

## Your New Kitten

Your new kitten requires special care. Whether this is your first cat, an additional pet, or if you haven't had a pet for a long time, there are special things that need to be done for ~~this new kitten~~. Having a kitten is not as simple as it used to be. This partly because we now know more about the health and preventative care of cats. And while preventative care requires some time and investment on your part, it is much more cost effective and less emotionally draining than treating a cat with leukemia or one of the other preventable diseases.

### Vaccinations

Your kitten will need to be vaccinated against feline *rhinotracheitis*, *calicivirus*, *panleukopenia*, *feline leukemia* and *rabies*. Your cat can also be vaccinated against *feline infectious peritonitis*. All the vaccines except *rabies* are given in a series of three each given 3-4 weeks apart starting at 7-8 weeks of age. The vaccines are started at an early age because although your kitten gets some immunity from his mother, this starts to decline at about 7-8 weeks of age. The immunity he receives from his mother against *rabies* is longer-lived, declining when he is about 4-5 months of age. This is why *rabies* vaccines are not given until the kitten is at least 4 months old. All the vaccines need to be boosted yearly so that your cat's immunity does not decline to the point where he would become susceptible to these diseases. There may be other vaccines that your new kitten may also need; check with our veterinarian.

### Feline Leukemia Prevention

Feline Leukemia can be prevented by vaccinating your kitten. It is also a good idea to test your kitten prior to vaccinating to make sure he is not a carrier of the disease. Many stray or pound kittens have been exposed to this disease and while they may not show any signs of the disease at present, they may quickly develop signs over the next few months. Vaccinating a kitten who has the virus will not harm the cat, nor will it cause the disease to develop any faster.

### Fecal Exam and Wormings

Strategic deworming is a practice recommended by the American Association of Veterinary Parasitologists (AAVP) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). We recommend deworming a minimum of three times at the same time the kitten's vaccinations are given. Then yearly dewormings are advised.

We recommend checking for internal parasites in your kitten by examining a fecal sample as well. We will investigate the sample under a microscope looking for eggs. You will occasionally see worms in the stool only if the worm burden is extremely large. If your kitten has worms present, we will prescribe the exact treatment for the exact parasite. No dewormer kills all types of parasites, there is no "one dewormer gets all" medication.

### Feeding

Feed your kitten a good quality *kitten* food. At about 1 year of age he can be switched to a good quality maintenance diet. Avoid giving him people food or table scraps; these foods are usually too high in fat and too low in nutrition benefit for your cat. Cats should be fed diets low in *magnesium*. We can recommend several brands for you. Contrary to popular opinion, eating mice and birds is not harmful to your cat, as long as they have not consumed any type of poison such as Di-Con. Your cat can however, pick up tapeworms periodically from rodents if these are eaten regularly.