

If the cat acquires fleas or ticks, these can be dealt with by using a special powder, available at supermarkets and chemists, which should also be dusted over its bed and basket. The bedding should be thoroughly washed.

ACCOMMODATION

Cats and kittens should have the run of the house and access to the garden. Kittens should be carefully watched and only allowed outside under supervision, preferably after meals to perform their toilet. If this is not possible or if the animal is to live in a flat, a dirt tray should be provided. This is ideally a plastic or metal container about 15" by 10" and about 3" to 6" deep. It should be filled with sand, sawdust or a similar commercially available grit for this purpose. If the cat or kitten is shown the tray, it will always use it provided it is cleaned daily.

The cat or kitten can be provided with a basket or box to sleep in. Newspapers or an old cloth, which can be discarded if necessary, are all that is required for bedding.

SPAYING AND CASTRATING

All pet cats and kittens should be spayed or castrated to prevent the thousands of unwanted kittens which are born every year. Kittens can be spayed or castrated at 4 to 5 months of age. A neutered cat makes a much better pet than a cat in its whole state, and will be a more happy and contented animal. Neutered male cats will not roam at night, get into fights or call out after females. They will not spray around the house or have that typical "Tom Cat" smell. The female cat is capable of breeding from the age of about 6 months. All attempts at mating are successful and result in average litters of 6 kittens. The gestation period is 9 weeks or 60-65 days. As the cat will come into season immediately after giving birth, she can have 3 litters a year. This means the average cat can be responsible for at least 18 unwanted kittens every year. Neutered females will not continually come into season, be bothered by the attentions of male cats or call out for a male cat when in season.

Spaying or castrating is a completely safe operation, performed under general anaesthetic, having no detrimental effects on the animal. It is NOT TRUE that a cat is better off for having a litter of kittens, or that neutering will make it fat. Nor is it true that neutered cats will no longer catch rats or mice. A cat's hunting activity is related to its general well-being and heredity and is unaffected by its sexuality. A well-fed cat will be a better rat-catcher as it has more energy to hunt.

FINALLY

Cats can live for 10 to 16 years and some much longer. Owning any animal is a big responsibility that cannot be taken lightly. The cat must be fed and watered every day and looked after. It must be taken to a vet for immunisation or if it gets sick. Arrangements must be made to board the cat if you go away (the SPCA has a boarding cattery) or re-homed if you leave the district. If the cat is unwanted or if you are unable to take further care of the animal in your charge, do it one final favour by bringing it to the S.P.C.A., where we can do our best either to find it a new home, or put it painlessly to sleep. Do not leave it to roam the streets as a stray, living a miserable existence, eventually to get sick and die.

