visit, or send it ahead, and we will set the plan from there. The ages below are a guide for a healthy kitten in South East Queensland.

> **Start socialisation now.** Kittens are especially receptive from about **2 weeks**, with this window waning around **7–10 weeks**. Ask the breeder or rescue carer what gentle handling they have done, then keep giving calm, positive experiences at home. Do not force a frightened kitten; they can still learn later, but early experiences can have lasting effects.

YOUR KITTEN'S EARLY CARE MILESTONES

6–8 wk	10–12 wk	16+ wk	6 mo	12 mo after final
First F3	Next F3	Final early F3	Review worming plan	First F3 booster + check
□ Done: _____	□ Done: _____	□ Done: _____	□ Done: _____	□ Done: _____

Worming: every 2 weeks from 2–12 weeks, then monthly until 6 months. Dates vary with the record and product used.

Before your kitten comes home

- □ Ask for the **vaccination, worming, flea/tick and microchip records**. Note the date, product and next due date for each. Confirm the microchip is registered and transfer the contact details to your name.
- □ Prepare one quiet **starter room** with food, water, a bed or hiding spot, scratcher, toys and a litter tray. Place the litter tray away from food and water. For one cat, plan on **two litter trays in separate places** once settled.
- □ Buy a complete, balanced **kitten food** and provide fresh water. Keep the food familiar at first, then change gradually if needed. Do not give cow's milk.
- □ Keep the carrier out at home with soft bedding and the door open. The carrier should become a normal resting option, not something that appears only before a vet visit.
- □ Book a **health check within a few days of arrival**, particularly if the history is unclear. In Queensland, kittens should be microchipped before 12 weeks of age unless an exemption applies.

Around 8 weeks: the first days at home

- □ Check whether the **first F3** vaccination (feline panleukopenia, herpesvirus and calicivirus) has already been given. The usual first dose is at **6–8 weeks**. Book the next vaccination **2–4 weeks later**; the final early dose needs to be at **16 weeks or older**. A 6-week start may need an extra visit.
- □ Continue **intestinal worming every 2 weeks from 2 through 12 weeks** (2, 4 and 6 weeks are usually handled by the breeder or carer, then 8, 10 and 12 weeks), then **monthly until 6 months**. Use a **cat-specific** product suitable for the kitten's current age and weight, and record each dose. Check whether it covers tapeworm as well as roundworm and hookworm.
- □ Agree on **age- and weight-approved flea and paralysis tick protection**. Cats can be affected by paralysis ticks in South East Queensland, including cats with enclosed outdoor access. Check the kitten's coat and skin daily when tick exposure is possible. **Never use a dog flea or tick product on a cat**; some are deadly to cats.

- ☐ Ask whether your kitten needs **heartworm prevention**. It is spread by mosquitoes, including to indoor cats. Your vet can choose a cat-labelled product and interval for your kitten's age, size and local risk; it is often included in a combined parasite product.
- ☐ Let your kitten come out of the carrier in the quiet room **at their own pace**. Keep other pets separate initially. Offer gentle play and allow rest and hiding. Do not pull a frightened kitten out of a hiding place.
- ☐ Make the litter tray easy to reach. Scoop daily. If there is an accident, clean it calmly and check the tray location, litter and kitten's health; never punish.

Around 10–12 weeks

- ☐ Attend the **next F3 vaccination visit**, usually 2–4 weeks after the previous dose. Discuss **FeLV or FIV** only if the kitten's future lifestyle creates a real exposure risk; these are not automatic additions to F3.
- ☐ Continue the worming plan and update flea/tick and heartworm reminders. Weigh the kitten before dosing: small weight changes can change the correct product or dose.
- ☐ Add short, pleasant experiences every day: visitors who let the kitten approach, soft household sounds, gentle brushing and one-second paw, ear or mouth touches followed by a treat. Stop if they become worried.
- ☐ Play with **wand toys or soft toys**, not hands and feet. Offer scratching surfaces near resting places and reward their use. Give high places and hiding spaces so the kitten has choices.
- ☐ Practise carrier training: place a treat near the open carrier, then inside it over several days. Let the kitten enter and leave freely before briefly closing the door.

At 16 weeks or older

- ☐ Book the **final dose of the initial F3 series at 16 weeks or later**, even if earlier doses were given. Maternal antibodies can block an early vaccine; the age of the last dose is the key detail.
- ☐ Discuss **desexing before puberty** and make a booking with an appropriate clinic. The right timing depends on health, size and local requirements; some female kittens can become fertile surprisingly young.
- ☐ Keep the kitten **safely contained** or use a secure outdoor enclosure. If you already have a cat, follow the introduction steps below.
- ☐ Continue monthly intestinal worming until 6 months and maintain the chosen flea/tick and heartworm plan without gaps.

At 6 months and beyond

- ☐ Write down the date for the **first F3 booster and health check: 12 months after the final early F3 dose**. Use the date in the vaccination record, rather than your kitten's first birthday.
- ☐ Move to an adult intestinal-worm plan based on lifestyle; **every 3 months** is a common baseline, while hunting or outdoor exposure may call for a different plan. Keep the flea/tick and heartworm plan suited to local risk.
- ☐ Keep up short reward-based sessions: coming when called, entering the carrier and accepting brushing or a paw touch. Give daily opportunities to climb, hide, scratch and play.
- ☐ Book a **health check every year**. Low-risk adult cats may have F3 at intervals of **3 years or longer** where the product and circumstances permit. Cats with greater respiratory-virus exposure may need more frequent herpesvirus and calicivirus protection.

If you already have a cat: introduce them slowly

Think carefully before bringing a kitten home. I do not generally recommend getting a kitten just to provide company for an existing cat. A resident cat may find a newcomer stressful, even when the newcomer is young. Some cats learn to share a home peacefully; friendship is not guaranteed. If your cat is elderly, unwell, or has struggled with other cats, talk with your vet before deciding.

- ☐ **Before they meet**, make sure both cats have had a recent health check. Ask your vet whether the new kitten needs testing for contagious disease before contact. Set up a separate, quiet room for the kitten with food, water, a litter tray, a bed, hiding places, a scratcher and toys. Keep your resident cat's routine and favourite spaces as steady as possible.
- ☐ **On arrival**, take the kitten straight to that room in a covered carrier. Close the door, then let the kitten come out when ready. Do not arrange a face-to-face greeting.
- ☐ **Once the kitten is settled**, swap bedding or soft toys between the cats each day. Let each cat investigate the other's scent at their own pace. Pair calm investigation with a treat or play. Move on only when both are comfortable.
- ☐ **Next, try brief visual contact** through a secure screen or tall gate. Keep the cats far enough apart to remain relaxed; use play or treats if they enjoy them. End the session while it is still calm. Then try short, supervised time in the same room, with hiding places, high perches and clear routes away from each other. Separate them when you cannot watch.
- ☐ **Give each cat their own resources in different places:** food, water, resting and hiding spots, scratching surfaces and litter trays. Aim for one litter tray per cat **plus one extra**, spread out so one cat cannot block another's access.
- ☐ **Watch for tension:** staring, blocking a doorway or tray, stalking, chasing, hiding, changes in eating or litter use, or repeated hissing and swatting. Go back a step if either cat is distressed. Never force contact or punish either cat. If there is injury, persistent stress or no progress, keep them apart and ask your vet for behaviour advice. This process may take weeks or months.

Call promptly if your kitten stops eating, is repeatedly vomiting, has significant diarrhoea, has trouble breathing or develops weakness after possible tick exposure. Young kittens can deteriorate quickly.

Book a home visit: personalisedmobilevet.com.au · Online booking · 0478 027 533

Sources: WSAVA vaccination guidelines (2024); AVA vaccination policy; AVA socialisation policy; Animal Welfare League Queensland foster protocol; RSPCA new kitten care; RSPCA tick advice; FelineVMA 2024 intercat tension guidelines and step-by-step cat introduction guide; Queensland microchipping.