



CATABELLA BIRMANS

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KITTEN CARE GUIDE

Catabella Birmans believes in raising healthy, happy and well socialized kittens. There are a number of things prospective Birman families need to know to help me achieve my goal. Some of the information included in this kitten care guide will be answers to often asked questions and general information that I feel will be helpful to new Birman owners.

Your kitten has been vaccinated for Rhinotracheitis, Calici Virus and Pankeukopenia . They will need an annual update of this vaccination.

Your kitten has not been given any rabies immunization and you should check with your veterinarian as to state requirements. I recommend waiting until the kitten is 5-6 months old to give the rabies vaccine. The decision to give these immunizations is entirely up to you and your veterinarian. There is some question in the cat fancy about the safety and effectiveness of the feline leukemia and FIP vaccines. My feeling is that your best defense against feline leukemia is in not exposing your cats to other cats. Don't let your cat go outside and don't bring in any new cats without being tested.

Use medications only under your veterinarians advice. **Never give a cat aspirin.** Your kitten will be teething between 4-6 months old. This may cause him/her to run a temperature, lose appetite, even have diarrhea. A cat's normal temperature is usually between 100.5 and 102.5 degrees Fahrenheit. Birmans do have a slight eye discharge which causes dried up "sleepers" to form in the corners of their eyes. Clean eyes daily. Excess white or gunky discharge means infection and you should see your veterinarian.

Nutrition: I feed good quality dry and canned food (Iams, Science Diet or Fancy Feast) 2-3 times a day to kittens under 8 months of age. I also feed other varieties of good quality food (Friskies, Whiskas) occasionally in an attempt to avoid producing picky eaters. You may find that your kitten, when away from the competition at the food dish, will develop a preference for one variety over others. I would encourage you to continue to offer a selection. I have found that over time, the cats do get bored with one kind of food. They also enjoy boiled/baked chicken or canned tuna. I usually feed it in the evening as a snack. My cats have dry food available at all times, along with fresh water. Kittens receive moistened Iams kitten food; adults receive a selection of Iams, Science Diet and Purina O.N.E. I do not feed baby food to my cats except as a treat at the cat shows, after a bath, etc. I sometimes mix a little cottage cheese or yogurt with the wet food. It is not necessary to offer your kitten milk, in fact, it will probably cause diarrhea.

It is not uncommon to see slight diarrhea for a day or two in a new kitten. That is due to a change in water or other things the kitten is ingesting. It should not last more than a day or two. Also, a kitten may not want to eat a lot for a day or two as it adjusts to its new home and routine.

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I use regular clay litter such as Fresh Start or clumping litter such as Exquisite Cat that I buy at PetSmart and covered litter boxes.

Grooming: Birmans are relatively low-maintenance cats. Generally, they do not mat and require little grooming. A stainless steel comb and nail clippers (for cats) are all the equipment you will need to groom your Birman. I suggest you comb your kitten once or twice a week (more if you have time and the inclination) to remove loose hair. Clip nails every other week. I begin grooming the kittens early and they will be used to having their nails cut and to being combed. If you continue in a reasonable regular way, they will continue to enjoy their grooming sessions. (My adult cats wait every evening to be groomed. They love it). I do not recommend that you use a brush to remove excess hair – brushing seems to cause static to build up and the coat to get greasier. Twice a year your Birman will undergo a major coat change (spring and fall) and will seem to be shedding a lot more than usual. You will need to groom your cat a little more often during these times. Giving them a bath also helps get rid of the loose hair. Birmans will occasionally throw up a fur ball or will make a noise where they sound like they're choking, generally a fur ball is the problem. I recommend you keep Petromalt (Cat Lax, Femalt, etc. – any malt flavored lubricant made for elimination of fur balls) on hand and give a 1" ribbon to your cat once a week to avoid this. Margarine or butter also works in a pinch.

A word of caution: Birmans are slow to mature. If your kitten is to be spayed or neutered, please wait until the cat is between 7 – 9 months of age. Some Birmans seem to have a sensitivity to anesthesia and you might want to advise your veterinarian accordingly.

I strongly recommend Isoflurane as the anesthetic of choice for a Birman. I also do not advise any pre-anesthetic injections.

Cat proof your house: Kittens can and will get into everything possible. Grannick's Bitter Apple on your electrical and phone cords will prevent chewing and possible electrocution. The cream is messy but will last longer. The spray can be used on most silk flower arrangements but test first. **Remove bells, strings, buttons and eyes from toys.** Your kitten will test you on house rules, so be prepared. He/she will probably climb on counters, tables, etc. and may try to sharpen his/her claws on your sofa. A sprayer bottle of water is handy for discouraging undesirable behavior. Try not to let the kitten see you spray him/her; let him/her think it's an act of God. My kittens are raised with a scratching post and carpeted cat tree which they are trained to use, not the furniture. I strongly suggest you buy one of these.

Kittens are like human babies in many ways. They sleep a lot and get tired quickly. Make sure the kitten has a place to go away from the noise of the family or other pets in order to get the required rest.

If you have other cats/kittens in your household, I would suggest introducing your new Birman kitten slowly. I recommend isolating your new Birman kitten for a period of at least 3 weeks. It is best if you can give the kitten his/her own room or space, where the other cat (s) can smell and hear him/her, but not actually get to him/her. Another good idea is to remove the kitten from his/her room (after the isolation period) and let the others cat(s) in to sniff around, check out the litter box, etc. Please make sure to give your other cat(s) lots of attention during this time and with patience, your new Birman kitten should be accepted happily into your feline family.

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One of the unusual characteristics of the Birman is a sound they make, usually when aggravated or miffed. It's a combination huff and bark. Even baby kittens do this when playing. Some Birmans do it frequently, some hardly ever. The Birman walk is also unusual and if you are not used to it, it may surprise you. From the back their walk is "tiger-like" swaying – like a tiger gait.

Birmans are usually healthy and long-lived; many active well into their teens. They have no inherent health problems and are excellent companions their whole lives. I hope you enjoy your kitten thoroughly and have many happy years together. I want you to remember that I am here for you. Don't ever hesitate to call with any questions or concerns.

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