

Care for Your Cat

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VACCINATIONS: Many serious diseases can be prevented by vaccination. Vaccination is inexpensive protection against costly medical treatment or the premature loss of your cat. Please discuss the following vaccines with one of our Veterinarians:

FVRCP VACCINE - The so-called "distemper/upper respiratory" vaccine, protects against 4 different infectious diseases: panleukopenia (feline distemper), feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, and chlamydia. Panleukopenia causes severe vomiting and diarrhea, and is usually fatal. The other diseases cause severe, debilitating respiratory symptoms. We recommend vaccinating kittens every 3-4 weeks between the ages of 6 and 14 weeks of age; older cats should receive two initial vaccinations 3-4 weeks apart. Remember: after initial immunity is established, regular FVRCP boosters are required to maintain immunity. It is recommended for all cats, even those that live only indoors.

RABIES VACCINE - Required by law for all cats 4 months of age or older, even if housed strictly indoors. It cannot be given before 3 months of age. It must be administered under supervision of a licensed Veterinarian. The first vaccine is good for one year; subsequent boosters are then given at three-year intervals. Owners must be able to produce a valid certificate of rabies vaccination. Rabies is a fatal disease, which both people and animals may contract through skin wounds.

FELINE LEUKEMIA VACCINE - Feline Leukemia is a contagious virus spread by direct contact between cats, and is transmitted by body fluids, usually through fighting and mating. It can also be transmitted from a mother to her kittens, either in the womb or through nursing. It is one of the leading killers of cats today. It depresses a cat's immune system and can lead to a variety of secondary infections and cancers, including leukemia. It is incurable, and usually fatal. If your cat goes outside, or will be exposed to other cats that do, you are strongly urged to vaccinate your cat against this disease. Two vaccinations 3-4 weeks apart are administered to cats over 8 weeks of age to establish immunity; annual boosters are then required to maintain immunity. We also recommend that all cats be feline leukemia tested prior to vaccination, since the vaccine will be of no benefit to cats already infected with the virus.

FIP, or "feline infectious peritonitis", is a poorly-understood viral disease of cats which causes a variety of symptoms and is usually fatal. Cats at most risk are outdoor cats and those that live in multiple cat households. There is currently no reliable test for this disease. Diagnosis is made by evaluating symptoms and ruling out other causes. A vaccine exists, but has fallen out of favor with most veterinarians and is, thus, no longer offered at our hospital.

FIV, or "feline immunodeficiency virus", has been labeled as the "cat AIDS virus" because of its similarities to human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). In cats, the virus is thought to be spread by blood to blood contact, primarily through bite wounds. It is not transmissible to people or other animal species. Its incidence is highest amongst outdoor cats (especially male) that engage in fighting. Like AIDS, it depresses a cat's immune system, making the cat susceptible to many secondary infections.

There is a reliable blood test for FIV that can be done in combination with the feline leukemia test. Keeping your cat indoors is its best protection against FIV and many other diseases.

ANNUAL EXAMINATIONS: Annual physical examinations are essential if our Veterinarians are to have the opportunity to discover serious illnesses at an early stage, when steps may be taken to lessen the impact of the disease and prolong your cat's life. Many diseases of the heart and other internal organs are clinically silent until they have reached an advanced stage, at which time treatment options may be limited. In other words, your cat could have a serious ailment and appear completely normal to you, until it is too late. Annual examinations also afford you the opportunity to get helpful information from our Veterinarians on questions of behavior, proper diet, parasite management, flea control, disease prevention, allergies, and other topics of interest to you and your pet.

INTESTINAL PARASITES: A variety of parasites can inhabit the digestive tracts of cats living in Ohio, leading to symptoms ranging from vomiting and diarrhea to anemia, weight loss, coughing, and "scooting". Parasites commonly found include roundworms, hookworms, tapeworms, coccidia, and giardia. Our Veterinarians can detect the presence of these parasites through examination of a fecal sample, which you are encouraged to bring with you to your cat's annual physical examination, or whenever your cat is experiencing the symptoms listed above. Once detected, these parasites can be readily treated with medications we will provide.

FLEA CONTROL: In addition to making your cat itchy and miserable, flea bites often cause allergic reactions in the skin, leading to skin infections and other lesions requiring medical care. If swallowed, fleas can also transmit tapeworms to your cat. Now, with the introduction of newer, monthly preventatives available only through Veterinarians, such as Advantage, flea control has become much more efficient and less labor-intensive. There is no reason any longer to put up with fleas! We will be happy to recommend products and strategies to help rid your cat and your house of fleas.

DENTISTRY: Dental health care is one of the most neglected of pet health needs. Periodontal disease affects most cats, particularly as they get older, and can lead to infection in the liver, kidneys, and heart. Bad breath, depression, drooling, and acute pain while eating are signs of periodontal disease. Regular dental examinations, professional scaling, and proper dental home care are necessary for good pet health.

SPAY/NEUTER: This surgery is recommended for all cats not intended for breeding, and is required for all cats adopted from the Humane Society, the SPCA, and other local shelters. This surgery can significantly reduce the incidence of breast tumors, infections of the uterus (pyometra), testicular disease, prostate disease, and certain undesirable behaviors, such as spraying. Of equal or greater significance is the role this surgery plays in reducing the number of unwanted pets in our community, lessening the need for the Humane Society, the SPCA, and other organizations to put thousands of these homeless animals to sleep each year. Do your part - spay or neuter your cat! We advise doing this surgery between 5 and 6 months of age, but it can be safely performed in older cats as well. We will honor the vouchers issued by local shelters as payment towards the cost of this surgery.