

**Your new ComposerCat family member:**

**Below you will find information to help your new cat adjust to your family and help you become a knowledgeable owner and an advocate for your cat.**

**Eats -**

FARMINA dry kibble. We rotate varieties between Boar, Chicken, Fish and Lamb Ancient Grain, ND and Grain Free varieties. Kittens do well with the ancient grains because they can use the extra carbs for energy, but adults do better on grain free to maintain a healthy weight. Kittens are also started on Royal Canin Kitten food and have the option of eating both. Farmina is an all life stages food and by the time they transition to your home, they should no longer need the baby/kitten varieties beyond the initial bag you get for your kitten. Should you choose to change food, be an informed consumer. Cats are obligate carnivores – this means they require meat to be the bulk of their diet. When you research cat foods, don’t just look at brands that advertise ‘grain free’ or ‘high protein’, know what that means. Many manufacturers use beans and peas as sources of protein however plant proteins cannot be metabolized by cats, so their advertised protein content is pointless. Look for foods that have a minimum of 70% MEAT protein. All kibble needs something to bind it together and this is typically a starch, but you don’t want a high percent of starches. The best/healthiest binding in kibble is sweet potato (NOT white potatoes) or ancient grains such as oats, spelt or quinoa. Any crop that has high pesticide use should also be avoided (corn, soybeans, peas, etc.)

We free feed kibble so that it is available throughout the day and night. The Havana Brown is not prone to being a cat that over eats and most owners don’t have a problem, especially in younger cats. Weight issues are normally only a concern for spayed/neutered adults, once they are less active. You may find food puzzles helpful if you start having concerns about weight.

We feed a variety of high-quality canned foods, each serving mixed with an extra tablespoon or so of water, to increase moisture intake. Cats need more moisture than they get from dry kibble so we recommend a small serving of wet food morning and night. Our preferred canned foods are Applaws, Weruva, Purina Pro Plan, Royal Canin Instinctive or Intense Beauty, TikiCat, Tiny Tiger, Wellness, Almo Nature, Farmina, Royal Canin and Purina Pro Plan Kitten. Rotating the food keeps them from getting bored with their food. You will find that there are times they are not interested in wet food, in this case, skip a day or two or swap varieties. When teething, they can also become a bit picky and do not eat as much because their mouth hurts.

Your kitten was weaned on a combination of canned kitten food and a raw beef diet (Blue Ridge Beef & Hare Today). If you choose to feed raw, we recommend visiting their website and following the transition instructions. If you want to make your own raw, Hare Today’s website has supplements that can be added to raw ground beef to make it nutritionally appropriate for cats.

Food and water should be in a stainless-steel bowl that is washed and refreshed daily to prevent bacteria accumulation from their saliva. We use and recommend Durapet bowls and Drinkwell stainless steel water fountains (clean weekly) or for a single cat, the Daisy Cat Fountain. Fountains seem to encourage them to drink more, but they do need to be cleaned weekly. Instinct will drive a cat to drink more running water rather than standing water.

**Eating Habits:**

Havana Browns are very good about self-regulating their weight as long as they are given the opportunity to be active. During the first year of a cat’s life, they should be allowed to eat as much as they desire. Afterwards, if you notice a bit of weight gain, consider transitioning to a slow feeder or puzzle feeder for their kibble. This is also a good option if your cat/kitten likes to eat too fast and regurgitates undigested food. Another way to prevent regurgitation is to raise the food bowl off the floor a few inches so that they are not eating off the ground. This is more often a problem in older cats than in kittens. A cat who gobbles their food by eating big mouthfuls of food can be deterred by putting their food on a plate and spreading it out.

Treats are rarely given here in preference to providing a healthy diet. When we do give treats, they are Hills Dental Diet as treats or dehydrated fish or chicken treats (Life Essentials Salmon, Halo Dehydrated Chicken or fish and dehydrated minnows are favorites). Treats should not be given more than twice a day and not more than 2-3 treats at a time.

To prevent begging, don’t make a habit of feeding your kitten/cat as soon as you wake up in the morning or as soon as you return home from work. Cats learn about these morning feedings will soon begin to wake you earlier and earlier to provide their breakfast. Unlike humans, cats do not benefit from eating on a set schedule. You will find your cat much easier to live with if they are not demanding food at a particular hour of the day. Here, an evening meal is normally given just before we humans eat dinner. Cats will then eat their meal, groom and sleep through yours. If you have a problem with your kitten waking too much during the night, try giving a little bit of wet food just before bed and ensure they have kibble available for free feeding during the night. Using slow feeders will keep bored cats from eating too quickly (which can lead to vomiting) but it will also entertain them and allow them to work for their food.

**Toilet**-

Kittens are given a variety of litter types to choose from to make the transition easier for their new family. The first step litter is Dr. Elsie’s Kitten Attract. In the event you ever have litter box problems, we recommend that you immediately return to Dr. Elsie’s Cat Attract and provide a new open top litterbox.

Once initially litterbox trained, they have access to clumping clay litter (Tidy Cat red or black lid), Worlds Best and wood pellet litter is also available. Most kittens will develop a preference for one or the other but will typically use any of these varieties, however we recommend you start with a Tidy Cat base and mix in the desired litter as all of the kittens will use Tidy Cat. Make certain the litter box is cleaned with bleach or replaced regularly (at least every month). Our process it to keep extra boxes and rotate them. Once empty, we scrub and sterilize the box and then store it until we do the next rotation.

Avoid litter that has a strong fragrance. While this may be desirable for you, cats are much more sensitive to smell than humans and are often deterred by fragrance in the litterbox. The best way to control odor is to use a baking soda base under your cat litter and scoop your box at least once a day. Cats hate to use a dirty toilet and failure to keep the litter box clean can lead to poor litterbox habits and soiling inappropriately. The plastic retains odor also, so it is important to clean and rotate out the boxes. You can also place a plug-in air filter in the area next to the litter box and that will eliminate much of the litterbox smell. Our choice is:

Hamilton Beach® TrueAir® Plug-Mount® Odor Eliminator

The box itself should initially be an open box. Once your cat or kitten is accustomed to using the box, you can add a lid. Our cats are used to using both side entry and top entry boxes but do not use the flap door that comes with the box. This will often deter a cat from entering the box. If you choose to add the door later, make certain to have a second box without a lid until you are certain they are comfortable using it. In multiple cat homes it is important to have multiple boxes in different locations due to potential litter box dominance. In a larger home, make certain you have a litter box in each area of the house, especially while they are still kittens.

**Play Time**-

A cat’s life is about sleeping, eating, purring and playing. They are coming from a multi-cat household where they have a lot of playmates, as well as a home where we provide tons of attention and play time (pre-spoiled) so they will expect to be entertained. You will need to make sure you dedicate time every day to play with your new family member. Especially important (if you value your sleep) is a good evening run. I recommend playtime before bed then their 2nd dinner for an active kitten. This will let them run out some energy, get their belly full and then they will settle down, give themselves a bath and hopefully sleep for several hours. Most of our kittens are raised sleeping with us and already have good nighttime habits.

Having good toys is important. They love to play with balls, especially the ones that they can pick up and carry around or ones that make noise. A laser light toy is important in every house and a wand toy also. Remember that hands and feet are not toys! If kittens get in the habit of biting fingers and toes, those little nips start to really hurt when they have their adult teeth! Better to never let them start and get them accustomed to play appropriate toys.

<https://3daypetsupply.com/products/wild-hemp-toy>

Use caution when choosing toys. We advise avoiding anything with mylar or strings that could be ingested and cause a bowel obstruction. Also be very cautious of leaving things like string or rubber bands around the house. Cats will play with them and if they are swallowed, they can cause serious problems in the intestine and may need surgery for removal.

**Scratching** -

Cats will scratch, they **need to scratch** to keep their muscles healthy. It is up to you to provide the appropriate place for them to do this. A cardboard scratcher on the floor is fun for the cat, but can be a mess to clean up. What they need most is a vertical surface where they can get a full body stretch when they scratch. When shopping for a cat tree, keep this in mind. Make certain to get a full 32” of vertical scratching area. Most of our trees come from Wes at Custom Quality. He ships all over the country and they are excellent quality. If you are able to pick up, Cat Trees by Max is in Northern Indiana and does a great job with custom trees as does Cat Tree Kingdom in Harvard, Illinois (retail sales through Best Pets in Antioch, IL). <http://www.acattree.com/cat-trees/product/27-spr-34-cat-scratching-post>

* <https://pawfriendlyfurniture.com/cat-trees.php>
* <https://catscozyspace.com/>
* https://cloud9cattrees.com/

**Introductions** –

It is very important to us that we place healthy and well socialized kittens. However, the transition to a new home can be a very stressful time for a cat/kitten. Often they have recently received their final series of immunizations which is challenging their immune system (as it is designed to do) so we work hard to reduce other stresses associated with the transition to a new home to prevent them from becoming ill.

When you first bring your cat/kitten home, they will be frightened of the new smells, sounds and movements as well as not knowing the general environment. The best way to help your kitten adjust is to reduce the number of variables that are changing.

1. Keep the cat/kitten using the same litter as they are accustomed to
2. Keep your cat/kitten eating the same food that they have been eating
3. Allow your kitten to have a safe hiding space. Often this is the crate they arrive in – just leave it out for them and it will make going to the Vet so much easier!
4. Minimize the number of people that your cat or kitten initially interacts with and introduce new people gradually as they become comfortable in their new home
5. Start SMALL – this is one of the most important things, keep the footprint of the area where the cat/kitten will initially be, as small as possible. The first couple hours can be in in a bathroom where the litter is, transitioning to a bedroom or a space that is just a bit bigger. Be aware that the cat/kitten will get into any hiding place they can find. Usually you can draw them out with food and toys, but give them some time. Different kittens have different character – some will be shy and others immediately confident. Even if they are, don’t move too fast with introductions. They need to understand that there is no threat in the new environment. Their instinct will often be to hide until they feel safe enough to explore. I’ve found the best way to accomplish this is to spend as much time as possible with them in their small space. Allow them to explore the room while you read or while you sleep and the house is silent. SLOWLY allow them to explore a larger space, always giving them the option to return to the safe zone. There is no set time frame in which this will occur. Every cat is different but after a few days, you can follow the lead of your cat and their natural curiosity. If they need two or three weeks to be confident, give them whatever time they need. Adults will normally take longer to adjust than kittens but this is not always the case. One VERY IMPORTANT reason to do small spaces is to make certain your cat always knows how to find their way back to the litterbox and that there is nothing threatening between wherever they are and he litterbox.
6. DO NOT introduce your cat/kitten to new pets in the household for the first few days. This could adversely impact the long-term relationship of your companions. Allow the cat/kitten to adjust to the smells, sounds and environment first. Next, swap bedding so the other animals become familiar with the smell of the new arrival. Allow them to smell each other under a door or see each other through a window, but introductions should be slow and the cat/kitten should always be able to retreat to the safe zone without fear of being cornered by the other pets. You may want to start by carrying the kitten into a new room and walking around while the kitten feels safe but return to the safe zone if the kitten gets uncomfortable or nervous. NEVER introduce a cat to another cat or other pet by putting them face to face, this is considered aggressive behavior. Animals smell where another animal has been, they observe them from a distance and only then approach the other animal (usually while they are sleeping) to smell them and determine if they are a threat. They will smell the BACK side rather than approaching the head of another animal. **You only get one chance for a first introduction, make it a good** **one**. That impression can impact the relationship throughout the life of the animal.

**Health** –

Your cat/kitten will arrive current on age appropriate vaccinations. Please follow the vaccination guidelines enclosed for future boosters. For housecats that are not at high risk for exposure, we recommend following AAFP guidelines and providing the one year booster and then boost every three years following.

Your cat has a microchip. Please login to the site below and register your microchip to your address as soon as you get home. During the first few months at a new home, a cat is at much higher risk of becoming separated from its owner. Feel free to list my information as a back-up contact.

<https://www.petchipregistry-us.info/register_new_microchip>

In kittens, keep in mind that they are still getting their adult teeth (up until 10 months) and will often have some of the same symptoms that children have when cutting teeth. This includes red gums, preference for soft food, chewing, drooling, bad breath and occasionally a low-grade fever. Don’t be alarmed if you see two teeth appear side by side. The baby teeth will normally fall out as the adult teeth push their way in. You should only be concerned if you notice significant redness or if the kitten seems to be in pain or not eating. It is rare that there are any serious issues from teething however it is likely to impact their behavior during that time.

As bacteria gets under the gums during teething, it can cause a sinus infection, ear infection or even juvenile gingivitis. Be aware of signs of a sinus infection (nasal or eye discharge, sneezing and fever) and visit your vet if you suspect your kitten is unwell. Scratching at head or ears and shaking the head are signs of an ear infection. The preferred antibiotic to treat sinus infections in the Havana Brown is Primor. It is an older sulfa antibiotic but has been proven to work quickly and eliminates sinus infections in this breed, before they can migrate further into the respiratory tract.

In the event your kitten is diagnosed with juvenile gingivitis, a combination antibiotic/steroid injection may be necessary but in the majority of cases, they will outgrow this with good dental care. While gingivitis is a common problem in cats, juvenile gingivitis normally clears up after all of the teeth are in. The last set of teeth (like our wisdom teeth) come in between 7-10 months. This is when you are most likely to have a cat get bad breath and develop infections or signs of gingivitis. While drops added to their water will help to eliminate some of these bacteria in their mouth, make certain it doesn’t influence their water intake. Should your Vet be concerned or recommend additional treatment, please let us know. We are always working to eliminate health issues from our breed and that also includes lines that have frequent dental issues.

Although our cats do not go outside, we do recommend doing parasite control 2-4 times a year, depending on where you live. Cats tend to eat flies and other bugs as well as get exposure to things we bring in the house on our shoes and clothes, so they are always at risk. Keeping them free of parasites will help keep them healthy. We also recommend weekly dosing of probiotics added to their wet food (BeneBac, Fortaflora or an over the counter human grade probiotic).

Some cats also enjoy eating yogurt and we encourage this in limited amounts. You may have heard that cats have difficulty digesting cows milk, but a goat milk treat is usually welcome and is well tolerated by cats. It is, in fact, the closest to the milk of a mother cat and often used to supplement kittens.

We recommend you visit your local vet within a few days of bringing your new cat/kitten home. Cats leave our home healthy and in good physical condition. In the event your Vet has any concerns, please contact us immediately and before agreeing to any treatment options unless it is an acute illness.

We strongly discourage the use of Ketamine for Havana Browns as adverse effects are known to be more prevalent in Oriental breeds. Please ask your Vet to make this notation in your cats medical record.

While there are many different companies that offer health insurance for your pet, our preferred provider is HealthyPaws. I encourage you to compare policies to meet your needs, but getting health insurance during the first 30 days is a requirement of our kitten contract.

Additionally, CFA offers 30 days of free insurance as long as you sign up within 30 days of receiving your cat. You can do this on the website.

<https://petinsurance.review/cat-fanciers-association-pet-insurance-review/>

<https://www.consumervoice.org/top-cat-insurance?gclid=Cj0KCQiArvX_BRCyARIsAKsnTxMA-8230rSTI64J4mgBbicNazKynAtOHU_5-NKh3bjyn089VYXHJ9MaAhifEALw_wcB&kw=%2Bcompare%20%2Bcat%20%2Binsurance&cpn=11503347989&adgroup=113725321593&loc_physical=9021477&loc_interest=&matchtype=b&network=g&device=c&creative=481309074153&placement=&target=&adpos=&gclid=Cj0KCQiArvX_BRCyARIsAKsnTxMA-8230rSTI64J4mgBbicNazKynAtOHU_5-NKh3bjyn089VYXHJ9MaAhifEALw_wcB>

**Should your cat become injured or ill at any time, please contact us as soon as possible.**

We remain concerned about the health and livelihood of all of our cats and kittens. We hope you will keep us up to date as they grow and send photos frequently! We encourage you to join our ComposerCat Havana Browns Facebook page and share your photos with your kittens Havana Brown family. This group is a wonderful support network and they can often answer questions quickly if you need urgent assistance.

**Welcome to the family!**

**LeAnn & Bill Rupy, ComposerCat Havana Browns**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/101614899987656/> 