

KITTEN CARE SHEET

This leaflet is designed to give you information about routine care for your new cat/kitten for now and the future. Please don't hesitate to ask any of our staff for further information and help.

VACCINATIONS

Your kitten needs to be regularly vaccinated throughout life in order to protect him/her from the main life-threatening diseases that he/she may catch: cat flu, enteritis and feline leukaemia.

The vaccination course begins when the kitten is aged from eight weeks upwards and consists of two injections that are given 3-5 weeks apart with the final vaccine at 12 weeks or older. Your kitten will then be free to go outside two weeks after the 2nd injection.

It is necessary to give your cat annual booster vaccinations for the rest of his/her life in order to maintain immunity from the above diseases.

If you are considering taking your kitten abroad in the future, it will be necessary to give him/her a rabies vaccination as part of the Pet Passport Scheme. Please speak to the vet for further details.

DIET

There are many types of diet available and it can be difficult knowing which is best. Supermarket foods and tinned foods contain a lot of salt to encourage the cat to eat it. However this is not good for the kidneys and kidney failure is very common in elderly cats. We recommend a good quality dry food that is low in salt and provides excellent and complete nutrition for your growing kitten. The foods we recommend have a 'closed formula' which means that the ingredient list must remain the same and cannot be changed to include cheaper ingredients just because they become available. The 3 brands that are 'super premium' and meet our standards are:

Hills Vet Essentials
Purina Proplan
Royal Canin

Once the cat is 6 months old, you should change to an adult formulation of the same brand and at 7 years, swap to the senior version. We really like the new 'tooth-cleaning' formulation of the Hills Vet Essentials range and the lower calorie levels in the adult food are especially formulated for neutered cats.

WORMS

All animals develop infestations of worms. The most common type found in kittens is roundworms. They look like pieces of curly spaghetti and can sometimes be seen when the kitten passes faeces. If left untreated, your kitten will become emaciated and weak with a pot belly.

It is important to worm kittens from 2 weeks of age and to ensure that the mother was also wormed regularly throughout the pregnancy. The mother passes worm infestations on to her kittens whilst carrying them in her womb or through her milk.

There are a number of products available to treat roundworms in kittens but we use Milbemax which also treats tapeworm.

- Milbemax is our wormer of choice. It treats round and tapeworms in a tasty tablet. This should be given **monthly until 6 months of age and then every 3 months or monthly if catching mice or birds**. The tasty formulation has revolutionised worming, making it possible to get a tablet down even the most difficult cat. We recommend hiding the tablet without crushing, in a blob of something tasty like salmon flavoured sandwich paste. Most cats will scoff this down without a second thought.

We will advise you of the most appropriate treatment to suit your kitten's needs. The most important point to remember is that regular worm treatment is essential to maintain good health for your kitten throughout his/her life.

FLEAS

Fleas are the other most common parasite found on cats. They cause discomfort to the animal when they bite, and they carry the tapeworm larvae in their body, thus causing worm infestations if swallowed by the cat. Newly hatched fleas also do not tend to be fussy and will bite humans as well!

A common misconception amongst pet owners is that flea infestations are clearly visible or that the kitten only has one or two fleas because they have only seen a couple at a time! The reality is that 5% of the flea infestation is on your kitten and that 95% of the problem is actually in the environment where the various stages of the flea are developing! It is only when they have matured that they will jump on your pet to feed. If the environment remains untreated, an infestation can continue for 3 years, even without an animal present! Fleas can also be quite sneaky, hiding deep in the fur. Often the only evidence of a flea infestation seen is the 'flea dirt' they leave behind.

It is important not only to treat your kitten if fleas are present but to also prevent flea infestations in the first place by treating your kitten regularly with effective flea treatments. A lot of products sold over the counter at pet outlets and supermarkets do not provide a persistent, satisfactory level of protection.

There are lots of products available but in general, we recommend the use of Frontline Combo or Frontline spray.

- **Frontline Combo** is available as a spot-on application. It kills 98% of the flea infestation within 24 hours. It will also prevent further infestations when used regularly (every 4 weeks). It contains an ingredient to prevent fleas laying fertile eggs in the house before they are killed.
- **Frontline spray** is also very effective and safe. The spray can be used on animals as young as 2 days old and on both dogs and cats, making it cost-effective in a multi-pet household. No other flea medication is licensed for use on animals of this age. It is applied every 3 months to dogs and every 2 months to cats.

Initially after a flea infestation, Frontline Combo needs to be used in conjunction with a household insecticide spray (Vetkem Acclaim) to treat the developing stages of the flea already in your home. This is also available from the practice and one can of spray will treat a 3-4 bedroom house. Once this is done, regular use of Frontline Combo will guarantee protection for your house and animal.

We will advise you of the most appropriate treatment to suit your kitten's individual needs. Please remember that these products are only available from vets and are prescription medicines. This means that your kitten needs to be seen annually in order for us to re-prescribe them to you. This will be done at annual vaccination or free of charge with a nurse if we have not seen your pet previously.

NEUTERING

If you are not planning to breed from your cat it is advisable to have him/her neutered. This procedure can be carried out from 6 months of age in both male and female cats. The operation involves your cat being admitted for the day. Female cats usually have dissolvable stitches either on the flank or the midline. Male cats do not have stitches.

Contrary to popular belief, neutering your cat will not change its personality! However, due to a reduction in the hormone testosterone after castration, it is common that male cats will be less territorial and neutering will prevent or reduce anti-social behaviour such as spraying in the house or fighting with other cats. Neutering also helps prevent them catching life-threatening viruses which are passed on by fighting and mating. Neutered cats are also less likely to stray, looking for a mate. Straying animals can often end up involved in road traffic accidents or becoming lost.

Cats can be susceptible to gaining weight after being neutered. Reducing daily food intake and swapping to a food formulated for neutered cats will

prevent weight gain. Please ask us if you have any further questions regarding the neutering of your cat.

MICROCHIPPING

Microchipping is now the most popular and reliable method of permanently identifying your pet. The microchip itself is implanted with an injection and contains a barcode. This barcode is your cat's individual identity number. When the microchip is implanted, you will be asked to fill in a form with your personal details and these details will be sent to the national database alongside your cat's identity number. Once the microchip is in place, a scanning device can be passed over your cat, picking up the barcode on the microchip.

Veterinary surgeries are not the only places that keep scanners. Police stations and rescue centres all have access to scanners and this is what makes microchips so effective. When a cat goes missing and is then found, the barcode on the microchip is reported to a national database and is matched to your personal details. This makes reuniting you with your cat a much easier task!

Kittens can be microchipped at the time of vaccination and onwards. We offer a reduced rate for microchipping at the time of neutering. Please ask at reception for more details.

INSURANCE

We strongly recommend pet insurance. It enables us to provide the best level of care for your kitten. Although pet insurance does not cover preventative healthcare treatments such as vaccinations and neutering, it does cover illnesses or accidents that may affect your cat throughout his/her life. We can offer very advanced surgery and medicine either here or at a specialist practice, should it be required. Chemotherapy, cataract removal, pinning of fractures, spinal surgery are all possible, but can be extremely expensive, as can be lifetime conditions such as skin allergy, diabetes and hyperthyroidism. Having a good insurance policy means that you do not have to consider cost when deciding on the best treatment options for a pet.

There are now many insurance policies on offer. However, please remember that the cheapest policy does not usually mean the best policy. Therefore it is wise to 'shop around' but to look at policies carefully to make sure you get the most satisfactory level of cover. We recommend Pet Plan policies as they offer the best cover- a minimum of £4000 per year for every year of your pet's life. Other policies usually only cover each condition for a year (12 month cover) or sometimes up to a limited amount of money (maximum benefit cover), which is rarely enough for the lifetime of the animal.

We offer a 4 week insurance policy for animals less than 12 months, free of charge with Pet Plan. There is no money or credit card details required and if you do not choose to continue the policy, you can just say no. However, the

policy gives you up to £4000 instant cover for illness or injury (excluding standard excess) and allows Pet Plan to give you a quote for insurance premiums for your animal. If you keep the policy going, anything for which you have made a claim for remain covered.

Please ask us for more advice. Leaflets are also available in the waiting room.

FINALLY....

We at The Oaks hope that you have found this leaflet useful. We are here to help you give your kitten the best start in life and maintain health and wellbeing throughout their life. So, if you have any more questions or queries, do not hesitate to ask one of our members of staff who will be happy to help!