

New Puppy & Kitten Care Guide

Community Animal Care – Client Resource Library

Welcome

Congratulations on your new pet! This guide provides practical, easy-to-follow information to help puppies and kittens settle into their new homes, stay healthy, and develop positive behaviors.

The First 0–2 Weeks: What to Expect

- Adjustment is normal. New pets may be shy, sleep more, eat less for the first 24–48 hours, or vocalize.
- Schedule a veterinary visit within 3–7 days of adoption or purchase for a wellness exam, vaccination planning, parasite screening, and microchip check.
- Set up a quiet, safe space with food, water, bedding, and toys. Gradually increase access to your home.
- Establish predictable routines for feeding, bathroom needs, play, and rest.

Basic Supplies Checklist

- Age-appropriate diet and measuring scoop
- Food and water bowls
- Bed and crate or carrier
- Collar or harness with ID tag; microchip recommended
- Leash for puppies; breakaway collar for kittens if used
- Safe chew toys or scratching posts and interactive toys
- Litter box and litter for kittens (one per cat plus one extra)
- Puppy pads or outdoor potty plan
- Training treats
- Grooming supplies
- Waste bags and pet-safe disinfectant

Puppy Care Guide

Puppy Feeding & Health

- Diet: Feed an age-appropriate diet and follow feeding directions provided by your veterinarian or food manufacturer.
- Puppies typically eat 3–4 small meals per day.
- Fresh water should be available at all times.
- Vaccinations generally begin around 6–8 weeks of age.
- Start parasite prevention as recommended by your veterinarian.
- Discuss spay/neuter timing with your veterinarian (often around 4–6 months).

House Training Puppies

- Take puppies outside after waking, eating, playing, and at least every 1–2 hours.
- Use a consistent potty location and cue.
- Reward immediately after successful outdoor elimination.
- Never punish accidents. Clean with an enzyme-based cleaner.
- Crate training supports house training and provides a safe resting space.

Puppy Training & Socialization

- Begin training early with short, positive sessions.
- Teach name recognition and basic cues such as sit and come.
- Critical socialization window: approximately 3–14 weeks.
- Safely expose puppies to people, sounds, surfaces, and healthy vaccinated dogs.

Kitten Care Guide

Kitten Feeding & Health

- Diet: Feed an age-appropriate diet and follow feeding directions provided by your veterinarian or food manufacturer.
- Kittens typically eat 3–4 small meals per day.
- Fresh water should be available at all times.
- Vaccinations generally begin around 6–8 weeks of age.

- Begin parasite prevention as recommended by your veterinarian.
- Discuss spay/neuter timing with your veterinarian.

Litter Training Kittens

- Place litter boxes in quiet, accessible areas.
- Use low-sided boxes for young kittens.
- Scoop daily and keep boxes clean.
- Provide one litter box per cat plus one extra.

Kitten Training & Socialization

- Socialization is most important from 2–9 weeks but continues beyond.
- Gently handle paws, ears, mouth, and tail.
- Introduce kittens to household noises, people, and short car rides.
- Redirect biting and scratching to appropriate toys and scratching surfaces.

New York State Pet Lemon Law – Important Information

New York State's Pet Lemon Law applies ONLY to dogs and cats that are PURCHASED from pet dealers or certain breeders. It does NOT apply to animals adopted from humane societies, animal shelters, or rescue organizations, even if an adoption fee is charged.

For pets that ARE covered under the Pet Lemon Law:

- A licensed veterinarian must examine the pet and certify a serious illness or contagious disease within 14 days of purchase.
- Congenital or hereditary conditions must be diagnosed within 180 days of purchase.
- Required documentation must be submitted within legal timeframes to qualify for remedies.

Although adopted pets are not covered under the Pet Lemon Law, Community Animal Care strongly recommends a veterinary exam within 3–7 days of adoption so any health concerns can be identified early.

When to Contact a Veterinarian or Trainer

- Vomiting or diarrhea lasting more than 24 hours
- Lethargy, breathing problems, or refusal to eat
- Sudden behavior changes, aggression, or extreme fear
- Signs of pain or injury