

Kitten Care

Congratulations on your new feline family member! It may seem like raising a kitten can be difficult with all the overwhelming amount of information available. Here's a starting point to build your knowledge on how to care properly for your new feline friend.

Vaccinations

Your kitten received some protective antibodies from its mother. As they start to wear off, you will need to give a series of vaccinations so that your pet will be protected. Whether your kitten remains indoors or not will determine which vaccines are needed. Your Veterinarian will help guide you.

The FVRCP vaccine protects against complex respiratory infections (Rhinitis, Chlamydia and Calicivirus), as well as Panleukopenia. Panleukopenia is a severe disease that affects the gastrointestinal system and can be fatal to unprotected cats. The vaccine is typically given at 8, 12 and 16-weeks of age. It is boosted one year later, then every three years after that. If your kitty is going to be outdoors, they should also receive a Rabies vaccination and a FeLV vaccine (Feline Leukemia).

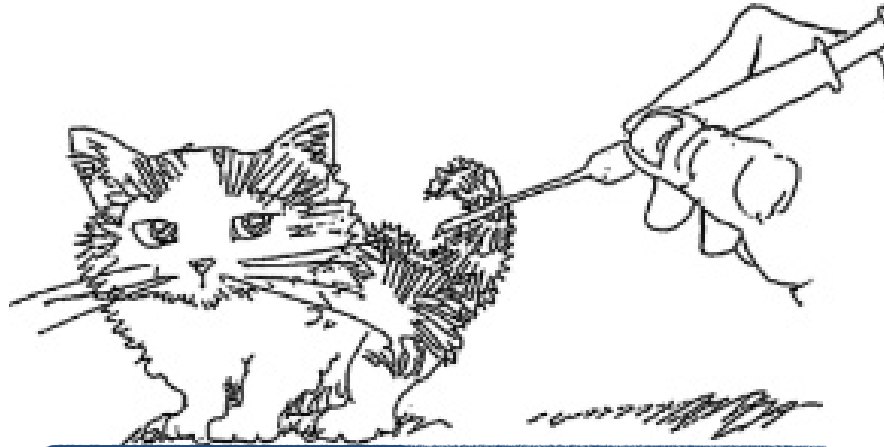


Parasites and Fleas

Intestinal parasites are common in young kittens. These parasites lay their eggs in cycles, and parasites may not be visible on a single test. For this reason, it can be recommended to do one or two fecal tests. To test, you need to collect approximately 1 - 2 tsps of fecal matter in a clean baggie or container. The fresher the sample the better; however, you can keep a sample viable in the refrigerator for 12 - 24 hours post collection.

Fleas

Flea prevention is a year-round issue for pets in Southern California. There are many effective topical and oral preventatives that are safe for your pet, as well as for you and your family. Please talk with your veterinarian about what option may be best for your little one.



FeLV/FIV testing

Feline Leukemia Virus and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus can be transmitted from cat to cat and are ultimately fatal. All cats should be tested so that exposure to uninfected cats can be limited and/or avoided entirely. It will also help assist in the medical needs of the infected cat. Testing is done via a blood sample and should be done before introducing your new kitty to any cats currently in your household. If your kitten/cat was a stray, it is strongly recommended to retest in three months because you can get a false negative result for the first three months after exposure.

Spay and Neuter

Spaying and neutering cats is beneficial in the prevention of both behavioral and medical problems. This surgery is typically performed at 6 months of age. Females in particular benefit from an early spay as it helps prevent breast cancer and Pyometra (an infection of the uterus which can be fatal). In addition, overpopulation is a huge problem with our shelters and rescues constantly over capacity.

Microchipping

This is a permanent way to identify your pet and can be done at any time. The microchip is safely inserted under their skin with a needle. Collars with name tags that have your address and/or phone number are also a great, inexpensive form of identification. If you are going to use a collar, it is important to use a "breakaway" design. This allows for the collar to break should your kitten's collar become stuck on anything, especially if they are outside. The collar (with enough pressure) will split apart and allow your cat to safely escape, rather than causing them to choke.

Socialization & Behavior

Kittens usually are adopted when they are around 8 weeks of age. Socialization happens very early in their kitten-hood. Having calm, quiet interactions with many people can lead to a more confident, social kitten. Kittens have lots of energy and love to play. Cardboard boxes, crumpled paper, jingle balls, feathered toys – almost anything can be a toy. However, we **STRONGLY** recommend that strings and/or ribbon-like toys are used with direct supervision at all times or not at all. Your kitten can ingest the string, which ultimately can become a life threatening emergency if it wraps around your kitten's gastrointestinal tract.

Scratching on objects is a normal marking behavior for cats. Almost all cats can be taught to use a scratching post, saving your furniture. There are vertical and horizontal scratching posts, as well as cat trees and cardboard scratchers available. You can have playtime around the scratching post/cat tree and use treats or catnip to encourage positive behavior. Touching your kitten's paws regularly will help to desensitize them and allow for an easier process when it comes time for a nail trim. There are many great videos online showing how to trim your kitties nails or you can ask your veterinary team to demonstrate the proper way.

Leaving your cat carrier out and placing treat or catnip inside can promote less fear of the carrier and encourage a positive association towards it. Cats and kittens live longer, healthier lives if they're kept strictly indoors and away from risks like cars, coyotes/predators and cat fights.



Diet

Cats are obligatory carnivores and there are many effective, healthy diets on the market to choose from for your growing kitten. If you have questions, it is always recommended to consult your Veterinarian about diet options due to the amount of misinformation that can be found online. If at any point you choose to change your kitten's diet, remember to do so gradually. If done too quickly, it can cause gastrointestinal upset.

Cats enjoy flowing water. Water fountains are a great way to encourage water intake and satisfy your cat's natural urges. Be sure to keep bowl and water fountains clean and free from mold.

Litter Boxes

Cats are naturally fastidious and almost instinctively use a litter box. The litter box can be simple to extravagant, but many cats prefer boxes without hoods or doors. Most (not all) cats prefer unscented, fine textured litter. Kittens under 10 weeks should not use clumping litter as they may ingest it while cleaning themselves. Be sure to keep the litter box clean and change the litter frequently. Cats may avoid an unclean litter box, which can lead to unwanted house soiling or health problems. The general rule of thumb is one litter box per cat, plus one additional box to help minimize territorial behavior.

