

Welcome to

Millis Animal Hospital!



At Millis Animal Hospital...

Our hospital team values our clients and the pets they share with us. We are committed to providing compassionate care through client education and exceptional service. Our experienced team understands the special role pets play in families and is here to strengthen and enrich that relationship. We provide the highest quality medical and surgical services in a clean and modern environment, with a focus on education and the well-being of our patients.

Traveling with your pet

Traveling with pets can be traumatic, especially if preparations are not made beforehand. Here are a few suggestions for a safe and comfortable journey...

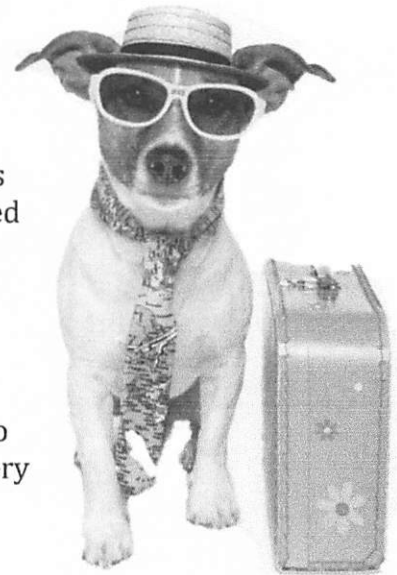
If you are flying with your pet... Contact us and the airline ahead of time. The airlines have special rules and regulations for pets and you will need health papers filled out ahead of time. If you are traveling or moving overseas, contact us at least 6 months ahead. The paperwork can get complicated.

If you are crossing state lines... Whether you are traveling by air or car, you will need a health certificate from us filled out within 10 days of your trip. Health certificates are required by law to help stop the spread of rabies and other diseases from state to state. Different states have different rules about the frequency of rabies vaccine administration, so your pet may need a booster shot before you leave. You should also carry a copy of your pet's rabies certificate with you. Without these papers, if you are stopped by police during your trip, you can be fined, and your animal quarantined for 10-14 days at your expense.

Be sure your pet is wearing a collar with ID tags while traveling in case he or she gets lost. An extra tag with the name and phone number of a friend or relative is also a good idea - remember, you won't be home to take the call if your pet is found again. Consider having a microchip injected for permanent identification.

Always leash your pet when they are not in the car. Do not let your dog become a pest or a hazard at gas stations or rest stops. Unless you are on private property and have permission to let your dog run loose, leash them at all times; at motels and campgrounds as well.

A crate is the best investment you can make for safe traveling. Ask us how to accustom your pet to the crate ahead of time if your pet hasn't used one before. Also, be sure your pet's crate is big enough for them to stand up, turn around and lay stretched out comfortably. Keeping your dog or cat confined to a tiny cage for hours on end will cause muscle soreness and potential anxiety. Cats need enough room for a litter pan and water bowl, as well as space to lay comfortably. Bed the cage with blankets or towels so your pet isn't laying on bare plastic. Lastly, your pet will need to get out and stretch his legs occasionally - every 3-4 hours for dog and every 6-8 for cats.



Never leave your pet unattended in the car for long. Heat and cold can kill an animal left alone. Don't park in direct sunlight. If you are traveling in the summer and your car is not air conditioned, think twice before taking your pet along. Brachycephalic breeds such as Pekingese, Pugs, Boston Terriers, Persian cats, etc. are especially prone to heat stroke and suffocation while traveling. Health problems or fear of strangers and unfamiliar things may also be a reason to leave your pet at home.

It's best to feed your pet lightly, or not at all, before traveling. Feed your pet once you arrive at your destination or stop for the night. It's better to eat lightly for a day or two than to spend the trip carsick.

You know your kitten is bugged, *right?*

Most kittens have parasites, inside and out.

Everyone groups all of the intestinal parasites under the term “worms” and worms are certainly a big part of the problem. There are other parasites too that are not technically “worms.” The most important thing for pet owners to know about parasites is you usually cannot see them with the naked eye and they can cause big trouble before you even realize they are there. Parasites have evolved to be everywhere, and most cats have worms at some point in their lives, usually as kittens.

Won't I be able to tell if my kitten has worms?

Intestinal worms, like roundworms, can cause signs such as weight loss, an unkempt hair coat and a potbellied appearance but can be present even if your cat seems unaffected. It is a common misconception that a person can see worms in the stool if they look. In fact, your veterinarian has special testing protocols to find the worms. Occasionally, pet owners will see certain types of worms, but many of the worms only “appear” in the stool after you administer a de-wormer.

Worms and parasites contaminate the area where your pet hangs out and serve as a source of re-infection for your pets and other animals. Worms have evolved to be very effective at infecting animals and it requires an active effort on the

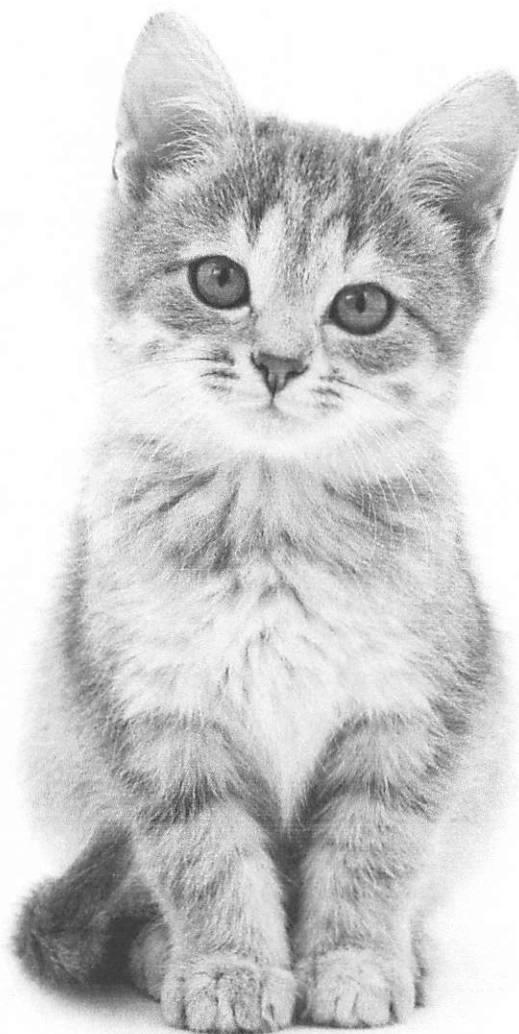
part of you and your veterinary team to head off these intestinal invaders.

Can't I just pick up a dewormer at the pet store?

There are certainly “over the counter” deworming options, but it is wiser to let your veterinary team find out for sure which type of parasites you need to treat. Only prescription medications can kill certain types of worms, and if there are other parasites that are not technically worms (like coccidia or *Toxoplasma* species), a completely different type of medication may be required. Only your veterinary team can find out exactly which parasites infest your individual kitten and target them specifically. No one wants their kitten to die from a treatable problem or to get medication that is inappropriate or unneeded, and certainly no one wants humans in the home to be affected.

What about fleas?

Fleas can make pets miserable. Flea saliva is an extremely irritating substance and flea bites cause profound pruritus (itching) for pets and people too. Fleas are another



thing that you will not see until the infestation is truly severe. Fleas love to get indoors where they can live year-round. Their goal is to have a blood meal so that they can lay eggs and make baby fleas. You will only see fleas on your kitten for a small part of their life cycle. That means that for every flea you see with your eyes, there are countless more in the environment. If you see a flea, alert your veterinary team.

Your veterinarian is well-versed in kitten infections and infestations and can recommend safe and effective products to help her not be “bugged”!

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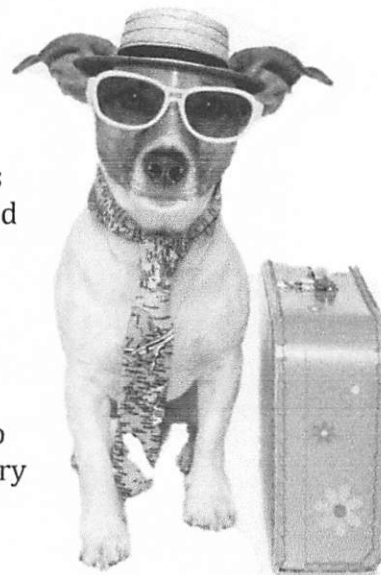
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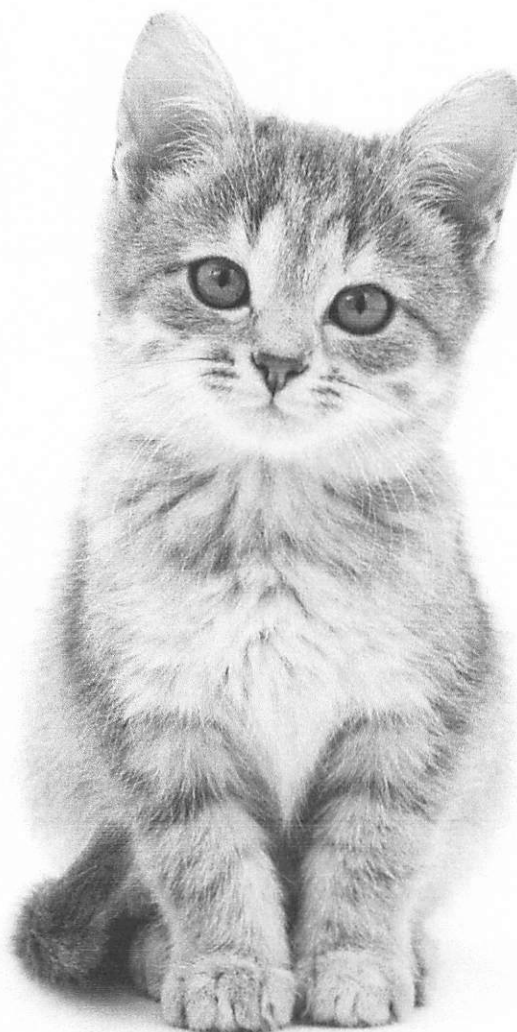
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5 secrets to a well-adjusted new kitten

Socializing your sleek new bundle of joy is something you can do with your veterinarian's help. Start here.

Did you know that kittens learn and develop a big part of their adult personality by 16 weeks of age? It's true, and if you want a happy cat that takes life in a joyous stride, the clock is ticking. The positive (or negative) associations that young cats develop during this critical stage of brain development can last a lifetime ... for better or worse. So let's make it better!

Note: Don't force things! Make sure these exposures are done in a way that's comfortable for the kitten. Don't keep exposing a kitten to a new experience if the cat is scared. Talk to your veterinarian for guidance.

1. Handle your kitten—literally

Make a point to touch your kitten all over. Don't ever be forceful or push to the point of struggle. Just touch and hold gently and reward her acceptance with a special treat or gentle pet (kittens love to be stroked on both sides of their faces—maybe that's all the reward you'll need). Remember, over time, you'll need to be able to trim toe nails, clean ears and brush teeth. If your new kitten actually *enjoys* these rituals, life is better for you both.

2. Socialize with your kitten

Let your kitten meet people of all shapes, sizes and mannerisms to learn there's nothing to fear from people of all kinds. Introduce children, men and women, and even people with hats or costumes—Halloween comes around once a year. Don't forget the treats to make "scary" fun! Warn everyone to go slowly and speak softly, because kittens can be cautious by nature.

3. Keep the peace (of mind)

Let's face it, your cat is going to be sick or hurt at some point in his life, maybe starting with a spay or neuter surgery. You can make this better by training early not to fear the cat carrier. Buy one that you like too, because you need to keep it where you both can see it and think of it as an everyday thing. Leave it in the cat's favorite area with the door open, and hide treats inside or even feed

meals in there. Anything you can do to create a positive association with the carrier is a step in the right direction.

The best carriers are those with rigid sides and that open on the top as well as the front. That way, your kitten can feel safe in a hospital exam room while your veterinarian does a physical examination right inside the carrier. Your veterinary team will love you, and your kitten (and eventually grownup cat) won't be as freaked out when she needs to ride in her carrier for any reason.



These cats can totally room free in their own cat car. If they're in yours, however, put them in a cat carrier for their safety and yours.

4. Adventure with your kitten

You and your cat will experience all life has to offer together, but the experiences won't be as fun if your cat is afraid or difficult to handle. Take your kitten wherever you can for exposure to new places. Visit your veterinarian on a day just for a visit—and some friendly treats. And don't forget to make her carrier into a cat nirvana, because that's the way you can keep travel with her the safest.

Science shows that it's easier for brains to remember bad experiences than good ones, so make sure your foundation for your kitten's brain is filled with terrific associations. You can avoid big problems in the future and, let's face it, handling and spending time with your kitten is a ton of fun!

VACCINES save kittens' LIVES

Doctors have a way to protect pets from diseases: vaccines. Here's why our hospital recommends them.

Back to basics: What's a vaccine?

The history starts with an epidemic of smallpox, which killed millions of people. In 1796, a physician named Edward Jenner noticed that the milk maids, who were routinely exposed to cowpox, did not get sick with smallpox. He wondered whether their exposure to cowpox protected them—and the idea of vaccination was born. A vaccine exposes the im-

mune system to inactive or incomplete disease-causing agents to train the immune system to quickly and effectively respond when exposed to the real thing.

If we expose cats to vaccines, if and when their immune systems face the real disease, they can fight it more easily. Think of vaccination like a training gym where athletes prepare their bodies and minds for actual competition.

cause we don't want to gamble with protection, veterinarians and other medical professionals believe it's far better to vaccinate too often than not enough.

While kittens receive some immune protection from their mother after they're born, that doesn't last for a cat's entire kittenhood. Eventually, kittens need to develop their own protection, and that's where vaccines come in. Since maternal immunity can interfere with the effectiveness of vaccines, we repeat them to make sure they're present when the kitten's own immune system takes over. This timeline varies between individual cats, so we follow guidelines to protect as many kittens as possible.

Which vaccines does my kitten need?

When a disease is widespread, dangerous—or both—researchers develop a vaccine against it. Vaccination choices are based on an individual kitten's lifestyle and risk factors. Your veterinary team can tell you which vaccines are appropriate and how they can be given.

Why does my kitten need to repeat vaccines ("boosters")?

We know that an immune system "remembers" diseases from vaccines, but we don't know how long the memory is for each individual animal. Be-

Are vaccines safe?

There have been cases of cats developing cancer in a spot where they've received a vaccination. The risk is small, however—especially for kittens—and it's better to vaccinate too often than not enough. Vaccination has saved innumerable lives, both human and animal. There are also isolated cases of allergic reactions, but these are rarely life-threatening when treated appropriately. It is important, however, that kittens not be randomly vaccinated outside of published recommendations. Vaccines are not one-size-fits-all and should be tailored to the individual kitten.



Neutering in Cats

What is meant by castration or neutering?

Neutering and castration are the common terms used to describe the surgical procedure known scientifically as orchidectomy or orchiectomy. In this procedure, both testicles are removed in order to sterilize a male cat.

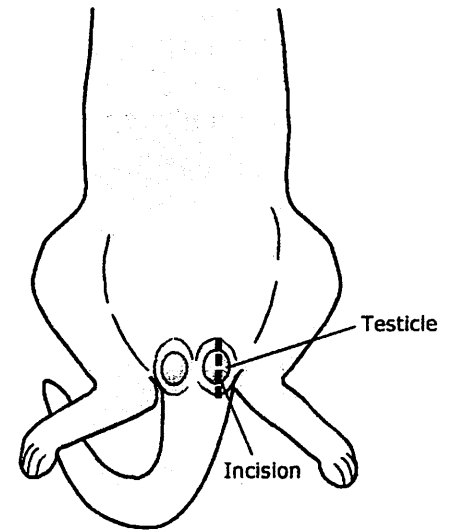
Why should I have my cat neutered?

Once a male cat reaches puberty, he will develop several behavioral changes that will make him a less desirable pet. He will become territorial and start to mark areas, even inside the house, by spraying urine. This urine has a particularly offensive odor that is difficult to remove. As the tomcat reaches sexual maturity, he will start to enlarge his territory, straying every farther from the house, particularly at night. By increasing the size of his territory, he increases the likelihood that he will encounter other cats and get into fights for territorial dominance. The longer a tomcat sprays and fights, the less likely neutering will stop these behaviors.

Fight wounds can result in severe infections and abscesses. Diseases such as FIV and FeLV, which cause immunosuppression and AIDS-like syndromes, are spread through cat bites. These incurable diseases tend to be more common in non-neutered male cats. Last, but not least, humane societies and animal shelters are overrun with unwanted kittens and cats, and neutering decreases the number of needless deaths.

When should I have my cat neutered?

In most cases, it is recommended to neuter your cat before the onset of puberty. Puberty normally begins between six and ten months of age. Many veterinarians recommend castration at around give to seven months of age. Please contact us for further details regarding their specific sterilization recommendations.



What does the operation involve?

Your cat will undergo a general anesthetic. You will need to withhold food prior to the procedure; your pet should have free access to water during most of the pre-operative fasting period. Your veterinarian will advise you how long to withhold food and water before surgery. In male cats, both of the testicles are removed through small incisions in the scrotum.

What surgical complications could arise?

In general, complications are rare during a castration surgery, however, as with all surgical procedures, there is always a small risk. Potential complications may include:

❖ *Anesthetic complications*

Any cat can have an unexpected adverse reaction following the administration of any drug or anesthetic. Such cases are impossible to predict, but fortunately are extremely rare.

Another potential danger associated with anesthesia arises if the cat is not properly fasted prior to anesthesia. Anesthetized patients lose the normal reflex ability to swallow; during swallowing, the

epiglottis, a cartilage flap at the entrance to the windpipe, closes and prevents food or water from entering the lungs. If there is food in the stomach, the cat could vomit while under anesthesia or in the early post-anesthetic period, allowing the food to enter the lungs and cause aspiration pneumonia, a potentially life-threatening condition.

Illness will increase the risks associated with anesthesia. Pre-operative blood work is a useful screening test that may detect pre-existing problems that could interfere with the pet's ability to handle anesthetic drugs.

To minimize the risks to your cat, it is essential that all pre-operative instructions are strictly followed and that you report any signs of illness to us prior to an operation.

❖ **Post-operative infection**

This may occur internally or around the incision wound. In most cases, the infection can be controlled with antibiotics.

What adverse effects might castration have on my cat?

In the vast majority of cats, no adverse effects are noted following neutering. In certain cats, notably the Siamese breed, the hair that grows back over an operation site may be noticeably darker, believed to be due to a difference in the skin temperature. This darker patch usually grows out with the following molt as the hair is naturally replaced.



Feline Vaccines

FVRCP:

(Feline viral rhinotracheitis, calicivirus, panleukopenia)

❖ **Feline Herpesvirus and Feline Calicivirus:**

Feline herpesvirus (the cause of feline viral rhinotracheitis) and feline calicivirus are estimated to be responsible for 80-90 percent of infectious feline upper respiratory tract diseases. Although usually not serious in adult cats, disease caused by these viruses may be severe and sometimes fatal in kittens. Sneezing, runny eyes, runny nose, and fever are the most typical signs of infection. In addition to upper respiratory tract disease, lameness and chronic oral inflammatory disease have been linked to calicivirus infection. Both viruses are shed in secretions from the nose, eyes, and mouth of infected cats. Cats become infected by direct exposure to infected individuals, either from sneezed droplets, or from contaminated objects such as food and water dishes.

Most cats are exposed to either or both of these viruses at some time during their lives, usually during kittenhood. Once infected, many cats never completely rid themselves of viruses. These carrier cats shed viruses either continuously or intermittently for long periods of time-perhaps for life-and serve as a major source of infection to other cats. Protection induced by the currently available vaccines minimizes the severity of disease, but does not prevent disease in all cats. Nonetheless, vaccination is recommended for all cats.



❖ **Panleukopenia**

Feline panleukopenia is a highly contagious and deadly viral disease. Signs include extreme listlessness and loss of appetite. Fever, vomiting, and diarrhea are frequently seen, but some cats die suddenly with few clinical signs. A high percentage of cats with panleukopenia-especially kittens- die from the infection. Feline panleukopenia virus is shed in the feces of an infected cat and can survive extremes of temperature and humidity for months to years. The virus is resistant to most available disinfectants. Until recent years, panleukopenia was the most serious infectious disease of cats, killing thousands every year. Thanks to the highly effective vaccines currently available, panleukopenia is now considered an uncommon disease. Immunity induced by panleukopenia vaccines is excellent, and most vaccinated cats are completely protected from infection and disease. Vaccination is recommended for all cats.

Rabies

Rabies is an increasing threat to cats. At present, the number of reported feline rabies cases in the United States far exceeds that of dogs and all other domestic animals. Rabies is routinely fatal and is a major public health concern. Because of the potential for human exposure, rabies vaccination is recommended for all cats and is required by law in many parts of the country.

Feline Leukemia Virus

FeLV is the leading viral killer of cats. The virus is spread in the saliva and nasal secretions of infected cats; infection is transmitted through prolonged contact with infected cats, bite wounds, and from an infected mother cat to her kittens. Disease caused by FeLV is very serious, and it is estimated that fewer than 20 percent of infected cats will survive more than three years after being infected. Anemia (a deficiency of oxygen-carrying red blood cells), cancer, and secondary infections resulting from immune deficiency are the most common consequences of infection.

Outdoor cats, indoor/outdoor cats, and cats exposed to such individuals are at greatest risk of exposure to FeLV. Cats living in households with FeLV-infected cats or with cats of unknown infection status are also at risk. Kittens younger than 4 months of age appear to be much more susceptible to infection than are adult cats. Indoor-only adult cats with little chance of exposure to potentially infected cats are not likely to be exposed or infected. Vaccination against FeLV is recommended for cats at risk of exposure, especially those younger than four months of age. Vaccination is not recommended for cats with minimal to no risk of exposure, especially those older than four months of age. Because FeLV vaccines do not induce protection in all cats, avoiding exposure to infected cats remains the single best way to prevent your cat from becoming infected.



Which vaccines should my cat receive?

The decision depends on the following factors:

- ❖ Your cat's risk of exposure to the disease-causing organism, in part dependent on the health of other cats to which yours is exposed, and the environment in which your cat lives.
- ❖ The consequences of infection
- ❖ The age and health of your cat
- ❖ The protective ability of the vaccine
- ❖ The frequency or severity of reactions associated with vaccination
- ❖ The risk an infected cat poses to human health (e.g., rabies virus)
- ❖ Vaccine reactions your cat may have experienced in the past

This brochure was prepared by the American Association of Feline Practitioners and the Cornell Feline Health Center, Cornell University, College of Veterinary Medicine, Ithaca, New York 14853-6401. The center is committed to improving the health of cats by developing methods to prevent or cure feline diseases and by providing continuing education to veterinarians and cat owners. Much of that work is made possible by the financial support of friends. 2002 by Cornell University. All rights reserved. Cornell University is an equal opportunity, affirmative action educator and employer.



Human foods that can poison pets

- Alcohol
- Avocado
- Broccoli
- Chocolate
- Cigarettes, tobacco, cigars
- Coffee grounds, beans, tea (CAFFEINE)
- Cooked bones
- Corn cobs
- Fatty foods
- Garlic
- Grapes
- Hops
- Macadamia nuts



- Molds/spoiled foods
- Nutmeg
- Onions
- Pear and apple core pips, kernels of plums, peaches, apricots
- Potato peel and green potatoes
- Raisins
- Raw salmon
- Rhubarb leaves
- Salt
- Tea leaves
- Tomato leaves and stems
- Xylitol

Hazardous items for pets around the house

- Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medications (ibuprofen, aspirin, etc.)
- Acetaminophen
- Cold and flu medications
- Antidepressants
- Vitamins
- Home insect products
- Rat and mouse bait
- Bleach
- Diet pills
- Disinfectants
- Fabric softener
- Lead
- Lighter fluid
- Mothballs
- Anti-cancer medications
- Solvents (paint thinner)
- Drain cleaners
- Liquid potpourri
- Slug and snail bait
- Oven cleaner sprays
- Lime/scale remover
- Fly bait
- Detergents
- Batteries
- Twist ties
- Buttons
- Algae
- Antifreeze/coolant
- Fire pit/grill
- Fences/gates/lattice with openings
- De-icing salts
- Compost
- Gasoline
- Oil
- Pesticides
- Cocoa bean shell mulch fertilizer
- Swimming pools/hot tubs



20 questions to help you choose a pet insurance provider



1. Is the company licensed in your state? Which of their policies are available in your state?
2. Does the company have a good reputation? What do the Better Business Bureau or other independent organizations have to say about it? How long has the company been around?
3. Are the policies and information provided reasonably easy to understand? Are the people you talk to knowledgeable and helpful?
4. Does the company offer customer service during reasonable hours?
5. Can you see any veterinarian you want?
6. Have premiums increased over the past few years? If so, by how much?
7. What happens to coverage and premiums as your pet ages?
8. Are there any reasons you wouldn't be able to renew your policy?
9. What type of coverage and coinsurance does the policy require?
10. Is there a "unusual and customary charges" clause? How are those limits determined?
11. What kinds of care are excluded or limited? Are congenital or hereditary diseases covered? What about cancer? Is dental care covered?
12. Are conditions diagnosed within one year excluded as pre-existing conditions the next?
13. Are benefits available for wellness or preventative care for your pet?
14. Can you choose a deductible? Can you change the deductible from year to year? Is the deductible annual or is it applied to each medical incident?
15. Are the waiting periods before coverage begins reasonable?
16. Is there a maximum age for enrollment?
17. Are there limits per incident, per year, per lifetime, or per body system? What are those limits?
18. Is a physical examination required for enrollment or renewal?
19. How quickly are claims processed and paid?
20. Are there any billing fees or discounts?



Practice Preventative care for your pet and your wallet

- **Annual Exams are important.**

Some vaccinations are administered every three years now, however, the annual exam is where you catch illness, disease, parasites, etc. before they become serious and expensive problems.

- **Practice good dental care.**

Pets get cavities and periodontal disease just as humans do. Regular brushing and dental care are about more than just healthy teeth. Rotting teeth and gums are breeding grounds for harmful bacteria that can end up in the bloodstream and shorten a pet's life by damaging the heart, liver and kidneys.

- **Nutrition and Exercise can help your pet live a longer and more comfortable life.**

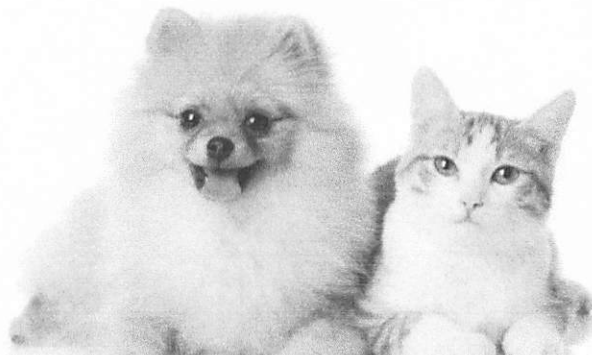
Keep your pet on a healthy, balanced pet food, and weight should be monitored regularly. A regular exercise routine helps both the physical and mental health of your pet. Your pet will be much less likely to be obese and have behavioral issues.

- **Pet proof your house.**

Please refer to the enclosed inserts for lists of foods, medications and household items that can be extremely harmful to your pet.

- **Practice good parasite control.**

It is important to check a fecal sample at each annual exam. Intestinal parasites can be harmful to your pet and your family. Checking blood work each year is important to monitor your pet for heartworm disease.



Poisonous Plants

- Alfalfa
- Aloe
- Amaryllis
- Andromeda japonica
- Angel's trumpet
- Arrowgrass
- Asian lily
- Asparagus fern
- Australian nut
- Autumn crocus
- Azalea
- Bella donna
- Bird of paradise
- Bittersweet
- Black locust
- Bleeding heart
- Branching ivy
- Buckeye
- Buddhist pine
- Buttercup
- Caladium
- Calla lily
- Castor bean
- Ceriman
- Cherry tree
- Cherry
- Chinaberry
- Chrysanthemum
- Clematis
- Clover
- Cordatum
- Correa
- Corn plant
- Creeping Charlie
- Crown of thorns
- Cycads
- Cyclamen
- Daffodil
- Day lily
- Delphinium
- Devils ivy
- Dieffenbachia
- Dumbcane
- Easter lily
- Elderberry
- Elephant ears
- Emerald fern
- English ivy
- Eucalyptus
- Fern
- Florida bean
- Foxglove
- Glacier ivy
- Gladiolas
- Gold dust dracena
- Golden pothos
- Heavenly bamboo
- Hemlock
- Hemp
- Holly
- Honeysuckle
- Hurricane plant
- Hydrangea
- Iris
- Ivy
- Jack in the pulpit
- Jasmine
- Jerusalem cherry
- Jimsonweed
- Kalanchoe
- Lantana
- Larkspur
- Lily of the valley
- Locoweed
- Lupine
- Marble queen
- Milkweed
- Moonseed
- Morning glory
- Mother in law
- Mountain laurel
- Mushrooms
- Narcissus
- Needlepoint ivy
- Nettles
- Nephthytis
- Nightshade
- Oleander
- Panda
- Peach tree
- Philodendron
- Poinsettia
- Poison hemlock
- Pokeweed
- Precatory bean
- Privet
- Red emerald
- Ribbon plant
- Rhododendron
- Rhubarb
- Sago palm
- Satin pothos
- Schefflera
- Skunk cabbage
- Spinach
- St. John's wort
- Striped dracaena
- Sweetheart ivy
- Thorn apple
- Tomato vine
- Tulip
- Umbrella pant
- Water hemlock
- Wisteria
- Yew
- Yucca



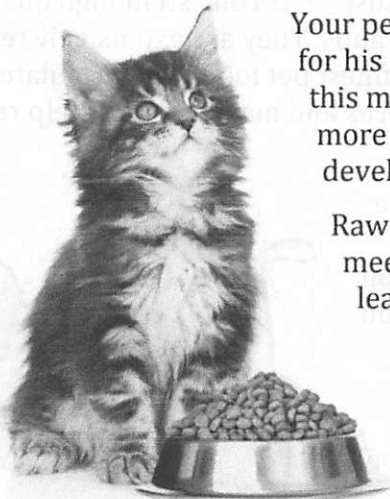
How to choose a pet food

One of the most common questions we are asked is "What should I feed my pet?" Since the most important contribution you can make to your pet's health and well being is his or her daily diet, it's a question that deserves a good answer.

Think quality!

With pet foods, as with most things, you get what you pay for. Cheap dog and cat foods use cheap ingredients, have poor quality control, are not well digested and may have excesses or deficiencies in vital nutrients, which can harm your pet. When analyzed in a laboratory, many generic and store brand foods do not actually contain the level of nutrition stated on the label. So, to get the nutrition you are paying for, choose a well-known name brand.

Ask us for a recommendation, and keep in mind that a fancy pet store brand is not necessarily better – it may just have a higher price and a fancier brochure. The pet food industry is highly competitive and cut throat. Government inspection of pet foods is not very good. Where the ingredients come from and how they are processed makes as much difference as what the ingredients are. Therefore, it's better to trust us for advice on which companies are reputable and which products make the most sense for your pet.



Your pet will usually do best if you pick one complete food that is appropriate for his or her age and activity level and stick with it. For a puppy or kitten, this means a puppy or kitten food. Young, rapidly growing animals need more nutrition than adult food can provide. As a pet ages, gains weight, or develops health problems, nutritional needs may change.

Raw and homemade diets are popular now, but it is extremely difficult to meet a pet's exact nutritional needs with home cooking, and raw diets can lead to Salmonella or E. coli poisoning in both pets and people. If you are interested in this option, please discuss it carefully with us. Also, be aware that "natural" is a meaningless term as far as pet food labeling regulations – the fact that it says the food is all natural on the bag doesn't mean a thing as far as quality or nutrition, so be wary of hype and advertising.

Switching foods

Animals do not really need variety in their diets if they are eating a good quality food. They are more prone to digestive upsets such as diarrhea on varied diets or table scraps. These problems usually appear in middle-aged pets, who may by then be accustomed to a healthier diet. Both dogs and cats are prone to becoming finicky eaters when fed a varied diet, causing problems for their owners later on, so do not switch foods every other week. If you do need to change from one product to another, do so gradually by mixing the two diets together for a few days. This will help prevent diarrhea from a too-sudden change in food.

The exception to this is with kittens. Cats choose their food based on "mouth feel" – the size and shape of the nugget and how it feels in their mouths when they chew or swallow it. They may get fixated on one size or shape of nugget and refuse to eat anything else; that's why different pet food

manufacturers have their own special shape for their cat foods – so the cat gets used to that food and won't eat anything else. It's a good idea to switch foods several times during a kitten's first year of life, so that he or she gets accustomed to a variety of shapes and textures, and both canned and dry foods. That way if a special diet is needed later in life, the cat is less likely to refuse to eat the new food. It's very frustrating, for example, if a cat has had teeth extracted or a broken jaw but refuses to eat canned food. Likewise, what happens when a cat could live two years longer on a renal diet for kidney disease, but you can't get him to touch the food with a ten-foot pole?

Don't base your food choices on what you would like to eat, as many pet food manufacturers would like you to do. Dogs and cats are color blind, so they don't care whether their food is red or brown. They also don't care if it looks like beef stew or little pork chops! The fancier the food looks, the more you are paying for unnecessary artificial coloring, flavoring, and preservatives.

A dry food is best for your pet's teeth and gums, so the majority of your dog and cat's nutritional needs should be met with a chow-type food, unless specific health problems dictate otherwise. Canned foods are much more expensive to feed, as you are paying for a lot of water and extra packaging. Many people like to supplement their pet's diet with some canned food, and this is fine as long as you pick a good one, and don't overdo it. Canned foods are more likely to have excesses of protein which can cause or contribute to kidney disease as your pet ages, as well as being worse for your pet's teeth.

Recommendation

We usually recommend Royal Canin and Hill's Science Diet because of its consistent high quality. Premium foods contain superior nutrition over grocery store brands. They are extensively tested and meet rigid standards with no ingredient substitutions. The finest pet foods are formulated with controlled levels of key nutrients like fat, protein, phosphorus and magnesium to help reduce the risk of such problems as obesity and kidney disease.

That is why, even though grocery store brands provide adequate nutrition for many pets, we still recommend that you feed your pet the best you can buy. Not only are you getting better nutrition for your pet, but the daily cost to you is not any greater than if you were feeding a cheaper brand. Better foods may cost more per bag, but the superior nutrition and better digestibility of these foods means you feed less per day, you clean up less stool later, and your veterinary bills for nutritionally related diseases will be less as well.



What about treats?

Most dog owners, and an increasing number of cat owners, feed treats to their pets, as well as their regular food. Treats are rarely "complete and balanced", and are often loaded with salt, fat, artificial colorings and preservatives – all of which comprise "junk food" for animals. For example, pig ears contain an average of 800 calories, almost all of it from fat! A daily vitamin and some biscuits every day will not harm your pet unless it has a diet related disease, but it's best to give these items in moderation (no more than 10% of a pet's calorie intake should come from treats and snacks).

Stick with a crunchy biscuit type of treat for your dog, and your cat too, if she'll eat them. Some of them, such as Hill's® line of life stage biscuits or Greenies cat treats, are better than others.

Grocery store brands are often high in both fat and salt, even then they look like a healthy, dry biscuit. Read labels before you buy. Also, these treats help slow the build up of dental tartar, but they cannot remove tartar once it is present. Your pet will still need dental care even if you feed him this type of snack. Some dogs, like carrots, cherry tomatoes, green beans or other vegetables, and these are great low-calorie snacks. Fruit is OK in moderation too (many cats seem to like cantaloupe!)

Check rawhide treat labels and stay away from brands not made in the USA. Foreign manufacturers are allowed to use formalin as a preservative in these chews, which is harmful to pets. Grapes and raisins can cause kidney failure in dogs and should never be fed. Onions and garlic, even as flavorings, can cause anemia in cats. Chocolate is toxic to both dogs and cats, although dogs are more likely to eat it. Xylitol, an artificial sweetener found in gums, candies, baked goods, and some peanut butters, is extremely poisonous to cats and dogs. In short, be careful what you feed your pet and ask us if you aren't sure!

Supplements & calories

Do not give any vitamin or mineral supplements to your dog or cat without your veterinarian's advice. These types of supplements can easily cause harmful nutrient excesses, especially calcium and the fat-soluble vitamins – A, D, E and K.

Puppies and kittens need lots of calories to grow on, and plenty of fresh water. Until they are 4 months old, feed at least three meals a day, giving as much as the animal will consume in a ten to fifteen-minute feeding. Kitten food may be left out all the time, but it's much easier to housebreak a puppy if you feed them at set times every day. Puppies will then have regular, predictable potty times as well.

Senior pets often benefit from glucosamine supplementation, but this nutrient has always been present in pet foods. The fact that it says "contains glucosamine" on the label doesn't mean that the food has enough of it to have a beneficial or therapeutic effect. The same is true for many fancy pet store brands – how much yucca, aloe, cranberry extract, chicory or licorice is actually in the food and what amount, if any, has been shown to have a beneficial or toxic effect? Ask us for advice regarding all these ingredients.

Frequency

Once your young dog is 4 months old, you can cut back to two meals per day, and at 6 months you can reduce that to one meal per day if desired. We recommend delaying a little longer in large breeds of dogs, which may still be growing rapidly at 6 months of age.

Cats are nibblers and need at least 2 meals a day throughout their lives. Continue to feed a diet made for puppies or kittens until your dog or cat is 1 year old – again; go longer for large dogs, who wont mature until 15-18 months of age.

The most important daily contribution you will make to your pet's health is his or her diet. So, choose wisely, and feel free to consult with us about any nutritional questions you may have.



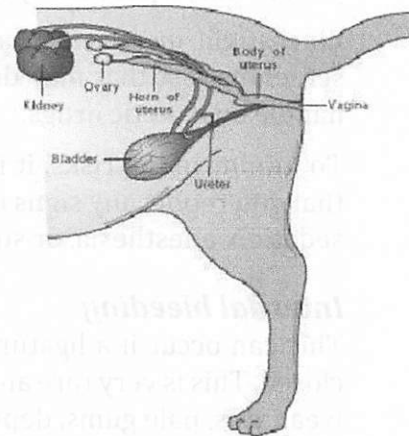
Spaying in Cats

What is meant by spaying or ovariectomy?

Spaying is the common term used to describe the surgical procedure known scientifically as an ovariectomy. In this procedure, the ovaries and uterus are removed completely in order to sterilize a female cat.

Why should I have my cat spayed?

We recommend that all non-breeding cats be sterilized. Several health benefits are associated with spaying your cat. First, spaying eliminates the risk of ovarian and uterine cancers. Second, breast cancer is the number one type of cancer diagnosed in intact or un-spayed female cats. If your cat is spayed before her first heat cycle, there is less than ½ of 1% (0.5%) chance of developing breast cancer. With every subsequent heat cycle, the risk of developing breast cancers increases. After about 2 ½ years of age, ovariectomy offers no protective benefit against developing breast cancer. Finally, cats with diabetes or epilepsy should be spayed to prevent hormonal changes that may interfere with medications.



Are there other benefits to spaying my cat?

The most obvious benefit is the prevention of unplanned pregnancies. There is no behavioral, medical, or scientific reason for letting your cat have a litter before she is spayed.

Once a cat reaches puberty, usually at around seven months of age, she will have a heat or estrus cycle every two to three weeks for most of the year, unless she becomes pregnant. She will be “in heat” or receptive to mating for approximately one week each cycle. During “heat”, she may display unsociable behavior such as loud and persistent crying and frequent rubbing and rolling on the floor. This behavior coupled with her scent, will attract males from miles around. Removal of the ovaries will stop her estrus cycle.

When should I have my cat spayed?

Spaying should be performed before the first estrus or “heat cycle”. Most cats are spayed between four and six months of age although some veterinarians choose to spay cats at two to three months of age.

What does a spay surgery involve?

This major surgical procedure requires general anesthesia. You will need to fast your cat the night prior to surgery. Most cats return home within forty-eight hours after surgery. Your veterinarian will advise you how long to withhold food and water, and any other details specific to your cat. This operation is performed through a relatively small incision made most commonly in the midline of the abdomen, just below the umbilicus. Both ovaries are removed along with the entire uterus. The surgical incision will be closed with several layers of sutures. In many cases, skin sutures will be placed, and these will be removed after seven to ten days.

Are complications common with spaying?

In general, complications are rare during an ovariectomy surgery. However, as with any anesthetic or surgical procedure, there is always a small risk. The potential complications include:

Anesthetic reaction

Any individual cat can have an unexpected adverse reaction following the administration of any drug or anesthetic. Such cases are impossible to predict but are extremely rare.

Another potential danger associated with anesthesia arises if the cat is not properly fasted prior to anesthesia. Anesthetized patients lose the normal reflex ability to swallow; during swallowing, the epiglottis, a cartilage flap at the entrance to the windpipe, closes and prevents food or water from entering the lungs. If there is food in the stomach, the cat could vomit while under anesthesia or in the early post-anesthetic period, allowing the food to enter the lungs and cause aspiration pneumonia, a potentially life-threatening condition.

Illness will increase the risks associated with anesthesia. Pre-operative blood work is a useful screening test that may detect pre-existing problems that could interfere with the pet's ability to handle anesthetic drugs.

To minimize the risks, it is important that all pre-operative instructions are strictly followed and that you report any signs of illness or previous medical conditions to your veterinarian prior to any sedation, anesthesia, or surgery.

Internal bleeding

This can occur if a ligature around a blood vessel breaks or slips off after the abdomen has been closed. This is very rare and is more likely to occur if the cat is extremely active. Clinical signs include weakness, pale gums, depression, anorexia, or a distended abdomen.

Post-operative infection

This may occur internally or externally around the incision site. In most cases, the infection can be controlled with antibiotics. A post-operative infection most commonly occurs when the cat licks the site excessively or is in a damp environment.

Suture reaction or Sinus Formation

Although extremely rare, occasionally the body will react to certain types of suture material used during surgery. This results in a draining wound or tract that may appear up to several weeks after the surgery was performed. Often a further operation is required to remove the suture material.

Will spaying have any adverse effects on my cat?

In the vast majority of cats, there are no adverse effects following an ovariohysterectomy. In certain cats, notably the Siamese breed, the hair that grows back over an operation site may be noticeably darker, believed to be due to a difference in the skin temperature. This darker patch usually grows out with the following molt as the hair is naturally replaced.

There are many myths and beliefs about spaying that are not supported by facts or research. Be sure to discuss any questions or concerns you may have with your veterinarian prior to surgery.

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