



HEALTHCARE FOR YOUR NEW KITTEN

Vaccinations

- Once a kitten is weaned from its mother's milk, it no longer has immunity against infectious disease. This is why it is very important to make sure your kitten completes his/her entire series of kitten shots, and then gets a yearly booster.
- The kitten's immune system needs repeated stimulation from the vaccines before it is fully competent, therefore, a kitten should receive his first vaccination at 7-8 weeks, then once a month until 16 weeks of age for a total of 3-4 vaccinations.
- If a kitten is started late on his/her vaccination series, they should still receive a total of 3-4 boosters for optimal protection.

Diseases

- **Feline Viral Rhino Tracheitis:** can cause respiratory disease
- **Calicivirus:** can cause upper respiratory disease
- **Panleukopenia:** can cause deadly bone marrow and gastrointestinal disease (we refer to this as "feline distemper")
- **Chlamydia:** an organism which can cause upper respiratory disease
- **Rabies:** causes deadly neurologic disease. We give this vaccine at 14 to 16 weeks of age. This vaccine is required by law.
- **Feline Leukemia:** A virus that causes immune suppression and cancer. We recommend that all kittens be tested for Feline Leukemia before receiving this vaccine, because kittens can be born with this disease. If your cat never comes in contact with other cats and does not go outdoors, this vaccine may not be needed.

Indoor versus Outdoor

- We recommend that all cats be kept indoors unless supervised. The reason for this is that all adult cats as well as kittens are highly susceptible to three major viruses:
 - **Feline Leukemia:** transmitted by direct contact (such as grooming or shared food bowls) or fighting (bite wounds). Though there is a vaccine, it is not 100% effective and there is no cure for the disease.
 - **Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV or Feline AIDS):** usually transmitted by bite wounds. This disease causes immune suppression and there is no cure or vaccine for this disease.
 - **Feline Infectious Peritonitis:** transmitted by direct contact and bite wounds. Though there is a vaccine, it has been implicated in causing disease in some cats, so we do not routinely recommend it.
- If you allow your cat to go outside, it is very important to vaccinate him/her for Feline Leukemia in addition to their yearly combination vaccine and Rabies.

Intestinal Parasites

- Parasites such as hookworms, roundworms, capillaria, and sometimes Coccidia can cause debilitating disease and weight loss in your kitten. These can be easily controlled by de-worming routinely with oral medications.
- We recommend checking your kitten at his/her first visit for intestinal parasites, and then annually thereafter.

Fleas

- Fleas are annoying external parasites which are very prevalent in the South. Aside from making animals uncomfortable and leading to allergies and skin infections, they carry the tapeworm ova and, if ingested, can cause your cat to develop a tapeworm infestation. In cats and kittens with a high population of fleas, they can cause anemia (low circulating red blood cells) which is extremely dangerous.
- Before bringing your kitten into your home, make sure you have treated your house and that it is “flea free”.
- Topicals may be used if you find your new kitten already has fleas or gets fleas after you bring him/her home. Please ask one of our staff members about our products. They can direct you to one that is both safe and effective.
- We carry and recommend Revolution, FrontlinePlus, Advantage, and Advantage Multi for flea control. We DO NOT recommend any of the “over the counter” brands that are commonly available at retail stores, many of which contain chemicals toxic to cats. Please ask one of our staff which product is the best one for your cat.

Heartworm Disease and Prevention

- Heartworms are actual worms that live inside the heart.
- This disease is transmitted by mosquitoes. A mosquito bites an infected dog or cat, ingesting the heartworm larvae (egg) from the bloodstream, and then bites your cat and injects larvae into his/her body. The heartworms migrate to the heart where they grow into adults and reproduce.
- In cats, heartworm disease is a lung disease, not a heart disease.
- The cat is not the natural host for the heartworm. The cat’s immune system attacks the migrating larvae and therefore very few survive to adulthood. The inflammatory reaction to the death of the worms can cause respiratory distress or chronic coughing. Sudden death is also possible.
- Heartworm disease is very difficult to test for in cats. False negatives are very common, and positive results can indicate a previous infection, not a current active infection. Therefore, we do not routinely test for heartworms in cats unless heartworm disease is suspected. In these cases additional testing will help to confirm heartworm disease.
- Heartworms can infect indoor cats just as easily as outdoor cats, so all cats should be on heartworm prevention. After all, you live inside and we know you’ve been bitten!

- Currently, there is no treatment for heartworm disease in cats, so prevention is the key. We carry and recommend Revolution and Advantage Multi for cats. This is a once a month topical application that also treats for fleas, ear mites, hookworms, and roundworms. Alternatively, we carry Heartguard chewables for cats (a once a month chewable treat that also treats for hookworms) or Interceptor (a once monthly flavor tablet that also treats for hookworms, roundworms, and whipworms). Please ask one of our staff members which product is the best one for your cat.

Routine Kitten Maintenance

- Keep toenails short.
- Brush their teeth regularly (every day to three days) to prevent gum disease, bad breath and tooth loss.
- Clean ears with an antiseptic cleaner every week to prevent ear infections and mites.
- If you start working with your kitten early, the experience will be more pleasurable for both of you.

Spay and Neuter

- Unless you plan to use your cat for breeding later in life, you should have your male cat neutered and your female cat spayed in order to prevent common reproductive tract disease and unwanted pregnancies in females and the desire to roam in males.
 - **Females:** Once they reach sexual maturity, female cats come into heat every 2 to 4 weeks year round. Unspayed females have a high incidence of ovarian and uterine diseases (infections, cancers) as well as breast cancer.
 - **Males:** Unneutered males commonly have the desire to roam, or to spray urine in the house. Usually (though not in every case), neutering will curb these desires.
- We recommend spaying or neutering your cat at 4 to 6 months of age, or approximately 1 month after completion of the kitten vaccine series.

Annual Checkups

- We recommend that your cat have a yearly visit to the veterinarian for a full physical, booster vaccines, and fecal exam.

Please feel free to call us with any further questions at 865-693-8212