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Stages of Kitten Development

The development of kittens has a series of marked phases which, as breeders, we notice as the weeks pass. While these changes in appearance are the same across litters, the timing of those changes can be different depending on the parents. Some litters develop faster than others. We can only put this difference down to the genetic combination provided by both parents. Below is a generalised outline of the stages of development:

Newborn Kittens

Average weight: (80–120 grams)

Physical Development

Newborn kittens will have their eyes closed and their ears folded. They will have no teeth and their gums, nose, and paws may appear pink in colour. They do not yet have a gag reflex or the ability to thermo-regulate. The umbilical cord will be attached and will fall off on its own around 4 to 5 days of age. Their claws will be non-retractable. At this age, they cannot hear or see; they can only navigate the world around them through scent and through seeking warmth and comfort. They will have a stumpy lizard-like tail, fat at the base and thinning to a narrow tip.

Behavioural Development

Newborns will sleep for the majority of the day. Newborn kittens cannot defend themselves or walk, but they may be able to move around by crawling. A healthy newborn will wiggle and meow if handled.

1-Week-Old Kittens

Average weight: (160–250 grams). By 1 week of age, the kitten should have roughly doubled their birth weight.

Physical Development

One-week-old kittens will still have their eyes closed, but no umbilical cord. They will still have no teeth, and their claws will still be non-retractable. At around 7 days old, the ear canals will slowly begin to open and the ears will unfold slightly. At 8–12 days old, the eyes will slowly begin to open, which can occur over the course of several days. One eye may open more quickly than the other; it's important to let the kitten's eyes open at

their own pace. All kittens will be born with blue eyes, which will transition to an adult eye colour with age.

Behavioural Development

One-week-old kittens, though larger than newborns, will still be mostly uncoordinated and will similarly sleep for the majority of the day. At this age, they should be able to hold their head up, move by wiggling their limbs, and be active and vocal if handled.

2-Week-Old Kittens

Average weight: (260–350 grams)

Physical Development

At 2 weeks of age, kittens' eyes will be fully open and baby blue. Their vision will be poor, and they will not be able to see at long distances. The ear canals will be open, and the ears will be small and rounded, like a bear cub. Kittens do not have any teeth and this age and their claws will still be non-retractable.

Behavioural Development

Two-week-old kittens are becoming more coordinated and will be beginning to attempt their first steps. But they will be wobbly on their feet and uncoordinated. Kittens at this age may exhibit some curiosity about the world around them, will not yet be playing, and will spend the majority of their time sleeping.

3-Week-Old Kittens

Average weight: (350–420 grams)

Physical Development

At 3 weeks of age, kittens will have blue eyes and small ears that are beginning to point upward, like a miniature cat. The kitten's vision and hearing will be slowly improving. At this age, a kitten's first baby teeth begin to emerge. The tiny teeth at the front of the mouth, called the incisors, will start to come through the gums. Kittens will slowly begin retracting their claws.

Behavioural Development

At this age, kittens will be walking, exploring their surroundings, and even begin to explore their litter tray. They may begin to become curious about toys, though they are not yet able to run or chase after moving objects. They will sleep frequently and may begin some small self-grooming behaviours. During this week, their coordination will be improving rapidly.

4-Week-Old Kittens

Average weight: (420–550 grams)

Physical Development

At 4 weeks of age, kittens will have much improved vision and hearing. The kitten's teeth will continue to develop; the long teeth next to the incisors, called the canine teeth, will start to come through the gums. Their claws will be retractable.

Behavioural Development

Four-week-old kittens will be confidently exploring and developing more coordination

that allows them to walk, run, and even begin to play. With their improved senses, they will be notably more responsive, making frequent eye contact with caregivers and reacting to sights and sounds in the environment. Kittens will be able to nibble on soft food and can lap water. Their grooming skills may still be limited, but improving. They will start using a litter box.

5-Week-Old Kittens

Average weight: (550–650 grams)

Physical Development

At 5 weeks of age, a kitten's baby teeth will continue to develop and the premolars will start to emerge. Their eyes will be blue, ears will be growing and pointed, and claws will be retractable. Their stumpy "lizard-tail" will suddenly lengthen almost overnight, and appear cat-like.

Behavioural Development

Five-week-old kittens will be running and playing confidently. They will be developing social skills with humans and other animals. Their grooming skills will be improving. They will have perfected their use of the litter box by this age.

6-Week-Old Kittens

Average weight: (650–780 grams)

Physical Development

At 6 weeks of age, a kitten's baby teeth will begin to reach their final stage of early development. The molars will start to emerge. The eyes will still be blue, and vision and hearing will be fully developed.

Behavioural Development

Six-week-old kittens will be socializing confidently with peers, play-fighting, pouncing, and defending themselves. They will be curious about their surroundings and eager to explore. They will be perfecting their grooming skills. Six-week-old kittens are becoming coordinated enough to explore height and jump off of short furniture and land on their feet. Kittens will have mastered eating solid foods and will be less dependent on their mother for food.

7-Week-Old Kittens

Average weight: (780–920 grams)

Physical Development

All baby teeth will be present at 7 weeks of age. The kitten's eye colour will be changing, and the adult eye colour will begin to emerge. Male kittens' testicles may begin to descend around 7 weeks.

Behavioural Development

Seven-week-old kittens will experience a spike in energy. Sleep will decrease and time spent playing will increase. At this age, kittens are able to run, climb and confidently jump off of furniture. Kittens should receive ample kitten wet food, and may have kitten

dry food as a supplement. Provide access to water, food, and a shallow litter box at all times.

8-Week-Old Kittens

Average weight: (920–1120 grams)

Physical Development

All baby teeth will be present at 8 weeks of age. The eyes will be begin transitioning to their adult colour and the ears will be proportionate.

Behavioural Development

Eight-week-old kittens will be energetic and independent. Their agility and coordination will be nearly fully developed. Kittens will be fully weaned at this age...

Anou Russian Cats will provide their clients with regular videos as their litters develop so that you may observe these changes for yourself. We will walk you through the whole process of adopting a new kitten right from birth to final adoption.