



We understand how significant your pet is to your life.

THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF KITTEN OWNERSHIP!

As a kitten owner, you should be aware of some important things so that your kitten will get a good start toward a healthy life.

First, kittens should receive a complete physical exam to rule out congenital problems such as hernias, heart murmurs, and retained testicles. Other less apparent problems may not reveal themselves until after your kitten has had a chance to grow, therefore we recommend a complete physical when you first purchase or adopt your kitten, then every three to four weeks when each booster vaccination is given.

Until about four months of age, your kitten has a very underdeveloped immune system; this is the reason that viruses – especially upper respiratory viruses - are extremely common in young kittens. These airborne viruses may incubate inside the kitten's body for as long as three to four weeks before noticeable clinical problems occur. Watch your kitten closely for symptoms such as sneezing, coughing, runny eyes, listlessness, or reduced appetite. Please call us immediately if any of these signs develop. Treatment is generally simple. Since we cannot prevent these cold-type symptoms, the best we can do is watch for signs, begin therapy as soon as possible, and follow recommended vaccination programs.

When a kitten consumes its mother's first milk, it receives immunity to some of the common diseases we're concerned about. This immunity is temporary and slowly fades away over the first three months of life. Furthermore, if a kitten is born to a stray cat, the stray may never have been vaccinated and may not have strong immunity to pass on to her kittens. As we vaccinate the kitten, we slowly help it build its own immunity. Our goal is to give a vaccination every three to four weeks until the maternal protection is completely gone, so we give the kitten its final booster when it can make its own strong immune response.

Depending on the age of the kitten when you first bring it in and what vaccinations it has received prior to that time, we will design the perfect vaccination program for your kitten. The last vaccine is generally given at or after 16 weeks of age.

Your kitten may have already been "dewormed"; however, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the American Association of Parasitologists recommend a practice called "strategic deworming". This entails deworming a kitten every two weeks until the kitten is three months of age, then monthly until the kitten is six months of age. Since no one medication will be effective against all the different intestinal parasites (i.e.

roundworms, tapeworms, hookworms, whipworms, coccidia, and Giardia), it is still important to check fecal samples. Intestinal parasites lay eggs which pass into the feces and these eggs are shed at variable times. Therefore, we recommend at least two clean (no parasites seen) samples to establish that there are no parasites inhabiting the intestines.

We check your kitten each time we do a physical exam for ear mites, fleas, and other external parasites if indicated. This is necessary because occasionally the infestation is so minimal at the time of the initial exam that these parasites may not reveal themselves in the typical manner. We recommend you watch your kitten closely for excessive scratching and call us if you notice any areas of hair loss.

Your kitten may have tested negative for Feline Leukemia Virus. If your kitten is younger than 12 weeks old, its immune system is still immature and the possibility exists that it may be incubating the virus. Our current recommendation is to wait until your kitten is older than 12 weeks before doing the initial test if this is the only cat in the house, or to test twice – once before taking your kitten into your home and again after 12 weeks of age.

We also recommend that your kitten or new cat be tested three months after being adopted to allow for the average incubation time of the virus. This test is in addition to the initial feline leukemia test.

We welcome you to our practice and want to take this opportunity to ensure you that nothing is more important to us than the health and quality of life of your new kitten.

Do you have questions about...

- Microchips and tags
- Optional Feline Leukemia Virus vaccine
- Heartworm disease (handout enclosed)
- Flea control (handout enclosed)
- Dental care (brushing, t/d food, CET chews)
- Feeding amounts (meals vs. free-choice)
- Biting (aggressive play) behavior
- Scratching / marking behavior
- Introduction of a new baby or pet into the home
- Nail trimming / grooming
- Zoonosis (disease or parasites spread from animals to humans)
- Vaccine sarcomas (handout enclosed)