



**Animal Clinics *of*
The Woodlands**

**How To Take Care Of A New Kitten
Kitten Information Booklet**

Animal Clinics Of The Woodlands

Alden Bridge 281-292-4700 | Cochran's Crossing 281-298-7387 | Indian Springs 281-298-5509

www.animalclinicsofthewoodlands.com | Twitter @animal_clinics | www.facebook.com/AnimalClinicsOfTheWoodlands

Introduction

Congratulations on your family member! He/she will give you many years of companionship and happiness. The manner in which you raise your kitten from the early, formative months to adulthood is of the utmost importance. Taking the time to train and socialize your kitten will prove WELL WORTH IT! Only you can make the difference between owning a well-behaved, loving adult cat or an aggressive, frightened, shy, and/or destructive cat. One must take into account the fact that different cats definitely have different personalities. Some like cuddling and being held while others prefer to be petted and not picked up and/or held. Our job is to make the most of what we have in our very own, special kitty!

Kittens and cats are not toys, nor do they have the ability to be “mean” or “vindictive”. They simply act on instinct prompted by the situation and or, perhaps your reaction. We hope this document give you the information and insight needed to have a long and happy relationship with your new pet. Please review the Table Of Contents below to learn more about a specific topic.

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Kitten's Sanctuary

The first two weeks, it is best to keep your kitten confined to a small area or room. This allows for supervision and ensure kitten's safety, especially when you are not home to keep an eye on them. The area should be large enough for ample exercise and complete with water, toys, bed, food, and litter box. Always be sure this room is relatively private. Kitten may enjoy soft soothing music, something of yours and, if there is another animal in the house, something of theirs. Soon your new kitten will learn, from you, what is accepted and forbidden and become an unrestricted member of the household. For more information on feline environmental enrichment, <https://indoorpet.osu.edu/cats>

Dangers

Never leave your small or young kitten alone with a dog or small children. Watch carefully for recliners/rockers, open windows, dryers, washers, cupboards, closets and drawers- all appear as potential hiding places for a kitten! Kittens excel at picking up, chewing on or digesting plastic, strings, rubber bands, hair ties and other small pieces. These all pose threats as then can cause GI upset and intestinal obstruction.

If you have any questions regarding the life and/or health of your new pet, please call our offices. We are here to help you and your new family member with your transition.

Feeding

It is recommended that kittens and adult cats be fed 50-100% canned food. The increased moisture and limited carbohydrates in moist foods support the dietary needs of felines. It is important to feed a diet from a reputable company that has AFFCO certification and has proven their food quality with food trials. Some recommendations are Hill's Science Diet, Royal Canin, and Eukanuba, but there are other trustworthy brands. Feel free to ask our staff for other recommendations.

A kitten formula is recommended until 12 months of age. Meal feeding (typically twice daily) is ideal to ensure foods are fresh, not allowed to spoil, and aids in maintaining a healthy weight. Canned diets are easily meal fed and, because they are low in carbohydrates, are beneficial to maintaining a healthy weight also. Dry food can be feed as well but, as always, food should be measured to avoid overeating. Make sure your kitten's bowl is shallow, easy to clean and non-skid. Stainless steel or porcelain bowls are recommended as plastic bowls can harbor bacteria.

Do not change your pet's diet suddenly. Sudden changes cause stomach upset, resulting in diarrhea, vomiting, and/or bloody stools. Changing an animal's diet should be done slowly, adding small amounts of new food to usual food, gradually for about a week.

Fresh clean water is the most important thing for your kitten. Be sure your kitten is drinking ample amounts of water. Most important is to provide fresh, clean water as cats prefer their water as fresh as possible. Running water fountains are also recommended for cats to encourage water intake.

Vaccines & Preventative Care

Kittens need a series of vaccinations to protect them as they grow. Prior to vaccination, ALL kittens should be tested for Feline Leukemia and FIV. Both are contagious diseases that can significantly affect the health of your kitten/cat. This testing requires only a small blood sample and is typically done at kitten's first visit as long as age appropriate.

Kittens pick up protective antibodies from their mothers through the placenta and in the colostrum that they drink in the first two days of their lives. These antibodies diminish over time, but until they do, they not only protect a kitten from disease but also keep vaccines from functioning properly. That's why kittens get a series of vaccinations. Your Veterinarian will determine your kitten's specific vaccination schedule.

- FVRCP is a combination vaccine, first given at 6-8 weeks. It protects against feline panleukopenia, feline rhinotracheitis and feline calicivirus. Your kitten will be given a total of three FVRCP vaccinations, each 3-4 weeks apart. A booster will be given at 1 year and then every 3 years thereafter.

- Feline Leukemia (FeLV) vaccinations will be started at 8-12 weeks. As it's name suggests, it protects against Feline Leukemia. A second booster will be given 3-4 weeks later. FeLV vaccinations may be discontinued at your cat's first annual exam if he/she does not go outdoors and is not exposed to other cats that go outdoors, but it is crucial to build initial immunities to the disease as a kitten. Annual boosters are recommended for cats exposed to the outdoors directly or through other cats.

- Rabies vaccines are required by law. A Rabies vaccination will be given between 12-16 weeks. A booster will be given at 1 year of age and then ever 3 years thereafter as long as the vaccine is not allowed to expire prior to booster.

- It is recommended that the veterinarian see your cat for a comprehensive exam at least annually starting at one year of age. During the exam, your pet's overall health will be evaluated, you can discuss any concerns, and booster vaccinations will be given. For tips on relieving the stress of a car ride, <http://www.catvets.com/cat-owners/behavior-and-care-tips/getting-your-cat-to-the-vet>

Heartworm & Parasite Prevention

An intestinal parasite test (fecal) is recommended at least once, sometimes more, for kittens to check for intestinal parasites. Should any parasites be present, an appropriate dewormer will be prescribed. As an adult cat, typically intestinal parasite tests are recommended annually unless deemed necessary more frequently by the veterinarian.

Just like dogs, cats can get heartworms from mosquitoes. Unfortunately, there is currently no reliable testing for heartworm disease in cats so prevention is our most effective approach. Heartworm disease manifests itself differently in cats and, often, the first noted symptom of heartworm disease in cats is sudden death. We currently recommend Revolution as it provides protection against heartworm, flea, and intestinal parasites.

Revolution is a topical product that is applied once a month. The product is an endectocide, which

means it is absorbed internally and spreads throughout the body including back to the skin. Because it acts internally, it cannot be washed off. It is recommended that, if you bathe your cat, wait until the pet is completely dry to apply. Revolution is safe for kittens as young as 6 weeks of age and for pregnant or nursing mothers. It kills fleas within 42 hours of application.

10 Tips For A Poison-Safe Household

- Be careful of plants you have in your house and in your yard. The ingestion of Oleander, Easter lily, and many other plants could be fatal.
- When cleaning your house, never allow your cat access to the areas where agents are used or stored..
- Using rat or mouse baits, ant or roach traps, or snail baits, place the products in areas that are inaccessible to your cats. Most baits contain sweet smelling inert ingredients, which can be very attractive to your cat.
- Never give your cat medications unless under the directions of a Veterinarian. Many medications that are used safely in humans can be deadly when used inappropriately.
- Keep all prescriptions and over the counter drugs out of reach of your cats.
- Never leave chocolate unattended. Approximately one half ounce of baking chocolate per pound of body weight or less can cause clinical signs of toxicity.
- Know the common household items that can be toxic to pets and make sure they are kept safely away from their access.
- All automotive products such as oil, gasoline, and antifreeze should be stored in areas away from cat access.
- Before buying or using flea products on your cat or in your household, contact your Veterinarian to discuss what types of flea products recommend for your pet. Read ALL information before using a product on your cat or in your home. house spray, make sure to remove all cats from the area for the time period specified on the container.
- When treating your lawn or garden with fertilizers, herbicides, or insecticides, always keep your cats away from the area until the area dries completely. Discuss usage of products with the manufacturer of the products to be used. Always store the products in an area that will ensure no cat exposure.

Neuter Is Neater...And Kinder, Too!

Have your cat spayed or neutered; the sooner the better.

Veterinary organizations as large as American Veterinary Medical Association now endorse early

spaying and neutering. Many humane associations and shelters are already doing so- perhaps your kitten was altered before you were allowed to take him/her home!

Typically, alteration is recommended between 4-6 months. Keeping kittens from being parents is the only way to prevent future kittens from dying for lack of a home. Spaying and neutering is an easy way to stop the revolving-door “kitten out, kittens in” game shelters play, and lose, every summer. In 2012, Montgomery County Animal Shelter euthanized approximately 9,000 pets from just the one county. Nationally, nearly 4 million pets are euthanized in shelters each year and 71% of cats that enter shelters are euthanized. Spaying and neutering is the solution to this problem.

Spaying and neutering also offers some real health and behavior benefits for you as a pet owner. Neutered males are less likely to roam and less likely to fight. Neutering greatly reduces problems with urine spraying and will give your cat a chance at the longest life possible. With all that “catting about”, unneutered males are prime candidates for getting run over or picking up deadly, contagious diseases through mating and/or fighting.

Spayed females are more attentive and loving because they’re not spending all their time looking for mates. Females are in heat nearly nonstop until they become pregnant, and if they do, are at higher risk for accidental death and contagious disease. Living with a cat looking for a mate can be very trying. They cry. They roll. They rub. They yowl. They spray. It’s not fun.

Get your kitten fixed!!! It’s the right thing to do.

Declawing

Declawing has probably become the most controversial of all elective surgical procedures commonly performed by Veterinarians. While it is normal for cats to scratch things (to mark territory as well as to condition their claws) this behavior can destroy the bond between an owner and cat. Cats, especially adolescent cats, have a tendency to play rough and scratching their owner in play, sometimes violently. The declaw surgery represents a permanent solution to these problems, however, it is popularly held that a number of adverse conditions result from declawing and that it is a form of mutilation. Pet owners need to sort out the facts from the rumors surrounding this procedure, as well as understand some of the options involved. The AVMA recommends that surgical declaw with appropriate client education, multi-modal pain management, and proper after care be considered only after investigating all other options (see below) and it is determined that declaw is the only suitable option for the cat to remain an acceptable member of the household.

Training

Scratching is a natural behavior of cats, which makes it difficult to modify. The usual goal is to transfer the cat’s scratching instinct to a scratching post: it is virtually impossible to control the desire to scratch completely. In general, this kind of training requires a great deal of time at home. The following are training tips:

1. Cats seem to prefer to scratch upholstery with a vertical drag to the fabric. Furniture can be upholstered in an unacceptable fabric and a scratching post can be swathed in an appropriate fabric (rather than the usual carpet).

2. Furniture can be made unacceptable by using plastic or even aluminum foil to cover the target pieces. Spray-on antiperspirants can be sprayed on furniture as a repellent.
3. Treats or catnip can be used to attract the cat to the scratching post.
4. Cats can be punished for furniture scratching attempts, but it is important that the cat not learn that the person is the punisher. Yelling, spanking, or shaking a can with pennies in it is too directly associated with the person rather than with the act of scratching. A squirt bottle with water is better, but only if the cat does not see where the squirt comes from.

Nail Trimming

For some cats, simply keeping the nails short is adequate control but many people do not know how to trim their cat's nails. Please ask one of our Veterinary Technicians to demonstrate proper nail trimming should you desire to do this yourself at home or review the following resource:

- http://www.vetmed.wsu.edu/ClientED/cat_claws.aspx

Soft Paws

This is another popular method of controlling a scratching problem. Blunt acrylic nail caps are glued onto the cat's claw. The idea is that the blunt nail will not be sharp enough to cause damage.

The nail caps must be replaced as the nail grows out, typically every 4-6 weeks. Some cats are very receptive to soft paws, but some cats may be prone to pull them off.

Declaw: The Laser Declaw

Feline Laser Onychectomy (Declaw) is our recommended method because there is less chance of infection and faster healing.

In the surgical procedure, the CO2 laser is used to vaporize tissue as opposed to cutting with a standard scalpel blade. An incision is made when the laser beam vaporizes tissue cells. Trauma to surrounding tissue is considerably less with the laser and small blood vessels, lymphatic vessels and nerve endings are sealed. The surgery removes the nail (or claw) and the last bone in the toe. Once the claw is removed, a small amount of surgical adhesive is applied to close the surgical site on each toe. No sutures required. The laser offers a dramatic reduction in pain and the need for less pain medication.

Although bleeding is rare, some patients, especially adult cats, may require a light bandage following the procedure. This dressing is removed the next day prior to going home.

Special litter called Yesterday's News is sent home to keep dust away from the sites. We give each patient an antibiotic injection and send home pain and anti-inflammatory medications for the pet.

“When I can perform a surgical procedure that improves the quality of a patient’s life and the enjoyment of the pet ownership, I become very satisfied with my work. Declawing allows many cats to remain inside-only pets. Cats that only live indoors have longer lives because they are exposed to less disease, cat fights, and cars. Destruction of furniture and other home furnishings is not acceptable behavior for any cat. Some cats will respond favorably to a scratching post, however for those that do not, this surgical procedure is a very realistic alternative.” Dr. Rick Wall, DVM

Dental Home Care

Dental home care is the single most important aspect of regular dental care. With proper home care, your pet may not need full dental cleanings as often, thus saving you the expense and your pet extra anesthetic. In general, it is recommended that some form of home care be performed at least 4-5 times weekly. We recommend and can provide Virbac CET dental health products.

What Kind of Home Care is Available?

First and foremost, make sure that all your dental home care products are approved by the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC). There are many options for dental home care, which can cater to you and your pet’s personal preferences and needs. One or more options can be used to manage your pet’s dental home care regimen.

The Toothbrush Kit

Just as with your own teeth, nothing beats brushing. The fibers of the tooth brush are able to reach between teeth and under gums to pick out tiny deposits of food. A toothbrush acts as a tiny scrub brush for the closest possible cleaning. Brushing is recommended 4-5 times weekly, if not daily.

Notice the shape of the canine and feline brushes and how they conform to a pet’s mouth. You can use a human toothbrush but you will probably find it difficult to manipulate in the pet’s mouth. Finger brushes are available and are smaller for puppies and kittens.

Oral Rinse

The oral rinse is the second best option to brushing and may work for many cats that are not tolerant of the brush. The oral rinse contains the same enzymatic properties that help remove plaque and slow the progression of dental disease. The oral rinse can be gently sprayed with the provided spout or applied to a cotton swab and rubbed along the gum line and teeth. This is recommended at least 4-5 times weekly, if not daily.

Dental Treats

Some cats will not allow anyone to reach into their mouths for any reason and will not tolerate brushing, spraying, rinsing or any other home care. For these animals, dental treats represent an excellent method of dental home care. Feline dental treats are freeze-dried fish pieces specially treated with enzymatic properties to help remove plaque. We recommend a treat daily for routine home care.

Toothpaste

DO NOT USE HUMAN TOOTHPASTE ON YOUR PET. Human toothpastes contain sudsing agents and fluoride that should not be swallowed. These will upset your pet's stomach because your pet is not able to rinse out his or her mouth. Pet toothpaste comes in a variety of flavors: mint, poultry, seafood, and beef.

Professional Dental Cleaning

By the age of three, most pets have some degree of periodontal disease. Once your pet develops tartar, it is time to consider a professional, anesthetized dental cleaning to remove the tartar, plaque, and bacteria in your pet's mouth. Bacteria in the mouth can affect the heart, liver, and kidneys, which compromises your pet's health. Anesthesia is required to correctly assess pet's oral health and properly clean the infections present under the gum. For more information on proper dental cleanings, <http://avdc.org/AFD/category/facts/>

Feline Heartworm Infection

Do Cats Get Heartworms?

The answer to this question is an unequivocal "yes" but the situation is vastly different from the canine situation. It is very important to understand the differences and understand why feline infection is so important to prevent.

The Parasite and Its Migration

A cat is not a natural host for the heartworm which means the migrating larval heartworm is not likely to find its way to the heart should it actually makes its way into the cat's skin from a mosquito bite. Mosquitoes that carry heartworm definitely prefer to feed on dogs.

Whereas a moderate heartworm infection in a dog would involve 25-50 adult heartworms, infected cats typically have less than six adult worms. Because the feline heart and blood vessels are so small, these few worms can wreak havoc.

Worms found in the canine heart can reach lengths up to 14 inches, but the average length of worms found in feline hearts is only 5-8 inches.

While an adult heartworm can expect to live 5 years in a dog, it will only live 2-3 years in a cat probably due to the cat's especially strong immune reaction.

Symptoms of Disease

The cat's immune system is extremely reactive against heartworms. For this reason, it is virtually impossible to detect microfilaria in an infected cat. (The cat's immune system removes them too quickly) also, symptoms of infection tend to be more immune-related than heart failure related. Cats develop more of a lung disease, complete with respiratory stress, and coughing or vomiting chronically. Feline heartworm disease is often misdiagnosed as feline asthma. Sudden death may

occur just as it may occur in infected dogs.

Prevention is the key to keeping your pet free of heartworms. For more information, <https://www.heartwormsociety.org/>

Changing Behavior and Training Your Pet

Unlike dogs, cats don't have a built in mechanism for working with a family. Dogs take naturally to the idea of a family, because their ancestors lived and hunted in cooperative teams with a highly developed social structure, called packs. With the exception of lions, cats are solitary hunters and they're used to taking care of themselves. You can't make them do what they don't want to. In order to change any behavior you must offer an alternative you both can accept.

Your cat loves you and enjoys your company, but if you want to convince him to do things your way, you must answer the quintessential cat question: What's in it for me?

The good news is that cats are creatures of habit. After yours learns where scratching, chewing, or relieving himself is okay, you can put away all the gadgets you've used to convince him.

Yes, Kitty!

Reward your cat for good behavior with praise, treats, petting, and games. If your cat uses the scratching post instead of the couch, make sure that he knows you approved by playing with him. Your cat isn't born knowing the rules of living among humans and, if you make following the rules pleasant, you have much better luck getting him to follow them.

No, Kitty!

Never hit your cat and never let him think that any discipline is coming from you. Physical discipline is worse than meaningless to cats and it can make a situation even worse by making your cat stressed out and afraid of you.

What works in cats is to make them believe that whatever they're doing wrong triggers an automatic response they don't like- and that you have nothing to do with it as far as they can tell. The couch they used to enjoy clawing is now covered in something they don't like to touch. Every time they get on the counter a stream of water comes their way.

Biting and Aggression

You need to do a little detective work and figure out what's causing your cat to bite or claw. Aggression takes many forms and the solution depends on the cause, some of which may be as follows:

Fear or pain: If your cat is striking out because he's afraid or hurting, your best bet is to leave him alone and work on underlying problem. A cat in pain or fear has his ears flat back against his head and body rolled into a defensive posture low against the ground with claws up and ready. This cat is saying, "Don't come near me!" you need to let your cat calm down-hide if needed- before you can get your Veterinarian to check her out. Often, under these circumstances, that carrier your cat seems to hate seems like heaven. Place the carrier with the door wide open in the room with your

cat. Your cat may choose to go in there and this may save you the “fight” of trying to force your cat to enter the carrier for the trip to the vet. Remember: Don’t fight with your cat. You will lose.

Overstimulation: You’re petting your cat and suddenly he grabs you with his claws and teeth. Not a full-powered attack, but you’ve still got those sharp tips around your hand. What to do? In the short run, freeze. Don’t fight your cat or you may trigger a real bite. Sometimes smacking your other hand against a hard surface- a tabletop, for example, may startle your cat into breaking off the attack. If you stay still, however, he usually calms down and releases you.

That’s the solution if you’ve gotten into the attack stage. The better option is to be familiar with his body language and stop petting before he becomes over stimulated. Cat lovers often think such attacks come without warning, but the fact is that they missed the warning signs of a cat that simply had enough. The tail is the key. If your cat starts twitching his tail in a jerky fashion, time to call off the petting has arrived. If you watch your cat’s body language, you can slowly build up your petting time. Three pats, then four, then five. Push up to, but never over, your cat’s level of tolerance and build slowly on your successes.

Often these “I’ve had enough” attacks come if you have been petting your cat’s belly. This is a sensitive area for cats, and even if yours offers it to you, you’re better off petting somewhere else.

Play aggression: Sure, it hurts all the same, but the cat who pounces on your feet the careens off the wall isn’t trying to hurt you-he’s playing. You need to increase your play sessions with your cat with an appropriate toy, such as a cat fishing pole or toy on a string- not one of your own body parts- to help your cat burn off his excess energy before you try for a quiet pet session. Use the spray bottle to let him/her know that attacks on you are not permitted.

Redirected Aggression: Your cat sees another cat, an intruder, outside your living window. He becomes enraged. You walk by, and he nails you. What gives? You were just the victim of redirected aggression. This one’s tough to fix. Try to discourage strange cats in your yard: Thump a window, or make a loud sound.

Conclusion

Animal Clinics of The Woodlands prides itself on providing the most advanced and compassionate, feline friendly health care. Please don’t hesitate to call our offices should you have any questions or concerns about your kitten's health throughout their lifetime. We are here to ensure your pet lives a long, healthy life as a member of your family.