

## FELINE NUTRITION

### Feeding Your Kitten

A high-quality balanced diet is very important particularly during your kitten's first 12 months. A diet with the correct balance of calcium and protein is vitally important in a growing kitten to ensure optimum muscle development and bone growth. Your kitten also has some additional nutritional requirements, including the need for immune support, increased energy, improved energy conversion and digestive protection. At Macarthur Vet Group we recommend **Royal Canin Feline Growth** - a premium range of commercial kitten food. At least 75% of your kitten's diet should be derived from a balanced commercial diet. Unlike dogs, most cats are grazers and more likely to consume dry food offered slowly over 10-16 small sittings rather than be gluttonous and consume a meal very quickly. Where feeding wet food (which cannot be left out all day without spoiling in hot weather) kittens should be offered 3-4 small meals a day until 4 months of age, then twice daily for life. With a proper balanced diet, calcium and vitamin supplements are unnecessary and we advise against using them.

Kittens and cats do not need to drink milk. However if you wish to provide milk in addition to water, please use a special pet milk. Cow's milk contains too much lactose for cats and can cause diarrhoea.

Ensure that your kitten always has access to clean water and change it daily.

#### Feeding Guide for Royal Canin Kitten diets:

Kittens	from weaning until 4 months old	Royal Canin Kitten Weaning
	from 4 months until desexing (at 6 months)	Royal Canin Kitten Growth

### Feeding Requirements After Desexing

Desexed cats have a greater risk of becoming obese compared to the overall feline population. This occurs since neutering alters a cat's metabolism, results in a poorer regulation of food intake and due to the development of a more sedentary behaviour. This certainly does not mean that this is what is destined for your cat! Obesity increases the risk of diabetes, joint disease, urine stones and reduces life expectancy. Prevention from an early age through appropriate feeding is far simpler than trying to get your cat to lose weight later.

**Royal Canin Neutered Young Male and Young Female** is a specialised range of neutered cat foods to meet the nutritional needs of desexed young cats. Neutered cat diets reduce the risk of weight gain by controlling calories and improving satiety (the feeling of fullness). It is important after desexing to follow feeding guidelines and not to simply 'top up' the food bowl as it empties or as your cat demands it (something that you may have been able to get away with prior to desexing when your kitten was still growing). These diets will also reduce the risk of urinary crystals by maintaining dilute urine. Tartar development is inhibited due to the kibble shape and texture and due to the addition of sodium phosphate which binds to calcium, preventing plaque from turning into hard tartar.

**Royal Canin Neutered Mature** diets for older cats continue to offer the benefits of young male and young female diets whilst also providing antioxidants to combat cellular aging and controlling phosphorous levels which may compromise renal function. **Royal Canin Neutered Senior** diets for more senior cats, in addition to previous benefits will help to delay joint degeneration and arthritis through the addition of omega 3 fatty acids, chondroitin and glucosamine.

#### Feeding Guide for Royal Canin Neutered cat diets:

Young Male Cats	from desexing until 7 years old	Royal Canin Young Male
Young Female Cats	from desexing until 7 years old	Royal Canin Young Female
Mature Cats	from 7 years until 10 years old	Royal Canin Neutered Mature
Senior Cats	over 10 years old	Royal Canin Neutered Senior

Some adult cats will have specialised dietary requirements particularly if they have been unwell. Ask our staff for more information about our Royal Canin maintenance and prescription range of cat foods.

## DENTAL HEALTH

The best way to prevent dental disease in cats is to brush their teeth every day. If done properly, brushing your cat's teeth daily can reduce plaque build up by 100%. We can advise/train you on how to clean your cat's teeth. But this may not always be practical.

Abrasive foods such as raw bones, greenies treats and dental diets can reduce plaque build up by 40%. Feeding **raw bones** is a great way to keep your pets teeth clean (2-3 days a week) but does carry a small risk of fracturing teeth, intestinal obstruction or constipation. It is important that bones are large enough to prevent your cat from swallowing them whole – chicken necks are ideal.

**Greenies** are a small nutritionally balanced treat with demonstrated efficacy in controlling plaque and tartar. They are gentle on teeth and are soluble (breaking down within 24 hours of ingestion) so are less likely to cause the problems associated with feeding raw bones. Greenies should be fed twice daily, with small cats given 6-8 per serve, medium cats 8-10 per serve and large cats 10-12 per serve to achieve maximum benefit. Greenies are the only treat on the market endorsed by the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC). Greenies are stocked at Macarthur Vet Group in your cats' favourite flavour!

**Royal Canin Feline Dental** is a diet specially formulated for adult cats to effectively reduce plaque and tartar development. A combination of larger kibble size (providing a mechanical cleaning effect) and calcium binding agents to reduce plaque (a chemical cleaning effect) achieves this reduction in risk of dental disease. Some of these benefits have been incorporated into neutered diets.

Although feeding dry food is superior to wet food, most dry food tends to shatter after a pet bites into them so does not offer the same teeth cleaning benefits as the specially designed foods described above.

## WHAT NOT TO FEED YOUR CAT

To maintain a healthy cat it is important **NOT** to feed the following:

**Human food ONLY diets** – human nutritional requirements are different to those of our pets. Making a home made diet for your cat is very costly and requires over 50 ingredients to create a complete balanced diet not deficient in essential nutrients. Kittens raised on human food alone may suffer calcium deficiency, bone growth abnormalities, stunted growth or a poor immune system, making them susceptible to disease. Human food is acceptable as a treat only.

**Meat ONLY diets** – severe calcium deficiencies can result from feeding meat only diets in kittens. Growing animals require calcium for healthy bone growth (kittens have a higher calcium requirement than adult cats). Calcium deficiency may result in abnormal bone growth, increases the susceptibility to fractures and may be very painful (premium commercial diets provide balanced calcium levels). Milk is NOT a suitable supplement for calcium in an unbalanced diet. Calcium supplementation is NOT required in pets fed a balanced diet but may be required for those pets where meat makes up a large portion of their diet. DO NOT supplement calcium before consulting with one of our vets as too much calcium in growing animals is also dangerous.

**Vegetarian and dog food diets** – cats have an absolute need for taurine and arginine (two essential amino acids found in meat) in every meal. Unlike dogs, cats have a limited ability to synthesise taurine and arginine on their own so are strict carnivores. Dog foods and vegetables contain insufficient amounts of these amino acids to satisfy the requirements of cats. Signs of taurine deficiency include foetal abnormalities, delayed growth and development, degenerative eye problems and heart disease. Arginine deficiency can result in an accumulation of life threatening levels of ammonia.

**Cooked bones** – cooked bones splinter very easily and may get caught in the mouth, throat or intestines (retrieval of lodged bones may involve an anaesthetic and surgery – this is expensive!).

**Chocolate** – the theobromine and caffeine in chocolate can affect the cardiovascular and neurological system of both dogs and cats potentially causing seizures and death.

**Onions** (including those on pizza and in left-over's) – are toxic to red blood cells and may cause a severe life threatening anaemia in both dogs and cats.

**Large amounts of liver and cod liver oil** – liver contains large amounts of vitamin A. Spinal abnormalities, blindness and other bone deformities may result if large amounts of vitamin A are consumed. Vitamin A toxicity used to be a common problem in young cats fed large amounts of liver (cats love liver!) before owners were educated to feed cats commercial foods. Liver treats are perfectly safe if kept as treats and not used as the staple diet of your pet.

**Meat containing preservatives** – some pet meats (those NOT purchased from a butcher) e.g. kangaroo meat, contain large amounts of sulphur dioxide as a preservative. In large quantities this may cause vitamin B1 deficiency. Pet meats should NOT be fed as a major portion of your pet's diet.

**Grapes and sultanas** – Grapes have recently been implicated as causing acute kidney failure in dogs consuming a toxic dose. It is also recommended not to feed grapes or sultanas to cats.

**Lilies** – these flowers may result in acute renal failure and death if inadvertently consumed by cats. Be sure to remove lilies from indoor flower arrangements and not plant lilies in your garden if your cats spend time outdoors. All parts of the flower are considered toxic and disease can result simply from your cat grooming pollen from their coat or chewing the leaves without eating any of it.

**Excessively fatty food** – can result in a painful potentially life threatening inflammation of the pancreas known as pancreatitis. This results in abdominal pain, lethargy, reduced appetite and vomiting.

**Mouldy Foods** - may contain **mycotoxins**. These can induce muscle tremors, loss of coordination, and convulsions. They can also cause severe liver damage and sometimes results in death.