



Looking after your kitten

Congratulations on the arrival of your new kitten!

These notes outline the basics of how to care for your kitten. Health care issues including vaccination, intestinal worming, flea control and desexing are all discussed. Other things such as diet, socialization and training are also very important. If you would like more information of any of the topics in these notes don't hesitate to give us a call, or make a list and ask us at your next visit.

The first year of your kitten's life will be a lot of fun for you both- so enjoy it!

Their new home

Taking a kitten from its mother into your home can be an extremely stressful time for your kitten. Kittens need gentle contact and handling to help them adapt to their new environment. If children are present, they need to be taught that the new kitten is not a toy as kittens can easily be injured and frightened in their new home. Here is a list of items your kitten will need in his/her new home.

- Bedding
- Collar, name tag
- Range of toys
- Kitten food
- Food and water bowls
- Litter tray

Health

Vaccinations: Your kitten should be vaccinated against certain diseases which are highly contagious and can be life threatening. More information is in the vaccination section of this handout.

Worming: Your kitten should be wormed with a good quality, broad spectrum intestinal wormer such as 'Milbemax' or 'Drontal' fortnightly until 12 weeks of age, monthly until 6 months of age and then every 3 months for the rest of its life. It is important to weigh your kitten before worming to ensure that you are dosing correctly.

Microchipping: Pets should be microchipped by 12 weeks of age and registered with the local council by 6 months of age.

Desexing: Desexing is always recommended for non-breeding cats. There is more information regarding desexing in this handout.

Fleas: Fleas suck blood from your cat, causing irritation, allergies and potentially anaemia. Monthly year round flea control is recommended to prevent outbreaks and contamination of your pet's environment with flea eggs. We recommend using a good quality flea product that can be purchased from your veterinarian.

Nutrition

Nutrition is extremely important to your kitten or cat. A kitten has different nutritional requirements to an adult cat including extra calcium and protein for growth. It is extremely important to provide your kitten with a balanced diet especially while they are still growing; we recommend a high quality commercial diet such as Hills, Royal Canin or Advance. Premium foods offer a guaranteed analysis of ingredients and do not contain 'fillers' like many mainstream foods, therefore reducing the amount of food your cat needs to be fed. It is important to always provide your kitten with fresh water. It is not recommended to feed your kitten milk, many pets are lactose intolerant so feeding them milk can cause diarrhoea.

Dental health

Your kitten will begin to lose its deciduous teeth and grow adult teeth at around 3 months of age. Adult teeth need to be looked after carefully to prevent dental disease in cats. To help with oral hygiene and avoid plaque build up on your cat's teeth, Hills Prescription diet Feline t/d can be given to your cat daily to help with plaque removal. This can be given as part of their normal diet or can be fed alone as it is a complete diet. Never feed cooked bones as they can splinter and can get stuck in your cat's mouth or throat.

Socialisation and training

Kittens have a sensitive development period from 3-14 weeks of age, during this time it is important to expose them to novel experiences such as other family members or household pets, but you must protect your cat against contagious disease during this time. Training should start as soon as you adopt your new kitten, handle your kitten daily and get them used to you touching their paws, mouth and teeth.

Feline Vaccination

Why should I vaccinate my cat?

During the first few weeks of life, kittens receive antibodies that help protect them from common diseases from their mother's milk. After that it is important to vaccinate your pets to protect them from disease.

What should I vaccinate my cat against?

- Feline 3 protects your cat against cat flu and enteritis. Cat flu (rhinotracheitis and calicivirus) causes discharge from the eyes and nose, sneezing, mouth ulcers and inappetence. Enteritis (feline panleukopaemia virus) causes severe and life threatening vomiting and diarrhoea.
- FIV (feline immunodeficiency virus) or feline AIDS is a progressive disease that causes a variety of symptoms due to low immune function and associated secondary infections. It is spread through breeding, socializing and fighting with FIV infected cats. We are currently experiencing a high prevalence of FIV in wild cats and inside/outside domestic cats. Therefore we highly recommend this vaccine if your cat is kept outdoors.
- Feline Leukaemia virus also affects the immune system. It is spread through grooming, bites and sharing food bowls. It is generally recommended for cats in high-risk environments, e.g. if your kitten is housed with an infected cat.

When should I vaccinate my cat?

Initial F3 vaccination should commence at 6-8 weeks of age. Your kitten requires a series of 2-3 vaccinations given every 4 weeks, with the final kitten vaccine given when your pet is over 12 weeks of age. After the initial course we recommend annual booster vaccinations at the same time as your cat's annual veterinary health check.

It is highly recommended to vaccinate your cat against Feline immunodeficiency virus/Feline AIDS unless they are kept inside away from other cats at all times. For cats older than 6 months of age an FIV test should be performed prior to vaccinating them, they can be vaccinated if they test negative to the virus. The vaccination schedule consists of 3 vaccines from 8 weeks of age, administered 2-4 weeks apart.

Desexing

Desexing and neutering are terms used for the surgical removal of reproductive organs from male and female cats.

Advantages of speying (desexing of female)

- Prevention of unwanted pregnancies
- Reduces roaming behaviour
- Prevent her coming on heat. When a female cat is on heat she will during change her behaviour and may spray urine around the house and call loudly
- Tomcats are less likely to visit your house in search of a mate when your female cat is desexed
- Reduces the risk of cat bite abscesses and contagious disease such as Feline AIDS
- Reduce the risk of mammary cancer
- Elimination of ovarian cancer
- Reduced price of lifetime registration

Advantages of castration (desexing of male)

- Reduces roaming behaviour and injury associated with roaming such as cat fight abscesses and trauma from being hit by car
- Reduces the risk of infectious diseases such as Feline AIDS
- Reduces fighting, calling and other territorial and mating behaviors such as urine spraying
- Eliminates testicular cancer
- Reduces the risk of prostate cancer in males.
- Reduced price of lifetime registration

Disadvantages of desexing

There are not many disadvantages of desexing your pet

Pet insurance

Just like house, contents and car insurance; there are insurance options available for your cat. Pet insurance is offered by many different companies and can even be included in many cases as part of your own personal insurance.

Pet insurance is similar to other types of insurance- allowing you to make a claim for eligible vet bills. If you are thinking about getting pet insurance for your cat, consider **commencing a policy when your cat is young**, as most insurance companies won't cover your cat for pre-existing conditions.

Pet insurance gives you as the owner peace of mind that if an accident does happen to your cat or your cat is diagnosed with a chronic condition; you can do everything possible to ensure your cat is offered the best treatment possible.

If you have any questions regarding pet insurance, please don't hesitate to contact our team.

Kitten Schedule

6-8 weeks

- First vaccination F3 and FIV
- Continue to worm fortnightly for intestinal worms (Milbemax/Drontal)
- Monthly flea prevention (spot on)
- Feeding ("Royal Canine", "Hills" or "Advance" kitten) 3-4 times a day
- Microchip
- Consider pet insurance if this is an option for you

10-12 weeks

- Second vaccination F3 and FIV
- Worm monthly for intestinal worms
- Continue monthly flea prevention
- Feeding ("Royal Canine", "Hills" or "Advance" kitten)

14-16 weeks

- Third F3 vaccination (if the second vaccination was done prior to 12 weeks of age) and third FIV vaccine
- Worm monthly for intestinal worms, continue this until 6 months of age
- Monthly flea prevention
- Feeding 3 times a day. Start feeding raw bones 2-3 times a week or "Greenies" 2 times a day

5-6 months

- Worm every 3 months from 6 months of age
- Spay or castrate your cat
- Monthly flea prevention
- Feeding twice daily
- Register your cat with the local council

6-15 months

- Continue worming every 3 months
- Monthly flea prevention
- Change to a high quality young adult commercial diet

15 months

- First annual health check and annual F3 and FIV vaccination