



The Governing Council of the Cat Fancy
Australia & Victoria Inc

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Member Education Series

Socialisation of Breeding cats and kittens

As most of the kittens bred by breeders will end up in pet homes, the socialisation of the kittens as they grow is a vital part of any health management plan. This ensures that when they enter their new homes, they will do so as a happy and well adjusted kitten, able to cope with the stresses of an unfamiliar environment.

Enrichment of the environment is also just as important for the adult cats – as many desexed adult cats may likewise spend their retirement in a new home after their breeding life is finished, it is important that they too are socialised and happy to be handled by strangers and will cope with the stress of moving into a strange new home.

Socialisation of cats and kittens is covered under the Code with regards to the expectations to be provided by breeders for their cats, to ensure their welfare is met, and it is a very important aspect of the daily routine of the cat.

Cats of all age and breeding status must be provided with a minimum amount of daily socialisation, handling and environmental enrichment which ensures they are adequately mentally stimulated.

An enrichment, socialisation and handling management plan needs to form part of a breeders' health management plan, and should be planned specific to the breed/type of cat (including any retired animals) – a highly active breed may require additional needs to one who is far less active. This can be formed in conjunction with a veterinary practitioner and other breeders of your breed if you are unfamiliar with the needs of your breed.

Category	Environmental enrichment requirements	Socialisation	Handling
Kittens 0–4 weeks	Must be provided with exposure to a variety of textures/surfaces (such as hard surfaces, soft bedding, paper, etc.)	Must be provided with daily exposure to humans via daily handling from 7 days of age Must remain with mother and other littermates unless under veterinary advice	Must be weighed daily from birth to ensure weight gain Must be handled for a minimum of 5 minutes per kitten per day
Orphaned kittens 0–4 weeks	Must be provided with exposure to a variety of textures/surfaces (such as hard surfaces, soft bedding, paper, etc.) May wish to provide noise simulation CDs	Must be provided with daily exposure to humans via daily handling from 7 days of age Must remain with other litter mates where possible, except under veterinary advice	Must be weighed daily from birth to ensure weight gain Must be handled for a minimum of 5 minutes per kitten per day

Category	Environmental enrichment requirements	Socialisation	Handling
Kittens 4–8 weeks	<p>Must be provided with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • climbing and perching areas • scratch poles • hide areas • a variety of toys they can roll, pounce on, capture and bite • exposure to variety of items that stimulate the senses (ie. catnip, cat grass, Feliway®, etc.) <p>Toys must be rotated weekly</p> <p>May wish to provide noise simulation CDs</p>	<p>Must be provided with daily exposure to humans via daily handling</p> <p>Must remain with mother and litter mates except under veterinary advice</p> <p>May begin socialisation with other animals/cats of appropriate vaccination status and temperament</p>	<p>Must be handled for a minimum of 15 minutes per kitten per day.</p>
Kittens 8–16 weeks	<p>Must be provided with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • climbing and perching areas • scratch poles • hide areas • a variety of toys they can roll, pounce on, capture and bite • exposure to variety of items that stimulate the senses (such as catnip, cat grass, Feliway®, etc.) <p>Toys must be rotated weekly</p>	<p>Must be provided with daily exposure to humans through handling and interactive play using toys outside of daily cleaning/feeding routine</p> <p>Must be provided with opportunity to socialise with other animals/cats of appropriate vaccination status and temperament</p>	<p>Must be handled for a minimum of 30 minutes per kitten per day</p>
Adolescent and adult cat 16+ weeks	<p>Must be provided with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • climbing and perching areas • scratch poles • hide areas • a variety of toys they can roll, pounce on, capture and bite • exposure to variety of items that stimulate the senses (such as catnip, cat grass, Feliway®, etc.) <p>Toys must be rotated weekly</p>	<p>Must be provided with daily exposure to humans through handling and interactive play using toys outside of daily cleaning/feeding routine</p> <p>Must be provided with the opportunity to exercise/socialisation with other socially compatible animals</p>	<p>Must be handled for a minimum of 30 minutes per cat per day</p>
Cats/kittens — injured, ill, or recovering from ailment	Under guidance of veterinary practitioner	Under guidance of veterinary practitioner	Under guidance of veterinary practitioner