

Agria's Pregnant Cat & Kitting Guide



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Five week vets
fees kitten
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When you send your kittens away with their new owners, give them the best chance by activating five weeks FREE Agria kitten insurance for them, so they are covered for veterinary fees from the day they leave you.

34%

of cats aged 6-12 months are un-neutered

23%

of all cats have a litter of kittens

78%

of litters are unplanned

One queen (female cat) can produce up to

20,000

descendants in

5 years

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What Should I do if My Cat is Pregnant?



This is a comprehensive guide to help you care for your cat through her pregnancy and for her kittens when they arrive. The information has been written with the help of: Blue Cross, Cats Protection and Your Cat Magazine and their associated vets.

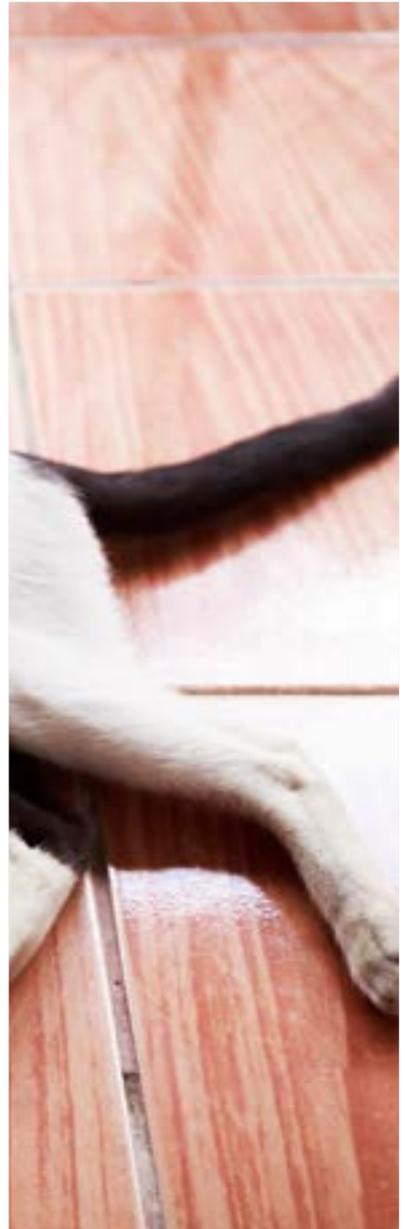
We know your cat is more than just a pet, your cat is a member of the family and a loving companion. After a long day out of the house, your cat is the one that makes you smile, wrapping their body lovingly around your legs and purring, vying for your attention.

Your cat loves you even more than you may think; according to research published in [Behavioural Processes](#)¹, a prestigious animal behavioural journal, your cat prefers contact with you to eating, dispelling the rumours that your cat is more in love with the food cupboard than with you.

As an important member of the family you will want to give your cat the best care that you can. We have created this guide for you and your pregnant cat to ensure your kittens are brought into this world safely and go on to live a happy, healthy life.

Pregnancy or gestation and kitting in cats tends to go without a hitch. Only [2.3%](#)² of cats have a problem, this is however, higher in pedigree cats. On the rare occasion of a complication we want you to be ready and aware. There are also things you can do to help make your cat and kittens more comfortable and information that will help you understand what is happening at key stages during her pregnancy and kitting.





If your cat is pregnant you are not alone

Far from it, recent research published in vet journal; [The Veterinary Record](#)³, showed that nearly 23% of all female cats in the UK have given birth to a litter at some point in

their life and that 34% of cats aged 6-12 months are not neutered. The paper goes on to say that 26.4% of owners believe that a cat can't become pregnant until 12 months of age,

when in fact cats can conceive at 4 months! Each year this results in an estimated 850,000 unplanned kittens born and 130,000-150,000 cats of all ages ending up in rehoming centres.



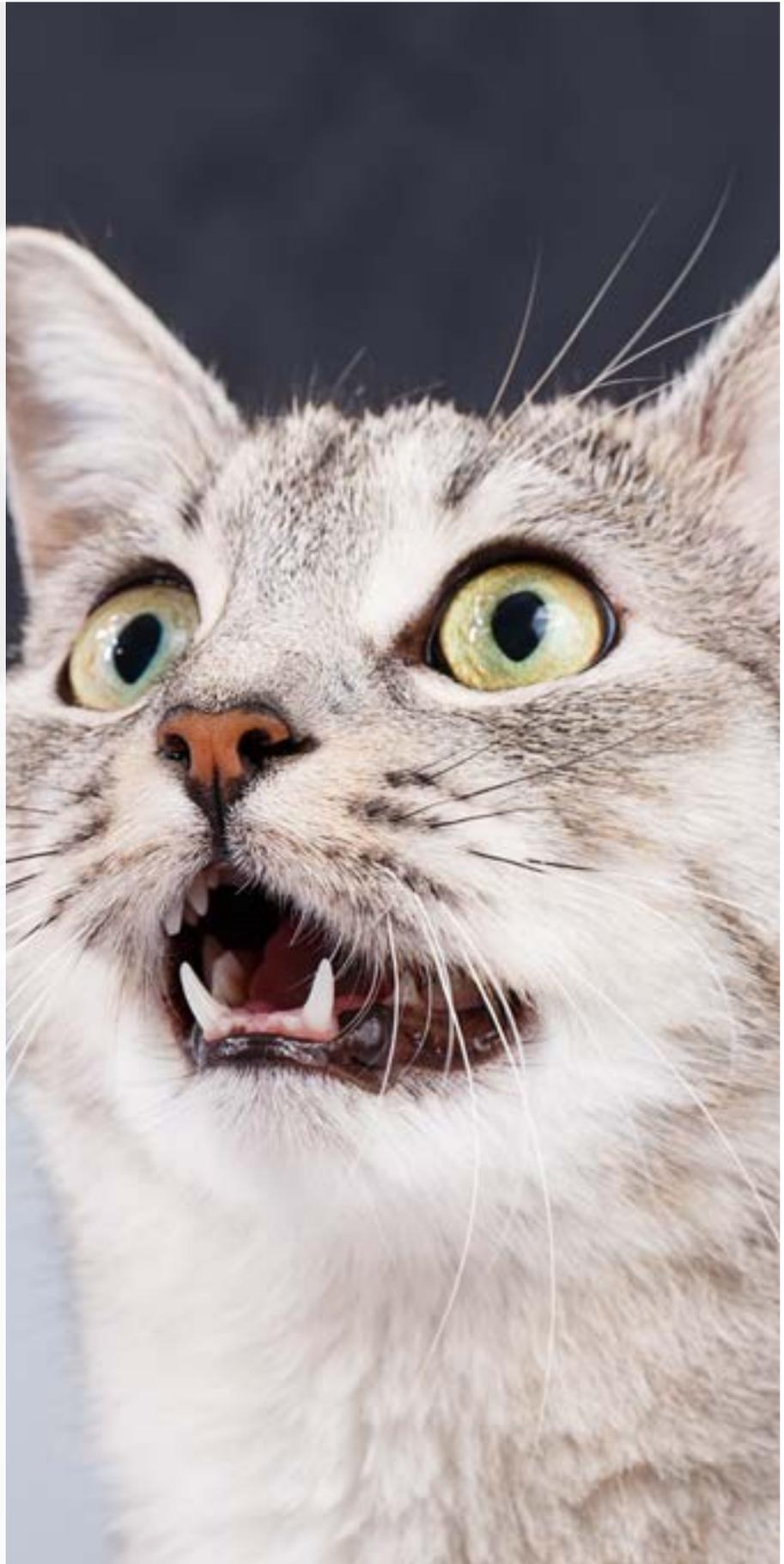
**“ 130,000-150,000
cats of all ages
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How can I tell if my cat is in heat and looking for a mate?

Cats Protection; the UK's leading feline welfare charity, recommend that cats are neutered at the age of 4 months to avoid unexpected pregnancies and more strain on already oversubscribed cat shelters.

According to Cats Protection, if your cat is un-neutered he or she could become a prolific breeder producing up to 20,000 descendants in [5 years](#)³!

Like humans, cats have ovulation cycles where they are more fertile. Each cycle lasts about three weeks and your cat will be most fertile, known as being in heat or in season, for between 4 to 7 days. This can become longer and more frequent if she is not neutered.





Look out for these telltale signs that she is in heat:

- **She becomes very vocal , referred to as 'calling' by vets and breeders**
- **She tries to get out of the house**
- **She stands with her tail straight up and tenses her back legs when you pet her**

How do I tell if my Cat is Pregnant?

Physical Changes

Your cat's gestation period (pregnancy) is only 9 to 10 weeks, so you will notice changes fast.

It is uncommon, but this is something you should be aware of: your cat is able to conceive a second litter at the same time as the first. So siblings in the same litter can have different fathers!

3-4 weeks: A vet can diagnose whether your cat is pregnant through abdominal palpation or by using ultrasound. Another physical sign at this stage of pregnancy is called 'pinking up' (see fig.1); you will notice your cat's nipples swell and change from white to a rosy pink.



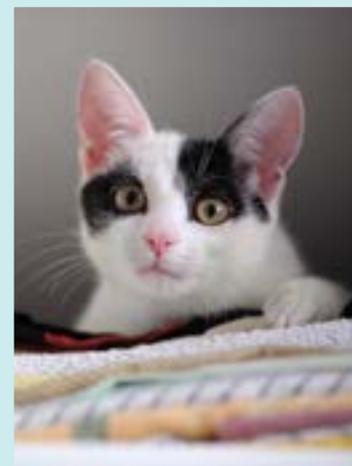
fig.1 "Pinking up" of the nipples



4-5 weeks: The stomach and abdominal area will grow in size and become tender, so take care not to stress your cat and her precious cargo. She will seek a low stress environment away from children, visitors or dogs. You can expect her to gain weight now and her appetite may fluctuate, so make sure she has food when she wants it.

To make sure she is getting sufficient nutrients she will need to switch to a kitten food but do this gradually over a few days to avoid any stomach upset.

7 to 9 weeks: Around two weeks before your cat is due to give birth, she'll begin to look for a suitable spot where she can safely bring her kittens into the world. This phase of the pregnancy is known as 'nesting'. Whether it's a laundry basket, airing cupboard or somewhere completely weird like a clothes draw in your bedroom, respect her choice, it will make the last few weeks of her pregnancy and her upcoming kitting significantly less stressful. If she is on your favourite top in your clothes draw you can probably be forgiven for taking it out and replacing it with a towel or blanket that has your scent on it.



Nesting in the airing cupboard!



Helping your cat through kitting

Most cats, around 98%⁴, give birth without complications. However, it's important to be aware of the stages of kitting and to know what can go wrong.

Your Cat Magazine have kindly supplied this section of our guide in association with Caroline Reay, chief vet at Blue Cross.

What Caroline says:



Kitting is divided into three stages:

1.

The first will see mum becoming restless and repeatedly visiting her bed, and she may later pant and scratch her bedding.



2.

The second stage will see the kittens born, and once straining starts a kitten usually appears within half an hour, but there can sometimes be 24 hours or more between kittens.



3.

The third stage is the passing of the membranes and placenta, which should follow immediately. Make sure one placenta is passed for each kitten. If they are not all passed within four to six hours, seek veterinary advice. Also bear in mind that the mum will usually eat the placenta. If the queen is calm and settled, you can then carefully check each kitten.



Helping the birthing process

In most cases mum will manage without any help, however, difficult births can occur and Cats Protection has offered this advice:



- If a kitten is partly out, but the mother is very tired and the kitten isn't passed within a few seconds, you can gently pull downwards with clean hands, but be very gentle.
- If the mother does not clean the kitten, you can clear the membranes from his head with clean, soft kitchen roll. Wipe his nose and open the mouth to clear it. Rub the kitten in small circular movements to get him breathing.
- If the mother is avoiding the kittens, keep them cosy with a warm, well covered hot water bottle.

If you've had to intervene at all, it is best to seek veterinary advice straight away.

- Call the vet for advice if the mum cat has been straining for more than 30 minutes without producing anything, if the first kitten has arrived and no further kittens appear after an hour and if the mother suddenly seems weak, and also if a kitten becomes stuck.
- The kittens should start to suckle from their mother almost immediately. If they haven't after half an hour, gently guide them towards the teats. If they don't start feeding consult your vet as you may need to start giving a substitute milk replacer – newborn kittens cannot go more than a few hours without milk.



Caring for the family



Once the kittens are feeding, the mother's energy requirements will double. Jane Harrup, Wood Green Animal Shelter's deputy manager, recommends giving her food meant for kittens during pregnancy and until the kittens are weaned as this is high in energy and she will need it.

A large bowl of fresh water should also be kept near the queen and kittens at all times and changed daily.

There are unlikely to be problems at this stage either, but problems can occur:

- Mastitis is one such problem, where mammary glands become inflamed, blocked or infected. This needs veterinary intervention. The symptoms will be a high temperature and disinterest in food.

Jane explains: "Kittens should suckle from their mum until about five weeks of age. When they start to become interested in mum's food, offer them a small amount of kitten meat and kitten kibble in separate bowls to encourage them."

"Cats can become pregnant again while still nursing kittens, **so neuter within a couple of weeks of giving birth**," says Caroline. "It won't interfere with milk production, that's maintained by the suckling action of the kittens."

It might be tempting to keep the kittens once born, but you need to seriously consider the commitment involved. Cats Protection advise: "It is important to find suitable, responsible new homes for the kittens with owners who will provide for them and have them neutered."

"If they are being homed individually, ensure the new owners will provide sufficient stimulation. If homed in pairs, make sure the new owners will provide separate beds, bowls and toileting areas for each kitten."



[For much more information on cat care and health matters, you can subscribe to Your Cat here.](#)



Finding a new home for your kittens

Finding a suitable, loving environment for your kittens is hugely important. 80%² of litters in the UK are unexpected, that's up to 850,000 unexpected kittens per year that need new homes country wide. Thousands of kittens end up in rehoming shelters and thousands still do not have insurance for associated veterinary fees.

With each potential adopter of your kittens; be certain that they understand the importance of neutering, vaccinations, veterinary fees and insurance.

This first few days and weeks in a new home are high risk for a vulnerable young kitten. When your kittens leave you, give them the best start and the new owners the peace of mind that they are insured so any concerns, however slight can immediately be referred to a vet. This could also stop them being returned to you or the owner asking for help with the vet's fees if they fall ill soon after they leave you.

Set up FREE 5 weeks Agria vet's fees kitten insurance online for each kitten easily and quickly. Cover will start from the time each kitten leaves you and as well as protecting your kitten,

you will have introduced his or her new owner to a key part of today's cat healthcare.

What's more when you set-up FREE 5 week Agria vet's fees kitten insurance, your new owners will have access to our free Kitten Health Helpline for extra reassurance. 24/7, 365 days a year we have veterinary experts available night and day to answer questions from concerned new owner.



Routine and preventive healthcare for your cat



Your cat and kitten's health



Looking after the health of your cat means looking out for every aspect of your cat's health and well-being.

This means keeping up with vaccine schedules understanding the importance of neutering, and providing treatments and prevention for issues such as fleas and worms.

Ideally the mother should be up to date with vaccinations, flea and worm treatment before she falls pregnant. This is important because the mother will pass on immunity to diseases to the kittens and fleas and worms can cause health problems to the mother and kittens.

If she is not up to date then speak to your local veterinary surgery as only certain products can be used when your cat is pregnant.

Cats, like us can fall ill and have accidents. Luckily vets can do so much to help sick and injured cats. But there is no NHS for pets.

Pet insurance helps owners budget for unexpected veterinary fees – for example if your cat became ill or was involved in an accident on the road or was scratched by a neighborhood cat and the wound turned into an abscess.

Agria policies include a range of pick and mix benefits that allow you to tailor your cover to meet your needs and your budget. As well as lifetime veterinary fees protection, they can also cover a range of other pet related risks including help to find a lost or stray cat, recompense in the event of a cat's death or loss, the costs of homecare or cattery fees if the you are ill... and much more.

To find out more about cover for your cat or the free cover for your kittens, call: 03330 30 82 12 or [if it is easier just visit our site](#)

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Issues to look out for:

If your cat is a cross breed, she is less likely to have complications than if she is a pedigree breed. For example, International Cat Care suggests that around 2% of cross breeds experience problems compared with between 7% and 10% of say Persian and Siamese queens.

You should seek veterinary assistance if any of the following occur:

- If labour lasts for over half an hour without a kitten being delivered.
- Around 10 minutes or more of intense labour has taken place and you can see a fluid-filled bubble or kitten in the birth canal that is not making any progress.
- Extreme lethargy or depression from the mother.
- An increase in body temperature exceeding 39.4 °C.
- Blood discharges from the vagina for more than 10 minutes.

Below are some of the things that can go wrong during pregnancy and during kitting. The list comes from [ICatCare](#) and [PMVet](#). It is by no means exhaustive and you are fairly unlikely to experience these problems however it is better to seek veterinary advice if you are at all unsure or worried.

Eclampsia (Milk Fever) – This is a deficiency in calcium in the blood and can be life threatening, it usually occurs late on in pregnancy.

Symptoms:

Restlessness, pacing, and irritability, drooling, panting, stiffness in gait, loss of coordination, pain apparent when walking

Final stages of eclampsia include muscle spasms.

If you suspect eclampsia you should seek veterinary support as soon as possible.

Premature birth - Very occasionally a litter of slight and sparsely haired kittens may be born several days early. They can survive with lots of care and attention. They will struggle to stay warm and to swallow milk. You can feed kittens that are not nursing with a small syringe. You should seek veterinary advice if you think your kittens are premature.

Dystocia - this is the medical term for difficulties in labour. It can occur in any stage of the labour and can cause contractions to slow or stop.

Uterine inertia - contractions stop - especially common in large headed breeds like Persians and Siamese, or small litters with big kittens.

Malpresentation - this is where a kitten is born tail first. It is fairly common and usually the kitten is born safely, but there is an increased risk.

Malposition - where a kitten has died in the uterus prior to rotation, this is obviously upsetting in itself, but can also cause further complications for the mother and other kittens if it obstructs the birth canal.

If you are concerned:

Call your vet

Visit: [International Cat Care's site here](#)

Or, call our vet helpline for free, on: **03333 321 947 (Quote "Agrida Pregnant Cat and Kitting Guide")**





To find out more about cover for your cat or the free cover for your kittens, call: **03330 30 82 12** or [if it is easier just click to visit our site](#)

or

References:

- [1. Kristyn R. Vitale Shrevea, Lindsay R. Mehrkamb, Monique A.R. Udella. Social interaction, food, scent or toys? A formal assessment of domestic pet and shelter cat \(*Felis silvestris catus*\) preferences.](#)
- [2. When to wait and when to Worry by International Cat Care](#)
- [3. J. K. Murray, BScEcon, MSc, PhD, A. Whitmarsh, T. J. Gruffydd-Jones. Survey of the characteristics of cats owned by households in the UK and factors affecting their neutered status.](#)
- [4. Cats Protection. Kitten Neutering advice web page](#)

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