

CAT ADVICE

What to do if you have found a cat...

1. Make a note of the date, time and area in which you found the cat.
2. Please ensure the cat has access to food and water – this is a basic, humane gesture.
3. Does the cat have a collar? If so are there any details of his owner? Please ensure you check the inside of the collar too. Ask around the local neighbourhood, Mairie, vets, shops, postman/woman, etc.
4. If the cat is undernourished, sick or hurt in any way, contact a vet first.
5. Does the cat have a tattoo in his ear? If so notify the I-CAD (French national ID), quote the tattoo number and they will give you the details of the cat's owner.
6. It is possible that the cat is micro chipped; In this case, take the cat to a vet, charity or the local pound, and they should be able to read the chip number in order to find the cat's owner.
7. Place details on the web site www.chat-perdu.org, here there is a section for found cats. Your local SPA may also have a lost/found section on their website. Please also contact Pet Alert France – a Facebook group dedicated to finding lost pets. This group is regionalised, so search for and post on your own region's group.
8. Place details and photos on the online groups as set out in the Lost a Cat section, in order to try and trace the owner.
9. Do an internet search to find details of all animal rescue centres in your area (Association Chat/Association animal) so that you can inform them and possibly ask for help in finding the cat a permanent home. Notify the local fourrières (pounds) – your Mairie should be able to help with this.
10. If possible, take a photo, along with details of the cat (the vet should give you an indication of age, etc.) and make posters. Posters can usually be displayed in the Mairie, La Poste, vet's clinics, supermarkets, outside your house and anywhere else you can think of! Don't forget to add the date and place where you found the cat.
11. All of this can take several weeks, so please be patient. Please note, if you start feeding a cat, you are taking on the responsibility for its welfare.
12. Keep the cat away from your other pets until it's been assessed by a vet as healthy – you don't want to spread any diseases to your existing pets.
13. Another kind gesture would be to give the cat a wormer. Stray animals are often more miserable, hungry and low due to worms. You can buy wormers from the vet or pharmacy.

Finding an Injured Cat

Often, stray cats become injured by traffic. Any injured animal becomes defensive and nervous after injury and cats are no exceptions. An injured cat will lash out if it is scared and will not want to be picked up. If the cat, however, is in a place where he may get further injuries or if he is a risk to others it is important to move him. The safest way of moving an injured cat is to carefully cover him with an old towel or blanket before picking him up. This will contain his legs and more importantly claws. Moving an animal with broken bones, however, is really a specialist task and a call to a local vet before moving it is strongly advised. If the cat is feral and injured, vets are legally obliged to treat their injuries free of charge. This applies to any injured wild animal. Make sure you keep the cat away from your own pets.

Keeping the cat

If all efforts to find the owner fail, you may decide that you'd like to keep the cat yourself. If the SPA has been informed, and all attempts to find the cat's owner have failed, you can have the animal registered in your name after ten days to two weeks.

Please assume all other responsibility for owning a pet. You must promise to take this cat on for his entire life, no matter what, and please take responsibility to ensure he is safe, fed, watered, vaccinated, and neutered.

If you plan to travel back to the UK or out of France, ensure that your pet is vaccinated against Rabies and has a Pet Passport – your vet can advise you.

Sometimes, the cat is chipped or tattooed and the owner can't be traced. In this complex situation, you have a lot of hoops to jump through to ever get him registered in your name, should you want to keep him. Vets generally can't help (some vets might be prepared to harass I-CAD until they get them to change ownership, others won't) and the only real solution is to take the cat to the SPA, who will keep him for the minimum period of quarantine and then apply to I-CAD to get the ownership transferred to the SPA. The finder can then 'adopt' the cat from the SPA. Some SPAs might be more helpful than others. The bottom line is that a registered letter has to be sent from I-CAD to the owner's address (if it's proving impossible to get him to respond by mail or phone) and only when I-CAD is satisfied that the cat is to all intents and purposes 'unowned' will they be prepared to re-register him in another person's name).

Finding a New Home for the Cat

Having taken in this cat, you assume responsibility for what happens next. Thousands of cats are abandoned or lost every year in France and Phoenix receives several calls a week from people wishing to re-home their cat. This combined with our lack of foster space makes it almost impossible to take more in and abandoned kittens have to be priority – often these can wait in Phoenix foster care for homes for up to a year!

Cat Health

All cats and kittens in Phoenix foster care are treated for fleas, ticks and worms. They also receive the appropriate, age related vaccinations and are micro-chipped.

This protection will need to be continued when the animal leaves us. Kittens and adult cats need to complete the course of vaccinations and be treated regularly for fleas, ticks and worms. You will be given a medical dossier on adoption. All treatments given to the cat are held in this document. It will also contain the cat's identity (ICAD) number.

Fleas

These are agile creatures that jump onto your cat and feast on her blood. The saliva from the flea can cause a type of dermatitis. This causes itching and your cat will scratch vehemently. The skin may be broken or bald patches may appear in his fur. If left untreated your cat could develop anaemia, as the fleas gradually lower the red blood cell count.

If your pet should eat a flea-ridden creature, such as a mouse, he might just acquire a tapeworm. The tapeworms in the fleas will continue to grow inside your kitten or cat. If your cat begins to lose weight this might be an indication that he has worms. Kittens in the wild are born with worms, inherited from their mothers.

Ticks

A tick is a spineless creature found in the long grass. There are many types. Once attached to your cat they will suck her blood. An infected tick can transmit serious life threatening diseases. We suggest you search the internet for safe methods of detaching them from your pet. It is important to remove all of the tick as leaving the head embedded can cause infection and inflammation.

Micro-chipping

All cats in Phoenix care will have an identity chip. On adoption we will notify ICAD of the change of ownership and a new certificate will be posted to you at no cost.

Neutering your cat

It is a condition of adopting a cat from Phoenix that you agree to neuter him or her, if not already done.

Female cats

Most vets will sterilise your female cat at 5-6 months of age. If she hasn't been neutered this is the time that she is likely to first come into season. While she is in season her behaviour will change. She will become restless to go outdoors. She will mew and yowl, calling out for a mate. The season here is from March until September when the weather begins to warm up, and she will come into heat every 3 weeks. Cat gestation, on average, is 64 to 67 days.

Unneutered females are at risk of violent sexual encounters, fights and sexually transmitted disease. They are more prone to mammary and uterine cancers than neutered females.

If you adopt a male and female kitten together please be vigilant as they approach maturity. The male can be castrated at 4 months so there is no excuse for accidents.

Male cats

Unneutered males are territorial. They will spray urine in the house that can be most unpleasant. They will roam to find females and get into fights with other males to stake their territory. Cat fighting is terrifying with sharp claws and incisors. Incisor comes from the Latin ` incidere, meaning to cut. With these inbuilt weapons, cats can inflict expensive damage on each other. Unneutered males are more prone to testicular cancer and prostate disease than neutered males.

Diet

Cats need a meat diet as they are true carnivores. They require an amino acid called taurine and this can only be found in animal protein. It is important for adopters to be aware of the correct diet for their cat.

Like many humans, many cats are lactose intolerant. As they grow out of infancy cats no longer produce the beta lactamase enzyme essential for the breakdown of the sugars found in milk. After weaning, milk is not necessary in a cat's diet.

That is not to say the cat will not drink a saucer of milk. A cat will eat almost anything if hungry, but it can cause havoc in his intestines.

It is unwise to feed a kitten with cows' milk. Mum's milk is always best and if mum is not around, the special milk for kittens is the next best thing. It can be purchased from a vet's surgery or a pharmacy.

In or Out?

This will be your decision. However it is prudent to keep your kittens in the home until they are fully vaccinated. Also new adult cats to your home need time to get to know their environment. Once these smells are strong and familiar, your cat will find her way home.

ABANDONED KITTENS

IMPORTANT – MAKE SURE THAT THE KITTENS ARE REALLY ABANDONED

The mother may merely be out of sight when you find a litter of kittens. She is very good at remaining out of sight and just because you do not see her at the nest, it doesn't necessarily mean she is not close by. If possible observe the site for several hours to be sure that the kittens are actually abandoned. If you don't see any sign of her after a couple of hours then it is best to contact a professional rescue organisation.

Please check these websites to see if anyone is missing a cat/kittens:

[Spa Bergerac Lost and found](#)
<http://www.chat-perdu.org/>
[Facebook pet alert Dordogne 24](#)

Phoenix does not recommend that an inexperienced person take on the responsibility for hand-rearing orphaned kittens. If you don't know what you are doing, it can be risky or dangerous.

Fostering kittens is challenging, but extremely rewarding. Kittens up to 4 weeks old are completely dependent on their "surrogate mother" for safety, warmth and food.

Rescuing a kitten

Kittens should be kept in a quiet, confined space such as a small carrier or nesting box. Always keep their blankets or towels on a heat pad for warmth (see below). Kittens need to be kept clean and dry. The bedding may have to be changed several times a day as a wet kitten will get cold and could die. Bedding should be washed as needed. A small, stuffed animal may be used for the kitten to snuggle in to. Kittens should never be outside, except when being transferred to the vet.

Warmth

Keeping kittens warm and free from drafts is very important because babies under 4 weeks of age are not able to regulate their body temperature and are incapable of shivering. A heating pad may be used. These should be placed on the lowest setting and anchored so that the kitten cannot crawl underneath. Place the heating pad under half of the box or crate so that the kitten can escape the heat if needed. Cover the heat pad with vet bed or a blanket several layers thick. Please use extreme caution when using a heating pad. Kittens should feel warm, not hot or cold to the touch.

Handling

You will need to handle the kitten when feeding and cleaning them while they are very small. Once this is done, return them to their nesting place. Whilst handling the kittens, old towels should be used in order to avoid being covered in urine or worse. Remember to wash your hands, especially if you have been dealing with other animals – antiseptic hand gel is recommended.

Feeding

Do not feed kittens until they are thoroughly warmed – they cannot digest food until the body reaches normal temperature range. When feeding kittens, always pay close attention to feeding guidelines. Dilute the formula carefully according to the directions, and NEVER give cow's milk to any animal as it can cause severe stomach trauma. If 'formula' is not available, full fat goats milk can be used. Use good hygiene/cleanliness with all food supplies. Avoid overfeeding and make all food changes gradually. Below follows dietary advice for kittens, according to age.

Mix the formula according to directions

The formula should be fed at room temperature. You can mix the formula with warm previously boiled water. Reheated refrigerated formula can cause upset stomachs in some kittens. Test the milk on your wrist for the correct temperature. Do not heat the bottle in the microwave as microwave heating causes nutrient loss in formula and hot spots can develop. There is not usually an opening in the teat that is supplied with the powdered formula, so make a small hole with a hot needle. The hole opening should be only large enough for a few drops of milk to drip out when the bottle is held upside down and squeezed gently. Milk should NOT stream out. This is important so that the kitten does not inhale formula into their lungs and develop pneumonia. Bubbles of milk coming out from the kitten's nose indicates that the animal is aspirating. In this case a new teat will have to be used and a smaller hole made.

Feeding Kittens 0-2 weeks old

Feed every 2-4 hours with 'Lait Maternisee', available from your vet or pharmacy. Remember to always wash your hands before and after feeding and to clean the implements with warm soapy water. Throw away stretched teats before the baby aspirates from a too-large hole in the tip or pulls the teat off the syringe and swallows it. Aspiration (bubbles of milk coming from the kittens nose) can be fairly common. If aspiration occurs, the baby can be turned upside down and gently shaken once to help the fluid drain out. If this happens with very young babies, a small bulb syringe or eyedropper can be used to suck the fluids out of the nostrils. Do not feed any more to the kitten until it has completely cleared the fluid from its lungs, usually by sneezing.

Feeding the kitten

The best method of feeding is to use a small towel to hold the kitten. This will reduce stress on them from cold hands and tight fingers, and will give the baby something to hang onto. The baby's forelegs should be unconfined to allow it to "knead" as it would on the mother's abdomen during feeding. Lie the kitten on its belly as it would when nursing on mum. Lightly grasp the kitten around the head with one hand, then place the tip of the teat to the kitten's mouth and squeeze a little milk into the mouth with your other hand. The kitten should latch on. Do not hold the kitten too far upright or tip the kitten's head as this can cause the kitten to choke or aspirate. The amount of formula the kitten should eat depends on its weight. Please refer to the directions on the container for the correct amounts. Some kittens will want to eat more than is listed on the can. This is okay, but be aware that this can cause diarrhoea. Check the tummy for fullness after feeding 2/3 to 3/4 of the formula to avoid overfeeding. Do not put more than the amount for one kittens feeding in the bottle at one time. This will help you keep track of how much each kitten consumes per feeding and will keep the baby from over eating. If a kitten refuses to eat for two consecutive feedings, seek veterinary advice. When feeding a litter of kittens make sure you can easily identify each one and use charts to record how much has been taken by which kitten and when. Kitchen scales can be used to record weight gains.

Feeding Kittens 3-4 weeks old

Feed every 4-6 hours. At this stage you can start introducing the kitten to soft food: baby food and wet puppy/kitten croquets. Mix the formula and croquets to introduce soft food. It will look like thick soup. Introducing wet food sometimes gives kittens diarrhoea. Encourage kittens to lap from a shallow dish. Put some of the soup on your finger, put it in the kitten's mouth, then lower your finger to the food dish and encourage the kitten to lap from the dish. Don't be alarmed if the kitten is not interested; it can take a couple of days. Never push the kitten's face into the food. After the kitten is eating from a dish, start reducing the amount of formula and increasing the amount of soft food. The goal is to wean the kitten off of the

formula altogether. Once the kitten is weaned, dry food should also be made available, fresh water must be available at all times.

Urination and Defecation Kittens

1-2 weeks old need to be stimulated in order to urinate and defecate before and after every feeding. Gently pat its anal area with a cotton ball or soft toilet paper that has been moistened with warm water. Gently rubbing the kitten's belly also encourages movement. Be sure to keep the anal area clean and dry by sponging with warm water and patting with a soft towel. Don't panic if it does not defecate every time. Once a day is fine although they may defecate as frequently as after every meal. Consistency of stool can vary from quite loose to toothpaste consistency and can range in colour from yellow to dark brown. When kittens first begin to eat solids, the time has come to begin toilet training. Place the litter tray in a convenient place that the kitten is familiar with. Try to find a quiet area so that the kitten will not be stressed or too distracted. In the general area of the kitten's bedding and food is a good place. Simply place the kitten in the litter tray and pat anal area with a moist cloth. When the kitten starts to urinate or defecate, remove the cloth and allow the kitten to use the tray. Instinctively, the kitten should start scratching and burying waste. Repeat these steps until the kitten goes into the litter tray on his own. It usually takes about 1-3 times although some small kittens will do this whole process naturally. Never rub the kitten's nose in their urine or faeces when they relieve themselves in the wrong place.