

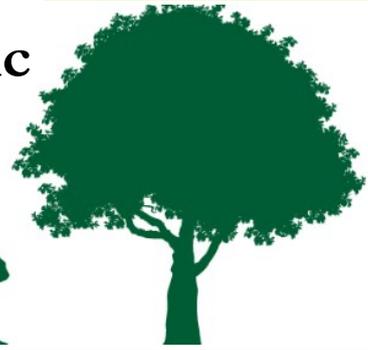
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Damory Veterinary Clinic

Small Animal Factsheet



A GUIDE TO YOUR NEW KITTEN

Vaccinations

Kittens can be vaccinated against cat flu and enteritis and against feline leukaemia virus. Cat flu is an extremely contagious condition that is caused by a group of viruses and bacteria; the symptoms are usually a snotty nose, sneezing, weepy eyes - in kittens and in old cats these symptoms can be very severe, and in few cases even fatal. The Tricat vaccination (against two of the viruses that cause cat flu and against a virus responsible for enteritis) is a course of two injections, one at 8-9 weeks of age and the second at 12 weeks of age. It is very much like the human flu vaccination; it does not prevent your cat getting a cold or upper respiratory tract infection, it does however protect him/her against the worst strains of the condition. Annual booster vaccination is necessary to maintain protection against cat flu.

The feline leukaemia virus causes a potentially fatal disease; spread between cats by direct contact – usually bites. It is associated with a number of serious conditions in cats, such as bone marrow suppression (causing a weakness of the immune system) and certain tumours in young adult cats. The feline leukaemia can only be spread by direct contact, this means that the risk of contracting the disease in purely indoor house cats is minimal, while those that spend much time outside with other cats and those that fight are at much higher risk. The vaccine can be given at the same time (in the same syringe) as the flu vaccine. Annual booster vaccination is also recommended.

Feeding

Kittens grow very quickly, so they have a high demand for energy. Most kittens will require 3-4 meals a day. Commercial kitten diets are generally well balanced – there are wet (tinned meat) and dry (biscuit) kitten foods available. Your vet will be happy to discuss your kitten's nutrition with you.



Worming

Kittens are very prone to harbouring worm burdens. Intestinal worms are an important cause of diarrhoea and poor growth in young kittens. Roundworms can be transmitted to kittens from their mother and we recommend monthly worming from 8 weeks of age, either with a spot-on or tablet wormer to treat for roundworms. Tapeworms are less of a problem in kittens but you may want to treat for them as well and can discuss this with your vet.

Having completed a kitten worming programme, it is important to regularly worm adult cats. Cats that become keen hunters or those that live in areas where there are many other cats will need to be wormed at least every 3-4 months; those that are more solitary and tend to live predominantly indoors will need worming about every 6 months.

Fleas

Fleas will jump on and off kittens as well as adult cats – causing itching and irritation (to both kitten and owner). Heavy flea burdens in young kittens can also cause profound anaemia (blood loss). There is a flea spray that can be used from 2 days of age on kittens and various monthly spot on and tablet products that start for use from 6 to 12 weeks of age. Your vet can advise you which product is best to use on your kitten.

Socialisation and handling

Young kittens are very impressionable. Frequent handling - picking up, stroking, cuddles, etc, from all members of the family in many cases will help the kitten to mature into an easy to handle and relaxed adult cat (there are some exceptions!). It is important to get your kitten used to domestic noises (TV, vacuum cleaner, washing machine, etc).

Insurance

There are many policies available from different insurance companies. Some of these policies are considerably better than others. Please see our insurance handout for more information and advice.

Neutering

Most kittens become sexually mature at between 4 and 6 months. We strongly recommend neutering to prevent unwanted pregnancies and in males it reduces the chances that they will want to stray and get into fights, where they can pick up infections. We routinely neuter both young male and young female cats from 4-6 months of age.

