

Feline Health Information

A Summary

- ✓ Annual health assessment and vaccination against cat flu, enteritis and leukemia virus. Leukaemia virus vaccination is optional for cats that never go outside.
- ✓ Feed either Hills Science Diet, Eukanuba, Proplan, Royal Canin or James Wellbeloved. Avoid supermarket foods like Iams, Go Cat, Felix and Whiskas. Feed real meat as a treat.
- ✓ Deworm with Milbemax or Profender. Most cats need worming every 3 months especially hunters. Indoor only cats can be dewormed yearly or every other year.
- ✓ Flea treatment for 12 months of the year with Frontline Combo every 6 weeks. Minimum treatment period should extend from Spring through to Winter until well after a few good frosts.
- ✓ Neuter from about 6 months of age.
- ✓ Microchip your cat to help find it when lost (an added bonus is our microchips have a built in thermometer so no more struggling with rectal thermometers).
- ✓ Insure your cat against accident and illness. Choose wisely, the more expensive policies are often better in the long run.
- ✓ You can get most of the above at a 10% discount if you join Our Pet Health Club.

Health Assessment and Vaccination

We routinely vaccinate against:

Feline Leukaemia Virus

This is the most common fatal viral disease of cats. It attacks the immune system and can also cause tumours to develop. It is spread by close contact with infected cats, such as bite wounds/fighting or sharing food bowls.

Feline Infectious Enteritis

This is a rare fatal viral disease in cats which caused bloody diarrhoea and vomiting. Thanks to many years of vaccination this illness is uncommon but has not been eradicated.

Feline Herpes Virus

Part of the "**cat flu**" syndrome, herpes virus causes severe cat flu symptoms, especially in kittens in which it can be fatal. Those that survive become lifelong carriers of the disease and will shed virus when stressed, this has ensured that Herpes Virus is common in the environment.

Feline Calici Virus

This virus also forms a part of the "**cat flu**" syndrome but tends to cause less severe illness. After infection up to 50% will become carriers of the disease and will shed virus continually for some time after recovery.

In certain circumstances we may advise vaccination against other diseases such as Chlamydia or Bordatella.

When can vaccination start?

The earliest age this can be started is at **9 weeks** of age. 2 injections given 15-21 days apart are needed to give protection to your cat against these diseases. The first injection "primes" the immune system and the second stimulates the production of antibodies that give the immunity or resistance to the viruses.

To work well the vaccine must be given to healthy animals, for this reason the veterinary surgeon or nurse will always give your pet a health assessment before giving a vaccination.

When can they go out to play?

Approximately 7 - 10 days after the second injection your kitten is protected against these diseases. Socialisation is important so kittens can be exposed to the outside after their first injection but not to unvaccinated cats so they are best allowed out only under supervision. There is a small risk they might be exposed to disease.

When do they need a Booster Vaccination?

To keep the immunity against these diseases up they will need a repeat vaccination in 12 months, although we do not give the enteritis vaccination every year as it lasts for 3 years.

Nutrition

Probably the most important part of caring for your cat will be making sure it eats healthy food. Nutrition has an important influence on long-term health and helps prevent disease.

Choosing a food

The pet food manufacturers want you to feed their specific brand to your cat. They all market their brands in the same way claiming that they are healthy and wholesome on the bag but beware there are a wide range of foods available. A good analogy is the difference between healthy human food and junk food. The majority of pet food is junk food. Because owners select pet food based on whether their pets want to eat it, the food manufacturers sell more junk food than healthy food.

Most of the major manufacturers make a healthy version of food and we can advise you on what different healthy diets are available. We recommend and sell Hills Science Diet because they only make healthy food. Other good brands include Proplan, Eukanuba, Royal Canin and James Wellbeloved. Avoid Whiskas, Felix, Go Cat and cheap foods.

- Avoid supermarkets when choosing a food, as most of the brands available are junk food versions of better diets. Buy your food from a good pet shop or from the surgery.
- Generally the more expensive a diet the better the ingredients that went into making the food, and the more vitamins and anti-oxidants are present.
- Healthy food is tasty but junk food is even tastier, given the choice your pet will choose junk food. It's up to you to say no!
- Beware the pet food manufacturers marketing. They know what to say to get you to buy their food.
- We would also advise that you avoid soft meaty foods or tinned foods in general as they contribute to dental disease.

We recommend that kittens be fed a diet designed for growth. These generally contain a slightly higher protein and calorie content than adult foods. Adult cats should be fed on an adult maintenance diet and cats over 7 years of age should be fed a senior diet. Senior diets generally contain less protein, less calories and fewer salts than adult cat food to enable your cat to cope better with the demands of a more senior lifestyle. For further information on feeding your cat throughout life please arrange to see a nurse at the surgery.

Controlling worms in cats

Worms have an amazing and crafty life cycle to ensure that they survive generations and worm their way into the lives of all animals!

Roundworms

Cats can pick these up from the environment. The mother cat also passes on the roundworms to her kittens via her milk. This is why regular worming of pregnant cats and of kittens is so important. Heavy worm burdens can cause weight loss, vomiting and diarrhoea. Adult worms look like bits of string or spaghetti but the eggs and larvae are invisible to the naked eye.

Tapeworms

There are two main ways your cat can pick up tapeworms. One is by grooming itself and swallowing a flea which contains the larval stage of the common tapeworm, which once swallowed develops into an adult tapeworm inside your cat. The other is by hunting and eating prey such as mice, which carry the larvae of a different tapeworm. The effect on your cat can be similar to a burden of roundworms. The adults attach themselves to inside of the guts, but your cat may pass tapeworm segments that look like grains of rice that actually move!

How to prevent them

For cats and kittens over 6 weeks of age that weigh over 0.5kg the easiest of the effective wormers is a tablet called milbemax as it kills ALL types of round and tapeworms. Kittens should be wormed monthly from 6 weeks of age to 6 months of age. After this they are

wormed the same as adult cats which should be every 3 months. However if your cat is a hunter you may need to worm more frequently than this, please discuss your cat's needs with one of our staff. For a wormer to be effective an adequate dose must be given which is why we always check the weight of your pet first. For small kittens under 6 weeks of age or under 0.5kg in weight we advise using panacur, which will treat roundworms and SOME types of tapeworms.

And if I cannot give my cat tablets?

Then our nurses are happy to weigh your cat and give the correct dose of wormer for you, by appointment in one of our nurse's clinics. Profender is a spot-on preparation for cats that is effective against both roundworms and tapeworms.

Fleas and how to control them

Fleas will find and feed on even the best looked after pet. They start breeding in spring and continue until the frosts arrive although indoors they can be a year round problem. Pets will initially pick up adult fleas outside the home, whilst walking or in the garden, and bring them indoors. Here they lay hundreds of eggs on your pet, which fall off into the carpets and furniture, soon contaminating the household environment.

Fleas are difficult to detect. You will not necessarily see fleas on your pet or in the bedding. Scratching does not occur in all individuals so is not a reliable way to tell if your pets are affected. However you should suspect their presence if your pet is scratching more than usual, losing fur or getting bald patches over the back and rump. You may also see flea droppings if you part your pet's coat and look at the base of the hairs. The droppings are tiny black specs, which will stain white paper reddish brown when moistened.

Life Cycle

The adult flea jumps onto your pet and stays on if it can. Should they fall off they have to get back on soon or they die. The female lays 50 eggs a day and these fall from the coat into the home environment. The eggs hatch into tiny pre-adult fleas (larvae) and then develop into adults who spin a cocoon and wait for the right moment to get onto you or your pet. A single flea will within 2 months will be responsible for 20 000 adults and 160 000 pre-adult fleas. For every flea you see there are at least 9 eggs or pre-adults in the environment.

Health Problems

The female has to have a blood meal to be able to make her eggs and these bites can cause discomfort and irritation to your pet or yourself. Some animals (and people) become allergic to fleabites and just one fleabite can then cause severe irritation sometimes for weeks. Once an allergy has developed it cannot be cured. Flea bite allergy is the most common allergy diagnosed in pets. Fleas also transmit tapeworms to cats and dogs.

How to solve the problem

Treat the animal to clear fleas from the coat and prevent re-infestation from the environment. We recommend Frontline Combo spot-on or spray.

Treat the environment by regular vacuuming and using household insecticidal sprays (we recommend Indorex) throughout the house to control the pre-adults and eggs. It is especially important to vacuum dark places like under the settees since pre-adults do not like light. Any of your pets bedding will benefit from being washed on a hot wash. There are a great number of flea treatments available (an indication of the size of the problem.) Not all flea products are equally effective. Therefore, please consult us about the best and most effective ones for your particular needs.

Neutering your cat

This is better known as spaying in the girls or castration in the boys.

CASTRATION

The removal of the testicles in males.

It reduces his urge to roam to find females and to enlarge his territory. This will make it less likely for him to be hit by a car or to be wounded in fights with other cats over territory disputes!

Entire males have a very much higher risk of catching Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) and Feline Leukaemia Virus. In fact entire male cats will almost certainly eventually die from aids or leukaemia.

Mature male cats also have strong smelling urine and will happily use it to mark their territory, which will include your home!

For these reasons all male cats should be castrated at approximately 6 months of age. This is done as a day patient under general anaesthetic. He will be admitted during morning surgery by a nurse, taken to the ward and given his pre-med, have his operation late morning to early afternoon, then spend some quiet time whilst back in his kennel. You will be given an appointment during evening surgery to collect him, and we will make an appointment in one of our nurse clinics which will be free of charge to check him post operatively.

SPAYING

The removal of the uterus (womb) and ovaries in the female cat.

Not only does it prevent your cat becoming pregnant, but it also stops her coming into season or "calling" which she will otherwise do on a regular basis throughout most of the year. It is known as "calling" because some females yowl and roll about suggestively in order to attract the attention of Tom cats, which can sound very distressing! Almost ALL mating's lead to pregnancy.

Again spaying is usually done at about 6 months of age and the operation entails a day visit to the surgery. Unlike the boys, the girls do have stitches which are usually removed 10 days after the operation, they too will be checked at about 3 days post op, and again there are no further charges for these services.