



When to Bring Your Savannah Kitten Home

by Jennifer Miller

I know you are eager to get your new baby, but here are several good reasons we do not allow our kittens to leave for their new homes any earlier than ten weeks:

1. We like to allow our kittens to wean themselves at their own pace, which makes for a less needy kitten and a happier mom. Most of our kittens start eating solid foods at around five weeks of age, but they still want/need the comfort of Mom. Some kittens have such a strong urge to suckle, that if they are taken away too early from mom, they will begin to nurse on each other, on a soft cloth or other similar material. Others become fretful without mom and tend to cry often or have nervous habits. These habits can be difficult to break. In the wild, a kitten would never leave mom at six to eight weeks of age -- they would never survive. It's not natural for a kitten to be taken from its mother and littermates at such an early age, so we let mom and baby determine when it's time to be fully weaned.



2. Good litter box habits are reinforced by watching mother. Most kittens don't start to use the litter box until around four or five weeks of age. They watch mom dig and scratch, defecate, and then bury. They learn to bury their waste in the litter, too. On the rare occasions when we've had to wean kittens early, these kittens took much longer to regularly use the litter box. On the other hand, the kittens raised by mom until 9 or 10 weeks of age rarely had litter box accidents. All kittens benefit from consistency and familiarity when young -- so a familiar environment, same litter box, etc. makes for few, if any accidents, and reinforces strong litter box habits. That way, when the kitten leaves for its new home it continues using the litter box faithfully.

3. While the kittens are nursing from mom, they receive passive immunity from mother's milk. At around six weeks of age this begins to slowly taper off, and our kittens are vaccinated around nine weeks of age, when mother's antibodies will no longer interfere with the vaccination, rendering it less effective. It is during this time period that a kitten is most vulnerable to disease and stress. Just another reason they are left with mom, given time for the vaccination to begin working, and allowed to continue to nurse. By the time a kitten is ten to twelve weeks of age, the immune system has developed enough to give the kitten much needed protection when going through the stress of adoption.

4. Kittens that leave for their new homes around ten to 12 weeks of age are well socialized by this time and can handle new experiences without much fear and/or stress. This socialization comes not only from their human family, but also from mom and littermates. They've learned how to play, without getting too rough, how to use the litter box, how to stay well kept through daily grooming, and how to interact with humans and other cats. Our kittens have well-formed litter box habits, have been eating solid foods for at least four weeks, and have become quite used to the daily activities of our household. When it is time for them to leave for their new home, they are mentally and physically ready to make the big change.

Hope that helps ease the anticipation a little,

Jennifer Miller