



Getting Started With Your Kitten!



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Health Care Program - First Year

Kitten's Name: _____

Birthday: _____

1st Vist - Date: _____

Kitten's Age: _____

- Doctor Exam: ☐
- Vaccines: FVRCP ☐ Rabies ☐ FeLV (when indicated) ☐
- Deworming ☐ Fecal Test ☐
- Heartworm Prevention _____
- Flea/Tick Prevention _____
- Felv/FIV test _____

Comments: _____

2nd Vist - Date: _____

Kitten's Age: _____

- Doctor Exam: ☐
- Vaccines: FVRCP ☐ Rabies ☐ FeLV (when indicated) ☐
- Deworming ☐ Fecal Test ☐
- Heartworm Prevention _____
- Flea/Tick Prevention _____
- Felv/FIV test _____

Comments: _____

3rd Vist - Date: _____

Kitten's Age: _____

- Doctor Exam: ☐
- Vaccines: FVRCP ☐ Rabies ☐ FeLV (when indicated) ☐
- Deworming ☐ Fecal Test ☐
- Heartworm Prevention _____
- Flea/Tick Prevention _____
- Felv/FIV test _____

Comments: _____

4th Vist - Date: _____

Kitten's Age: _____

- Doctor Exam: ☐
- Vaccines: FVRCP ☐ Rabies ☐ FeLV (when indicated) ☐
- Deworming ☐ Fecal Test ☐
- Heartworm Prevention _____
- Flea/Tick Prevention _____
- Felv/FIV test _____

Comments: _____

Let's Start With the Basics

♥Preventive Care:

All cats should receive a complete vaccine series as kittens and be kept up to date with yearly physical exams and vaccine boosters as they age. After 7 years of age, your kitty should also be examined every 6 months since senior diseases become more common after this age. Just like people, it is usually easier, less expensive, and less stressful for your kitty to catch and treat diseases if caught early. It is much easier to treat disease if it is caught early. More information is provided on the following pages.

♥Litter Box Etiquette:

Most kittens/cats will naturally tend to use the litter box because they tend to prefer a sandy material to eliminate in. But don't take it for granted that they will use it! It is important to keep the box clean, choose a brand of litter that your cat likes (most kitties prefer an uncovered litter box, with clumping unscented litter, and no plastic liner), and keep the box in a quiet and private area of the house that your cat has easy access to. Scoop the litter once a day, dump all litter out once a week, scrub the litter box once a month, and get a new litter box once a year. Generally, you should try to have 1 more litter box than the number of cats you have (ie. 1 cat = 2 boxes, 2 cats = 3 boxes etc.) For kittens, every time they show signs of needing to urinate or defecate (pawing at the ground, squatting) place them in the litter box. Reward good behavior if you see it! Adult cats should be shown and placed in the box where the litter box is located so that they can find it when they need it. The number of available litter boxes should be equal to or greater than the number of cats in the household.

♥Territorial Marking and Spraying:

Territorial marking is something that cats do to mark what is "theirs", and the need to spray on your belongings will diminish if your cat is fixed. Neutering, positive reward training, and stress reduction are some of the solutions for this problem. Talk to your vet if you experience marking issues with your cat.

♥Scratching:

Scratching is a natural behavior that cats do to stretch, clean away dead layers from their nails, and to mark their territory. To reduce the chance of your cat scratching your furniture, make a scratching post available immediately and encourage your cat to use it by using toys and catnip. You may need to try different types of scratching posts (horizontal, vertical, carpet, or cardboard to find what your cat prefers. Regular nail trimmings will also help in reducing any damage done to your home and are safe and harmless. You can also temporarily block access to items you don't want your cat to use with aluminum foil, plastic wrap, or double-sided tape until your cat gets used to using a scratching post.

♥The Cat Carrier:

You should introduce your cat to a carrier as soon as possible, as a carrier is the safest way to transport your kitty. Leave the carrier in the room with your kitten and place treats in it to encourage them to enter it on their own. This will allow your kitten to get familiar with the carrier.

♥Houseplants:

Cats will eat houseplants, dig in the dirt they are potted in, and drink any water left in the houseplant's saucer. Make sure that any houseplants you own are safe for kitties to eat as there are a surprising number of plants that are toxic to cats (see common toxins, next page). If you do plan on keeping indoor plants, keep them away from your cat and do not use potentially toxic pesticides on the plant that may be toxic.

Common Poisonous Plants, Fruits, and Foods

- Almonds: seeds
- Apple cores
- Lily of the valley: the entire plant
- Apricot: pit
- Lilies, all kinds and colors
- Avocado: pit
- Lobelia: leaves-stems-fruit
- - Cherry: seeds
- Indian tobacco
- Wild cherry
- Macadamia nut
- Chocolate * Very Toxic*
- Marijuana: leaves-flowers-seeds
- Christmas Rose: the entire plant
- Mistletoe: the entire plant
- Lenten rose
- Mock Orange: fruit
- Skunk Cabbage
- Morning glory: seeds
- Clematis: the entire plant
- Mushrooms
- Crown of thorns: leaves, stems and sap
- Nutmeg
- Daphne: the entire plant *Very Poisonous*
- Oleander: the entire plant/roots
- Delphinium: the entire plant
- Onion
- Larkspur
- Peach: pit/seeds
- Stagerweed
- Pear Balsam: seeds/fruit
- Dieffenbachia: the entire plant
- Philodendron: the entire plant/roots
- Dumb Cane
- All kinds of philodendron
- Mother-in-law's tongue
- Periwinkle: the entire plant *Very Poisonous*
- Foxglove: the entire plant, * Very Poisonous*
- Pittosporum: the entire plant *Very poisonous*
- Garlic
- Poppy: seeds/oil
- Grapes/Raisins
- Primrose: leaves-stems
- Holly: leaves-berries
- Privet: leaves-berries
- All kinds of Hollies
- Rhubarb: leaves blades
- Hydrangea: the entire plant
- Tobacco: the entire plant
- Ivy: the entire plant
- Tomato: all the non-fruit part
- All kind of Ivies
- Jasmine: fruit-leaves-sap
- Amaryllis Lantana: the entire plant
- Rhododendron: the entire plant

*The BULBS from these plants are very poisonous:
Java beans, Jessamine, Crocus, Daffodils, Azaleas, Hyacinth, Laurel, Narcissus, Snowdrop

This is a partial list of the more common poisonous plants.

In case of emergency or if you need an immediate answer about a specific plant or toxin that is not on this list, please call ASPCA poison control at **1-800-426-4435** or the Pet Poison Helpline at **1-855-764-7661**. Please be aware that both services require a fee to open a case.

Environmental Enrichment

Generally, it's recommended keeping cats indoors for health and safety reasons. However, since cats are both social creatures and natural predators, they must be provided with opportunities to express their natural behaviors to safeguard their mental well-being. Your new kitty needs your help to satisfy these natural social and predatory drives, and we want to help you learn how. Here are just a few suggestions to enrich your cat's life, environment, and help you forge a stronger human-animal bond.

Self-Play Toys

Self-play toys are especially good for cats that are left home alone. Most self-play toys dispense food, which motivates the cat to play with the toy. You may either buy food-dispensing toys or make your own out of racquet or tennis balls or clean yogurt containers with plastic lids. Simply cut a hole into the ball or container, fill it with dry kibble, and, presto, your cat is entertained. Some cats may take longer than others to figure the toys out; if a little encouragement is needed you may fill the toy with low-calorie treats instead of kibble.



Interactive Toys

Interactive toys help strengthen the bond between you and your cat by letting you share fun and positive experiences. A popular choice is the wand-type toy with feathers, string, or fabric attached. Laser pointers are another great way to get your kitty exercise and stimulate their prey-drive. Be careful not to direct the laser at your cats' eyes!

Structural Features

Cats need plenty of resources other than just food, water, and a litterbox. Climbing, scratching, and observing the premises are all part of a cat's natural behaviors to avoid scratching furniture. It is essential to provide your cat with vertical or horizontal scratching structures. It's a very typical behavior for cats to sharpen their claws / mark their territory so making sure they have something to scratch, other than your cherished belongings, is a priority. Being up high or perched on something appropriate, like a cat condo, is also important.

Other routes of stimulation like audio-visual stimulation include leaving the T.V. or music on while you are away from the house. This creates ambient sounds associated with human presence. Access to windows, fish tanks, etc. provides great visual stimulus. Olfactory stimulation includes catnip, herbs, or synthetic feline pheromones, like Feliway®, Nurture CALM® collars, which provides a variety of enrichment elements. Another great resource for tips on keeping indoor cats happy and healthy is: indoorpet.osu.edu



Core Vaccines and De-worming

Rabies and FVRCP are considered Core Feline vaccines. Other vaccines, such as Feline Leukemia vaccine, are optional; the need depends on the environment and life style of your pet.

*Administration of a broad-spectrum dewormer is standard protocol for puppies and kittens to rid them of internal parasites. This includes tapeworms, roundworms, hook worms, and whipworms which can compete for nutrition and cause gastrointestinal issues.

Rabies Vaccine:

Rabies is a virus that affects the brain and spinal cord of all mammals, including dogs, cats and humans. Though preventable, there is good reason that the word “rabies” evokes fear in people. The disease has been reported in every state except Hawaii, and everywhere throughout the world except for Australia and Antarctica. Annually, rabies causes the deaths of more than 50,000 humans and millions of animals worldwide. Once symptoms appear, the disease results in fatality.



Unvaccinated animals who are allowed to roam outdoors without supervision are most at risk for infection. If they're exposed to wild animals, they have a greater chance of fighting with infected stray or wild animals. There is no accurate test to diagnose rabies in live animals. The direct fluorescent antibody test is the most accurate test for diagnosis, but because it requires brain tissue, it can only be performed after the death of the animal. There is no treatment or cure for rabies once symptoms appear. Since rabies presents a serious public health threat, animals that are suspected of having the virus are most often euthanized.

Vaccinating your pet not only protects them from getting rabies, it protects them if they bite someone. Dogs or cats that have bitten humans are required to be confined for at least 10 days to see if signs of rabies develop. If the animal's vaccination records are not current, a lengthy quarantine or even euthanasia may be mandated. In many areas of the country, the law requires that all domestic dogs and cats are vaccinated at or after the age of 3 months. Avoiding contact with wild animals is also necessary for prevention. You can greatly decrease chances of rabies transmission by walking your dog on a leash, and by keeping your cat indoors. Since even indoor only pets are not completely without risk, and due to the human health risk with fatal nature of the disease, we generally recommend all pets be vaccinated for rabies. If you have further questions, please ask your veterinarian.

FVRCP Vaccine:

Feline Rhinotracheitis-Calici-Panleukopenia vaccine is a quality core vaccine which prevents cats against the most threatening viral infections—calicivirus, herpesvirus, and the deadly feline parvovirus, panleukopenia. We recommend the vaccination of healthy cats 9 weeks of age and older. Kittens will need a series of boosters after the initial vaccine and then annually after their kitten vaccines are complete. Most adult cats will then receive this vaccine every 3 years.



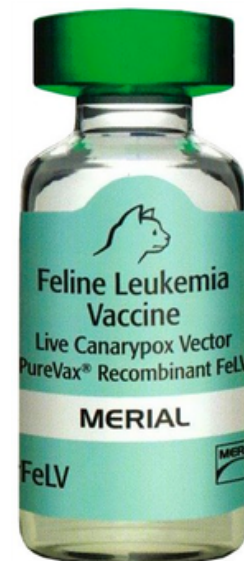
Feline Leukemia (FeLV)

Feline Leukemia Virus, a retrovirus, is unfortunately a common infection among cats, especially those who are allowed outside. The virus is spread through contact with the saliva, blood, or urine of an infected cat, most commonly saliva or from mother to kitten. It also can be spread through friendly contact. While most infected cats will shed the virus and become immune, cats that do not become immune sicken quickly—85% of cats die within 3 years of diagnosis—and once the virus spreads to the bone marrow there is no effective treatment for the disease. Because of this poor prognosis, prevention is especially important. There are several ways of preventing your kitty from contracting this disease:

The easiest preventive method is simply to avoid exposure. Keep your cat indoors, away from other neighborhood cats and feral cat colonies that are likely to harbor active infections.



1. Screen all newly-adopted cats and kittens for infection. A simple blood test, run in the hospital, can tell us whether or not your kitty has the virus within 30 minutes. Since the virus may not be detectable for 1-3 months after infection, it is recommended that kittens be tested after six months of age, even if tests performed at a younger age show the kitten is negative to be absolutely sure.
2. Vaccinate! Cats are most susceptible to infection with FeLV as kittens, so the AVMA and AAFP both recommend a series of 2 FeLV vaccines for ALL kittens up to 1 year of age, regardless of exposure. This is to be followed by a booster after one year of age for adult cats with continuing risk of exposure.
3. If you decide to keep a kitty who is infected with Feline Leukemia, you should maintain your household as a “closed colony.” In other words, do not introduce any new cats to the house unless they are already infected with the virus too. Luckily, the virus dies quickly once outside a cat’s body, so new, healthy cats may be safely introduced within days of the departure of an FeLV-positive kitty.



Flea Prevention

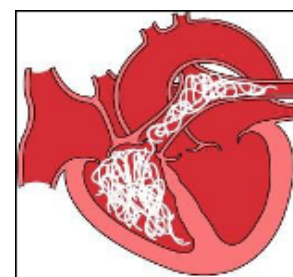
Unfortunately, fleas do not go on vacation. Even in harsh weather conditions, they can still be a year-round nuisance. Even indoor-only pets can get fleas and have an outbreak!

Happily, the days of flea dips and harsh shampoos are behind us, as we now have a variety of safe, effective products to control fleas. Keeping fleas off your pet not only keeps them more comfortable, but also prevents transmission of several diseases carried by these itchy and disgusting little parasites. Below is a summary of some of the products we carry and highly recommend at our hospital.

- **Revolution Plus** (Selamectin and Sarolaner) is a multi-use topical product that we carry for cats. It must be applied once per month, and controls a number of parasites. It kills fleas, prevents flea eggs from hatching, treats ear mites, controls certain intestinal worm infections, and prevents heartworm disease. We recommend Revolution+ for indoor AND outdoor cats because it also protects them against heartworm disease, and doesn't require administration of a pill.



The use of over the counter preventatives bought at pet stores and online can potentially be more harmful to your pet than helpful. We base our recommendations on the companies who make the products and the level of research that has been put into the product. Even recommended products that are bought from non-veterinary sources, which are unauthorized dealers, are not guaranteed to be effective due to inappropriate storage, handling, and counterfeit product flooding the “grey” market for these products. We **do not** recommend using over the counter flea and tick products. If you have noticed fleas or ‘flea dirt’ on your pet, let your veterinarian know so they can offer helpful tips on how to treat your pet and environment to get rid of the fleas.



Heartworm Disease & Prevention

Heartworms are a parasite of dogs and other canine species, such as foxes. Cats can also be affected, although they are more resistant to infection. Although it's rare, a few cases have also been reported in people.

Heartworms are transmitted by mosquitoes. Once limited to the southern regions of the United States, heartworms are now found in most areas of the United States, and are well-recognized in many other regions of the world.

Mosquitoes inject the parasite, *Dirofilaria immitis*, into the dog or cat when they feed. The larvae mature into thin, adult worms that are several inches long. Adult heartworms live in the heart and arteries, and lungs. By their physical presence, they cause harm in two ways: they block the normal forward flow of blood, causing an excessive workload on the heart, and they also damage the inner lining of the blood vessels, which gives rise to blood clots that cut off circulation to parts of the lungs. Adult heartworms reproduce and release the next generation of immature larval worms, called microfilaria, into the bloodstream. Mosquitoes feeding on an infected dog pick up microfilaria and transmit heartworms to yet more animals.

Heartworm disease in cats is very different from heartworm disease in dogs. Cats typically are infected with only a few worms, often only one or two. However one or two worms is a substantial worm burden for cats and can cause a significant reaction. Even immature worms cause real damage in the form of a condition known as heartworm associated respiratory disease (HARD). Moreover, the medication used to treat heartworm infections in dogs cannot be used in cats, so prevention is the only means of protecting cats from the effects of heartworm disease.

Vaccines cont. →

Symptoms that could indicate heartworm disease: coughing, vomiting, breathing difficulty, sudden death

Diagnosis

A simple blood test can determine whether heartworms are present in your cat or dog. Most veterinary clinics can run an Antigen test in the hospital to detect microfilaria in dogs; however, detection of heartworm is more difficult in cats and requires an Antibody test that is usually sent to an outside laboratory. Either way, results are typically available within 24 hours.

Prevention and Treatment:

Unfortunately, the treatment for adult heartworm infection in dogs is in VERY limited supply, expensive, and hard to get. There is no cure available for cats. For this reason, prevention is **KEY**. Monthly prevention, often in the easy-to-give form of chewable tablets, is recommended for all dogs and for cats in high-risk areas. A topical prevention, Revolution, is a preventative as well. Since these preventives can be missed or not absorbed due to vomiting, diarrhea, etc., annual testing is recommended for all dogs.



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Information About Spaying and Neutering Your Pet

Spaying and neutering are safe and effective procedures. These procedures not only help to reduce pet overpopulation, but a spayed/neutered pet is less likely to roam or run away to look for a mate, and the health benefits are significant. Approximately **6 million** animals are euthanized at shelters each year, due to the sheer fact that there are not enough willing adopters. Having your pet spayed or neutered ensures that you will not be adding to this tremendous burden.

***Neutering** is the general term used for the surgical removal of the reproductive organs (testicles) of the male dog or cat.

***Spaying** is the general term used for the surgical removal of the reproductive organs (ovaries, uterus, and fallopian tubes) of the female dog or cat.

Spaying or Neutering:

- Decreases the incidence of contracting contagious diseases
- If done prior to their first heat cycle nearly eliminates the risk of breast cancer and totally prevents uterine infections and uterine cancer in females.
- Prevents testicular cancer and enlargement of the prostate gland, and greatly reduces their risk for perianal tumors and hernias in males.

We recommend that your pet is spayed/neutered around 4-6 months of age, before the first heat cycle of the female cat or dog. Your animal will go home on the same day of the surgery and will require home care until the incision site is healed and any sutures are removed (usually 10-14 days after surgery).

For more information, please feel free to contact us about any questions or concerns you may have.



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What's the harm in a few extra pounds? [A ton.](#)

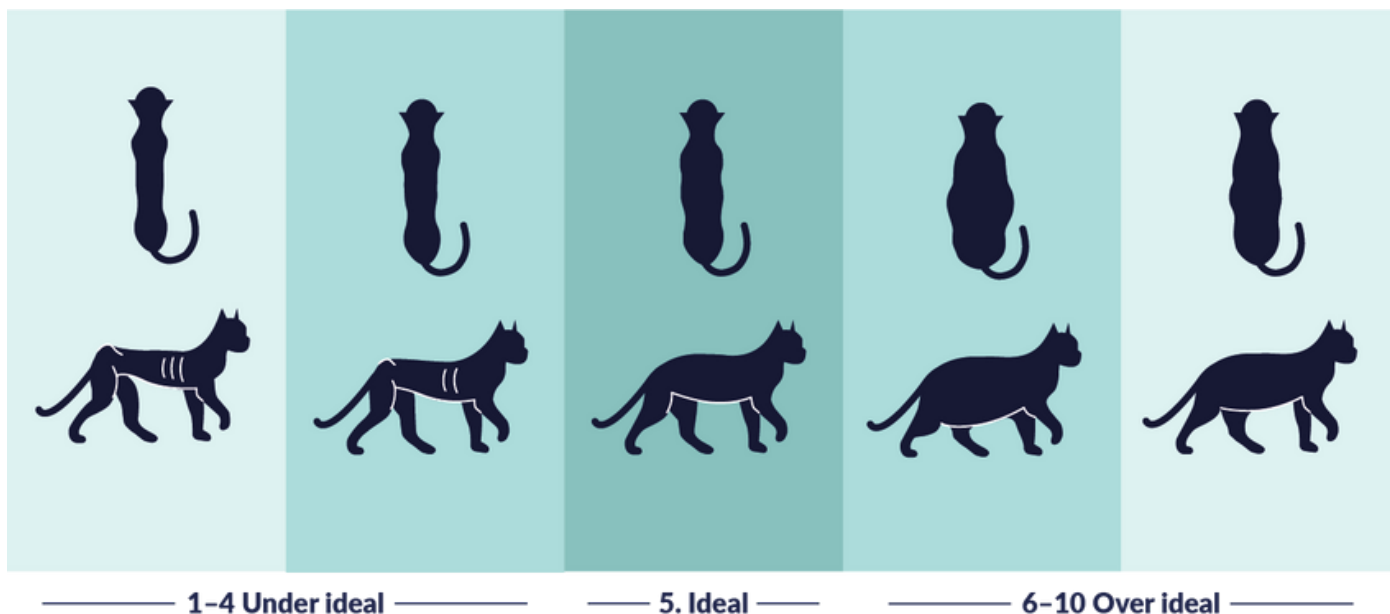
Excess weight on your pet can cause chronic health problems, including diabetes, arthritis, and kidney disease—and a 15% shorter life span! More than half of all dogs and cats in the United States are overweight or obese.

How does your dog measure up?

Regardless of your cats' size, body, and breed:

- Can you feel your pet's ribs without too much difficulty?
- Is there a slight but noticeable indented waistline just in front of your pet's hips when viewed from above?
- Do you see your pet's waist from the side?

Body Condition Scale (BCS):



Tips to Keep Your Cat in Shape:

1. **Pick up the pace.** Get your cat's heart rate elevated by taking advantage of cats' natural hunting instincts; most will happily chase feather toys or laser pointers.
2. **Move the food bowl.** Make your pet earn his or her kibble by walking upstairs or to the far end of the hall to eat or consider using a treat ball to dispense kibble for an additional challenge.
3. **Give healthy treats** like cooked plain chicken breast.
4. **Try several small meals** throughout the day instead of feeding the entire day's portion at once. This will help boost your pet's metabolism.
5. **Keep track** of how much you feed and how much your pet ate. If you have multiple pets, feed them separately and only when you are at home.
6. Most importantly, weigh your cat weekly after any changes to their plan to be sure they are accepting the plan and eventually monthly to see if the new plan is still working. The goal is to lose approximately 1% of body weight per week. NEVER starve a cat or suddenly change their diet. Cats can develop liver failure if there is a sudden/ drastic decrease in calories for an extended period.



Dental Health

After eating a meal, it only takes 6 hours for plaque to start developing and covering the tooth's surface. Plaque eventually turns to calculus, which is harder to remove and can cause bacterial infections in the mouth. This bacteria may spread through the bloodstream to the liver, kidneys, heart, and brain. Dental disease is seen in over 90% of the patients we see. Regular brushing/cleaning is the key to preventing periodontal disease, oral pain tooth loss, oral odors, and systemic disease. If you notice your pet has stinky breath, discolored or dirty teeth, or is having any trouble eating, a thorough oral exam should be done by your veterinarian.

We recommend brushing your pet's teeth daily. According to research, brushing your pet's teeth a minimum of 5 days per week is considered effective, but anything is better than nothing! If you are unable to brush your pet's teeth regularly, it is even more important that they have a thorough oral exam with a veterinarian minimally once a year.

There are several different kinds of tooth brushes and the one that is appropriate for your pet will depend on their comfort level with teeth brushing.

Getting them used to a brush or your finger in their mouth can be a challenge. Most pets are not used to us putting our fingers in their mouths. When we do they can be alarmed and may get irritated. The key is slow, continual, repetition to get them more comfortable with it. Make sure you only use a pet-specific tooth paste! There are several flavors to choose from to accommodate your preference and pet's taste buds!



We NEVER recommend anesthesia-free dental cleanings!! It can be very dangerous for your pet and cause more harm than good! It is not safe or possible to perform a complete dental cleaning, take important x- rays to properly evaluate tooth root health/ sub-gingival pockets/ bone density, or perform interventional treatments such as extractions and bonding. One of the most important areas in an animal's mouth to clean is the sub-gingival pockets (under the gum line of all teeth.). On an awake animal, this is not comfortable or possible to do a thorough job.

We take every safety precaution and require pre-anesthetic blood work to be done within 30 days of the scheduled anesthetic procedure. This helps us to be sure your pet is healthy enough to go under anesthesia and that all internal organ functions are normal.

If you would like more in-depth information, instructions, and/or a demonstration, please let any of the staff know!

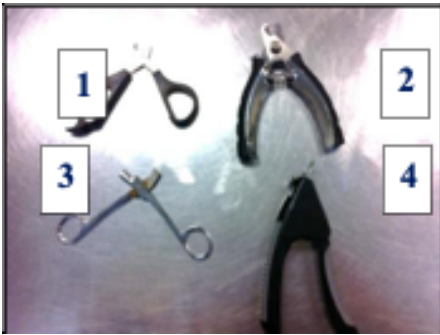
Trimming Your Dog's Nails

Why do nail trimming?

Nail trimming is an important grooming routine. Long nails can get caught on things in the environment and become at risk for infection by breaking or growing into the paw pads. Moreover, walking on overgrown nails is uncomfortable and can cause an unnatural gait, leading to skeletal damage.

Is there a difference between dog and cat nails?

Cat and dog nails are not very different. In cats, you need to press the paw pad to expose the nails. Also, cats typically have white nails where the quick is clearly pink, making nail trims slightly easier. Dogs do not have retractable nails and can have either white, black, or both nail colors.



Types of Nail Clippers:

- Plier-type: photo #1 and #2*

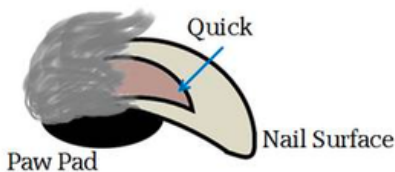
These types of clippers are generally recommended for better control during nail trimming but use what you feel most comfortable with!

- Scissor-type: photo #3
- Guillotine-type: photo #4

Getting Started:

1. Start touching your dog or cat's paws regularly so they become used to you doing so. Give lots of treats and praise when they are still for you.
2. Practice restraining, usually with one other person laying your animal on their side.
3. Go slow and be patient. It's a scary ordeal for most animals but can be made into positive experience. Getting used to the routine takes time.

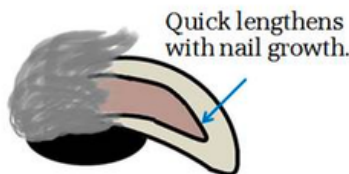
How to Cut:



The quick is the sensitive part inside the nail containing blood vessels and nerves. Cutting into the quick is very painful and will cause bleeding.



Cut the nail just in front of the quick. Trimming the nail tips often will cause the quick to recede over time.



As the nail grows longer, the quick lengthens. Take extra care not to cut long nails too short. Keep kwik stop on hand in case bleeding occurs.



Keep dog nails short. Establish a weekly schedule to inspect and trim dog nails and smooth away rough edges with a nail file.

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If you cut too short and the nail bleeds, IT'S OK

Have some styptic powder on hand to pack on the nail just in case.



Just apply some powder to the bleeding nail and apply gentle pressure for five seconds.

Re-apply as necessary until bleeding stops.

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Medicating Your Cat

If your pet is sick or has a chronic issue, your veterinarian may prescribe an oral medication. Successfully administering the medication is very important to ensure the recovery or treatment of your pet.

Some common reasons oral medications are prescribed:

- Infection (antibiotics)
- Injury/arthritis (pain control)
- Allergies (antihistamine)
- Medical conditions (hyperthyroidism)
- Heart conditions
- Monthly prevention



Discuss with your veterinarian what form of medication will be easiest for you to give. In many cases, there are alternatives if one is hard to administer. Oral medications can come in several forms, such as tablets or capsules, chewable tablets, and liquid suspensions.

Here are a few different methods you can try to medicate your pets. Use the method that is safest and easiest for both of you.

1. Try hiding the medicine in a treat such as Pill Pockets®, cheese, yogurt, or canned food. Sometimes having a “dummy” treat without medicine in it before and after tricks the pet. Watch your pet to be sure they have swallowed it! Some are very good at eating the treat and spitting out the medicine.
2. Directly open your cat’s mouth and place the pill or capsule in the back of the tongue. Close their mouth. Tilt their head back and gently rub their throat until they swallow. Having a water chaser in a syringe helps wash the medicine down.



3. Pill guns are also available in your local pet store. They allow owners to place the medications far back in the throat without worrying about biting.
 - Place the medication in the pill gun. Once ready, place the tip at the back of the mouth and depress the plunger to release the medication. Please be careful of your pet’s mouth. This is a sensitive area, and you don’t want to cause injury.
4. Oral suspensions or solutions are usually given in a syringe. After drawing up the indicated amount, place the tip of the syringe under the lip on the side of the mouth and squirt the contents in the cheek pouch.
 - If the medication is thick or if there is a large amount to administer, squirt little amounts to prevent possible aspiration.



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Understanding Your Cat's Blood Work

Blood tests help us determine your pet's health status and causes of illness accurately, safely, and quickly and lets us monitor the progress of medical treatments. Your veterinarian will review blood test results with you and point out any significant abnormal findings. If you have questions, don't hesitate to ask any staff member- we want you to understand our recommendations and be a partner in your pet's care.

Complete Blood Count (CBC)

The most common test, a CBC, gives information on hydration status, anemia, infection, the blood's clotting ability, and the immune system's ability to respond.

- **HCT (hematocrit)** measures the percentage of red blood cells to detect anemia and dehydration.
- **Hb and MCHC** (hemoglobin and mean corpuscular hemoglobin concentration) measure hemoglobin, the oxygen-carrying pigment of red blood cells (corpuscles).
- **WBC** (white blood cell) count classifies & measures the body's immune cells. Increases or decreases indicate certain diseases or infections.
- **EOS** (eosinophils) are a specific type of white blood cells that, if elevated, may indicate allergic or parasitic conditions.
- **PLT** (platelet count) measures cells that help stop bleeding by forming blood clots.
- **RETICS** (reticulocytes) are immature red blood cells. High or low levels help classify anemias.

Serum Chemistry Profile

- **ALB (albumin)** is a serum protein that helps evaluate hydration, hemorrhage, and intestinal, liver, and kidney health.
- **ALKP or ALP (alkaline phosphatase)** elevations may indicate liver damage, Cushing's disease, or active bone growth in young pets.
- **ALT (alanine aminotransferase)** is a sensitive indicator of active liver damage but doesn't indicate the cause.
- **AMYL (amylase)** elevations show pancreatitis or kidney disease.
- **AST (aspartate aminotransferase)** increases may indicate liver, heart, or skeletal muscle damage.
- **BUN (blood urea nitrogen)** reflects kidney function. Increased blood levels are referred to as azotemia and can be caused by kidney, liver, and heart disease, urethral obstruction, shock, and dehydration.
- **Ca (calcium)** deviations can indicate a variety of diseases. Tumors, hyperparathyroidism, kidney disease, and low albumin are just a few of the conditions that alter serum calcium.
- **CHOL (cholesterol)** levels are used to supplement diagnosis of hypothyroidism, liver disease, Cushing's disease, and diabetes mellitus.
- **Cl (chloride)** is an electrolyte often lost with vomiting and Addison's disease. Elevations often indicate dehydration.
- **CREA (creatinine)** reflects kidney function. This test helps distinguish between kidney and non-kidney causes of elevated BUN.
- **GGT (gamma-glutamyl transpeptidase)** is an enzyme that, when elevated, indicates liver disease or corticosteroid excess.
- **GLOB (globulin)** is a blood protein that often increases with chronic inflammation and certain disease states.
- **GLU (glucose)** is blood sugar. Elevated levels may indicate diabetes mellitus or stress.
- **K (potassium)** is an electrolyte lost with vomiting, diarrhea, or excessive urination. Increased levels may indicate kidney failure, Addison's disease, dehydration, and urethral obstruction. High levels can lead to cardiac arrest and death.
- **LIP (lipase)** is an enzyme that may indicate pancreatitis when elevated.
- **Na (sodium)** is an electrolyte lost with vomiting, diarrhea, and kidney or Addison's disease.
- **PHOS (phosphorous)** elevations are often associated with kidney disease, hyperthyroidism, and bleeding disorders.
- **TBIL (total bilirubin)** elevations may indicate liver or hemolytic disease. This test helps identify bile duct problems and certain types of anemia.
- **TP (total protein)** indicates hydration status and provides information about the liver, kidneys, and infectious diseases.
- **T4 (thyroxine)** is a thyroid hormone. Decreased levels often signal hypothyroidism in dogs, while high levels indicate hyperthyroidism in cats.

Your Cat's Check-Up Preparation Checklist

Routine wellness exams are vital for giving your kitty the long, happy, and healthy life he or she deserves.

August 22nd is National Bring Your Cat to the Vet Day – a perfect opportunity to schedule your cat's routine check-up. Many cats dislike going to the veterinarian. Reduce the stress associated with the veterinary visit for both your cat and yourself, and ensure that you are well prepared, by following the checklist below.

Make Your Cat's Carrier a "Home Away From Home"

Leave the carrier in a room where your cat spends time so they can become comfortable and familiar with it before the visit to the veterinarian. This will take some time, so be patient. It will make getting your cat into the carrier before the appointment easier.

Place Familiar Soft Bedding or Towels in the Carrier

Cats are most comfortable with the familiar, and need time to adjust to the unfamiliar. Bedding or clothing with your scent can make them feel more secure in the carrier. It can also be helpful to cover the carrier with a towel.

Consider using a synthetic feline facial pheromone

Use a feline facial pheromone product and spray/wipe the carrier and towels/bedding 30 minutes before getting your cat in the carrier and leaving for the appointment to help keep your cat calm.

Jot down questions and a list of any changes you've noticed since your last visit

Has anything changed with your cat's eating patterns? Weight? Activity level? Behavioral changes can often be an indicator of a problem, and knowing about them can help your veterinarian fully assess your cat's health. Make a list beforehand so you don't forget to share during the visit. If this is your cat's first visit at the clinic, bring previous medical records.

Make an appointment at your veterinary practice or consider a local Cat Friendly Practice®

Veterinary clinics designated as a Cat Friendly Practice® (CFP) have taken extra steps to assure they understand a cat's unique needs. These clinics have implemented feline-friendly standards, such as cat-only waiting areas and exam rooms and other ways to make vet visits less stressful for cats and their caregivers. To find a CFP near you, visit: www.catvets.com/find-vet-and-practices. Also, if you have a nervous kitty, ask the clinic for tips on reducing stress prior to the visit.

The 10 Most-Searched Questions About Cats

We know you've "Googled" when it comes to your pet. In fact, Google released the 10 most-searched questions pet owners asked about their cats last year. So, instead of leaving the answers to a Google algorithm, here are some veterinary experts to answer your queries so you can get to the bottom of questions like, "Why do cats like boxes?"

Google is a great tool, but if you ever have a question regarding your pet, never hesitate to contact us. We're here to answer the serious to merely curious questions—we're happy to do it! In the meantime, see how John Ciribassi, DVM, DACVB, Elizabeth Colleran, DVM, DAVBP (feline practice) and Ernie Ward, DVM, answer your most pressing questions about Fluffy.

Why do cats purr?

>Purring occurs as a result of vibration of vocal cords due to neurological stimulation from brain activity. The purpose is uncertain but it does seem to be associated with pleasurable activity. However, cats are also known to purr when ill or injured, which lead some to believe that the frequency of the vibration can be associated with greater healing. Purring also is reinforcing for people and therefore can increase the amount of petting. —*Dr. Ciribassi*

>Cats generally purr when in contact with someone; a favored owner stroking, nursing a kitten, or greeting a familiar partner-cat. Positive experiences also elicit purring, rolling or rubbing, being in a warm familiar environment or about to fall peacefully asleep. —*Dr. Colleran*

How long do cats live?

>Average life span in cats is around 15 years. This can vary widely depending on the health of the cat, nutrition and preventive care. We have had cats in our practice live to 22 years. —*Dr. Ciribassi*

>Outdoor cats often live shorter lives than indoor. Being overweight or obese shortens life by 1 to 2.5 years on average. Regular health care, physical examinations, parasite prevention and vaccinations provide protection against threats to life and health. —*Dr. Colleran*

>House cats can expect to live 15 to 20 years, with some reaching 25. Advances in preventing kittenhood diseases such as distemper and feline leukemia, heartworms and other parasites, are key in extending longevity, along with better diets. Indoor cats face fewer threats from predators and trauma, but indoor cats also are facing an obesity epidemic leading to skyrocketing rates of diabetes. —*Dr. Ward*

Why do cats knead?

>Kneading behavior in cats is a reflection of instinctual behavior from kittenhood. Kittens knead the mammary glands of the queen to stimulate milk production. I see this in older kittens and cats when they are content and are attempting to solicit attention. —*Dr. Ciribassi*

>Cats knead for two reasons. While settling down to rest, some cats will knead soft places as if to prepare it to lie comfortably. This may be from a time when vegetation would be knocked down to make a safe sleeping place. Kittens knead the queen to help with milk release when nursing. —*Dr. Colleran*

>One theory is kneading cats are marking territory with special scent glands located in the paws. Another is that kneading is a lingering behavior from suckling. Finally, kneading may be a form of stretching or it just plain feels good. —*Dr. Ward*

Why do cats sleep so much?

>Often they appear to be asleep but are instantly awakened; this type of sleep varies with another deeper one. They tend to sleep in short increments of 10 to 30 minutes, so they are probably not sleeping as much as we think. —*Dr. Colleran*

>Cats sleep an average of 16 to 18 hours a day. One reason is energy conservation. Cats use a special form of sugar to fuel their short bursts of activity. It takes a while to restore this energy so cats are careful when and why they rush into action. Cats are most active at dawn and dusk, so to balance their instinct and our human schedules, they end up taking lots of "cat naps." —*Dr. Ward*

Why do cats have whiskers?

>They are very sensitive sense organs and tell a cat a lot about his position in space and what is going on around him. They appear to be particularly useful in low light and darkness, times when other organs cannot collect as much information.—*Dr. Colleran*

>Whiskers are highly sensitive and help inform the cat about surrounding objects, air movements and more. Whiskers may also be used to gauge whether a cat can slip into a tight space. You can also tell if a cat is nervous or scared if the whiskers are pointing forward at a potential threat. Whatever you do, don't trim or pluck whiskers because they serve an important information source for cats. —*Dr. Ward*

What does catnip do to cats?

>Catnip is an herb. About half of cats are genetically likely to respond to active oil in catnip. It is not certain what part of the brain is stimulated by this ingredient but it is not harmful and can be used to help increase use of items like scratching posts. Many treats have this to help stimulate play. —*Dr. Ciribassi*

>The aroma of catnip in cats is thought to be quite pleasurable. It has no other significance and seems to be a genetic accident. It is an autosomal dominant trait, so not all cats are sensitive. —*Dr. Colleran*

Why do cats hate water?

>There are many types and breeds of cats that are comfortable around or in water. Many cats will fish for food. The Turkish Van and Maine Coon seem to like water—even being immersed in it. For those that don't like it, it may be related to the way their fur is constructed. It isn't made for drenching and can become quite heavy when it is. —*Dr. Colleran*

Why do cats eat grass?

>One theory is that it is an evolutionary adaption to intestinal parasites and may serve as a purging mechanism. The taste of sweet moist grass may help to explain it as well as there are some observers who think it is more common with new spring grass. —*Dr. Colleran*

>Most veterinarians agree grass eating seems to be a way for cats to relieve gastrointestinal (GI) symptoms, parasites or possibly infections. Another theory is that cats are craving micronutrients found in leafy plants. Finally, cats may eat grass simply because they like it. It's important to note some cats suffering from inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) may be misdiagnosed as "grass eaters." —*Dr. Ward*

Why do cats like boxes?

>Cats like to hide and yet be able to see what is going on around them. The opening gives them the view and the sides of the box can protect them from being seen by predators. Remember cats are today the same cats they were 10,000 years ago when they hunted and avoided predators to survive. —*Dr. Colleran*

What is a group of cats called?

>It is called a clowder or a glaring. —*Dr. Ciribassi*

>A group of related kittens is a litter. A few litters are a kindle. —*Dr. Colleran*

>Clowder originates in Middle English from the term "clotter," which meant, "to huddle together." It also has roots in "clutter" which is what my clowder creates in my house. —*Dr. Ward*

Dr. John Ciribassi, DVM, DACVB

Founded the animal behavior specialty practice Chicagoland Veterinary Behavior Consultants located in Buffalo Grove, Bensenville and Chicago, Illinois. Ciribassi is a board certified veterinary behaviorist and has served as president of the Chicago Veterinary Medical Association as well as president of the American Veterinary Society of Animal Behavior (AVSAB).

Dr. Elizabeth Colleran, DVM, DABVP (feline practice)

A veterinarian at Chico Hospital for Cats in Chico, California. Dr. Colleran graduated from Tufts University School of Veterinary Medicine in 1990 and earned a Masters of Science in Animals and Public Policy at Tufts in 1996. In 2011, she was the president of the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP). She is a Diplomate of the American Board of Veterinary Practitioners, Specialty in Feline Practice. Dr. Colleran speaks at major conferences around the country.

Dr. Ernie Ward, DVM

A veterinarian, author, speaker and media personality, has dedicated his life and career to promoting a healthier lifestyle for people and pets. Known as "America's Pet Advocate," Ward founded the Association for Pet Obesity Prevention (APOP) in 2005. He lives with his wife and daughters in coastal North Carolina where he began his career with his clinic, Seaside Animal Care, in 1993. He's also a certified personal trainer and USA Triathlon certified coach.

It's NATURAL for Cats to Scratch!

Cats need to scratch and mark their claws to:

- Stretch their body.
- Remove the worn layer of their nail.
- Maintain necessary claw motion used in hunting and climbing.
- Leave visible markers to establish their territory, especially if there is a concern with other cats in the household or outdoors.

Best practices:

- Trim your cat's nails regularly.
- Provide a variety of scratchers (i.e. tall, horizontal, or angled; sisal rope, carpet, cardboard, or wood).
- Place scratchers near your cat's sleeping area; in front of their preferred, yet undesirable, scratching object (e.g. corner of couch).
- Ensure ample cat environmental enrichment and resources (i.e. litter boxes, sleeping areas, food & water bowls, and perches all in multiple locations).
- Do not use your fingers or toes, or the wiggling of hands or feet as a toy for play. This form of play can lead to biting or scratching, and as a cat grows they will accept it as an appropriate form of play. Instead, play can be stimulated with the use of interactive toys that mimic prey, such as a toy mouse that is pulled across a floor or feathers on a wand that is waved through the air.



Important to keep in mind:

- If your cat continues to scratch undesired objects, it may be due to stress, anxiety, attention seeking, or feeling unsafe in their environment.
- Look for any problems between other cats or household members, which might make your cat feel anxious, threatened, or territorial. Signs of conflict are subtle. If your cats never groom one another, sleep or play together, inter-cat conflict is likely.
- Reward your cat's positive scratching immediately.
- Please speak with a veterinarian or behaviorist for individualized advice.

For more detailed information, visit:
[***catfriendly.com/scratching***](http://catfriendly.com/scratching)