

Caring for Your New Bengal Kitten *From Squirehaven Cattery*

Congratulation on your new baby Bengal! Moving to a new home is always stressful for a kitten. Here are some tips to get both of you through these first few days. Your new kitten will be at least 12 weeks old when you take them home.

New Home

On arriving home with your new kitten, put your new arrival in a room where he/she will feel secure. A bedroom would be a good choice. Provide your cat/kitten with plenty of food, fresh water, a litter box, and a comfortable bed in which your kitten will feel safe. If you use a bathroom, please keep toilet lid down.

Kittens seem to “ask” to come out and explore the rest of the house when they feel ready. The safe room is not a punishment. It is the best place for your kitten at night and when guests arrive and there is a risk of doors being left open. If you have a multiple cat home, you must quarantine your new arrival for a period of time specified in your contract. Move slowly, calmly and talk gently. Your kitten may be very scared in new surroundings and may cry. Make sure they know where their food, bed and litter box are.

Diet

Do not change your kitten’s diet. Your kitten has been eating a special diet of Life’s Abundance Premium Cat Food and cooked chicken (see recipe below). You should have enough food for 4-5 days. A booklet about your kitten’s dry food is included with your kitten folder. Additional supplies can be ordered online at <http://www.healthypetnet.com> or call (877) 387-4564 between the hours of 8:00 AM to 7:00PM EST to order.

Dry food should be free fed. Cooked chicken is great and they love it. Raw beef can be fed occasionally in very small amounts. Be sure to cut in very small kitten bite size pieces. Do not ever feed raw chicken or pork. Do not, under any circumstances, leave the meat in their bowl for over 2 hours! It will go bad and they will get sick!

If your kitten develops diarrhea, stop the canned food and feed raw meat or cooked chicken only until stools are firm. When stools are firm again resume feeding dry food. A meat only diet will cause severe dietary deficiencies. Bengal’s love raw meat and you may notice that the Bengal may exhibit a primal growl when eating raw meat.

Ma Ma Squires Chicken Recipe: I got this from my mentor, Joan Crook.

This is a mixture I use for my kittens. I boil skinless chicken breasts until cooked thoroughly. Let them cool and reserve the broth. Do not add salt. Cut chicken into chunks, cool and then place in blender with enough broth to make a baby food consistency. This can be frozen for several months. I usually make about 10 pounds at a time and freeze in small containers. Place a small container in the refrigerator to thaw the day before you need it. I mix several tablespoons with 1/2 cup of dry food and add a little warm water if needed to mix. As the kittens get older, cut the chicken up into small pieces instead of blending.

Trimming Nails/Declawing

Your kitten has already become accustomed to having its nails trimmed. Declawing is unnecessary if you keep your kitten's nails trimmed. Declawing can break the spirit of your cat and encourage biting as a way to defend itself. It can also cause behavior problems like urinating outside of the litter box due to sensitive paws. There are many products on the market which cats can use for scratching and will provide further protection for your furniture. For more information on alternatives and the subject of declawing see <http://cats.about.com/cs/declawing/a/declawing.htm>

Safety

Do not allow your kitten to roam outdoors; there are too many risks. Your kitten may be stolen, hit by a car, pick up diseases from other cats, or fall prey to another animal. Kittens who stay in the house all the time will not ask to go outside. The average lifespan of a cat is 16 years. The life expectancy of an outdoor cat is 3 years. Always use a carrier to transport your kitten. I leave the carrier open in the house to encourage the kitten to get into it. Take them on short rides in the car just for fun; then when its time to go to the vet, they won't associate the carrier with "VET". I use an enclosed pet stroller to take my cat on walks instead of using a leash. This protects them from other animals.

Do not allow your kitten to chew on house plants. Many house plants are poisonous, so move the plant out of reach until you are sure of its toxicity and whether or not your cat finds it enticing. Check drawers, the refrigerator, closets, and the dryer before you close them! Being quick and curious, your Bengal just may have gone in to investigate!
When cooking, put your kitten in another room. Burns to paws are dangerous and painful.

Cat Litter

The most important part of the litter box is keeping it clean. Bengal's will not use a dirty litter box. Scoop daily to remove feces and urine. We do not use clumping litter. Bengals love water and when they have wet paws and get into clumping litter, the litter gets stuck in their paws. They will instinctively clean their paws and when they do, clumping litter will cause intestinal blockage. I use a wheat based litter called Sweat Scoop. Clean the litter box weekly with a 10% bleach solution to keep bacteria and odor under control. Be sure to rinse thoroughly and dry. Cats want to use the litter box. If they don't, they are telling you something is wrong.

Socialization

Socialization is very important. Move slowly, calmly and talk gently. Get down on the kitten's level. Use a toy to begin play and then slowly interact physically. Bengals are loving and will respond quickly to affection.

To introduce your kitten to other animals we recommend the following:

1. Confine your kitten to a small safe, secure room.
2. Feed your other animals near that door, but not next to it.
3. Gradually move the dishes closer to the door until both are comfortable, and eat calmly.
4. They will call to each other and play footsies under the door.
5. Then put something small of each inside the room.
6. Switch sleeping blankets, etc., between the two, and put them under the food dishes.
7. When the kitten is eating and using the litter box freely, gradually introduce it to the rest of the house while the other animals are confined elsewhere.
8. When all has gone well so far, put the kitten in his pet carrier and introduce them face to face. There will be hissing and spitting but this will subside.
9. Supervise all first contact outside of the carrier and limit time frame if kitten appears stressed.

Training

Never hit a Bengal. For discipline remove them from the forbidden area or object and say “no”. Distract with an alternative activity. If they repeat the behavior, use a water sprayer with the command. Bengals are very intelligent and can be trained easily. My husband has taught our Bengal female to play dead, come on command (most of the time) and dance. Most training is accomplished with positive reinforcement of natural behaviors.

Bengals are active, playful, and curious cats. That’s what makes them so much fun to live with! You may need to do a little “child-proofing” around your house. If you have a favorite vase or object that you couldn’t bear to have knocked over, better move it until you get an idea of your Bengal’s activity level. I use museum wax or putty on many breakables during the training period. . If your kitten/cat is enjoying something you'd rather they not, the best method is to divert their attention to something else more appropriate. Try some of the following toys. These are my cat’s favorites: toy mice, feather teasers, balls, and balls of rabbit fur. Kittens also love empty boxes and paper I train my cats to use a cardboard cat scratcher that I buy at Wal-Mart. They are cheap and will truly save the furniture. I have my best results by putting a little catnip on top to encourage the use of the scratcher.

Health

Your kitten has already had two sets of vaccinations and one deworming. (See health record) The kitten will need a Rabies vaccine at about 12 weeks of age or older. The current recommendation for vaccination from the American Association of Feline Practitioners and the Academy of Feline Medicine Advisory Panel on Feline Vaccines is contained in the following website. <http://www.vas-awareness.org/CurrentVaxRecs081706.pdf>

Please contact me if you have any questions. I look forward to hearing stories of your adventures with your new Bengal!