



Recommendations for Kittens

We would like to congratulate you on bringing a new kitten into your family. Owning a kitten can be an extremely rewarding experience. We hope this handout will give you the information needed to make some good decisions regarding your kitten.

First, let us say that we are grateful that you have chosen us to help you with your kitten's health care. If you have questions concerning any subject related to your kitten's health, please feel free to call our hospital. Our entire professional staff is willing and happy to help you.

When should my kitten be vaccinated?

There are many fatal diseases of cats. Fortunately, we have the ability to prevent several of these by vaccinating your pet. In order to be effective, these vaccines must be given as a series of injections. Ideally, they are given at 6, 9, and 12 weeks of age, but this schedule may vary depending on your pet's individual needs.

The core vaccination schedule will protect your kitten from several common diseases: rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, chlamydia, panleukopenia and rabies. Rabies vaccine is given at 12 weeks of age. There are two other optional vaccinations that are appropriate in certain situations. These vaccinations are the Feline Leukemia vaccine and the Feline Immunodeficiency Virus vaccine. Both of these vaccines require a blood test before the vaccinations can be given to the kitten.

Do all kittens have worms?

Intestinal parasites are very common in kittens. Kittens can become infected with parasites before they are born or later through their mother's milk. Not all parasites are seen with the naked eye. The microscopic examination of a stool sample will usually help us to determine the presence of intestinal parasites. We recommend this exam for all kittens.

Tapeworms are one of the most common intestinal parasites of cats. Kittens become infected with them when they swallow fleas; the eggs of the tapeworm live inside the flea. When the cat chews or licks its skin as a flea bites, the flea may be swallowed. The flea is digested within the cat's intestine; the tapeworm hatches and then anchors itself to the intestinal lining. Therefore, exposure to fleas may result in a new infection.



There are lots of choices of cat foods. What should I feed my kitten?

Diet is extremely important during the growing months of a cat's life. We recommend a VETERINARY RECOMMENDED NAME-BRAND FOOD made by a national cat food company (not a generic or local brand) and a diet MADE FOR KITTENS. This should be fed until your kitten is about twelve months of age, depending on its breed and size.

What can be done about fleas on my kitten?

Fleas do not stay on your kitten all of the time; occasionally, they jump off and seek another host. Therefore, it is important to kill fleas on your new kitten before they can become established in your house. Many of the flea control products that are safe on adult cats are not safe for kittens less than four months of age. Be sure that any flea product you use is labeled safe for kittens.

We will provide you with age and weight-specific flea control products that are safe for your pet and highly effective at keeping your pet flea-free. There are newer products available that prevent heartworm disease, ear mites, as well as preventing fleas.

Why should I have my female kitten spayed?

Spaying offers several advantages. The female's heat cycle results in about two to three weeks of vaginal bleeding. This can be quite annoying if your cat is kept indoors. Male cats are attracted from blocks away and, in fact, seem to come out of the woodwork. Spaying is the removal of the uterus and the ovaries. As a result, heat cycles no longer occur. In many cases, despite your best efforts, the female will become pregnant; spaying prevents unplanned litters of kittens.

It has been proven that as the female cat gets older there is a significant incidence of breast cancer and uterine infections if she has not been spayed. Spaying before she has **any heat periods** will virtually eliminate the chance of either. If you do not plan to breed your cat, we strongly recommend that she be spayed before her first heat period. This can be done at six months of age.

Why should I have my male cat neutered?

Neutering offers several advantages. Male cats are attracted to a female cat in heat and will climb over or go through fences to find her. Male cats are more aggressive and more likely to fight, especially with other male cats. As cats age, the prostate gland frequently enlarges and causes difficulty urinating and defecating. Male cats that are intact are also prone to cancers and other contagious diseases such as FIV. Neutering will solve, or greatly help, all of these problems that come with owning a male cat. The surgery can be performed any time after the cat is six months of age.



Can you recommend something for pet identification?

The most widely recommended pet identification device is the microchip. This tiny device is implanted with a needle much like administering an injection. A special scanner can detect these chips; veterinary hospitals, humane societies, and animal shelters across the country have these scanners. A national registry assists in the identification and return of microchipped pets throughout the United States and Canada. We strongly recommend microchipping all pets. We use the Home Again Microchip.

Other issues:

Declawing Kittens

It is just natural for kittens to sharpen their claws. Scratching posts are wonderful for kittens, and may help keep your furniture in tack with no rips or tears. Owners that decide to declaw a kitten must make sure they are going to keep the cat as an **indoor cat only**.

Litter Training Kittens

Kittens usually housebreak themselves. All you have to do is provide a clean litter box that is low enough for the kitten to enter.

Cat Carriers

Cat carriers are the safest way to transport kittens to the veterinarian or for travel. Putting a kitten in a carrier will get them used to traveling when they are older. We recommend finding a carrier that allows you to remove the top portion of the carrier easily. We require cats to be in carriers when they enter and exit the hospital.