



CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR NEW KITTEN!

New Pet Owner's Guide for Kitten

If you are a new pet owner, there are many questions you may have. Hopefully this guide will help. If you have any additional questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

New Kitten Wellness Examination

Our veterinarians at Eagle Animal Hospital would like to develop a specific and appropriate vaccination protocol for your new kitten. With many vaccinations available our staff will be able to tailor a protocol to keep your pet healthy without over-vaccinating your new family member.

Core Vaccinations

1. **Panleukopenia** (Given between the ages of 6-16 weeks in intervals of 3 weeks. Kittens should be given a 1 year booster, then every 1 to 3 years.)
2. **Herpesvirus-1/Calicivirus** (Given between the ages of 6-16 weeks in intervals of 3 weeks. Kittens should be given a 1 year booster, then every 1 to 3 years.)
3. **Rabies** (One dose administered as early as 3 months of age. Kittens should be given a 1 year booster, then every 1 to 3 years.)

Optional Vaccinations

1. Leukemia virus (FeLV)
2. Immunodeficiency virus (FIV)
3. Chlamydophilosis
4. Bordetellosis
5. Feline Infectious Peritonitis (FIP)
6. Giardia

Intestinal parasites

Intestinal parasites are common in kittens. Most kittens acquire roundworms from their mother when they are born. The Center for Disease Control recommends 2-4 fecal examinations during the first year, accompanied by appropriate de-worming. People can contract roundworm infections through direct contact with infected feces. This can happen through contaminated soil, sand, and plant life.

Parasite Control (Heartworm Preventative & Flea/Tick Control)

Heartworm disease is a very serious condition that can cause lung damage and heart failure. We have known for many years that dogs are very susceptible to heartworm infections, but recently we have also realized that cats can be affected as well. While they are not the normal host for the parasite, and therefore not at the same risk as a dog, they can develop clinical signs and even die suddenly from the disease.



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Heartworm disease is transmitted by mosquitoes. The immature worms develop into adults whilst traveling in the bloodstream to the heart and lungs. Signs of disease can range from nothing to coughing and difficulty breathing.

Because infection can be very difficult to diagnose and treatment is only aimed at calming the clinical signs, prevention is key. Fortunately, heartworm preventatives are readily available and inexpensive in both oral and topical forms. They should be given each month, at the same time every month, year-round.

Not only do they prevent against heartworm disease, most heartworm preventatives also protect against major intestinal parasites. Therefore, you can think of it as an extremely safe and effective comprehensive deworming every month.

Flea and tick control is extremely important in the Midwest. Monthly administration is recommended. These products are extremely safe and can prevent significant dermatologic diseases.

Eagle Animal Hospital recommends the following products:

- Revolution® (prevents heartworms, intestinal parasites, fleas, and ear mites)
- Advantage® (prevents fleas)
- Frontline® Plus (prevents fleas and ticks)
- Interceptor® (prevents heartworms and intestinal parasites)

Training

Socialization begins as early as 3 weeks and continues through to about 9 weeks of age. This is the term used to define the time that the kitten will learn appropriate behaviors and about its physical environment. This is much sooner than a dog, so it is important to start acclimating them to nail trims, tooth brushing, grooming, and handling at an early age.

Typically, housetraining a kitten requires minimal effort. Initially, the kitten should be confined to a small area with an appropriate sized litterbox and only one type of loose substrate available. Kittens, like dogs, will need to eliminate after they eat, sleep, and play. At those times, place the kitten in its litterbox and praise him/her for elimination. A kitten does not need to be confined continuously, but should be supervised to prevent accidents and frequently brought back to the appropriate elimination location.

It is important to maintain good litterbox hygiene. Ideally, the litter box should be scooped daily and changed weekly. It is recommended that there be one litter box for each cat plus one more, strategically located in areas of the house that the cat frequently visits.

Spaying/Neutering

We recommend that all cats be spayed or neutered at around 5-6 months of age.

Spaying a female cat prior to her first heat cycle decreases her risk of developing breast cancer by over 90%. It also eliminates the possibility that she will have an unwanted litter of kittens or a uterine infection. It is not true that a female cat will be a better pet if you let her have a litter.



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Neutering a male cat can help to decrease some of the less desirable behaviors (marking, wandering, +/- aggression). Intact males are also at an increased risk for some other health concerns, including testicular tumors.

Declawing

Clawing and scratching are normal behaviors for a cat and they will find a place to do this activity. For them, it is a way to mark their territory and leave a “message”.

If you do not want to declaw your cat there are many products available to try and prevent unwanted scratching behavior. The best situation is to provide appropriate places for them to scratch. This means scratching posts located in prominent locations in the house. Alternatively, there are temporary claw covers available to protect your drapes and furniture.

However, you may ultimately decide that your kitten needs to be declawed. This procedure is best done when they are young, the earliest being 5 months of age. For male cats, this can be done at the same time as the neuter, but for female cats, it is recommended that it be done 4 weeks apart from the spay. We do not advocate removing all four sets of claws unless there are special circumstances.

Microchipping

A microchip is a small implant just under the skin between the shoulders. It contains a unique identification number that can be recognized by a special scanner available at every animal clinic and shelter. This number is placed in a registry maintained by the manufacturer of the chip and is linked to your name and address.

It is a great way to feel secure that your pet can be identified if they accidentally escape your care and are found without identification tags. This procedure can be done at any visit but is most frequently done at the time of their spay/neuter surgery.