



Important Information for New Kittens

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome you to North Waterloo Veterinary Hospital! We appreciate that you have chosen our hospital for your kitten's veterinary care. We strive to provide the best veterinary care possible, with an attentive and sensitive hospital staff to serve you.

Our mission is to provide excellence in preventive health care, diagnostic care and treatments for your pet. We deliver high-quality customer service for our patients and their human companions. Our qualified team members treat pets as if they were their own. The well-being of your pet always comes first.

We wanted to provide you with information on some of the topics we will discuss during your kitten's appointments.

Vaccinations

- One of the best ways to keep your cat healthy is by ensuring they receive all the recommended vaccinations.
- Kitten vaccines are given as a series at specific intervals beginning around 7-8 weeks old until they have developed sufficient immunity, typically around 16 weeks old.
- During this time, your kitten will become protected against the "core" group of diseases, panleukopenia (feline distemper), calicivirus, rhinotracheitis, FeLV (feline leukemia) and rabies.
- Even cats living totally indoors require regular vaccination as they may be exposed to diseases in many circumstances (such as travel or boarding, interaction with other cats, the addition of a new cat to the home, and even viruses carried on your clothing).
- We will evaluate your cat's individual needs in order to discuss which vaccines are necessary and how often they should be given to provide the best protection for your cat.

Deworming and Fecal Testing

- A less obvious point of wellness care is parasite prevention.
- Unfortunately, many parasites go undetected since young kittens can be infected without showing any clinical signs and are susceptible to re-infection.

- To make sure your kitten does not have intestinal parasites, be sure to bring a stool sample to your first veterinary checkup.
- Fecal testing detects the eggs of mature parasites that live inside the body and pass their eggs to the outside by shedding them into the host's stool. Some of these parasites are worm-like, while others are tiny single-celled organisms called protozoa. Most of the parasites live in the intestine, but a few live elsewhere in the body.
- If a pet is found to have parasites, follow-up fecal flotations may be recommended to monitor the response to treatment.
- We will also recommend routine de-worming for your kitten at each visit since kittens do not always shed parasite eggs in their stool.
- Depending on your kitten's lifestyle risk, we may also recommend flea or tick prevention.

Feline Viral Testing

- Feline viral testing typically encompasses testing for feline leukemia virus (FeLV), feline immunodeficiency virus (FIV)
- FeLV is responsible for several diseases in cats including leukemia. FeLV is highly contagious and is transmitted through body fluids and may be transmitted across the placenta in pregnant cats.
- FIV reduces the capacity of the cat's immune system to respond to other infectious agents. FIV is highly contagious and is transmitted primarily through cat bite wounds, although it may be transmitted by other routes such as across the placenta.
- Testing is recommended for a cat that has been exposed to another cat of unknown FeLV or FIV status or testing a new cat prior to its adoption into a household with other cats.

Pet Insurance

- Pet health insurance policies are primarily designed to cover your pet for accidents and illness.
- Some companies will also offer additional coverage for routine vaccinations and other routine care such as dental cleanings for an added fee.
- We recommend OVMA Pet Insurance, but there are many other companies available.
- Ask us about signing up your kitten for a free, four-week accident and illness trial!

Litterbox Maintenance

- According to the American Association of Feline Practitioners (AAFP), The general rule of thumb is to have one litter box for each cat, plus one additional extra box.
- Litter boxes should be in an area that is easily accessed by the cat, yet out of the way. (Cats should have some privacy and quiet to eliminate, so avoid laundry and furnace rooms.)
- Fecal material should be removed after each bowel movement, if possible, and the box should be cleaned or scooped of urine wastes daily, regardless of the type of litter material.

- The entire contents of the litter box should be cleaned out weekly. Rinse the box with hot water and dry before replacing with new litter.

Handling Your Cat

- Getting your kitten use to routine handling is a very important step in their kitten care.
- We recommend touching and handling your kitten's feet, ears and mouth as they are growing.
- Rewarding with treats afterwards is a great way to help encourage good behaviour for future nail trims, ear cleaning, teeth brushing and routine veterinary appointments.

Dental Care

- It is best to teach your pet to accept teeth brushing while they are still young.
- Choose a quiet time and place to begin. Select a small room where you can place your kitten on a surface such as a counter or tabletop (on a blanket or towel) or sit with them in your lap.
- Gently rub a soft toothbrush, or your finger along the area where the gum tissue touches the tooth surface (the gingival margin). This is the region where plaque accumulates, and gingivitis is initiated. Only the outside surfaces of the teeth need to be rubbed.
- For the first few lessons, it is a good idea to rub along only a few teeth rather than the whole mouth, especially if your kitten is unsure or nervous about the process.
- Rewarding with treats after is a good way to help encourage future good behaviour.
- Avoid brushing when your kitten is teething, which roughly occurs at 5 months, or 20 weeks of age.

Play Aggression

- Chasing and pouncing behaviours are vital elements of feline predatory behaviour, and your kitten will spend hours engaging in these activities.
- As a basic rule, it is best to only play predatory games with toys that your cat can eventually catch and "kill", such as toy mice, pieces of food on the end of string, or balls of rolled-up paper.
- Interactions with human hands should be limited to the context of affection and to being stroked and petted.

Stimulation

- Under-stimulation, an excess of unused energy, and lack of appropriate opportunities for play can lead to play-related aggression.
- Moving objects that can be stalked, chased, swatted, or pounced upon best stimulate cat play.
- You must provide ample outlets and opportunities for play on your terms. These should be aerobic play sessions so that your kitten gets plenty of exercise.
- To try to maintain your cat's interest in toys, you might consider a daily rotation of toys so that your kitten is presented with a few new or different items daily. Pick up all the toys and place them in a box or basket out of the cat's reach. Every day, take out a few toys or a bag or box, and set them out for the cat to play with. Increase novelty and interest by stuffing or coating the toys with food or catnip.

Spaying or Neutering Your Kitten

- It is recommended that all non-breeding cats be spayed or neutered.
- Most cats are sterilized between four and six months of age.

Body Condition Score and Feeding

- The pet version of BMI is called **BCS (Body Condition Score)** which is a quantitative yet subjective method for evaluating body fat.
- Assigning a score to your pet requires visualization and palpation. You must look at **and** feel your pet. Start by looking at your cat or dog from above. Does she have a waistline that curves in behind the rib cage giving her an hourglass figure? Next, sit on the floor and look at your pet from the side. Does he have a tummy tuck? Does his abdomen slant upwards between the ribcage and the hind legs? Or does he have a saggy belly?
- Now for palpation. If your pet is a healthy weight, you should easily feel his ribs. Place your thumbs on the backbone and spread your fingers across his rib cage. You should feel a thin layer of fat with the ribs right underneath. To know how much fat is acceptable, make a fist with one hand and feel your knuckles with the other. That is what your pet's ribs should feel like.
- Consider switching to an adult formula after spay/neuter to keep your pet fit.