



## 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 additional nutritional requirements which include the need for immune support, bladder support, increased energy (together with improved energy conversion), skin/coat health and digestive protection. At Macarthur Vet Group we recommend **Hill's Science Diet VetEssentials Kitten** - a premium range of commercial kitten food addressing each of these 5 key needs. At least 75% of your kitten's diet should be derived from a balanced commercial diet such as **Hill's**. Unlike dogs, most cats are grazers and more likely to consume dry food offered slowly over 10-16 small sittings per day, rather than be gluttonous and consume a meal very quickly. When 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. Whilst wet food does nothing for your kitten's dental health, it is a good idea to expose kittens and cats to small amounts of premium **Hill's** wet kitten food from a young age. Some health conditions of adult cats respond best to wet food feeding and trying to introduce wet for the first time to a senior cat can be difficult if they become finicky eaters!

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 Requirements of Adult Cats

As cats mature, they have a high risk of developing dental disease (the most common disease affecting dogs and cats), obesity (affecting more than 30% of cats) and bladder conditions. The risk of becoming obese is greater in desexed cats compared to the overall feline population. This occurs since neutering alters a cat's metabolism, reduces the 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.

**Hill's Science Diet VetEssentials** adult cat is formulated perfectly for neutered cats targeting 5 essential health needs.

- Oral health - larger kibble size and unique mono directional natural fibre technology deliver a clinically proven 'toothbrush' like action to remove plaque, *keeping teeth and gums healthy*
- Weight management - Increased fibre helps achieve satiety (the feeling of fullness after eating) and added L-carnitine helps build lean muscle mass and convert fat into energy, thereby maintaining *optimal body weight*. 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).
- Healthy digestion - High quality digestible ingredients maintain *healthy digestion* with maximal absorption of essential nutrients, promotes firm stools and minimises odour compared with supermarket foods.
- Skin and coat health - Omega fatty acids maintain a *healthy skin and coat*.
- A healthy bladder - reduced risk of struvite crystals (common to cats) is maintained by lowering urine pH and the crystal precursor minerals, magnesium and phosphorous.

**Hill's Science Diet** provides special diets for senior cats – Youthful Vitality and Age Defying diets. The addition of powerful antioxidants helps combat cellular aging, support a healthy brain and improve the desire for family interaction. Controlled levels of phosphorous and magnesium support kidney and bladder health. High quality protein, L-carnitine and omega fatty acids improves activity and vitality.

### Feeding Guide for Hill's™ Science Diet™ VetEssentials™ Adult and Hill's™ Science Diet™ for mature & senior cats

Young cats from desexing to 7 years	<b>Hill's Science Diet - VetEssentials</b> adult cat
Mature Cats from 7 until 11 years	<b>Hill's Science Diet - Youthful Vitality</b>
Senior cats from 11years	<b>Hill's Science Diet - Age Defying</b>

## 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 pet's 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!

**Hill's Prescription Diet t/d** is a clinically proven, uniquely formulated dental diet for adult cats to effectively reduce plaque and tartar development. **Hill's t/d** has a unique fibre matrix (together with large kibble size) which resists crumbling. This kibble engulfs teeth to the gumline before splitting, effectively 'brushing' the tooth surface clean. **Hill's Prescription Diet t/d** has been awarded the VOHC seal for effective mechanical removal of plaque and tartar.

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.