

KITTEN ADVICE

Vaccination

Vaccines work by stimulating the body to produce its own defence against infection. The first vaccination can be given from eight weeks of age. Before this, the maternally derived antibodies (MDA) received from the mother provide some protection. The second vaccination is given three weeks later, usually at twelve weeks of age.



The standard vaccinations will protect your kitten from life-threatening conditions including Cat Flu (Feline Upper Respiratory Tract Disease), Infectious Enteritis (Feline Panleucopenia) and Feline Leukaemia. These are infectious viral diseases that can easily be spread between cats; we highly recommend vaccinating against them.

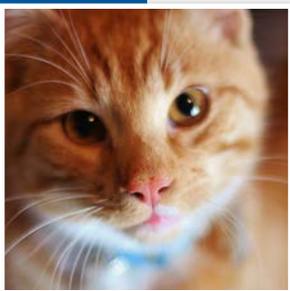
A week after the second vaccination has been given, your kitten can be let outside. However, it is recommended to keep your kitten indoors until after it has been neutered to prevent the risk of fighting or unwanted pregnancies.

Your kitten will need to have annual booster vaccinations with the veterinary surgeon. This is necessary to maintain a high level of immunity. Without regular vaccinations your cat's immunity will wane leaving them at greater risk of infection. At the time of their vaccination the Vet will give your pet a thorough examination to ensure they are in good health.



Neutering

Neutering of males (castration) can be done from four months of age if both testicles have descended. A Vet or Nurse can check that both testicles are in the correct position. Neutering male cats prevents many unwanted behavioural problems. Un-castrated tomcats will patrol a wide territory in search of a mate while neutered males tend to stay closer to home. A tomcat who wanders is more likely to be involved in a car accident or to fight with other males. This brings the risk of physical injury and infection with dangerous viruses such as Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV), which is mostly spread by biting. Tomcats also mark their territory (including inside your house) with their urine. This has a powerful and extremely unpleasant smell which is often difficult to get rid of.



Neutering of females (spaying) can be done from four months of age. There are many advantages to neutering a female cat. Un-neutered females will come into season 3-4 times a year and she could be having litters of kittens (averaging 4-6 in a litter) almost constantly throughout her life. In one year, an un-neutered female cat could have over 20 kittens. This will take its toll on the mother, as having several litters is likely to shorten her life expectancy. There may be behavioural changes whilst she is in season including spraying urine around the house and garden - this can attract tomcats from miles around. Neutering females also reduces the risk of future medical conditions such as mammary tumours.

We recommend neutering male and female cats at 4 months old (dependant on size). If your pet has not been seen recently, a pre-operative check is advised before neutering. Castrating or spaying your cat will require a stay in the hospital of only one day.



Fleas

Kittens need to be protected against external parasites too. Fleas can make your kitten miserable and they can pose a serious threat to health. Aside from skin irritation (which can be serious), fleas can also cause anaemia and transmit tapeworms (an intestinal worm which can also infect people).

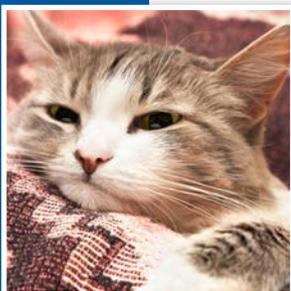
The flea life cycle also involves an egg and larval stage in the environment, and thanks to central heating, our homes provide the perfect habitat. Once an infestation is present in the home it can be extremely difficult to eliminate and can take months.

We recommend treating your cat for fleas monthly throughout their life to prevent an infestation taking hold.



Worms

Worms are internal parasites which can cause serious illness and can be life-threatening on rare occasions. There are many different types of worms our pets are exposed to and some can spread to people (children and the elderly being the most vulnerable). When a pet is infected with worms, the eggs are shed in their faeces, contaminating the environment thus continuing the worm life cycle. To protect your kitten (and your family) ensure you clean litter trays regularly, treat your kitten for worms as advised and always wash your hands after handling soil, sand or litter that may have been contaminated with faeces.



Contrary to some beliefs, you need to worm your cat regularly throughout their life not just if you see worms in your pet's faeces (which is only when the burden is already extremely high). The breeder should have wormed your kitten regularly from two weeks of age. Once they are in their new home, they should be wormed every month until six months old and then at least every three months throughout their adult lives. If your kitten becomes a keen hunter, monthly worming would be more appropriate.

Ticks

Ticks are parasitic arachnids commonly picked up in woodland or long grass areas. Once they find a host, the tick embeds their mouth-parts into the skin to feed on the blood, growing up to 600 times their original size. They cause irritation, infection, abscesses, skin reactions and can easily transmit disease (such as Lyme Disease).



When embedded in the skin, ticks look like small brown or grey warts and can be difficult to remove. We recommend using a specialist tick removal tool which is available from our surgeries. Incorrect removal techniques can result in the tick's mouth-parts being left in the skin causing infection.

If you have an outside cat, we advise thoroughly checking them regularly, especially if they roam close to woodland or long grass. We recommend monthly preventative treatment and remove any ticks immediately. Indoor cats are at a very low risk of ticks.

Flea, worm & tick treatment

There are many products on the market but not all will kill all types of worms or be the most effective at killing fleas or ticks. As vets, we have prescription-only treatments including spot-ons and tasty treat tablets, which we are confident are the optimal choice for parasite control.



Like most medications, flea and worm products give the correct dose according to the pet's weight which is why it is important for us to weigh your kitten as it grows. This also gives an ideal opportunity for your kitten to be socialised at the veterinary practice.

CAUTION Some spot-on products for dogs are highly toxic to cats and can prove fatal. Please ensure the correct product is used.

Diet

Most kittens will be on a proprietary kitten food when they come to their new home. There are many different kitten foods now available. A complete dry diet contains all the essential nutrients to keep your kitten healthy and help it grow. It will also help to reduce build-up of plaque from an early age due to the crunching action of the teeth on the biscuits.



It is recommended that kittens be fed three to four times daily initially. By six months of age this can be reduced to once or twice daily according to your preference. An adult maintenance diet can then be used from twelve months of age.

Any change in diet should be introduced over a 7-14 day period to prevent the risk of an upset tummy due to a sudden dietary change.

Clean, fresh water should be available at all times. Feeding toys are also a great way to keep a kitten entertained and stimulated.

As they get older, a cat's dietary requirements change. You need to ensure you feed appropriately for their age and health to give them the best dietary support and avoid obesity. If you are uncertain, please speak to us for advice.



Socialisation & behaviour

Settling in to your home is the first big step for a kitten. It is often a difficult time being away from their mother and littermates for the first time. It is important for your kitten to experience all the sights and sounds of everyday life (vacuum, other pets etc.) from an early age. However, do not force them if they are fearful; instead reward positive, non-fearful behaviour with praise and treats. If possible leave their cat carrier accessible at all times as this not only provides them with a safe place if they get overwhelmed but it will also get them used to it if you need to travel or bring them to see the Vet.



Handling your kitten is an important life lesson for the future. We recommend you handle your kitten as much as possible by stroking all areas of their bodies, particularly around their face, ears and paws. This will not only help with future grooming and nail clipping, but also with future medication and examinations with the Vet. It is also a good idea to introduce your kitten to any visitors to your home and allow them to be handled by people of all ages.

Introducing a new kitten to your resident cat can be a stressful time for both and will take time. We advise keeping the kitten in a separate room at first, not only to allow them to adjust to your home gently but also to keep them safe. The next step is to start to mix the scents of the new kitten and your cat - swap their bedding, stroke them both regularly. This way the new kitten's scent will become incorporated into your household. It is a good idea to use a crate to protect the kitten during initial meetings. Once they appear calm you can start to use the crate in other rooms to get them accustomed to each other's presence throughout the house. When you feel confident, the crate door can be opened - this **MUST** be done with close supervision. It is advisable to continue to separate cat and kitten when unsupervised until their relationship is established.



Introducing a new kitten to your dog can actually be easier than a cat-to-cat introduction. Far from being enemies, cats and dogs can get on very well. A structured introduction is the best approach. Use a pet crate in the early stages as this allows safe interactions where they can interact but the kitten is kept safe. Once they are both comfortable with this you can start meetings outside the crate but keep your dog on the lead at first and make sure your kitten has somewhere to escape to (shelves, window sills etc.). Don't leave you kitten alone with your dog until you are confident they are safe together. Reward the dog for quiet, calm interaction throughout the process and take your time!



Introducing a new kitten to children is best done with gradual and calm interactions. As a parent and pet owner it is important to teach children how to approach, stroke and handle cats (no rough play, chasing or startling) and young children shouldn't be left alone with the cat. Baby gates, hiding places and beds (which young children can't reach) can provide the kitten with a safe place if they feel overwhelmed. Ultimately this relationship is built with the right education and mutual respect.

Cats are complex creatures but a basic understanding of normal behaviour can dramatically enhance their quality of life and your relationship with them. There are nine characteristics of domestic cats which are worth considering as a cat owner. Cats are: hunters, obligate carnivores, territorial, agile, scent sensitive, self-reliant, highly aware, emotional and adaptable. Getting to know your cat and their normal behaviours will help you spot if something is wrong in the future.



For more information about socialisation and behaviour we recommend the website www.icatcare.org or book an appointment to speak to one of our clinic nurses.

Microchipping

A microchip is approximately the size of a grain of rice and is placed under the skin in the scruff of the neck. The chip contains essential information, which is linked to a national database. If your pet is lost or stolen and is scanned at any veterinary practice or rehoming shelter, your details will be easily obtained and you will be contacted. For this reason it is essential that all your details are kept accurate and up-to-date to ensure your pet can be returned back to you.

Microchips can be placed at any age by one of our clinic nurses or veterinary surgeons but we recommend microchipping at the time of second vaccination or neutering.



Insurance

It is highly recommended that you take out insurance for your pet to cover any unexpected vet bills if your cat was to become poorly or injured. There are three main types of insurance policy.



A life time cover policy is renewed on an annual basis but cover is provided up to a set amount for veterinary fees each year, providing it is renewed annually. There is no time limit on how long you can claim for each illness or injury, so if your pet has something that will require ongoing treatment, such as diabetes or skin problems, the policy will cover the condition for the pet's life time.

A maximum benefit policy covers up to a maximum amount for life but there is no time limit on how long you can claim for. However, when you have reached the maximum amount, you can no longer claim.

An annual policy is renewed on an annual basis but it will only pay for the first year of treatment per condition. So, if your cat were to become poorly or have an accident, it would be covered for that first year only. The policy would no longer cover for that condition the following year.

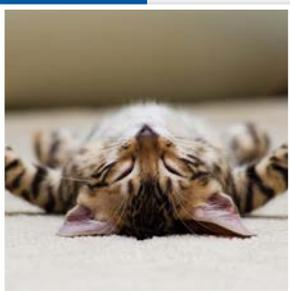
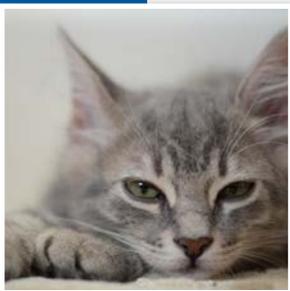
We recommend a life time policy for your pet. One of our clinic nurses can issue your kitten a four weeks free insurance cover note with Pet Plan.



It is worth noting that if you were to change insurance company (or take out insurance at a later date), any pre-existing conditions would not be covered with the new insurance policy.

Always check policy details carefully and read the small print.

If you require further information about caring for your kitten, we invite you to book a free appointment with our clinic nurses.



The Cromwell Veterinary Group Ltd

Huntingdon: 01480 52601 St Neots: 01480 216612 St Ives: 01480 300389

Ramsey: 01487 814789 Cambourne: 01954 715161 Sawtry: 01487 800199

24hr hospital in Huntingdon: 01480 52222

enquiries@cromwellvets.co.uk

www.cromwellvets.co.uk